



The main reasons for rating the waterways positively were the nice natural environment (28%), the opportunity to relax and the peacefulness of the waterways (22%) and the activities one can do on the waterways (12%). The main reasons for rating the waterways negatively were because of poor/lack of facilities (4%), untidiness/litter/pollution (2%), poor fishing (2%) and overcrowding/noisiness (2%).

The Erne received the highest rating, with 95% rating it as very good or good, followed by the Shannon Erne (93%), Royal Canal (92%), Shannon (82%), Lower Bann (77%), Grand Canal (73%) and Barrow (59%). It should be noted however that a sizeable portion of respondents did not give a rating for the Barrow (18%) or the Shannon (10%).

Facilities that need to be developed

The main facilities that respondents feel are needed are public facilities (37%) including toilets, showers, changing rooms, rubbish bins, freshwater and picnic areas.

Waterways Ireland

The survey identified a fairly high level of awareness of Waterways Ireland, with the majority (66%) having heard of the organisation.

For more information on this research or on other publications produced by Waterways Ireland please contact

Marketing & Communications Division
20 Darling St, Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, BT74 7EW
Tel no +44 28 6634 6219
Fax no +44 28 6634 6237
Email info@waterwaysireland.org

Survey of Waterway Users 2004



Survey of Waterway Users 2004

Waterways Ireland is charged with the management, maintenance, development and restoration of the seven inland navigable waterway systems, principally for recreational purposes. These include the Barrow Navigation, Erne System, Grand Canal, Lower Bann Navigation, Royal Canal, Shannon Erne Waterway and Shannon Navigation. Its marketing role is defined as follows 'to increase awareness and promote greater use of Ireland's navigable inland waterways'.

Waterways Ireland commissioned the Tourism Research Centre (TRC) at the Dublin Institute of Technology to conduct independent market research with waterway users. The aim of the research was to provide a detailed market profile of waterway users and their level of awareness of Waterways Ireland,

The research project was undertaken by conducting face-to-face surveying with a representative sample of 1,640 waterway users at 23 agreed points over the seven waterways, between June and September 2004.

Profile of Waterway users

A broad range of people, for example in terms of social class, age group and type of activity undertaken, were identified to be using the waterways. The majority of respondents were resident on the island of Ireland, with 58% residing in the Republic and 24% in Northern Ireland.

Eighteen percent of respondents were overseas visitors, their average length of stay was 11.2 days and 70% visited Ireland specifically to experience the waterways. 79% of overseas respondents indicated that their experience of the waterways would encourage them to return to Ireland.

There were more male waterway users (68%) than female (32%). The average party size using the waterways was 3.6 persons. Thirty seven percent of respondents were regular users, 34% holidaymakers and 21% were locals. For 88% of respondents, English was their first language and for 6% it was German.

Equality section

The majority of waterway users have no caring responsibilities (56%), while 37% care for children. The population of respondents was peaked around the middle aged age group (34% were aged 35 to 49 years of age). The majority were Roman Catholic (52%), and of the remainder, 21% were Protestant and 18% had no religious beliefs. 4% of those interviewed indicated that they had a disability.

Activities

The four main activities respondents took part in on the seven waterways were walking (27%), private boating (24%), angling (20%) and hire boating (18%). Rowing, walking, cycling, canoe polo, angling and private boating were the activities that were most frequently undertaken by respondents.

Motivation to use the waterway

The top two motivations for using the waterway were for recreation/to undertake activities (42%) and for relaxation/a break/for a holiday (38%).

Sources of information

Friends/relatives/word-of-mouth (44%), living in the area (31%) and being a regular user (28%) were the main sources of information on the waterways. The Internet (12%), tourist information office (10%) and cruise hire companies (9%) were the other main sources of information.

Length of time spent on the waterway

The average length of stay on the waterways was approximately 4.21 days.

Rating of waterway facilities

Overall respondents rated the waterways highly, with 84% rating them as very good or good.