

discover

Sharing our love for France's spectacular waterways

Hotel barging

Luxury hotel barge cruising in France as heralded by Thomas Jefferson continue to deliver exquisite French experiences.

Exclusive & enchanting

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO LUXURY HOTEL BARGE CRUISING IN FRANCE

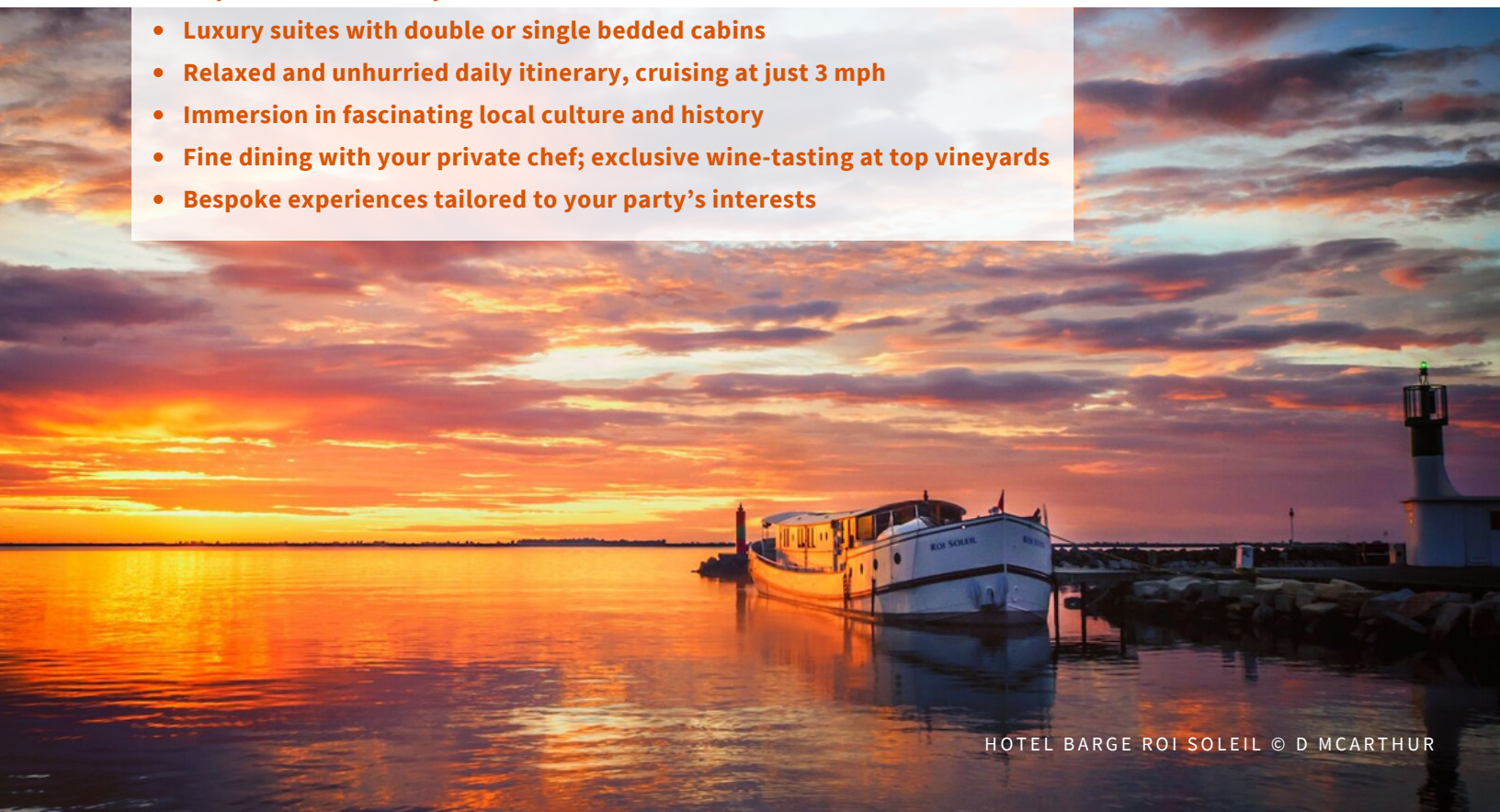
Combine the exclusive comforts of a boutique hotel with a tranquil inland cruise and you'll have one of the world's most privileged and memorable pleasures – a luxury barge vacation in France. Voyage through lush countryside, explore historic towns and villages, savour new tastes and relax in sumptuous luxury. Barging in France has it all.

Hotel barges are elegant and supremely comfortable, converted from traditional vessels or created as cruising boutique hotels from new. They are large and stable so you'll experience the smoothest of relaxing week-long vacations with a professional English-speaking crew who'll delight in introducing you to new gastronomic experiences.

Comfortable, calm, slow travel; delicious cuisine and wines; fascinating private excursions; top class service. These are the essential ingredients for every luxury hotel barge in French Waterways' selection.

Ruth & the team

- **Intimate atmosphere with few guests on board**
- **Unparalleled level of personal service**
- **Luxury suites with double or single bedded cabins**
- **Relaxed and unhurried daily itinerary, cruising at just 3 mph**
- **Immersion in fascinating local culture and history**
- **Fine dining with your private chef; exclusive wine-tasting at top vineyards**
- **Bespoke experiences tailored to your party's interests**



Discover hidden France

WHICH IS THE BEST REGION TO EXPLORE?

Each region of France offers a glorious variety of treasures for you to discover – in cuisine, wine, architecture and culture – so it's almost impossible to choose one region over another. Add geography and climate to the mix and your choice of barge vacations are endless, offering a fascinating range of blissful destinations for you to experience and come to love.

Whether you're a first-timer or a frequent visitor to France, French Waterways' selection of luxury barges covers the length and breadth of France. Each will take you along a peaceful scenic waterway to beautiful places not easily reached by other means – the secret wonders of hidden France.

We talk to clients throughout the world every day, especially in America and Australia, sharing our extensive knowledge about barging in France; our experience of cruising the waterways is unrivalled and widely recognised.



THE BEAUTIFUL SOUTH



The Canal du Midi spans the departments of Languedoc-Roussillon and Midi-Pyrénées and passes through unique and breathtaking landscapes. Avenues of majestic plane trees that still line much of its route, bordered by fields of shining sunflowers and gently sloping vineyards as it weaves through charming villages. The must-see medieval castle at Carcassonne is as stunning as the engineering and construction feat of this ancient waterway – both UNESCO listed this region is at the top of the list.

Provence conjures up the perfumed fields of lavender and bright sunflowers, the artistry of Van Gogh and the rich wines of Châteauneuf du Pape. The landscapes are rocky, the light dazzling, and the major cities of the Rhône River – Avignon and Arles – lead you south to the Camargue, its delicious sea-food delta, its white horses, pink flamingo and azure blue sea-scapes. Cruise here for lashings of sunshine and Mediterranean cuisine.



Aquitaine in the south-west corner of France is an ancient wine-growing region, famed for its St Emilion label amongst many other top vineyards surrounding its capital, Bordeaux. The quiet Canal de Garonne, linking the Atlantic ocean to the Canal du Midi at Toulouse, is now one of Europe's top fruit growing regions offering scented blossoms in spring and bountiful harvest scenes in the autumn. Choose this route to discover delicious wines and the rich historic heritage of the land of the bastides, once in English hands.

IN DEEPEST BURGUNDY

Famous for its red and white wines and its Grand Cru route through the vineyards, the region bursts with culinary prowess and the cultural richness bestowed by the Dukes of Burgundy. Together with the western lands of the Loire River, famed as the Garden of France, the region's wealth of waterways were once busy trade conduits to Paris and across France for wood and stone, wheat and wine.

Now, they offer several delightfully enchanting and peaceful routes through sunny rolling vistas, with hundreds of châteaux, famous vineyards and picturesque villages to explore. With the Côte d'Or and the Saône River to the south Burgundy's variety of cruising routes inspires voyagers to return over and again.



PARIS AND THE EAST

Discover the iconic sights and thrilling delights of Parisian city life, interspersed with gourmet dining and street-café lunches. Then, head off east to immerse yourself in the famous vineyards and cellars of Champagne's lush green hillsides. Make this your cruise to unravel the mysteries of bubbly.

Cross the Vosges mountains to discover the picture-book scenery and culture of the Alsace region, its cuisine and architecture mingling with Germanic influences from across the Rhine River and its romantic sparkling Christmas markets attracting seasonal visitors from around the world. Fly to the stunning city of Strasbourg to cruise this lesser known region.



Contact us for guidance about each and every region, its countryside, towns, villages, culture and rivers and canals - or visit our destinations page on www.french-waterways.com. Our experience is uniquely based on more than 10,000km of cruising the French Waterways network ourselves - we know each hotel barge and its regional itinerary, up close and in person.

Authentic experiences

WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS?

- **Wine and cruises**
- **Gourmet skills**
- **Walking and biking**
- **History and culture**
- **Creative expression**
- **Adventure and excitement**
- **Golf and watersports**
- **Beauty and wellness**

France is the world's most beloved home of fine wines, exceptional cuisine and haute couture. She is steeped in European history, architectural heritage and culture- but away from the well-known icons of Paris and large cities lies authentic French life, natural and captivating - a wealth of beauty and fascination. Wherever you journey on the waterways there's something mouth-watering to savour, views to marvel at and things to discover.

For seven days and six nights aboard your barge you'll enjoy sunny breakfasts and evening sunsets on deck, forgetting worldly cares as you absorb France as she should be seen, away from the crowds, relaxing with your private party. Each day you'll also venture forth, in air-conditioned comfort away from the barge, to explore and enjoy nearby places of interest and discover local wines. Charter parties may enjoy bespoke itineraries, crafted to suit the groups' interests.



AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES



Take it easy

Barge cruising is quiet, slow and peaceful. The level towpath alongside is perfect for walking and each barge has bikes, whether pedal-powered or electric powered, to get you into the surrounding countryside and the pretty villages.

Enjoy the good life

Dining in France is supremely important and your private on board chef ensures that only the finest ingredients are used, usually from local producers. Your cruise will include a trip to the nearby market to help select the freshest cut of locally grown beef or bunch of asparagus. Vegetarian, kosher, low-carbohydrate or gluten-free foods, and your favourite beverages, will be catered for with relish. Guests may also enjoy a lunch or dinner taken onshore locally in authentic French style at an Informal village bistro or Michelin starred haute-cuisine restaurant.



Out and about

France is an endless source of historical sites, architectural heritage and artefacts of civilisation. There are also opportunities for more active pursuits – kayaking, climbing or horse-riding for example. Cave exploration, canoeing, archery and treetop swinging are just some of the activities that can be organised to keep you on your toes – ideal for a multi-generation cruise.

A TYPICAL ITINERARY - BARGE GRAND VICTORIA, BURGUNDY

Cruise the peaceful dreamy waters of the Saône River through Burgundy's rich tapestry of famed vineyards, rolling hillsides, enchanting châteaux and culinary excellence.

- **6 guests / 3 luxurious suites**
- **All inclusive dining with 2 lunches ashore at a local bistro and Michelin starred restaurant**

Sunday - Arrival in Auxonne

You'll be collected from Paris or Dijon for a private chauffeured transfer to Grand Victoria, moored in Auxonne. Once you've settled in, relax with a signature champagne welcome before your first of many delicious dinners on board.

Monday - Cruise to St Jean de Losne | Excursion to Clos de Vougeot

As you glide along one of the prettiest stretches of the petit Saône just relax on deck, enjoy the scenery, listen to the birdsong and begin to unwind. After a delightful lunch onboard, we depart for the historic Château du Clos de Vougeot, once home of the Cistercian monks and their burgundy vineyards. Follow this with an informal private wine tasting at a renowned Côte d'Or cellar.

Tuesday - Cruise to Seurre | Excursion to Dijon

We'll take a fascinating walking tour of the region's famous capital, Dijon. Home to Gustav Eiffel's historic covered market, we'll also explore the Duke's Palace and Notre Dame before enjoying lunch at a French bistro. Explore at your leisure before a mustard tasting at the historic Maille Maison. Then return to Grand Victoria for a dreamy cruise to medieval Seurre.

Wednesday - Cruise to Chalon-sur-Saône | Excursion to Château de Rully

The canal itself fascinates, its ancient towpath invite us to walk or cycle alongside the barge as she cruises gently from lock to lock. Enjoy a magnificent lunch aboard before we venture off to tour the majestic Château de Rully, a medieval fortress built in the 12th century. At our mooring in Chalon-sur-Saône savour cocktails and dinner, and perhaps an evening wander of this spectacular city, the birthplace of photography.



A TYPICAL ITINERARY - BARGE GRAND VICTORIA, BURGUNDY

Thursday - Cruise to Fragnes | Excursion to Beaune

Work up an appetite on an early morning visit to Beaune with its medieval streets and ancient Hospices de Beaune, one of France's most prestigious historic monuments from the Middle Ages. After lunch at a local Michelin Star restaurant, sip cocktails as we cruise serenely to Fragnes. Cycle alongside a little, if you like, before a gourmet supper aboard.

Friday - Cruise to Chagny | Excursion to Château de Pommard

The week has flown past and already we're on our way to our last destination, Chagny. After lunch, we'll visit the famous Château de Pommard, where we'll discover the true taste of Burgundy's appellations, viticulture, and winemaking from the heart of the largest privately-owned clos in the Cote d'Or. Later, we're going wine tasting at the famous Pouilly-Fuissé vineyards. Full of cheers, it's the celebratory Captain's dinner on board this evening - time to reflect, share and toast the best moments of your cruise together.

Saturday - Departure from Chagny

Your private chauffeur arrives at 9:00 am to take you back to Paris or Geneva.



Whether you prefer to focus on food and wine, or history and culture, or an active vacation for the whole family, just tell us about your dream cruise preferences and our experienced concierge will find the itinerary that perfectly suits you and your party. We're English speaking and just a phone call away – contact us today.

The essence of elegance

WHAT WILL MY BARGE BE LIKE?

Cruising the most desirable French waterways, plying the most scenic routes, barges offer various styles of cruising: most barges offer full board, six night private cruises, but some are open to cabin bookings and others provide half-board and short weeks. Some barges are owned and managed in a fleet, others are individually owned with unique personalities.

All barges in France are quality rated and all include:

- Expert captain and deck crew
- Professional on-board chef to create fabulous cuisine
- Friendly, attentive hostess and cabin staff
- Highly knowledgeable excursions guide
- Light and comfortable saloon
- Sunny deck with shade and seating
- Two dining areas
- Air conditioning and heating
- WiFi and charging points for smart devices, etc.
- Bicycles and private luxury transport



In addition, individual barges provide their own levels of comfort & service

6* and 5* Barges

- Ultimate quality – ultimate comfort
- Upwards of 200 sq ft cabins with king-size beds
- Exceptional hospitality and facilities

4* Barges

- Very high quality – distinct Personality
- 150+ sq ft cabins, usually queen-size beds
- Wonderful service and attention

3* Barges

- Great value, no quality compromises
- Comfortable cabins, compact bathrooms
- Great food, good wine, charming service

We work closely with our selected group of hotel barge owners who entrust us with their representation. With frequent close contact we know each barge intimately, their service and style, pricing and availability.

Your perfect barge

WHICH BARGE IS FOR ME?

Singles & independent couples

Many barges can be booked by the cabin just like a hotel and this is a great option for single travellers or a couple. You'll be on board with like-minded folks who share your spirit of adventure, your love of France and your appreciation of the French joie de vivre. Take Luciole, for example, a perfect luxury barge for making new friends whilst relaxing and discovering cruising in France. She cruises the idyllic Nivernais canal with up to twelve guests and a choice of double, twin and single suites and a large deck area makes this barge ideal.



"A wonderful holiday on the beautiful Luciole. Delicious food, wonderful company and a great crew. So relaxing we lost track of time.... In fact probably the most relaxing holiday we have ever had. Trips, cycling, walking – all wonderful, and the crew could not have been more attentive. Thank you so much for a wonderful 6 days."

Happy families

A multi-generational barge cruise is the perfect way to get the family relaxing together. Whether you're eight months or eighty years, all ages are catered for. Savannah on the Canal du Midi, for instance, offers five star luxury accommodation and heavenly cuisine along with a truly bespoke itinerary - a choice of fun activities for the children and guided tours to vineyards and gentler excursions for parents and seniors. With a single suite, as well as three double suites, the nanny can come too!



"We can't thank you enough for the fabulous time we had on board the Savannah. It is an incredible boat with an outstanding crew. Our kids continue to start sentences with, "when we go back to the boat next year...."

Your perfect barge

WHICH BARGE IS FOR ME?

Small friendship groups

Seasoned travellers often explore the world together and perhaps it's time that you shared your love of France with your best friends. Discovering a new environment together enriches the experience significantly and is so much fun. In the south-west of France, why not step aboard the Saint Louis barge. Smart and chic, with beautifully authentic curvaceous lines, your party of six will simply adore relaxing on her super-spacious deck. This is the fruit growing region of France - perfumed, bountiful and home to the top Grand Cru labels of Bordeaux.

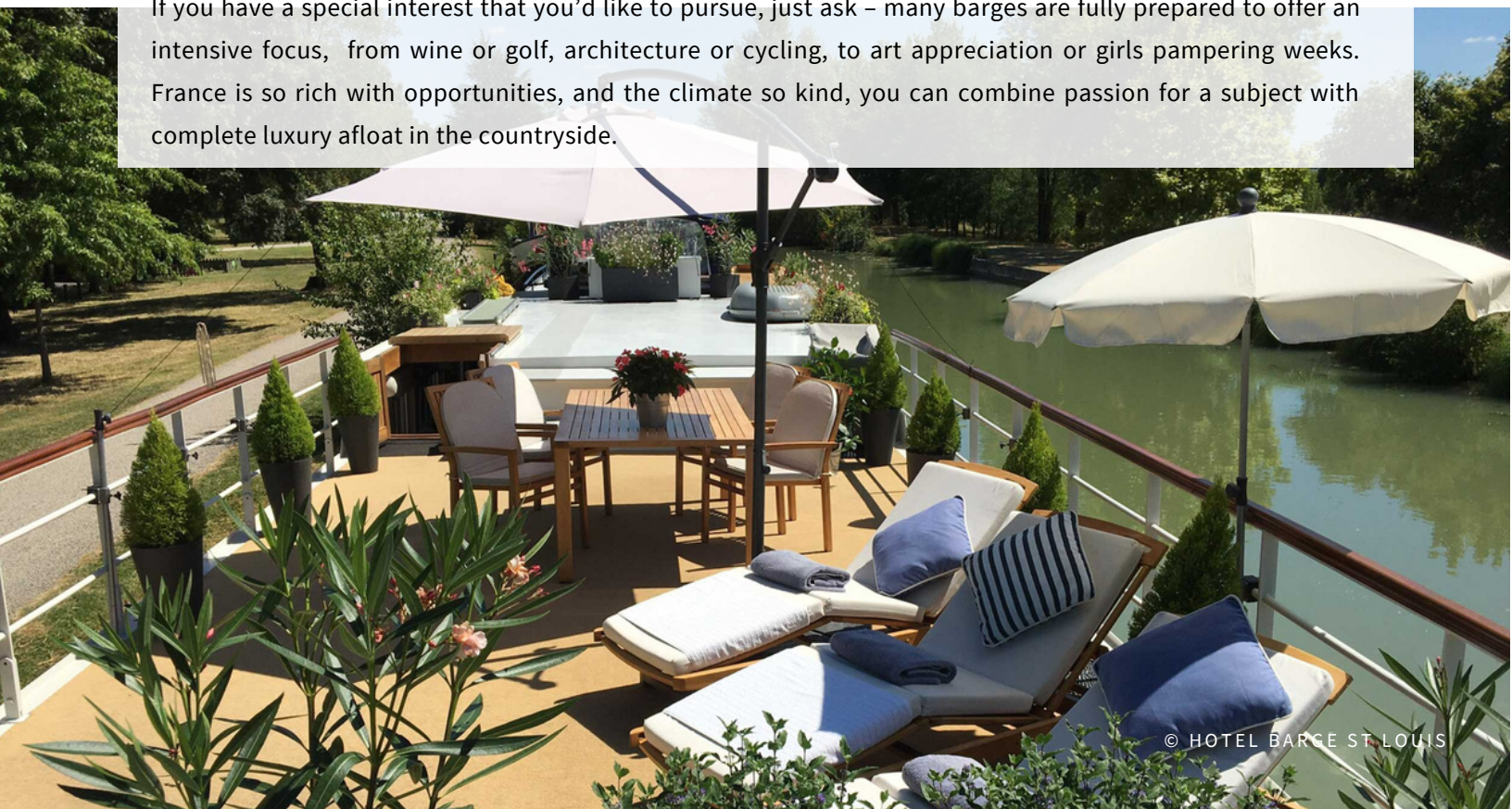
Themed cruises

If you have a special interest that you'd like to pursue, just ask – many barges are fully prepared to offer an intensive focus, from wine or golf, architecture or cycling, to art appreciation or girls pampering weeks. France is so rich with opportunities, and the climate so kind, you can combine passion for a subject with complete luxury afloat in the countryside.

Larger groups

Treating your group to a chartered barge cruise is an increasingly popular choice – it's luxuriously different and can fulfil a common interest. Lovers of the best in cuisine and wine will have their dreams fulfilled aboard barge Grand Cru. This supreme contemporary barge cruises in 6 star style in southern Burgundy with daily private tours to the Cote d'Or vineyards, medieval towns and fabulous local markets. With a bath in each of its four spacious suites it's home from home, with your personal master-chef at hand to pique your palette every day.

Contact us for some friendly advice about how to get the best from your cruise in France and which barge to choose for your party. We have unrivalled on-the-spot knowledge to share.



Next steps

HOW DO I BOOK MY CRUISE?

A luxury barge cruise is simply not the kind of vacation that's chosen solely on price, nor booked with a mouse-click. It's exclusive and exceptional and many elite barges are booked months or even years in advance.

Choices are difficult with such a wide variety of cruises on offer, but French Waterways' concierge expertise is on hand to guide you. Why choose us to help? Because, quite uniquely, we have over fifteen years' experience of cruising throughout France on our own boat; with insider knowledge and sensitivity we can provide a selection that's just right for you – all part of the service, no extra charge.

What's more, we're independent, impartial and hugely enthusiastic. We know first-hand about the joys of cruising in France's idyllic countryside and the treasures to be found if you only know where to look - and we do.







Contact us



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You can trust French Waterways to discover and secure your perfect barge cruise. Our expert advice and guidance is freely offered and always much appreciated, so when you're ready to plan your cruise simply get in touch and we'll work with you to match your requirements with prices and availabilities. We look forward to hearing from you and welcoming you aboard in beautiful France!



French Waterways

Cruising Inspiration and Information