

BELGIUM HOLLAND FRANCE - WEST FLANDERS

8-days / 7-nights Easy level **STANDARD PLUS** cycling cruises from Bruges to Menin Gate & Dunkirk



For 2020 we have a limited number of cabins on a unique hotel barge carrying up to just 14 passengers on a cycling cruise from the beautiful city of Bruges in Belgium to discover the fascinating flat countryside of West Flanders. The recently refurbished barge offers a cosy atmosphere and a choice of comfortable cabins (all with ensuite shower/toilet). Two PREMIUM cabins, three twin cabins and two with bunks (ideal for singles).

We explore the areas historic and cultural centres, sampling beer and local produce. Each day you can join a guided cycling tour, ride independently or stay onboard to enjoy the cruise. In the evenings our guide may offer a city walk or other activities. Well-maintained multi-geared bicycles with panniers are provided – comfortable, easy to ride and ideal for this route. A limited number of **e-bikes are available** for hire (at extra cost).

Bike & Barge cycling cruises combine cycling and river/canal cruising, allowing partners of different abilities and interests to holiday together, unpack once and return 'home' each night to a wonderful meal and a comfortable cabin. Flat cycling with easy distances gives you free time to explore each day's destination avoiding the traffic where possible, taking small country roads, towpaths, trails and the occasional busier road in cities and major towns where there are some cobblestones.

Departs: Bruges – Ypres – Nieuwpoort - Bruges on 4th, 11th, 18th, 25th July, 2020

Costs: **\$2250** per person twin share Single cabin supplement from **\$570** (only two per departure).
(or \$1920 per person in a twin bunk cabin)

Two Premium cabins available in 2020 with a supplement from **\$390** per person twin share.

Grade: Easy cycling (no hills) - daily distances @ 45km

Includes: Breakfast, dinner on board most nights, picnic lunches, cycling tour guide and bicycle hire

Highlights: Bruges, Ypres & Menin Gate for the 'Last Post', Dunkirk and WW1 and WW2 memorials, coastal dunes, historical cities, Belgian beer tasting, nature reserves and flat, easy cycling.



Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations



Suggested itinerary:

Saturday: Bruges – Oudenburg

Meet the barge moored in the UNESCO listed city of Bruges known as the “Venice of the North”. After a briefing there is a short bike ride of 25km along the oldest canal in Belgium connecting Bruges and Gent with the North Sea. We overnight in the beautiful town Oudenburg with its old market square and a Roman Archaeological Museum with artefacts dating back to 69AD.

Sunday: Oudenburg – Nieuwpoort – Diksmuide

After breakfast we ride along the canal from Plassendale to Nieuwpoort where the river Yser River flows into the North Sea. From Nieuwpoort we take the rail trail Diksmuide (Dixmude) deviating slightly to follow the meandering river Yser. In Diksmuide we can see the WW1 trenches and the Yser Tower and museum commemorating the battles between the Belgian army and German invaders. From the roof terrace, nearly 80-metres above the ‘*Flanders Fields*’, there is a view over the entire area from Nieuwpoort by the coast to Ypres and Ploegsteert.

Monday: Diksmuide – Ypres

We continue our ride along the Yser and the canal that connected the Belgian front to the English front near Ypres. We pass many WW1 battlefields and memorial sites in and around Ypres (which, if time allows, may include Zuydcoote in France, about 10km from Dunkirk, with its Commonwealth cemetery). In Ypres we can visit the historical centre and ‘*Grote Markt*’ and the ‘*In Flanders Fields*’ Museum before attending the sounding of the Last Post ceremony at Menin-gate. The great memorial arch records the names of 55,000 soldiers including 6,000 Australians who died in Belgium in WW1.

Tuesday: Ypres – Veurne

Today we visit an area that is the very centre of Belgian beer brewing history. Biking to Poperinge we visit the Lemahieu hop farm and Abbey of Saint Sixtus, where Trappist monks brew the Westvleteren beer (often claimed to be the best beer in the world) for a beer tasting. Afterwards we ride along the Lo Canal and visit the picturesque city of Lo with its Bell Tower and historic market place. At the end of the Lo Canal we arrive in the beautiful medieval town Veurne with time to explore the historical centre.

Wednesday: Veurne – Dunkirk – Nieuwpoort

In the morning we ride through the ‘*De Moeren Nature Reserve*’ to the French harbour at Dunkirk famous for the WW2 evacuation of tens of thousands of British troops escaping the advancing German Army. In the afternoon we follow the coast and beaches via Nieuwpoort where the river Yser flows to the North Sea.

Thursday: Veurne – Nieuwpoort – Oudenburg

We ride along the canal to the famous Ganzenpoot (*Goose Foot*) where 5 different waterways meet. The sluice played a crucial role during WWI when in October 1914 they opened the sluices flooding the IJzer plains halting the advancing German troops. The visitor centre gives an introduction to Westhoek and the Belgian coast in WW1. We ride along the coast and the sand dunes and North Sea beaches between De Panne and Oostende - taking the ferry crossing at the mouth of the River Yser - to Oudenburg.

Friday: Oudenburg – Bruges

Today we make our way through the northern part of the Flemish farmland with its distinctive Belgian Blue cows, flax and barley fields. We cross the border and visit Sluis, a medieval town in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, the most Southwestern part of the Netherlands. In Bruges a farewell dinner onboard and walk through the centre.

Saturday

Tour ends after breakfast in Bruges.



Outdoor Travel offer Bike & Barge cruises in many regions of France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Romania, in Austria along the Danube, to the islands of Croatia, Greece and Turkey or Vietnam. Hotel Barge cruises along rivers and canal are available in Europe (bicycles are available for passenger use) and inn-to-inn guided or self-guided cycling tours are also available in the UK & Europe, China, Japan, New Zealand & South Africa.

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

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