

## Amsterdam - Maastricht - Antwerp Tour

This two-country tour combines the beauty of the big rivers delta of Rhine and Meuse in the Netherlands with the pastoral countryside of the Kempen and Brabant in Belgium. The routing starts cycling to the catholic southern and south eastern part of the Netherlands. The beautiful Meuse (Maas) river forms the border between the Dutch provinces of Brabant and Limburg. We dock in Nijmegen and Maastricht, cities that contest each other for being the oldest city of the Netherlands, both being founded by the Romans.

The border with Germany is not far from the Meuse valley. We will set foot there and could claim our tour as a tour of three countries. Nowadays the borders are not noticeable anymore, but in history the strategic value of the valley lead to many battles. Near Nijmegen we visit the Liberation museum, referring to the allied sacrifices in WW-II and near Maastricht we pass Margraten, where over 8,000 American soldiers are buried.

Maastricht and the newly formed province of Limburg became part of the Netherlands in 1815. It would have been Belgium if the local military commanders would have swapped sides in 1830, when Belgium declared itself independent from the Netherlands. In this lovely city we take a day off. Maastricht is the host of many European conferences. It has a burgundy life style, many restaurants, museums, winding streets and very old monuments.

After visiting the marl stone caves south from Maastricht we enter Belgium. We leave the Meuse for the Albert Canal, dug out just before WW-II. Napoleon dreamt about this canal, but the idea of a connection in Belgium between the Scheldt and Meuse rivers already existed in the times of the Independence war (1568-1648) of the Low Lands against the Spaniards. Along the Albert Canal we turn west towards the Kempen. Its capital, Hasselt is known for its jenever, the Low Lands gin. Don't worry, if you don't like the stronger stuff, the Belgium beers are available everywhere.

After Hasselt we head for two of the Flemish pearls of 16th century prosperity, Lier and of course Antwerp. Lier is famous for its clock works on the Zimmer tower and has one of the most beautiful beguinages. Typically laid-back towns lead you into Antwerp, where our destination is the Willemdok. Old harbor buildings are converted into condominiums and some of the museums in Antwerp. The diamond center found a new home in the renown MAS (Museum at the River). The roof of the MAS gives a beautiful view over the old town and over the Willemdok with the Angeline docked in the middle of it.

We will cycle in two groups (short 20-30 miles, long 25-50 miles), each accompanied by a professional guide. Of course you always have the option to sail along with the Angeline. On a scale 1 (easy cycling) to 7 (very challenging cycling) this trip is a 2. The route is flat for most rides, but around Nijmegen, Maastricht and Hasselt there are hills. They are not high, but some of them are steep. Bike paths and biking lanes are found when approaching towns or cities. Preferably we will cycle on smaller roads with minimal car-traffic, but sections on bigger roads are possible. In order to avoid hills or traffic we sometimes choose unpaved roads.

The options for the Angeline to drop-off or pick-up in this tour are limited. Docking and itinerary subject to change.

Tours begin on Saturday in Europe; you must leave the USA on Friday to arrive on Saturday. Guests need to arrive at the barge by noon the day the tour starts. On the last day of the tour guests disembark by 9:00 am.