

Pack and Pedal Europe: Barge and Bike Tours

Your friends have just returned from vacationing in Europe and cannot stop talking about their Barge/Bike tour, claiming it was the best vacation that they have ever had! You find yourself picturing a rusted old tug boat chugging along some oily waterway and cannot imagine that this would be something that anyone could enjoy! You try to imagine how a bike would fit in to the whole scenario and you simply cannot.



Perplexed, you ask, what in the world is a barge/bike tour and why are people so excited?!

Barge: (bär) 1. A flat-bottomed boat used to maneuver through canals or rivers 2. A large pleasure boat

Bike: (bī) 1. A bicycle, a lightweight vehicle consisting of a metal frame mounted on 2 spoked wheels and having a seat, handlebars for steering and 2 pedals for propulsion.

Tour: (toor) 1. A trip including visits to points of interest. 2. A journey to fulfill a schedule of engagements in different places

Combine all three and you have the perfect definition and description of what a Barge/Bike tour is.

Imagine yourself - relaxing on the sundeck of a modern river barge and watching the beautiful countryside pass, able to just soak in sun and scenery.

Imagine - climbing atop a bicycle and becoming part of the terrain that most tourists only see fly pass in an impressionistic blur from the window of their bus or train.



Imagine - being rocked to sleep at night by the gentle motion of the water.

Imagine - awakening on your floating hotel, to the smell of coffee, knowing that another day stretches before you, a day filled with biking, boating, local history and the camaraderie of your fellow passengers.

A barge/bike tour is all of this and so much more. The possibilities are endless and range from barging along the flower filled canals of Holland, or motoring the Danube River Bend to maneuvering the open waters of the Tyrrhenian and Adriatic Seas, exploring islands and ancient ruins.

Some of the most popular canal cruises are the various tours offered in the Netherlands, the land of Tulips. The very flat terrain and the long and rich history of canal transport make the Netherlands a perfect place to enjoy a tour such as this. When the sun rises during spring in the Netherlands, millions of eager bulbs also rise for the occasion. Acres upon endless acres of the most brilliantly exquisite tulips transform dozens of ordinary fields into a colorful kaleidoscope of hues. Having been grown in the Netherlands for more than 400 years, 1200 different varieties of these flowers are harvested during this season. Holland is also the land of bicycles. According to Holland's Board of Tourism, Holland's 16 million people own approximately 18 million bicycles!

A normal barge/bike tour is 8 days/7 nights with accommodations aboard a wide class of ships from standard to comfort plus with smaller cabins with bunk beds to more spacious cabins with lower beds. All classes of ships have private bathroom facilities and other amenities in common. The ships are designed for people of all ages seeking active vacations as well as cozy accommodations, as opposed to passive entertainment and excessive luxury. You will not find room service on any of the boats!



All the ships meet strict requirements with respect to sailing expertise and safety on board. Many tours now offer the option of E-bike rental allowing people of all ages the opportunity to continue to explore by bicycle the contours of the countries.

European barge/bike tours offer a unique opportunity to experience the essence of a local lifestyle and culture in ways that your typical touring cannot offer. Cycling back roads and country by ways allows for a unique type of meandering and leisurely exploring while learning the rich and varied history of each locale.

The guides are fun loving and provide a wealth of information! Knowing your boat awaits you at the end of your day's journey is both a comfort and an incentive and the evenings are spent celebrating the day's accomplishments with good food, drink and the new friendships formed.

Now that you know what a barge/bike tour is and have imagined yourself being a part of one, it is time to really experience it!

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