

Messing about in a boat for holiday fun

FOR water rats — and an awful lot of people — just messing about in boats is the ideal holiday and the rivers and marinas of the Eastern Cape offer great opportunities, from canoe trails to luxurious steam-boat cruises.

For nature lovers the Fish, Kowie and Bushmans Rivers are a special treat.

The banks of all three rivers are heavily wooded and alive with birdlife — and there are now ways of travelling many kilometres upstream.

There are five daily boat trips up the Fish River. They depart from the bridge on the N2 (about 1 hour and 45 minutes from PE).

The two-hour return trip on a double-decker boat takes passengers 12km upstream.

There are also champagne lunches, sunset cruises and braais available.

To complete a day's outing you can go on a 45-minute hike to Bat's Cave, an unusual sandstone formation, at Great Fish River point.

The tours are offered by Tour and Trail, ☎ (041) 522042.

In Port Alfred, Kowie Anchorage, at ☎ (0464) 42410, offer four cruises daily up the river from the town centre, starting at 9.30am and ending at 5.30pm.

The company also rents out paddleskis, canoes, pedaloes and a small motorised craft for those who want to explore the river on their own.

Patcraft in Port Alfred also

rents out a six-seater boat, ☎ (0464) 244830.

Canoe trails up the Eastern Cape rivers are becoming so popular that the Kowie Canoe Trail, which is run by the Port Alfred municipality, is fully booked up to six months in advance.

However, an overnight canoe trail operates on the Bushman's River and a spokesman for Kenton Marina said they still had openings this summer for this trail.

This involves a 15km paddle upstream to an overnight hut. Contact ☎ (0464) 81223.

Near Jeffreys Bay the man-made saltwater Marina Martinique is offering a range of water activities including ferry rides on the canals, ☎ (0423) 920200.

The ferry, a yacht and a gamefishing cruiser, which puts to sea

through the marina lock, are available for charter.

A floating restaurant, the Belafonte, serves lunch and supper and there is also the Galley waterside restaurant, which serves meals seven days a week.

In East London canoes and paddleskis can be hired from Playwaters to paddle up the Nahoon River.

For a trip up the Quinera River, canoes, paddle skis and paddle boats can be rented at the Bonza Bay water slide.

The pontoon used to ferry cars across the Kei River Mouth is available at night for rental to parties of at least 30 people.

They are taken on a 45min cruise up the river for an evening braai in a boma, ☎ (043272) 132.



The fleet at Marina Martinique, one of the inland water areas that offer an array of boat rides. At the back is the floating restaurant and in front (from the left) the ferry Fantasque, the gamefishing cruiser Esprit and the yacht Martinique.