14 Day European Bike & Barge Canal Cruise “Maastricht Special”

From Amsterdam (Netherlands) to Brugge (Belgium)

Dates: Saturday 10th July to Friday 23rd July - 2021

Aimed at the active traveller, this tour combines two ideal ways of exploring Europe - cycling & canal barge cruising. Escorted by Bruno & Christine Corletto, this itinerary sees us cruising from the Netherlands' lively & amazing capital of Amsterdam to majestic Maastricht & ends in the fairy-tale Belgium city of Brugge.

This journey meanders south along the Vecht, Waal, Linge, Maas & Scheldt Rivers through gorgeous green landscapes with interesting encounters at every bend, then heads west through pretty Flemish countryside. This is 'slow travel' as it was meant to be - enjoying guided cycling excursions through some of North & South Holland's prettiest regions ...And if that wasn't already enough, we have included Maastricht in the itinerary, one of the oldest & most beautiful cities in Holland with magnificent buildings & a historic cobblestone town centre. Maastricht is also famous for being the hometown of the superstar violinist/conductor Andre Rieu & where, for the past 16 years, he has performed his summer evening open-air gala concerts in the most romantic square in the Netherlands - the Vrijthof in Maastricht. We are planning this tour to coincide with one of these concerts & whilst his 2021 program has not yet been released, we hope to include tickets to this spectacular show (subject to confirmation). Take a sneak-peek at www.visitmaastricht.com/andre-rieu

Enjoy 13 nights onboard our “floating hotel” the Quo Vadis which will dock every night in charming canal-ringed medieval towns & river cities - unpack once in your comfortable en-suited cabin & delight in the homely facilities & personable services provided by our wonderful crew.

Each day you can choose to do the easy guided cycling excursions along tow-paths, cycle-ways & village streets or spend leisurely days in the lounge or on deck enjoying the beautiful scenery & countryside as it passes by.
TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

🌟 Share the company of fellow travellers & our friendly crew onboard the very comfortable Quo Vadis Barge boat, a beautifully restored & classic Canal Barge exclusively booked for Bishops Adventures.

🌟 Unpack once & return to your “floating hotel” each day to relax over a refreshment in the lounge or sundeck before savouring a delicious 3 course meal prepared by our very own onboard chef.

🌟 Enjoy ample time in Amsterdam to discover some of the many sites & attractions of this fascinating city.

🌟 Overnight tie-ups in some of the most interesting & historical towns & cities in Europe including the beautiful Dutch & Flemish river port-cities of Maastricht, Antwerp & Ghent allowing leisurely evening walks or cycles into town after most of the day trippers have gone.

🌟 Guided bike excursions along mostly flat paths & trails enjoying charming towns & peaceful countryside.
- Ride along relaxed canal-side cycleways, through rare Kempen forests & moorlands, typical rural hamlets & communities, medieval towns, wooded estates with impressive monasteries, castles & gardens.

🌟 Discover natural beauty & interesting encounters around every bend as we cruise along the pretty river & canal systems of the Vecht, Waal, Linge, Maas & Scheldt Rivers.

🌟 Explore the fascinating German border-town of Arcen & the opportunity to see the amazing Castle Gardens, arguably the best parkland gardens in Holland.

🌟 Tickets to “Andre Rieu” Concert in the most romantic square in the Netherlands - the Vrijthof in Maastricht (NB. Subject to concert confirmation).

🌟 Experience a full day in Belgium’s enchanting port-city of Brugge, one of Europe’s best-preserved medieval gems. Known as “Venice of the North”, enjoy exploring cobbled alleyways & picture-perfect squares & canals.

CANAL BARGE (QUO VADIS) FACILITIES

Our home for this tour is a beautifully refurbished canal barge ‘Quo Vadis’ with comfortable air-conditioned twin bed en-suited cabins (with porthole) for a maximum of 22 passengers plus crew. Exclusively booked for our Bishops Adventures Tour, the Quo Vadis has spacious lounge/dining areas, saloon bar & outside sundeck. Meals are beautifully prepared & the bar is well stocked & prices are very reasonable. Wi-fi is free but limited. The vessel is skippered by the owner who involves himself with his passengers & along with the personable crew ensures that everything is “ship shape”. Because the barge is small with a retractable wheelhouse it can access some of the narrower canals & waterways fitting under lower bridges that other larger operators can’t.

CYCLING

Cycle touring is a major part of these tours & is the best way to really experience & enjoy the flat lowland regions we will travel through. These organised guided-rides will interest leisure riders & cycling enthusiasts alike & are varied passing through farmlands, forests, pretty villages & towns, alongside canals, rivers & on levy banks lined with windmills etc.
Each evening our on-board Bike Guide will provide a briefing on the next day’s ride & will offer on most days either a longer or shorter ride on a majority rules basis or subject to weather conditions or operational restrictions. The rides are classified as easy-moderate & will average out at between 40-50 klm per day however this is mostly along flat tow paths, cycle ways & village streets.

Daily cycling itineraries are leisurely with ample time for coffee or beer breaks allowing us to truly soak up the experiences along the way, just like a local. There is also a limited supply of e-bikes (electric pedal-bikes) available onboard at an additional cost should you prefer. Each bike is equipped with a weatherproof bag, water bottle & holder, security lock & helmets will be provided.

Of course, you can opt out from riding & simply spend leisurely days cruising comfortably onboard enjoying the scenery & admiring how well the Quo Vadis negotiates the fascinating waterways, locks & drawbridges.

PROPOSED ITINERARY (NB: Please note that the following itinerary is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances, including, but not limited to, weather, last minute mooring changes & operational issues that may arise with the locks or bridges etc on route. This is an adventure tour after all. All cycling distances are approximate.)

DAY 1: Sat 10th July Arrive Amsterdam & Check-in to “Quo Vadis” Barge Boat (Intro Cycle up to 20 klm) (L,D)
Our adventure starts in Amsterdam, renowned for its picturesque 400 year old canal district, museums, street artists & performers, the famous red-light district & much more. Try to arrive a day or two prior to the tour to allow time to visit the historical centre, a World Heritage site, & admire the elegant tree-lined canals & colourful canal-houses.
Check-in begins at 10:00am where you will be welcomed aboard the “Quo Vadis” by Bruno, Christine & our friendly crew & be assigned your cabin & bike. In the afternoon, an introductory 10-20 km flat ride through the historical green suburbs & meadows of Amsterdam’s charming Waterland district will be offered to get you accustomed to your bike, otherwise spend the afternoon exploring more of Amsterdam or simply relax onboard.

DAY 2: Sun 11th July Amsterdam – Weesp – Utrecht – Vianen (Cycle approx. 45 klm) (B,L,D)
Today we enter the Dutch provinces of Utrecht & North Holland navigating the Vecht River through the economic heartland of the Netherlands known for its natural environment, parks, medieval castles & stately summer homes of wealthy Amsterdam merchants. After a sailing breakfast, the Quo Vadis will dock near the centre of Weesp a quaint historic town dating back to the 14th century famed for its fortifications & influence on the chocolate industry thanks to the Van Houten family who in 1828 invented the “Dutch Chocolate Process” to remove the bitter taste of cocoa forming the basis for much of modern chocolate production.
From Weesp the cyclists head off through the Vechtstreek – a lush green region of the Netherlands following the winding Vecht River visiting a cheese farm on route. Further along the riverbanks we will pass magnificent mansions, proud castles & villages with stunning gardens. A longer route leaves the river heading towards Castle De Haar, an excellent example of a medieval fortress with towers, ramparts, moats & drawbridges. The Quo Vadis awaits the cyclists at the edge of Utrecht city, a vibrant university city with a medieval centre ringed by pretty tree-lined canals before cruising onto Vianen, a small historic market town for the night.

DAY 3: Mon 12th July Vianen – Heusden (Cycle 35 or 53 klm) (B,L,D)
The route today features the land where many rivers unite, passing through several 16th century fortress towns. First, Leerdam, known for its glass design, followed by a leisurely cycle over quiet meadow paths to the historic river-town of Gorinchem. From here you will board the ferry to Woudrichem, a quiet town in Brabant Province. The long cycle route has the same stops but follows the more populated areas of the Linge River. After Woudrichem we follow the picturesque & winding paths along the Bergse Maas Canal. Tonight the Quo Vadis will be moored in Heusden, another small fortress town with pretty alleyways & beautifully restored historic buildings.
DAY 4: Tues 13th July  Heusden – Maasbommel – Cuijk (Cycle 40 or 50 kllms) (B,L,D)

Today starts with a sailing breakfast to Maasbommel, once a bustling port within the Hanseatic League (a commercial & defensive confederation of merchant guilds & market towns bordering Germany). For the cyclists, we disembark here to ride along the Maas River canals that define the landscape. Along these wind ing dikes we encounter small market towns, fortified villages & castles that was once the border between the powerful medieval Duchies of Gelre & Brabant. During the 17th century Dutch Republic, the new Reformed Church ruled the northern banks & the southern banks belonged to the German Catholic County of Klev where several monasteries were established.

From here the shorter cycle route passes over tree-lined dikes to the small towns of Megen then lovely Ravenstein on the River Maas, whilst a longer diversion leads to the beautiful Gardens of Appeltern featuring more than 200 model gardens set on 22 hectares where no two gardens are the same.

The cycling continues to the baroque conven chapel of Velp & then the fortified town of Grave & its bridge famous for being one of the main military objectives of the WW2 failed allied parachute assault “Operation Market Garden” that tried to halt the German advances across the Maas River. From here the route follows the wetlands of the Beerseroverlaat, a remnant of past flood events, before meeting up with the Quo Vadis at our overnight stop in the large town of Cuijk whose impressive cathedral dominates the skyline.

DAY 5: Wed 14th July  Cuijk – Arcen (Cycle approx. 45 kllms) (B,L,D)

The Quo Vadis today sails south-east along the Maas River through Limburg, the Netherlands southernmost province, skirting the German border region amid typical floodplain country. The cyclists head for the renaissance town hall of Gennep then ride along the Maas River floodplains passing by lakes, villages & the restored 14th century Well Castle.

A highlight awaits us in the beautiful fortified village of Arcen, situated only 2 kms from the German border & where the Quo Vadis is moored for our overnight stop. Here we can visit the wonderful Castle Gardens, a spectacular series of gardens & one of the most varied flower & plant parks in Europe full of scents, colours, unique gardens, historical parks & 17th century castle. Various highlights invite visitors to experience the gardens in diverse ways including the large Rosarium with its stunning roses, the shady Lommerreich water gardens, the Mountain Garden with its unique stone formations & waterfalls, the Mediterranean Casa Verde with typical olive trees & the oldest fig tree in the Netherlands, the Asian gardens with a Thai fishing hut & miniature rice field terraces & the Rhododendron Garden in the shadow of the historic castle. If time permits, we can also visit the brewery for the local Hertog Jan Pilsener Beer.

DAY 6: Thurs 15th July Arcen – Roermond (Cycle 47 or 59 kms) (B,L,D)

This morning we continue to follow the Maas as it winds southward along the German border through panoramic riverplain landscapes. The cycling group will then decide (based on our Guide’s recommendations & group consensus) between the shorter route or a wooded adventure for a brief sojourn into Germany for a longer ride. We initially pass through Venlo, another typical historic town with a renaissance town hall, gothic cathedral & a lively market square however an even better spot for a picnic lunch is near the hamlet of Steyl where we find three fascinating functioning monasteries & gardens & a museum filled with unusual ethnographic & taxidermic objects.

If the longer route is chosen by the group a quick getaway is required, passing the charming Ronckenstein hamlet in the direction of the German hills, over unpaved roads in the dense Brachter forest followed by medieval remains in Brüggen & finally the picturesque Schwalm brook brings you back into the Maas Valley. If we do the shorter route instead, we cross the river in the direction of Kessel, passing one of the oldest restored castles in the Netherlands with a terrace & a perfect view to the river.

Tonight’s destination is the gorgeous town of Roermond at the confluence of the Roer & Maas Rivers. Surrounded by beautiful natural surroundings, it was once the trading capital of the Gelre duchy in the middle ages & since the 16th century the seat of the region’s Catholic Bishop. The historic marketplace, monumental churches & monasteries are all witness of its rich cultural heritage.
DAY 7: Fri 16th July  Roermond-Wessem-Born-Maastricht (Cycle approx. 30 klms) (B,L – Dinner at own arrangement)

Today we enter the province of Limburg passing through a narrow portion of the country (at one point only 5 klms wide) sandwiched between the German & Belgium borders. Today a shorter cycle is on offer as we aim to arrive at Maastricht as early as possible for time to explore this fascinating city before our “big” night out. The cycling starts at Born, rides along the green belt between the waterways to the small town of Elsloo before taking a ferry on the Belgium border zone to Smeermaas, once a Roman villa. All going well we should arrive in Maastricht early afternoon.

Maastricht is one of the oldest & most stunning cities in Holland situated on the border of the Netherlands, Belgium, & Germany. This beautiful medieval city shows her age in the architecture, a labyrinth of cobblestone alleys & its Roman bridge stretching over the River Maas, but she is young at heart with a youthful atmosphere & energy.

There are many highlights to be enjoyed in the historic centre including the treasure house of the St. Servaas Church, the Bonnefanten museum for art & antiquity & the Kazematten, a system of underground fortress works from the 18th century. Then again a couple of enjoyable hours will easily pass by just simply exploring the medieval quarter’s fascinating streets & alleyways including finding your own dinner in one of the many restaurants & bars around the city’s main square the Vrijthof – and of course this is where the magnificent stage will be set for tonight’s gala “Andre Rieu” concert *

* (NB. Please note that whilst we have planned this itinerary based on previous year’s concert schedules, the show dates will not be confirmed until October 2020. Should the concert not eventuate, then instead we will replace this with a special group dinner banquet in Maastricht focusing on regional cuisine &…. Bruno may even entertain us with his own mini concert)

DAY 8: Sat 17th July  Maastricht – Hasselt (Cycle 44 or 55 klms)  (B,L,D)

From Maastricht the Quo Vadis today sails into Belgium & the Dutch speaking region of Flanders.

The cycling party will again choose by consensus either the long route leading through the Wallonian hills & the beautiful Jeker valley through the rolling fields of Flanders to Zichen-Zussen-Bolder then the Alden Bieze Castle - a 16th century moated castle & striking English park OR the shorter distance through the unique pine forests & heathland of the National Kempen park & onto Bokrijk - an interesting heritage centre, open-air museum & model village with 140 historical buildings from all over Flanders. Prior to ending the day’s ride, we can pass by one of Europe’s largest Japanese gardens before arriving at our overnight mooring in Hasselt, a lively medieval town known for its Jenever (gin), baroque monuments & an impressive modern town hall.

DAY 9: Sun 18th July  Hasselt – Oevel (Herentals) – Antwerp (Cycle approx. 50 klms)  (B,L,D)

The non-cyclists today will enjoy sailing westward through typical Flemish countryside along the Albertkanaal canal system towards Antwerp. For those keen for a longish ride, the cycling today starts initially through regional residential communities then traverses mostly quiet rural lanes passing farmlands & rural hamlets stopping at points of interests along the way. We visit the pretty village of Zichem on route to the tranquil Abbey of Averbode founded in 1134, then re-join the Quo Vadis near the town of Oevel to enjoy a sailing dinner to Antwerp for night.

Antwerp is not only known for being Belgium's first port but also as the diamond city, famous for handling up to 80% of the world's rough diamonds. It is also the birthplace of the famous 16th century painter Rubens considered the most influential of all the Flemish artists. In the heart of the city you can see the Cathedral of ‘Our Lady’ & explore the fascinating alleys & historic Renaissance buildings surrounding the gorgeous City Square ‘Grote’ Market. The Red Star Line museum on the harbor tells the story of European Immigration & a tower for city panoramas.
DAY 10: Mon 19th July  

**Antwerp - St. Amands – Dendermonde** (Cycle 30 or 53 kls)  
(B,L,D)

For the non-cyclists, the Quo Vadis today cruises along one of the most picturesque & winding parts of the route especially the section beyond St. Amands, as we sail along the River Schelde before arriving near the historic centre of Dendermonde at the mouth of the Dender estuary. The cyclists today take a beautiful ride along the banks of the river that provides wonderful variety.

The long track crosses the river via the St. Ann bike tunnel & on to the 15th century Wissekerke Castle with a suspension bridge that is one of the oldest surviving wrought iron suspension bridges in Europe. We then follow winding dikes along fishing lakes via the small town of Temse to pretty & tranquil villages like Mariekerke & St. Amands. The shorter ride basically follows the same route but starts instead with a ferry trip & reboards the Quo Vadis in St. Amands.

Tonight, we are in Dendermonde which for its size packs a big punch with many outstanding World Heritage listed medieval buildings thanks to a thriving cloth industry through the middle ages which led to the building of the impressive City Hall, Belfry & Cloth Hall centred around its stately market square, Grote Market.

DAY 11: Tues 20th July  

**Dendermonde – Ghent** (Cycle approx. 40 kls)  
(B,L,D)

Today both cyclists & those remaining onboard will continue to enjoy the many highlights & panorama as we head west deep into the medieval region of Flanders along the wonderful Scheldt River before arriving in the historic & charming port city of Ghent. Here we will moor close to the centre with an easy connection for a not to be missed visit to the historic quarter. Ghent has a rich past with its origins in Roman Times, at the place where the rivers Leie & Schelde converge. This favourable situation brought a great deal of prosperity over the years. This lively small city has a heavenly mixture of medieval buildings, stylish shopping streets, baroque churches, steeples & several delightful squares. It is particularly magical in the late evening when all the day trippers have gone.

DAY 12: Wed 21st July  

**Ghent - Lovendegem – Brugge** (Cycle 45 or 55 kls)  
(B,L,D)

Today the Barge & cyclists follow one of the most important canals in Belgium’s history, The Ghent-Brugge Canal was first built in the 1600s as a vital trade link between the North Sea & inland towns. This interesting & scenic journey takes us past urban & rural communities then through mixed farming country as we approach our final destination, Brugge. This canal was also a strategic WW2 military objective during the Liberation of Belgium during September 1944 – the infrastructure along this canal was heavily defended by German Panzer forces resulting in heavy allied losses especially by Polish & Canadian Armoured Divisions.

Cycling on mostly rural roads & quiet bike paths along the canal, we pass many fine estates with the long route providing opportunity to see the Romanesque Lotenhulle church & the grand 13th Cent Poeke Castle & gardens. The shorter ride passes through the friendly town of Aalter & then along lovely forest pathways before arriving in the lush surrounds of Bulskampveld Manor & parklands. Later we pass the striking WW2 monument of the Moerbrugge battle where in Sept 1944 the Royal Canadian Argyll Highlanders were tasked to cross the very deep Ghent Canal under heavy fire, five kls south of Brugge at the small villages of Oostkamp & Moerbrugge.

The Quo Vadis is conveniently moored for us just outside the fortifications of Brugge, near the train station. The “Venice of the North” invites us for a quiet evening walk through its magical cobblestone alleys.
DAY 13: Thurs 22nd July

**Brugge** (Cycle via the coast 25 klms, OR via Damme 16 klms) (B,L,D)

Today we visit Brugge, the most beautiful of all Flemish cities with a historic centre comprising some of Europe’s most well-preserved medieval formations. Brugge will capture your heart - straight out of a fairy-tale it is known as the “Venice of the North” with pretty cobbled streets & a network of canals overflowing with charm. Medieval church spires are nestled amongst its famous chocolate shops & atmospheric bars serving world renowned Belgium beer.

While you are here, you should not miss the city centre’s Burg Square with its ramparts, gates & decorated gables & now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. You will enjoy discovering the lively streets & squares or find time to fit in a canal-boat ride through the charming canals that weave through the city. If you’re into art, visit the medieval palace museum of the Gruuthuize family & learn of the city’s fascinating past through a fine collection of tapestries, paintings, archive documents, lace & silverware. If you like beer, the Halve Maan (Moon) Brewery conducts tours & tastings. This authentic brewery in the centre of Brugge is a family business with a tradition stretching back through six generations to 1856 & where Brugge’s malt style beer, Brugse Zot, is brewed.

For the cyclists you may wish to partake in a ride to the seaside resort Blankenberge with beaches, boulevardes & an Art Deco casino. On the way back there is charming Lissewege with art exposition in the church & the remains of the medieval abbey Ter Doest, an enormous 14th century barn designed to safekeep farmer’s taxes or instead for a shorter ride, to enable more time to enjoy Brugge, we can cycle the pretty canal-side route through country pastures to the nearby & charming village of Damme.

Tonight enjoy our last dinner together on-board the Quo Vadis & recount the fun & our adventures on tour.

DAY 14: Fri 23rd July  

**Departure** (B)

Your tour officially ends at 9:00am after breakfast. Disembark with own arrangements for ongoing travel.

**WW1 Battlefield Tours;**

Brugge is located close to the Flanders Fields Memorials & Battlefields on the Western Front where Aussie Troops served in WW1 including YPRES in the Somme, therefore after our tour ends you may like to extend your stay in Brugge to do either a full or half day guided Battlefield Tour especially if you had relatives who fought in this area - For further details, prices etc go to; [www.visitbruges.org](http://www.visitbruges.org) & for booking enquiries email info@visitbruges.org - checkout the rave reviews on TripAdvisor by clicking link below; [www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction_Review-g188671-d1188743-Reviews-Flanders_FIELDS_Battlefield_Daytours-Bruges_West_Flanders_Province.html](http://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction_Review-g188671-d1188743-Reviews-Flanders_FIELDS_Battlefield_Daytours-Bruges_West_Flanders_Province.html)

**Brugge or Bruges?**

The Flemish-speaking locals & Dutch spell it BRUGGE (and that’s the way you’ll see it on all the local signs) whilst the French & English spell it BRUGES. Both ways are acceptable however in all our information we have chosen to use the Flemish name. The most common way of pronouncing it is “Brewww-sh” spoken with a prolonged Brewww.

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*All the comforts of home onboard the Quo Vadis*

*Spacious & comfy twin-bed cabins with private en-suite*
TOUR DATES; Saturday 10th July - Friday 23rd July 2021
TOUR PRICE; $5,995 p/p twin share (booking & cancelation conditions apply)
NB; Please note that as there are no single berth cabins on this vessel

INCLUSIONS;
✓ 14 days / 13 nights on board the Quo Vadis
✓ Twin-bed cabins for 2 people with private shower, toilet, air-conditioning & central heating
✓ Full board (13 x breakfasts, 13 x self-packed lunches, 12 x 3 course dinners) except dinner out in Maastricht
✓ Daily cabin cleaning
✓ Free WIFI on board (but limited)
✓ 8-speed bike rental with helmet, removal bike bag, water bottle & security lock
✓ On-board English-speaking Bike Tour Guide & daily cycling briefings
✓ Coffee, tea, hot chocolate & water
✓ All ferry fares on route
✓ Tickets to “Andre Rieu” gala concert in Maastricht (subject to concert confirmation)
✓ Ticket for Castle de Haar
✓ Cheese farm & brewery Tour
✓ Belgium Beer tasting experience
✓ Canal boat tour
✓ Tour Information Pack
✓ Tour escorted by Bruno & Christine Corletto

NOT INCLUDED;
✗ Beverages
✗ Dinner for the night-out in Maastricht (but will be included if Andre Rieu concert does not eventuate)
✗ Entrance fees to optional attractions (museums, galleries etc) not listed in the inclusions above
✗ Electric e-bike supplement at a cost of approximately 15 Euros per day (limited number available)
✗ Special diets
✗ Gratuities

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