

## HOLLAND & BELGIUM – AMSTERDAM TO BRUGES (GHENT) **IN SPRINGTIME** 8-days/7-nights easy to moderate *STANDARD PLUS* cycling and sightseeing cruise



Experience the most famous sights of the Netherlands and discover the beauty of Holland in springtime using the locals' favourite mode of transport: barge and bicycle. Holland in springtime is awash with the colours and fragrances of fresh flowers, especially the millions upon millions of brightly hued tulips.

This is one of our most popular routes, offering mostly flat, easy cycling along well made cycle paths, polders and dykes, quiet country roads with occasional busier roads in major towns and cities. We visit three historical Flemish cities all famous for their spectacular architecture and history – Antwerp, Ghent and Bruges – and we see a very beautiful part of rural Holland, which contrasts with the vibrant capital of the Netherlands, Amsterdam. In the European spring months of April and May, we make a special visit to the fabulous Keukenhof gardens, 32 hectares filled with the stunning colours and scents of countless flowers. Keukenhof offers visitors an overwhelming blaze of spring colours, with seven million flowering tulips as well as hyacinth, narcissi, crocuses, blossoming trees, azaleas, rhododendrons and more, over a magnificent 80 acres.

Bike & Barge cruises combine two popular ways of exploring Europe, cycling and river cruising. Partners of different abilities and interests can holiday together – trips are just as interesting for leisure cyclists OR enthusiasts. Unpack once and come 'home' each night to a wonderful meal and a comfortable cabin with your own bathroom. These cruises appeal to the more active mature traveller, and are ideal for first timers or groups.

Cycling in Belgium and Holland is very easy; there are lots of sealed cycle paths and the rural scenery is wonderful. These cycling cruises are led by experienced guides to make sure you see the many interesting places along the route. However, you don't have to cycle with the group. You will find a detailed map with cycle routes and are most welcome to plan your own cycling day, meeting the barge at the next destination. Well-maintained multi-gear bikes are provided (or you can bring your own if you prefer). Extra time is usually available for those who want more cycling each day.

**Cost from:** \$1725 per person twin share      Single cabin supplement from \$405 (limited availability)

**Departs:** From Amsterdam: 6<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> April; 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2019  
From Bruges: 13<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2019

**Includes:** 7 nights' twin-share cabin accommodation (some cabins with lower twin or double beds, available on a first-come, first-served basis, some cabins have split-level beds; all cabins have ensuite shower/toilet), breakfast and dinner on board, lunch packages when cycling, experienced tour guide, multi-gear touring bicycle, panniers and lock, route information, Keukenhof and Kinderdijk Windmill entry fee, horse-drawn carriage ride in Bruges, return train ticket Ghent-Bruges, standard bus transfer Ghent – Amsterdam Airport if required.

**Not included:** Meals and drinks not mentioned, personal expenses, other entrance fees.

**Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservation**

**Suggested itinerary:** (the daily route may be subject to change at the discretion of the captain or cycle guide)

**Day 1: Arrive Amsterdam, cruise to Oude Wetering**

**cycling @ 10km**

Plan to arrive on the barge in central Amsterdam (not far from the main Railway Station and Maritime Museum) by 1.00pm for a 1.30pm departure crossing through Amsterdam and heading for the village of Oude Wetering. In the evening you may take a short ride to test out the bicycles and warm up those cycling muscles.

**Day 2: Oude Wetering – Keukenhof – Gouda**

**cycling @ 25km**

We start the day with an early morning ride through the reclaimed land of the Haarlemmermeer (Haarlemmer Lake) to the Keukenhof gardens. After time to admire the riotous colours of tulips, daffodils and hyacinth in bloom we return to the barge and depart for Gouda, a town world famous for its cheese. There is free time to explore Gouda – perhaps visit its Gothic city hall, the cheese museum at the *Waag* (weigh house, where cheese was weighed to be taxed), or view the magnificent collection of stained glass windows at St Johns Church.

**Day 3: Gouda – Kinderdijk – Dordrecht - Willemstad**

**cycling @ 40km**

The barge cruises this morning to the world famous UNESCO listed windmills of Kinderdijk. We have the opportunity to visit one of these iconic windmills before cycling to the old Dutch town of Dordrecht. Later we sail to the historical fortified walled town of Willemstad, a real Dutch treasure.

**Day 4: Willemstad – Antwerp**

**no cycling**

Cruising across the impressive waterways of Zeeland, the barge takes us to the lively town of Antwerp, Belgium's second largest city. Once there we have free time to explore. Antwerp is the centre of the world's diamond trade, with over 80% of the world's rough diamonds traded through the Antwerp Diamond Exchange (perhaps visit the *Diamantkwartier* to see more about this trade). Antwerp is also the birthplace of one of the greatest Flemish artists of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century: Peter Paul Rubens. In the Cathedral of Our Lady you can see two of his most famous works, *The Raising of the Cross* and *The Descent from the Cross*. This is a city of beautiful town houses from a rich trading past, many of which are situated near this church and the Market Square.

**Day 5: Antwerp – Dendermonde**

**cycling @ 50km**

We start with a cruise to the outskirts of Antwerp, then cycle along the beautiful tidal River Schelde to the charming provincial town of Dendermonde. Here we can visit the beautiful town hall and perhaps sample the local beer. After dinner, there is free time to explore the town centre.

**Day 6: Dendermonde – Ghent**

**cycling @ 35km**

The barge cruises further along the tidal River Schelde, while we cycle across the flat Flemish countryside to Ghent, a lively university city, again with a rich history. The city has its origins in Roman times situated strategically at the junction of the River Leie and River Schelde. From the 11<sup>th</sup> until the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Ghent was an important centre for the production and trade of cloth woven from imported English wool. In 1178 Count Philip of Alsace granted Ghent its first privileges and transformed the wooden fortification into the impressive stone castle. Today, Ghent has a population of around 250,000 inhabitants and is the capital of the Belgian province of East-Flanders. As time allows there will be a guided walk across the wonderful town centre.

**Day 7: Ghent – Bruges – Ghent**

**no cycling**

We leave our bikes and take the train to Bruges, often known as the *Venice of the North* because of its many canals and waterways. Bruges has always been a centre for trade and art. The historic city centre, which dates to the middle ages, is a prominent UNESCO World Heritage listed site and it is almost completely intact. After a traditional horse carriage ride we have a short guided walk past the many historic monuments in the centre of Bruges. Afterwards there is free time to explore Bruges until mid-afternoon when we return by train to Ghent.

**Day 8: Depart Ghent**

Tour ends after breakfast. A transfer to Amsterdam airport at a set time is available if required.

The tour reverses direction on alternate weeks and a standard arrival transfer from Amsterdam Airport to Ghent is available if required (please ask when you make your booking).

Other Bike & Barge cruises from **Outdoor Travel** are available in France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, in Scotland, Italy (Venice, Amalfi or Sicily), along the Danube, in Romania, Croatia, Greece and Turkey. Cycling holidays - inn-to-inn either guided or self-guided - available across Europe particularly in France, Spain, Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Also in Vietnam, South Africa, New Zealand, Japan, the USA and Canada.

**Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:**

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