

FEED-BACK FROM SOME OF OUR GUESTS

“Wonderful Champagne Cruise”

Dear Kurt and Bente,

Thank you for an amazing week aboard Aslaug.

It has definitely been the highlight of our trip to Europe. We have really enjoyed your generous hospitality and lovely company.

Thanks for making us feel so welcome.

B. and J. Muller, NSW, Australia, June 2019

“Barge Handling Trip”

In early September 2018 I spent five days on the barge Aslaug receiving instructions in barge handling from the owners, Bente Arnild and Kurt Jensen. I knew absolutely nothing about barge handling and was a raw beginner. I could not have asked for better instructors or a better place or people for learning. On top of which I had a very enjoyable time. I recommend the Aslaug very highly for anyone wanting to learn barging.

I was allowed (under close supervision from Kurt) to steer the boat for a limited period each day and learned about rope handling going up or down locks from Bente at each of the twenty or so locks the barge went through in its trip through the Canals du Somme and the Canal du Nord, as well as how to tie up a barge to bollards when docked for the night. I learned a great deal on the finer details of barge handling from extensive conversations with both Bente and Kurt carried on throughout the day as I stood beside the helm or on the deck at a lock or during the evening in the barge's salon. I very much enjoyed and greatly benefitted from the very informal atmosphere present through all of my days on the barge. I found both Bente and Kurt to be excellent instructors and at the same time very sociable and quite willing and happy to instruct a raw novice such as myself.

Breakfast and some lunches were provided, as well as coffee throughout the day. All were uniformly excellent and very enjoyable. There was quite adequate time at various stops made during the voyage for me to explore some of the local attractions (eg the Australian War Memorial near the town of Corbie) or to go for dinner at local restaurants, but this was not the primary purpose of my barge trip. Learning the basics of barge handling was what I was there for; I was very pleased with the extent and the very high quality of instruction provided by Bente and Kurt. An added bonus was the warm hospitality and very comfortable lodgings provided on the Aslaug.

To conclude, not only did I have a wonderful time with Bente and Kurt on their barge Aslaug, I was provided with ample direct on-hands experience with all aspects of barge handling accompanied by excellent instruction, all coupled with extensive informal conversations during the day on numerous barge related topic, along with excellent meals. Someone looking for instruction in barging and all related matters would be hard pressed to find a better learning environment than that provided on Aslaug by its owners.

A.A., Toronto, Canada, September 2018

“Wonderful Mystery Tour”

We took our granddaughter on a six day cruise on the canal alongside the Somme river for what we call the G8thGMT (Great 8th Grade Mystery Tour). Neither she nor her parents knew where she was going.

How fortunate we were to have booked the barge Aslaug for our trip. To say that it is luxurious is an understatement! We each had our own room complete with bathroom.

We lounged in the wheelhouse or on deck watching the world go by. This part of France is peaceful and uncrowded so much of the time we cruised through the beautiful countryside our only companions were ducks, geese and swan, with babies trailing them.

Kurt and Bente are amazing hosts, so knowledgeable and accommodating. And the food when we ate on board was incredible, croissants every morning fetched by Kurt on his bicycle at the closest bakery, fresh fruit, and, of course, varied French cheeses. We are already planning a return trip in a year or so. It was the most relaxing and fascinating vacation we could have imagined.

J. & A. T., Maryland, USA, June 2017

“A most relaxing cruise”

We spent a restful week cruising the Canal de la Somme on the barge MS Aslaug with our hosts Bente and Kurt.

The cruise began at Peronne in Northern France, and from the moment we boarded the barge, our hosts could not be anymore accommodating. After being shown over the well designed and maintained vessel, we had a pleasant drink with them prior to casting off. Once under way we cruised along at a leisurely 6kMH. On the first night, Kurt prepared a delicious ‘Captains Dinner’. At the completion of the meal and a chat we headed to our compact but comfortable cabin complete with ensuite shower and toilet.

While cruising pass the beautiful scenery and country side, Bente provided snacks and refreshments on a regular basis, and each morning Kurt would head off to the local bakery for fresh bread or rolls for breakfast.

When we tied up at a village or town at the end of each days cruising, our hosts would suggest places and sites to visit and eat, and also assist with transport if required.

Our cruise finished in the town of Amiens, where we said farewell to our hosts and thanked them for a most enjoyable and relaxing time. This is a trip both Faye and I will remember for a long time, thanks to Bente & Kurt.

F. & B.D., Melbourne, Australia, August 2016

“What a glorious day out!”

My father in-law canal aficionado and we booked a full day trip from Amiens to Corbie with Bente and Kurt while on a family vacation in Northern France. It was superb! The boat, which is their home, is beautifully kept and decorated in a Danish modern style. Bente served coffee and croissants on the deck as we motored along. More cruising and then we enjoyed a gorgeous French lunch while docked in a lock - with dessert, coffee and darts (!) in the nearby cafe. Everything detail was taken care of. Kurt and Bente are marvelous hosts/guides and even went so far as to arrange van transport back to our car at the end of our day. Our party of nine ranged in age from 5 - 79 and a wonderful time was had by all. It was truly a day to remember!

FYI, Arnild Barging offers day trips as well as week-long cruises along the canals of Northern France and to historic sites of WWI.

S.S., New York, USA, July 2016

Barge Cruising in France

For 6 nights we cruised the Picardy Region in Northern France onboard Aslaug through the canals of the Somme and can thoroughly recommend it! This trip was much more than I had expected!

Aslaug accommodates up to 4 passengers with 2 x twin rooms, each with their own ensuite. If you prefer you can book for 2 people and pay a supplement to ensure your holiday is your private retreat and no other guests will be booked.

Our hosts and crew, Bente and Kurt, were brilliant. Every morning our breakfast was prepared at any time that suited us complete with freshly baked croissants and baguettes. Lunch was also supplied onboard which showcased the French cuisine and local produce and always included a selection of fromage (cheese). If you haven't been to France before I doubt if you have tasted pastries, baguettes or cheese this good! A Captain's Dinner, tea, coffee and soft drinks are also included. Other dinners were onshore, at our own expense, in one of the local restaurants usually recommended or booked for us by Bente.

The mornings were relaxing with time for a walk or even a fish before departing at approx. 9am, that's if you wish to get out of bed. There are no strict schedules to follow here! While cruising the canals it was a good time to be up on deck as we went through locks and admired the scenery. It was so peaceful and Bente was always close by to offer coffee and biscuits. Of course, if you would prefer to spend your time planning your afternoon in the next town Bente and Kurt have lots of knowledge on the history and sightseeing in the next destination complete with all the local tourist brochures and information.

By early afternoon it was time to explore on our own the next beautiful village. We were always docked within walking distance to nearly everything. Another option we loved was to ride the fold-up bikes around the town or along the canal and we could always guarantee that Bente had packed us water, fruit and snacks just in case.

Our highlight was visiting the Australian & NZ War Memorial, Museum and battlefields at Villers-Bretonneux. We put our fold-up bikes in the taxi to the Museum and then road downhill on the bike path through the poppy fields to the Memorial and back to Aslaug. This was so incredibly moving to experience this on our own and not in a large tourist group. We had all the time we wanted to truly absorb the facts of this historic site and appreciate the gratitude the French still have today for the Australian Forces. It made us feel truly proud to be Australian when we saw words saying “Do Not Forget Australia”.

Amiens was a lovely university city, famous for the Notre-Dame Cathedral (which is over twice the size of the one in Paris), the hortillonnages (floating gardens), author Jules Verne’s home (which is now a museum), and almond macarons amongst other delicacies. On the entrance to the railway station there are large signs with “Merci” & “Thank You” to all the troops during the war.

The other villages were also wonderful all with their own uniqueness and very friendly locals that were always happy to meet us.

Arnild Barging offer a range of options from day trips to 6 nights along different areas of the Canal de la Somme. Bente & Kurt know how to offer the finest hospitality without encroaching on your special private holiday!

So if you are thinking of a relaxing French holiday, or would like to add a wind-down after a hectic Europe trip, away from the crowds, this is the solution!

R. & G.D., Queensland, Australia, July 2016

“A fantastic option that isn't same-old same-old”

Well, I am so glad our group of four chose to "take a chance on the unusual" and reserve for 3 nights on Barge Aslaug. The hosts, Bente and Kurt, who live on board, were fantastic. They were just the right mix of attentive and inclusive, but never intrusive. They welcomed us with open arms and much appreciated wine and appetizers! They even shared dinner with us one night (when we had some food, they had some food....). Breakfasts were just delicious. The accommodations were terrific, very comfortable twin berths in each cabin, plenty of storage space, private ensuite in each cabin (with terrific water pressure in the shower). It was lovely to be on the water, away from the craziness of towns or cities, listening to the birds, etc. It was just fabulous. I think we were unanimous in saying we would stay there again, and recommend it highly. Thank you to our Danish friends xoxo.

C. and M. R., Toronto, Canada, June 2016

Week-Cruise

We spent a wonderful week with Kurt and Bente in late July on the Somme River and the Somme River Canal, beginning in Amiens and cruising downstream to the ancient port city of St. Valery-sur-Somme. This is beautiful country, with pretty, interesting, historic small towns along the way: Amiens, Abbeville, Picquigny, Long, and St. Valery. The boat is charming, built to Kurt and Bente's specifications. Every aspect of it has been carefully thought out. There are two guest cabins, each with room for two people, each with its own bathroom and shower. Compact, but very comfortable. The interior of the boat was finished by Dutch cabinetmakers, and the woodwork is a work of art in itself.

This trip is an unusual opportunity. Many river/canal barge chartered trips are a completely guided experience, with nearly all meals eaten on board, with guides leading a group through a planned itinerary, etc. We would feel a bit suffocated on a trip like that. Also, complete package trips like that are much more expensive. Aboard the Aslaug, you sleep on the boat, have breakfast and lunch, and then are on your own to explore the area you are passing through that day. Really, it's a floating bed and breakfast, which suited us perfectly. Four bikes are available; we didn't use them simply because we enjoyed walking.

Meals are a treat on board the Aslaug. Kurt and Bente like food and like to cook. The "Captain's Dinner" was as good a meal as we had anytime during our three weeks in France, which is saying something, as we did not have a bad meal once, and visited many fine restaurants. Bente gets up each morning and prepares breakfast while Kurt goes to the local bakery for fresh baked goods. Bente seems always to have a snack ready. You will have to be careful if you want to leave the boat the same weight as when you hopped aboard.

Kurt and Bente are wonderful hosts. They don't run these charters for a living; they've done that already. Instead, they love their life on the rivers and canals, and love to share it with their guests. Friendly and personable, Kurt and Bente spend the cruising part of the day in the wheelhouse, and are happy to chat with you, explaining the ins and outs of navigation on the river. At the end of the day, they will always be ready to share a drink with you, discussing whatever you wish to talk about. This is a kind, considerate, interesting couple with a great wealth of experience and knowledge. Getting to know them was the highlight of the trip for me. We'd love to join them again sometime.

L. and D. M. and 2 teens, Colorado Springs, USA, August 2015

What wonderful memories we have! We certainly enjoyed our trip to France, and the time on your barge was the highlight of it!

A totally relaxed week's cruising on the Somme, delicious breakfast and lunch buffets and a very tasty welcome dinner. You are both very welcoming and caring hosts and accommodated our changes of plans underway without problem. The boat is a true beauty, spacious with lots of light, and with high quality furnishing, - a pleasure to stay here.

S.S. and L.F., Vancouver, Canada, June 2015

What a truly unique and wonderful week of cruising on the Somme! The experience far exceeded our expectations and in particular we appreciated the friendly, welcoming and quality experience that you both provided to our family. We all enjoyed the opportunity to relax and loved the peacefulness of the foredeck and the hammock. Thank you again for your kind and generous hospitality.

L. and A.K., N.S.W., Australia, May 2015