

2006
Season

The Barge Company

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



The 'Grande Dame' of the Upper Loire... 'La Bonne Humeur' is our 'Barge of the Month' May 2006



Welcome to our latest 'Barge of the Month' feature for the month of May 2006. This month we would like to introduce you to the newest member of our fleet of European hotel-barges—'La Bonne Humeur'. In mid-April 2006 The Barge Company was invited to cruise on her through the tranquil inland waterways of the Upper Loire region of France (for those of you who are unfamiliar with this region, it's about 2 hours south of Paris and cruising takes place on the Briare Canal and the *Canal Lateral a la Loire*). Read on for exclusive pictures and an inside report—only from The Barge Company.





Following her 300,000 euro re-fit which took place this winter (2005—6), La Bonne Humeur is really in pristine condition. Her four huge staterooms (two of which are featured above) are all large, open and spacious with at least two large port-holes; the perfect place for a luxurious siesta after lunch, and for sleeping soundly each night of course. Each stateroom has ample room to move about it, with high, luxurious beds which can be configured as either a twin (two singles) or a generous king size double. Headboards are padded and wonderful for sitting up reading in bed. Specially positioned, swivellable lamps are on each side of the bed too, so if one person wishes to read before bedding down, the other person need not be kept awake. A sturdy, comfortable chair is in each cabin, plus a very large, 3-tiered chest of drawers is in each stateroom—ample room for even the most luggage-laden traveller! In addition, there is a very large built-in wardrobe with padded hangers and a cabinet for shoes to be safely stored. Fresh flowers, fine paintings and mineral water add the finishing touches.



The en suite bathrooms are equally indulgent, comprising of the toilet, large enclosed shower, an over-sized washbasin and several good-sized wooden cabinets in which one can store all one's cosmetics with ease. Hairdryers are in each bathroom, as is a delightful selection of de luxe 'Occitane' bathcare products, ranging from shampoos, body lotions, conditioners, face wash and even flannels.

The bathrooms are tiled in gleaming white throughout, with exotic hardwood floors and matching dark wood cabinets. Towels are snow-white, soft and fluffy, and bathroom trimmings shiny silver aluminium.

A huge mirror is also at your disposal in the bathroom, as is a full length mirror in each stateroom. And for the finishing touch, a huge, heated, all-erected towel rail ensures that a warm welcome always awaits you in your personal bathroom.





Half of each day - either the morning or afternoon—is occupied on an excursion of historic or cultural interest. The remaining part of the day is spent cruising gently along the Canal. Excursions are many and varied on La Bonne Humeur'. Whilst we were on board, cruising between Nemours and Chatillon-sur-Loire, our excursions included a visit to the world-famous Chateau de Fontainebleau (see pictures above and throne room, left), and also a much lesser-known privately-owned chateau called the Chateau de la Bussiere which has been in the same family for generations and has dwindled from a huge, feudal estate of several thousand acres, to now only several hundred. Happily the original chateau is still in the family and the friendly Countess may even bid you good day as you cross the courtyard!

The original kitchen which the family were still using up to the mid



1990's (right) is something to behold... The rest of the chateau is decorated in classic style with parts of it serving as a fishing museum. Its unique position (set into a lake) adds much charm and we were honoured to be able to visit such a place. During our visit we saw no other tourists at all and the feeling is of a private aristocrats home. The chateau garden is an informal affair but there they grow a huge range of herbs, fruits and vegetables which are transformed into delicious jams and preserves, buyable in the little gift shop.



The sun deck is large and comfortable on La Bonne Humeur, with a large round table where meals can be enjoyed *al fresco*, or you can take advantage of cooling off in the large, heated jacuzzi.



Other visits may include an excursion to the famous porcelain factory and shop at Gien. This glorious tableware is handpainted with various wonderful designs and the ladies in your group will be sure to want to take at least one piece home with them (although they do ship abroad).



Examples of the glorious food we enjoyed, as well as the beautiful Gien porcelain that we were served on at each meal, are to be seen here to the left and right.

A light lunch (see left) and a mozzarella and tomato starter (right).



The interior dining table (below) is very solid and has been, interestingly, constructed from the base of an old wine barrel (of about 2 metres width), together with some specially crafted, solid legs. Eight people can be seated here with ease. Large windows of the saloon allow plenty of natural light in at all times, so even when cruising whilst breakfasting, for example, you won't need to miss anything. Walls are decorated with a warm spice colour in the dining room, and in the open-plan lounge area the décor is led by a continental mustard colour.



The barge bar is very well-stocked with all types of spirits, liqueurs and soft drinks, and any special favourites can be requested prior to cruising (see below). There is usually a member of staff at the bar to serve you, but if not, guests are able to help themselves at any time of day or night. Bar drinks are, as usual, included in the overall all-inclusive cruise price ([click here for prices](#)).

The open plan living room also has a double-sided real flame fire, which services the living room and also the dining room area—a very useful novelty on a barge for those less than perfect days in spring or autumn.

La Bonne Humeur is the perfect barge for discerning clients who are seeking a really special barge cruise with friends or family. Taking up to 8 people in unostentatious luxury, the barge has all you could dream of for creating an unforgettable private cruise vacation.

The cruising region is mainly countryside—either wooded or pasture lands—and you will also follow a chain of pretty, picturesque villages and towns that each offer a new interest as you gently meander along each day.

The old tow path follows the canal so cycling and/or walking along through the countryside next to the barge or ahead of it, is also a delightful possibility.

We returned from our trip very impressed by the barge, its crew, excursions and the overall wonderful experience that we know our clients will have on this barge. We hope you can give it a try—either this year or next. We sincerely look forward to welcoming you aboard.

