



OUTLINES OUTDOOR TRAVEL NEWS

June 2022

Looking forward to travel – EUROPE, AFRICA, THE KIMBERLEY COAST & GREAT BARRIER REEF

If you are seeing our e-newsletter for the first time, welcome, and if you are a regular reader, welcome back. If you are interested in past copies they are stored on our website: <https://bit.ly/1NR5eqK>. To change your address, add the name of a friend or to stop receiving this material please contact us.

After a challenging 2 years for Outdoor Travel we embrace with growing optimism the recovery in Australia and the desire to travel is firmly in all our minds. Most international destinations are now open with little if any restrictions. Read about our experiences in Europe earlier this year. If you want to stay closer to home for your next few active holidays, we are delighted to offer our favourite trips in Australia and New Zealand.

Check out the holidays for the 2022 / 2023 seasons here:

Australia <https://bit.ly/3lnEF2U> New Zealand <https://bit.ly/3vEbq0e>



TRAVELLING IN EUROPE – POST COVID

Martyn and Lucie, owners of Outdoor Travel, were eager to get back to their regular visits to Europe. Seeking out the new and rediscovering the old, here are the highlights their recent visit to eight countries with nine international flights, nine hours travelling by train, several walks and over 600km of cycling:

Preparation is the key to travel in 2022 as each country has an ever-changing array of updated and vague online information about Covid. An Australian International Vaccination Certificate is the first step and printed copies and a digital version on your phone was vital at Sydney Airport and in crossing some borders. Initially we had similar forms or Passenger Location forms for the UK, France (which also required a sworn statement to say we were Covid free), the Netherlands and a separate one for the European Union. We also had pre-booked Covid tests to enter the Netherlands and to return to Australia (neither of which was needed).

Martyn left an almost empty Sydney Concourse and arrived at a crowded and chaotic Paris CDG Airport with easily 1000 people ahead of him at passport control at 7.00am. The police did the usual passport stamp but did not appear interested in a sworn statement, a Covid declaration or any vaccination status. Those early morning crowds were a sign of things to come as I quickly discovered it was 'business as usual' across all the major European centres especially airports and tourism hotspots. The days of isolation, social distancing and mask wearing were gone except in a small number of places.

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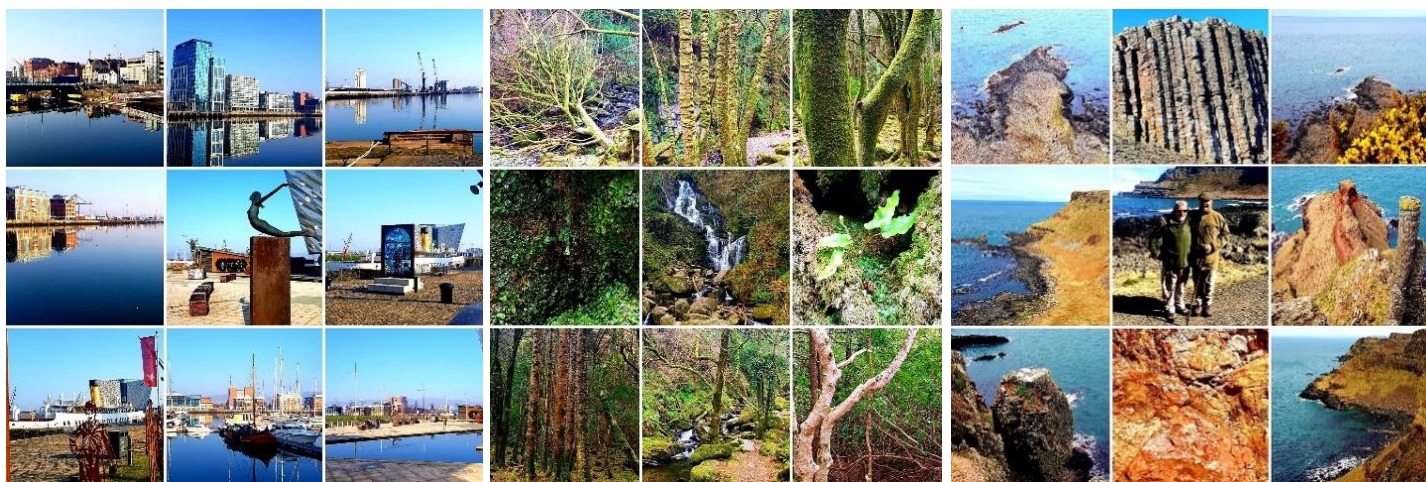
CYCLING THE LOIRE VALLEY IN FRANCE

The first destination for Martyn was the city of Orleans in Western France and four days of cycling along the beautiful Loire Valley. The highlights were of course the chateaux and historical towns, the food and wine. The cycling is mostly flat - with some minor undulations across some limestone escarpments - along well marked cycle trails. Highlights included Chateau de Chambord, Amboise, the final resting place of Leonardo Da Vinci, Fontevraud Abbey, which was founded in 1101 and is where Richard the Lionheart and family are buried, the many caves (used to store wine or grow mushrooms and in the past silkworms), and the many troglodyte villages, vineyards and churches.

Cycling the Loire Valley – see:

http://www.outdoortravel.com.au/content/pdfs/2021/France_Loire_Valley_from_Tours_Self-guided_cycling_2022.pdf

Next Martyn travelled north to Nantes and to a small regional airport with direct flights to London and a link to Belfast.



IRELAND NORTH & SOUTH

Martyn and Lucie spent 10 days in Ireland travelling both north and south. Driving and walking they visited the Ring of Kerry, the Wild Atlantic Way, the city walls and museums of Londonderry, the Giant's Causeway, and a boat on Lough Neagh plus the Titanic Centre in Belfast and Dublin.

Ireland has so much to offer with ancient history dating back to Neolithic times, through the periods of plantation, famine and migration to the more recent 'troubles' and the removal of a border prior to Brexit. The rugged west coast has wild sea cliffs, fishing ports, spectacular peninsulas and islands. It is a haven for sea birds including colonies of puffins and shearwaters. The lush green heartland contains rolling hills, woodlands, huge freshwater lakes and the navigable River Shannon. There are pilgrim trails, walking and cycling routes, mountains, national parks, picturesque villages, myths and legends. Ireland is a must-see destination with so much to offer.

Outdoor Travel's choice for walking holidays for Ireland:

http://www.outdoortravel.com.au/content/pdfs/2021/Ireland_Ring_of_Kerry_self-guided_walk_2022.pdf

BIKE & BARGE HOLLAND - CYCLING THROUGH THE TULIP FIELDS

Their next destination was the Netherlands. Holland in springtime is a must for those who dream of cycling through fields of brilliantly coloured flowers. The tulips are in full bloom and the scent of thousands of hyacinths fills the air. The best way to see these wonderful colours is on a weeklong Bike & Barge cycling cruise and they joined *Sailing Home* to cruise from Amsterdam to Delft, Gouda, the Hague, Rotterdam and Haarlem.

The journey goes through the sand dunes of the North Sea coast, along many canals, through the rural heartlands where the migrating storks, geese and white swans had arrived, past the national parliament, through the streets of Rotterdam (one of the world's largest sea ports), and to museums and art galleries with works by famous painters, the Old Masters, including Rembrandt, Rubens and Van Dyck.

Good food, great company and a full itinerary of guided cycling made it a very enjoyable week with lots to photograph.



Book early for cycling through the tulips in Spring 2023 – see:

http://www.outdoortravel.com.au/content/pdfs/2022/Holland_Springtime_Tulip_Bike_Barge_2023.pdf

Train travel across Europe is convenient and relatively fast. Train reservations and seat reservations are always vital if travelling First Class especially in fast trains. A pre-paid Eurail Pass is idea with great savings if you plan several long rail journeys.

An early start saw Martyn and Lucie on a nine-hour journey from Amsterdam to Passau in Germany with a simple change of trains in Frankfurt to connect with our Bike & Boat to cycling cruise along the River Danube. Unfortunately, a difficult passenger without a ticket, saw the Police board the train to remove him delaying them just enough to miss their connection. Fortunately, they had time up their sleeve and with the help of the conductor they redirected the journey arriving in Passau and the boat harbour just minutes before departure.

BTW they found travelling anywhere without a phone is almost impossible.

BIKE & BOAT ALONG THE RIVER DANUBE

Vastly different from *Sailing Home*, *Prinzessin Katharina* can accommodate 140 passengers in 71 comfortable cabins. The cabins are a good size with two single beds (one of which was folded away during the day), large opening windows and a well-equipped bathroom with a shower. There is adequate wardrobe space and room under the beds for two suitcases. Cabins were cleaned and beds made each day.

Designed for cyclists there is plenty of space on the top deck to store the hybrid and e-bikes (which are included in the tour cost). There is a spacious bar and lounge and a large dining room. The sun-deck has plenty of space for relaxing or to watch the river as you cruise to Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and numerous other small towns and villages in four countries – Germany, Austria, Slovakia and Hungary - along the Danube. They sell good quality bike helmets onboard for those who didn't bring their own.

This was a self-guided itinerary with easy-to-follow maps and a briefing each day on the proposed four-to-five-hour cycling route. Free days are possible for those who want a break or in bad weather. The English-speaking guide also acted as sweep, following the cyclists and helping with difficult junctions, recommending coffee stops or where to take one of the many ferry crossings. The trip is for both English and German speaking customers.

The river is the guide of course as you ride and glide past seamless borders through central Europe. In the cities there were options for guided sightseeing, again by bike, and options for other sightseeing or visits to shows or wine-tasting as the schedule allowed.

The Danube is a big river, hence the larger boats which cruise during the day when you are cycling or at night when you are sleeping to give you access to the best cycling routes and the classical capital cities of Vienna, Bratislava and Budapest.

A full buffet breakfast is served each day and a three-course dinner (with choices including vegetarian) with English speaking waiter service. Drinks are extra, on a room tab basis. For lunch a buffet selection is available at breakfast with bags, fruit, chocolate bars, cheese and bottled water.

It is a fun and very relaxing holiday with plenty of free time, cruising time and space to explore. Despite the numbers onboard the cyclists chose their own start time and pace so there was no chance of a large group blocking up the trails. The cycling was flat of course along the river and with a choice of distance each day to accommodate leisurely cyclists or those who want more distance. Optional uphill sections into the many small valleys took you to castles, vineyards and orchard with places of historical interest easily reached.

To explore the Danube – see:

http://www.outdoortravel.com.au/content/pdfs/2021/Danube_Austria_Germany_Hungary_Slovakia_B-B_rr_rev_2022.pdf



PRAGUE & THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Prague, capital of the Czech Republic, was their next port of call. They looked at the train from Passau but found because of the distance and train schedules it was cheaper to take a private transfer from the boat to the wonderful, family run Hotel Lippard right on the central square. What a view from their bedroom window day and night.



Look carefully as you walk along the river and you may see beaver and coypu (introduced into Europe from South America for their fur) living wild near Charles Bridge right in the centre of the city!

Prague is central to some great walking and cycling destination, including a Bike & Barge cycling cruise along the Upper Moldova River through Bohemia. It is of course a destination in itself, all-be-it a crowded one. Again, a place to book early, including concert tickets and restaurants but there are many, many to choose from. Our

favourites are the goulash at *Restaurace Mincovna* just off the quieter side of the main square or the aptly named *Meat Beer* near the main railway station.

WALKING IN ENGLAND

Their final destination for this trip was the UK, with walking along the Cotswolds Way near Chipping Camden and the South Downs Way near Lewes. Brilliant to see the spring colours in Warwickshire with the canola fields full of yellow flowers and a blue-sky background near the National Trust's Charlcote Park. No trip to England would be complete without a visit to see the newly re-opened Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon. This year's production of *Henry VI* and *War of the Roses* did not disappoint.

Walk the South Downs Way – see:

http://www.outdoortravel.com.au/content/pdfs/2021/England_South_Downs_one-hotel_guided_walk_2022.pdf

Walk the Cotswolds Way – see:

http://www.outdoortravel.com.au/content/pdfs/2021/England_Cotswolds_one-hotel_guided_walk_2022.pdf



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In summary, according to Martyn, post Covid travel in Europe is open and surprisingly busy. Masks were required on flights to and within Europe, at airports, onboard the Danube boat, on some buses and taxis and in restaurants and in shops and cafes in Germany but on the whole people are moving freely, with caution but with little restrictions. During the weeks they were there, many of the reporting or registration / declaration requirements – including those for Australia – were removed.

Travel operators are getting their preparations and staffing levels ready for their first season in two years. One operator went from 120 staff to just 12 during Covid and with full tours in April and May they will demand our patience as they get back up to speed.

The Holland Bike & Barge tulip tours were mostly full in 2022 with local experienced staff. The Danube ships likewise were fully booked for some periods as customers activate postponed plans from two years ago. The staff onboard were mostly new to cruising and came from across Europe, even as far away as Thailand. All were eager to chat and to improve their English skills.

As in Australia the locals are travelling in Europe and ‘honey-pot’ destinations such as Prague, Amsterdam, Vienna, Paris, and London are experiencing record visitor numbers and staff shortages. Heathrow Airport alone has reported over 15,000 staff vacancies currently. Prices are high, especially for central city accommodation and queues and timed visits are becoming the norm so don’t plan to just turn-up with nothing booked. Fuel prices across Europe are set to rise by over 35% in coming months (which added over Euro 250,000 extra to one boats fuel bill for this year) which will likely increase prices.

Should I go now is a question we are often asked. The answer is yes, there are no real impediments post Covid but we suggest wait until the end of the Europe season, September / October 2022 or book early for 2023 especially if you want a Bike & Barge trip of to walk on some of the more popular walks such as England Coast to Coast, the West Highland Way, the Camino de Santiago or any walk in the Alps. Places on centre-based walks such as the Lake District, Cotswolds, Tuscany or Southern France and the Mediterranean islands are selling quickly and many dates this year are already full.

Cabins are still available in Australia for spectacular Kimberley cruises – see:

<http://www.outdoortravel.com.au/content/pdfs/2022/Australia - Wild Kimberley Coast Small Ship Cruising 2023.pdf>

As for New Zealand, the DOC self-guided hut walks on the Milford Track sold out completely online for next season in just 3 seconds. Places are still available for guided walks but look at alternative destinations such as Abel Tasman, Queen Charlotte, or Akaroa.

Outdoor Travel is scaling up too as travel re-opens and we are advertising for new staff in our Bright office. Our website is still a work in progress so please be patient and if there is updated information, dates or prices you need do send us an email and we will get back to you as promptly as we can.

FALLING IN LOVE WITH SLOW TRAVEL IN FRANCE

CRUISE ON THE CANAL DU MIDI ABOARD ANJODI BY JUDY COHEN

This was our first international trip since the start of the pandemic, so my husband and I were a little nervous about dipping our toes into hotel barge cruising in France. However, from the moment we met Captain Laurent in Narbonne for our drive to Marseillan, where we were warmly welcomed with champagne and canapes by Chef Mickail and Hostess Zita, we knew our next 6 nights of pampering aboard the 4-cabin barge Anjodi with European Waterways would check all the boxes.

We were gently immersed into slow travel in one of the most romantic parts of the world as our luxury barge meandered gracefully along the tree-lined 17th century Canal du Midi. I had been to France many times over the years, but there was something different while traveling this “slow” way. I felt virtually no urgency to see the usual famous landmarks or to be programmed. This time, we came to France with no expectations. Seeing the rural landscape from the windows and deck of the Anjodi I was immediately grateful to be able to slow down on a tiny barge with a handful of experienced “travelers” and a passionate crew in a region of France I had not visited previously. While an itinerary was planned, Captain Laurent, who has been sailing for over 15 years with European Waterways, fine-tuned and altered our daily plans from the moment we boarded and I embraced this more relaxed free-flowing barge adventure.



Our cabin, called “Thym”, was just perfect with a comfy double bed and 3 portholes that opened. The shower and bathroom also had a porthole, and was bright and clean with fluffy bathrobes and towels. We packed light so everything found a place in the closet, drawers and hooks in the cabin.

The Captain and Chef seamlessly varied our routine for meal times, adjusting our time in the small villages we visited, while cruising through locks and tunnels and under arched bridges along the Canal du Midi. The raising and lowering of the roof top bimini throughout the day to adjust to the sun and the number of low bridges and tunnels became rhythmic and calming. All of our COVID and travel stress evaporated as we made ourselves comfortable on the top deck with the sun warming our faces.

Chef Mickail, masterfully created a moving feast of French and Mediterranean delicacies from the moment we arrived until the time we begrudgingly had to disembark. I consider a full breakfast an essential start my day and the breakfast, served buffet style from 7-9am in the traditional, French style saloon did not disappoint. I had ample time to relax and enjoy my fresh brewed coffee or cappuccino before digging into the fresh baguette, croissants and breads, French pastries, an assortment of cheeses and sliced meats, along with yogurt, fresh fruit, cereals and fresh squeezed orange juice. Eggs, any style were available by just letting Zita know.

At lunch and dinner each course was accompanied by Chef Mickail’s personal stories about the recipes and details about the ingredients. Red and white wines were selected to pair with every dish and our hostess introduced the wine pairings while the Chef was busy preparing our food in the small galley. Each day the menu was posted on a small chalkboard in the saloon creating anticipation. This was fine French dining at its best for an entire week! Each of the four courses at lunch and dinner was served graciously and paced just right so we could savour every bite. One of the highlights was going shopping with our Chef to the art nouveau covered food market in Narbonne to help select fresh oysters, shrimps, mussels and other delights for lunch when we returned to our barge.

Just when we thought life couldn’t get much better, we saw Zita setting the large wood table on the top deck for dining al fresco and watching the vineyards, gardens and other barges and houseboats pass by. All 7 of us ate our meals and enjoyed cocktails together throughout the cruise moving between the top deck and the saloon. We cajoled each other with stories about our previous and planned travel, our love of fine wine and gourmet food and how grateful we all were to be able to travel again after so long. We agreed that a small barge cruise was a great choice to avoid the crowds and be outdoors as much as possible.



Lest I leave you thinking that all we did on the Anjodi for 6 days was eat delicious food and consume fine French wines, there were many other highlights on our barge cruise. Some other highlights included:

Walking and Cycling along the Canal du Midi. When we were in the mood to walk or cycle along the picturesque, gently rolling tow paths alongside the Plane tree-lined Canal du Midi, we just let the captain know and we could hop on and off as often as we wanted. We felt like locals being greeted by smiles from the others on the tow path.

*We enjoyed a Languedoc wine tour and tasting at the 145-hectare Chateau Pech-Celeyran, owned by the Saint-Exupéry family for over five generations. Antoine de Saint Exupery was a French pilot, poet and author. His adventures as an aviator inspired much of his writing including the most notable 1943 publication of *The Little Prince*, a delightful book that my children enjoyed years ago.*

We thoroughly enjoyed wandering the cobblestone streets and narrow alleyways in the perfectly preserved and protected tiny villages of Capestang, Pezenas and Minerve. It's as if time stood still!



Cruising through the historical canal tunnel in Malpas

As we approached the legendary Malpas tunnel, built in 1679, we learned about the extreme engineering challenges of digging through brittle sandstone. Gliding through the tunnel, seated on the top deck, we were less than a metre from the arched sandstone etched tunnel walls.



We cruised through a total of 24 locks along the canal. Negotiating the Fonserrannes Locks (constructed between 1612-1681), a flight of staircase locks near Beziers was a truly staggering experience.



Bicycles, helmets and maps were available for guests to explore the rural areas surrounding the canal and along the tow paths as well. For those wishing to cycle for longer periods of time, a Bike Plus plan was available and detailed maps and directions were provided on the length of rides and the meeting points along the canal to re-join the cruise.

We met new friends, immersed in French history, learned about one of the oldest canals in the world, enjoyed delicious French dishes and wine, and soaked in the beauty that surrounded us as we cruised slowly and comfortably on the classic Barge Anjodi. Thank you to Laurent, Mickail and Zita, and everyone at European Waterways for memories we will cherish forever, and a most needed post-COVID, “slow” welcome back to international travel.

Judi Cohen is a Travel Expert and Writer from Toronto, Canada. In October 2021, Judi and her husband Lawrence embarked on their first luxury hotel barge cruise aboard Anjodi along France’s Canal du Midi.

Read her blog on TravelingJudi.Com
Images © Judi Cohen

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AUSTRALIAN SMALL SHIP EXPEDITION HOLIDAYS

WESTERN AUSTRALIA’S KIMBERLEY COAST

Western Australia’s largely untouched Kimberley coastline with more than 2600 islands, cascading waterfalls, reefs and crystal-clear water, is a must-see destination. It is one that deserves viewing from a unique perspective and the most relaxing way to do so is from a luxury yacht. Explore the unspoilt nature, ancient rock art and pristine white beaches while perfecting the art of sunset drinks. Sit back and enjoy as the amazing landscapes slip past from the comfort of your deck chair, get up close in one of our Zodiacs or take a guided hike ashore. Your adventure starts and ends in Broome, which is well worth a few extra nights before or after your holiday. Ask for details of pre-tour accommodation and flights to complete your experience.

'*Island Escape*' is a brand new, beautifully appointed small ship with a stunning interior. Newly launched in 2021 and equipped to travel to inaccessible areas, she offers the highest level of passenger comfort with 17 spacious ensuite suites with ocean views, a large dining room/saloon lounge, a library, and generous outdoor living spaces.

The small ship carries two landing craft, two large tenders, sea kayaks, a five-seat helicopter, fishing and snorkeling equipment and for those looking for something less strenuous, lazing in a deckchair is always an option. During each journey, our 14 person crew is on hand to share their knowledge of the ocean and local landscapes. For those interested in fishing, several levels are available during the cruises to suit everyone from the novice to the more experienced angler.

Cruises are fully inclusive, offering onboard accommodation in air-conditioned cabins with ensuite bathrooms; daily cabin cleaning; all onboard chef prepared meals; full bar onboard including wine, beer, spirits, bottled water; expedition leaders, scheduled guided small boat excursions and sport fishing trips, use of kayaks, paddleboards, snorkel & fishing equipment; unlimited WiFi; all taxes and port charges.

In the galley, our chefs work with the freshest local ingredients and delicacies to create memorable meals that reflect the day's adventures.



Departs: Wyndham to Broome: 15th May, 9th June, 4th July, 19th August, 2023

Broome to Wyndham: 28th May, 22nd June, 7th August, 1st September 2023

Costs from: \$16,195 per person (twin share) in a main deck Ocean Suite on a 12 night cruise



The ship accommodates a maximum of 32 passengers in 17 well appointed, comfortable suites.

Ocean Suites:	8 x Main Deck, King/Twin beds (17sqm)
Ocean Single Suites:	2 x Singles (14sqm)
Horizon Suites:	6 x Upper Deck with balcony, King/Twin beds (19sqm)
Owners Suite:	1 x Upper Deck with balcony, King bed (26sqm)

These suites will sell out quickly, so contact us to secure your place on one of these unique adventure cruises. Our experienced staff can also book the flights and other travel required to get you there. Let us take care of your entire itinerary, for a seamless travel experience.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

For those that don't know, our office is located in North East Victoria, in the beautiful little township of Bright. Autumn is settling into the valley and the brilliant colours for which our town is well renowned increase by the day. Cycling is very popular in our valley and we are out on our bikes as often as we can. Why not share in the beautiful, clear, crisp cycling days and all the great food and wine of our local region on one of our cycling tours.

Guided Rutherglen - Bright: <https://bit.ly/3cGM49u> **Self-Guided** Beechworth - Bright: <https://bit.ly/2NqHWSm>



We want to take this opportunity to thank all our remarkable clients for your support and understanding through the COVID-19 pandemic, it really means a lot to all of us at Outdoor Travel. Please note we are limited to the number

of staff and hours we spend in the office. We are still here and we are still working, please send us an email if you want to get in touch or call us and leave a message if you cannot get through.

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