

Questions and Answers

EVERYTHING YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BARGING

Barging Overview

[What's It All About?]

Q. What are the different types of barge cruise vacations?

A. Basically there is river barging and there is canal barging. In either case whether you are barging on canals or rivers, it is really more of a floating experience. The canal experience is virtually without current and the barges move at a pace of around 3 miles per hour. Navigation of locks is part of the canal experience in France and occurs every 20-30 minutes depending on the canal. River barging differs in the fact that there may be a slight current and no lock system navigation.

Q. There seem to be many choices how do I decide what is the right option for me?

A. The entire barging industry consists only of several dozen vessels. We recommend that you first narrow down your choices of region. Most of the barge operators are in France. Barging is also offered in England, Scotland, Ireland and the Netherlands. We also suggest that you consider the appeal of the optional excursions that go along with the barge cruise. Do you have a penchant for wineries and vineyards or would you rather explore the nooks and crannies of out of the way villages? Perhaps you enjoy both. Barging affords you the opportunity to do as much or as little as you please.

Q. How many people are typically on a barge?

A. Barging has become increasingly popular and generally the barges depart with all cabins full. Approximately one-half of the barges are in the small 6-10 passenger grouping. There are around a dozen medium barges of 15-24 passengers and only a few 40 - 50 passenger barges. In France the maximum allowable length for canal cruising is 130 feet which is a 22-24 passenger barge.

Q. What is the barge vacation comparable to in terms of experiences and amenities?

A. Barging is like no other vacation. All barges have lovely public spaces including a dining area and a bar/lounge area. Cabins are modestly sized (8x10) with private bathrooms. Most have air conditioning. The deck area is always a favorite place to enjoy the passing landscapes or to curl up with a book. Several vessels even have a whirlpool on deck. The differences between barges are subtle such that that we hesitate to classify barges with traditional mass market terms like Deluxe and First Class. The nature of barging is intimate because of the size and design of the vessels. Most all barges have less than 20 passengers. During the day passengers can be as active or as inactive as they choose. The 2-3 mile pace of the moving barge is particularly attractive to those that choose to walk alongside (or run ahead of) the barge on the paths. Crew members will offer unique excursions to the passengers by van from the barges mooring spot. Barges moor village-side at dinner time and remain moored till the next morning. Dining occurs onboard the barge and is considered to be one of the highlights of the vacation.

Q. What is the approximate cost of a barge vacation and what is included?

A. Barging tariffs vary by seasonality and level of amenities. All barges operate on six nights schedules. A generalization would be that the average price per person is in the \$2500 range, which does not include airfare or gratuities. Gratuities are not expected, however 5% of tariff is the usual and customary amount given by passengers. Meals, wine and open bar and excursions are included in the price of most barges. Several operators do not include a fully open bar. Pricing of the emerging super deluxe category can exceed \$6000 per person in peak season. Chartering of an entire barge is also very popular and may afford some savings.

Q. Are children allowed?

A. Generally children under the age of 12 are accepted generally only in a charter arrangement. Promotional “family cruises” are on occasion offered by barge operators.

Before We Choose

[Reliability of Company, Financial Security, Competitive Difference]

Q. Who owns The Barge Experts?

A. The Barge Experts is a wholly owned subsidiary of privately held Elations Travel Group, LLC. The Barge Experts operate in joint venture with Europe Express – One of America’s most respected travel companies and a member of USTOA*. The General Partners of Elations have held Executive positions with the most respected brands in the travel and hospitality industries and bring a distinct philosophy about travel along with over 40 year of combined experience.

* USTOA [United States Tour Operator Association]

Q. We have read a great deal about the importance of booking with a reliable operator. How do I know my money is secure with the Barge Experts?

A. All deposits and payments are held in escrow and remain in the account until you return from your vacation. We also offer the most comprehensive travel insurance options available.

Q. We are interested in pre and post hotel options to round out our vacation. Can the Barge Experts assist us?

A. We would be delighted. The Barge Experts have access to considerable inventory at the very best available tariffs. Our extensive experience in making pre-cruise and post-cruise arrangements has resulted in countless endorsements from satisfied customers. We also have access to best available airfares including business and first class ticketing.

Q. We are considering a group – Is there a group discount?

A. There are several advantages to a [charter cruise](#) including pricing. Perhaps the biggest consideration is the fact that you can control the overall experience by choosing who you cruise with. Discounts for charters are arranged through our charter department and vary by seasonality.

Before We “Cruise”

[Getting Ready]

Q. How much luggage is allowed and do we bring our own soap and toiletries -- what about hair driers and electrical appliances?

A. Clothing is informal and space is limited. We recommend no more than one suitcase per traveler and comfortable practical clothing. As for toiletries, amenities are not provided in the way that Americans have become accustomed and we recommend that you bring your favorite soaps and shampoos. Barges are wired at 220 volts and a standard converter/adaptor kit (not provided) will enable the use of your appliances such as hair dryers and electric razors.

Q. What if we need to cancel our vacation?

A. The Barge Experts offers comprehensive trip cancellation and interruption coverage with leading travel insurance providers.

Q. What about visas and passports

A. A visa is not required for travel to and through any of the countries serviced by The Barge Experts. Passports are required and should be checked to see that they are in order before your travel begins.

Q. Are all major credit cards accepted by The Barge Experts?

A. The Barge Experts accept Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover cards.

The Vacation On The Barge

[What to Do – How it Feels]

Q. Will the other passengers on board speak English? – Will language be an issue with the crew?

A. Typically 90% of the people on a barge cruise are Americans. As for crew, there will be no language issues whatsoever.

Q. Will there be daily maid service?

A. Cabins are made up fresh daily.

Q. What is the cabin size and what are the appointments like?

A. Cabins are tastefully appointed but of modest size. (8x10 would be that average size cabin on most vessels.)

Q. Will there be a window in our room?

A. Yes, without exception.

Q. What can I expect of the food, wine and dining experiences in general?

A. The food and wine to a certain extent defines the overall barge experience. Food and wine are never in short supply and are consistently of gourmet quality. Customer satisfaction surveys overwhelmingly pay accolades to the gastronomic element. It is not unusual to see the crew bargaining with local merchants only to see the ingredients served as something very special a few hours latter. Breakfast is consistently hearty. Lunches are often buffet style. Dinners are in the traditional course style with a minimum of four courses being served.

Q. Is there access to telephones, Internet and television

A. Telephones are not a part of the barge experience. Europeans are enthusiastic users of cellular/wireless communications, so barges are equipped. If there are pressing matters that require a phone call, public telephones are accessible along the rivers, canals and in the villages of the sojourn. Television is available by satellite (only when moored) on only a few barges. Internet access is available on several vessels.