

REVISED NOVEMBER 21, 2019
HEARTCYCLE BICYCLE TOURING CLUB
BRUGES - PARIS, BIKE AND BARGE TOUR, 2020

- Dates:** Arrival May 16, 2020, 2pm. On the Barge May 16, 2020-May 29. Departure May 30.
- Coordinator:** Joanne Speirs
- Miles:** Approximately 315 miles for the scheduled tour routes. However, longer routes will be available (25% to 30%) on some days, if the route allows. Those riding the longer routes must be prepared to use Ride with GPS and will have to be adventurous as the route will not have been scouted.
- Rating:** Easy to Intermediate. We will be riding in a variety of situations, including bike paths, and small country roads. You must have good bicycle handling skills, be comfortable riding in a group and be able to maintain a speed of at least 10 mph on a flat pedal, hybrid bike.
- Riders:** 10 Maximum (including Coordinator) **Additional may be possible – contact Coordinator**
- Price:** \$3,200 Double occupancy. \$800 Deposit due upon registration. Balance due by 2/15/2020. No Single Supplements for this tour. Travel Insurance is recommended.
- Special Cancellation Fees:** Cancel before 2/1/20, \$100.00 fee; 2/1/20 - 3/15/20, 50% of your deposit; after 3/15, no refund, unless replacement found by 4/15/20, then 50% of your deposit.



OVERVIEW

This cycling adventure will take us through the countryside in Flanders (northern Belgium) and northern France. You will ride through a variety of landscapes from gently forested undulations and farmlands to picturesque villages each day. We will travel along the rivers Scheldt, Scarpe, Somme, Oise and Seine. Highlights of the tour include:

- Visit the UNESCO World Heritage –listed historical center of Bruges;
- Explore Ghent where several masterpieces of medieval painting are found;
- Pass through Oudenaarde, the town of tapestry weavers;
- Visit the town of Peronne with her fascinating “Grande Guerre” museum;
- Admire the splendid Chateau of Chantilly, a luxurious castle with an impressive art collection and horse dressage;
- Walk to the grave of Vincent van Gogh in Auvers-sur-Oise;
- Visit many highlights of Paris.

What’s included:

The tour is 14 days and includes breakfast, packed lunch on tour, 13 dinners on board the Barge, bed linens, daily cleaning of cabin, 1x change of bed sheets, bike rental and entrance fees to the Museum of Glade of the Armistice, Castle of Chantilly, Town hall at Oundenaarde & Canal trip through Ghent.

We will have two tour guides on this Tour, which will allow for flexibility in riding speeds of the group. We will also have longer routes available on some days; 25%-30% longer than the scheduled route. All routes will be available to download on Ride with GPS. We strongly recommend that riders download the free app and do so prior to leaving the U.S with the availability of a dedicated Internet connection. Instructions and the routes will be available for the tour in plenty of time for you to be prepared when we meet in Bruges. Those riding the longer routes will have to be adventurous and utilize Ride with GPS, as the route will not have been scouted. The longer routes and utilization of Ride with GPS is designed to allow riders flexibility for speed and distance.

The tour includes German 11 speed Gudereit hybrid bikes (picture below). Panniers and water bottles are standard on all bikes. You may be able to rent an e-bike, however, there is a limited number, and is an additional cost, anticipated to be approximately 350 euro. Please indicate this request when you register. It is not advised that you bring your own bike, clip-in pedals or bike shoes. Sport shoes will be just fine for the rides.

Our barge, the Fleur, has 10 comfortable cabins, with two single beds. All have a private bathroom, a hairdryer, wardrobe and a small safe. The cabins are small, so it is best to bring a collapsible soft traveling bag rather than a large, hard suitcase. There is a cozy lounge where we will enjoy our meals and socialize with fellow riders. There is also a beautiful large deck where we may enjoy meals, or simply sit and watch the scenery while we cruise. There is free Wi-Fi in the lounge. However, due to instability of the mobile network, your connection may not be steady. The whole barge has central heating and air conditioning. The average temperature during the day will range from 59 to 69 degrees.

In addition to the tour guide, the tour will include a Skipper, sailor, cook, and kitchen assistant. An extensive breakfast is served every morning and a three-course dinner most evenings. During breakfast you will make a packed lunch to take with you. Coffee and tea will be waiting for you on board after the daily bike trip. Other drinks, such as wine, beer and soft drinks, are available on board at a charge. If you want a bottle of wine that you did not purchase from the ship’s bar, a corkage fee will be charged per bottle.

If you have special meal requirements, please indicate that at the time of registration. Vegetarian meals are easily arranged; in all other cases (gluten and lactose free) we will have to check if your request can be accommodated. There may be an extra charge to be paid on board.

We suggest you arrive in Bruges no later than Friday to minimize flight delays, loss of luggage and jet lag. Plus, you will want the time to explore the historical city of Bruges.

Note: changes to the trip itinerary may be necessary due to nautical and technical reasons.

ITINERARY

Day 1, Saturday, May 16, 2020: Bruges.

We will meet dockside in Bruges, Belgium on Saturday, at 2:00 P.M. You may then board the Fleur to get settled and relax. At 6:00 pm the tour will start with a welcome drink. Dinner will follow prepared by the onboard chef. After dinner you may take a walk with a tour guide to see the town. Bruges is known as the “Venice of the North”, a beautiful Flemish City. The old town center, which is still intact, dates from the middle Ages.

Day 2, Sunday, May 17, 2020: Bruges - Ghent (approx. 40 km/ 25 miles).

We will have a breakfast cruise to Beernem, where we disembark and ride through the pleasant flat countryside of Western Flanders. We spend the night in Ghent, having origins in Roman times, now a university town on the confluence of the rivers Leie and Schelde Rivers. This location provided opportunity for commerce during the 13th and 14th century. The cloth industry thrived in the middle Ages, and many patrician residences have been preserved. The St. Baaf’s cathedral, constructed in different styles during different centuries holds several masterpieces of medieval paintings, including “The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb” by Jan van Eyck.



Day 3, Monday, May 18, 2020: Ghent - Oudenaarde (approx. 45km/ 28 miles).



On this day we ride along the river Bovenschelde to Oudenaarde. This little town was once on the border of the French and German Empires and often involved in wars, requiring the town to always have someone on the lookout. The statute of the most famous watchman, “Hanske de Krijger” sits on the central belfry town hall. The Gothic style town hall was built of sandstone and is considered one of the most beautiful city halls of Flanders. The tapestry weavers here are famous all over the world.

Day 4, Tuesday, May 19, 2020: Oudenaarde - Doornik (Flemish) or Tournai (French) (approx. 42 km/ 26 miles).

On our way out of town, we will have a guided visit through the town hall to view a collection of relics from Oudenaarde's past. The tapestries hanging in the Lower Cloth Hall and the adjacent Cloth Hall building represent an art form that brought the city fame between about the 15th–18th centuries.

Our destination of Doornik, is one of the oldest cities in Belgium. Up until the beginning of the 17th century, Doornik was ruled by the French, and in this region, towns and villages have both French and Flemish names. The town center, destroyed by a German raid in 1940, has been successfully renovated. A highlight will be the Cathedral de Notre Dame (12 & 13th century) and the Belfort, built about 1200.

Day 5, Wednesday, May 20, 2020: Doornik (Tournai) – Pont Malin (Bouchain) (approx. 50 km/ 31 miles).

During breakfast we will cruise towards the French-Belgium border, starting our ride from the town of Antoing, Belgium. The Antoing castle is one of the original castles in Belgium, first mentioned in the 12th century. The present structure dates from the 13th-15th centuries, was renovated in the 19th century.



After riding through picturesque villages along the border, we will spend the evening at the Pont Malin lock on the Canal de l'Escaut, which connects southern Belgium and Dunkirk, the northern most City in France.

Day 6, Thursday, May 21, 2020: Pont Malin – Cambrai - Honnecourt (approx. 60 km/37 miles).



From Pont Malin, we will travel the Canal de St. Quentin, where we will stop in the city of Cambrai to see the historic center. We will visit the impressive restored buildings of the fortress, built under Charles V, the old city gates that date from 1300, the “Spanish House” built in 1595, and the Cathedral of Notre Dame. We will cycle on, passing the ancient restored cloister of Vaucelles Abbey (circa 1145), which at one time was the largest Cistercian abbey of Europe. We will continue our travels to spend the night in the little village of Honnecourt.

Day 7, Friday, May 22, 2020: Honnecourt - Tunnel of Riqueval - St. Quentin (approx. 65 km/ 40 miles).



We will once again enjoy a breakfast cruise, while the Fleur passes through the tunnel of Riqueval, (built from 1802-1810) enabling the barge to travel from the height of the Sommes Basin to the Escaut Basin. Like in former years, the barge will be pulled through the underground tunnel in two hours by an electric towboat. Our final destination of St. Quentin arose in the 2nd century on a junction of Roman roads. The lively provincial city was a destination for pilgrims to the grave of St. Quentin, a Roman Christian who was said to have been martyred there in the 3rd. Century.

Day 8, Saturday, May 23, 2020: St. Quentin.

Today the Fleur will stay in St.-Quentin. If there is enough of an interest, you can participate in a day excursion by bus to the museum and memorial at the WW I battlefields in Somme Valley, where the British and French armies fought the Germans in a brutal battle. It is also possible to use the day for exploring and shopping. There will be no dinner on board and you can enjoy your meal at one of the many fine restaurants.

Day 9, Sunday, May 24, 2020: St. Quentin – Chauny (approx. 41 km/ 25 miles).

We will sail again during breakfast through the valley of the Somme. We will leave the barge, and ride through the quiet countryside of the Somme region with many small picturesque villages, to Chauny where we will spend the night.

Day 10, Monday, May 25, 2020: Chauny - Compiègne (approx. 41 km/ 26 miles).

We will cruise on the Fleur during breakfast, continuing along the old St. Quentin canal. When we disembark, we will cycle through the forest of Ourscamp across the river Aisne into the forest of Compiègne. You will have an opportunity to visit the small museum celebrating the “Clairière de Armistice”, where the French and German generals signed the Treaty to end World War I. We will ride through the immense Compiègne forest to Compiègne, where French Monarchs spent their summers; primarily for hunting given its proximity to the forest.



You may want to add some additional miles through the forest to visit the little town of Pierrefond, where you can admire the exterior of the impressive castle. Alternatively, ride into town to visit the Château de Compiègne, the first royal residence built in 1374 for Charles V and modified by a long procession of successors.

Day 11, Tuesday, May 26, 2020: Compiègne - Creil (approx. 33 km/ 21miles).

We continue cycling south through the forest following the valley of the Oise River. You will pass the abbey of Moncel, which was founded in 1309 by King Phillips le Bel, the last of the great Capetian kings.



We will pass through Pont-Ste-Maxence. This town owes its name to the fact that in olden times there

was a bridge over the Oise, and kings and merchants would stay there on their way to Flanders. Our destination of Creil, a country town, located on the Oise River was first mentioned in a 633 AD document. The town is known for its 19th Century pottery produced in a factory founded in 1795.

Day 12, Wednesday, May 27, 2020: Creil - Auvers sur Oise (approx. 42 km/26 miles).

A highlight of today will be a tour through Chantilly Castle, which houses one of the finest collections of paintings in France, specializing in French paintings and book illuminations of the 15th and 16th centuries. The Castle overlooks the Chantilly Racecourse, a thoroughbred turf flat course, well known on the horse-racing circuit. We will pass the abbey of Royaumont, cross the Oise River and follow it to Auvers sur Oise. Vincent van Gogh spent the last days of his life here and he and his brother are buried in the local cemetery. This region was loved by many impressionist painters. After dinner we can take a walk to the cemetery.



Day 13, Thursday, May 28, 2020: Auvers – Conflans - Reuil-sur-Seine (approx. 48 km/30 miles).

During breakfast we will sail to Conflans-Sainte Honorine, where the Oise and the Seine converge. From the 19th century, Conflans has been an important shipping center in North France. We start cycling in Conflans and ride to St. Germain-en-Laye, an affluent western suburb of Paris. We will climb the plateau to the top to see the palace and from the palace garden enjoy a splendid view over Paris. After that we continue towards Reuil-sur-seine where we will spend the night. This will be our last day of riding.

Day 14, Friday, May 29, 2020: Paris.

Today we enjoy a cruise on the Fleur up the Seine River to Paris. We will sail past the Eiffel tower and other historic sites. The Fleur will then moor in the center of Paris. You can spend the rest of the day exploring the city. We will have our last group dinner onboard the Fleur.



Day 15, Saturday, May 30, 2020: Paris.

After breakfast on board the Fleur, it will be time to say goodbye to friends, old and new, and disembark at 9:00 am.

Our bikes:



The Fleur:



For additional information, contact: Joanne Speirs at jcspeirs1@gmail.com