



## Eurosail Bike & Barge

### Bruges 14 day roundtour: Belgium and French Flanders

### Program

14 days

Fiep

**Itinerary:** Bruges – Deinze – Kortrijk – Lille – Douai – Valenciennes – Mortagne – Tournai – Oudenaarde – Ghent – Bruges.

**Included:** 14 days, breakfast, packed lunch, 13 x dinner (3 courses), bed linen, tour guide, welcome drink. Bike rental is NOT included: € 140, - per bike

This interesting round tour goes through some beautiful provinces of Belgium and brings us across the border into France.

Starting point is Bruges, with its picturesque town centre probably the most beautiful of the historical Flemish cities. From Bruges we bike across the pleasant country side of Western Flanders to Deinze, where we visit a small beer brewery St Canarus.

From Deinze we follow the river Leie to the south to Kortrijk, where we visit the flax museum. The Lys area owes its prosperity to a great extent to the flax industry.

We also visit the Flanders Fields Museum in Ypres, commemorating the First World War, in which many American soldiers were fighting in this region.

Then a visit of the French city of Lille is on the program with its beautiful old town center.

We have now crossed the Belgium / French border and are cycling through French regions which have belonged to Belgium (and the Netherlands) for a long time.

Only in the second half of the 17th century, under the reign of Louis XIV, these parts of Flanders and Henegouwen were conquered by the French. Louis XIV assigned his court architect Vauban to build a line of fortresses to consolidate the northern border of his empire. A good example of such a fortress we can see in Le Quesnoy.



The area around the towns of Douai and Valenciennes is also called the "Black Country". For almost 300 years intensive coal mining was done in this region and since the summer of 2012, the entire northern French mining area is protected by UNESCO as a cultural landscape. We visit the Mining History Centre of Lewarde where we learn about the years of mining history and daily life of the miners.

Leaving Valenciennes we go to the north through the evergreen landscape of the regional park of the rivers 'Scarpe' and 'Escaut' and we will visit a cheese farm near Mortagne.

Back in Belgium we follow the Scheldt to Tournai, which used to be an important city for the pilgrims during the middle Ages. Towards the end of the tour we visit Ghent, in order to breathe in the atmosphere of the old days in the town center with its impressive Belfort and the St. Bavo's cathedral.



### **Day 1 (Sat): Bruges**

- 15.00 h Arrival in Bruges, also called the Venice of the North, maybe is the most beautiful of all Flemish cities. Its old centre, which dates from the middle Ages, is almost completely intact. At the time Bruges was a metropolis, centre of trade and art, which we can still fully enjoy.
- 16.00 h Welcome speech and crew introduction
- 16.30 h Bike fitting and test ride
- 18.15 h Welcoming drink
- 18.30 h Dinner
- 20.00 h Town walk

### **Day 2 (Sun): Bruges**

- Bike tour (optional): 25 km
- 8.00 h Breakfast
- 9.00 h Today the barge stays in Bruges. You can join a short bike tour to the town of Damme or spend the day on your own in Bruges and visit one of the many museums.
- 18.30 h Dinner

### **Day 3 (Mon): Bruges - Deinze**

- Bike tour: about 40 km
- 8.00 h Breakfast
- 9.00 h Today we bike across the pleasant country side of Western Flanders to Deinze. We visit Tielt and at the end of our bike tour, we will visit a small beer brewery, St Canarus, where we can taste some very nice Belgium beers.
- 18.30 h Dinner

#### Day 4 (Tue): Deinze - Kortrijk (Courtrai)

Bike tour: about 40 km

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Today we continue our bike tour in the direction of Kortrijk, again a pleasant old town with lots of history. We will visit the flax museum. The Lys area owes its prosperity to a great extent to the flax industry

We are in an area here, where all towns and villages have both a French and a Flemish name

18.30 h Dinner

#### Day 5 (Wed): Kortrijk – Ieper - Lille (Rijsel)

Bike tour: about 50 km

8.00 h Breakfast while sailing

9.00 h The bike tour starts in Menen and leads us to Ieper. Ieper is well known because it is in the center of the WW I Battlefields. We will visit the Flanders Field museum, that tells us all we need to know about this terrible war.

"In Flanders Fields" is a war poem written during the First World War by Canadian physician and Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae. He was inspired to write it on May 3, 1915, after presiding over the funeral of friend and fellow soldier Alexis Helmer, who died in the Second Battle of Ypres.

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.  
We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow  
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.  
Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.*

16.00 h On the way back to the barge we will visit the town of le Quesnoy, a good example of a fortified city by Vauban.

18.30 h Dinner



## Day 6 (Thu): Lille (Rijssel)

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Today we will not bike and the barge stays in Lille.

Lille has a rich history and it features the Musée des Beaux Arts that can be seen as the second best art museum of France (after the Louvre museum in Paris). Here we find one of France's greatest art collections. More than 550 pieces from the 16th to the 20th century. Works by Rubens, Goya, Delacroix, Carpeaux, Rodin. In the basement models of fortified towns in northern France and Belgium.

The old Lille (Vieux Lille) is a bustling neighborhood that has still preserved its original character. Interesting to visit is the old market on the Place Général de Gaulle, a square that is surrounded by beautiful buildings. The old market nowadays serves as a beautiful setting for a market in second-hand books.

A little bizarre is the cathedral of Notre-Dame-de-la-Treille in old Lille. It seems Gothic building, but is not. At first glance, you think there's a piece missing, as if it has been hit by a bomb. In reality, they started this neo-Gothic piece of art in 1854. The building has been completed in 1999, nearly 150 years later, by finishing it with a modern façade.

Outside Vieux Lille the "only" 70 years old Town Hall with its 106 meter high tower attracts the attention. From that height, in times of war, the men of the city were called to arms.

Also outside the old Lille is the citadel, like so many French military buildings designed by the architect of Sun King Louis XIV, Vauban. The citadel of Lille is known as the 'Queen of the citadels'.

Tonight there is no dinner on board. You can eat at one of the restaurants in town. Mussels with fries are a popular dish here.

## Day 7 (Fri): Lille - Douai

Bike tour: about 40 km

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Today we bike in the direction of Douai. We are now cycling through the 'black country'. In former days intensive coal mining was done here. Douai is known for its bell tower with as many as 62 bells. Climb the tower and enjoy the breathtaking view over the historic center of Douai. Another attraction is the museum of the Chartreuse. This former convent, you'll find a unique collection of paintings, sculptures and art objects. Works by Van Dyck and Delacroix, but also 20th century Impressionists such as Pissarro, Renoir, Sisley and Rodin. The building with its cloisters, refectory and chapter house is an exceptional example of the monastic architecture of the 18th century.

18.30 h Dinner



## Day 8 (Sat): Douai - Valenciennes

Bike tour: about 25 / 40 km

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h First we bike to Lewarde, where we will visit the mining museum. The largest museum of mining in France gives the public the chance to visit the mine under the guidance of former miners: a track with a mine- train to the shaft where you descend to the locations where the coal was mined: the visitors are immersed in the reality of the miner's world.

We will meet the Fiep again in the city of Valenciennes.

18.30 h Dinner



## Day 9 (Sun): Valenciennes - Mortagne

Bike tour: about 40 km

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Our journey now goes back up north, through the regional park Scarpe-Escaut. We cycle through different landscapes. Meadows, orchards, forests, plains, valleys and lowlands ... We visit Saint-Amand-Les-Eaux, a spa, which originated around the Abbey of Saint-Amand, one of the most important abbeys of Flanders and Hainaut. Of the Benedictine abbey itself just the baroque tower of the church (1626) remains. Later we visit a cheese farm, La ferme du Grand Manoir where we can taste delicious cheese, organically produced

And we find the Fiep back in Mortagne, at the confluence of the Scheldt and the Scarpe, near the border of Belgium.

18.30 h Dinner

## Day 10 (Mon): Mortagne - Tournai (Doornik)

Bike tour: about 35 km

8.00 h Breakfast

Here in Mortagne we cross the French frontier and a little later, in Bleharies, we cross the Belgium frontier. We bike through the so-called 'white land'. The charming little fortress town Antoing lies at the heart of this region and since the Roman days limestone has been mined here. Our today's destination is Doornik (in French: Tournai), one of the oldest cities of Belgium. Here we are in Wallonia, where all towns and villages have again both a French and a Flemish name.

Up till the beginning of the 17th century Doornik was ruled by the French.

Here, tapestry weaving gained in importance, while the cloth industry became less important. In the various musea of the town, excellent examples can be seen.

In 1940 the entire city center was destroyed after a German air-raid. However, the town has been renovated splendidly. Especially the cathedral the Notre Dame (12th and 13th century) is worth seeing, as well as the Belfort, which was built at about 1200.

18.30 h Dinner

## Day 11 (Tue):Tournai - Oudenaarde

Bike tour: about 45 km

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Now we sail downstream the river Scheldt and crossing the language barrier we enter the Flemish region. From here onwards Flemish is the spoken language. Our target is Oudenaarde. In former days this little town was situated on the border of the French and German Empires and as a result it was involved in wars frequently. Since Oudenaarde was right in the firing-line, there was always someone on the look-out. The statue of the most famous watchman, Hanske de Krijger, is on the splendid city hall. In the first half of the 16th century this city hall was built of sandstone in Brabantine late Gothic style and it is one of the most beautiful city halls of Flanders. Oudenaarde is also known as the town of the tapestry weavers. Their tapestry is famous all over the world. We might have to quench our thirst at one of Belgium's famous beer breweries called Liefmans

18.30 h Dinner



## Day 12 (Wed):Oudenaarde - Gent

Bike tour: about 35 km

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h We continue sailing on the Scheldt in the direction of Ghent, but before we arrive there we may visit an interesting archaeological site (of an old Abbey) Ename which is located at the east-side of the river Scheldt.

Ghent is a lively university town with a rich history. The town arose on the spot where in Roman days the rivers Leie and Schelde merged. This favourable location brought on quite some wealth with a peak in the late 13th and early 14th century. The cloth industry was a source of great riches. In the city many patrician residences have been preserved. In the Lakenhalle (1425) the cloth traders gathered. The most important church is St. Baafs cathedral, which was constructed in different centuries and in different styles. In the cathedral several masterpieces of mediaeval painting are to be found. "The worship of the Lamb of God" by Jan van Eyck is the most famous of all.

You might want to take a city tour by boat or visit the old castle Gravensteen.

18.30 h Dinner

## Day 13 (Thu):Gent

Bike tour: about 35 km

8.00 h Breakfast.

9.00 h Today the Fiep stays in Ghent.

You can join the bike ride along the river Leie or spent the day in Ghent.

The bike tour leads through the Lys region southwest of Ghent. This region attracted



various artists around the turn of the century. Many a painter could bring something of the beautiful Lys landscape alive with his palette. Poets could express through the ever changing length of their verses something of the winding bends of the Lys. In one of the many meanders of the Lys, between Deinze and Ghent, is a surprisingly atmospheric, richly furnished and well-maintained 16th-century castle, "Ooidonk." What this castle distinguishes from most accessible castles is undoubtedly the fact that it is maintained so well and that it is also inhabited and has the setting of a family life.

We can visit the castle and walk around the beautiful gardens.

18.30 h Dinner

#### **Day 14 (Fri): Gent - Brugge**

Bike tour: ca 25 / 45 km

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Today our bike tour goes through country side of Western Flanders back to Bruges. You can choose to bike all the way or start biking from Aalter.

18.30 h Dinner

#### **Day 15 (Sat):Brugge**

8.00 h Breakfast

9.00 h Departure



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