

FRANCE: PARIS & THE SEINE TO THE LOIRE VALLEY OR RETURN

8-days / 7-nights **PREMIUM** cycling cruise between Paris and Montargis



Departs: From **Paris to Montargis** on 7th – 14th July 2012
 From **Montargis to Paris** 14th – 21st July, 2012

Cost: AU\$1845 per person twin share, (single cabin supplement AU\$780)

Highlights: Vaux-le-Vicomte, the Chateau of Fontainebleau, mediaeval cities of Ferrières, the artist village at Barbizon, the gardens & forests of Ile-De-France & the rocks formations at Nemours

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.

Enjoy the splendour of rural France within easy reach or and with a night in central Paris

This region of Ile-de-France, once famed for its royal hunting grounds, grand country homes and palaces is an ideal location for an easy and relaxed cycling holiday. There is much to see and the terrain is cycle friendly with an average of 40 – 45km of riding each day. The tour starts in Montargis and from there we follow the Seine valley downstream towards Paris. The first couple of days we follow the canals Du Centre, a section of the waterway with a rich shipping history. We cruise through Montargis, with its many charming canals to Moret-sur-Loing a mediaeval fortified town, strategically situated on the banks of the Loing. Here the impressionist painter Sisley found inspiration for many of his works.

We continue along the Seine valley to an area rich in royal history and visit the castles of Vaux-le-Vicomte and Fontainebleau. At Vaux-le-Vicomte the impressive royal gardens are hugely popular, offering a traditional French style and perfect symmetry.

We cruise the woods of Fontainebleau, heading for the artists village of Barbizon. Our destination is central Paris where the barge will be moored overnight at Port d' Arsenal, not far from the Notre Dame and all the major attractions of the city, transport links, fine restaurants, cafes, shopping, museums and galleries.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Suggested itinerary – may be offered in reverse & day to day schedule at the discretion of barge captain:

Day 1 (Sat): Arrive Montargis

Plan to arrive in Montargis (population @ 15,000 and the biggest town of the Loiret after Orléans) by 4.00pm for a welcome drink and to meet fellow passengers and crew. Get fitted with your bicycle and relax before dinner at 6.30pm. After dinner perhaps a city walk of Montargis. The former royal residence here was destroyed by fire in the 16th Century but the canals still give the town a unique charm. There is also a museum, named after the famous French painter Louis Girodet, where many of his paintings are on display if you do arrive early.

Day 2 (Sun): Montargis Cycling distance: @ 40km

From Montargis we bike along the l'Ouanne by bike to Château - Renard, where we can visit the ruins of a castle from the 10th century. We will also visit Apiculture's Living Museum. There you can see beekeepers and their bees at work, and sample their delicious honey.

Day 3 (Mon): Montargis – Neronville Cycling distance: @ 35km (sailing time 5-hours)

Today our route passes through the magnificent forests of Montargis, northeast of the town. Our next stop is the mediaeval town of Ferrieres with its old and preserved town centre (down one of its narrow streets you will find a splendid monastery). We travel west to the archeological site of Sceaux-du Gatinais and on to the old Gallic stronghold of Château-Landon, a fortified town situated on a large rock outcrop.

The Abbey of Saint-Severin here dates from the 13th century. We stop overnight in Neronville.

Day 4 (Tue): Neronville – Nemours Cycling distance: @ 40km (sailing time 5-hours)

We are travelling today through a rural area that has been cultivated since before the Roman era and we plan to visit an orchard and berry farm where they produce lovely jams. We will discover the rocks of Nemours on our way and we meet the barge again in Nemours. In Nemours there is a castle or the prehistoric museum of the Ile-de-France region to explore.

Day 5 (Wed): Nemours - Moret-sur-Loing Cycling distance: @ 45km (sailing time 5-hours)

After breakfast we cycle through woodland with rugged rock formations often on unsealed forest tracks. We follow the picturesque valleys of the Orvanne and Lunain with old farmhouses and castle ruins on the southern boundary of the forests of Fontainebleau. We are heading in the direction of Moret-sur-Loing, a charming mediaeval fortified town, strategically situated on the banks of the Loing, where the painter Sisley found inspiration for his beautiful impressionist paintings. As time allows we can visit the house where he was born.



Day 6 (Thu): Moret-sur-Loing – Melun Cycling distance: 35km (sailing time 5-hours)

Cycling through the manicured forests of Fontainebleau is a wonderful and inspiring journey and we will visit the city of Fontainebleau itself with its spectacular chateau. The chateau was much in favored by the French kings because of the extensive hunting available in the surrounding forests.

In the castle itself among other things of interest, there is a museum dedicated to Napoleon. The town of Fontainebleau is also a pleasant place to explore, with time for some souvenir shopping.

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We continue our ride to the artistic village of Barbizon, where, since the first half of the 19th Century, many famous painters have found inspiration and formed the landscape artist's 'school of Barbizon'. We can visit the local museum/gallery here.

Our final destination before Paris is Melun, a town which is known as 'le domaine des reines blanches', because in former years it used to be the popular as a place of residence of the widows of the French kings.

Day 7 (Fri): Melun – Paris Cycling distance: 30km (sailing time 8-hours)

We cycle to the River Seine by bicycle, rejoining the barge for the leisurely cruise into Paris avoiding the heavy traffic. The overnight mooring place of the barge is the Port d'Arseal, not far from the Notre Dame and very central. After dinner there is an optional city walk visiting Montmartre and the Sacré-Coeur.

Day 8 (Sat): Paris

Tour ends after breakfast



Please note we offer this tour as a Bike & Barge or as Barge only tour (for those not interested in cycling each day) and you can decide each day if you want to join the bike ride or not. There are no activities scheduled for non-cyclists during the day but you are free to use the bicycles before and after the cruise and to join in with evening activities.

Outdoor Travel offers Bike & Barge or Bike & Boat cruises in many areas of Europe including the Loire Valley & Burgundy, Provence, on a 2-week route between Paris & Bruges through the Somme WW1 battlefields & memorial sites in France (many significant in Australian history), several routes in Holland, Germany – along the River Saar, Moselle & Rhine, the Dalmatian coast of Croatia, the islands of Greece & Turkey.

Contact Outdoor Travel or see our website for more details, travel brochures and reservations

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