

# 7-Day Amsterdam - Maastricht Bike & Barge Tour

## June 29 – July 6, 2019

**Total Cost:** \$1,650 (Transportation to and from Europe **not** included)

**Deposit:** \$1,000 (paid at time of registration)

**Final Payment:** \$650 due by 1/15/19

**Rider Limit:** 22 – **NO SINGLE SUPPLEMENTS!**

**Tour Leaders:** Ralph Nussbaum & Francien van der Lee

**Tour Rating:** Easy

### **Special International Cancellation Policy:**

**Before 1/15/19:** Refund all but \$100

**Between 1/16-3/15/19:** \$1,000 cancellation fee unless tour is full and your spot is filled, then \$100

**After 3/16/19:** Loss of total fee unless tour is full and your spot is filled, then \$100 cancellation fee

**WE STRONGLY ADVISE YOU PURCHASE TRIP INSURANCE!**



### **THE BIKE AND BARGE EXPERIENCE:**

After running two very successful Bike and Barge Tours in 2014 and two more in 2017 and then two in Belgium in France in 2018, Ralph & Carol will be returning to the Netherlands in 2019. It may be worth pointing out that Ralph and Carol both speak Dutch. Ralph grew up in Amsterdam and Carol has learned the language from his family. Francien will be our Dutch guide who we got to know in 2014 and has been leading tours in Europe for us ever since. This tour is limited to only 22 participants (plus Ralph & Carol), as that is all the Lena Maria, our floating barge hotel will hold. We will be fed three meals each day on board the Lena Maria. (Actually, we will pack lunch each morning, so we can eat it as we cycle through the beautiful Dutch countryside.) All the cabins have two twin beds and they are not **bunk** beds! We have individual bathrooms with showers in each room. Please do be aware that the rooms are not air conditioned but that really shouldn't be an issue in the Netherlands where the average summer temperature is a high of 68 and a low of 50.

Each of us will have the free use of a high end 21 speed hybrid bike equipped with a lock and nice pannier, so there is no need to bring your bike with you. (They even provide a helmet and water bottle, though you may wish to bring your own!) We plan on riding no more than 30 to 40 miles per day on mostly flat roads or the best bike paths in the world. This tour is intended for the intermediate rider, comfortable on a bicycle saddle for 4-5 hours at a time. Holland is very flat, so hills won't be an issue but there is always the possibility of a headwind and rain is always a consideration any time of year.

**Note:** The entrance fees for all of the museums and other attractions listed on our tour are covered in your registration fee. One dinner will be on your own so that the crew has an evening off.

### **TOUR DESCRIPTION:**

*Broad rivers meandering through endless lowlands and picturesque towns* characterizes this wonderful journey between Amsterdam and Maastricht, the southernmost city in the Netherlands. Discover magical flat

green landscapes formed by the rivers Vecht, Lower Rhine, Waal, Linge and Maas (Meuse in French): a tangle of old rivers, cut-off meanders, dikes and flood plains with interesting flora and fauna. Visit historical towns, remarkable villages and some castles and gardens along these rivers. This is truly a special bike and barge tour as it takes us into a part of the Netherlands that is a bit off the beaten path. We end up in the unique province of Limburg, which hangs like an appendage from the southeast corner of the Netherlands bordering Belgium on the west and Germany on the east. We will cross these borders regularly, so we can eat '*Kuchen*' (cake) in a German '*Konditorei*' in the morning and have a delicious afternoon beer in a street café in Belgium. The journey ends in Maastricht, the capital of the province of Limburg, famous for its beautiful old city center and vibrant welcome.

**Day One Saturday, June 29: Amsterdam to Weesp (15-20 km):** We will start our tour in Amsterdam. The Lena Maria, our barge/hotel will be docked at the Oosterdok which is very close to Amsterdam's Central Station in the heart of the city. We meet there at 2:00PM. While we take time for bike adjustments and an

explanation about the traffic rules and safety issues, our barge will make its way out of the busy port of Amsterdam on its way to Weesp. What better way to experience Amsterdam than from the water? This small city on the banks of the river Vecht has a historical center with many canals and buildings dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth century. It also has a few beautiful windmills. The scenic river Vecht and the small roads along the river attracts boaters and cyclists alike. In Weesp, we will cycle a lovely loop around the village and along the river Vecht. Riding around town and into the lovely countryside will give us an opportunity to "dial in" our bicycles. We will return in the evening where we will be treated to the first of 9 wonderful gourmet dinners. After dinner you will have time to stroll through this charming town.



### **Day Two Sunday, June 30: Weesp-Utrecht-Vianen**

**(47 km):** Today we cycle the meandering river Vecht. Here, in the 18th-century, the wealthy inhabitants of Amsterdam built their country-houses, semi-castles. We pass lovely villages as Vreeland, Loenen and Breukelen. Brooklyn-New York got its name from this Vecht village. Along the way you will visit a real Dutch cheese farm, where cheese is still produced according to traditional methods. You will meet the barge in the city of Utrecht and from there you will sail the Amsterdam-Rhine canal to Vianen, a small fortified town on the river Lek.



**Day Three Monday, July 1: Vianen–Gorinchem–Heusden (41 km)** From Vianen you cycle through a typical Dutch landscape to Leerdam a little town on the banks of the river Linge full of farms with berries and cherries. The many fruit orchards show you why this region, the Betuwe is also known as the "fruit garden of the Netherlands". Leerdam is famous for its glasswork. We will visit the centuries-old crystal factory of Royal Leerdam where we will see a team of master glass blowers at work. From there we continue biking on the beautiful roads along the Linge to Gorinchem, a charming town on the river Waal. After a short visit, we will join the barge to the old fortified city of Heusden.

**Day Four Tuesday, July 2: Heusden – Cuijck (40km)** A breakfast river cruise will take us from Heusden to Maasbommel, a village on the Maas river. We'll start our ride along the Maas here and visit the very picturesque medieval cities of Ravenstein and Grave. In Ravenstein we will visit the Tanner's Cottages and in Grave you will see canons from the time of the Napoleonic Wars. Grave has also played an important role in Operation Market Garden during the second world war, because it was situated near an important bridge. This bridge is now called John S. Thompson Bridge after the American 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant and his paratroopers who secured the bridge for the allies. Continuing along the Maas river we will meet the Lena Maria in Cuijk. The St. Martin's Church, a neo-gothic church houses very well-kept baroque-organ (built 1639-1650), it is one of the oldest organs in the Netherlands. Hopefully we'll be able to visit a working windmill in Cuijk.



**Day Five Wednesday, July 3: Cuijck – Arcen (48 km)** Perhaps the “Queen Stage” of our bike tour we will cycle along the Maas Valley to Heyen and Afferden. The route then continues through Maasduinen National Park to Well where you will find the Well castle with its heavy round brick tower dating from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Our destination is Arcen where we will visit the famous castle gardens with its huge variety:



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**Day Six Thursday, July 4: Arcen – Venlo – Roermond (50 km)** Again we will follow the Maas river. We will cross it several times by ferry or bridge to follow the most interesting routes. The first stop is Venlo, with many historical monuments and a lively inner city. At lunchtime you arrive in Kessel, one of the oldest villages along the Maas. There you cross over to the other bank and continue the bike ride to the beautiful village of Beesel, where the grain mill 'grey bear' stands proudly along the river. Today's tour ends in the city of Roermond, where of the river Roer and Maas come together. Roermond is known for its rich cultural heritage. Since 1559 it has been a cathedral city. In the center you will find many historical buildings. Roermond is also the city of Pierre Cuypers, according to many the most important Dutch architect of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He is the architect best known for the Rijksmuseum and Central Station in Amsterdam.



**Day Seven Friday, July 5: Roermond – Born – Maastricht (42 km)** Today, the cycling tour continues through charming villages and the beautiful landscape of the province of Limburg. First stop is Thorn, the 'white Village' on the Dutch/Belgian border known for its cobblestone streets and white painted houses. The only non-white building is the 14<sup>th</sup>-century church. From Thorn you cycle across the Dutch / Belgian border to the Belgian city Maaseik. This city is famous for the painters Hubert and Jan van Eyck. On the market square you will see typical Renaissance-style houses with their impressive facades. You can also take the opportunity to have a nice Belgian "pint" on this beautiful square. You will find the ship in Born, from where you sail to Maastricht. Maastricht, the capital of the province is a beautifully preserved city with Roman roots. In this town you find the treasure house of the St. Servaas Church, the Bonnefanten museum for art and antiquity, and the Kazematten, a system of underground fortress works from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In addition to these places of interest, it is also worthwhile visiting the marl caves, or just to thoroughly enjoy yourself on the Vrijthof. You will not get bored!

**Day Eight Saturday, July 6: Maastricht:** After another great Dutch breakfast aboard the Lena Maria we will disembark and head our separate ways. You may want to think about spending an extra day in Maastricht as there is so much to see and do. If not, Amsterdam is a short 2-1/2 hour train ride away. (There are over 30 trains per day to choose from!)



# OUR FLOATING HOTEL, THE LENA MARIA

