

Cycling Europe

BIKE & BARGE 2020 - ACROSS FLANDERS

BRUGES - BRUSSELS or V.V.

COMFORT BARGE: MS MECKLENBURG

8 DAYS/7 NIGHTS – Guided or Self Guided Cycling

The Bruges to Brussels bike and barge tour is an absolute classic that takes you through an enchanting river landscape bookended by these two iconic Belgian cities. On this tour you get to explore the most beautiful of Belgium cities- Brussels, Mechelen, Ghent and Bruges. Along the way you will cycle through small traditional Belgian villages, will visit a number of famous local landmarks and will have the opportunity to immerse yourself in Belgium's well-deserved reputation for superb food and drink.



You spend a night in Bruges -a fairytale medieval town of cobbled streets, soaring towers, picturesque squares and whitewashed alms houses. Asking citizens of Ghent what they think of their city is a pointless exercise; you'll find only unanimous love- and with good reason. Ghent is intimate yet vibrant. It has enough medieval frivolity to create a spectacle but retains a gritty industrial edge that keeps things 'real'. Tourists remain surprisingly thin on the ground, yet with its fabulous canal side architecture, wealth of quirky bars and some of Belgium's most fascinating museums, this is a city you really won't

want to miss. Antwerp, the city of Rubens, whose paintings you can admire in the Antwerp cathedral. Belgium's fascinating capital, Brussels – the administrative capital of the EU, Brussels is historic yet hip, bureaucratic yet bizarre, self-confident yet unshowy, and multicultural to its roots. Each day you will cycle old tow paths next to small canals and rivers and via quiet country lanes to ancient villages steeped in history. Enjoy a coffee or one of the village beers in an authentic Belgian pub where the locals approvingly raise their glass, especially when you arrive by bike!

TERRAIN

Easy flat cycling with distances up to 55kms. Weather can adversely affect cycling in spring and autumn months, so it is advisable to always carry a wind proof/shower proof jacket and over trousers.

ITINERARY

The writing in blue italics is covered by boat

Cycling is shown in green

Day 1 (Sat): Embarkation: Bruges



Individual arrival in Bruges. Embarkation and check-in where the crew will welcome you on board is from 3 to 5pm. Before or after boarding take the opportunity to explore this lovely city of art, widely described as the "Venice of the North". You can enjoy the ambience of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed historical centre during a leisurely walk, take in the hustle and bustle of the Grote Markt square (Great Market square), visit one of Bruges many museums or simply enjoy the stunning beauty and culture of this unforgettable city from the comfort of a sidewalk café.

Day 2 (Sun): Roundtrip around Bruges to the

North Sea Coast : **Bruges – Damme – Blankenberge – Bruges (Approx. 55 km)**

Your first day of cycling will take you through Damme, the birthplace of the impudent Middle Ages trickster Till Eulenspiegel, to the seaside resort of Blankenberge. Visit any one of numerous cafés and, if you want to cool down, enjoy a swim in the North Sea. After approx. 2 hours you will cycle back to Bruges and the **MS Mecklenburg**, your floating hotel for the week.

Day 3 (Mon): **Bruges – Moerebrugge** | **Moerebrugge–Oostende–Ghent (Approx. 40 km)**

While you enjoy breakfast the barge will sail to Moerebrugge where you will start your day's cycling. With the historical city of Ghent your destination today you will cycle via Oostende along the Ghent canal through the beautiful Flemish landscape. The town centre of Ghent features lovely illuminated streets that are a must to explore, while the architectural richness in the historical centre of the city has to be seen to be believed (during the Middle Ages Ghent was the 2nd largest European city after Paris). The barge will dock for the night at the Merelbeke lock, a suburb of Ghent and approx. 15 cycling minutes to the city centre.



Day 4 (Tue): Ghent – Dendermonde (Approx. 48 km) | Dendermonde – St. Amands

After breakfast in Ghent you will cycle through a diverse landscape to Dendermonde which is located at the mouth of the Dender River where it flows into the Schelde River. Here you can enjoy some time off your bicycle with a coffee or a cup of tea at the beautiful Flemish Grote Market square. This evening the barge sails to St. Amands, one of the most beautiful and winding parts of the route on the river Schelde.

Day 5 (Wed): St. Amands – Temse – Antwerp (Approx. 42 km)

Your cycle route for the day will take you over the Brussels-Rupel canal and on to an historical brick factory situated between Boom and Niel where bricks have been manufactured since the Middle Ages. After cycling through the countryside to Rupelmonde and later Hemiksem you will finally reach Antwerp, your destination for the night. Antwerp is a harbour city situated on the river Schelde famous for handling up to 80% of the world's rough diamonds. There are many highlights in the city to discover including: the City Hall, one of several majestic buildings constructed during the Renaissance period, the historical City Square Grote Markt, the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe Cathedral and the medieval Steen Castle.



Day 6 (Thu): Antwerp – Lier –Willebroek (Approx. 45 km)

After breakfast you will cycle through the leafy suburbs of Antwerp and past typical Belgian villas that feature beautiful trees, manicured gardens and picturesque facades to Lier. From here you cycle along the small river Nete and on to Willebroek where the **MS Mecklenburg** is waiting for you once again.

Day 7 (Fri): Willebroek – Mechelen – Vilvoorde (Approx. 40 km) | Vilvoorde – Brussels

While the barge sets sail along the Willebroek canal, your final day's cycling will see you pass through the picturesque countryside via Mechelen to Vilvoorde. Mechelen is a remarkable city that boasts more than 300 buildings that are historically listed. Of these 8 are churches – all on less than 3 square kilometres of land! From Vilvoorde you will board the **MS Mecklenburg** for the trip to Brussels where you can walk through the historical city centre, visit the Grote Markt square (Great Market square), arguably Europe's most beautiful medieval square lined with guild houses or marvel at the Gothic town hall.

Day 8 (Sat): Disembarkation: Brussels

Disembarkation after breakfast by 9:30am

ITINERARY: BRUSSELS TO BRUGES

The writing in blue italics is travel by boat - Daily cycle tour is shown in green



Day 1 (Sat): Arrival and embarkation in Brussels

Individual arrival in Brussels. The **MS Mecklenburg** awaits you in Brussels harbour. Embarkation and check-in where the crew will welcome you on board is from 3 to 5pm. Take some time to explore the capital of Belgium; walk through the historical city centre, visit the Grand Place, arguably Europe's most beautiful medieval square lined with guild houses or marvel at the Gothic town hall. The highlight of the palace, many will agree, is the Mirror Room which is adorned from floor to ceiling with mirrors and 11 luminous chandeliers.

Day 2 (Sun): Brussels – Vilvoorde / Vilvoorde - Mechelen - Willebroek (40 km)

During breakfast the barge will sail to Vilvoorde. On your first bike tour you will visit Mechelen;

Over 300 buildings in Mechelen are listed as historical buildings. Continue through green countryside past picturesque villages and large country estates to Willebroek.

Day 3 (Mon): Willebroek – Antwerp (50 km)

Cycle from Willebroek via Lier to Antwerp. This harbour city on the river Schelde is one of the world's major diamond cities and has many highlights: the City Hall is one of several majestic buildings constructed in the Renaissance, the historical City Square Grote Markt, the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwe cathedral and the medieval Steen Castle.

Day 4 (Tue): Antwerp – St Amands / St-Amands – Dendermonde (50 km)

Today's bicycle tour will take you upstream along the river Schelde to Hemiksem and on to Rupelmonde where the river Rupel joins the Schelde. We follow the Rupel for a few kilometres to the village Niel and then on to the Walenhoek nature reserve. Between Niel and Boom you will have the opportunity to visit a historical brick factory where bricks have been manufactured since the Middle Ages. Your destination for the day is the beautiful city of Dendermonde. A must is a short stop for a drink at Dendermonde's beautiful Flemish market square - Grote Markt (Great Market square).

Day 5 (Wed): Dendermonde – Ghent (48 km)

Today you cycle to the beautiful city of Ghent, where the MS Mecklenburg will be moored in the suburb of Merelbeke, which is approx. a 15 minute cycle from the city centre. Explore the pedestrian area in the town centre of Ghent, part by bike and part on foot. Ghent features lovely illuminated streets while the architectural richness in the historical centre of the city has to be seen to be believed (during the Middle Ages the 2nd largest European city after Paris).

Day 6 (Thu): Ghent – Vinderhoute – Bruges (40 km)

Part of today's cycling is along the canal Ghent to Oostende through the beautiful Flemish landscape to Bruges. Widely described as the "Venice of the North", Bruges is Belgium's most perfectly preserved medieval town, attracting more than two million visitors every year who come for the ambience of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed historical centre. Visit one of Bruges many museums or simply take in the stunning beauty and culture of this unforgettable city.

Day 7 (Fri): Tour around Bruges to the North Sea : Bruges – Damme – Blankenberge – Bruges (55 km)

Your final day of cycling takes you to a quiet canal along past poplars and picturesque farm houses. Then, via the small city of Damme, to the North Sea coast. A 12 kilometre long sandy beach, numerous cafés and the dune landscape of "Het Zwin" (a unique nature reserve) provide the perfect place for your lunch break before riding back to Bruges.

Day 8 (Sat): Disembarkation: Bruges

Disembarkation after breakfast by 9:30am

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- For both tours *the writing in blue italics* will be covered by the ship.
- On the arrival day it is possible to put your luggage on board **from 9:30 AM**.
- **The cycling is guided**, or you can choose to cycle individually, as tour description and maps are available on board. On some days you can choose between a short or long cycle.
- During the day the tour leader will cycle with you, and be your guide.
- Should you wish to take a break from cycling on any day, you are welcome to stay on board and relax while cruising to the next harbour.

2020 TOUR COST - EUROS PER PERSON

Twin Cabin	€ 1059
Twin cabin for single use	€1559
Bike Hire (24 Speed) per week	€ 75

E-Bike hire (5 only available)

€ 165

2020 SCHEDULE

Bruges to Brussels

16 May, 27 June, 11 July, 8, 22 August

Brussels to Bruges

6 June, 4, 18 July, 15 August

INCLUDED IN TOUR COST

- 7 night tour in cabin with ensuite
- 7 breakfasts, 6 packed lunches and 7 dinners three course
- Welcome drink and tour briefing on day of arrival
- Bed linen and towels
- Daily cleaning of cabin
- Tour leader with daily briefings of the bike tours, some short city tours, daily guided bike tours.
- Printed instructions and detailed maps for individual bike tours– 1 set per cabin
- GPS tracks
- Daily coffee and tea at breakfast and in the afternoon
- Wi Fi

TOUR PRICE EXCLUDES

- Transfers to/from the docking places in Bruges and Brussels
- Bike rental
- Helmet – not available on board
- Entrance fees and excursions
- Fees for ferries
- Drinks on board
- Coffee and tea on board at times not mentioned in inclusions
- Insurance
- Tips/ (at your discretion)
- Special diet catering – on request

Barge: MECKLENBURG: (11 cabins, Max. 22 passenger)

Comfortable barge, 41 m in length, 5.05m wide, with a family atmosphere. There are 11 air-conditioned cabins, approximately 8 – 9 sq m with two separate beds and an ensuite bathroom with shower and toilet. The windows are fixed and do not open. A partially covered sundeck is a place to relax in or out of the sun. There is a cosy salon/restaurant with big picture windows.





BOOK THROUGH

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