

## FRANCE – THE LOIRE VALLEY

8-days / 7-nights of easy to moderate cycling – includes return transfers by bus from central Paris



Join us as we explore the Loire Valley in the very heart of France, combining an easy-to-moderate guided or self-guided cycling route. This cruise offers all-meals and ensuite cabin accommodation onboard our homely hotel barge plus the opportunity to sample the wines and local cuisine that makes this region so famous.

Located between the towns of Nevers and Montargis we have found a beautiful area in the Loire Valley that is ideally suited to cycling holidays. This route of approximately 100-kilometers offers a great variety of typically French countryside, history and culture. We cycle along mostly quiet roads following a gently rolling landscape to visit the many chateaux and small villages that make a visit to this part of France a unique experience.

Bike & Barge cruises combines two popular ways of exploring Europe (cycling & river cruising), they allow partners of different abilities and interests to holiday together (trips are just as interesting for leisure cyclist OR enthusiasts), you unpack once & come 'home' each night to a wonderful meal and a comfortable cabin with your own bathroom.

Well-maintained multi-gear bicycles with panniers are provided – comfortable, easy to ride and ideal for this route – and a fascinating and varied guided cycling program with free time to explore each day's destination.

**Loire Valley Bike & Barge:** AU\$1395 per person (twin share). Single cabin not available

**Departs:** Every Saturday 28th April to 22nd September 2012

**Starts & Ends:** Paris - Gare du Nord

**Cost includes:** Small, simple twin share cabins with bunk beds and compact ensuite bathrooms, full board (which includes breakfast + packed lunch each day + 3-course dinner each night), daily easy to moderate cycling with an English-speaking guide including a visit to typical French Chateau, wine tasting, route information, bike hire and cycle bag plus return transfers from Paris / Gare du Nord railway station to the barge.

**Not included in tour:** Airfares to France or transport other than indicated, excursions, entrance fees (that are not shown in the itinerary), drinks, bike insurance (@ €17.50 per person, paid locally). We recommend you bring or buy a bike helmet for this trip.

The program in the Loire Valley is offered in reverse on alternate weeks - starting in Rogny & ending in Cours-les-Barres - and may be subject to changes due to any unforeseen circumstances. Transfers to/from Paris are still included. Distances shown are approximate and may change if the cruise schedule so demands.

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

## Suggested itinerary:

**Day 1: Saturday:** In the afternoon we leave from Gare du Nord in central Paris by coach to Cours-les-Barres, to board the barge. On arrival you will meet our tour leader and the crew and settle into your cabin. Dinner tonight is served on-board.

**Day 2: Sunday:** ± 50km cycling - moderate terrain. A day to explore - cycle to Apremont and visit the 12th Century chateau and its fabulous gardens. Continue to the town of Nevers, and then back to the barge.

**Day 3: Monday:** ± 55km cycling – with some hills. The barge will cruise to Beffes, we cycle to La Charité-sur-Loire, an ancient Roman town. Crossing the 16th Century stone bridge to the centre, there are splendid views over the town and its Notre Dame church. We enter the region of the Pouilly Fumé wines and in Ménétréol, situated amidst the Sancerre vineyards, we have the opportunity to taste these spectacular wines.

**Day 4: Tuesday:** ± 50km cycling with some hills. After breakfast we visit Sancerre and take a picturesque cycling route across Sancerre's vineyards. We pass several wine villages with impressive, attractive scenery. Today we stop in Beaulieu for the night.

**Day 5: Wednesday:** ± 40km cycling across moderate terrain. Cycle past the historic locks of Châtillon-sur-Loire and over an aqueduct to St Brisson. After St. Brisson, and its charming castle, we head back to the barge through the forest 'Fôret de St. Brisson'. Later, we cross the River Loire over a magnificent aqueduct and stop for the night in Briare.

**Day 6: Thursday:** ± 45km cycling - moderate terrain. In the morning there is time to explore Briare before cycling to the chateau 'Pont Chevron' situated picturesquely on a small lake. We continue past lakes to a lovely 16<sup>th</sup> Century chateau near Bléneau and our trip today ends in the village Rogny-les-Sept-Écluses, known for its seven-historical locks.

**Day 7: Friday:** ± 50km of cycling - moderate terrain. Our barge will stay in Rogny today and we cycle a circular route to the market in Châtillon-Coligny, and on to the chateau in La Bussière, before returning to the barge, via Escrignelles.

**Day 8: Saturday:** In the morning we return by coach to Paris.



Please note: We offer this as a guided Bike & Boat cycling cruise however, you can decide each day if you want to join the guided bike ride or independently.

Bike & Barge cycling cruises are available on many of the canals & rivers of Europe including the Seine & Burgundy or Provence in France & on the 2-week route between Paris & Bruges through the Somme WW1 battlefield & memorial sites in northern France. We also offer several routes in Holland, Belgium & Germany along the Saar, Moselle & Rhine Rivers or in Italy from Venice.

Outdoor Travel offers Bike & Boat cruises to many areas of Europe including the Dalmatian coast of Croatia, the islands of Greece & Turkey and the coast of Italy. We also have similar tours in Vietnam.

**Contact the experienced staff at Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:**

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