

FRANCE – PARIS TO CHAMPAGNE or RETURN

E-BIKE TOUR

8-days/7-nights Moderate **PREMIUM PLUS** Bike & Barge **GUIDED** cycling cruise



We have secured a very limited number of berths on a delightful hotel barge to cruise from Paris, *City of Light*, to Épernay in the heart of Champagne, or return. Our Premium Plus class barge cruises offer a high standard of meals and comfortable cabin accommodation (all with lower twin beds and ensuite bathrooms). All cabins have air-conditioning and a fixed window and there are also two double cabins which have larger windows that open. On the main deck there is a comfortable, air-conditioned lounge with panoramic windows, dining area, seating corner and a small bar. On sunny days, there is a very spacious sun deck with chairs and tables, where you can relax and enjoy the scenery or join the skipper in the wheel house.

Our Champagne cycling cruise is a great opportunity to explore the varied and interesting countryside, with visits to historic and cultural centres, sampling the wine and local produce that makes this part of France famous. Highlights include the Champagne capital of Épernay, Château-Thierry, Champagne vineyards, the Marne River valley, WWI battlefields, Dom Pérignon, Meaux Brie, rolling hills, canal tunnels, great food and a night in Paris. Each day you can join a guided bike tour, cycle independently and meet up with the group at the boat or stay on board to enjoy the cruise. In the evenings our guide may offer a city walk or other activities.

Bike & Barge cruises combine two popular ways of exploring Europe, cycling and river cruising. They allow partners of different abilities and interests to holiday together - trips are just as interesting for leisure cyclists or cycling enthusiasts. Unpack once and come 'home' each night to a wonderful meal and a comfortable cabin with your own bathroom.

Our moderate graded cycling tours require a good level of fitness, which can be acquired from steady cycling practise. Champagne is an undulating landscape with some steeper sections up and down the wide Marne valley slopes, through the hills and vineyards. Routes avoid traffic wherever possible, taking small country roads, towpaths, and the occasional cobblestone road or unpaved track. It is possible to avoid the traffic or hillier days by staying on the barge to enjoy the cruise. **E-bikes** are included on this tour and are an ideal way to neutralise the steeper hills, though of course you will still be pedalling.

Departs: Paris to Épernay: 26 June, 10, 24 July, 7, 21 August, 4 September, 2025
Épernay to Paris: 3, 17, 31 July, 14, 28 August, 11 September, 2025

Cost from: \$3890 per person twin share Single cabin supplement from \$1640 (limited availability)
High season supplement from \$185 - \$270 per person on selected departures

Includes: 7 nights' accommodation in twin-share cabins with ensuite bathroom; 7 breakfasts, 6 packed lunches, 6 dinners; cycling tour guide; E-bike hire with pannier & helmet; ferry fares; cheese tasting, Champagne cellar visit in Épernay and Champagne tasting, SGR insolvency protection.

Not included: Drinks, 1 dinner, personal expenses, gratuities, transfers to/from the barge, travel insurance. Special diets available at extra cost.

Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details or reservations

Suggested itinerary Paris to Épernay: (tour operates in reverse direction on alternate weeks)

Day 1: Arrive Paris – Lagny-sur-Marne

Plan to arrive at the barge moored near the Seine River in Paris around 2pm for a welcome from the captain, crew and tour leader. We depart Paris shortly afterwards, cruising from our mooring point to Lagny-sur-Marne, a lively town on the Marne River where the city's urban fringe meets the French countryside.

Day 2: Lagny-sur-Marne loop ride

cycling @ 22-45km

In the morning receive and be fitted to your e-bikes, then we set off on our first bike ride along the Marne River. There is a choice of routes; one that follows the river and one that is a bit more challenging. We pass the castle of Champs-sur-Marne and cycle through the surrounding gardens. The Château de Champs-sur-Marne is typical of the residences built in the countryside in the 18th century, which gave rise to a new style of living. It is one of the most magnificently furnished castles in the Ile-de-France.

Day 3: Lagny-sur-Marne – Meaux

cycling @ 20-45km

We cycle mainly along the River Marne and the canal parallel. Our first challenge is the hill near Chalifert (the barge will take the tunnel through the hill and you are welcome to stay aboard; keen cyclists can test their fitness by climbing and crossing the hill by bicycle). Our destination on this day is the city of Meaux, famous for its "*Brie de Meaux*" cheeses and the magnificent Cathedral St.-Etienne. The overnight mooring is in Meaux.

Day 4: Meaux – La Ferté-sous-Jouarre

cycling @ 30-55km

After breakfast we cycle through the centre of Meaux and follow the hills and slopes of the Marne valley, through forests and many small villages on the southern and northern banks of the river. As time allows, we may visit the Château de Montceau, a building started by Catherine de Médici in the 16th century. During the day there is an opportunity to taste the famous local Brie de Meaux and Brie noir cheeses at a family-run *fromagerie*. Our overnight mooring is at La-Ferté-sous-Jouarre or a nearby village.

Day 5: La-Ferté-sous-Jouarre – Château-Thierry

cycling @ 40-45km

Today offers a somewhat challenging ride from La-Ferté-sous-Jouarre to Château-Thierry. First we cycle alongside the River Marne. After a few miles we take a side valley and follow country roads through villages and hamlets to reach the plateau above the northern Marne valley. The valley is mostly forested whilst up on the plateau agriculture is predominant. We follow the River Clignon and can visit the large WWI American War Cemetery and Monument near Belleau, then descend to our overnight mooring at Château-Thierry. Château-Thierry owes its name to the castle that once was on the hill above the Marne; you can still see remnants. The town was the site of two important battles, in 1814 during the Napoleonic Wars, and at the end of WWI.

Day 6: Château-Thierry – Dormans – Épernay

cycling @ 35-50km

We officially enter the Champagne region today. We cruise to Dormans, a quiet village on the Marne with a castle and chapel in memory of the battle of the Marne. During WWI this area was the site of many fierce battles. A ride up the northern valley slopes to the village of Châtillon-sur-Marne offers a stunning panoramic view over the Marne valley and the Champagne vineyards. We see Château de Boursault, a large chateau built in 1848 by the widow Cliquot who gave her name (Veuve Cliquot) to a famous Champagne house. Dinner is at your own arrangements tonight and you can choose from one of the many restaurants in Épernay.

Day 7: Épernay tour and Champagne house visit

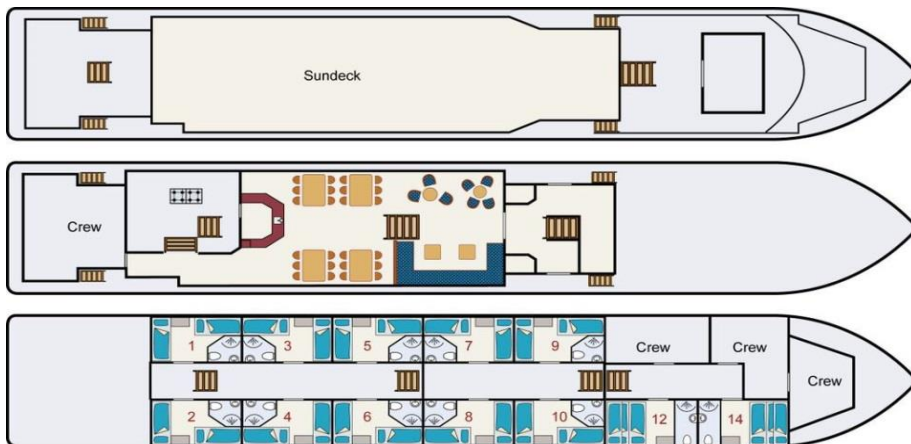
cycling @ 20-25km

A morning ride takes us along the quiet canal that runs parallel to the River Marne to Ay and Mareuil-sur-Ay. It's a challenging ascent via Dizy to Hautvillers, a picturesque village with many vineyards on the southern slopes of the Montagne de Reims. A highlight is a visit to the chapel and the tomb of the monk Dom Pérignon. According to tradition, Dom Pérignon (1638-1715) oversaw the wine cellars of a Benedictine abbey. The monks were the first to blend the various grape varieties into a wine of superb quality and to introduce double fermentation, a key process in making champagne.

We return by bicycle to Épernay and after lunch explore the city which, together with Reims, is the major wine centre of the Champagne region. Here three important wine regions meet: the Montagne de Reims, the Côte des Blancs and the Vallée de la Marne. Épernay has many interesting 19th century townhouses in neo-Renaissance or Classical style, especially around the beautiful Avenue de Champagne, the location of many prestigious champagne houses such as *Moët & Chandon*. We have planned a Champagne tasting and a tour of a major Champagne house.

Day 8: Departure day

Tour ends after breakfast in Épernay. From here you may take one of several daily direct trains to Paris Gare de l'Est or take a regional train to Reims.



Outdoor Travel offers Bike & Barge cruises on the canals and rivers of Europe including along the Danube. Bike & Boat holidays are available in the coastal and island regions of Croatia, Greece and Turkey or Vietnam.

Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations – early bookings essential

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