

We are pleased to present a new barge for 2010

"Maria"



A new concept in barging offering self-catering, skippered charters for up to four guests aboard a stunning, luxury 83' Dutch barge

2010 Information Pack

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Introduction

Until now there has been no package to bridge the gap between hotel-barging and self-drive rental boats.

Imagine....

.....the freedom to choose from France's finest ingredients at the market then cook them on the barbecue over a bottle of local wine bought directly from the wine maker. Or how about strolling into town to sample the freshly prepared local specialties in a little auberge or enjoying a lavish gourmet feast on the terrace of a grand chateau?

.....being able to set your own pace for daily excursions and choose between cycling to a nearby attraction, hiring a driver/guide to go further a field or simply reading a book on your very own shaded aft-deck then going for a leisurely stroll along the canal.

.....having the total tranquility and privacy of your own boat with an experienced, French-speaking Captain to pilot it for you so you can relax and enjoy the beautiful, ever-changing scenery as you float along.

.....having exclusive use of an immaculate, fully equipped and beautifully decorated 1924 Dutch barge – an activity until now, reserved for privileged barge owners.

Well now, you can have it all.....we are delighted to announce self-catering, skippered charters aboard the stunningly pretty, luxuriously fitted Dutch barge "Maria".

So, who should charter this cruise?

Anyone with a passion for France and a sense of adventure.

Anyone with a preference for spontaneity and privacy over structured routine and regimented pampering.

Anyone who has ever taken a trip on a hotel barge and loved it but longed to sample the local restaurants or the simple pleasures of buying the fresh, local ingredients and preparing their own meals.

Anyone who would normally book a gîte but loves the idea of being on a floating gîte – a barge with ever changing scenery and moorings.

Anyone who yearns for the freedom of a rental boat but is nervous of piloting the boat and concerned about the barrier of not speaking French.

Anyone who has considered rental boats but doesn't want to be crammed into a small fibreglass boat with no charm, limited facilities and very little space.

Anyone who would consider buying a barge in France but would like to try before they buy or wants to explore one of most beautiful waterways of France without committing to huge expense.

What makes this barge cruise special?
This barge cruise is ideal for people who . . .

Don't have a hotel-barge budget but want the experience anyway

Actually want to buy and cook some of that incredible seasonal produce found at the market instead of just looking at it

Want to explore on their own rather than in a crowd and would like to sample the local restaurants rather than be tied to set dining arrangements

Love the idea of chartering a barge but do not want to share it with an omnipresent crew

Want to spend more time cycling or walking and less time in a minibus

Have no desire to see the more famous tourist attractions and simply want to explore sublime, rural France at their own pace

The package at a glance

- **SEVEN** nights accommodation aboard Maria on one of France's oldest, most picturesque and tranquil canals. Pick up and drop off at Montargis train station, the regional capital town
- Check-in 4.30pm Monday, depart 9.30am Monday
- Five cruises with overnight halts in picturesque villages or sublime remote moorings
- The services of a highly experienced Barge Captain to pilot the barge on five days (the barge does not move on the afternoon of arrival and Friday is spent moored in either Rogny-les-Sept Ecluses or Chatillon Coligny - villages where there are cafés, restaurants and shops as well as plenty to see and do)
- Complimentary Welcome pack for guests on arrival including:
 - Fresh flowers
 - Fruit bowl
 - Fresh bread
 - A bottle of red, white and sparkling wine already chilled in the fridge
 - Tea, coffee, milk, sugar, butter, jam and bottled water
 - Hand soap, shower gel and shampoo in both bathrooms
 - Washing up liquid, dishwasher tablets, washing detergent, toilet tissue and cleaning materials
- The barge will be professionally cleaned, the beds made and fresh towels provided
- Four lightweight bikes on board for guest use
- Many excursions can be accessed on foot or by bicycle. For those that are further from the canal your Captain can arrange taxis or offer a driving service – none of this needs to be pre-arranged and can be booked locally on arrival (see itinerary).
- Many opportunities to shop for provisions along the cruise route including a wonderful Farmer's market bursting with fresh local produce. Paradise for the keen cook or enthusiastic amateur.
- Guests must pay a Damage Deposit to cover damage to the barge or contents (see T&C's for details) – the deposit to be refunded post cruise

The Barge – “Maria”

MARIA is arguably the most comfortable and well equipped barge in her class and, to our knowledge, the only barge with a two-stateroom layout available for skippered, self catering charters in France.

A “Luxe-Motor” barge (originally so called because of the luxury of an engine and crew quarters!), MARIA was constructed in 1924 in Holland as a small commercial barge specifically to transport a Fair Ground Ride around Holland, Belgium and France.

Remaining in the same family ownership until 1995, the barge doubtless has many tales to tell of her lifetime of travels in “commercial barging” and has since provided a wonderful cruising home for her recent owners.

The transformation to a private cruising barge was completed in 2002 to a very high specification in Belgium on behalf of a retired Sea Captain with long-range, luxurious and comfortable Europe-wide cruising in mind.

MARIA has since been continuously upgraded to the luxury, private cruiser she is today, accommodating a maximum of four guests in two staterooms with private bathrooms, a comfortable salon and a large, open plan galley.

Further luxury is provided by air conditioning in the staterooms and salon, a large open-plan wheelhouse for upper deck dining and a wonderful aft “Cocktail Deck” terrace with a permanent sun canopy overhead.

The barge is totally autonomous with an onboard super-silent electricity generator, enough fresh water for a weeks cruising for four and sufficient fridge/freezer space to store provisions for your cruise. A separate wine fridge for those bottles of white, rose and Champagne completes the vital equipment list!

On deck, Maria has an open aft-deck with built in seating for relaxed cruising and teak furniture for alfresco dining. A separate well-deck at the front of the boat offers a different view altogether whilst cruising.

Four identical lightweight bicycles are kept on board for trips to local attractions or for collecting bread and provisions from local stores.

MARIA in summary

- Passengers: Four - in two staterooms (85 sq ft and 95 sq ft)
- Crew: One – a highly experienced (French speaking) English Captain with ten years experience of Hotel-Barging and boating in France (NB the Captain does not live aboard!).
- Barge Length: 25.3m (or 83ft).
- Barge Width: 4.55m (or 15ft).
- Internal Headroom: In excess of 6ft 6ins throughout. There are only four domestic sized steps between floor levels inside the barge.
- Large, opening "picture" windows throughout with anti-glare glass.
- Staterooms: two, one with Double bed, the second available with a Double or two Single beds. Each stateroom has a private bathroom with WC and shower, wardrobe, opening windows and sky-lights, hair dryers.
- There is plenty of hanging cupboard space on board (although guests should aim to travel light where possible)
- Salon: comfortably furnished for four guests with easy-chairs and sofa (180 sq ft)
- Galley: a full size (100 sq ft), domestic standard galley with Oven, Halogen Hob, Extractor canopy, separate Fridge and Freezer, Dishwasher, Double bowl sink, Electric kettle, Toaster, Coffee percolator and an extensive range of cooking utensils
- Wheelhouse: Pilot station with all engine and power controls together with space for indoor dining. Furniture for four (100 sq ft)
- Aft "Cocktail deck" seating with upholstered cushions, teak dining table and chairs, non-slip wooden deck flooring and fixed sun-canopy (150 sq ft)
- Central heating throughout plus Air Conditioning in both Staterooms and Salon
- Four identical bicycles
- Washer/dryer available for guest use
- All crockery, cookware, glassware, towels and bed-linen included

The barge is equipped with 220v AC power sockets throughout.

Meet your Captain

Phill Spurge (48) has a life-long love of boating and an extensive history with barges in France.

Englishman Phill came to France with his wife Hannah in 2000 to run Hotel-Barges "Meanderer" and later "La Bonne Humeur" which were regarded amongst the most well managed barges in France under their management.

An experienced Pilot and skilled Engineer, Phill is bi-lingual and has an unrivalled knowledge of MARIA's cruise route. He and Hannah have spent many years cruising in the region and now live just a few minutes from the canal.

Phill's previous exploits in barging earned him a reputation for being Captain of the most comfortable, cleanest and best presented barges in France and this reputation will surely continue with the luxuriously appointed and immaculate MARIA.

Your Captain looks forward to sharing his infectious enthusiasm for barging and welcoming you aboard MARIA.

Canal de Briare - Upper Loire Cruise Itinerary

The ancient Canal de Briare, the first in France specifically created to connect two major rivers, provides the perfect route to explore by barge. The charming, typically French towns and villages which grew up alongside the canal each have a character of their own and cry out to be explored and enjoyed at a leisurely pace.

Our cruise itinerary has overnight halts in the most charming spots along the canal where guests can explore on foot or by bike and visit local attractions.

Most halts have restaurant options close by, ranging in style from local auberges to Michelin accredited gastronomic delights.

Shopping for supplies is made easy too since every village has a Boulangerie for the all-important fresh daily bread and croissants, most have a small general store and the larger towns have major supermarkets within easy reach of the canal. There is also at least one opportunity to shop for supplies at the colourful local markets during each cruise.

Transferring to and from the barge at the start and finish of each cruise is also stress-free since a major rail-link to Paris runs parallel to the canal throughout its length (although never close enough to see or hear!) with the main station at Montargis never more than a 45 minute drive away from the barge. For those who wish to drive to the cruise start point, access is easy from the Autoroute network and we offer secure parking nearby or will help you move your car each day so you can keep it close to the barge at all times during the cruise.

Day 1 Monday. Arrival, welcome and check-in.

You will be collected at 4.30pm from the main railway station and transferred to Maria in the town of Chatillon Sur Loire, approximately 45 minutes drive away (or for those not arriving by train, the barge will be available for check-in from 4.30pm to 6.30pm).

Over a glass of the local "Cremant de Loire" your Captain will explain features of the barge and if you wish, arrange to take you to a local supermarket to buy provisions for the first few days of your stay, before leaving you to enjoy your first night aboard.

The charming town of Chatillon Sur Loire stands above the Canal and was an important river crossing point for the Merchants who traded on the Loire River in centuries past.

Day 2 Tuesday. Chatillon Sur Loire to Briare.

Our cruise itinerary begins today on the Canal Lateral a la Loire with a morning cruise to the town of Ouzoeur Sur Trezee. The Canal follows the line of the River Loire (which supplies the water for the canal) as it winds through open meadows and fields.

As we leave the town of Chatillon Sur Loire behind us, we cross the magnificent Pont Canal de Briare which takes us to the opposite bank of the Loire River and on to Briare – the town from whence the Canal de Briare takes its name.

In earlier times, the Merchants bringing wine and produce from the rich farming lands of the Loire Valley would transfer their wares onto boats for delivery via the canal to Paris and beyond. We still see evidence of their trade in the town with many memorials, museums and much of the canal infrastructure still operational.

The line of the canal was altered in the late 1890s to allow non-stop passage across the River Loire through the creation of one of the most celebrated waterways landmarks in the world – the 600metre long Pont Canal de Briare (the longest aqueduct in Europe), built by the engineer Eiffel, more renowned of course for his famous Parisian tower.

Later we commence the climb out of the Loire valley towards to the summit level of the canal. The route passes along the oldest part of the canal taking us to the village of Ouzoeur Sur Trezee.

Day 3 Wednesday. Ouzoeur Sur Trezee to Rogny Les Sept Ecluses.

The cruise continues today to the village of Rogny Les Sept Ecluses, famed for it's seven "stair-case locks", built in the 17th century to allow boats to pass the summit level of the canal. The village offers restaurants, bars, shops and the all important bakery and is well placed as a base for excursions to local attractions or to venture further afield.

The village "Petanque" (or Boules) pitch - scene of many local championship boules matches - is right alongside the canal where the locals can often be seen sipping a cool beer from the quay-side bar whilst disputing (in a mainly good-naturedly way!) the winner of today's match.

Day 4 Thursday. Rogny Les Sept Ecluses to Chatillon Coligny.

As we leave Rogny Les Sept Ecluses, the canal begins the gentle descent towards the Seine valley and follows the natural path of the River Loing which was the original waterway's route to Paris before the canal was commissioned.

Our overnight mooring tonight will be in Chatillon Coligny where you are free to explore the town at your leisure or to walk, cycle or take a trip to any of the nearby excursions.

Day 5 Friday. Chatillon Coligny.

Since Chatillon Coligny is a little over half-way along our cruise route, today the barge remains in the port without cruising to allow a truly relaxed day of rest.

There are many excursion opportunities plus great walking and biking routes or, if you prefer, take time to simply relax and watch the world go by from the comfort of Maria's sundeck.

Day 6 Saturday. Chatillon Coligny to Montcresson.

Our cruise today takes us to an idyllic mooring close to the village of Montcresson as we continue our descent of the Loing valley through open meadows and fields.

At Montbouy, the canal passes the Gallo-Roman Amphitheatre which stands as a monument to the history of the region. The 11th century church here dominates the village of Montbouy and our passage may coincide with the tolling of the church bells – renowned as the loudest and most melodic in the region.

Day 7 Sunday. Montcresson to Montargis.

Our final cruise takes us to the regional capital town of Montargis – the so called "Venice of Gâtinais" because of the network of waterways which dominate the town.

In centuries past, Montargis was the largest fortified town in France, an important trading post on the route from the Loire valley to Paris and the influence the canal has on the town is very clear to see.

Montargis is a bustling city with a busy commercial heart but loses none of its typically French style – the town offers exactly what you should expect of a central France market town. Our mooring today will be close enough to allow easy access to town on foot or by bike.

Day 8. Departure

Check out today is before 9.30am for the return transfer or onward travel. Those travelling by train will be returned to Montargis railway station in time to catch a train to arrive in Paris for around midday.

NOTE: This is a sample itinerary and is subject to change. On alternate weeks, cruises will be in reverse direction (see sample itinerary for reverse direction below).

The route in reverse direction – Montargis to Chatillon sur Loire

Day 1 Monday. Arrival, welcome and check-in.

You will be collected at 4.30pm from the main railway station in Montargis and transferred to Maria, moored in the town nearby. Transfer time is approximately 15 minutes (or for those not arriving by train, the barge will be available for check-in from 4.30pm).

Over a glass of the local “Cremant de Loire” your Captain will explain features of the barge and if you wish, arrange to take you to a local supermarket to buy provisions for the first few days of your stay, before leaving you to enjoy your first night aboard.

Day 2 Tuesday. Montargis to Montcresson.

Our cruise itinerary begins today with a cruise to an idyllic remote mooring close to the village of Montcresson. The Canal here follows the line of the River Loing (which supplies the water for the canal) as it winds through open meadows and fields.

The first cruise reveals just how peaceful and relaxing barge cruising can be as we pass several locks, float through quiet hamlets and generally escape the bustle of everyday life. At canal speed, we may not move too far in an hour, but by the end of this first day, you should feel that you have left the real world a long way behind!

Day 3 Wednesday. Montcresson to Chatillon Coligny.

Today we cruise the longest section of the Canal with no locks before beginning the steeper climb through the deepest locks of the week en-route to Chatillon Coligny.

At Montbouy, the canal passes the Gallo-Roman amphitheatre which stands as a monument to the history of the region. The 11th century church here dominates the village of Montbouy and our passage may coincide with the tolling of the church bells – renowned as the loudest and most melodic in the region.

Our overnight mooring tonight will be in Chatillon Coligny where you are free to explore the town at your leisure or to walk, cycle or visit any of the nearby excursions.

Day 4 Thursday. Chatillon Coligny to Rogny Les Sept Ecluses.

The cruise continues today to the village of Rogny Les Sept Ecluses, famed for its seven “stair-case locks”, built in the 17th century to allow boats to pass the summit level of the canal. The village offers restaurants, bars, shops and the all important bakery and is well placed as a base for excursions to local attractions or to venture further afield.

The village "Petanque" (or Boules) pitch - scene of many local championship boules matches - is right alongside the canal where the locals can often be seen sipping a cool beer from the quay-side bar whilst disputing (in a mainly good-natured way!) the winner of today's match.

Day 5 Friday. Rogny Les Sept Ecluses.

Rogny is the half-way point of our cruise route so today the barge remains in the port without cruising to allow a truly relaxed day of rest.

There are many excursion opportunities plus great walking and biking routes or, if you prefer, take time to simply relax and watch the world go by from the comfort of Maria's sundeck.

Day 6. Rogny to Ouzoeur sur Trezee.

Today's cruise takes us over the highest point of the canal as we cross from the Loing Valley into the valley of the River Loire and begin our descent towards Ouzoeur Sur Trezee. Having quickly risen to the summit level via the flight of locks in Rogny, our descent is more sedate as we pass the six deep locks into the valley of the River Trezee before mooring in the oldest village on the canal.

Here you have time to explore the charming village with its narrow streets dating back to the 16th century, whilst there are also Grand Chateaux to be visited a short distance away or the regional town of Gien (a Loire River bankside town, famed for its fine china) nearby.

Day 7 Sunday. Ouzouer Sur Trezee to Briare and Chatillon Sur Loire.

Our cruise today takes us through the heart of the town from whence the canal takes its name. In earlier times, the Merchants bringing wine and produce from the rich farming lands of the Loire Valley would transfer their wares onto boats for delivery via the canal to Paris and beyond.

We still see evidence of their trade in the town with many memorials, museums and much of the canal infrastructure still operational.

Briare is also home to the region's very own wine label – "Coteaux de Giennois" and several winemakers ply their trade in the town or nearby so today could be the day to discover the regional wines.

The line of the canal was altered in the 1890s to allow non-stop passage across the River Loire through the creation of one of the greatest waterways landmarks in the world – the 600metre long Pont Canal de Briare (the longest aqueduct in Europe), built by the engineer Eiffel, more renowned of course, for his famous Parisian tower.

Leaving Briare we move onto the Canal Lateral à la Loire for the final leg of our cruise to the town of Chatillon Sur Loire on the banks of the River Loire. As we leave the town of Briare behind us, we cross the magnificent Pont Canal de Briare which takes us to the opposite bank of the Loire River for the journey southwards to Chatillon Sur Loire.

The charming town of Chatillon stands above the canal and was an important river crossing point for the commerce which traded on the river in centuries past.

Day 8 Monday. Departure.

Check out today is before 9.30am for the return transfer or onward travel. Those traveling by train will be returned to Montargis railway station in time to catch a train to arrive in Paris for around midday.

Excursions on foot, by bike and optional side trips

Maria's cruise route passes through some of the finest French countryside and villages so there is an ever changing scene to watch from the barge.

However, there is much more to see and do in the region for those who wish take time away from the barge, some of which is immediately nearby the canal whilst other attractions require a bike ride or car journey to visit.

Here is a selection of the visits we recommend whilst cruising aboard Maria.

Visits on foot

The historic regional capital Montargis, know as "The Venice of Gâtinais" with restaurants, cafés, bars, museums, galleries and great shops for souvenirs including the world famous, 17th century Mazet Praline chocolate shop

The pretty villages of Montbouy, Montcresson, Conflans and Ouzouer with their interesting variety of churches, willowy canal scenes, floral displays and charming architecture. Between Montcresson and Montbouy there is also a clearly visible Gallo-Roman Amphitheatre to explore.

Rogny-les-Sept-Ecluses where the town is named after one of the canal's most famous features, the 17th century flight of seven locks (now a national historic monument). There are also antique/bric-a-brac shops, food shops, restaurants and bars here as well a lovely walk to the hill top church with wonderful views over the valley.

Chatillon Coligny dates back to the 15th century and was once all about a vast chateau that dominated the town. Over the centuries most of the chateau has disappeared but it still intriguingly visible in places as you stroll the narrow streets and shop for souvenirs in the old fashioned shops. There are several bars, a museum, a great restaurant and food shops here too.

The Aqueduct at Briare is renowned as one of the greatest waterways engineering achievements in the world and the visitors who flock to see it make this a bustling market town with much to see and do. You can explore the old port where boats used to "lock down" onto the River Loire, visit the museum of mosaics (Briare was the very first place in the world to mass produce mosaics and they are evident all over the town), explore the huge church or people watch in the square and shop for souvenirs in galleries and antique shops.

You will, of course, cross the famous aqueduct on "Maria" as it spans the River Loire offering the most incredible views and a chance to marvel at an amazing feat of engineering created by Eiffel.

At Chatillon Sur Loire, the canal splits where it used to allow boat access onto the River Loire and here the old locks and "Mantelot" (holding basin) used by barges for centuries past is a beautiful walk from our mooring. The town too is a worthwhile visit with its narrow streets, 15th century houses, selection of curious shops, bars and restaurants.

Canal walks are one of the most simple pleasures to be enjoyed, either whilst cruising or once moored. The towpaths are in generally good condition and each turn of the canal provides a new adventure. You'll meet fishermen, lock-keepers (and their children, cats and dogs!) see other boats going through the locks, abundant wildlife and more pretty canal scenes than you can take in as you stroll.

Visits accessible by bicycle close to the cruise route

The entire length of the cruise route has a path which can be cycled by almost anyone – it is largely flat and in great condition for most of its length. Turn off the canal path and onto the quiet roads at any point to explore the many rural villages nearby.

All of the above excursions that you can do on foot can be enhanced by doing them on a bicycle. You can simply see more and fit more in if you go by bicycle.

Keen cyclists can go further afield and discover...

Chateau La Bussiere – Home of the Countess de Chasseval. A sublime private chateau set on a lake with a fascinating collection of fishing memorabilia and a wonderful kitchen garden.

Chateau de St Fargeau – Magnificent 13th century masterpiece remodeled by the Architect Vaux – now more famous for his work at Fontainebleau and Versailles.

Chateau Pont Chevron – Private estate of the Count and Countess Robert de La Rochefourcauld. Modelled on an 18th century chateau and mainly built in the 19th century with origins and some features from the middle ages. Lovely formal gardens to explore.

Wine tasting in Ousson-sur-Loire and Briare are easily accessible by bike and provide a great opportunity to sample the local "Coteaux de Giennois", reds made from Pinot Noir/Gamay and whites made from Sauvignon Blanc. Made from the same grape and grown in the same region, these whites are tipped to become the next "Sancerre" of the Loire Valley.

Town of Gien, famed for its fine China and 12th century stone bridge across the Loire River.

Kayaking on the River Loire at Bonny-sur-Loire. Cycle there and kayak down the peaceful river.

Excursions by taxi, private car or in your own car

Attraction/Destination	Distance from closest point of cruise route	Suggested visit duration including journey time	Approximate cost by Taxi or Private Tour Bus (for whole party) payable locally excluding attraction entry fees.
Palace and town of Fontainebleau	50kms	5 hours	€175
Chateau Vaux le Vicomte	90Kms	5 hours	€225
Town and Cathedral of Orleans	70kms	¾ day	€195
Town and Cathedrals of Auxerre, Burgundy	60kms	¾ day	€195
Chateau St Fargeau	20kms	4 hours	€125
Chateau La Bussiere	10kms	2 hour	€80
Reconstructed Medieval Castle "Guedelon"	35kms	½ day	€125
Gien, Loire river town and Fine China factory visit	15kms	3 hours	€125
Private guided tour of the Chablis wine region, Burgundy with Private wine tastings and pre-arranged visits	90kms	Whole day	€350
Private guided tour of the Sancerre wine region, Loire Valley, with Private wine tastings and pre-arranged visits	40kms	½ day	€225

Sporting activities available nearby

Golf
Swimming
Tennis
Hot air ballooning
Horse riding
Kayaking

2010 Prices and Cruise Dates

Maria is available on a whole-boat, self-catering, skippered charter basis for up to four people, based upon two people sharing twin or double bedded cabins. One cabin is available with twin or double beds, the other is available with a double bed. Both cabins have private en-suite bathrooms with WC and shower. Both cabins and the salon have Air Conditioning. Charters are for 7 nights, Monday 16.30 to the following Monday 09.30.

2010 US\$ Prices		
	Low Season	High Season
Whole boat charter for 2 guests	\$5995	\$6550
Whole boat charter for 3 guests	\$6395	\$6950
Whole boat charters for 4 guests	\$6795	\$7350

2010 Low season cruise departure dates (Monday)	April 19th, 26th,	May 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th	July 19th, 26th	August 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd 30th	October 18th
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2010 High season cruise departure dates (Monday)	May 31st	June 7th, 14th, 21st, 28th	July 5th, 12th	September 6th, 13th, 20th 27th	October 4th, 11th
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Frequently Asked Questions

How and where do we shop for provisions?

There are small grocery shops or in some cases large supermarkets along the route as well as butchers, green grocers, bakers, patisseries, traiteurs (who sell ready-prepared local dishes) and at least one opportunity to shop for provisions at a spectacular local farmer's market.

What equipment is available in the kitchen?

The kitchen is well equipped with: Kettle, coffee machine, fridge, freezer, dishwasher, oven, hob, a selection of crockery, cutlery, glassware, cooking utensils, pans and baking trays. There is also a barbecue on board.

What is included in our welcome pack?

Fruit bowl

Fresh flowers

Fresh bread

A bottle of red, white and sparkling wine

Tea, coffee, milk, sugar, butter, jam, bottled water

Hand soap, shower gel and shampoo in both bathrooms

Washing up liquid, dishwasher tablets, washing detergent, toilet tissue and cleaning materials

Can I buy wines locally?

Yes! Just about anywhere – from wine producers themselves, in supermarkets, in specialist shops and from the markets. We even have a stock of excellent regional wines (the whites are already chilled in a wine fridge) available for you to purchase onboard the barge.

Are there restaurants available at every mooring?

There are restaurants at most of the mooring locations and if they are not within walking distance they are a short cycle or taxi ride away

What do we need to bring with us?

Very little other than personal clothes and possessions – whatever you would normally take to a hotel or villa.

Is the barge equipped with hairdryers?

Yes, both cabins have hairdryers

How do we transfer to/from Paris (or elsewhere) at the start/finish of our cruise?

There are frequent trains from Paris Gare de Lyon station (in central Paris) direct to Montargis. The barge's own vehicle will collect you from the station in Montargis and take you to the barge at the start of your cruise and will drop you at the station at the end of your cruise. The train journey takes about 85 minutes so you would need to leave Paris no later than 15.00 on Monday to get to the barge and we will arrange for you to catch a train which will return you to Paris no later than midday on the return journey.

If we do not want to be picked up at Montargis Train Station but make our own way to the barge, what time can we check in and by what time must we check out?

If not arriving by train or if staying locally, you can check in anytime between 4.30pm and 6.30pm on your arrival day. We ask you to vacate the barge by 9.30am on the day of departure.

If we bring a car, will we be able to keep it with us or park it somewhere safely?

Should you wish to keep your car with you during the cruise, your Captain can assist you to move your car before or after cruising each day so that it is always parked where you are moored. This service is provided free of charge.

Should you wish to leave your car parked for the duration of your cruise, we offer free, secure, open-air parking nearby. We will transfer you to and from the parking area free of charge at the start and finish of your cruise.

What are the nearest airports to Montargis*?

Paris Charles de Gaulle: 136kms

Paris Orly: 104kms

Paris Beauvais: 197kms

Tours: 188kms

**Montargis is at the northern end of our route. Chatillon sur Loire (the southerly most point) is a further 45 mins/45kms away from Paris.*

Can private transfers to and from airports/Paris be arranged?

Yes, we can arrange for a reliable local taxi company to collect you or return you to Paris or the airports. An example of their approximate price is Montargis to Charles de Gaulle Airport at €425 (one way for four passengers not including gratuity).

Do we have to drive the boat, operate the locks or handle the ropes?

No, your Captain can easily handle the barge alone but you may be asked to take a rope from him occasionally. All of the locks on the canal are automatic or manned so there is no need to operate the locks but your offer of help will never be declined if you would like to aid the lock keeper and your Captain.

Do we have to clean the barge before we leave?

No, the barge will be professionally cleaned after your departure but we ask that you dispose of any rubbish/recycling, wash up and load the dishwasher before you check out.

What guest linen is included?

Bed linen, towels and tea-towels are provided.

Who pays for fuel, moorings, electricity and water?

Fuel, mooring fees, electricity and water are all included in your charter price.

What visits can we do on foot, by bicycle and by car?

Please consult the itinerary for a list of suggested options

Is the barge equipped with bicycles for all passengers?

The barge is equipped with four adult bikes that are suitable for passengers ranging from approximately 5' to 6'5". For hygiene reasons we do not supply cycle helmets but you are welcome to bring your own.

Are life jackets provided?

Yes, four adult life jackets are provided.

Will I be able to recharge my camera, phone or other electronic equipment?

Yes, the barge has a 220 v system throughout. All sockets are for French two pin plugs so you may need a converter or transformer to convert the socket and/or power supply to suit your appliances.

Is the barge heated and does it have air-conditioning?

The barge has central heating throughout. Both cabins and the salon are air-conditioned.

Can I bring my dog on the barge?

No, we regret we do not allow pets on board the barge.

Can I smoke on the barge?

Smoking is not permitted anywhere onboard the barge but there are plenty of opportunities to disembark whilst cruising and you can easily step off the barge to smoke once moored.

How long do we cruise for each day?

Approximately four hours per day.

Is the cruise suitable for children?

As "Maria" has open deck areas she is not really suitable for smaller children. We recommend that the barge is most suited for children aged 14 years upwards or babies who are not yet mobile.

Is the cruise suitable for passengers with limited mobility?

The barge does NOT have wheelchair access but there are only four steps between levels on board. The walkway is generally not too steep and has a handrail along one side so provided guests can walk reasonably comfortably, there should be no problem.

How do I pay the security deposit and what is it for?

A security deposit of €1000, GBP1000 or US\$1500 for the charter is required in case of damage to the vessel or its contents, caused by Guests. This deposit can be paid in the currencies stated here either by cheque (to be received by The Company a minimum of three weeks prior to The Charter start date) or by cash on arrival. However, the sum reserved by this clause, shall not limit the Client's liability to the The Company. The Company will account to the Client for the security deposit and make a refund, less any charges necessary, within two weeks after the end of the rental period for deposits paid by cheque or on the morning of departure for deposits paid by cash. In the event that the cost of any damage cannot be ascertained on the morning of departure, the whole sum of the deposit will be retained until such cost can be identified, deducted from the deposit and the balance returned to The Client within two weeks by cheque. Any damage to the vessel or its contents (but not including guests personal belongings) caused by the Captain or any other employee of the Company during the cruise will be at the liability of the Company.

Can we play golf, go hot-air ballooning or participate in other sports during our cruise?

Golf, hot-air ballooning, swimming, tennis and kayaking can be arranged very near the cruise route at additional cost.

Can I book just one cabin on the barge?

The barge can only be chartered on a whole boat basis.

Is there storage space on board?

Each cabin has plenty of wardrobe space and there is additional cupboard space elsewhere on the barge. However, you are advised to travel as lightly as possible – especially if transferring by train, since there are rarely porters available at French train stations and you will have to handle your luggage yourselves.

How many people can the barge accommodate?

The barge can accommodate four adults. Children under the age of one year can come for free but over the age of one are considered to be full paying guests. Life jackets, cots and high chairs for babies can be hired at additional cost.

Standard Terms and Conditions of Business

The following conditions comprise the standard terms of business of Vacance Fluvial (UK Partnership) and all work undertaken shall be on these terms to the exclusion of any others unless specifically varied in writing and signed for and on behalf of the Client and the Company. In engaging the Company, these conditions are deemed to have been accepted by the Client on their own behalf and on behalf of every Guest in their party.

DEFINITION

"the Client"	<i>the individual, business or corporate body for whom the Charter is provided</i>
"the Company"	<i>Vacance Fluvial (UK Partnership) including where applicable its partners, employees, suppliers or sub-contractors acting on behalf of the company</i>
"the Charter"	<i>the cruise offered by the company as set out in the Brochure</i>
"the Guest"	<i>any passenger carried by the Company under the terms of the Charter</i>
"the Brochure"	<i>the published schedule and information</i>
"the Price"	<i>the amount paid by the Client for the Charter</i>

1. THE PRICE

1.1 *The Price for the Charter includes:*

7 nights accommodation

Private transfers between the nominated pick up/drop off point and the Charter start/finish points.

Exclusive use of the vessel "Maria" for the duration of your charter.

A Pilot to drive the vessel for five half days of cruising.

Use of bicycles

Guest linens, welcome pack, fuel, mooring fees, electricity and water

1.2 *The Price excludes:*

Flights or transportation to and from the pick-up/drop off point

Special excursions and activities not included in the Brochure

Food and wines

Optional gratuities for your Captain

Personal holiday insurance

2. BOOKINGS

2.1 Options: *The Company will "hold" a Charter date on option for up to 14 days pending payment of the deposit. If the deposit remains unpaid beyond 14 days the option may be released without notice. Options may be renewed at the discretion of the Company.*

2.2 Deposits: *A deposit of 30% of the Price must be paid to confirm a Charter.*

2.3 Balances: *The balance of the Price is due to be paid in full at least 90 days prior to the date of the Charter, unless the booking is made less than 90 days prior to the Charter date, in which case the deposit and balance in full, fall due upon confirmation of the Charter.*

2.4 Cancellations: *The Client may cancel a Charter subject to the following conditions:*

Charter deposits are not refundable under any circumstances.

The balance of the Price will only be refunded in the event that the Charter is resold.

The Company reserves the right to cancel any Charter for which the balance of the Price has not been paid 90 days prior to the Charter date. Under such conditions, no refund will be payable.

Notice of cancellation must be given in writing by either party.

No refunds will be payable by the Company where the Client or Guests miss a portion of the Charter for whatever reason.

To protect yourself in the event that you must cancel or postpone your trip, we recommend that you take out comprehensive medical cancellation insurance.

3. SECURITY DEPOSIT

A security deposit of €1000 or GBP1000 or US\$1500 for the charter is required in case of damage to the vessel or its contents, caused by the Client or Guests. This deposit can be paid in the currencies stated here either by cheque (to be received by The Company a minimum of three weeks prior to The Charter start date) or by cash on arrival of The Client at the vessel. However, the sum reserved by this clause, shall not limit the Client's liability to the The Company. The Company will account to the Client for the security deposit and refund, less any charges necessary, within two weeks after the end of the rental period for deposits paid by cheque or on the morning of departure for deposits paid by cash. In the event that the cost of any damage caused by The Client cannot be ascertained on the morning of departure, the whole sum of the deposit will be retained until such cost can be identified, deducted from the deposit and the balance returned to The Client within two weeks by cheque.

4. CHARTER ROUTES.

Charter routes are subject to change without notice. Some waterways may be subject to occasional closures due to drought, storms, floods, canal or lock repairs or other unforeseen circumstances that may result in conditions unsafe for navigation.

If navigation is suspended, (1) the Company reserve the right to alter the cruise route, (2) Guests will continue to be accommodated on board if possible (3) cruising will be continued as soon as possible.

5. CRUISE DIRECTION

The published route is run in reverse on alternate weeks. Mooring locations may vary.

6. LIMIT OF LIABILITY

The Company may purchase services from third party suppliers that are not subject to its control. The Company cannot be held liable for any damage, loss or injury that may occur due to (1) any act or omission of any supplier, (2) defects in or failures of any aircraft, vessel, automotive vehicle or other means of transportation that is not under its control or (3) lost or delayed luggage.

7. SAFETY ABOARD THE VESSEL

7.1 The client will ensure that any members of his/her party comply with the safety guidelines as described by The Captain of the vessel and any reasonable directions and orders which he may give for the duration of the cruise.

7.2 All passengers must behave in a manner that will not cause offence to fellow passengers or cause a safety hazard. The Captain of the vessel has sole discretion to refuse passage to or disembark any person who is or who, in his opinion may become disruptive, a danger to themselves or others. In this eventuality no refund of the cruise cost will be reimbursed.

8. LAW and JURISDICTION

These terms and conditions are subject to English Law. The High Court of Justice in England shall have exclusive jurisdiction to determine any dispute arising out of them.

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Why book your barge cruise through CanalBargeCruises.com?

- Your interests, comfort, enjoyment and budget are important to us. We want you to have the best barge vacation possible.
- We only book barge cruise vacations, and are committed to providing you with our best service.
- We know the barges, canals and sights. My husband, Jack, and I owned and operated two charter barges for 8 years and have cruised the canals and rivers many times. Another 7 years was spent organizing and leading tours throughout France.
- We love France and barging and want you to benefit from our knowledge and experience.
- The cost to you is the same if you book directly with the barge or through an agent. With an agent, you receive independent advice as to which barge works best for you.
- We can help with your pre and post cruise activities too.

As a valued client, you will receive:

- Trip Preparation Kit with travel tips
- Recommended Paris hotels & restaurants
- Suggested Packing List
- Resources for airlines, car rentals, airport shuttles, hotels, etc.
- Assistance with travel insurance claims when you purchase your travel insurance through us.
- Want help reserving hotels, trains and car rentals? We can do that too. We are affiliated with Rail Europe, Auto Europe, Travel Guard insurance and many other resources for your trip planning.

Thank you for your interest in barge cruising. We look forward to working with you to select and book the right barge cruise for you.



Beth Hanson, Owner