

## BELGIUM & FRANCE - BRUGES TO PARIS or return

15-days / 14-nights – **PREMIUM** easy to moderate Bike & Barge cruises

- Departs:** 19th August, 16th September From Bruges to Paris  
1st July, 2nd September, 30th September From Paris to Bruges
- Cost:** AU\$3515 per person twin share Single cabin supplement \$1755
- Includes:** Breakfast, dinner on board (most nights), packed lunch, cycling tour guide and bicycle hire
- Highlights:** The historical cities of **Bruges** and **Ghent**, the forests of the Ardennes, the WW1 museums and memorials of **Peronne** and **the Somme**, Wallonia, Chateaux de Chantilly, Auvers-sur-l'Oise, the Palace of **Versailles** and central **Paris**

Bike & Barge cruises combines two popular ways of exploring Europe, cycling and river cruising, it allows 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.

This holiday is ideal for experienced cyclists interested in 4 – 6 hours of cycling per day on flat to undulating terrain with some hills. Extra kilometres can be added independently if you prefer. Non-cycling partners are welcome and can arrange their own sightseeing when not cruising.



For 2011 we have secured a **very limited** number of cabins on a unique hotel barge to cruise from the beautiful city of Bruges in Belgium to Paris. This Premium Bike & Barge cruise offers comfortable cabin accommodation (lower beds, all with ensuite bathrooms) plus the opportunity to explore the varied and interesting countryside, with visits to historic and cultural centres, sampling the beer and local produce that makes this part of Belgium and France famous. We provide well-maintained multi-geared bicycles – comfortable, easy to ride, ideal for this route – and a fascinating guided cycling program with free time to explore each day's destination.

The ride from Paris or Bruges will avoid the traffic wherever possible, taking you along small country roads, towpaths, paved forest trails and the occasional cobblestone road in cities and major towns. In Belgium we cycle through relatively flat rural landscapes with much of the route along canal or river towpaths. In France we follow country roads and the occasional bike path. Towards Paris the terrain gets hillier and of course traffic may increase, so we offer the option of staying on the boat if you prefer.

A highlight for Australians is the two-nights in Peronne, a small town in the Somme region of Northern France (just 35km from Villers-Bretonneux where ANZAC Day was celebrated for the first time in 2008). This **free-day** will allow you to visit many important World War One 'Western Front' battle sites and memorials including Amiens, Fromelles and Bullecourt or Villers-Bretonneux or to visit the fascinating museum at Peronne.

**Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for etails or reservations**

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The city of Bruges and Ghent are wonderful places to visit with a tremendous wealth of historic and religious buildings. Built on trade and weaving since medieval times you can enjoy street cafes and gift or souvenir shopping amongst these ancient facades. Picardy, the northern province of France and the area around the River Somme still carries the scars of the Great War. In almost every town there are memorials to commemorate those who died in this war from France, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, North America, Canada and South Africa. For those interested in this history the war museum at Peronne is a must.

Approaching Paris we cycle through the 'banlieue's', green, park-like suburbs with a network of cycle paths leading into the wonderful 'City of Light'. For those more confident in traffic there is the exciting ride from Versailles into the center of Paris. Two nights in central Paris gives you free time to explore this wonderful city on foot or by bicycle.

**Suggested itinerary:** cruise & cycling schedule are at the discretion of the captain & cycle guide

**Day 1 Sunday: Bruges 15km**

Arrive in Bruges in the afternoon and be welcomed aboard with cup of coffee or tea and an introduction to the crew, life on board, to your cabin and tour program. As time allows there will be a short tour to Damme, a small historical town near Bruges to allow you to get comfortable with your bike and make the necessary adjustments. Bruges is a wonderful place for an evening stroll.

**Day 2 Monday: Bruges – Ghent 45km**

We begin our cycling along towpaths past farms and picturesque Flemish towns. Our route was once on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela via Compiègne. Ghent is a university town full of life and activity with a great atmosphere!

**Day 3 Tuesday: Ghent – Oudenaarde 33km**

Today we continue upstream on the Schelde/Escaut following river towpaths through farmland with the occasional nature reserve or harbour. The route is essentially flat with the occasional lock (there are six in all). The route is mostly sealed with short sections of street traffic in Ghent and Oudenaarde. Oudenaarde is the capital of the Flemish Ardennes. Centuries old it is famous for its breweries and the manufacture of carpets. We take the opportunity to visit Liefmansbrewery one of the best breweries in the country.

**Day 4 Wednesday: Oudenaarde – Tournai 46km**

The cycle path to Tournai mostly follows the towpath. We are entering Wallonia; the French speaking part of Belgium and the difference in culture is immediately noticeable. The Walloons speak the French language and have adopted the French culture.

Tournai, the oldest city in Belgium is considered to be one of the most important cultural sites in the country. The mixed Romanesque / Gothic-style cathedral of *Notre Dame de Tournai* and its belfry have been designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Inside the cathedral the *Châsse de Notre-Dame flamande*, is a beautifully ornate 12<sup>th</sup> century relic, giving testament to Tournai's wealth during the Middle Ages.

**Day 5 Thursday: Tournai – Bouchain 42km**

Passing the Scarpe – Escaut National Park – a reclaimed coal-mining centre - we cycle towards Denaing. We pass the famous cycling racetrack of Paris, Roubaix and the notorious Wallers – Arenberg trench before rejoining the river at Bouchain and our boat.

**Day 6 Friday: Bouchain - Peronne 39km**

In the morning we cycle away from the river to Lewarde with its fascinating museum dedicated to the mining industry in the north of France. In the museum it is possible to actually go underground into a mine some 450m below ground. We return to our boat on the river at Sains le Marquion and cruise through a remarkable 5km tunnel towards Peronne.

**Day 7 Saturday: Peronne \*\***

Today is a free day to make your own plans, as our base will be the interesting town of Peronne for two nights. Peronne has a lovely town centre, a big park and a very interesting museum. For those interested in a relaxing day here is your chance to read a book and sit in the sun. Situated in a castle in the nearby centre of town is the museum of the Great War. Together with Albert and Bapaume, Peronne formed the triangle in which the battles of the Somme took place.

For those wishing to explore there is the opportunity to visit nearby towns, battle sites and memorials such as Villers-Bretonneux, Amiens, Fromelles and Bullecourt. Tonight dinner is at your own arrangement and you are free to enjoy a French meal in one of the local restaurants.

**Day 8 Sunday: Peronne – Noyonne 50km**

Today we cycle along the canal du Nord towards Noyonne, birthplace of the religious theologian Calvin (or in Dutch Calvijn), a clergyman of great influence in Holland. This region of Picardy has been an important centre for Gothic art and architecture and in Noyon you can find a beautiful example of this period in its Gothic Cathedral.

**Day 9 Monday: Noyonne – Compiègne 39km**

Through the forest of Dom Dourscam and Dom de Laigue we follow a more hilly terrain. We have chance to visit the replica railway carriage where the First World War ended (the Germans on Hitler's orders demolished the Armistice site and the carriage was taken to Berlin and destroyed - a replica of the carriage can be seen together with the restored site).

From here we visit the town of Compiègne - famous for its horse races and castle (a preferred summer residence for French monarchs, build for Louis XV, and restored by Napoleon) - where we spend the night.

**Day 10 Tuesday: Compiègne – Creil 41km**

We cycle today through forests, hills, small towns and rivers of the Pays de France regional park to Creil. This park is one of 45 community parks across France that combines natural and cultural sites with community life.

**Day 11 Wednesday: Creil – Auvers sur l'Oise 41km**

A day of undulating hills lies ahead of us but the rewards will be great. Chateaux de Chantilly is one of the most beautiful castles in France and we spend some time here to admire the castle and grounds and to possibly visit the museum de Condé.

We will spend the night in Auvers-sur-l'Oise. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century a number of Impressionist painters lived, worked and were inspired here including Paul Cézanne, Charles-François Daubigny, Camille Pissarro, Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot and of course, Vincent van Gogh. Van Gogh painted some of his most famous works here and spent the last days of his life in this town. He is buried in the local graveyard.

**Day 12 Thursday: Auvers sur l'Oise – Bougival 41km**

Today we will ride through the banlieux of Paris - a green pathway will lead us to our next stop in Bougival. Along the way we will pas St Germain en Laye, the birthplace of the famous composer, Debussy. We will get a glimpse of Paris – including the Eiffel Tower - from a terrace near the chateaux de St Germain en Laye (the national museum of archeology).

**Day 13 Friday: Bougival – Versailles – Paris 38km**

On our final trail before we reach the centre of Paris we visit Versailles – an uphill ride to one of the most splendid palaces in the world. Once inhabited by French kings, it is now a museum and we have time to go inside Versailles or to explore the magnificent gardens. We then descend to the river and through Paris to our mooring at the Place de la Bastille.

**Day 14 Saturday: Paris**

Free day to relax or explore and enjoy the wonderful city of Paris\*

**Day 15 Sunday: Paris**

Tour ends after breakfast.

\*\* The program is also offered in reverse from Paris to Bruges and is subject to changes due to local canal or river conditions or unforeseen circumstances. The freeday location may change depending on locks & traffic.

\* If you want to guarantee time to explore Paris we suggest you arrange additional hotel accommodation.

Other Bike & Barge cruises are available in France, Germany, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Greece, Turkey & in Vietnam. River and canal hotel barge cruises are available throughout Europe – ask for details

**Contact Outdoor Travel direct for more details and reservations**

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