

Itinerary – 3 night cruise departing 19th September

Thursday 19th September

Afternoon

We will meet you and your fellow cruise guests at the Novotel Paris Gare du Lyon Hotel at 3pm. We'll then drive to where Serenity is moored by the village of Mareuil-sur-Ay (typically 1.5 hour drive depending on traffic).

Upon arrival at the barge you'll be welcomed by the rest of the crew with champagne and canapes. Afterwards there's time to take a stroll in the village or just simply relax and unpack.

Evening

There is the opportunity to get to know you fellow cruisers and crew over a relaxed dinner aboard tonight.

Friday 20th September

Morning – Cruise from Mareuil-sur-Ay to Damery

Around 9.30am Serenity will pull away from the quayside and we'll start our journey along the Canal Lateral a la Marne. This man-made canal, which follows the course of the adjacent river, was opened in 1845. With the towpath alongside and several nearby villages this is the perfect opportunity to hop on one of our bikes or take a stroll as there are lots of opportunities to get on/off the barge as we stop in each lock.

Mid-morning we will exit the last lock of the canal and descend onto the river Marne. As we pass the village of Cumieres, make sure you look out for the metal sculptures along the river bank, depicting different scenes from the vineyards. Lunch will be served onboard as we arrive at our peaceful countryside mooring near the village of Damery.

Afternoon

You will have seen the vine clad hillsides from the barge and this afternoon we take a drive through the vineyards to visit Champagne Le Gallais, where the lovely Marine will take us for a walk in the vineyard and explain how they care for the vines throughout the year. Not only are their vineyards blessed with beautiful views down the Marne valley but the grapes also go right up to the turreted Chateau Boursault, built in 1843 by Madame Cliquot. And whilst tasting the estates champagnes, one of the group will be taught how to open a bottle using a sword! Called 'Sabrage' this technique dates back to the Napoleonic troop's who liked to celebrate victory with champagne.

We will then visit the village of Hautvilliers. Famous as the home of Dom Perignon, who is often credited with discovering how to make champagne, today this pretty village is home to around 800 people and over 30 champagne producers! During your guided walk around the village you'll visit the abbey and there are opportunities to stop for an additional tasting at one of the village's small producers if you wish.

Evening

Dinner tonight is a gastronomic treat as you will be dining at a Michelin starred restaurant!

Saturday 21st September

Morning – Market visit and cruise from Damery to Dormans

It's an early breakfast this morning before a visit to the Saturday morning market. The stalls are laden with fresh produce and delicacies from across the region and you'll choose the cheeses and charcuterie to enjoy as a platter style lunch as we start our cruise today.

We will then visit Champagne Boizel. Founded in 1834, the current generation of the Boizel family still lead the brand. Our tour will take us through the Vat room, the barrel room's vast oak barrels and then down into the cellars where the champagne is aged. Unsurprisingly your visit concludes with a tutored tasting of some of the Boizel range. After you drain your glasses we will walk back towards the city centre, down the famous Avenue of Champagne and you'll learn the story of some of champagne's most iconic names including Moët & Chandon, Pol Roger and Perrier Jouët.

Afternoon

After we return to the barge, lunch will be served as Serenity continues cruising east along the winding, tree-lined river. For centuries the river Marne has been an important trade route to Paris and even today we will likely pass some cargo barges on our journey. Otherwise the river is a peaceful place with wildlife, fishermen patiently waiting for their catch, pleasure boaters and canoeists.

If you're feeling energetic join Claire for a visit to the WW1 Memorial Chapel in Dormans, with its beautiful views over the Marne river valley, before walking back through the village to the barge.

Evening

Tonight you will enjoy dinner at a popular restaurant on the village square, a short walk or drive from the barge.

Sunday 22nd September

Morning

After a relaxed breakfast it's time to say goodbye to Serenity. You'll leave the boat at 10am and should be in Paris around midday, depending on traffic. Again our drop-off point will be the Gare du Lyon, which is in the centre of Paris and offers easy access to the rest of the city via the Metro or a taxi.