



16 - 22 August 2023

Westbound: Chalons-en-Champagne to Courcelles

€3,250 per person

Optional extras

Bicycle - €40 per person

Electric bicycle - €100 per person

Hot air balloon flight over the vineyards - from €200 per person

WEDNESDAY

Afternoon - Pick up at Chalons-en-Champagne train station and welcome aboard

We'll meet you on the platform at Chalons-en-Champagne train station, which is just 5 minutes drive from the barge. The direct train from central Paris takes 1 hour 40 minutes (which is quicker than if you drive). We'll provide all the information you need, including where to go and how to buy your tickets in advance. Typically the fare from Paris to Chalons-en-Champagne is around €25 - €40 per person, each way.



When you arrive at the barge you'll be welcomed aboard by the rest of the crew with champagne and canapes. There's then time to take a stroll to explore the medieval buildings in the centre of Chalons or just relax onboard and unpack.

Evening

We're kicking off your cruise in style tonight with dinner at a Michelin starred restaurant. Holder of a Michelin Star since 2018, we love this restaurant for the interesting flavour combinations, beautiful presentation and excellent service to match and it's just 10 minutes walk from the barge (or we can hop in the car if you prefer).

THURSDAY

Morning - Cruise from Chalons-en-Champagne to Vraux

About 10am we'll be taking off the mooring ropes to start our cruise along the canal. Here the canal takes us through peaceful countryside, past occasional grain silos that are the canal's original raison d'être.

Afternoon excursion: Visit to the historic city of Reims (40 minutes drive from the barge)

Settled since Roman times, Reims is awash with history. On our walking tour you'll get to discover of its hidden gems and beautiful art deco buildings. With this option there is also time for souvenir shopping and a stop at a patisserie. We'll finish our walk at the magnificent gothic cathedral. Every king of France since Clovis in 1130 has been crowned in this cathedral. Today it is an UNESCO World Heritage site in recognition of this history, its architectural significance and the impressive beauty of the external sculpture work.



Reims Cathedral





BBQ evening aboard

We'll then cross the city to the San Remi Basilica and Musée San Remi. Built in the 11th century the beautiful romanesque San Remi basilica is even older than the main cathedral. Next door we will also visit the 17th century abbey which now houses a museum telling the history of the city through the ages.

Evening - BBQ dinner aboard

Graeme's manning the grill tonight for a BBQ dinner aboard. As we're moored in the countryside tonight, it's a great opportunity to really enjoy the peace and nature before ending the evening with a beautiful sunset over the hills. Dinner is accompanied by your choice of champagne or wine - how about trying the Bouzy Rouge, a full bodied Pinot Noir just like this region produced for the Kings of France before Champagne was invented.



E-bike adventure through the vineyards

FRIDAY

Morning - Cruise from Vraux to Mareuil-sur-Ay

Leaving Vraux we'll spend this morning cruising through the pretty villages of Tours-sur-Marne, Bisseuil and Conde-sur-Marne. With just short distance between the locks, today is a great opportunity to hop of the barge and watch from a different angle the precision of maneuvering Serenity in with just centimetres to space each side.

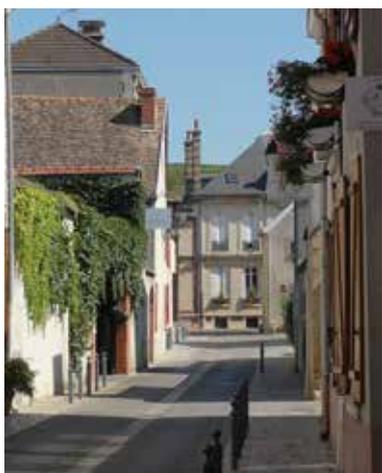
Afternoon excursion: E-bike adventure to Hautvilliers (0 minutes drive from the barge)

Our ride takes us up through the vineyards to the village of Hautvilliers, considered 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! We'll visit the abbey where he is buried and visit the cellars of a family run champagne house.

NB. This excursion is a 40-50 minute bike ride each way.

Evening

Tonight we are moored in one of our favourite spots, on the edge of the village of Mareuil-sur-Ay. Right underneath the vineyards we always get beautiful sunsets over the canal here. It's about 5 minutes in the car to reach our restaurant for this evening, the Henri IV restaurant in Ay. This place is so popular with locals and visitors that they moved to a larger location a few years ago - guests often come home raving about the 12 hour lamb dish.



Hautvilliers

SATURDAY

Morning - Market visit and cruise from Mareuil-sur-Ay to Ay

It's an early morning start today if you want to join Claire for a visit to the bustling Saturday morning covered market in Epernay. The stalls are



Market visit

laden with fresh produce from across the region and you can choose the cheeses and charcuterie to enjoy as a platter style lunch today.

After the barge is moored you can join Claire for a walking tour of this charming village, with its 14th century half timbered houses, winding lanes and gothic church.

Afternoon/Evening excursion: Candlelight evening at Chateau Vaux Le Vicomte (1hr 45 minutes from the barge)

Enjoy a night to remember at this picture perfect 17th century chateau. Upon arrival we'll visit the interior of the chateau with its magnificent state apartments. There is then time to wander in the formal gardens designed by Le Notre (who also did the gardens at the Palace of Versailles) before enjoying dinner al-fresco overlooking the gardens. Then as darkness falls over 2000 candles are lit in the gardens and chateau, a beautiful spectacle and a glimpse of how the chateau would have felt in the time of Louis XIV.

IMPORTANT: The chateau is over a 90 minute drive from the barge (each way) which is much further than we normally travel for excursions and we won't be back until around midnight. But if you don't mind a long car trip, previous guests who've chosen this option have really enjoyed this unique experience.



Candlelight evening at Chateau Vaux Le Vicomte

SUNDAY

Morning - Cruise from Ay to Damery

Today we leave the canal and join the meandering river Marne with its sweeping views of the rolling vineyards. 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.



Epernay from the tethered balloon

Afternoon excursion: Epernay and the Avenue of Champagne (20 minutes drive from the barge)

This afternoon we're heading to Epernay, the so called 'Capital of Champagne'. You'll discover the stories of some of champagne's most iconic names on a walking tour along the Avenue of Champagne, home to Moet & Chandon, Pol Roger, Perrier Jouet and Mercier to name a few. We'll start with a tasting flight at Boizel and there are many options for additional tasting stops if you wish. We'll finish our walk with a flight on a tethered balloon, offering fantastic views over the city and vineyards (weather permitting). There is also time for some shopping if you wish.

Evening

As it's Sunday and many restaurants are closed, it's a relaxing evening of dining aboard.



Sunset over the canal





Champagne Le Gallais

MONDAY

Morning - Cruise from Damery to Courcelles

Today we continue to cruise west on the Marne. 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 excursion: Explore the vines at Champagne Le Gallais (30 minutes from the barge)

At this winery 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 Clicquot. Join the lovely Florie for a walk in the vineyard and learn how they care for the vines throughout the year. 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 troops who liked to celebrate victory with champagne.



Evening

The final dinner of your cruise is at the Auberge Le Relais, a Michelin recommended restaurant, which offers classic french flavours with a modern presentation. At this elegant country inn you can choose to sit on the terrace looking out over the vineyards or in the tastefully decorated dining room. Conveniently located in the next village it's just a quick 10 minute drive in the car to the restaurant.

TUESDAY

Morning - Au revoir!

After a relaxed breakfast it's time to say goodbye to Serenity.

You'll leave the boat at around 10am and we will take you to meet your train back to Paris at Dormans train station (you'll arrive in Paris around midday)