



**Your Bike & Barge Tour**  
**Bruges to Paris OR Paris to Bruges**



**FBP or FPB 2012**

# BRUGES TO PARIS – PARIS TO BRUGES 2012

## BRUGES TO PARIS

- Day 1: Bruges, arrival
- 2: Bruges – Ghent
- 3: Ghent – Oudenaarde
- 4: Oudenaarde – Doornik (Tournai)
- 5: Doornik (Tournai) – Pont Malin (Bouchain)
- 6: Pont Malin (Bouchain) Cambrai – Honnecourt
- 7: Honnecourt – Tunnel of Riqueval – Saint-Quentin
- 8: Saint-Quentin
- 9: Saint-Quentin - Noyon
- 10: Noyon – Compiègne
- 11: Compiègne - Creil
- 12: Creil - Auvers sur Oise
- 13: Auvers sur Oise – Conflans - Paris
- 14: Paris
- 15: Paris, end of the tour

## PARIS TO BRUGES

- Day 1: Paris, arrival
- 2: Paris
- 3: Paris – Conflans - Auvers sur Oise
- 4: Auvers sur Oise - Creil
- 5: Creil – Compiègne
- 6: Compiègne- Noyon
- 7: Noyon- Saint-Quentin
- 8: Saint-Quentin
- 9: Saint-Quentin – Tunnel of Riqueval - Honnecourt
- 10: Honnecourt – Cambrai – Pont Malin (Bouchain)
- 11: Pont-Malin (Bouchain) – Doornik (Tournai)
- 12: Doornik (Tournai) - Oudenaarde
- 13: Oudenaarde - Ghent
- 14: Ghent - Bruges
- 15: Bruges, end of the tour

## DAY 1 : BRUGES

At 14.00 PM arrival in Bruges, also referred to as the Venice of the north. Bruges is considered one of the most beautiful towns in Flanders. The old town center dates back to the Middle Ages and is virtually unchanged. In its heyday Bruges was a major city, a cultural and business center, which we can still enjoy to this day. In the afternoon you make a test ride and afterwards the guides takes you for a city walk. In the evening we will be serving you a welcome dinner.

## BRUGES

Bruges is the capital of the province of West-Vlaanderen. The town finds its origins around a county-castle in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century.. The city reminds of a giant open-air museum. The enormous number of monuments and the well preserved grid of medieval streets attracts large numbers of visitors. In town there are many museums. Bruges is famous for its lace-work and chocolates. You can explore the city walking, cycling, by carriage or by boat in the city-canal.

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## DAY 2: BRUGES - GHENT

We begin by biking through the pleasant countryside of western Flanders to Ghent where we arrive around noon. Ghent is a lively university town, also with a rich past. The city has its origins in Roman times on the spot where the rivers Leie and Scheldt converge. This favorable situation brought a great deal of prosperity over the centuries and it had its peak in the late 13th - early 14th century. The textile industry brought great wealth. Many old patrician houses have been preserved in the town center. Textile merchants used to meet in the Cloth Makers' Hall (1425). Its major church is the St. Baaf's Cathedral, built over many centuries and in various styles. In the cathedral you can admire a number of masterpieces of medieval painting; the 'Adoration of the Lamb' by Jan van Eyck is the most famous one. You might want to take a town tour by boat or visit the old castle, Gravensteen. Bikes can be parked in the center of town and in the late afternoon we will cycle to the docking place south of the center.



### DAY 3: GHENT - OUDENAARDE

This morning we cruise from Ghent to Oudenaarde on the river Upper Scheldt. Oudenaarde is a small town, which was situated on the border of the French and German Empires, so the town was at the center of many wars. Since it was often in the line of fire, there was always someone on look-out. The most famous watchman still stands on the magnificent town hall: Hanske de Krijger. The town hall was built in the first half of the 16th century and is one of the most beautiful in Flanders. The style is late-Gothic Brabantian; the material is sandstone from Balegem. Oudenaarde is also known as the town of tapestry weavers. The tapestries became famous all over the world. (Museum closed on Monday). Before reaching Oudenaarde we will visit an interesting archeological site of an old abbey in Ename, which is located on the east side of the river Scheldt. From there, coming into Oudenaarde, we might have to quench our thirst at Liefmans, one of Belgium's famous beer breweries.



### DAY 4: OUDENAARDE – DOORNIK (TOURNAI)

We follow the river Scheldt upstream and cross the linguistic border into the Walloon region. From now on people speak French and villages, towns and cities have French names. Final destination of today is Doornik, or Tournai, one of the oldest towns in Belgium. Doornik was under French rule until early 17th century. Just as in Oudenaarde after the decline of the textile industry, tapestry became important here. In 1940 the entire town center was destroyed in a German air raid, but reconstruction has been very successful. Especially the Nôtre Dame cathedral (12th and 13th century) is worth seeing. But also the Belfort, built around 1200, is definitely worth a visit.



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### **DAY 5: DOORNIK (TOURNAI) – PONT MALIN (BOUCHAIN)**

During breakfast we cruise in the direction of the French-Belgian border through the 'white land', called that way because of the limestone that is mined there since Roman times. The lovely fortified town of Antoing lies at the heart of this region and our bike ride begins there. We follow part of the old pilgrim route to Santiago de Compostela, we pass border villages and end up in Bouchain. We spend the night at the great lock of Pont-Malin. The barge is no longer on the river Scheldt, but on a large canal that ultimately leads to Dunkirk. This region is characterized by the steel industry.



### **DAY 6: PONT-MALIN - CAMBRAI - HONNECOURT**

We leave the large canal during breakfast and take a left into the canal of Saint-Quentin. Here the Fleur feels at home and for the first time during this trip, the size of the locks are just right for her. The canal breathes peace and quietness, and reminds us of its rich shipping history. In order to transport coal from the mines to the north, Napoleon decided to dig this canal in 1801.

At Thun l'Evêque we start cycling to the city of Cambrai, once a Roman provincial capital and an important destination for pilgrims. Not until 1677 did Cambrai become French. Worth seeing are the impressive restored buildings of the city fortress built during Charles V's reign. The old city gate dates back to 1300 (as do the so-called Spanish House and the cathedral next to it.) After the town visit we cycle on to Marcoing and from there we follow the Scheldt valley (Escaut in French). We pass the ancient abbey of Vaucelles (which can be visited) and our final destination is Honnecourt.



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## DAY 7 : HONNECOURT – TUNNEL OF RIQUEVAL – SAINT-QUENTIN

Today, the barge passes through the Tunnel of Riqueval. The Canal de Saint-Quentin was built during Napoleon's reign. Because the differences in height were large at times, it was necessary to dig a number of tunnels. The longest one is the Tunnel of Riqueval, which is 5670 meters long. Today we go through this tunnel with the Fleur. Ships are still pulled through the tunnel in two hours time by an electric tugboat, just like in earlier times. Above the tunnel lies the water parting of the rivers Escaut (Scheldt) and Somme. As a result the barge is once again going downstream from there in the direction of Saint-Quentin.

Bikers disembark either right before or right after the tunnel. There is a small museum about the tunnel nearby. (This is also the region where the Australian Divisions came through during World War I on their way to Saint-Quentin.)

Final destination is Saint-Quentin where we also spend the Saturday. Saint-Quentin was built in the 2nd century on a junction of Roman roads. The lively provincial capital of Aisne province flourished as a pilgrimage destination around the grave of Saint-Quentin. The Gothic basilica was built between 1230 and the 15th century, and has a unique double transept with windows made in the 13th and 14th century. The town hall, built around 1500 in a flamboyant Gothic style, shows Flemish characteristics.



## DAY 8 : SAINT-QUENTIN

Today the Fleur stays in Saint-Quentin.

You can take an excursion by bus to the battlefields of World War I in the Somme valley. But it is also possible to fill your day by further exploring the city of St. Quentin and shopping.



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## DAY 9 : SAINT-QUENTIN - NOYON

During breakfast we sail in a southwesterly direction in the valley of the Somme. We cycle through the peaceful Somme region with its tiny villages to the town of Noyon, the place where Calvin (the well-known Protestant reformer) was born. This town, where Charlemagne was crowned king, later became an important cathedral town. The 12th and 13th century cathedral is surely worth a visit, as well as the medieval library next to it.

### NOYON

Noyon is a small but historic French town in the Oise department, Picardie. It has an impressive cathedral: the Notre-Dame, a nice museum about John Calvin and you can see the remains of sections of the Roman walls.



## Day 10 NOYON – COMPIEGNE

From Noyon we set course for Compiègne on the river Oise. Compiègne owes its magnificent structures to its proximity to Paris and the great surrounding woodlands, where the French kings loved to stay. Worth visiting are the beautiful gardens of the Château de Compiègne and you should not miss the town hall (1498-1530), the national stud farm nor the Tour de Jeanne d'Arc.

The cycling trip takes us through the forest of Ourscamp, crosses the river Aisne to the "Clairière de l'Armistice": the place where French and German generals signed the document that ended WWI. You can visit the small, but interesting, museum there. Then we cycle back to Compiègne (or you can take a detour and visit the Château de Pierrefonds).



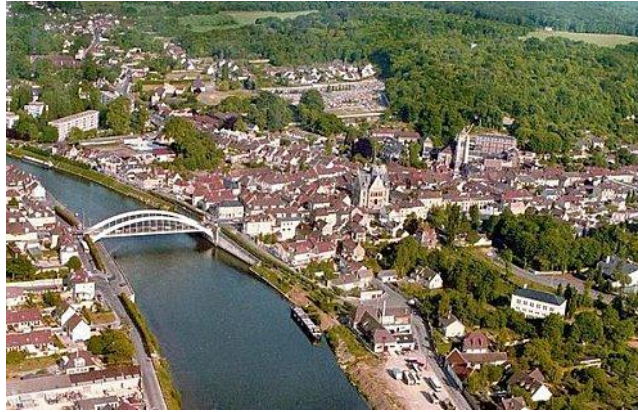
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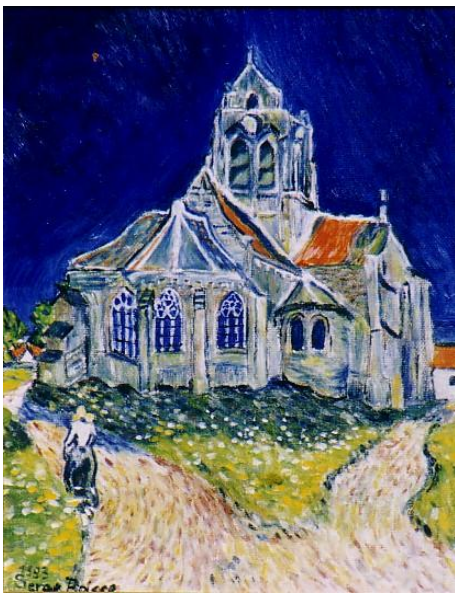
## DAY 11 : COMPIEGNE – CREIL

Today we first cycle through the forest south of Compiègne and then we follow the Oise river further downstream in the direction of Creil. Right before Pont-Ste-Maxence we pass by the abbey of Moncel, founded in 1309 by King Philip the Fair. Pont-Ste-Maxence owes its name to the fact that there was a bridge across the Oise in olden times. Pont-Ste-Maxence became a place to spend the night for merchants and kings on their way to Flanders. Creil, our final destination on this day, was renowned in the 19th century for its fine pottery, a collection of which you can see in the museum of Gallé Juillet.



## DAY 12 : CREIL – AUVERS SUR OISE

We start cycling from busy Creil towards Chantilly with its lovely and famous chateau and royal stables. It is also well-known for its horse-racing circuit. After a visit we continue through lush woods and pass or visit the abbey of Royaumont (in Chantilly you can decide to shorten the route and skip the abbey of Royaumont, so you can spend more time in Auvers). Then we cross the river Oise and follow it to Auvers-sur-Oise, where Vincent van Gogh spent the last days of his life. He and his brother are buried there. This region was very popular with many impressionist painters.



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## **DAY 13 : AUVERS SUR OISE – CONFLANS - PARIS**

During breakfast we will sail to Conflans-Sainte-Honorine, where the Oise and the Seine converge. Conflans has been an important shipping center in northern France since the 19th century. Today the barge finally cruises on the Seine, upstream to Paris. It is not far in a straight line, but the Seine has a number of large bends here. The Fleur now cruises through a region with a rich royal past: we pass Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Marly-le-Roi and Rueil-Malmaison. Still further along we cruise past the industrial suburbs of Gennevilliers and Bologne-Billancourt, and the Ile-Sequin, where the old Renault factories are. We finally arrive in the center. We cruise past the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, the Musée d'Orsay, the Ile de la Cité and the Nôtre Dame. The docking place of the Fleur is in the Port d'Arsenal, close to the Place de la Bastille.

For the people who want to enter Paris by bike, the trip begins in St.Germain-en-Laye. There we climb up to the palace, where there is a splendid view of Paris from the palace garden. After that we continue through the suburbs towards the modern architectural highlight of La Défense. We continue on through the Bois de Boulogne, past the Arc de Triomphe and the Louvre to the Place de la Bastille, where the Fleur will have docked by then.



## **DAY 14: PARIS**

Today the Fleur stays in Paris. You are free to spend the day any way you like. You can explore the city by metro or by a special bus that takes you past all the sights. You can also choose to take a day trip to Versailles.

### **PARIS**

Paris is the capital of France and the country's largest city. It is often called the city of light, la ville lumière.

There are many things to see and do: Paris has 150 museums, famous parks and gardens, beautiful cathedrals and churches and other remarkable buildings.

You can visit a market or go shopping and in the evening see the theatre, cabaret or some live music.

## **DAY 15 : PARIS, END OF THE TOUR**

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