



## **A Culinary Tour de Forts from Bruges to Maastricht**

**This tour will make you wonder how it is possible to be impressed and surprised again and again with every new day along the ride. Each of the towns on this route has a special beauty and unique atmosphere about it. Most of them have been fortified, defending their influence in trade, culture and wealth of the surrounding area - and in most of them, this atmosphere has survived throughout centuries, along with culinary traditions, famous breweries and vineyards. You'll have a lot to do if you want to try each and every traditional recipe and all the fantastic food. And at the same time your eyes will never get enough of the beauty of both, towns and countryside. For those of you who are interested in engineering at its best, the ride in the ship's elevator at Strépy-Thieu is a fantastic adventure. It will bring Elodie and everyone onboard 73 meters up, while you can enjoy a breathtaking view of the Ardennes mountains.\***

### **Day 1 Bruges 10 km / 6 miles**

Arrival on board the Elodie in Bruges where the crew will welcome you with a nice cup of coffee or tea. Introduction to the crew, traffic rules, safety onboard and general explanation of the program. Afterwards we will take a short tour to Damme, a small historical town in the area of Bruges. Now you can get comfortable with your bike and make necessary adjustments. Bruges can be considered an open air museum in every aspect. An evening stroll through this beautiful town is worthwhile.

### **Day 2 Bruges - Gent 50 km / 31 miles**

This day brings us along towpaths, green pastures and picturesque little towns of the Flemish countryside. An excellent track to warm up the muscles for the days to come. It is also part of the Santiago the Compostela pilgrims route. Gent, once one of the largest and richest cities in Northern Europe, still shows some impressive architecture from the Middle Ages, including the Belfry, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Today it's a vivid University Town with a great atmosphere.

### **Day 3 Gent - Oudenaarde 40 km / 25 miles**

From Gent we will continue upstream on the Schelde/Escaut to the South and Southwest. We will ride along river towpaths, through farmland, nature preserves and the occasional small port. The route is mostly flat. The locks along this part of the stream in most cases cover a rise of only about one meter. The towpaths are mostly well paved, with short sections of street riding in Gent and Oudenaarde. Oudenaarde is the capital of the Flemish Ardennes. Centuries old, it is famous for its beer breweries and wall paintings. Here we also try to take some time for the „Crazy Bicycle Museum“.

### **Day 4 Oudenaarde - Tournai 50 km / 31 miles**

The cycle path to Tournai follows in some parts the former railway track which had been converted into cycle paths. We will now enter the Wallonie, the French speaking part of Belgium. The difference in culture will be immediately noticeable. The Wallonians not only speak the French language but have also adopted the French culture.



Tournai, the oldest city in Belgium is considered to be one of the most important cultural sites of the country. The Cathedral Nôtre-Dame de Tournai in mixed Romanesque and Gothic style and the belfry, the oldest in Belgium, are another UNESCO World Heritage Site. Inside the cathedral, the Châsse de Notre-Dame flamande, a beautifully ornamented 12th-century reliquary, is a reminder of Tournai's wealth in the Middle Ages. We will be mooring outside Tournai, in Antoing, a picturesque little village.

### **Day 5 Antoing - Mons 60 km / 38 miles**

Today, we will follow the riverbed towards Mons, along the old towpaths which were used in the old days for pulling the barges upstream with horses, and sometimes even by the sole hands of men, women and children.

### **Day 6 Mons 0 km / 0 miles**

Today you have a choice: You can visit the house where Vincent van Gogh lived while he was studying to become a priest and where he worked with mine working people. Some very impressive works of the famous painter give witness of the strong impression the living conditions of the poor had on his sensitive soul and spirit. For those of you who prefer to go on a stroll, do some exploring and maybe do some souvenir shopping, there will be plenty of time for that. You can also go to the Strep ship lift museum which will give you an impression of what to expect the next day.

### **Day 7 Mons - Charleroi 40 km / 28 miles**

We will stay onboard Elodie until we have passed the ship's elevator at Strépy-Thieu. After a breathtaking lift 73 meters upwards we go off and cycle past the old ship lift to a meeting point near Charleroi, where Elodie will pick us up again. In the evening we will explore this impressive example of an old mining and steel industry center which is famous for its number of buildings and houses in Art Deco style. It's fascinating to see how the city is slowly developing again, after the closing of the mines and steel factories had seen it decline. Today the city is vibrating with the sense of a new era.

### **Day 8 Charleroi - Namur 46 km / 32 miles**

Elodie will drop us off at Auvélais from where we will continue our ride through farmland towards Namur, which has an enchanting city centre with an impressive citadel overlooking the city. After dinner we will walk around in the lively university town where also the rivers Maas and Sambre meet. Along the many small streets and squares you will find plenty of terraces for having a refreshing drink - or try one of the 150 different beers, Belgium is famous for.

### **Day 9 Namur - Huy 41 km / 20 miles**

In the morning we will have an opportunity to visit the Citadel, before we leave the town through picturesque countryside towards the charming little town of Huy. Amongst bikers the place is famous for the „Wall of Huy“, one of the steepest climbs along the cycling round of „Waalse Pijl“.



### **Day 10 Huy - Maastricht 40 km / 28 miles**

Along the river Maas we make our way towards Maastricht. We will see farmlands, the old stone quarries and enter the city of Liege. There Elodie will pick us up again and sail with us through the locks to Maastricht. And even when it's a lot less than what we experienced in Strépy-Thieu, the difference in height is still an impressive ten meters. Just before Maastricht we can see the only mountain in the Netherlands, the Sint Pietersberg.

### **Day 11 Maastricht 0 km / 0 miles**

Maastricht is a great place to end a tour, as it's an old tradition that we keep our kitchen onboard closed in the evening. You could hardly find a better place for going out for dinner. Our guide will help you with finding a nice restaurant of your choice. But try to find something where they serve local cuisine - it's worth it!

But, of course Maastricht has a lot more to offer than food. Due to its position in the far Southeast of the Netherlands, it has been influenced by cultures from all sides: Germany to the East, Belgium in the South. The old town is picturesque with its old fortifications, alleyways, squares and little streets. You can really forget time when you're on a stroll here.

### **Day 12 Maastricht**

After breakfast, at 9 a.m. we take leave of you.

*\* All distances mentioned are approximate and subject to change due to weather, road or water conditions or other circumstances that might occur during the tour and were not foreseen at the moment of offering this tour.*