

# Cycling Europe

## FRANCE MEETS BELGIUM

PARIS - BRUGES or v.v. by Bike & Barge

15 DAYS/14 NIGHTS – Guided Cycling 2020



*Two of the most beautiful cities in the world and all the wonder and beauty that lies between. On this remarkable 15 day voyage from Paris to Bruges (or vice versa) you avoid mass tourism and explore northern France and Flanders by barge, pedal power and evening walks. You'll enjoy a wide variety of landscapes and experiences, culture and history ... the parks of Paris, small art-deco towns such as Ham and Ronse, the famous tapestries of Oudenaarde and Ghent, the palaces of Chantilly, Compiègne and Blérancourt, Vincent van Gogh's heritage, castles cathedrals and of course, World War 1 battlefields and memorials in the Somme valley. And let's not forget how well a good Belgium beer goes down at the end of bike ride!*



**Maximum number of guests:** MS Zwaantje- 24

**Grade:** Relaxed. Suitable for anyone in good physical condition and basic cycling skills. Distances up to 50kms per day; short slopes up to 100m



### ITINERARY:

#### Day 1 (Sat): Embarkation in Paris

Embarking takes place from 2pm on board the barge **MS Zwaantje** in central Paris. This evening enjoy a walk to Ile de la Cité and Notre Dame Cathedral. Overnight in Paris.

#### Day 2 (Sun): Paris: City Centre - Bougival

During breakfast we cruise on the River Seine through the centre of Paris. At around 10.30am you have the option of going ashore for an interesting bike ride. You can choose to stay on board and enjoy the view as the barge cruises and moors close to the outer area of the city.

**Cycling: 35 km**

#### Day 3 (Mon): Saint Germain and Laye, Conflans and Auvers sur Oise

After breakfast cycle along quiet towpaths along the River Seine to the higher situated St. Germain where the gardens of Le Nôtre provide a magnificent view over Paris. Next

pedal through the woods to Conflans for a picnic on the pier. After a short stop at the Pontoise Bridge, you cycle further across the picturesque Chemin des Monts to the church of Auvers, famous for Van Gogh's paintings. We will visit his grave during the evening walk. **Cycling 38 km**



#### Day 4 (Tue): Beaumont sur Oise, Royaumont, Chantilly, Creil

After a short stop in Beaumont we will have a picnic at the Royaumont Abbey; one of the best preserved abbeys from the 13th century. During the afternoon we will visit the splendid Chantilly; a luxurious castle with an impressive art collection and horse dressage. After dinner there will be a stroll through the lively provincial town of Creil.

**Cycling: 42 km**



### **Day 5 (Wed): Pont St.Maxence, Pierrefond, Compiègne**

During breakfast the **MS Zwaantje** will take you to Pont Saint Maxence. From there you will cycle through little towns, enjoying a short stop in Verberie and then through the forest to Castle Pierrefonds; the leading restoration project by Viollette Duc. The gardens of the Chateau de Compiègne are definitely worth a visit. In the evening explore the historical centre with its medieval market and many alleyways.

**Cycling: 33 or 48km**

### **Day 6 (Thu): La Clairière, Tracy, Ourschamps, Noyon – Pont l'Eveque**

First up today is l'Armistice de la Clairière -the forest clearing and the carriage where the First World War armistice was signed. Continue through Tracy and the Ourschamps Abbey with its charming ruin, then on through rolling woodlands to Noyon and its imposing cathedral. Cycle back to the canal at Pont L'Eveque where the barge will be waiting for you.

**Cycling: 41km**

### **Day 7 (Fri): Pont l'Eveque – Haudival by barge, Haudival to Péronne**

Cruise along the Canal du Nord which was built to replace the older Canal de St Quentin, constructed by Napoleon in 1801 to transport coal from the mines to the north. Cycle through gently rolling, open countryside to the art deco town of Ham and along the River Somme with its picturesque villages.

**Cycling: 44 or 54 km**

### **Day 8 (Sat): Day in Péronne**

The **MS Zwaantje** will be moored just outside the charming town of Péronne with its' intimate square and church as well as a castle and the fascinating Grande Guerre museum. Dinner tonight is in town at a restaurant of your choice (not included, recommendations available on board).

### **Day 9 (Sun): Péronne – Ytres by barge, Ytres – Moeuvres by bike**

We will continue cycling along the River Somme and then through the sparsely populated, open and rolling landscape to Ruyaulcourt. At the end of WW1 this area was the frontline of the battle around the Somme. The barge will pass through the long (4.3km) tunnel dividing the watershed between the Somme and the Scheldt rivers; the original border between Flanders and France. Mooring is in Moeuvres.

**Cycling: 19 km or 45km**



### **Day 10 (Mon): Cambrai and Arleux**

Today we visit Cambrai, a lively provincial town with splendid historic monuments and a beautiful park to picnic in; then onto the marshlands of Chantraine and rural Arleux.

**Cycling: 35 or 51 km**

### **Day 11 (Tue): Lewarde, Montigny, Marchiennes, Saint Amand les Eaux, Tournai**

A long and lovely day of cycling through former mining towns with beautifully preserved heritage from around 1900, and past the Scarpe river through Marchiennes and St.Amand where there are monumental remains of Baroque abbeys. Just across

the border from Belgium lies Tournai / Doornik – discover its historic centre on this evening's walk.

**Cycling: 57km**

**Day 12 (Wed): Kluisbergen, Ronse, Oudenaarde**

North of Tournai we head across flat farmland punctuated with a few hills to the wooded Kluisberg, known for its cycling trails. The church in Ronse has a beautiful crypt from the 13th century. In Oudenaarde you will find

the splendid town hall with a magnificent collection from the 16th and 17th centuries as well as the Tour of Flanders Centre. After dinner enjoy a Belgian beer in the atmospheric Market place. Oudenaarde is also known as the town of the tapestry weaves and world renowned.

**Cycling: 41 – 47 km**



**Day 13 (Thu): Through Nazareth, Ooidonk, Sint-Martens-Lathem or directly to Ghent**

Cycle directly along the River Scheldt to Ghent to spend an afternoon in this lively university town. Of Roman origin and situated at the merging point of the rivers Scheldt and Leie, Ghent was, a wealthy trade and textile city between the 14th and 16th centuries, evidence of which lies in the cloth hall, cathedral and town hall. In the evenings the town centre is a very atmospheric place to be. There is the option of joining a canal tour to the centre and returning to the ship by taxi (not included), or to visit the old Gravensteen castle.

**Cycling: 41 km**

**Day 14 (Fri): Bellem, Hertsberge, Moerbrugge, Bruges**

During breakfast cruise with the barge to Aalterbrug then onto our bikes and cycle through the pleasant flat countryside of Western Flanders to Bruges, the most picturesque city in Flanders and from the 14th to the 16th centuries, renowned as one of Europe's most important centres of banking and art.

**Cycling: 30 or 40 km**

**Day 15 (Sat): Tour ends in Bruges.**

Disembark up until 9.30am.





# BRUGES - PARIS

## Day 1: (Sat) Embarkation in Bruges (18 km)

Boarding from 2.00pm followed by a short test-ride. Bruges, the Venice of the North and perhaps the most beautiful of all Flemish cities. Its old centre, which dates from the Middle Ages, is almost completely intact. At that time Bruges was a centre of trade and art, which we can still fully enjoy today. Enjoy a guided walk through town after dinner.

## Day 2: (Sun) Bruges – Ghent

Enjoy breakfast as we sail out of Bruges. In Beernem, start biking across the pleasant countryside of Western Flanders to Ghent where we arrive around noon. Ghent is a lively university town with a rich history. The town arose on the spot where in Roman days the rivers Leie and Schelde merged. This favourable location brought considerable wealth to the city with a peak in the late 13th and early 14th century. The cloth industry was a source of great riches. In the city many patrician residences have been preserved. Lakenhalle (1425) is where the cloth traders gathered. The most important church is St. Baafs cathedral, which was constructed in different centuries and in different styles. In the cathedral several masterpieces of medieval painting are to be found. "The worship of the Lamb of God" by Jan van Eyck is the most famous. You might want to take a city tour by boat or visit the old castle Gravensteen.

**Cycling: 37-45km**

## Day 3: (Mon) Ghent - Oudenaarde,

This morning cruise from Ghent on the River Bovenschelde to Oudenaarde.

In former days this little town was situated on the border of the French and German Empires and as a result, it was frequently involved in wars. Since Oudenaarde was right in the firing-line, there was always someone on the look-out. The statue of the most famous watchman, Hanske de Krijger, is on the splendid city hall. In the first half of the 16th century this city hall was built of sandstone in Brabantine late Gothic style and it is one of the most beautiful city halls of Flanders. Oudenaarde is also known as the town of the tapestry weavers. Their tapestry is famous all over the world. Before reaching Oudenaarde we will visit the interesting archaeological site of Ename (an old abbey). From there coming into Oudenaarde we might have to quench our thirst at one of Belgium's famous beer breweries called Liefmans.

**Cycling: 41km**



#### **Day 4: (Tue) Oudenaarde - Doornik (Tournai)**

Before leaving Oudenaarde we visit the beautiful town hall then follow the River Scheldt upstream and cross the linguistic frontier, thus arriving in the Walloon region. From now on people speak French and villages, towns and cities have a French name. Final destination today is Doornik or Tournai, one of the oldest towns of Belgium. Doornik fell under French government early in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Just as in Oudenaarde, after the decline of the textile industry, tapestry became important here. In 1940, the entire town centre was destroyed in a German air raid but renovation of the town has been very successful. The Notre Dame cathedral (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century) is especially worth seeing along with the Belfort, built around 1200.

**Cycling: 41-47km**

#### **Day 5: (Wed) Doornik (Tournai) - Arleux**

During breakfast cruise in the direction of the French Belgium border, through the so called 'white land', where limestone had been quarried since Roman times.

Around the border town village of Bleharies start our bike ride. Cycle through open farm land, little mining towns and visit a museum at Lewarde. Overnight in Arleux.

**Cycling: 47km**

#### **Day 6: (Thu) Arleux-Ruyalcourt**

We leave the large canal during breakfast and veer into the Canal du Nord. This canal was planned in 1903 but wasn't finished until 1966. It was constructed to replace the older and smaller Canal de St Quentin constructed in 1801 by Napoleon to transport coal from the mines to the north. Cycle on to the pilgrim city of Cambrai and see the impressive restored buildings of the city fortress built under King Charles V. On through the marshlands of Chantaine to rural Ruyalcourt for overnight.

**Cycling: 35-51km**

#### **Day 7: (Fri) Ruyalcourt-Péronne**

When the Canal de St Quentin was dug under the government of Napoleon, the height differences meant it was necessary to dig tunnels. The longest one is the tunnel of Tuyalcourt, which is 4350 meters long. Today we go through this tunnel with the Zwaantje. As in former years, ships are still pulled through the tunnel in two hours by an electrically driven towboat. Above the tunnel there is the watershed between rivers Escaut (Schelde) and Somme. From there the barge goes downhill again in the direction of Péronne. Cycle on through the valley of the River Somme through open landscape and the former frontline in the Battle of the Somme in World War 1.

**Cycling: 19-45km**

#### **Day 8: (Sat) Péronne**

Today the Zwaantje stays in Péronne. Visit the fascinating Grande Guerre Museum. This evening, dinner is your own arrangements. You can select one of the French restaurants in Péronne (not included).

#### **Day 9: (Sun) Péronne-Noyon-Pont l'Eveque**

During breakfast cruise to the little village of Epénancourt. Enjoy your day's cycle through gentle open countryside to the art deco town of Ham, along the River Somme and other picturesque villages.

**Cycling: 40-50km**

#### **Day 10: (Mon) Pont l'Eveque – Compiègne**

From Chauny we set course for Compiègne and its magnificent buildings resulting from its proximity to Paris and the great woods where the French kings loved to stay. A visit of the beautiful gardens of the Château are a must. The cycling route goes through the forest of Ourscamp, crosses the River Aisne and in the forest of Compiègne at the other side is the "Clairière de l'Armistice" - which is where the French and German generals signed for the end of WWI. Visit the small but interesting museum there. Then head for Compiègne.

**Cycling: 33-57km**

### Day 11: (Tue) Compiègne – Creil

Today we cycle through the forest south of Compiègne then follow the valley of the Oise downstream towards Creil. The longer tour adds a loop to include the little town of Pierrefonds, where you can see the exterior of the Disney-like Castle. Right before Pont St Maxence we pass by the abbey of Moncel, founded in 1309 by King Philip the Fair. Pont St Maxence owes its name to the fact that very early on there was a bridge across the Oise. It became a place to spend the night for merchants and kings on their way to Flanders. Our final destination today is Creil known for its fine pottery.

**Cycling: 45 - 60km**

### Day 12: (Wed) Creil – Auvers sur Oise

Cycling out of bustling Creil we head for the famous castle of Chantilly, its horse racing circuit and royal stables. After our visit we continue through lush forest to the abbey of Royaumont before crossing and following the River Oise to Auvers sur Oise, where Vincent van Gogh spent the last days of his life and where he and his brother are buried in the cemetery. This region was very popular with many impressionist painters. Dinner and evening walk to the van Gogh cemetery.

**Cycling: 42-57km**

### Day 13: (Thu) Auvers Conflans – Paris (Bougival)

During breakfast we will cruise to Conflans Sainte Honorine, where the Oise and the Seine converge. Conflans has been an important shipping centre in North France since the 19th century. This afternoon cycle to the castle at St.Germain-en-Laye from where you will have a magnificent view out over Paris. Then it's to Bougival to spend the night.

**Cycling: 39km**

### Day 14: (Fri) Paris

Today the barge finally cruises the Seine upstream to Paris. It is not far in a straight line, but the Seine makes the journey interesting with a number of large curves. We cruise past the Eiffel tower, the Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay, the Ile de la Cité and the Nôtre Dame. The mooring place of the Fleur is in the Port d'Arsenal, close to the Place de la Bastille. You can spend the rest of the day exploring the 'city of love'.

### Day 15: (Sat) Paris

Disembark after breakfast by 9.30am.

## 2020 TOUR DATES

Paris to Bruges: 27 June, 26 September

Bruges to Paris: 02 May, 25 July

## 2020 TOUR COST - EUROS PER PERSON

	May – July	September
<b>Twin Cabin</b>	<b>€2499</b>	<b>€2399</b>
<b>Single use of Cabin</b>	<b>€3719</b>	<b>€3569</b>
<b>Bike Hire</b>	<b>€170</b>	
<b>E-Bike hire</b>	<b>€370 (limited number available)</b>	

**Limitation of liability (damage) rental bike €20/2 weeks**

**Limitation of liability (damage) E Bike €50/2 weeks**

## WHATS INCLUDED

- Accommodations for 15 day/14 nights in air conditioned cabin
- 14 x breakfasts, 13 x picnic lunches on bike tours, 13 x three course dinners (1x dinner in Péronne excluded)

**Note:** Vegetarian meals are possible with no charge however gluten free or lactose intolerant are possible at a fee – please advise on reservation

- Bed linen and towels (1 x change of bed linen) and daily cleaning service
- Welcome briefing and complimentary drink
- Tour leader (multilingual) for fully guided cycling tours (18 guests = 2 guides)
- Detailed route notes & maps for individual daily bike tours 1 set per cabin)
- Helmet (please request when booking), pannier bag, water bottle
- Entrance to Clairière de l'Armistice (museum)
- Entrance to Chateau Chantilly
- Entrance to City hall Oudenaarde
- GPS Tracks
- Fees for ferries
- Canal tour through Ghent
- Wi Fi

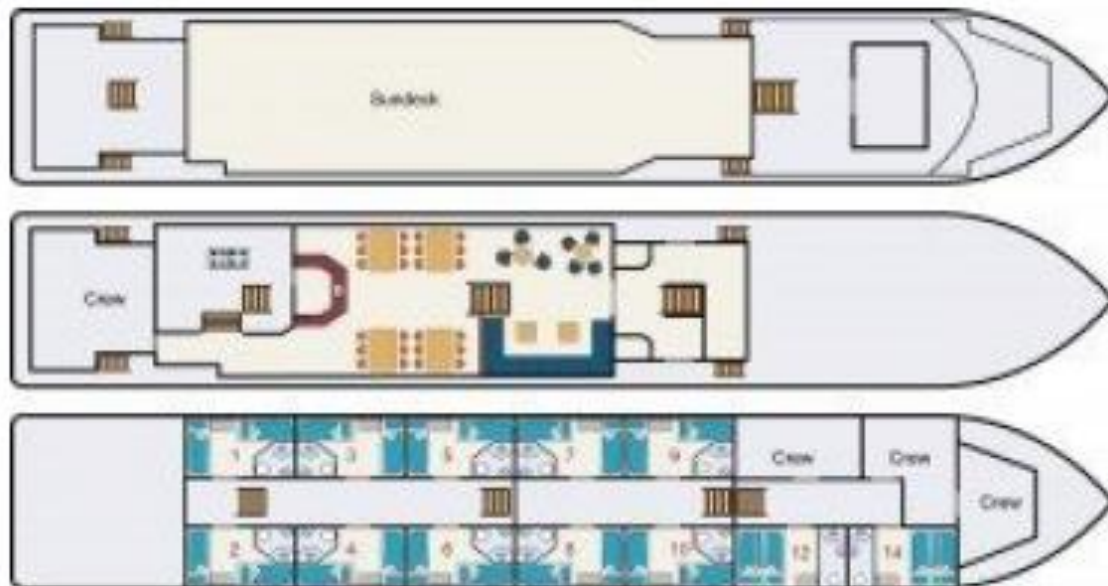
## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Transfers to and from the port in Paris/Bruges
- Dinner in Péronne
- Drinks on board
- Gratuities
- Excursions not mentioned in itinerary
- Ticket public transport in Paris
- Bicycle protection
- Trip insurance

## PREMIUM BARGE: MS ZWANNTJE







***MS Zwaantje (Little Swan) is a fully converted, 40 metre passenger barge under Dutch flag and management that can accommodate 24 passengers. On the lower deck the barge has 12 sleeping cabins: 10 twin cabins with two single beds each and 2 cabins with a double (French) bed.***

***All cabins have a small en-suite bathroom with toilet, shower and wash basin, a fixed window (double cabins have larger windows that open) and individual air conditioning. On the main deck you will find the salon with air conditioning and large panoramic windows, a restaurant area, lounge corner and a small bar. Depending on the quality of the network connection (mobile internet, limited data amount) the salon offers free Wi-Fi. The barge has a very spacious sun deck (90 square metres) with chairs and tables and a beautiful view, where you can relax or join the skipper in the wheel house. Bicycles will be stored in a separate area on the sun deck.***

**BOOK THROUGH:**

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