

HOLLAND and BELGIUM IN SPRINGTIME - AMSTERDAM TO BRUGES

Dutch landscape, Flemish cities

Easy to moderate Bike and Barge cruise

Duration: 8-days / 7-nights

Cost: AU\$2090 per person twin share (single supplement on request)

Departs: 17th April from Amsterdam to Bruges and 1st May 2010 from Bruges to Amsterdam



Bike and Barge cruises combines two popular ways of exploring Europe (easy to moderate cycling with river, canal or island cruising). They allow partners of different abilities and interests to holiday together (trips are just as interesting for non-cycling partners, leisure cyclist OR enthusiasts), you unpack once and come 'home' each night to a wonderful meal and a comfortable cabin with your own bathroom. These cruises are rapidly becoming the thing to do in Europe appealing to the more active mature traveller. They are ideal for first timer or small groups.

These cruises offer the opportunity to explore beautiful countryside and historic cities sampling beers, wine and local produce in the company of like-minded cyclists. Tours are conducted in English but passengers mostly include a mix of different nationalities - including English or German speaking with French, Italian or Dutch as the other main languages - adding to the cultural enjoyment of bike and barge cruising.

Well-maintained multi-geared bikes are provided (passengers can bring their own if they prefer) with opportunities for guided cycling along a variety of waterway routes – mostly along flat, sealed pathways - but occasionally they break away into hillier country to visit areas of interest, wine tasting, a castle or a coffee stop. More challenging routes are available in some destinations so please ask for our suggestions according to your ability and interests. The cycling is always fascinating and varied with free time to explore each day's destination. Extra time is usually available for those who want more cycling at the end of each day's stage.

Highlights: The historical Flemish cities of Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges are central to this itinerary as are very beautiful parts of the Netherlands. The tour starts in Amsterdam where we suggest you allow time to explore the canals, the Rijksmuseum or the Van Gogh-museum. From Amsterdam you cycle along the winding river Vecht with impressive castles on its banks. We stop at a traditional cheese farm and visit the historical center of Dordrecht and the windmills of Kinderdijk. We will stay overnight in Willemstad, a fortified town on the Haringvliet. Our last destination in the Netherlands is Tholen, once an important fishing harbour. We continue through Belgium to Antwerp famous for the painter Rubens.

From Antwerp we follow the beautiful tidal river Nederschelde to Ghent via the Belfort and Saint Baafs-Cathedral, with the famous triptych by the Dutch painter Jan van Eyck. Then we cycle through the Flemish countryside to Bruges with its picturesque town centre, probably the most beautiful of all the Flemish historical cities.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Itinerary: Amsterdam – Vianen – Dordrecht – Willemstad – Antwerp – Dendermonde – Ghent - Bruges

Day 1 (Sat): Amsterdam- Weesp

Afternoon check in, your boat will be moored in central Amsterdam near the central railway station. Welcome drink, information on life aboard the boat and time to relax in your cabin.

Before check-in at 4.00pm, if you arrive earlier you may join a guided city tour including a boat ride through the cities famous canals. As time allows perhaps visit the Rijksmuseum or the Van Gogh museum.

At 5.00pm the Merlijn departs Amsterdam cruising to Weesp where we will dock for the night. Here we will have dinner and a city walk.

Day 2 (Sun): Weesp - Vianen Cycling distance: about 45 km

Breakfast - Today your cycling tour starts from Weesp via the winding river Vecht into the direction of Utrecht. On the way we will visit a cheese farm, where cheese is still made according to traditional methods. In the afternoon we cruise to Vianen, a small-fortified town on the river Lek. Dinner

Day 3 (Mon): Vianen – Dordrecht Cycling: about 35 / 55 km

Breakfast - The cycling today takes you from Vianen through the beautiful Dutch river landscape to Schoonhoven, the Silvertown, then through the Alblasserwaard including Kinderdijk. Here appears an impressive row of large windmills, built to drain the Alblasserwaard. You can visit one of the mills. From here we will be sailing together into the city of Dordrecht and in the evening you will have time to explore this ancient city, full of history. Dinner

Day 4 (Tue): Dordrecht - Willemstad – Kreekrak locks – Antwerp Cycling: about 25 km.

Breakfast - From Dordrecht we cruise to Willemstad, a charming, fortified town. Our cycling from here takes us through a very scenic part of Holland and to the charming, medieval city of Bergen op Zoom. At the Kreekrak locks we rejoin the Merlijn and cruise into the Willemsdok in Antwerp.

Antwerp is not only known as the diamond city, but also as the native city of the painter Rubens. In Rubens' House you can admire his work. In the centre of the city you will see the Cathedral of Our Lady and a beautiful market square with many town houses from the city's a rich past. Tonight you are free to enjoy your dinner in one of the many restaurants in Antwerp.

Day 5 (Wed): Antwerp – Dendermonde Cycling: about 45 km

Breakfast - This morning we have a city tour through the city of Antwerp with free time to explore Rubens' House or a diamond factory or you can go shopping in the lively center. The cycling today follows the river Schelde further upstream via Temse and Baasrode to Dendermonde. There is a beautiful bike path along the river and the landscape around the Schelde is magnificent. Dendermonde is a nice country town on the Dender estuary. Dinner followed by an optional city walk in Dendermonde.

Day 6 (Thu): Dendermonde – Ghent Cycling: about 40 km.

After breakfast we bike along the river Zeeschelde. We follow this beautiful tidal river upstream to Ghent, a lively university city, again one with a rich past. This city at the place where the rivers Leie and Schelde converge has its origins in Roman Times. In the late 13th, early 14th century textiles brought great wealth here and in the city center many old patrician houses have been preserved. In the Clothmakers' Hall (1425) textile merchants used to meet. The major church is St. Baafs' Cathedral, built in various ages and in various styles. In the cathedral you can admire a number of masterpieces of mediaeval art, of which the 'Adoration of the Lamb' by Jan van Eyck is perhaps the most famous. In the afternoon there will be a city tour through the city of Ghent. Dinner

Day 7 (Fri): Ghent – Bruges Cycling: about 40 km.

After breakfast your last cycling day will take you through the pleasant countryside of Western Flanders from Ghent to Bruges. Bruges, also called the Venice of the North, is perhaps the most beautiful of all Flemish cities. Its old centre, which dates from the Middle Ages, is almost completely intact and, at the time, Bruges was a metropolis, centre of trade and art. In the afternoon you have free time to enjoy a tour through this city followed by a farewell dinner.

Day 8 (Sat): Bruges

Tour ends after breakfast at @ 9.00am

Please note: *the tour operator reserve the right to change the schedule and/or program as necessary if the route or any part of it is not navigable or for safety reasons. See tour conditions for details on the booking form.*

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Tour cost includes:

- * 7-nights accommodation in a twin/double cabin with private bathroom, air-conditioning, safe, hairdryer
- * 7 buffet breakfasts and 6 3-course dinners (starting with dinner on Saturday, the first day and ending with breakfast on Saturday the last day)
- * Daily room cleaning service
- * All bedding, sheets, towels, facial tissues, soap
- * Porterage of luggage
- * Unlimited drinking water during meals. Tea and coffee, beer and wine etc are available from the bar
- * 7-speed hybrid bicycle hire with panniers and experienced cycle tour guide (bring, buy or hire a helmet_
- * City tours in Dordrecht, Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges
- * Harbour and ferry fees

Not included:

- * Lunches, drinks and bar expenses other than those mentioned
- * Entrance fees other than those described
- * Transfers or travel to/from the cruise
- * Travel insurance and personal expenses
- * Helmets (for rent €10 per week each)



Other Bike and Barge cruises are available in France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Croatia, Greece and Turkey and also in Vietnam and Canada – river and canal cruises are available throughout Europe – sailing holidays in Corsica, Tuscany or Sicily in Italy - ask for details

Contact Outdoor Travel or your travel agent for more details and reservations:

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