



From Canal du Midi with love



Why not take to the water? Escape the pace and stresses of your daily life by joining, if only temporarily, the ancient, peaceful way of life on the canals of France. We joined the canal barge Anjodi, operated by European Waterways which offers luxurious five star canal barge holidays, cruising a variety of canals throughout Europe and loved it, writes Mary Conisbee.

Anjodi achieved film star status and has never been more popular since Rick Stein brought her to the attention of the world in his successful TV series 'French Odyssey' when she carried the world famous chef on a 400 mile voyage of culinary discovery through the south of France.

Our six day voyage took us from Marseillan on the French Mediterranean coast, west of Montpellier to Le Somail, close to Narbonne which is further west and close to the world heritage city of Carcassonne, travelling at a stately pace through miles of wonderful scenery on the Canal du Midi.

Anjodi accommodates a maximum of eight passengers with four crew who respond to your every need. Refined luxury was the order of the day, teamed with ample space, cuisine which would give any Michelin star restaurant a serious run for their money, fine French wines and courteous and friendly English speaking staff who could not do enough to cater to our every whim and wish. All this plus the enjoyment of the stunningly beautiful countryside made for a wonderfully relaxing holiday.



We travelled from London Gatwick to Montpellier where we spent some hours loving the cosmopolitan atmosphere of this authentic Mediterranean city, with its typically gentle southern French lifestyle. Key attractions include the historical centre and medieval streets, the Fabre Museum, La Panacee cultural centre, beautiful gardens and vineyards. We were met late afternoon by a member of Anjodi's crew at Montpellier station, who drove us westwards to the lakeside fishing village of Marseillan whilst we enjoyed the view over the oyster beds. Once on board we were greeted with a champagne welcome by the captain and crew.

When shown to our cabin we were pleasantly surprised to find it had a large double bed and attractive bed linen and it also had compact fitted wardrobes, air-conditioning, and an en-suite bathroom with shower, WC and heated towel rail.

The enclosed pretty lounge/dining area was comfortably fitted with quality sofas, a very well stocked bar and a large table sufficient for all eight of us and each evening it was beautifully decorated. The lounge was attractively furnished, enhanced with fresh flowers and for those who enjoy music a CD player and an ipod dock was available. For star gazing enthusiasts an excellent telescope was available to observe the clear south of France night skies.

On the top deck we found a spacious sun area, surrounded with troughs of flowers, and complete with umbrellas, sun loungers and a heated spa pool. For the more energetic amongst us, eight touring bikes for tow path cycling.

Life on board was extremely relaxed and very comfortable - one can easily understand how addictive barging becomes even after twenty-four hours. One of the greatest pleasures for me was the quality of ingredients most of which were bought daily by Chef wherever we moored up. The lovely



fresh local produce was first class as was Chef's presentation. He created imaginative French cuisine which was beautiful but not fussy and matched by a knowledge of etiquette one would expect to find in an esteemed French Michelin star restaurant. We were thoroughly spoilt on both the wine and cuisine fronts which impressed us as everything is included in the original booking fee.

As passengers we could easily have spent the whole cruise on board enjoying the wonderful food and wine and the beautiful scenery. However European Waterways also provide an excellent excursion itinerary and our voyage included visits to the world famous medieval walled city of Carcassonne which dates back to the Gallo Roman era. This is the most complete medieval fortified city in existence today. With its 52 watchtowers, portcullis and extraordinary repertoire of defenses it is stunning. We also went to Narbonne, a Roman Mediterranean capital where the Visigoth monarchs once lived and Minerve, the ancient capital of Minervo, which boasts a 12th century Cathar fort surrounded by deep limestone gorges. At Chateau de Perdiguer we marvelled at the 15th century frescoes and learn a little about the Chateau's world famous Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay wines. We also enjoyed a great wine tasting in the quaint village of Pezenas.

European Waterways offer a variety of different types of cruises and there's sure to be something to interest every type of traveller. From Artisan cruises through the rolling green landscapes of Ireland, exploring the best of handcrafted cuisine; to Art cruises through the region of Provence that inspired so many Impressionist painters like Van Gogh and Cezanne; to the Antiques cruises on the River Thames, not to mention the wonderfully romantic Honeymoon cruises through the fairy tale setting of the Loire Valley or the dramatic landscapes of the Scottish Highlands.

There's a cruise and a barge to suit everyone.

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European Waterways prices for a 6 night cruise aboard the 8-passenger hotel barge 'Anjodi' are from £2,850pp in a twin/double ensuite cabin suite, including all meals, wines, an open bar, excursions and local transfers. Full boat charters are also available. Call European Waterways: +44 (0) 1753 598555 Website: www.gobarging.com
