

## **5<sup>th</sup> June 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 5<sup>th</sup> June**

#### **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 Sillery (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 dinner at a fantastic local restaurant.

### **Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June**

#### **Morning – Cruise from Sillery to Isse**

About 9am we'll be taking off the mooring ropes to start our cruise along the canal. Here the canal passes through peaceful countryside, past occasional grain silos that are the canal's original raison d'être. You can also see the vineyards in the distance. Around midday we will reach the Mont Billy Tunnel. Built in 1860, this tunnel took 15 years to complete and takes the canal beneath the Montagne de Reims. Passage through the tunnel takes around 45 minutes - if anyone is claustrophobic or doesn't want to travel through the tunnel, the vehicle is available to take you for a visit to the nearby Phare de Verzenay, a lighthouse built in the vineyards as an eye catching landmark, which now houses a modern museum about the vineyards. Or you can take the bicycles and meet the barge at the other end of the tunnel.

#### **Afternoon**

After lunch on board we will be heading to the historic 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. You can then choose from the following options:

**Option A - Walking tour of Reims city-centre** – Settled since Roman times, Reims is awash with history. On our walking tour you'll get to discover of it's hidden gems and beautiful art deco buildings. With this option there is also time for souvenir shopping and a stop at a patisserie.

NB. We can combine this with another optional tour to make a longer excursion if you would like.

**Option B - San Remi Basilica and Musee San Remi** – Built in the 11<sup>th</sup> century the beautiful Romanesque San Remi Basilica is even older than the main cathedral. Next door we will also visit the 17<sup>th</sup> century abbey which now houses a museum telling 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.

### **Evening**

Tonight you will enjoy dinner aboard the barge.

## **Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June**

### **Morning – Cruise from Isse to Mareuil-sur-Ay**

We will spend around 6 to 7 hours cruising today so the barge may already be moving as you sit down to breakfast. Serenity will be descending downhill through a chain 6 locks, before passing through the pretty villages of Tours sur Marne and Bisseuil. 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.

### **Afternoon**

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

**Option 1: Visit to the village of Hautvilliers** - 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! Located in the middle of the vineyards, Hautvilliers is considered one of the prettiest villages in the region. On our guided walk around the village you'll visit the abbey and enjoy another champagne tasting at one of the village's small producers. (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 20 minutes)

**Option 2: Visit to Champagne Guy Charbaut** – 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. (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 1 minute)

**Option 3: Epernay's Avenue of Champagne** – Often called the Capital of Champagne, a highlight of Epernay is the famous Avenue of Champagne, the home of Moët & Chandon, Pol Roger, Mercier

and Perrier Jouet. As we stroll down the hill into the city there are plenty of opportunities to stop for additional tastings if you wish. Your excursion ends with a flight on a tethered balloon that climbs to 150m, offering fantastic views over the city, vineyards and the Marne river valley (weather/queues permitting). (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 20 minutes)

### **Evening**

Dinner tonight is at an excellent local restaurant.

## **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> June**

### **Morning**

This morning you have the choice of two excursions:

***Option 1: Saturday morning market*** – A visit to the Saturday morning food market in Epernay is always popular with our guests. The art deco style covered market hall is filled with stalls of fresh produce and delicacies from across the region. And you will get to choose the cheese and charcuterie for today's platter style lunch. (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 15 minutes)

***Option 2: Visit to a private 18<sup>th</sup> century chateau*** - Just south of Epernay, Chateau Pierry, is a charming, privately owned 18th century chateau. Infact, 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. (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 20 minutes)

### **Afternoon – Cruise from Mareuil-sur-Ay to Damery**

When we return to the barge we'll enjoy the short cruise to Damery. As lunch is served we will leave the manmade 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.

Late in the afternoon we will depart for a visit to 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.

### **Evening**

Dinner tonight is at one of our favourite restaurants in nearby Epernay.

## **Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> June**

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

About 10am we'll be taking off the mooring ropes to continue our journey along the river Marne to the village of Dormans. 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**

You will have lunch whilst the barge is cruising and after we are moored in Dormans you have the choice of two excursions:

***Option 1: Visit to the Dom Caudron Champagne*** – This village champagne production co-operative set up by the local abbot in 1929. Our tour starts at the museum's historic wine presses before moving onto the modern cuverie. You will then get to taste their champagnes that focus on the Pinot Meunier grape which dominates the village's vineyards. We'll then 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. (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 10 minutes)

***Option 2: Epernay's Avenue of Champagne*** – Often called the Capital of Champagne, a highlight of Epernay is the famous Avenue of Champagne, the home of Moët & Chandon, Pol Roger, Mercier and Perrier Jouët. As we stroll down the hill into the city there are plenty of opportunities to stop for additional tastings if you wish. Your excursion ends with a flight on a tethered balloon that climbs to 150m, offering fantastic views over the city, vineyards and the Marne river valley (weather/queues permitting). (Drive time from the barge, each direction: 30 minutes)

### **Evening**

Tonight you will enjoy dinner at a restaurant in a nearby village.

## **Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June**

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

Our final morning of cruising takes us further west along the river to the town of Chateau Thierry. The scenery of rolling vine covered slopes and frequent villages becomes more wooded over the course of the morning, before we arrive into Chateau Thierry, which has been a strategic crossing point of the Marne river since Roman times.

### **Afternoon**

Lunch will be served as we travel and in the afternoon you can choose from two 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, overlooking the river valley below. (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 in 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'll 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**

For your final night you will enjoy a BBQ dinner aboard.

## **Monday 30<sup>th</sup> 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.