

## **2<sup>nd</sup> October departure**

### **About this itinerary**

At the moment there are no cabins reserved for this departure, so as the first people to book you get to choose the duration of the cruise, ie. a 5 or 6 night trip. As soon as you make your booking (which is secured by completion of our booking form and the payment of your 30% deposit) your cruise departure is guaranteed, regardless of whether any other cabins are booked. Infact you might end up getting a private cruise for just the two of you, which happened to one lucky couple last year.

You also get the benefit of choosing the excursions for the week. Once you've booked your cabin and selected your choice of excursions, this itinerary is then locked in for the cruise and will be put on the website so that other people can see it when they book the remaining cabins.

### **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October**

#### **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 in the village of Bissueil (typically 1.5 hour – 2 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 before getting to know your fellow guests over a 3 course dinner onboard.

### **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October**

#### **Morning – Cruise from Bissueil to Dizy**

After a relaxed breakfast we will start our journey along the canal, passing through the pretty villages of Mareuil-sur-Ay and Tours-sur-Marne. With the canal towpath running alongside 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.

#### **Afternoon**

Lunch will be served aboard as we arrive in Dizy and this afternoon you can choose from the following excursion options:

***Option 1: Visit to Champagne Guy Charbaut and Avenue of Champagne*** – Established in 1936, this family owned champagne house focus on bio-dynamic work in the vineyards and are experimenting with aging in oak barrels for their cuvees. Marion explain the complete process of making champagne as she shows you around the vat house and century old cellars dug into the chalk cliff above. Your visit ends with a generous tasting of a range of the vintage and non-vintage champagnes. We will then drive to the city of Epernay, where on a walk down the famous Avenue of

Champagne you'll learn the story of some of champagne's most iconic names including Moët & Chandon, Pol Roger and Perrier Jouët. Unsurprisingly there are plenty of opportunities to stop for additional tastings if you wish along the way. (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 15 minutes)

***Option 2: Chocolate workshop and the Avenue of Champagne*** – Get hands on and learn how to make filled chocolate champagne corks with Xavier at his artisan chocolate shop. We will then head to the city centre, where on a walk down the famous Avenue of Champagne you'll learn the story of some of champagne's most iconic names including Moët & Chandon, Pol Roger and Perrier Jouët. Unsurprisingly there are plenty of opportunities to stop for additional tastings if you wish along the way. (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 15 minutes)

### **Evening**

Tonight you will eat dinner at a family owned restaurant in Epernay that is a perennial favourite with the locals.

## **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> October**

### **Morning – Cruise from Dizy to Damery**

During our cruise today we leave the manmade canal and join the winding Marne river. Here the scenery changes with natural riverbanks and wider locks operated by remote control. 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.

### **Afternoon**

After lunch, the barge will moor and you have two excursion options to choose from:

***Option 1: Visit to the vineyards of Champagne Le Gallais and the village of Hautvilliers*** – Here 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 drive to Hautvilliers, considered to be one of the prettiest villages in the region. Famous as the home of Dom Perignon, who is often credited with discovering how to make champagne, today this village is home to around 800 people and more than 30 champagne houses! (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 15 minutes)

***Option 2: A Chateau and vineyard village*** - We start our afternoon at Chateau Pierry, a charming, privately owned 18th century chateau. Small but perfectly formed, we may well bump into the owner as Claire shows you round the reception rooms, former private apartments, gallery of the kings, champagne granary and wine cellar, before enjoying a glass of champagne in the garden. We will then drive onto the nearby village of Cramant which is nestled among the vines of the Cote de Blanc, where the chalky soils are ideally suited to Chardonnay grapes. Our stroll around the pretty village concludes with a tasting at a small producer. (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 30 minutes)

### **Evening**

Dinner tonight is at a popular restaurant which specialises in traditional French food and grilled meats.

## **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> October**

### **Morning – Market visit and cruise from Damery to Dormans**

A visit to the Saturday morning covered market in Epernay is always a popular excursion with our guests. The stalls are laden with fresh produce from across the region and you'll choose the cheeses and charcuterie to enjoy as a platter style lunch during today's cruise.

After we return from the market we'll be taking off the mooring ropes to continue our river journey. This tree lined winding river has for centuries 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.

### **Afternoon**

We will arrive in the village of Dormans mid-afternoon. If you are feeling energetic take a short drive to the Memorial Chapel in Dormans, with its beautiful views over the Marne river valley, before walking back through the village to the barge.

### **Evening**

Dinner tonight is at the excellent restaurant on the village square, just 10 minutes walk from the barge.

## **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October**

### **Morning and afternoon – Excursion to Reims**

Today the barge won't be cruising and we will be visiting the unmissable city of Reims. We will start our visit at the magnificent gothic cathedral. Every king of France since Clovis in 1130 has been crowned in this cathedral, today it is a UNESCO World Heritage site in recognition of this history it's architecture significance and the impressive beauty of the external sculpture work. We'll take a short walking tour of the city centre, during which you'll discover it's hidden gems and beautiful art deco buildings. This is also a great opportunity for souvenir shopping and a well deserved stop at a patisserie!

Sunday lunch is a popular time for French families to get together and we will be joining them at one of the cities top restaurants. To complete your afternoon can choose from the following options:

***Option A – Pommery Champagne*** – One of Champagne's 'Grande Maisons' it was Pommery champagne that first developed the modern "Brut" style of champagne in 1874. Your guide will show you around the beautiful natural chalk cellars which were originally dug out by the Romans, which today house an eclectic collection of modern artworks as well as million of bottles of maturing champagne. NB. If you wish it is possible to visit Pommery Champagne and one of the following options.

***Option B - San Remi Basilica and Musee San Remi*** – Built in housed in a beautiful old abbey this museum tell the history of the city from Roman times.

***Option C - Musée de la Reddition*** - The school which served as the Headquarters of General Eisenhower, and where he received the German surrender that ended combat in

WW2 (24 hours before it was re-signed in Berlin) is now a museum dedicated to this historic event and the city's role in the closing stages of the war.

**Option D - Villa Demoiselle** – Originally built for the directors of Pommery Champagne, in the last five years this Art Deco house has been lovingly restored before being opened to the public. The result is a real architectural jewel with floral paintings climbing the walls, stained glass windows, period furniture throughout, sweeping central staircase and superb Baccarat chandeliers. Our visit ends with a glass of champagne in the garden.

### **Evening**

Tonight you'll enjoy a relaxed BBQ dinner aboard.

## **Monday 7<sup>th</sup> October**

**NB. If you choose the 5 night cruise option you will depart the barge around 10am and be driven back to Paris**

### **Morning – Cruise from Dormans to Chateau Thierry**

Our final morning of cruising takes us to Chateau Thierry, which was first settled by the Romans. As we travel further west the river becomes wider and the scenery changes from vineyards to woodland.

### **Afternoon**

You'll have lunch onboard as we arrive at our mooring. In the afternoon you can choose from the following excursions:

**Option 1: Visit to Champagne Pannier** – On a visit to Champagne Pannier you'll be introduced to the champagne production method. Since 1937 the company have been maturing their champagne in a 2km long network of 12<sup>th</sup> century cellars in Chateau Thierry. At the end of your tour you will get to taste a range of their champagnes. On the way back to the barge we will visit the town's ruined hilltop castle, which with its commanding position overlooking the river valley below has been a strategic stronghold since Roman times. (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 5 minutes)

**Option 2: WW1 history tour** – Chateau Thierry was a key strategic location during the Aisne Marne Offensive during the closing stages of World War 1. We start our tour at the statuesque Franco-American Memorial atop Hill 204, with its sweeping views over the champagne hillsides of the Marne valley. We will then drive a short way to Belleau Wood where the trench lines and shell holes remain as scars of the fierce fighting that took place here, famous as the first significant engagement of the newly created US Marine Corps. We will also visit the small museum here and the adjoining American and German cemeteries. (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 20 minutes)

### **Evening**

Your final dinner is a gastronomic treat at an excellent Michelin recommended restaurant around 20 minutes drive from the barge.

## **Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October**

### **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.