

Itinerary Boat Rally on the Canal de Bourgogne 24th May – 2nd June 2024

Organised by ANPEI with the support of the association Autour du Canal de Bourgogne

Friday May 24th: The boats arrive in Vandenesse en Auxois at the port between locks 8S and 9S. There will probably be some hotel barges with reserved moorings in the port, so some of the boats in our group may have to moor breasted up, possibly tripled. If there are really a lot of boats some might have to moor on the opposite bank or in the pound below.

Saturday May 25th: No navigation for our group today as it's the day of the Festival of Nature in Vandenesse (in previous years it was called the Festival of Fishing, and in the future it is to become the Festival of Biodiversity). There will be fifteen or so stands with exhibitions with a general tendency towards making people sensitive to biodiversity, making the most of the landscape and of the quality of life. There will be producers of local specialities, the "ambassador of waste selection", open air activities such as trail, hiking, golf, mountain biking, outdoor games, archery, a circuit of giant marbles and an escape-game along the canal. The Festival will extend as far as the reservoir of Panthier with displays by the Wingfoil Club, the Vandenesse Fishing Club, "La Gaule de Vandenesse". VNF, the French Inland Waterways Authority, will be participating in the activities, there will be a youngsters' orchestra playing and a quantity of trout will be let free in the Vandenesse fishing pond and the Côte d'Or Fishing Federation will be running a refreshments stand. Canal related displays will include the stand of the Pouilly-Bligny Tourist Office with a game on the subject of locks and a working model of a lock to explain how they function. The stand of the association "Autour du Canal de Bourgogne" will have various objects connected to the canal, posters explaining its water supply system and enlargements of postcards of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Sunday 26th May: Cruise from Vandenesse to Escommes (8 locks and roughly 2.5km) Availability of water and electricity in Escommes to be checked. According to the number of boats the rally might be divided into two groups, one navigating in the morning and going on excursion in the afternoon and the other vice/versa.

Excursion by minibus, 10 minute journey: Château of Commarin, a guided visit. The château stands only 4 km from Châteauneuf en Auxois and is part of the Historic Route of the Dukes of Burgundy. It is one of the rare châteaux in France to have neither been sold nor pillaged during the Revolution. Having belonged to the same family for over 900 years, Commarin gives the visitor the experience of a living château which has always been inhabited, converted with refinement from a fortress during the 18th century. Being lived in from the beginning by descendants of its creators, it has frequently been in the heart of the history of France, from the crusades to the revolution. The proprietors, Count and Countess Bertrand de Vogüë are the 26th generation to live in the château. Inheritors of a monument which has survived over the centuries, they intend to maintain its appearance of being alive and welcoming. Commarin is a precious witness of the past, each century having left its mark whilst respecting that of the previous generations.

We will return to Escommes via the village of Châteauneuf en Auxois, weather allowing, taking a walk around and perhaps stopping for a coffee or an aperitif on the terrace of a café.

Monday May 27th: Cruise from Escommes to Pouilly, including the famous Pouilly tunnel (3.4km) and the two cuttings at each end, a total of 7km. Water and electricity are available in the port at Pouilly. The navigation time will depend on the speed and displacement of each boat, but draconian safety regulations will make this a rather slow process, the next boat being held at the entrance to the cutting at Escommes until the previous one leaves the mouth of the cutting on the Pouilly side. Timing will depend on the number of boats joining the rally and how early VNF are prepared to start and how late they are prepared to finish, in extremis it may be necessary for some boats to make the crossing on the Saturday or on the Monday.

Before leaving Escommes or on arrival in Pouilly, there can be a short visit on foot to look at and hear explanations of how the tunnel tug used to work, including its remarkable hydro-electric system and floating dry dock to reduce the air draught of empty barges so they could pass under the tunnel vault.

Excursion by minibus: to Beaune (half an hour on the motorway) Beaune was the Capital of the Duchy of Burgundy until 1365 when Philip the Bold, the first of the four great Dukes of the Valois family, moved his capital to Dijon. Beaune has however remained the centre of the wine trade, many of the world's most famous vineyards being located within a few kilometres of the town. Here you will be free to visit the world-famous Hôtel Dieu, enjoy the town centre and its shops or take advantage of the opportunity to taste some of the local vintages at the Marché aux Vins or other wine cellars. The Hôtel Dieu was founded in 1443 by Nicolas Rolin, chancellor of the Duke and his wife Guigogne de Salins. Its architecture seems austere when viewed from the street whereas the courtyard offers a remarkably rich example of Flemish influenced design with its highly coloured glazed roof tiles. It was initially destined to be a place of refuge for the many who had become poor, ill and destitute as a result of the hundred year's war. Over the centuries large parts of some of the most famous Burgundy vineyards have been bequeathed to what has become a hospital foundation running establishments in Beaune, Seurre, Arnay-le-Duc and Nuits-St-Georges; since the mid-fifteenth century the foundation has never ceased caring for the ill and the poor. The visit includes the wards, some of which were in use until the 1970's, and the foundation's excellent collection of tapestries, furniture and works of art including a polyptych by Rogier Van der Weyden of the last judgement ordered by Rolin in 1443.

In case of rain, it will nevertheless be possible for all the crews to gather together for dinner tonight, the Pouilly-Bigny tourist office is letting us have the use of a room on the quayside.

Tuesday May 28th: Cruise from Pouilly to Eguilly (11 locks and 5km, around 4 hours) No water nor electricity this evening. **Excursion on (500m) foot to the Château of Eguilly and/or possibility of a visit of the feudal castle of Sousse-sous-Brionne** (2.5km from the port of la Raquette above lock 12 which is 2.5km downstream from Eguilly. Some boats may stay in Pouilly as their crew may be attending the AGM of Agir Pour le Fluvial today in Dijon, a minibus will be transporting them to and from Dijon.

Château of Eguilly: Showing a mixture of architectural styles from Gallo-Roman to the 18th century, located 200m from the first canal bridge below lock 11, this 12th century fortified castle has come back to life since it was bought by Roger Aubry, a former art dealer and his wife Françoise. The château has six towers, ramparts and a moat. The visit includes the main building, outbuildings, the 15th century chapel built by the archbishop of Choiseul and the formal garden. Fabio Magnani, new owner of the château of Eguilly, has opened the buildings to visits since 2016. After several months refurbishment several of the rooms have had period furniture installed dating from the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries. This is the case of the guardroom, an attractive room of 80 square metres. The château was built in the 12th century on the site of a former gallo-roman structure, you will see here the past of a château the style of which continually developed up until the 17th century. Inside this large fortress boasting six towers and ramparts you will find a 12th century gatehouse, a covered well, a 15th century chapel and 17th century stables. The guided visit will allow you to discover a group of architectural elements dating from the 12th to the 17th centuries but also many details in the courtyard including some dating from the gallo-roman period. You can also see the paving stones of a Roman road from the 2nd century and a funerary monument of the same era from a local graveyard or Roman villa. At the end of your visit Fabio Magnani may invite you to join him for a convivial cocktail. The château of Eguilly allows one to make a formidable travel through time, we hope you enjoy it!

The château of Sousse-sous-Brionne: is a 13th century fortress which is partially classified as a historic monument. The various buildings of the château were gradually added through the course of the 13th, 14th and 16th centuries. The most ancient part, the square keep, dates from the 13th century. During the 16th century, following a marriage with the barony of Sousse, the Pracomtal family became owners of the château and of the manorial estate attached to it. Of gothic and Renaissance styles the existing château stands on a slightly raised square platform bordered on the East by a dry moat used as a garden and to the North by a low bank which is possibly a trace of where there was once a lower courtyard. Once through the carriage gate one gets view of the 13th century lodging tower, a venerable square keep with four floors and a height of 25 metres commonly called the "tower of Brionne". It has a spiral staircase tower dating from the 16th century with a tiled roof. The other buildings around the courtyard dating from the 16th and 17th centuries boast a doorway with a sculptured Renaissance pediment, mullioned windows and two

bas-relief sculptures with the coat of arms of the family. In the southern corner there is a neo-gothic tower built at the end of the nineteenth century to house a staircase.

The keep, the main buildings, including the vestiges of mural paintings, and the dovecot were classified as historic monuments in 1984.

Wednesday 29th May: Cruise from Eguilly or the port of la Raquette (above lock 13Y) (2 locks and 11 or 9 km). **It is recommended to make a pause in the port of Saint Thibault (PK 140.5) to make the walk of around 600 metres into the village to visit the former priory church which has recently been restored.** It is an elegant and richly furnished masterpiece of gothic art dating from the 13th century. There is the possibility of having a guided visit on prior request by a member of the association les Amis de Saint Thibault.

Boats which spent the night in Pouilly so their crew could attend the APLF meeting in Dijon will need to leave as early as possible to cruise straight to Pont Royal (13 locks and 18km).

Excursion by minibus to Semur-en-Auxois 14km/10 minutes. There will be guided visit led by one of the official Tourist Office guides of this highly picturesque medieval town, the capital of the Auxois area, whose origins date from prehistory. The name may come from the Latin “Senemurum Castrum” (Fortress without walls) or possibly “Castrum Sine Murum” (Fortress without walls) because a meander forming an almost complete circle of the river Armançon around the easternmost outcrop of the hard pink granit of the Morvan geological formation renders this place easy to defend against invaders. A visit of the town can include the collegiate church of Notre Dame the construction of which began in 1225 and which displays in harmony the three great eras of the gothic style, the mansions of the members of the Parliament of Burgundy who took refuge here during periods of plague in Dijon, the ramparts and towers built during the Hundred Years War, the impressive buildings of the religious orders founded here during the period of the counter-reform in the 17th century and the shops in and around the pedestrian precinct of the town centre. Semur will certainly be a hive of activity because in two days, on May 31st takes place the “Festival of the Ring” and its horse race, la Course de la Bague, the oldest horse race in France , which has taken place every year since 1639. The day is also a public holiday in Semur, a holiday specific only to this town. On our way back to Pont Royal, we shall make a small detour to visit the barrage and canal reservoir at Pont et Massène, an impressive barrage on the river Armançon just upstream of Semur-en-Auxois, built to flood the valley and create a reservoir for the Burgundy Canal. Although built principally to provide water for the Canal, the reservoir has since also been used as a supply of drinking water. Major leisure and sporting activities have developed around the reservoir: swimming, fishing, water sports and hiking. In 2015 and 2016 major restorations and modernisations have been undertaken, at the same time improving the appearance of the structure. A park at the foot of the barrage has been restored and a beach created by the community of communes of les Terres d’Auxois with the help of VNF, it is listed as a “site remarquable” (site of outstanding interest)

- 1878-1882: Construction of the barrage of Pont-et –Massène on the river Armançon
- Length: 150.9 metres
- Height: 23.10 metres
- Normal depth: 21.03 metres
- Maximum capacity of the reservoir at its normal depth: six million five thousand and seventeen cubic metres
- Surface of the reservoir at its normal depth: 75 hectares. (185.3 acres)

Dinner tonight is planned to be taken at the Maison du Canal, a bed and breakfast which also provides an excellent restaurant service. It is located in the former canal offices built in the 1830’s and run by Gérald Baton who was born in the neighbouring farm. He has returned here after thirty years working abroad as a chef, including most recently in Dublin where he still has interests in two restaurants.

Thursday May 30th: Cruise from Pont Royal to Marigny-le-Cahouet (19 locks 6km) Availability of water and electricity to be verified. Marigny-le-Cahouet has been an important port on the canal; a factory here produced rapid-setting cement made from limestone quarried next to the canal, the cement being mostly delivered by barge.

Later, in the 1970's and 80's, a carpenter with a large business in the village undertook work on boats and notably converted the former cargo barge "Jocrisse" into the 22 passenger hotel barge "la Litote".

A few hundred meters from the port at Marigny is a château, a former fortress surrounded with a moat, with a fortified gate, a roof of glazed tiles and an attractive park. This magnificent setting has attracted film directors, which has resulted in several films being made here. (Angélique Marquise des Anges, Clérambard, Ni Vu Ni Connu, les Trois Mousquetaires). The château is a private property and only the exterior is normally available for visit; however it may be possible to meet the owner and visit part of the interior, since one of our hosts of the association « Autour du Canal » knows the family well.

In case of rain this evening dinner can be taken at the home of Bernard Durupt, who would be very pleased anyway if the group would like to visit him and join him in an aperitif.

Friday May 31st: Cruise Marigny-le Cahouet to Pouillenay (11 locks 7km) Water available but no electricity.

Excursion by minibus to Flavigny-sur-Ozerain (5km, 7 minutes) Flavigny is a small medieval town perched on the summit of a hill overlooking three valleys. It has been the religious centre of the Auxois area since at least the 8th century when a large Benedictine Abbey was founded here. Today there is still a convent, a seminary and a monastery in activity as well as the thirteenth century parish church of Saint Genest and the remains of the abbatial church of Saint Peter dating from the 9th century. The former Abbey of Flavigny houses the factory of the Anis de Flavigny. Tradition has it that it was the Roman army which imported and planted aniseed in the area during the siege of Alesia in 52 B.C., the plant being used for medicinal purposes and it is known that the Roman hospital camp was close to the present site of the town. During the seventeenth century it is believed that the Ursuline nuns perfected the recipe for making the aniseed sweets as we know them today, an industry which was continued after the revolution by local artisans and then after 1920 by the Troubat family business. The factory can be visited and light snacks and drinks are available and there are outdoor and indoor games in the courtyard which is in fact the former cloister.

A few years ago a brewery was installed in former farm buildings just outside the city walls, high quality beer is brewed here, light meals are available and a large terrace offers a wonderful view of this remarkable site.

Guided visits are available both of the town and of the Aniseed factory, we will decide on how to proceed in view of the size of our group and the availability of guides.

Saturday June 1st: Cruise from Pouillenay to les Granges-sous-Grignon, (11 locks 7km, there is the possibility of making a halt at the port of Venarey at PK 115 where water, electricity and pump out are available since huge and costly improvements have been made at the port over the last two years).

Water and electricity available this evening at the tile factory quay at les Granges-sous-Grignon

Excursion by minibus (4km) to visit Mount Auxois(4km) to see the statue of Vercingétorix, get an excellent view of the valley of the river Brenne and then visit the Centre of Interpretation of the Battle of Alesia (also called Muséoparc). The museum presents the history of Alesia from prehistoric times to the present day and includes, on the exact site of the original structures, full scale representations of the military engineering undertaken by Julius Caesar's troops in 52 B.C. to encircle the entire hill twice, both in order both to besiege Vercingetorix's army and to defend themselves from attack by other celtic tribes.

The first archaeological digs were undertaken at the order of Napoleon the third between 1861 and 1865, large quantities of coins minted both by Rome and Gaul, weapons etc. were found. However the site of the battle of Alesia continued to be contested by other towns and villages claiming the battle happened on their territory, until during the 1990's, a Franco-German team of archaeologists found incontestable proof confirming that the oppidum on top of Mount Auxois really was the town into which Vercingetorix retreated in 52 B.C. During the visit of the museum, cultural media accompany you through the exhibition, on the panoramic rooftop terrace and between the reconstructions of the Roman fortifications to allow you to feel you are living through this historic siege.

This evening there will be a barbecue and a “Friends of the Canal” party held in the former outbuildings of the Château d’Orain at les Granges-sous-Grignon, a few hundred metres from the quay by the Pont de Granges (PK 114.8 on the left bank). The barbecue for our group will be organised by Autour du Canal de Bourgogne and the ANPEI, but the evening will be open to all those who feel an attachment to the Burgundy canal or waterways in general, they will be welcome to bring their own food and drinks. We hope to organise some music as well.

Sunday June 2nd:

Visit the neighbouring tile factory museum: There were many tile factories along the Burgundy Canal throughout the 19th century and well into the 20th, excellent quality clay for making bricks and tiles is to be found along the river valleys and the canal provided safe, economical transport for fragile loads. The factory at les Granges was founded in 1880 by the Sebillotte family, later taken over by the Laurent family who still own the buildings and live here. However François Laurent, who will conduct the visit, ran the business for a few years before having to close it down in 1973, a victim of competition from large companies using new processes in tile and brick making and changes in the building trade including the introduction of plasterboard. Since retiring François and his wife Jacqueline have created an association to open the former workshop and kilns as a museum, receiving groups and individuals who can learn about the history of tile making, the importance that this industry had in this area, and see the methods used to produce various types of tiles and bricks.

For those who are in no hurry to leave, this afternoon there will be a concert of Gregorian chants in the church of Grignon at the top of the hill overlooking the canal, a short distance of a couple of kilometres but a steep climb, but there should be some friendly locals around to offer you a lift if you don’t fancy the uphill hike!