

Bristol Harbour Festival Cardboard Boat Race 2025

Information for teams entering a cardboard vessel in the race

19th July, 11:00hrs to install boats on the pontoon Arnolfini Pontoon, Prince Street Bridge. Bristol. Cover with tarp. if raining.

Bringing boats in the day before is best as the roads are shut by mid-morning. We will find storage on our ship or at our office (70 Prince Street) if you let us know.

12: 00 Children's Model boat Race

12:30hrs... ish – Cardboard Boat Race – be prepared by 12:15 on the pontoon

The aims are

- Raise awareness of Bristol waterways showing them that water is fun and must be valued.
- Celebrate engineering, making and creativity.

You will be watched by about 9000 spectators and your boat needs a name and if possible, a bit of story so our 'commentators' can engage the crowd in your exploits. Promoting your own cause, charity or business is encouraged.

There is no entry fee, but donations are welcome. Donations in the past range from £5 to £1600 and reflect the circumstances of the team entering. If you have no money don't give us any.

All donations are used to support the **Learning Ships** programmes which work with over 1000 young people each year. The larger donations are usually from businesses or societies who want to sponsor school workshops. There is no fixed amount to donate but each workshop for 30 children costs £850. Workshops are held in schools across Bristol and on the MV Balmoral where children use Bristol Packet boat trips to explore the Bristol's Docks and Rivers.

Workshops use volunteers, helping young people complete tasks and engaging them with insights into the world of work. If this is something you would like to do, please let us know.

Rules for the Cardboard Boat Race

1. Cardboard boat must have a person or people on board
2. No plastic, metal and wood allowed. This includes the paddles, oars or other methods of propulsion
3. Varnish and paint are allowed and are preferable to an excess of plastic tapes.
4. No plastic sheeting or foam.
5. All participants wear a buoyancy aid. We provide these if needed.
6. All competitors sign the waiver and follow the advice on the risk assessment. Don't worry it is a safe event we have rescue boats on hand so you don't even need to swim if you sink.
7. Boats to be on the Arnolfini pontoon by 11:00am on race day. If rain is forecast bring something to cover the boat on the pontoon. Entry to the Prince Street Bridge area by car will be restricted after about 9:30am and we will be setting up around 10am. Parading your boat through the crowds is encouraged.
8. The winner is the first to complete a race to a marker buoy and back. The course is approximately 200metres long in total. Boats start on the pontoon and launch to the water on the crowds count down. Larger vessels can start in the water if necessary.
9. After the race competitors may want a sea battle. This is entirely optional but much applauded by the adoring fans.
10. The awards ceremony will follow straight after the race – these are ironic cardboard prizes much sought after.
11. After the race all the cardboard boats must be lifted from the water onto the pontoon or into a vessel supplied by the Harbour Master. We will recycle it with the help of the docks engineers. Please help with the recycling. If you want to display or keep your boat, take after it over to our ship the MV Balmoral where we will be hosting other events. There is a bar on the ship!

Prizes – Beautiful Cardboard Trophies to Keep and Display

1. Race Winner - First back to the pontoon
2. Team Spirit Award – Needs a happy crew
3. Titanic Award - most dramatic sinker
4. Innovation Award - design and propulsion
5. Best Dressed Boat Award - looks are everything

Thanks for entering and supporting. If you need more information or just want to tell us your boats story in advance, please contact us hugh@myfuturemychoice.co.uk / 01173290387

Please share any pictures of your boat and announce your involvement on Twitter and Facebook

Insta: My.Future.My.Choice / Facebook: MV Balmoral and My Future My Choice

Top Tips from previous years

Paddles – Cardboard tubes with handles cut in the side / seal the tube at the top.

Sails – they do work and the wind will be behind you in one direction or the other.

Paddle wheels – they are worth it

Dressing up – always applauded

Falling in – the water is clean enough, just don't swallow

Getting dried, showered, or changed after the event – visit the Ship MV Balmoral.

Getting a rewarding beer – Visit our ship the MV Balmoral

Photos – these usually make the national news as well as local. They will appear on our website and the Festival website.