

2006
Season

The Barge Company

Relax, Unwind and Let the World Float by...



The 'Saroche' is our 'Barge of the Month' - June 2006 -



On May 21—27 2006, The Barge Company was honoured and privileged to spend a week cruising on the splendid [Saroche](#) barge as she meandered gracefully from Sète to Avignon through the Camargue and Provence regions of southern France.

Taking 6 passengers in graceful comfort she represents one of the very best barges in France, with a standard of cuisine and on-board service to match—and in some cases exceed - many five star hotels.

Here we bring to you exclusive photographs and our personal feedback on the cruise, the food, the crew, the excursions and this very special cruising region!

To view her special offer reduced cruise rates for 2006 cruises, [click here](#).

MEALTIMES....



The food we ate on board the [Saroche](#) barge equalled the cuisine we have tasted in many of the world's 'top-ranking' restaurants, including many French ones. Jodie (a New Zealander), is the wife of Kevin, the Saroche's Captain, and she has fully trained as a professional chef. Her creations appear from the galley, day after day, in a seemingly effortless flow...



Breakfasts are a great start to the day—with an array of croissants, pastries, freshly squeezed orange juice with all those yummy bits in, mineral waters, coffees, teas, yoghurts (fruited and plain), freshly cut fruits plus breads, jams and several choices of cereal that will set you up for a day of sight-seeing and exploration (plus some relaxation of course!).

At breakfast you will peruse the proposed menu choices for that evening and inform the chef of what you would like to eat - **Saroche is the only barge on which you have a choice of evening meal.**



Lunches consist largely of a choice of fresh salads, fish, quiche lorraines, omelettes and cold meats, with a variety of fresh breads and pâtés to accompany. Both red and white wines are served at lunch and dinner times, a suitable vintage having been chosen to accompany your dish. We were delighted to find that desserts are served at lunchtimes, which is not always the case on all barges, where you may simply have cheese then coffee.

Evening meals are a splendid affair, with chef's appetiser, a starter, your main dish, cheeses, dessert, and then coffee if liked.

Fine porcelain crockery and elegant cutlery and glasses are used for all meals, adding that extra touch of luxury!



THE BARGE ITSELF....

The **Saroche** is one of the most elegant and graceful looking barges on the French waterways. Her flowing exterior lines make her a real eye-catcher, and everywhere you go people will stop what they're doing to admire her as she gently glides past.



Her interior living space is well designed, spacious and comfortable, with large, leafy plants and large windows allowing lots of light to enter. A large hexagonal roof window also adds to the feeling of natural, airy roominess. **The main lounge area is on two levels**—the lower one with sofas, coffee tables, a large oriental rug on the floor

and even a real French-style fireplace. Pretty framed pictures, fresh flowers and frondy plants add an air of fresh elegance and the real wooden floor adds a solid feel.

Wrought iron balustrades and several steps take you up to the higher level where you will find the **well stocked bar and dining area**. With a large solid wood table and chairs for 6, this is a very pleasant place to dine and watch the sun set out of the large picture windows. Each evening the dining table was decorated in a different style to suit where we moored. When we were moored near the Mediterranean Sea we sat down to find a 'sea-side theme' to the table (see far left). On other evenings it was more classic arrangements (see left).

The sun deck (see above right) is huge, with another 6 person dining table for those balmy evenings, with loungers and solid teak chairs of several kinds to relax in.



The three cabins on board the [Saroche](#) are a good size, and you can walk around the beds on three sides. Our green cabin (above left) was very pleasant, with thick, good-quality curtains and bed linen (which is changed halfway through the week). The en suite bathrooms are an ample size, with large showers beautifully tiled with an elegant mock marble design (see above right). The bathroom houses shower and toilet, with your large mirror and wash basin elegantly incorporated into a recess of the main cabin. Hanging and storage space for clothes was adequate for our needs, and the air conditioning unit a very welcome feature to the room, although only when the sun had been streaming through our cabin windows did we need it—a lesson learnt; better to keep the curtains closed when out on excursions!



The large, modern jacuzzi on the sun deck is another super feature of the [Saroche](#) as it suggests an alternative way to relax and watch the world float by...

Wild Camarguais white horses (above right) can be seen in abundance on the Sète—Avignon cruise route, as can pink flamingoes, black bulls and many other insects and wild creatures, including African bee-eaters which gave us an amazing display of exotic colour on one section of the route.

PLACES WE VISITED...

The excursions on the [Saroche](#) cruise include **Aigues-Mortes (above-right) a very ancient, fortified fishing port** with immense fourteenth century towers and high ramparts.

Inside you will find cafes, squares with fountains and many wonderful boutiques where you're sure to find a gem or



Further along the route we moored in **Arles—the capital of Provence**—and saw the huge Roman arena (above), and wandered the sun-drenched streets...





Arles holds a lot of Roman history and **Van Gogh** has made it even more famous recently as he spent a month or so at the *Hotel de Dieu* (hospice) in the centre of town. We visited the inner courtyard and perused some of the colourful prints and paintings that were for sale (above), before taking lunch off the barge in a shady square under colourful parasols.



Van Gogh immortalised the *Café de la Nuit* (above) in his paintings of Arles, and today this is a popular place to sit and enjoy a glass of cool Perrier water or a *café crème*.

The next day we found ourselves touring the gigantic Roman aquaduct the **Pont du Gard** (see left). The facilities there were great, and there was also plenty of shade for those who found the heat too much.

The jewel in the crown of this cruise is **the historic city of Avignon**, the visit to the ancient Pope's Palace and the remains of the famous bridge over the River Rhone (below left). The wind whistled down the river as we entered the port and moored up just along from the bridge. With the [Saroche](#) you will have personalised guided visits to all of these places, and of course all excursion fees are already included in the price of your cruise. We toured the Pope's Palace and the bridge with Simon the barge guide.

Later we travelled in the barge minibus to the **internationally renowned village of Chateauneuf du Pape** from where we took this stunning picture (below right). Now there is only a ruined castle remaining of the original Pope's residence, but it is of course world famous for its unique wines of the region.





We all enjoyed a wine-tasting of some Chateauneuf du Pape wines (above left) and no one left empty-handed! They even ship wines to America, so you needn't carry all those delicious but heavy wines home with you.

WHAT PAST DELIGHTED CLIENTS HAVE SAID...

April 2006

Dear Kevin, Jodie, Branwen and Simon,

Ben and I will never forget 'April in France'. You all have made my dream of seeing France come true. We are so lucky to have stayed on your lovely barge—what a *divine* experience! Merci beaucoup for beautiful memories.

B+GV, USA

Dear Kevin, Jodie, Branwen and Simon,

What a fantastic trip! We've never travelled in such style. The scenery changed constantly, which gave us a true insight into French life in the Camargue. And as for the food—simply the best we've had anywhere in the world—unbelievable!

C+V, UK

Dear Kevin, Jodie, Branwen and Simon,

Yet another time a fabulous trip on the Saroche. Yet another time I must say 'goodbye'. This is the perfect way to visit villages and towns in France—in luxury with the best food anywhere. How could anything top this?

DM, NY, USA

Dear Kevin, Jodie, Branwen and Simon,

Many thanks for an experience that exceeded all of our expectations. Great cruising, great people, great wine and oh! - the food! Jodie, you are uniquely talented. Everything was fabulous.

R+DT, CT, USA