



Bike & Barge in Europe

2009

Paris to Bruges

Bike & Barge or Barge only cruises



Departs: 15 days – 17th – 31st October 2009
From: Paris - Bruges
Cost: AU\$2825 per person twin share, (single cabin supplement AU\$1415)
Includes: Breakfast, packed lunch, dinner, bed linen, bike rental, and tour guide.
Itinerary: Conflans – Compiègne – St. Quentin – Cambrai – Oudenaarde – Ghent – Bruges.
Highlights: Paris – Royal palace in Compiègne – basilica of St. Quentin – tunnel of Riqueval – Belfort in Ghent - round trip of the canals of Bruges.

Included: Breakfast, packed lunch, dinner, bed linen and towels, bike rental and tour guide. The price does not include: entrance fees of museums etc; transfer to and from the barge, drinks on board, travel insurance and personal expenses

Bike & Barge cruises combines two popular ways of exploring Europe (cycling & river cruising), it allows partners of different abilities & interests to holiday together (trips are just as interesting for non-cycling partners, 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 bikes are provided (you can bring their own if you prefer). The cycling is fascinating and varied with free time at each day's destination.

The scenic beauty of France & Flemish history

In October our hotel barge returns from France to Belgium - sailing back from Paris to Bruges in 15 days. For the cyclists there are bikes available on board, but remember it is also possible to book this trip as 'cruise only'. We start our tour in Paris, the famous capital of France, not far from the Notre Dame. We follow the Seine downstream passing the Louvre and Eiffel tower into Conflans. From here we cruise through the valley of the Oise to Compiègne. From the Middle Ages on, this part of France was the centre of the powerful French kingdom. A visit to the palace of the French kings is included in our program.

Later we follow the wonderful old St. Quentin canal to the historical city of St. Quentin, where the gothic basilica and the town hall are worth a visit. We cruise through the tunnel of Riqueval and cross the border into Belgium where we visit Doornik, once an important stopping place for pilgrims, and Oudenaarde which has a beautiful town hall. We also visit Ghent, with its many ancient streets and buildings. Here too you can admire the beautiful triptych by the famous Dutch painter Jan van Eyck. The city of Bruges is possibly the most beautiful of the historical Flemish cities, famous for its many museums and hand-made Bruges lace.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Suggested itinerary:

Day 1 (Sat):

Paris

- 16.00 h Meet at Port d'Arsenal in central Paris, next to the Place de la Bastille for a welcome drink and to meet fellow passengers and crew.
- 18.30 h Dinner followed by a guided city walk - Montmartre and the Sacré-Coeur.

Day 2 (Sun):

Paris – Conflans

Cruising time: 6.5 hours

- 9.00 h. We cruise or cycle through the centre of Paris, past the Louvre, Musée d'Orsay and Eiffel tower. We follow the Seine through industrial suburbs Gennevilliers, Bologne-Billancourt and Ile Sequin, home of the Renault car factories. Finally we arrive at Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, where the Oise and the Seine merge. Since the 19th century Conflans was an important centre of shipping in Northern France – see its history at the museum Municipal de la Batellerie.
- 18.30 h Dinner

Day 3 (Mon):

Conflans – Creil

Cruising time: 7.5 hours

- 8.00 h Breakfast
- 9.00 h From Conflans we follow the Oise to Auvers-sur Oise, where Vincent van Gogh spent the last days of his life (this area was visited by many impressionist painters). We pass the abbey of Royaumont and Chantilly with its famous castle.
- Today's destination is Creil, a country town, which in the 19th century was famous for its fine pottery – much of which can be seen in the museum Gallée Juillet.
- 18.30 h Dinner

Day 4 (Tue):

Creil – Compiègne

Cruising time: 5 hours

- 8.00 h Breakfast
- 9.00 h We pass Pont-St-Maxence – where there was a bridge over the Oise. Pont-St-Maxence became the place to stay for kings and merchants on their way to Flanders. We pass the abbey of Moncel founded in 1309 by King Philips de Schone. We stay the night in Compiègne, a beautiful town that owes its architectural wealth to its proximity to Paris and the enormous woods in which the French kings loved to hunt. The Chateau de Compiègne with its magnificent gardens are spectacular, as is the town hall (1498 – 1530), the national horse stud farm and the Tour Jeanne d'Arc.
- 18.30 h Dinner

Day 5 (Wed):

Compiègne – Noyon

Cruising time: 6 hours

- 8.00 h Breakfast
- 9.00 h Leaving the river Oise we continue by way of the canal system connecting France and Belgium. We spend the night in Noyon, the town where the coronation of King Charlemagne took place. Later Noyon became an important Episcopal town and the cathedral (dating from the 12th century) is worth visiting.
- 18.30 h Dinner

Day 6 (Thu):

Noyon – St Quentin

Cruising time: 8 hours

- 8.00 h Breakfast
- Wee cruise on the canal of St.-Quentin past Chauny and Tergnier. Our destination today is St. Quentin a city founded in the 2nd century on a junction of two important Roman roads. The lively provincial capital of the Aisne flourished as a destination for pilgrims to the grave of St.-Quentin. The gothic basilica here was built between 1230 and the 15th century and has a unique double transept and windows from the 13th and 14th century. The city hall dates back to 1500 and is in the flamboyant gothic style with unique Flemish characteristics.
- 18.30 h Dinner

Day 7 (Fri): St. Quentin

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Free day today in St.-Quentin. You can explore the city further or go shopping. You can also take a train to Amiens or Ypres to visit the WW1 memorial sites (see: <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~dccfarr/>)



Or visit Laon, once the capital of the French empire with a 12th century cathedral.

Day 8 (Sat): St. Quentin - Cambrai
Cruising time: 7 hours

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h The Canal de St.-Quentin was commissioned in Napoleon's time to carry coal. There are many tunnels the longest being the tunnel of Riqueval, which is 5670 meters long. Today, like in former years, ships are still pulled through the tunnel by an electrically driven towboat (which takes about 2-hours). Above the tunnel there is the watershed between rivers Escaut (Schelde) and Somme.

Cambrai was once a Roman provincial capital and an important destination for pilgrims. Worth seeing are the impressive restored buildings of the city fortress, built under Charles V and the old city gate which dates from the late 12th century.

18.30 h Dinner

Day 9 (Sun): Cambrai – Pont Malin
Cruising time: 6 hours

8.00 h Breakfast.

9.00 h We continue along the canal de St. Quentin, the route is peaceful now, a far cry from the days when coal from the mines needed to be transported to the north. In the afternoon we continue along the Canal du Grand Gabarit to Pont Malin, where we spend the night.

18.30 h Dinner

Day 10 (Mon): Pont Malin – Doornik
Cruising time: 8 hours

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Following the canal du Grand Gabarit at Montagne we cross the French frontier and then at Bleharies we cross into Belgium. We sail through the so-called 'white land' to the charming fortress town of Antoing. Our destination is Doornik (in French: Tournai), one of the oldest cities of Belgium. Here we are in Wallonia, where towns and villages have both a French and a Flemish name.

Since the beginning of the 17th century Doornik was ruled by the French. Here, tapestry weaving gained in importance, while the cloth weaving industry declined and in the various museums excellent examples of both industries can be seen. In 1940 the entire city centre was destroyed after a German air raid. However, the town has been renovated splendidly especially the cathedral the Notre Dame (12th and 13th century) and the Belfort which was built at about 1200.

Day 11 (Tue): Doornik (Tournai) – Oudenaarde

Cruising time: 5.5 hours

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h We cruise downstream on the River Schelde, crossing the language barrier into the Flemish region. From here onwards Flemish is the spoken language. Our destination today is Oudenaarde a place that because of its border location was involved in many wars. Oudenaarde has always had someone on lookout and we can see the statue of the most famous watchman, Hanske de Krijger on the city hall. Built in the first half of the 16th century this city hall was built of sandstone in a Brabantine late Gothic style and it is one of the most beautiful in Flanders. Oudenaarde is also known as the town of the tapestry weavers

18.30 h Dinner

Day 12 (Wed): Oudenaarde – Ghent

Cruising time: 7 hours

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h We continue on the Schelde towards Ghent, a lively university town with a rich history. The town, founded by the Romans, is at the place where the rivers Leie and Schelde merged. This favourable location brought on quite some wealth peaking in the late 13th and early 14th century when the cloth weaving industry was a source of great riches. In the city itself many patrician residences have been preserved. Visits should include the Lakenhalle (1425) where the cloth traders gathered and St. Baafs cathedral where you can see several masterpieces of mediaeval art including “The worship of the Lamb of God” by Jan van Eyck.

18.30 h Dinner

Day 13 (Thu): Ghent – Bruges

Cruising time: 6 hours

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Continuing through the pleasant countryside of Western Flanders we arrive at our final destination, a city also called the Venice of the North. Bruges is perhaps the most beautiful of all Flemish cities. Its old city centre dates from the Middle Ages and is almost completely intact.

18.30 h Dinner

Day 14 (Fri): Bruges

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Free day to explore Bruges.

18.30 h Dinner

Day 15 (Sat): Bruges

8.00 h Tour ends after breakfast

NB: We offer this tour as a Bike& Barge or as Barge only tour. You can decide each day if you want to join the bike ride or not. Daily distances can be adjusted according to ability. The tour requires a minimum number of passengers to operate. In case there are less than 10 passengers on any departure, we may have to cancel the trip and we will refund you payments in full.

Outdoor Travel offers Bike & Barge or Bike & Boat cruises to many areas of Europe including the Loire Valley & Burgundy in France, several routes in Holland, Germany – along the Saar, Moselle & Rhine, the Dalmatian coast of Croatia, the islands of Greece & Turkey.

Contact Outdoor Travel direct for more details, travel brochures and reservations

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