

# 10 . Navigating South Australian rivers

*Special regulations or conditions apply to some waterways, and you should be aware of them before you go boating. In particular, the River Murray has hidden navigation hazards and specific rules about navigating its bridges, ferries and locks. As the boat operator's licence covers all of the state's waterways, even if you only intend boating at sea you will need to know these rules*

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## Local knowledge

There are several ways of finding out if the area you are visiting has any specific rules or water conditions you need to be aware of. These may include hazards such as coastal bars, etc (refer chapter 5, Weather & other potential hazards), specific regulations, or local by-laws.

The majority of speed or vessel restrictions applying in South Australia are detailed in the *Harbors & Navigation Regulations 2009*. These restrictions may apply to certain types of vessels or vessel operations in specific areas of water.

Additionally, some councils may have By-Laws applying to launching or mooring boats, or to certain types of vessels which operate along the foreshore or riverbanks. It is recommended that you check with the council before using your vessel in any unfamiliar area.

If boating interstate you must follow the local rules and law. For information you can refer to the relevant State authority website.

## Inland waters

Boating on the River Murray and other inland waterways demands special care. Possible dangers and obstructions such as submerged trees, shallow sandbars and other snags, may be hidden just below the murky surface.

Floating trees, branches and other debris can be brought into waterways by increased flows or after heavy rain and flooding. While navigating past obstructions such as ferry cables and water intake pipes you should take greater care.

Where identified, the more dangerous hazards are generally marked with navigation markers. Hazards are not always marked as soon as they appear and it is not always feasible or practical to remove all of them. Get to know the buoys, marks and beacons (refer chapter 7, [Buoys, marks, beacons, signals & signs](#)) and stay within any marked channel.

Maintain a safe speed and constant lookout. Seek local knowledge and familiarise yourself with an area every time you visit before attempting any high-speed activities such as waterskiing. Conditions can change in a short time, even in areas you visit regularly.

## River Murray

The rules that apply to boating on the River Murray are essentially the same as those for other navigable waters. However, additional rules under the *River Murray Traffic Regulations* that specifically apply to bridges, ferries and locks on the River Murray are incorporated into the *Harbors & Navigation Regulations 2009* and are outlined below.



*Boating on the River Murray demands special care*

## Bridges

For all of the listed bridges, where two or more vessels need to pass under the bridge and there's not enough room to pass at the same time, the vessel that is upstream of the bridge has right-of-way. River Murray bridges and ferry operations are managed by DIT (refer chapter 13).

### Hindmarsh Island Bridge

Vessels more than 10 m long that are navigating under the bridge are required to:

- Proceed with caution, maintaining a mid-channel course when passing under the bridge, returning to the starboard side of the navigation channel as soon as practicable.
- Give way to vessels moving downstream (until that vessel is well clear of the bridge structure).

### Kingston Bridge

Vessels more than 10 m long that are navigating under the bridge are required to:

- Proceed with caution, maintaining a mid-channel course when passing under the bridge, returning to the starboard side of the navigation channel as soon as practicable.
- Give way to vessels moving downstream (until that vessel is well clear of the bridge structure).

- Sound one long blast (4–6 seconds) when it comes within 0.5 nautical miles (that is, just over 900 m) of the bridge.
- Respond with a long blast to a long blast from an approaching vessel.
- Not overtake another vessel within 0.25 nautical miles (about 450 m) of the bridge.
- After giving way, must again sound one long blast before proceeding under the bridge.

### Paringa Bridge

The Paringa Bridge must be raised manually for larger vessels to pass through. It is opened daily at 9.30 am and 2.30 pm. You need to contact the DIT bridge operator (refer chapter 13) at least two hours before the bridge is opened to book in.

A vessel wanting to pass must sound three long blasts or wave a flag when it is no more than 600 m but at least 400 m from the bridge. If the bridge operator is available, he or she will indicate:

- That the signal has been heard, by waving a red flag or flashing a red light.
- That the vessel can proceed, by waving a green flag or flashing a green light.

Before going through the bridge, the vessel must sound one long then one short blast, or wave a flag.



*Paringa Bridge*



*A four knot ferry crossing.*

## Ferries

When approaching a ferry crossing you must:

- If possible sound one long blast on a whistle, horn or similar device when between 800m and 400m from the ferry, then proceed with caution.
- Reduce speed to 4 knots within 100 m of either side of the crossing.
- All vessels must give way to a ferry which is crossing the channel and avoid proceeding ahead of the ferry.
- Never pass close to a ferry that is crossing because the heavy steel cables used to guide it may be close to the surface and can severely damage a vessel.
- Slow down or stop, and wait for the ferry to reach the bank and 'lock on' before proceeding, keeping a look out for the ferry cables.

A ferry signals its intention by showing:

- A flashing green light if it is not going to proceed and the other vessel can pass.
- Between sunset and sunrise an all-round red light at each end, and an all-round green light above the red light at the forward end, to indicate the direction in which it is moving.

## Locks

Traversing a lock is quite simple providing you observe the following basic rules.

- When between 600m and 400m from the lock, signal the lock master your intention to proceed by:
  - Sounding three long blasts (4-6 seconds each) on a whistle, horn or similar device.
  - Waving a flag.
  - Flashing a light.
- Wait at least 150 m from the lock until the lock master gives the signal to proceed, which is:
  - A green flag.
  - A green fixed or flashing light.
- Slowly proceed into the lock chamber.
- If necessary, use the holding ropes to counter the water surge when the water level alters.
- Never tie up to anything inside the lock.
- Wait for the lock master to indicate it is safe to move out of the chamber.

The SA Water Berri office has information on lock opening times ([refer chapter 13](#)).

## Port Adelaide River

**Note: a four knot speed limit applies within 100 m either side of all Port River Bridges.**

### Birkenhead Bridge

If you require Birkenhead Bridge to be opened you need to contact the DIT Traffic Management Centre, either by telephone or VHF Marine Radio Channel 68, call sign 'Birkenhead Bridge', at least two hours before you need the bridge opened (refer chapter 13, Contact details & further information).

### Port River Expressway (PREXY) Bridges

As these bridges have a minimum clearance of more than 8 m, many vessels are able to pass under without the bridges being opened. However, if you require the PREXY Bridges to be opened you need to contact the DIT Traffic Management Centre, either by telephone or VHF Channel 68, using call sign 'Prexy Bridges' at least 10 minutes ahead of the opening time, but no more than one hour ahead of opening. The opening times of the PREXY Bridges, on request only, are as follows:

#### Weekdays:

6:00 am to 6:15 am and 7:00 am to 7:15 pm.



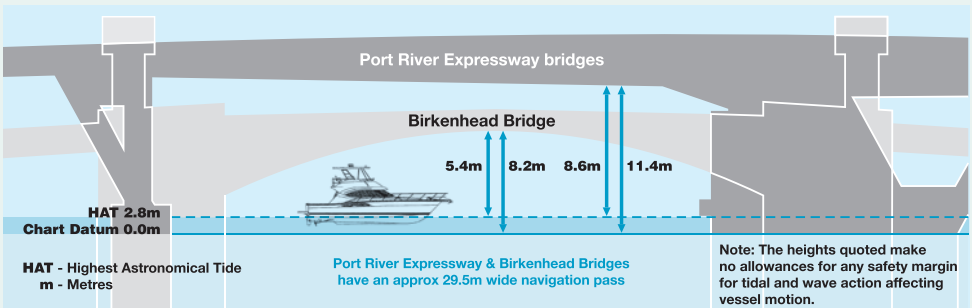
*A four knot speed limit applies within 100 m either side of all Port River Bridges.*

#### Weekends and Public Holidays:

10:00 am to 10:15 am, 3:00pm to 3:15 pm and 6:00 pm to 6:15 pm (extra opening available from 10:00 am to 10:15 pm during daylight saving).

Vessels must not approach within 100 m of the PREXY Bridges while they are being raised or lowered.

For all Port River bridges, where no vessel traffic control signals are operating at the time, if two vessels are approaching the bridge from opposite directions and cannot pass each other safely under the bridge, the vessel travelling upstream (that is, inland away from Outer Harbour) is required to give way to and allow safe passage to the vessel travelling downstream (that is, towards Outer Harbour and open water). Further information regarding opening times and procedures for Port River Bridges can be found at [www.marinesafety.sa.gov.au](http://www.marinesafety.sa.gov.au).



## Chapter 10.

### Self-check questions

#### 1) What must you do when nearing a ferry crossing on the River Murray?

- A. Reduce speed to four knots within 100 m either side of the crossing and watch out for ferry cables.
- B. Reduce speed to four knots within 50 m if the ferry is moving and watch out for ferry cables.
- C. Reduce speed to four knots if the ferry is moving and watch out for the ferry cables.
- D. Sound one long blast on a horn, whistle or similar to advise the ferry operator you intend approaching and they should not start crossing.

#### 2) How can you tell whether it's safe to pass through a ferry crossing?

- A. The ferry operator waves a green flag.
- B. A flashing green light shows the vessel is not moving.
- C. The ferry operator sounds a siren to any vessel waiting to pass.

#### 3) What distance from a lock must you wait for the Lock Master's signal to enter?

- A. 150 m.
- B. Between 800 and 400 m.
- C. No minimum distance as long as you slow to four knots.

#### 4) At night, what lights does a ferry show to indicate the direction of travel?

- A. A flashing green light forward.
- B. Red lights each end and an all-round white light above the forward red light.
- C. Red lights at each end, with a green light above the forward red light in the direction of travel.