

HOLLAND & BELGIUM – FROM AMSTERDAM TO BRUGES or RETURN 8-days/7-nights – choice of **STANDARD**, **STANDARD PLUS**, **PREMIUM** or **PREMIUM PLUS** barges



Departs: Amsterdam or Bruges every Saturday and selected Wednesdays from 18th April to 14th October, 2020

Cost: From **\$1625** to **\$2505** per person twin share. Single cabins available with a supplement on request.

Included: 7 nights' accommodation aboard your barge in twin-bed cabin with en-suite shower/toilet, breakfast daily, picnic lunch, 3-course dinners on most nights, bicycle hire with pannier and experienced cycle tour guides.

Not Included: Drinks on board, entrance fees to museums, castles, breweries, cheese farm or other attractions. On some barges you have one night free to have dinner at your own arrangements, please ask when booking.

One of our most popular and much sought after Bike & Barge routes in Europe. We offer several barges of different standards on several routes between these two cities. The cycling is mostly flat and generally easy to moderate with usually between 25 - 60km over 5 to 6 hours a day. It's possible on some days (at the discretion of the captain / tour guide) to cycle just part of the route or to stay aboard the barge to enjoy the cruising. Cycling in Belgium and Holland is great fun; there are lots of sealed cycle paths and the rural scenery is wonderful.

Led by experienced guides who make sure you see the many interesting places along the route. However, if you prefer to cycle independently, you are welcome to plan your own cycling day, meeting the barge at the next destination. The cycling is varied and fascinating with flat terrain, woodlands, open river valleys, small country towns and villages or historic cities. There is time for sightseeing, shopping or simply to relax onboard the barge. Well-maintained multi-gear bikes are provided, although you can bring your own if you prefer. E-bikes are available upon request on most departures at extra cost and these do need to be reserved well in advance.

The tour starts or finishes in cosmopolitan Amsterdam and we recommend you have extra nights to explore this fascinating city. We visit historical Flemish cities such as Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges. Along the route we may visit a Dutch cheese farm, where cheese is still produced by traditional methods, and the iconic Dutch windmills of Kinderdijk. We cycle to fortified towns such as Willemstad, situated on the wide expanses of Zeeland, and we can spend the night in Antwerp, birthplace of Rubens (whose paintings are in the Cathedral of Our Lady). Sightseeing in the old town centre of Ghent – with its impressive bell tower – can include a visit to Saint Baafs' Cathedral to admire the famous triptych painting by Jan van Eyck. We begin or end in Bruges, with its windmills, gardens and picturesque town centre, possibly the most beautiful of all historical Flemish cities.

Bike & Barge cruising combine two popular ways of exploring Europe, cycling and river cruising. It allows partners of different abilities and interests to holiday together (trips are just as interesting for leisure cyclists or enthusiasts). You unpack once and come 'home' each night to a wonderful meal and a comfortable cabin with your own bathroom. Non-cycling passengers are always welcome on these departures but note that whilst there may be guided walks in the evenings there are no sightseeing provisions for non-cyclists during the day.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Typical suggested itinerary - from Amsterdam to Bruges: *

Day 1: Amsterdam – Uithoorn **cycling @ 15km**

Plan to arrive at the mooring point, not far from the Central Railway Station, by mid-afternoon, board the ship, stow your luggage away in your cabin and then enjoy a cup of tea or coffee. The welcome briefing offers a chance to get to know your guides, the crew, the barge, your bike and cycling plan and your fellow passengers.

We sail through Amsterdam westwards to the huge Haarlemmermeerpolder which is roughly six metres below sea level. Along the way is a rich horticultural area of trees, flowers and plants destined for local markets and for export around the world. At the small village of Uithoorn we take a warm-up ride and test out our bikes. This area is regarded locally as the '*Green Heart of Holland*' with its canals, farms and irrigated fields. Dinner is aboard the ship, followed by a briefing on the program for the next day.

Day 2: Uithoorn – Gouda **cycling @ 45km**

From Uithoorn, we continue our cycling following country roads, river banks and channels through the typical rural scenes to the city of Gouda, a place known worldwide for its cheese. The city is also known for 'stroopwafels' (treacle-waffle), pottery, stained-glass windows, a magnificent town hall and many atmospheric canals. After dinner there is time for a stroll through the old city centre for a coffee or a beer.

Day 3: Gouda – Dordrecht **cycling @ 39km**

We cycle along the Dutch IJssel and alongside one of the most important polders in the Netherlands, Krimpenerwaard. We follow narrow cycle paths to the River Lek and may visit Kinderdijk, a unique collection of nineteen UNESCO listed historic working windmills. As time allows we can explore here before continuing along the Alblasserwaardpolder and the Beneden-Merwede, where we take a fast ferry to meet the barge at Dordrecht.

Not all tours visit Kinderdijk, if this is important to you ask us for itinerary details to make sure you can visit here.

Day 4: Dordrecht – Willemstad or Bruinisse – Zierikzee **cycling @ 55 or 25km**

From Dordrecht we cruise to the delta of several great Dutch rivers. Years ago there was an open connection to the sea but after flooding in 1953, the Deltaplan was developed and most tidal rivers here were closed by dams. Those who prefer a longer ride can start cycling in Willemstad – for a shorter ride, stay onboard the barge until Bruinisse. We cycle over the Volkerakbrug, with one of the world's busiest locks beneath it, and through this area protected from the encroaching seas by the Deltaplan, to Zierikzee. We can visit the Watersnoodmuseum – which tells the story of the disastrous flooding in 1953 – in this beautiful town, the centre of the Dutch mussel industry. The 'Zeeuwse mosselen' (blue mussels) are a local delicacy.

Day 5: Zierikzee – Middelburg – Vlissingen **cycling @ 51 or 32km**

We reach the beaches and sand dunes of the North Sea coast cycling along the Oosterschelde to the Oosterschelddam. These enormous locks were built to be closed during storms and high tides protecting the whole south-west of the Netherlands against the sea, and are one of the wonders of modern engineering. We ride to Middelburg pausing to visit the picturesque port town of Veere. Middelburg is the principal town of Zeeland with many old traditional houses, churches and a shopping centre. The Roosevelt Academy, a liberal arts college, is located in the former late-Gothic town hall on the market square.

When possible, we sail to Vlissingen whilst enjoying our dinner onboard. This lovely port town is situated at the Westerschelde beside the sea. A walk through the town with its restaurants, shops and cafes is well worth while.

Day 6: Vlissingen – Ghent **cycling @ 45km**

By taking the unique ferry adapted for bicycles to Breskens in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen (Dutch-Flanders) we are now close to Belgium. We cross the Dutch-Belgian border at Sas van Gent, the former gateway to the harbor of Ghent, a rural area of small traditional villages and beautiful rural scenery, following creeks and embankments. There may be an opportunity to re-join the barge here to shorten the cycling day and then cruise along the canal to Terneuzen. Those who prefer can cycle the extra distance to our mooring point. After dinner there is time to join the guide for a stroll and a coffee or to ride a tram into the medieval centre.

Day 7: Ghent – Bruges **cycling @ 45km**

This morning we cycle through the heart of this bicycle-friendly city and out into the scenic countryside of Oost-Vlaanderen (East-Flanders) with its forest, cultivated fields, small villages and castles. Again, as conditions allow, we have a shorter cycling option for those who prefer rejoining the barge near Aalterbrug. Our last cycling day takes us along the tow path of the Oostende-Gent canal – the oldest canal in Belgium – into Bruges, nicknamed the '*Venice of the North*.' Bruges is one of the most interesting and impressive cities in Belgium. There is time to explore the medieval centre and many choose to stay another day or two in this beautiful city.

Day 8: Bruges

Tour ends after breakfast in central Bruges. Ask for details of extra nights of hotel accommodation. The city of Bruges is well connected by regular trains to Brussels or fast rail connections to Amsterdam or Paris.

Typical suggested itinerary - from Bruges to Amsterdam: *

Day 1: Arrive Bruges

Plan to arrive at the barge by mid-afternoon (the canal is a short distance from the Railway Station) to board the ship, stow your luggage and enjoy a cup of tea or coffee. At the welcome briefing you can get to know your guides, the crew, the barge and cycling plan and other passengers. After dinner there is time to explore beautiful Bruges with its picturesque medieval town centre, one of the most interesting and impressive cities in Europe.

Day 2: Bruges – Ghent

cycling @ 35 or 57km

We breakfast as the barge departs Bruges, and we begin cycling just outside of the city across the flat land of West Flanders towards the historical centre of Ghent. Ghent, located at the confluence of the Rivers Leie and Schelde, gained influence and prosperity through trade in the 13th and 14th Centuries. There are still many well-preserved houses and halls from this era, and a visit to the Clothmakers' Hall, built 1425, is a highlight. You may also like to stop by St Baafs' Cathedral to admire Jan van Eyck's painting, 'The Adoration of the Lamb' – along with many other medieval masterpieces.

Day 3: Ghent – Dendermonde – St-Amands

cycling @ 40 or 53km

While the barge sails on the River Schelde to Dendermonde, we cycle along the banks of this beautiful but capricious tidal river to meet the barge at the confluence of the Dender and Schelde rivers in Dendermonde. Here you may choose to continue on by bicycle or to relax aboard the barge as it sails to our mooring point, the small village of St-Amands.

Day 4: St-Amands – Antwerp

cycling @ 32 or 49km

We ride along a beautiful cycling track beside the River Schelde, past tranquil lush green rural scenery to the city of Antwerp. Well-known as one of the world's leading centres of the diamond trade, Antwerp also boasts many lovely historical houses, market squares and cafes. It was the birthplace of the painter Rubens, and you can admire some of his work in the Cathedral of Our Lady in the city centre.

Day 5: Antwerp – Tholen – Dordrecht

cycling @ 20 or 36km

After breakfast we stay aboard the barge as it sails the Schelde-Rhine Canal through the complex series of locks at Kreekrak to Tholen, a picturesque village which was once an island amidst the large streams of Zeeland. Here we disembark and begin cycling, past the impressive Volkerak locks, through the beautiful fortified town of Willemstad, to Dordrecht, one of the oldest cities in the Netherlands.

Day 6: Dordrecht – Vianen

cycling @ 32 or 57km

We continue our ride to Kinderdijk, site of the most famous windmills in the Netherlands – a perfect photo opportunity with nineteen UNESCO listed windmills all in a row. Many of these were built in the 18th Century to drain the low Alblasserwaard polder. As time allows we can explore one of these iconic structures. In the afternoon we continue on to the 'silver city' of Schoonhoven, and to our destination for tonight, Vianen. Time this evening for a stroll after dinner to explore this small fortified town on the River Lek.

Day 7: Vianen – Breukelen – Amsterdam

cycling @ 36 or 46km

Over breakfast the barge cruises to Breukelen where we begin cycling along the River Vecht, known for its beautiful mansions, small castles and houses with parks and gardens. We pass several small and picturesque villages, and perhaps stop to see a traditional Dutch cheese farm. We arrive in Amsterdam in early afternoon, with plenty of time to explore the city's canals, laneways, or museums in the evening.

Day 8: Amsterdam

Tour ends after breakfast in central Amsterdam. To stay extra nights in Amsterdam ask our staff about booking hotel accommodation. Amsterdam seems always busy so early reservations are highly recommended.

** These are sample or suggested itineraries only and may vary depending on the boat, departure date and abilities of the group. All itineraries are subject to change depending weather, tides, canal / river traffic, waterway traffic or technical conditions and other unforeseen circumstances. All cycling distances given are approximate.*



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PREMIUM PLUS BARGES

Premium Plus boats have more spacious cabins with lower beds, some with doubles. Cabins may have extras such as hair dryers, televisions and air-conditioning. Furnishings and fixtures are up-to-date and to a high standard, and the common areas such as lounge, dining and sundeck are spacious and well-equipped. Non-cycling passengers may prefer a Premium Plus boat as there is more room to relax during the day. *Some Premium Plus barges may offer Upgrade cabins or Suites for a supplement – please ask when booking.*



PREMIUM BARGES

Cabins on Premium barges have comfortable twin, lower level beds (no bunks). The barges have generally modern fitouts with simple but tasteful furnishings. The common areas inside and out are spacious and pleasant.



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PREMIUM BARGES



STANDARD OR STANDARD PLUS BARGES

Standard Plus cabins are generally furnished with split level beds (one bed is higher and may require a climb on a small ladder or step-up, beds may not be directly above/below each other as in a bunk cabin). These barges are cheerful and comfortable, well-lit and airy. Cabins have a small shower/toilet. Some triple cabins with a double and single bed may be available on some barges.

Standard barges are equipped with compact cabins, simply furnished, usually with bunk beds and windows or portholes allowing in light. Some Standard barges may have 2 or 3 Standard Plus cabins. Common areas such as lounge, sun-deck and dining room are designed for comfort and to encourage a sociable atmosphere.



Outdoor Travel offers Bike & Barge or Bike & Boat cruises to many areas of Europe including the Loire Valley & Burgundy or Provence in **France**, in **Germany** along the Rivers Saar, Moselle and Rhine, in **Italy** on the Venice Lagoon, Sicily or the Amalfi Coast, the popular River Danube in **Austria** or **Romania**, island hopping in **Greece**, **Turkey** or on the Dalmatian coast of **Croatia**. We also offer inn-to-inn guided or self-guided cycling holidays in many destinations in Europe & across the world including **South Africa**, **New Zealand**, **Vietnam** and **Japan**.

Contact Outdoor Travel direct for more details and reservations:

- Call Toll free: 1800 331 582 or (03) 57551743 or Fax (03) 57501020
- Email: info@outdoortravel.com.au
- Web: <http://www.outdoortravel.com.au>
- Mail: Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd, PO Box 286, Bright VIC 3741, Australia



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