

Travel deals

◆ It will be easier to get to Greece next summer with Ryanair starting three new routes from Stansted to Crete, Kos and Patras Araxos. Seats on the new flights are from £47.99 – visit [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com) for details. The company uses 42 aircraft on 112 routes out of Stansted.

◆ One company offering good deals to tempt early bookers is Haven Holidays which has 35 family holiday parks around the coast of Britain. At the moment you can book a week in the summer holidays at one of its parks for less than £500 for a family of six. Visit [www.haven.com](http://www.haven.com) or telephone 0871 2301900 to see what is available.



◆ If you want to go abroad for a family holiday Keycamp also offers good deals at its parcs across Europe and discounts on bookings before the end of February. For example, a stylish parc on the south

coast of France, Keycamp's Domaine du Colombier in Frejus is a four-star resort with all the trimmings – the centrepiece is a new pool complex and the glamour and glitz of the French Riviera is on the doorstep. A week from June 2 for a family of two adults and up to four children costs from £549, including Dover to Calais ferry crossings if booked before February 29. More information from [www.keycamp.co.uk](http://www.keycamp.co.uk) or 0844 406 0319.

◆ According to British Airways Holidays New York is likely to be the most popular long-haul destination next year. Not far behind is Orlando and Las Vegas. Claire Bentley, of BA Holidays, said America was seeing strong bookings, with people taking advantage of the currency exchange. "The Caribbean and Indian Ocean will both continue to be as popular as ever with even more hotels now available for 2012 and many offering value-added extras and all-inclusive options which will be key for 2012."

Local offers

**Late holiday offers with flights from Norwich. Telephone Travel Norwich Airport on 01603 428700 or e-mail [enquiries@travelnorwichairport.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@travelnorwichairport.co.uk) to check availability, or visit the website at [www.travelnorwich.com](http://www.travelnorwich.com)**

◆ **Tenerife** – January 24, 3T named in Playa Paraiso, seven nights, all-inclusive, £449 per person.

◆ **Tenerife** – February 28, three-star named in Puerto de la Cruz, 14 nights, half-board, £575 per person.

◆ **Moscow and St Petersburg** – March 29, touring hotels, five nights, bed and breakfast, £799 per person.

◆ **Turkey** – April 20, four-star named in Marmaris, seven nights, all-inclusive, £339 per person, saving £200 per couple.

◆ **Corfu** – May 4, 4T Platinum hotel in Aghios Gordios, seven nights, half-board, £395 per person.

◆ **Majorca** – May 15, three-star named in Palma Nova, seven nights, all-inclusive, £419 per person.

◆ **Malta** – May 15, three-star named in Qawra, seven nights, half-board, £375 per person.

◆ **Bulgaria** – May 20, three-star plus named in Sunny Beach, seven nights, all-inclusive, £409 per person.

*Prices correct at time of sending - all are subject to continuing availability and based on maximum occupancy.*

It's all aboard as we join **Brian Caldecott** on a luxury barge adventure in Burgundy – a fine mix of history, humour and hospitality.

**A**jolly French ditty that I recall from schooldays satirised an eccentric court bailiff named Guillaume Roussel. I'd be surprised if the catchy tune has slipped the memory of anyone who's heard it or the last lines of each verse, to wit: 'Ah! Ah! Ah! Mais vraiment, Cadet Roussel est bon enfant'.

I never expected to meet him but during a visit to Auxerre in Burgundy I came face to face with him – or at least a fountain statue bearing his name. Tricia and I arrived in Auxerre at the start of a week-long luxury barge adventure and took a pre-dinner stroll following the brass Cadet Roussel pavement plates through the winding cobbled streets of the medieval town on the river Yonne.

Returning to our barge, a former Scottish munitions carrier built in 1917 that has been transformed into the elegant L'Art de Vivre, we were welcomed by our captain, Laurent Charbonnier. He introduced the crew: hostess-housekeeper Amy, who was born in Norwich and attended Notre Dame High School; gourmet chef Sarah, from Shrewsbury, who treated us to a mouthwatering selection of dishes at breakfast, lunch and dinner; and Claire, from Australia, our capable and knowledgeable driver and tour guide.

At a champagne reception we met our three travelling companions: Ginger, originally from Mississippi and now retired to Florida; Karen, born in Holland and living in Australia; and her daughter Nichola, resident in Bangkok. I wondered what I had let myself in for, one of two men up the creek with seven women, but we got on like a house on fire and enjoyed lots of fun.

Barge facilities included a sundeck dining area, spa pool and comfortable saloon. Our air-conditioned, en-suite cabin could be fitted out with twin beds or a double and was equipped with toiletries, towels, bathrobes and slippers – and Tricia was pleased to find ample storage space.

Capt Laurent was a skilful and safety-conscious skipper. Some of the locks on the Canal du Nivernais allowed only inches of clearance on either side and how he managed to steer our 100ft long, 16ft wide vessel through with only an occasional minor scrape was baffling.

It was not busy on the waterways and there were always cheery waves when other pleasure craft hove into view, many carrying Dutch, German or Australian tourists. Our first morning cruise took us past hillside vineyards and rich pastures ranged by creamy-white Charolais beef



# Barging into Burgundy



cattle. The heat was intense by mid morning and tree-lined stretches on the approach to our rural mooring at Vincelles gave welcome breaks.

After lunch we drove to Chablis, home of one of the most famous white wines in the world, where a tasting in one of the aged cellars of the Domaine Servin set us up for dinner on board.

We welcomed an opportunity to take a closer look at a town of some 40,000 people, that resounds with the history of one of the oldest towns in France. We marvelled at the magnificent Cathedral of St Etienne, the first in France to be built

in the Gothic manner, and discovered that the Abbey St Germain contains 9th century frescos that are the oldest known in France. The old houses follow a semi-circular pattern around the Clock Tower which once guarded the 15th century ramparts.

After a cruise south we reached our overnight mooring in the market town of Mailly la Ville and prepared for another of Sarah's feasts, on deck in the evening sun. She treated us to a smoked salmon soufflé, followed by supreme of guinea fowl with wild mushrooms, a tarte tatin and St Augur and Reblochon cheeses. Amy stepped in with St Bris and Irancy wines.

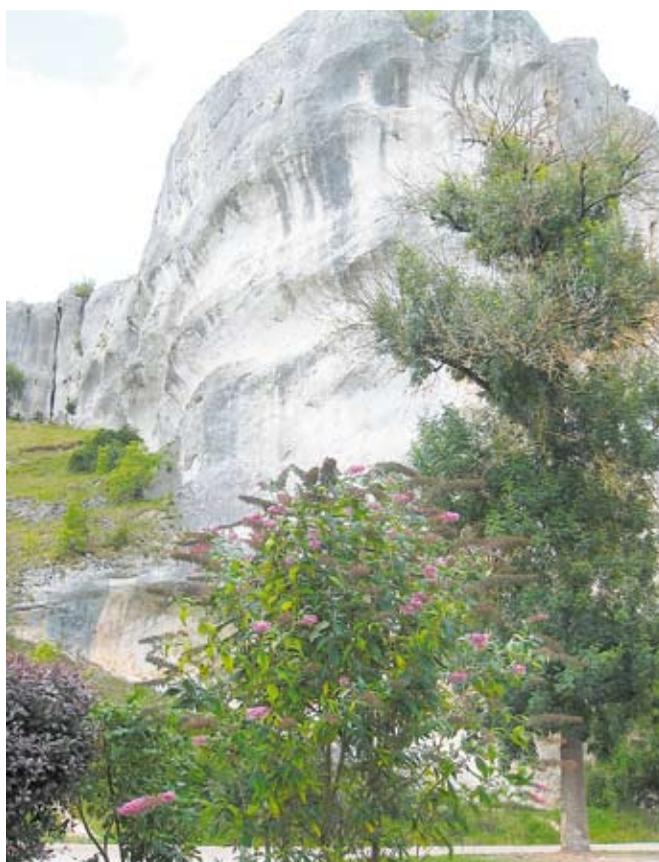
After another restful night we visited the picturesque 14th century village of Noyers that has preserved all the charm of its history. The rampart wall is guarded by no fewer than 16 towers circling the arcades of the central square. In the afternoon I took a bike ride past the spectacular Saussois cliffs, site of an international climbing centre.

Next morning we enjoyed an



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## Factfile

◆ We travelled by rail from Norwich to London Liverpool Street. For information and best value fares visit [www.nationalexpresseastanglia.com](http://www.nationalexpresseastanglia.com). From St Pancras we took the Eurostar to Paris and travelled to Burgundy with Corail French railway. Return fares from London to Laroche Migennes, via Paris, start at £111 (standard class). Log on to [raileurope.co.uk](http://raileurope.co.uk), telephone 0844 848 4070 or visit Rail Europe Travel Centre, 1 Regent Street, London, SW1.

◆ European Waterways (01753 598555 or [www.gobarging.com](http://www.gobarging.com)) is owner-operator of Europe's premier fleet of all-inclusive hotel-barges, cruising the inland waterways since 1974. Price for L'Art de Vivre Burgundy wine appreciation cruise includes transfer to/from Laroche Migennes, a six-night cruise, all meals on board catered for by the gourmet chef, open bar 24/7, wines throughout cruise, excursions and admission fees, use of barge facilities. From £2,350 to £2,690 per person based on double occupancy per stateroom. Boat charter for eight passengers £16,300 to £20,000.

excursion to the town of Vézelay, one of Burgundy's most famous treasures, with the Romanesque Basilica of St Mary Magdalene, craft shops and fine views of the surrounding countryside. Lunch was taken at an auberge popular with locals and during an afternoon cruise through the Yonne valley Capt Laurent welcomed on board two musicians who entertained with guitar and songs.

Our last full day included a morning cruise through beautiful countryside to Clamecy where it was just a short walk into town and its narrow streets lined with ancient buildings presented Tricia with shopping opportunities. Others joined Claire on a tour of the medieval stronghold of Chateau de Bazoches, whose illustrious visitors have included Richard the Lionheart. From 1675 it was the home of the renowned military engineer Marshal Vauban whose descendants are the present owners.

The captain's farewell dinner was a hilarious song-and-dance affair, truly a floating expression of the Burgundian 'good life', enjoyed by all.

**Clockwise from main picture: The luxury barge L'Art de Vivre, converted from a former Scottish munitions carrier built in 1917.**

**The medieval stronghold of Chateau de Bazoches.**

**The dramatic cliffs at Saussois – site of an international climbing centre.**

**The Cathedral St Etienne in Auxerre was the first in France built in the Gothic manner. Captain Laurent and, from left, crew members Claire, Sarah and Amy.**

Pictures: Brian Caldecott.

**Andy Russell** relieves worry and strain of an early-morning flight at the Radisson Edwardian Heathrow.

# Holiday starts here with a flying visit

Early-morning flights from Heathrow or Gatwick when you live in Norfolk are always a dilemma – do you get up in the middle of the night to drive there or stay at the airport and get off to a flying start. I've done the former many times only to arrive at the last minute stressed after M25 hold-ups and irritable from lack of sleep or depressed by hours at the airport having arrived early to be on the safe side. So with an 8.10am Heathrow check-in for a winter flight to Perth in Western Australia, and the memory of the country covered in snow a year earlier, my wife and I went for the easy and safe option and booked into the Radisson Edwardian Heathrow – a wise move as it was a foggy week.

And to make your holiday even easier you can also drive there and then take advantage of some cracking stay, park and fly packages with valet parking. Arriving late evening, we were pleasantly surprised by the lavish and luxurious ambience of this large hotel, a short bus ride from the airport terminals, which has 459 rooms and suites.

The marble and wood panelled reception sets the scene for a stylish stay – the Radisson Edwardian feels anything but an airport hotel and far removed from some 'rabbit hutches' I have stayed in.

Our double room was spacious – with a huge bed, a small table and two chairs and an armchair – and comfortable and included a huge LCD TV on the wall, tea and coffee-making facilities, air-conditioning, Broadband access and use of the health spa and gym.

Once installed we unwound after the journey with a well-earned nightcap in the smart bar before retiring for a good night's sleep. Given how close it is to the busy main A4 Bath Road and the airport, the hotel is quiet and good sound-proofing meant we were not awoken by other guests coming and going through the night – often a problem at airport hotels. The ensuite bathroom, with toilet, sink and over-bath shower, is compact but roomy enough for two people – ideal if you need to make a smart exit to catch a plane. Showered and ready for the off, we had a relaxed breakfast in the classy Brasserie.

The hotel also boasts Henley's restaurant and bar serving high-quality, modern British cuisine.

The breakfast service was fast and efficient but the self-service full English cooked breakfast looked a little dry from being kept hot. That said, there was plenty of alternatives including cereals, delicious smoked salmon and mackerel, porridge, fruit, yoghurt, pastries and various breads and rolls. And, to be honest, a big cooked breakfast was probably not the best idea with the best part of a full day flying. Our stay at the Radisson Edwardian was as enjoyable as it was successful and we will do again it again next time we fly early

from Heathrow – a sound night's sleep, no worries about getting to the airport on time and hassle-free parking. It was just a shame we had to leave the hotel straight after breakfast – if we could have stayed longer I might have got round to using the health spa. That would have been an even more relaxing way to start a holiday.



**Luxury: The Radisson Edwardian Heathrow is upmarket and convenient for the airport.**

### FACTFILE

■ **Radisson Edwardian Heathrow, 140 Bath Road, Hayes, UB3 5AW. Telephone 020 87596311 or e-mail [resreh@radisson.com](mailto:resreh@radisson.com). Central reservations for all Radisson Edwardian Hotels 0800 374411.**

■ **The hotel's stay, park and fly packages include a double, two or deluxe room, two-for-one dining, frequent flier points and valet parking for four, eight and 15 days. Prices range from £78.50 to £95.50 – for details visit [radissonedwardian.com/stayparkandfly](http://radissonedwardian.com/stayparkandfly)**

■ **A filling full breakfast costs £17.75 per person.**

■ **The National Express Hotel Hoppa bus picks up from outside the hotel door, takes between five and 15 minutes to reach the various Heathrow terminals and costs £4.50 per person one-way.**

■ **The Radisson Edwardian Heathrow is also one of Europe's largest conference centres with 43 meeting rooms of varying sizes catering for up to 700 guests.**