

# Inland Waterways by Sailboat

## Amsterdam to the Mediterranean



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*"We needed this guide before going on our adventure of cruising the inland waterways of The Netherlands, Belgium and France. That's why we created it for other sailors."*

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## About us

We are a Dutch family of three: Tim, Eveline and Max. Since 2015 we live on our sailing boat 'Mallemok', an Endurance 35 ketch. We quit our jobs and sold our house to go on this adventure. After having navigated Europe's inland waterways we cruised the Med.

To see more inland waterway pictures visit: [facebook.com/varen.mallemok](https://facebook.com/varen.mallemok).

On [facebook.com/sailingmallemok](https://facebook.com/sailingmallemok) and [www.sailingmallemok.com](http://www.sailingmallemok.com) you can read more about our adventure on the Med.

Along the way we like meeting other families to spend time with. We've setup a Facebook page for this: [Liveaboard Families Med](https://facebook.com/liveaboardfamiliesmed)



In November 2015 we reached the Mediterranean after having spent three months on the inland waterways of The Netherlands, Belgium and France. We thoroughly enjoyed this journey. We enjoyed it so much, that we decided to write this e-pilot in order to inspire other sailors to take and enjoy this route, as an alternative to going by sea. While wintering in Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône where Max went to the local daycare we wrote articles for the Dutch sailing magazine 'Zeilen' [www.sailingmallemok.com/zeilen.html](http://www.sailingmallemok.com/zeilen.html) and we worked on this e-pilot, documenting all our experiences and observations. In April 2017 we updated the e-pilot using input we gathered from cruisers that used it to navigate the inland waterways.



**Tim:** *"Years ago while backpacking around the world everytime we were admiring a shoreline somewhere there would be a sailing boat anchored there. And the idea of having such a lifestyle grew on me. Travelling around in your own house. 2015 was the year we said goodbye to Amsterdam and I discontinued my work as web developer. Our liveaboard lifestyle is aligned with my values and passions of having little possessions and live an adventurous, fun and playful life in freedom. Not putting things off till it's to late. It is fantastic to fully live in the 'here and now' and spend so much time with my wonderful family and to cook for them."*

**Eveline:** *"After having worked for 12 years in international jobs for a large financial institution I went through a burn-out. While recovering I realized that going back into corporate life was not the best decision for me. Instead taking off to do what we had been dreaming of for a very long time, seemed a much better prospect. Cruising combines my passions of travelling and sailing and it enables being with my family, exploring new territories, improving my language skills and meeting interesting people. I am curious what this new phase in my life will bring and look forward to integrating my professional passions into life on the boat."*



**Max:** *"I enjoy living on our Mallemok because I get to spend a lot of time with both my mommy and daddy. I am making new friends from different countries and although it's hard to understand what they say I am learning fast. I love riding my bike and playing outside. On Mallemok I have lots of toys. I have my own room, but my toys are all over the place actually. I love reading books with my parents and watching movies on their bed, especially Sing, Trolls, Barbapappa, Octonauts and Paw Patrol. I really enjoy playing with LEGO. My dad can build great things for me to play with. When I am in Holland I go to school, which I like."*

**Mallemok:** *"I was built in 1979 by Astilleros Belliure in Calpe, Spain. They gave me two masts, 1.75m draught, 10.80m length and 3.35m width. I'm a solid boat and people admire my classical style. Tim, Eveline and Max are my fourth owners. I have always been well looked after. Most of my days I sailed in The Netherlands on the IJsselmeer and in Zeeland. Although I really enjoyed the French canals, I am glad to have my masts up again and I am excited to be back on the sea where I was created. It's great to be a liveaboard yacht. I get a lot of care and attention and I am happy to be a good home to this fantastic family."*



## Input from other sailors

We would like to thank all sailors who shared their inland waterway experiences and feedback with us. We used this input to create a new version: *Inland Waterways by Sailboat Amsterdam to the Mediterranean v2.0 April 2017*. We would like to invite all users of this e-pilot to send us input to keep improving this document.

Special thanks goes out to:

## SY Heavy Metal

In Autumn/Winter 2016/17 Koen and Yvonne made the journey in their van der Stadt Seal *Heavy Metal*.

Route: North2South;

Dutch Maas (Meuse) to Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône with the Sambre detour (chapter 4).

Draught: 1.75m-1.80m

When: 9 October 2016 - January 2017

<http://deheavymetal.nl>

[www.zeilersforum.nl](http://www.zeilersforum.nl)

[zilt magazine](#)

We were able to meet up in March 2017 in Beaulieu-sur-mer where we wintered.



## SY Andante

We met Martin in Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône while we were working on the e-pilot and gave him an early version for the Rhône and the Saône.

Route: South2North;

Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône to Seurre on the Saône (and later to Germany).

Draught: only 0.5m because of lifting keel

When: 10 April 2016 – 24 April 2016

Their stopovers on the Rhône:

Sunday 10th April 2016, Port St. Louis-du-Rhone. We started on Sunday 10th April on 6:20 through the bridge into the lock. It was a great relieve seeing that we could easily move against the flow of the Rhone. We went the whole day up to the first Rhone lock Beaucaire and moored in the afternoon at the ponton above the lock.

Monday 11th April 2016, Beaucaire lock.

At 7:00 we set out. After having filled our fuel tank in Avignon at the conveniently located boat fuel station and a brief walk into town, we went on to arrive at the marina at l'Ardoise.

Tuesday 12th April, Marina l'Ardoise.

We started 7:10. At Viviers we wanted to stop but the finger pontons were tilted up and there was a sign "Marina fermé". Somebody shouted to us that the marina was shallow, not dug out yet. We considered to more despite that (having a draught of only 0.5 m) but then decided to move on. We moored in the evening above Chateauneuf du Rhone lock.

Wednesday 13th April, Chateauneuf du Rhone lock. Start 6:55. We moor at Cruas marina for about two hours to visit the medieval town at the hill slope. THIS IS A MUST TO VISIT! There is strong current across the entrance to the marina in Cruas. But this is no problem. Just go at an angle to the current and move slowly sideward into the marina. After the visit we reached Valence marina in the evening.

Thursday 14th April, Valence marina.

We fill up Diesel at the marina and go the "unpleasant 1 km walk along bussy road" to the supermarket. It is 14:00 until we travel on. We moor above Gervans lock.

Friday 15th April, Gervans lock.

Start 6:50. After Givors at PK 17.6 we see a steel boat (La Belle Helene) aground outside the ship's route. We tried to tow it free but could not. We gave the boat the phone number of the next lock upstream. Later we found that the current got stronger and stronger and nearly stopped us. Strange! (Well, read on!). At 20h, it was getting dark, we reached Pierre Bennite lock and moored above it (20:30).

Saturday 16th April, Pierre Benite lock.

Start 8:30. Soon we are turning left into the Saône and run straight to the fuel barge just a couple of hundred meters north of the "confluence bassin". We filled up Diesel. The Saône had high water. We moored at the entrance to the marina in the confluence bassin. The marina was closed, not even toilets open. But as a consequence we got water and electricity for free and WiFi from the supermarket. Later the "La Belle Helene" appeared and its skipper told us that after we had given them the lock phone number he phoned and the lock keeper increased the water flow. As a consequence the water level rose and he got free - and we got nearly stopped because of the strong current (see Friday). We walked up to the cathedral and the roman theater not far from it.

## Preface

### *It's possible!*

This pilot is exactly what we were looking for when we prepared our trip from Amsterdam through the French canals to the Mediterranean in the Autumn of 2015. It took a lot of research on the internet and confirmations from others who had done it that with our draught of 1.75m we could actually do it. Our plan to do this trip was challenged by quite a few people who 'warned' us that we should expect trouble with depth. Vital to our decision to go ahead with the trip was the reassurance of Dutch barge Picaro, that is used to taking the same route and has 1.80m draught when loaded. Maximum head room is 3.45m.

### *It's fun!*

Many sailors view the inland route through France as a necessary hurdle to get to the Med or get home from the Med. They try to do it as fast as possible, turning every lock into a time-consuming obstacle. If you rush, you can do it in three weeks. We however decided to take our time and spent three months enjoying 'canal-life' to take in the beautiful scenery, exploring small towns, finding the best croissants and visiting historic cities.

### *Just do it!*

We've heard and read many times that due to the diminished cargo traffic it may in the future become impossible to travel through France to reach the Med. We would be very sad if this would become reality. Therefore we decided to write this e-pilot to promote this route. We want to reassure other sailors that you can actually do it and also that you can enjoy it a lot. This e-pilot covers the route we took from Amsterdam to Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône. It includes lots of detailed information on the different waterways, locks, places to stop, necessary documentation and equipment, etc. All based on our own experiences, observations, research and input from fellow sailors. This e-pilot is a supplement to the Fluviacarte maps #8, (#9), #10, #16 [www.fluviacarte.com](http://www.fluviacarte.com).

### *Share your experiences and feedback with us*

This e-pilot will be regularly updated to ensure that the content remains relevant and up-to-date and to continually improve it. We encourage you to share your experiences and feedback with us via [e-mail](#) or through the dedicated [Facebook page](#). Your input, photos and stories could be featured in the next edition. The first edition of this e-pilot was published in April 2016 and the second in April 2017.

### *Enjoy it!*

We wish you safe travels and hope you will enjoy the journey as much as we did.







# 1. Summary of our route and experience

There are many different routes through France. We chose our route after extensive research and advice from different sources, because this route should have the best depth (at least 1.80m). This indeed appeared to be the case.

## Our route

- Amsterdam to Maastricht (294km, 13 locks)
- Meuse through Belgium and France (228km, 34 locks)
- Canal des Ardennes (88km, 44 locks)
- Canal latéral à l'Aisne (19km, 2 locks)
- Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne (58km, 24 locks)
- Canal latéral à la Marne (48km, 11 locks)
- Canal entre Champagne et Bourgogne (224km, 114 locks)
- La Saône (250km, 8 locks)
- Le Rhône (313km, 13 locks)

Total 1,522km and 263 locks.

## Our experience

We really enjoyed our inland-waterways journey, otherwise why else would we take the effort to write an e-pilot about it to promote this route to other sailors? What we enjoyed most were the tranquillity, the peace, the beauty of the scenery and taking the time to experience it. We are very, very impressed with the network of canals and locks that the French have built ages ago and that are still operational now. VNF does an amazing job in maintaining and managing this infrastructure. Although the number of manual locks is decreasing, since one by one they are being automated, we still felt that we were taking a ride through history. The many old villages and towns, where time seems to stand still added to this feeling. From a cost perspective our route was also a success, since the average we paid per night for mooring was €8.63.

Before we started we were quite anxious about the trip and whether we would face any trouble with depth, mooring, locks etc, but in hindsight we know that we should not have worried so much. That's really one of the main reasons why we decided to share our story and experiences hopefully bringing peace of mind to other sailors who intend to do this trip. We may have been lucky since we did not face any engine problems, did not hit any rocks underwater, did not get delayed by weeks due to lock failures, did not scrape our hull on steel pins at mooring spaces, did not get stuck in the ice, did not have clogs in our water cooling system, like some others told us they experienced. We did get stuck in the clay at some point, and needed help from a bunch of fishermen to pull us free. We also had a collision with a barge in one of the Dutch locks which left a nasty long black mark on our hull and a lock-trauma for a week or so. We also experienced some delays due to locks not working properly, which was always solved by VNF within half an hour. But these experiences made the adventure as well. All in all we experienced it as a smooth trip and if we did not have other plans to sail the Med, we'd be happily doing the canal trip again.



## 2. Introduction

This e-pilot is written for sailors (and motor boats alike) who want to travel through Europe's inland waterways from The Netherlands to the Med instead of travelling by sea. It is based on our experiences and observations from our trip from Amsterdam to Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône in Autumn 2015. If you travel from the Med to the North of Europe you can of course also use this e-pilot, reading it backwards.

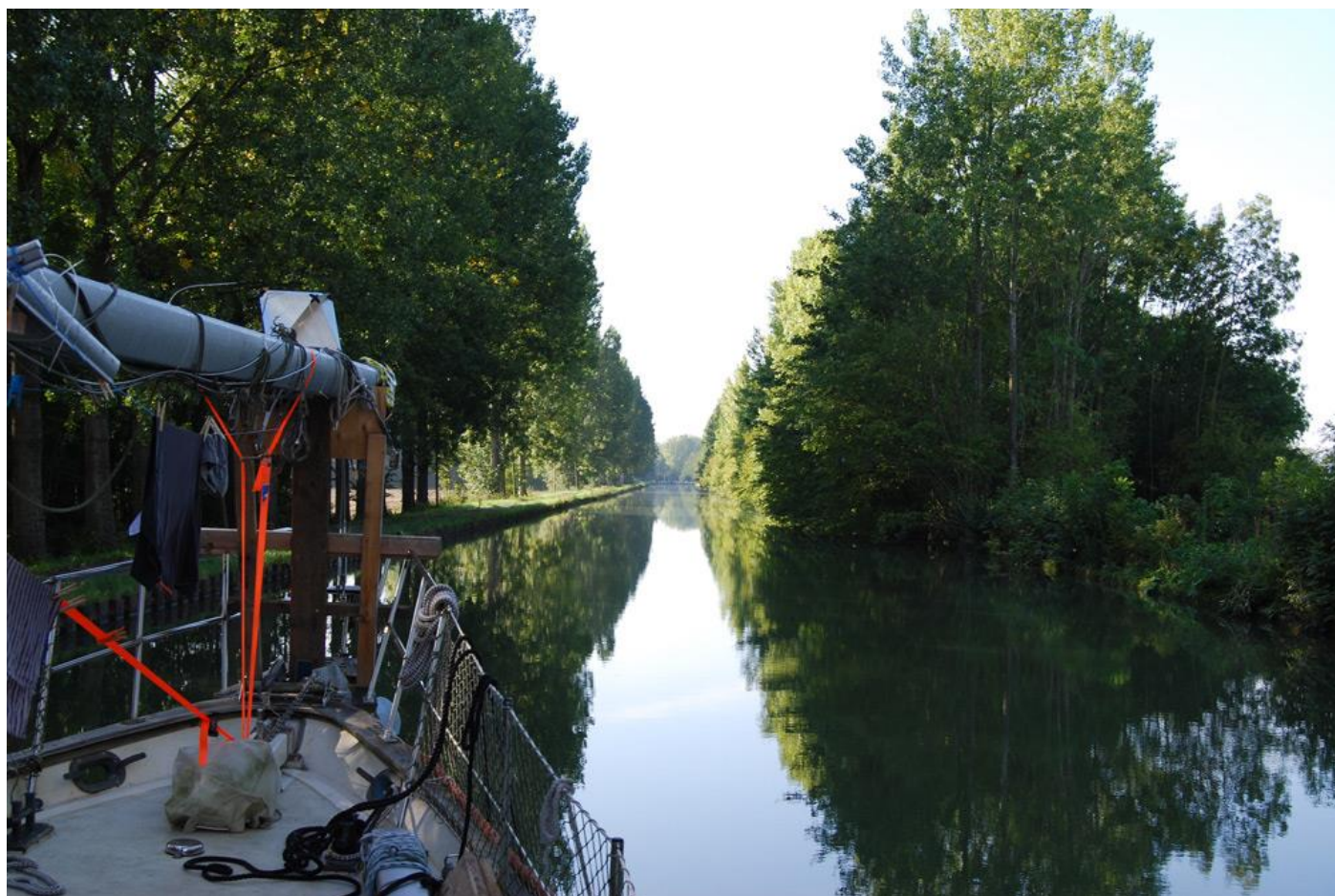
For the entire route the minimum headroom is 3.45m and minimum depth is 1.80m.

We took our time for this journey, but if you want to travel faster, six weeks is reasonable. If you are in a hurry the trip will take you 3-4 weeks, but then you should expect long cruising days. In winter when the days are short the distance one can travel per day is limited.

Besides practical information about what you need in order to prepare your trip through the inland waterways of The Netherlands, Belgium and France and what you can expect during the trip, you can find very detailed information about mooring spaces, towns, etc, in each of the different chapters. We've divided the journey by waterway. Each chapter represents a different waterway.

Each chapter has the same flow. It begins with a map of the waterway that is covered in the respective chapter, the number of locks and distance in kilometres; a number of special remarks related to this particular part of the route and some comments on our experience. Then detailed information is given based on PK (kilometre points) numbering, corresponding with the PKs in the Fluviacarte maps. In the column next to the PK information you can find pictures and anecdotes of our trip. This e-pilot is an addition to Fluviacarte #8, #9, #10, #14. We refer to these maps throughout the pilot. Breil maps are also used often. PK numbering will be similar.

In the Appendix you can find a detailed overview of our entire journey, and an overview of useful words and sentences in French.





### 3. Practical information

This chapter provides practical information on what you need to have and to know in order to enjoy a pleasant and safe trip through the inland waterways of The Netherlands, Belgium and France. In principle the requirements are suited to vessels no longer than 15m.

#### Mandatory documents:

- International Certificate of Competence (ICC) plus copy of CEVNI rules
- International Certificate of Pleasure craft (ICP) or another official ownership document
- Boat's insurance policy including third party damages insurance
- Proof of VAT payment
- VHF Radio certificate
- 'Vignette Plaisance' (permit/license/tax sticker for French waterways). This can be bought online and in several locations. Go to the vnf page about the the vignette: ([Achetez votre vignette plaisance](#)).
- Passports for each crew member

#### Mandatory equipment<sup>1</sup>:

- VHF radio
- Life jacket for each crew member
- Two mooring lines of minimum the length of the boat (we recommend two mooring lines of 20m)
- Life buoy with rope
- Fire blanket and at least one fire extinguisher
- Anchor
- Horn
- Medical emergency kit

#### Recommended equipment:

- Spare parts for engine
- Two boathooks, of which one long, one short
- Many fenders
- Alternatives to floating fenders, i.e. rubber mats, fenders filled with sand or another form of underwater protection (for sloping quays, banks with low edges and overflowing locks). Car tires are prohibited.
- Wooden planks to keep fenders in place (can also be used to fend off or as gangplank)
- Mooring stakes and hammer
- Long water hose with different fittings
- Long electricity cable for 220/230V with 3-pin plug and adaptor for 2-pin plug
- Binoculars
- Radar reflector
- Electrical heater in colder seasons, in winter preferably also a non-electrical heater
- Electrical stove and water cooker to save gas consumption (electricity is often free or included in fee)
- Jerrycans for diesel (you often have to fill up at road fuel stations)
- Searchlight (for unlit tunnels)
- Round white light (to attach midship when moored)

#### Tips:

- Have your engine serviced before you leave
- Gas bottles and connectors vary from country to country, you may be best of adapting to local systems or use electrical stove (that's what we did), because you often have (free) access to electricity.
- Diesel is sometimes hard to find, stock up wherever you can and have spare diesel in a jerrycan as well
- Emergency VHF radio antenna (regular one is not operational with mast down)
- Wifi-booster antenna and router (we often picked up free networks)
- Foldable bike(s)

#### **Voies Navigables de France (VNF)**

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<sup>1</sup> This list is not exhaustive. There are differences by country, waterways/regions and different (official) sources state different items. The size of your boat and country of origin may also influence the requirements.

VNF is the official government body that manages and maintains all of France's inland waterways, except the Rhône (which is managed by Compagnie Nationale du Rhône). The website of VNF [www.vnf.fr](http://www.vnf.fr) gives a lot of relevant information, mainly in French. The most important items are:

- General information and map of all the French waterways can be found on the VNF website, using this link <https://www.vnf.fr/vnf/accueil/tourisme-fluvial/naviguer-comme-plaisancier-2/>
- On the VNF site you can find a map per year with all scheduled maintenance projects and lock closures (chômages).
- Each Friday afternoon a weekly overview of all obstructions and ad hoc maintenance is available on the VNF website in the right column on the homepage under '*Situation hebdomaire du réseau du <date>*'
- You need to buy a permit/license to cruise the French waterways 'Vignette Plaisance'. This can be done online at the VNF website. Go to the vnf page about the vignette: ([Achetez votre vignette plaisance](#)).
- General number to reach VNF is 0800-863000.
- Also find a detailed pdf map on the vnf website: [https://www.vnf.fr/vnf/app/uploads/2021/03/Carte-Bienvenue-2021-vf\\_DEF.pdf](https://www.vnf.fr/vnf/app/uploads/2021/03/Carte-Bienvenue-2021-vf_DEF.pdf)

### When to go

In principle you can navigate the route as described in this guide in any season, however the circumstances will differ. Here are some variables to take into account when planning your trip. Off-season (Spring, Autumn, Winter) VNF does more maintenance to the locks, see annual maintenance scheme for details and the weekly update (as mentioned above).

### Summer

- expect hot weather
- water levels may be low due to dry weather
- more pleasure craft, including inexperienced rental boats
- fewer 'free' mooring spaces
- weed can cause problems for your propeller and cooling system

### Autumn

- rain will cause water levels to rise (we had a dry autumn with pleasant sunny weather, but it can be cold and rainy)
- on the canals lots of leaves can congest your cooling system
- weed can cause problems for your propeller and cooling system
- mist is typical on the Saône
- facilities are closing down
- Rhône can have strong current due to heavy rainfall

### Winter

- you may encounter problems with frost (we heard of a British boat that got stuck in the ice for a few days in Joinville)
- most facilities are closed
- we met a handful of sailors who went through this route in winter and although it was cold, they did enjoy it. Heating that does not rely on shore power is strongly recommended.
- Lack of daylight will mean progress will be slower

### Spring

- good conditions for the canals
- facilities are opening up
- water levels are likely to be good
- Rhône can get violent, because of melting water from the Alps

### Depth

Depth of course varies depending on water levels/rainfall. When we did the trip in Autumn 2015 the levels were quite low, but these could be even lower in a dry summer. In Winter and Spring water levels are higher than in Summer. Depth mentioned throughout this e-pilot are based on our experience or on reported depth from other sources. If 'good depth' is indicated, a minimum of 1.80m is meant. In all places where we moored with our boat depth was good (min 1.80m), unless we made a remark about it, for example in Joinville and Langres. When we do not know the depth from our own experience we indicate 'depth unknown' or 'reported depth' if various sources agree. In marinas depth is usually not a problem, therefore comments on depth are only made when necessary.



## Speed

Speed limit on the canals is 6 km/hr. On the Saône the speed limit varies: from Corre to Auxonne it is 15 km/hr on the river and 6 km/hr on canalised sections and in tunnels; from Auxonne to Lyon the speed limit is 30 km/hr on the river and 15 km/hr on canalised sections. On the Rhône maximum speed is 30 km/hr. Pleasure craft navigating the Rhône need to be able to make a minimal average speed of 3.6 km/hr.

## Mast

You can choose to bring your mast on deck or to have it transported by land. Especially if your mast is a lot longer than the length of your boat you may want to consider to have it transported. Although this is quite expensive it may save you costs and trouble with potential damage. We decided to carry our masts and to save the costs of transportation.

If you carry your mast on deck make sure it well-supported and tightly fastened and make sure your total headroom does not exceed 3.45m. To support our masts we used a strong wooden construction in the middle, a wooden X-frame in the back and a wooden construction in the front. Although we had tied everything quite tightly, on our maiden voyage with the masts down we encountered big waves due to crossing barges on the Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal just outside the Oranje locks. The masts dangerously moved and we had to hold our breaths. We quickly added more ties to resist fore-and-aft and side-to-side movement. Not only on the big rivers where strong currents, wind and sea-going barges create significant wash, even when moored, passing craft (barges, but more-importantly small speeding fishing or pleasure boats) can lead to a rocking boat. In the locks you need to be careful not to bash the mast end on the lock walls, in some locks water can pour in quickly creating considerable potential movement if you are not moored sufficiently. The mast sticking out in the front is more vulnerable than in the back.

Having the mast on deck prevents easy moving around on deck. We decided to support ours at a height of about 3m, so we could easily move to one side to the other.

(Un)stepping the mast is a worrying event for most sailors, since we don't do it often. If you are lucky the boatyard you chose has helpful and knowledgeable staff that not only helps with taking the mast off or up, but also with the (de)-rigging. Normally you are expected to prepare everything beforehand. Do discuss about your needs and expectations, in order to prevent disappointments, frustrations and potential damage. When we unstepped our masts in Monnickendam we were supported by a team of four very experienced guys who gave us great peace of mind. Luckily we had taken pictures of all the critical parts of our rig and we taped the positions of our stay and shroud. This came in very handy when we stepped our mast in Port-Saint-Louis, where it is much more common practice that you do everything yourself, except for operating the crane. In the chapters 'Amsterdam' and 'Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône' you can find addresses of places where you can take (un)step your mast.

Should you decide to have your mast transported, then here are a few suggestions of companies you can contact: <http://www.vandewetering.nl/>, <https://www.transports-capelle.fr/>, <http://www.masttransporte.de/>.



3 wooden structures aligned to carry the 2 masts



Mast crane marina Hemmeland in Monnickendam

## Locks

Navigating through the inland waterways involves passing locks...many locks...over 250 in total for this route. Locks can be roughly separated in two groups: large locks and small locks. From Amsterdam to

Givet and on the Saône and Rhône you will encounter (very) large locks. From Givet to the Saône the locks are small (péniche-size).

### Large locks

You need to take into account various variables that affect lock tactics, these include lock size, going up or down, rise, other traffic, distance between bollards and whether these float or not. In general commercial craft is not very considerate to pleasure craft. In the Netherlands and Belgium you will most likely have to share the lock with (large) commercial vessels. This requires some precautions:

- Always give way and enter the lock behind commercial barges, make sure there are no other commercial barges behind you before you enter.
- Best is to enter once the barge in front of you has tied up properly, because this will reduce wash from their manouvering.
- Always tie up at the back of the lock, stay behind the commercial craft.
- When the gates open hold your lines until the barges in front of you are well clear. They produce severe wash causing turbulent water that makes steerin difficult for you.
- Often at the back of locks there are 'recreational' bollards, that are closer together (althought often still far apart) and sometimes they float.
- If you travel alone the best option is to tie one line tightly midship.
- A good technique if you are together is to have a front and back line both tied around one bollard that you keep midship. You can keep the boat in the middle by either pulling the front of back line. If needed you can fixate the lines on your ship.
- Always follow instructions of the lock keeper through VHF (channels 18, 20 or 22 as indicated on the map).

The Saône and Rhône locks are also large, but by far not as busy with commercial craft as in The Netherlands and Belgium. (We did not have to share any lock with commercial traffic on the Rhône and Saône). The Rhône locks have huge rise, up to 23m in Bollène. But that's not a problem, because they all have floating bollards and the water in and out flow is very gentle. The bollards are very far apart, so it is recommended to use one bollard midship with two lines, one in front and one at the back, or one line midship if you prefer (or if you travel alone).



### Small locks

The péniche-sized locks cannot be shared with commercial craft, because these just fit in the lock. You may have to share locks with other pleasure craft, but we only encountered this once during our trip. Although the locks are small, they should not be underestimated. They are all different. Some are friendly, others can be violent with lots of water flowing in rapidly. In general going up is more difficult than going down. The rise is mostly 3-3.5m, but can go up to over 5m. Long lines (20m) are a necessity and climbing up and down a slippery ladder is often required, since bollards are always on the quays. From single-handed sailors we hear that they tie up tightly midship with one line. We normally tied up a front and back line, and in violent locks we sometimes even added a spring line. Long boathooks can come in handy. Nearly all locks are automated. There are different ways in which they operate.

Your arrival can be detected in different ways:

- via remote control (télécommande) that will be handed out by a lock keeper
- via handle bars that hang over the water and that you need to turn



- via radar detection

Activating the lock once you have entered and tied up works in various ways:

- mostly through pulling up a blue handle bar
- or through a button on the remote control

If you encounter a problem with a lock, you can contact VNF, either by phone 0800-863000 or by intercom that can be found in each lock. Someone will show up to fix the problem. In our experience VNF service staff arrived within 30 minutes.

#### Precautions:

- you cannot have too many fenders
- at least two long lines (min 20m)
- at least one long boathook
- non-floating protection measures for overflowing locks (see recommended equipment).



#### **Stops and facilities**

Fluviacarte shows icons for available facilities. In this guide 'all facilities' indicates that showers, toilets, water, electricity and laundry are available. If wifi is available we mention it separately, likewise with waste water pumps. 'Rural' mooring spaces have no facilities. A 'Halte Nautique' often offers water and electricity, sometimes toilets and showers. We consistently use the term 'Halte Nautique'. Other terms for similar stop-overs are 'Halte Fluviale', 'Relais Nautique', 'municipal port' or even just 'Halte'. Both 'port de plaisance' and 'marina' are used for marina's, where 'marina' is often larger than a 'port de plaisance'.

There are many small mooring opportunities alongside the canals, but we only mention the ones that we used ourselves or observed when we passed them. Stops with reported depth <1.40m are not listed in this guide. Also stops that are indicated in Fluviacarte, but that we do not find worth mentioning are not listed in this guide.

Stops reported in **grey**: we report certain stops (of which some are mentioned in Fluviacarte, and others are not) in grey, because of depth problems, unknown depth, perceived unattractiveness (i.e. industrial setting, exposed to wash or wind, very remote, etc) or because they are inaccessible for other reasons. The choice to make these grey is either based on our own experiences and observations; stories from fellow sailors; or other sources.

**S.T.O.P.** in our definition stands for **Superb Time-Out Point**. These are places that we enjoyed a lot and where we rested for a couple days to recharge, re-stock, do laundry, etc. These marinas have good showers, laundry facility, water, electricity, wifi and nearby shops, supermarkets and fuel station. We recommend a stop-over at these locations. Examples are Revin, Sillery, Châlons-en-Champagne, Froncles, Chaumont, Auxonne, Châlon-sur-Saône.

### Warnings

- Beware of hitting something with your keel. We heard stories of underwater rocks that someone hit (in Pontalliers and on the other side of the channel near Table du Roi – both are noted in this guide at their respective PKs). Some locks have underwater barriers at entry/exit. With normal water levels there is always enough space to get over these barriers, however one German sailor we met, who cruised the canals in Nov/Dec, had hit a barrier in a lock because water levels were down because of some maintenance on the lock.
- In narrow parts of the waterways it may be difficult to cross paths with an approaching vessel. If the sides are sloping you do not want to hit ground with your keel. Someone advised us to make a cardboard sign (white with red band and in black 1.80m depth) to inform the approaching vessel of your depth, so it would understand that you cannot go entirely to the side. Anyway, it is recommended to keep some pace while crossing the approaching vessel.
- Closely watch your water cooling system since it can get clogged with leaves, debris or weed. Regularly checking your weed pot and keeping an eye on temperature of your engine is essential. (some people we met did this several times a day and even had to poke through the system to unclog it. We did not encounter any problems whatsoever, and even did not have to clean the weed pot once.)
- Never underestimate locks (see dedicated paragraph about locks).

### Recommended maps

(digital) ANWB app 'Waterkaarten'. Fluviacarte #9 'La Meuse et son canal', Fluviacarte #8 'Champagne-Ardenne', Fluviacarte #14 'La Saône', Fluviacarte #16 'Le Rhône'

### Sources

In preparing our trip we used many different sources, ranging from guides, websites of other sailors who took this route and advice from people we met before we left and along the way. Guides we used included 'Vaarwijzer Franse binnenwateren', information from the dutch barge Picaro; Fluviacarte #8, #9, #10, #16; 'Fluvial Guide du Plaisancier 2015'; 'Navigating the inland waterways of France and Belgium'. Another useful website is [www.french-waterways.com](http://www.french-waterways.com)









## 4. Alternative routes, add-ons and detours

We started our journey in Amsterdam, but there are many different points from where you can start the route to the South. We list a few alternatives that all join our route at some point. Be sure to check depths obstructions.

### A. Stellendam alternative (coming from North Sea)

For sailors who come from the North Sea, a good alternative route to get to the Maas (Meuse) is via the 'Stellendam route'. This route is more pleasant than the routes via Rotterdam or Antwerp, where you encounter heavy commercial traffic due to their busy ports.

- Entry into The Netherlands at Stellendam (SW of Rotterdam). You enter through the 'Goereese lock' (VHF20) to reach the Haringvliet lake. Stellendam has a good marina. Just to the East Hellevoetsluis is also a good stopover.
- Follow Haringvliet Eastbound. Haringvlietbrug opens several times a day.
- After Haringvlietbrug you continue on Hollands Diep. Willemstad is a good stopover. Good marina in historical town.
- At Strijensas you can find a marina with good facilities to take down your mast. Check ahead about availability. For €32 you can use the mast crane yourself. Assistance can be arranged at extra cost. [www.jachthavenstriensas.nl](http://www.jachthavenstriensas.nl), [info@jachthavenstriensas.nl](mailto:info@jachthavenstriensas.nl), +31 78 67 42 182, +31 6 302 166 01.
- Continue Eastbound on Hollandsdiep, keep right to go on Amer.
- Then continue for 53km on the Amer/(Bergse)Maas, which you follow up to PK209.
- As of PK209 you can follow our route as described in Chapter 7.

### B. Antwerp alternative

- There are different options to get to the Meuse from Antwerp, for example the Albert Canal to Liège.
- From Liège you can follow our route as described in Chapter 8.

### C. Belgian/French North Sea coast alternative

- Coming from for example Ostende, Nieuwpoort, Dunkerque or Calais there are different options to join our route from the Belgian/French Northsea coast, for example by taking Canal du Nord and the Aisne to reach Berry-au-Bac.
- From Berry-au-Bac you can follow our route as described in Chapter 11.

### D. Paris alternative

- Coming from Paris you can take the Marne Eastbound.
- From Condé-sur-Marne you can follow our route as described in Chapter 11.

### E. Nijmegen alternative (coming from Germany)

- If you come from Germany one of your options is to go down the Rhine.
- Enter The Netherlands at Lobith and follow it up to Nijmegen.
- After passing Nijmegen (at PK877) you take the Maas-Waalkanaal which you follow until it joins the Maas at PK166. From here you can follow our route as described in Chapter 7.

### F. Moselle alternative (coming from Germany)

- If you follow the Moselle upstream into France through Metz and Nancy it connects with the Canal de la Marne au Rhin, which takes you from Toul to Vitry-le-Francois.
- From Vitry-le-Francois you can follow our route as described in Chapter 12.

### G. Petit-Rhône to Sète add-on

The Petit-Rhône starts at Rhône pk279.5 just upstream of Arles. After following the Petit-Rhône for about 20km go through the St Gilles lock onto the canal du Rhône à Sète (it's not recommended to continue on the Petit-Rhône). The canal du Rhône à Sète (fluvialcarte #4) will take you to Sète in 65km.

### H. Standing mast route add-on from Delfzijl to Amsterdam

Interesting for sailors coming from the Baltic sea, from Delfzijl you can reach Amsterdam through inland waterways and lakes with your mast standing. The standing mast route continues south to Willemstad (Rotterdam/Zeeland) also see the Stellendam alternative.

<http://webwinkel.anwb.nl/webwinkel/anwb-wateratlas-staande-mastroute.html>



## The Sambre detour

When you've arrived in Namur traveling South. Be sure to check the VNF website for scheduled maintenance and incidental obstructions ahead (the url is provided elsewhere in the e-pilot). In autumn and winter the VNF tends to do maintenance work on the Meuse or also referred to as the 'Canal de l'Est Branche Nord'. This means Givet can be closed and you need to take the 'Sambre detour'. This route will take you past Charleroi (industrial). Then onto the Canal du centre. Just before Mons the boatlift of Strépy-Thieu is a cool ride. You continue this canal to Péronnes. Then go South on the L'escault (Scheldt). You will pass Valenciennes (not so nice). Then at Hordain you will follow Canal de St-Quentin. Grand souterrain de Riqueval L. 5,670 km is a tunnel that uses a tow barge. St-Quentin is a nice town. Chauny is a good stop too. Then at Abbécourt East onto the Canal de l'Oise à l'Aisne. You will be back on the original route at Berry-au-Bac (chapter 11).



the boatlift of Strépy-Thieu (photo by Heavy Metal)

## Other routes

Fellow sailors shared their experiences with us about other routes to get to the Mediterranean. We share a few remarks here.

### 'Vosges route' (Pont-à-Bar to Pontailier)

*Meuse – Canal de l'Est branche Nord (Meuse) – Canal de la Marne au Rhin – Canal de l'Est branche Sud (Canal des Vosges) – Petit Saône – Saône – Rhône*

This route is named after Canal des Vosges, also known as Canal de l'Est branche Sud. In some older guides this route is still mentioned as the main North-South route. Many sailors, even with draughts of up to 1.50m, have experienced problems with depth on this route. In the late Summer of 2015 this route was temporarily closed for all traffic due to severe water shortages. The route from Pontailier down the Saône and Rhône is described in Chapter 13 and 14.

### 'Bourbonnais route' (Paris to Chalon-sur-Saône)

*Haute Seine – Canal du Loing – Canal de Briare – Latéral à la Loire – Canal du Centre – Saône – Rhône*

The route as of Paris is beautiful and very scenic. It has moderate commercial traffic. Depth can be a problem, especially in Summer. A British family we met took this route with 1.60m draught during Summer and had to plough through the mud various times. Another British sailor who took this route in Summer with 1.80m draught grounded several times and once was stuck so badly that a tractor had to pull him free. We met a German boat with 1.80m draught who started in Ostende in February and who took the Paris – Loire route down to Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône in about three weeks. They had no draught problems at all. Another boat we met who took this route in January 2016 with 1.60m also encountered no problems. The route from Chalon-sur-Saône down the Saône and Rhône is described in Chapter 13 and 14.

### 'Rhine route' (via Mulhouse)

*Rhine – Canal du Rhône au Rhin Branche Sud – Saône - Rhône*

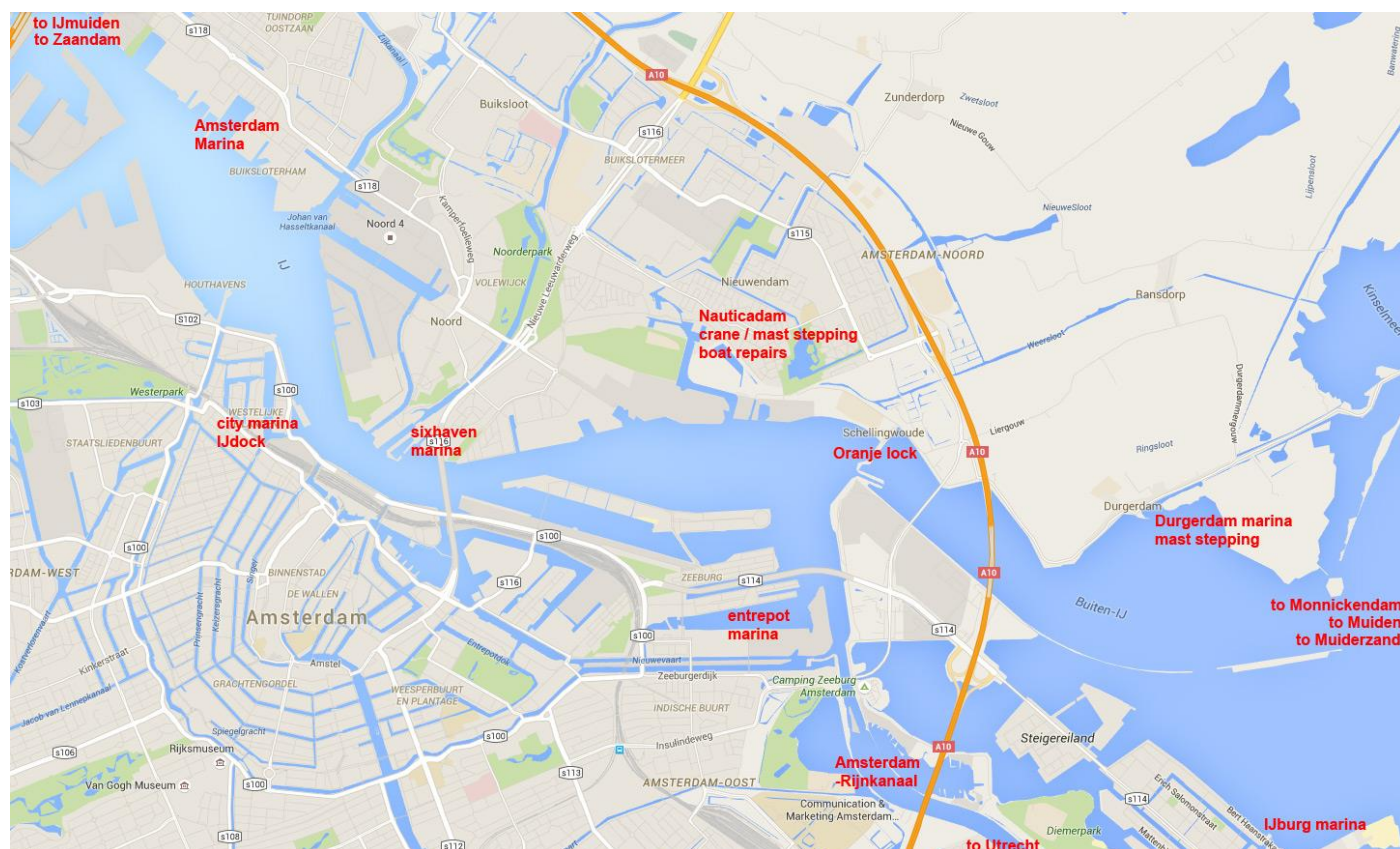
We met one German sailor who intends to take this route in Spring 2016. He does not expect any depth problems on this route. The route from St-Jean-de-Losne down the Saône and Rhône is described in Chapter 13 and 14. This route is good going North, using the Rhine current to your advantage.

### 'Canal du Midi' (Bordeaux to Agde)

From the French Atlantic coast you can reach the Mediterranean through the Canal du Midi. It is a very scenic route, however maximum depth is 1.40-1.50m.

## 5. Amsterdam

Amsterdam is absolutely worth a visit and offers a lot of different marinas. For (un)stepping your mast there are various addresses listed below. You can reach Amsterdam with your mast up by North Sea or IJsselmeer. There's a lot to do and see in the city, see <https://www.iamsterdam.com/en/see-and-do>.



source: Google

### Amsterdam Marina

New marina with all facilities including wifi. Restaurant onsite. Free ferry to city centre.

[www.amsterdammarina.com](http://www.amsterdammarina.com), +31 20 6310767.

### City marina IJdock

New marina with all facilities including wifi. Request for opening bridge VHF22 or +31 20 6241457.

[www.nauticadam.nl/ijdock](http://www.nauticadam.nl/ijdock), +31 6 87478290.

### Sixhaven marina

Marina with all facilities including wifi. Free ferry to city centre.

[www.sixhaven.nl](http://www.sixhaven.nl), +31 20 6329429.

### Entrepot marina

New marina with all facilities except laundry, including wifi. Restaurant onsite. Near Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal.

[www.portentrepot.nl](http://www.portentrepot.nl), +31 6 11035681.

### Nauticadam

Marina offering all facilities. Furthermore a crane, mast stepping and boat repairs.

[www.nauticadam.nl](http://www.nauticadam.nl), +31 6 511 111 59.

### Durgerdam Marina

Marina offers all facilities, a mast crane and boat repairs.

[www.zvhety.nl](http://www.zvhety.nl), +31 6 51 62 88 73.



### **IJburg marina**

New marina on reclaimed land residential neighbourhood with all facilities except laundry, including wifi. A small lock gives access to the marina. It operates on demand. Shops and restaurants nearby. Quick access to Amsterdam city centre using tram#26, which runs very often. Large children's playground not far. Market on the quay of marina on Saturday morning. [www.wvijburg.nl](http://www.wvijburg.nl), +31 6 54376131.

### **Muiden**

Charming historic town just East of Amsterdam with several marina's. KNZRV has all all facilities except laundry, including wifi. Has mast crane. Restaurants and small shops near. [www.knzrv.nl](http://www.knzrv.nl), +31 6 20146897.

### **Muiderzand**

East of Amsterdam Muiderzand features a marina with all facilities and a good and large chandlery (Kniest). Also a crane, mast stepping and boat repairs. [www.marinamuiderzand.nl](http://www.marinamuiderzand.nl), [www.georgekniest.nl](http://www.georgekniest.nl).

### **Monnickendam**

Historic town North of Amsterdam that has several marina's. Waterland/Hemmeland marina offers all facilities, including a crane, mast stepping and boat repairs. Bus service to Amsterdam. <https://www.waterlandyacht.nl/>, +31 299 655555. Visser Yacht Service offers chandlery services and has a shop. [www.yachtservicevisser.nl](http://www.yachtservicevisser.nl).

### **Zaandam**

To the West of Amsterdam, Dekker Watersport in Zaandam is a good and large chandlery. Address is Pieter Ghijsenlaan 4, Zaandam. Accessible via the channel. [www.dekkerwatersport.nl](http://www.dekkerwatersport.nl).

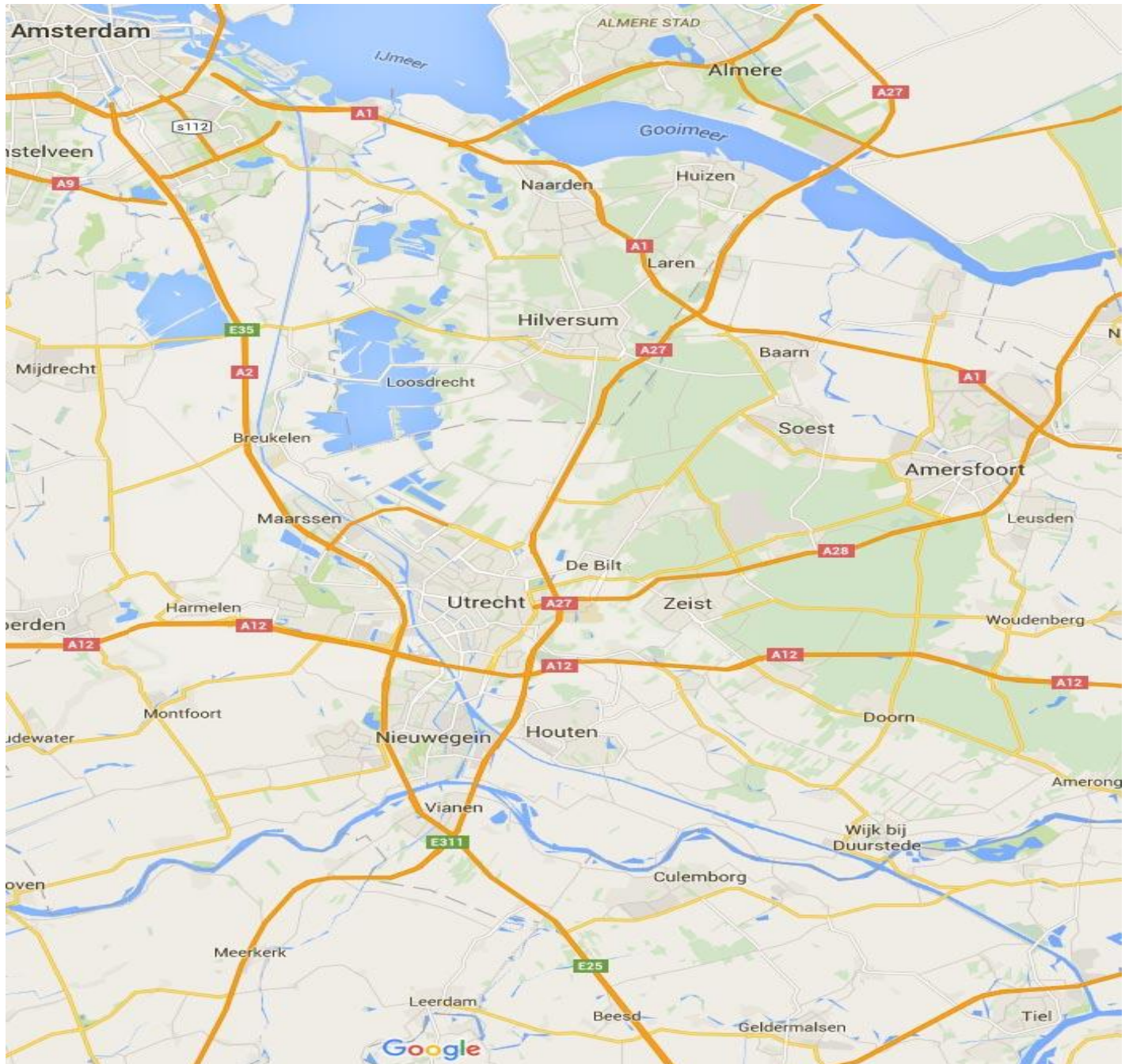


*The famous Skinny bridge over the Amstel river in Amsterdam city centre*

## 6. Amsterdam – Maas (Sint Andries)

### The route

This route takes you from Amsterdam to Sint Andries, mainly along the Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal for 72km with 3 locks and 12.5km on Waal river with 1 lock.



### Special remarks

- Recommended map: (digital) ANWB app 'Waterkaarten'. (Free for 48 hours)
- Very heavy commercial traffic.
- Very few places to stop.
- S.T.O.P.: Amsterdam and Wijk bij Duurstede

### Our experience

A 'must-do' part of the journey, not very pleasant due to the very heavy commercial traffic. Scenery is also not very impressive.



## Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal (Amsterdam to Tiel)

### **PK0 Amsterdam S.T.O.P.**

**PK2** – several marinas are located on Nieuwe Diep on both sides of the canal, but these are too shallow for sailing yachts.

**PK59** – Lock Prinses Irene VHF22.

### **PK60 (+2km) Wijk bij Duurstede S.T.O.P.**

**PK62** – Lock Prinses Marijke. VHF22.

**PK71** – Lock Prins Bernhard. VHF18.

**PK72** – end of Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal, junction with Waal river. PK numbering changes to Waal numbering starting at PK913.5.

## Waal (Tiel to Sint Andries)



### **S.T.O.P.**

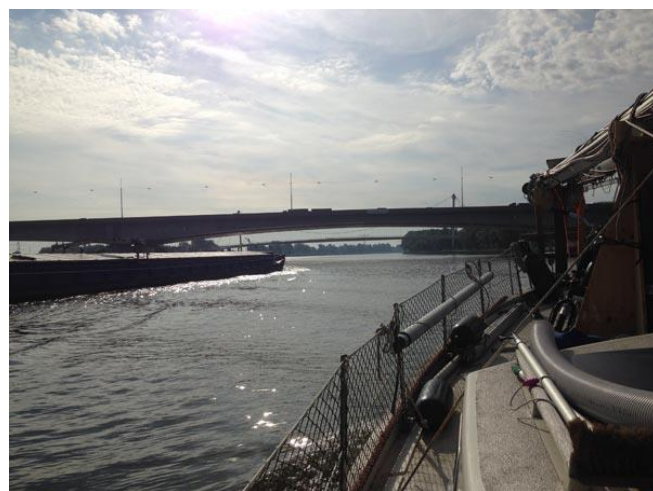
**PK0 Amsterdam** – see chapter 5 on Amsterdam.

### **S.T.O.P.**

**PK60 (+2km) Wijk bij Duurstede** is a very charming, historical town located 2km East (on Lek river) of the Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal. Several marina's. We stayed at 'WSV Rijn en Lek', which we enjoyed. It's about 1.5km from town centre, but the marina offers bikes for free. Good facilities and a restaurant on site. Good depth. [www.rijnenlek.nl](http://www.rijnenlek.nl), +31 6 30 48 10 79. VHF31.

### **Rivercruiser**

Jan and Corrie Maas, Eveline's parents, have helped us a lot with the preparations for our journey. One of the things was taking the masts down and building the construction they're secured on. They accompanied us on the first day going from Monnickendam to Amsterdam. Once we cleared the Oranje lock we encountered heavy crosswaves from some big boats on the IJ in Amsterdam. The mast construction was being tested and it swayed back and forth in an alarming manner. Jan secured the masts better. The whole construction now looked really solid. The next morning we got onto the Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal and after a few kilometres we were overtaken by a very fast going rivercruiser (hotelboat). The Mallemok was hurled all over the place in it's wake. I was thrown around the cockpit looking up anxiously if the heavy masts would stay in place. Inside, Max and Eveline were flying around the cabin. Because the mast construction had been improved the day before we came out alright. The construction held. Although it resulted in a 'big waves' trauma for Max.



*Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal, not the nicest part of the trip*

**PK913.5** – junction Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal and river Waal near the city of Tiel. The Waal is the busiest river in Western Europe and has strong current. You go downstream for only 12.5km. However, you will be surprised with the heavy commercial traffic, so watch out.

**PK914.5 Tiel** – marina Tiel is a small marina with good depth, except at entrance. Stick to port side when entering. +31 344 61 48 34, +31 6 41 35 15 50. VHF31.

**PK926** – cross the river carefully to enter the Kanaal van St. Andries where you find Sint Andries lock (VHF20) that gives access to the river Maas (Meuse).

### Waal

The short stretch of Waal we crossed (only 12.5 kilometres) was by far the busiest and fiercest part of the whole trip. This river (basically it's the Rhine flowing from Germany to Rotterdam) is the busiest waterway in Western-Europe. An uninterrupted chain of big cargo barges was going in our opposite direction. Well two chains actually because the second lane was for overtaking. On starboard we also had ships going into the opposite direction. They indicated they wanted to pass starboard on starboard (probably because of the strong current in the bend). We were overtaken by a barge and followed it closely at full speed. This seemed to be the most relaxed way to get through this stretch of water. The amount of traffic, high speed and high waves made it a rather intense ride.



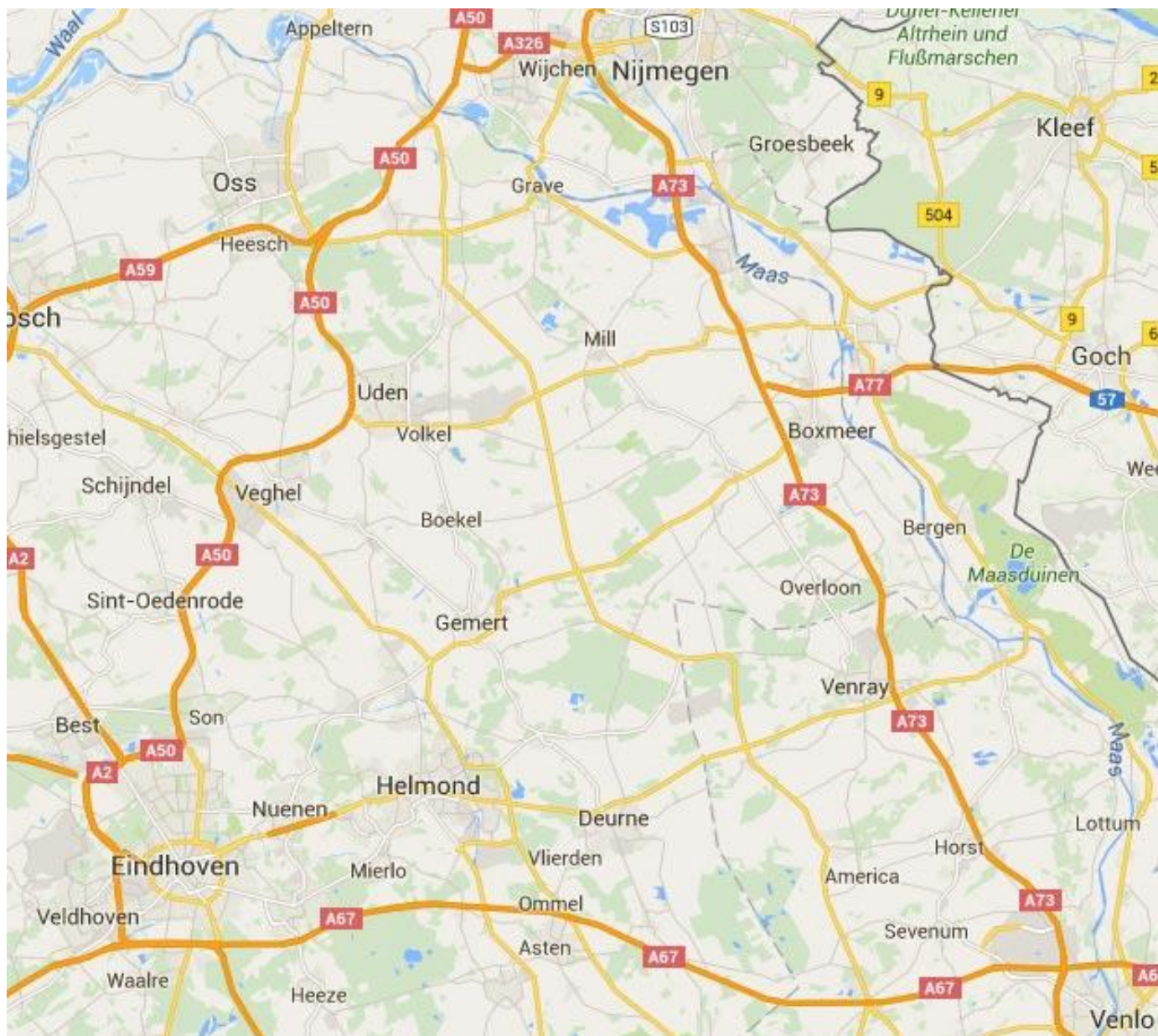
*Heavy traffic on the river Waal*



## 7. Maas Netherlands (Meuse) Sint Andries – Maastricht

### The route

This route takes you from Sint Andries to Maastricht, a total of 209km with 8 or 9 locks.



### Special remarks

- Recommended map: digital: ANWB app 'Waterkaarten' or paper: ANWB Wateratlas 'Grote Rivieren Oost' L, ANWB Wateratlas 'Limburgse Maas' M.
- The Maas river (up to Maasbracht) is popular in high season, especially on the various lakes that can be found along the route. These lakes have good depth and mooring spaces, anchorages and marinas.
- Scenic environment and friendly atmosphere.
- Commercial traffic is moderate to light.
- Few riverside quays on the river itself, all of them marked unsuitable for overnight stay due to wash. But there are many sheltered marinas (especially on the lakes that the Meuse gives access to), which are all indicated on the map. If you have time, it's a nice environment to spend some time. We list only a few of them in this pilot.
- Between Maasbracht and Maastricht the river is canalised by the 34km 'Julianakanaal'. This canal is busy with commercial traffic, there are no stops for pleasure craft and the locks are large and not particularly easy, especially due to the commercial traffic.
- S.T.O.P.: Roermond



## Our experience

We entered the Maas river at Sint Andries at the junction with the Waal river. The Maas is a very friendly river, with little current and not a lot of commercial traffic up to Maasbracht.

In Summer it is very busy with leisure boats, especially on the many lakes off the river. We unfortunately did not have time for sightseeing and only stopped a few times along the route.

Near Maasbracht the canal 'Zuid-Willemsvaart' joins the Maas which leads to a huge increase of commercial traffic all the way South to Belgium.

We really enjoyed the Maas between Sint Andries and Roermond. It meanders through the Dutch landscape, it's peaceful and friendly.

We experienced the 'Julianakanaal' between Maasbracht and Maastricht as a 'have-to-do' stretch, rather than a 'want-to-do' stretch. It's quite industrial and busy with commercial traffic. Sharing the locks with the big guys was not pleasant.

We enjoyed visiting the cities of Venlo, Roermond and Maastricht.





**PK209** – Lock Sint Andries (VHF20) gives access to the Maas (Meuse).

**PK201** – Lock Prinses Maxima VHF22.

**PK192 Maasbommel** – access to lakes with various mooring options including some small marinas. We stayed at WSV De Gouden Ham in Maasbommel, just off the river. Good depth. All facilities including restaurant. Children's playground. [www.wvsdegoudenham.nl](http://www.wvsdegoudenham.nl), [info@wvsdegoudenham.nl](mailto:info@wvsdegoudenham.nl), +31 487 56 23 64, +31 6 51 48 58 79.

**PK181 Niftrik (+2km)** – access to lake Loonse Waard, depth nearly 5m. After 2km you find two good marina's with all facilities. De Batavier marina, the first marina you encounter has a good restaurant, fuel and a children's playground. No shops nearby. [www.debatavier.com](http://www.debatavier.com), [secretariat@debatavier.com](mailto:secretariat@debatavier.com), +31 24 64 14 268.

**PK175.5** – Lock Grave VHF20.

**PK167 Lake Kraaijenbergse Plassen** – this lake has depth of 3.5m. When entering the Kraaijenbergse Plassen, watch carefully if there are ships coming from the opposite direction through the open lock. Keep starboard after the open lock. The Kraaijenbergse plassen feature multiple marina's and several free mooring spaces (that can be crowded in summer). We stayed in JH Brasker on port side after passing the third bridge. It has all facilities, including a restaurant and a small beach. [www.jachthavenbrasker.nl](http://www.jachthavenbrasker.nl), [info@jachthavenbrasker.nl](mailto:info@jachthavenbrasker.nl), +31 485 31 18 51.

**PK146.5** – Lock Sambeek VHF22.

**PK135 Leukermeer** – depth 4m. Multiple marinas and anchoring. Can be very crowded in summer.

**PK133 (+1km) Wanssum** – depth 3.5m, small marina with restaurant and fuel onsite. All facilities, except laundry. Supermarket nearby. [www.jachthavenwanssum.nl](http://www.jachthavenwanssum.nl), [info@jachthavenwanssum.nl](mailto:info@jachthavenwanssum.nl), +31 53 18 22 48.

**PK111 Venlo** – WSV De Maas is a good marina with good depth and all facilities. Restaurant onsite. Far from shops. Children's playground. Marina offers guests a free ferry service to Venlo town in summer (3km by water, longer over land). [www.wsvdemaasvenlo.nl](http://www.wsvdemaasvenlo.nl), [haven@wsvdemaasvenlo.nl](mailto:haven@wsvdemaasvenlo.nl), +31 6 46 00 56 66.



*Follow the river Maas / Meuse to Pont-à-Bar (about 500km)*



*Lock Prinses Máxima*



*PK111 WSV De Maas marina*



*Venlo is worth a visit*

**PK108 Venlo** – visitor's marina with good depth right in town centre for boats up to 15m. Nice town, worth a visit, shops and supermarket nearby. Marina is managed by WSV De Maas.

**PK101** – Lock Belfeld VHF18.

**PK84** – keep left to follow the river to the city of Roermond which is worth a visit and a S.T.O.P. and a huge recreational area with lots of marinas. Alternatively, if you do not intend to stop at Roermond, keep right to take the 7km long lateraalkanaal Linne-Buggenum. Lock Heel VHF18 at pk1. This is 3km shorter and 1 lock less than when following the river via Roermond.

**PK81** – Lock Roermond VHF20.

**PK78.5 – Roermond Nautilus marina S.T.O.P.**

**PK73.5** – Lock Linne VHF22.

**PK68** – at this 4 way junction take a left onto the Julianakanaal. PK numbering changes to Julianakanaal numbering. After a few km you will reach Maasbracht.

**PK35 Maasbracht** – marina on East bank, just North of the lock. Good depth. We paid €12 but facilities are limited. [www.passantenhaven-maasbracht.nl](http://www.passantenhaven-maasbracht.nl), +31 475 46 48 48. Cheap diesel on West bank just before the lock.

**PK34** – Lock Maasbracht VHF20.

**PK21** – Lock Born VHF22.

**PK1** – Lock Limmel VHF20 (usually open).

**PK0** – PK numbering changes from Juliana-kanaal numbering to Maas numbering.

**PK14 Maastricht** – small marina 'Historische Binnenhaven 't Bassin' on West bank accessible via a lock. Open from 1 April to 1 November. [www.tbassin.nl](http://www.tbassin.nl), [info@bassin.nl](mailto:info@bassin.nl), +31 6 53 96 03 49. VHF31. Reported depth 1.8m.

**PK13.5 Maastricht** – free quay on East side of channel between Wilhelminabrug and St. Servaasbrug. Right in centre. No facilities. Somewhat exposed to wash.

You can buy **Fluviacarte maps** for Belgium and France at the 'Nautica Jansen' ship that lies on the Maas at PK13.5 on the West bank. There are various nautical shops in town that also sell the maps.



*Roermond is worth a visit too*

**S.T.O.P. PK78.5 Roermond** – Nautilus marina is a good marina near town centre with all facilities. Restaurant on site. Wifi available. Waste water pump available. We paid €15.50. Roermond is a nice town with many shops, restaurants, terraces. +31 6 25 37 69 43 [www.rwvnautilus.nl](http://www.rwvnautilus.nl)

### **Drama in Lock Born**

When we enter the Born lock behind a barge there is another one steaming up in the distance. That barge will enter the lock too. We missed the recreational bollards in the back that are close together. So we have to tie up to just one bollard. We do not tie up properly and Eveline is going below to get Max who just woke up from his afternoon nap. When we are all back on deck the barge is just entering the lock and starts to pass us. It is loaded and moving quite fast. The suction is strong and it's getting hard to hold the boat in place with the lines in my hand. The bow is pulled towards the passing barge more and more and at a certain point I can't hold the line anymore. Once I let go of the line our bow crashes into the side of the barge giving a horrible noise. At this point we're stuck to the barge and it pulls us along. I run to the steering wheel and manage to free the Mallemok. But our worries are far from over. The lock keeper has already closed the door and had started the lockage. By now the barge lay diagonal and was powering up his propeller to align the boat again. This all gave a lot of wash and we were thrown around like a toy boat. We bounced on both sides of the lock holding off to not damage the masts while trying to tie up. Finally we managed to do that. It took us weeks to get over this lock trauma.



*Maastricht, free quay in the city centre*



**PK12 Maastricht Marina JH WV Treech 42**  
**S.T.O.P.**

**PK11 Maastricht** – marina 'Maastrichtsche Watersport Club' offers some spaces for visitors, but their website states that you can only stay for one night. It has all facilities, including a restaurant and children's playground.  
[www.maastrichtsche.nl/haven](http://www.maastrichtsche.nl/haven).

**PK17 lock Lanaye** – border between the Netherlands and Belgium. The lock keeper speaks French. Announce your approach through VHF18. It's a big lock. High probability that you need to share it with commercial vessels. No need for Belgian waterways permit if you just take the Albert Canal and the Meuse.



*Lock Lanaye coming from Maastricht*

**S.T.O.P.**

**PK12 Maastricht** – marina JH WV Treech 42 is a friendly marina with all facilities. It has a restaurant on site and a children's playground. We paid €14.40 per night. There are some shops on walking distance, including a bakery, butcher and small supermarket. For more shops you can cross the river at the John F. Kennedybride. Town centre is a bit further up North. Definitely worth a visit.

<http://treech42.nl>  
[havenmeester@treech42.nl](mailto:havenmeester@treech42.nl)  
+31 6 20 31 78 46



*Maastricht is worth a visit*



*S.T.O.P. Marina JH WV Treech 42*

## 8. La Meuse in Belgium (Maastricht – Givet)

### The route

This route takes you from the Belgian border at lock Lanaye just South of Maastricht to the French border just North of Givet, a total of 131km with 14 locks.

### Special remarks

- Recommended map: Fluviacarte #9 'La Meuse et son canal' covers the 17 km long 'Albert Canal' (a canalised part of the Meuse) between the Dutch/Belgian border and Liège. From Liège onwards the PK numbering of the Meuse is followed again, starting at PK114. Effectively you only need the first five pages covering 48km of this map before Fluviacarte #8 starts. Recommended map: Fluviacarte #8 'Champagne-Ardenne' starts at PK59 on the Meuse, 12km North of Namur (PK47).
- All locks are 'montant' when travelling South. The locks are large and busy with commercial vessels. Some floating bollards. Locks not very easy. Mooring in the locks is best on the West-side.
- Not so many, but good stops along the route.
- All quays along the river North of Namur are not recommend for mooring due to the busy commercial traffic. The quays are often reserved for them anyway.
- Popular in high season.
- Quite heavy commercial traffic.
- S.T.O.P.: Liège

### Our experience

Between the Dutch/Belgian border and Namur the route is quite industrial and not very scenic. Also commercial traffic is quite heavy, and you often share locks with them. In Namur larger commercial vessels turn West onto the Sambre. Therefore commercial traffic reduces considerably South of Namur. The scenery becomes more and more spectacular the further South you get with high rocks, dense forests and a more tranquil and peaceful vibe. We enjoyed the cities of Liège, Namur and Dinant.





**PK17 lock Lanaye** – border between the Netherlands and Belgium. The lock keeper speaks French. Announce your approach through VHF18. It's a big lock. High probability that you need to share it with commercial vessels. No need for Belgian waterways permit if you just take the Albert Canal and the Meuse.

**PK0 (PK114)** – Albert Canal ends/begins here and Meuse PK numbering (PK114) takes over from here.

### **Liège PK110 – Marina 'Port des Yachts' S.T.O.P.**

Although there are quays in Liège where you could more, we recommend using the marina due to the heavy commercial traffic.

**PK80** – marina, reported depth 1.2m.

**PK75.5 Huy/Wanze** – Port de plaisance de Statle run by Huy Yacht Club. A pleasant small marina with all facilities, except laundry. Wifi available. Restaurant on site. We paid €12 per night. Marina is open all year. [www.ych.be](http://www.ych.be), [ych@skynet.be](mailto:ych@skynet.be), +32 85 21 14 33, +32 495 84 60 56. 2km walk to town centre with all shops. First part along main road, then pleasant footpath along the river.

**PK54 Ancienne écluse de Maizeret** – Relais Nautique de Lives. Reported depth 3m. Few places on quay. All facilities. Open all year. Managed by [www.portnamur.be](http://www.portnamur.be).

**PK52 Port de Beez** – depth unknown, chandlery. [www.meusam.com](http://www.meusam.com).

**PK46 Namur** – long quay on West bank North of bridge 'Pont de Jambes' which is reserved for passenger boats. Off-season you may find a free mooring space here. The quay South of the bridge is accessible for plaisance when there is no market and you may be charged.

**PK45.5 Namur** – Port de plaisance 'port de Jambes' on East bank. All facilities, except laundry. Wifi available. Diesel. Open from mid-April to Mid-Oct. [www.portnamur.be](http://www.portnamur.be), [portdejambes.namur@skynet.be](mailto:portdejambes.namur@skynet.be), +32 81 31 39 46, +32 476 306 813.

**PK43 Namur** – Port de plaisance d'Amée. All facilities. Wifi available. Open from mid-April to Mid-Oct. 2km from town. Managed by [www.portnamur.be](http://www.portnamur.be).



*PK0 at the Albert canal*

#### **S.T.O.P.**

**Liège PK110** – marina 'Port des Yachts' is a good, sheltered marina, open all year, with all facilities and a restaurant offering wifi on top of the Capitainerie. The marina is located in the city centre. Lots of shops and restaurants on walking distance. Aldi supermarket 10 min walk from the marina.

[www.portdeliege.be](http://www.portdeliege.be)

[c.marechal@portdeliege.be](mailto:c.marechal@portdeliege.be)

+32 42 23 14 04 / +32 498 54 80 17



*S.T.O.P. Liège marina 'Port des Yachts'*



*Huy Yacht Club, nice friendly sheltered marina*



*Namur, most commercial barges go onto the river Sambre*

**Warning:** Be sure to check the VNF website for scheduled maintenance and incidental obstructions ahead (the url is provided elsewhere in the e-pilot). In autumn and winter the VNF tends to do maintenance work on the Meuse also referred to as the 'Canal de l'Est Branche Nord'. This means you may need to take the 'Sambre detour' (chapter 4).

**PK36 Profondeville** – good free pontoon in picturesque surroundings. Small village with some restaurants. One of them has a nice children's playground and wifi.

**PK27 Yvoir** – Halte Nautique 'Ile d'Yvoir' on small island with charming passenger ferry to mainland. All facilities, except laundry. Reported depth 2.50m. Restaurant on the island. Open 1 May to 30 Sept. +32 82 61 18 67, +32 82 61 03 10, +32 484 03 45 68. [marcel.colet@yvoir.be](mailto:marcel.colet@yvoir.be), [www.iledyvoir.com](http://www.iledyvoir.com)

**PK19 Dinant** – Halte Nautique with pontoons on both sides of the river. Pay at Tourist Office on West bank, where jetons for showers are sold as well. All facilities, except laundry. Wifi available. Open from Easter to end Sept. Right in city centre. Very pretty surroundings featuring many restaurants with terraces.

**PK15.5 Anseremme** – pontoons with water and electricity. Looks nice and shaded.

**PK15 Anseremme** – Port de plaisance accessible through bridge. All facilities. Open April to October. [jeanine.bodart@gmail.com](mailto:jeanine.bodart@gmail.com), [www.yca.be](http://www.yca.be), +32 82 676 197, +32 478 56 64 06.

**PK9.5 Waulsort** – Port de plaisance with all facilities. Reported depth <2m. Recommended mooring on outside pontoons. Open from 1 May to 30 Sept. Shops in nearby Hastière on 5km.

**PK6 Hastière** – free mooring space on quays on both sides of the river. We moored at the East bank, just North of the bridge. A sign indicated that on certain days in summer the quay was reserved for passenger boats. On the East bank there is a bakery and a children's playground. Supermarket with laundrette and other shops can be found in town on the West bank.

**PK0 former Douane Belge** – concrete quay just North of bridge on West bank, from where it's only a short walk to a fuel station.

## Beauty and the beast

It's amazing how the scenery changes around Namur. From Maastricht to Namur it's so industrial. Lot's of cargo barges. But South of Namur commercial traffic decreases dramatically. And the scenery improves even more dramatically as the Meuse meanders through the Ardennes.



Profondeville



Beautiful Dinant



Getting some diesel at the nearby fuel station



## 9. La Meuse in France (Givet – Pont-à-Bar)

### The route

This route takes you from the French border just North of Givet to the Canal des Ardennes entry, 1.5km from Pont-à-Bar, a total of 97km with 20 locks. Just South of Givet you pass a narrow, unlit tunnel 'Tunnel de Ham' of 565m.

### Special remarks

- Recommended map: Fluviacarte #8 'Champagne-Ardenne'.
- Other name for this part of Meuse river is 'Canal de l'Est Branche Nord'.
- All locks are 'montant' when travelling South.
- Good stops in nice small villages.
- Popular in high season.
- In some locks the water level can overflow the sides when full. Take precautions.
- S.T.O.P.: Revin.

### Our experience

We enjoyed this route very much. The scenery is beautiful. The river meanders through fields and forests of the Ardennes. Little commercial traffic.



*Approaching a lock on the river Meuse*

**PK0 former Douane Belge** – concrete quay just North of bridge on West bank, from where it's only a short walk to a fuel station.

**PK0.5 lock Les 4 Cheminées#59** – when going South this is your entry to France. In this lock you have to buy your French waterways vignette at the VNF office and you will receive a remote control to operate the locks. The friendly VNF staff will explain everything in detail.

**PK4 Givet** – Port de plaisance on East bank with good pontoons and all facilities. We paid €8.55. Small supermarket and other shops on square behind Capitainerie. Open from 1 June to 30 Sept. Market on Friday morning on the square. Quay on West bank is part of the same port.

**PK14.5 Vireux-Wallerand** – paid Halte Nautique on quay on East bank North of bridge. All facilities available. Open mid-April to mid-Sept. We paid €7 including electricity. Some shops in town. Market on Thursday morning +33 3 24 40 59 54. [vieuxwallerand@wanadoo.fr](mailto:vieuxwallerand@wanadoo.fr)

**PK24.5 Haybes** – paid Halte Nautique on quay with all facilities. Accessible all year. Wifi. Bike hire. Some shops nearby. Market on Sunday morning.

**PK27.5 Fumay** – paid Halte Nautique on long quay. All facilities. Open from 1 April to 30 Sept. Market on Wednesday morning. Shops and restaurants in town.

### **PK39.5 (+1km) Revin S.T.O.P.**

**PK49 Laifour** – paid Halte Nautique on quay. Accessible all year. Water and electricity available from June to Sept. No showers and toilets. Small supermarket nearby.

The 'Communauté de communes Meuse & Semuy' is investing in various Haltes Nautique: Monthermé, Bogny, Joigny.

**PK58.5 Monthermé** – paid Halte Nautique on long concrete quay with all facilities.

**PK62.5 Bogny/Château-Regnault** – paid Halte Nautique on pontoons just South of bridge. Water and electricity available. Restaurant, bakery and butcher nearby.

### **Down the rabbit hole**

Welcome to France! One and a half century ago we've built this magnificent tunnel for you. 565 meters long, 6.4m wide and 3.6m high. When you approach the tunnel it resembles a rabbit's hole. We approach it slowly. Thusfar nobody had the idea to put in lightbulbs so Eveline switches on the search light. When we enter the tunnel we see another small light source. The exit... let's go. The thing to do now is to keep the boat neatly in the middle in this narrow dark tube. I must admit that this takes quite some effort. It's like we are in a cave. What an experience! The French really do make this into an exciting ride. We feel like Alice going to Wonderland. What will be in store for us on the other side? What adventures lie ahead in this big country before us...



*PK7 tunnel de Ham, aka the rabbit hole :)*

### **S.T.O.P.**

**PK39.5 (+1km) Revin** – 1km off main route through buoyed channel. Excellent Halte Nautique along quay with bollards in beautiful, quiet, green surroundings. Relaxed atmosphere. All facilities. Next to nice park with children's playground. Open from 1 April to 31 October. We paid €7.65 including electricity. Intermarché and Lidl nearby. Old town on other side of the river. Busy road gets you there.

[www.ville-revin.fr](http://www.ville-revin.fr)  
[tourisme@ville-revin.fr](mailto:tourisme@ville-revin.fr)  
+33 3 24 40 10 72



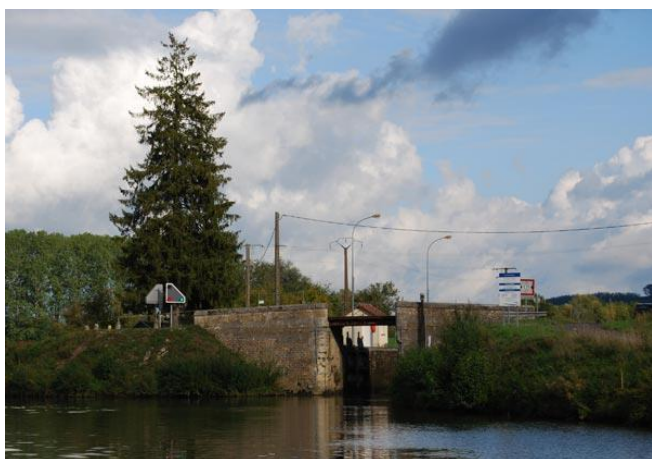
*S.T.O.P. Revin*



**PK80 Charleville-Mezières** – Port de plaisance about 1.5km off canal towards West from lock Montcy#43. Pass under two bridges then you reach large pontoon along the river with good mooring. Water and electricity available. A bit further down a low (3m) arched foot bridge gives access to marina with pontoons. Large camp site on the same grounds. All facilities at Capitainerie on camp site. Open from 1 April to 30 Sept. Lots of green areas and big park closeby with two children's playgrounds. To enter town cross bridge over river. +33 3 24 33 23 60

**PK88 Lumes** – free Halte Nautique on pontoon. No facilities. Accessible from 1 April to 31 Oct.

**PK96.5** – Exit to Canal des Ardennes. Turn right at the big pine tree. Lock Meuse#7 gives access to Canal des Ardennes.



*The big pine tree marks the entrance to Canal des Ardennes*



*PK58.5 Monthermé Halte Nautique*



*PK62.5 Bogny/Château-Regnault Halte Nautique*

### **Péniche**

South of lock Les 3 Fontaines#58 the locks have the péniche-size. A péniche is a type of commercial barge that can access the French canals. With its sizes of 38.50m x 5.05m it just fits in the locks. Not higher than 3.50m it can just pass underneath the bridges and with a draught of 1.80m they dredge the canals for you. Compared to the huge commercial barges in Holland, Belgium and the Rhône these barges are not that big. But on the narrow canals they are formidable. We did not encounter many of them but eventually you will have to pass one that is coming your way. The difficulty is that you cannot move over to the side of the canal too much because of depth problems. If you run aground your bow or stern may turn sideways to be hit by the approaching barge. The barges also have a sucking effect that draws your boat towards them. The barge has a depth problem as well so you will pass each other at a very short distance. Keep some speed as to not lose rudder control. Some sort of sign (in CEVNI style) to point out your depth to other boats can be useful on the canals. Commercial traffic has priority over pleasure crafts.

## 10. Canal des Ardennes (Pont-à-Bar – Berry-au-Bac)

### The route

This route takes you from the Canal des Ardennes entry 1.5km from Pont-à-Bar to Berry-au-Bac, a total of 106.5km with 46 locks. Fluvicarte divides it in three parts for which different PK numbering applies. First part of Canal des Ardennes runs up to PK39 lock Rilly#27, where the second part starts at PK12 up to Vieux-lès-Asfeld (PK60). From there Canal latéral à l'Aisne takes you to Berry-au-Bac in just 18.5 km with 2 locks.



### Special remarks

- Recommended map: Fluvicarte #8 'Champagne-Ardenne'.
- From Pont-à-Bar to Le Chesne locks are 'montant', thereafter 'avalant'.
- In Le Chesne a chain of 26 automated locks (covering 9 km) starts, which you have to do in one go, it takes about 7 hours, so start early.
- Good stops in nice small villages.

### Our experience

We enjoyed this route very much. The scenery is beautiful. The chain of locks is a nice experience. Little commercial traffic.



*We meet a péniche in the chain of locks at Le Chesne*



**PK96.5** – Exit to Canal des Ardennes. Turn right at the big pine tree. Lock Meuse#7 gives access to Canal des Ardennes.

**PK1 Pont-à-Bar** – good mooring spaces, there's a boatyard with chandlery, crane, fuel. At the bar next to the lock you can order bread and exchange gas bottles. Some people leave their boat here for the winter.

**PK6.5** – small shaded mooring space on East bank in between lock St-Aignan#4 and tunnel 'Souterrain de St-Aignan'.

**PK17 La Cassine** – very nice small mooring space on West bank just North of the lock.

**PK29 Le Chesne** – small, friendly village with free Halte Nautique on both sides of the canal with free water and electricity. There are two bakeries and a small supermarket. Good wifi at bar-restaurant at bridge. Small market on Tuesday mornings. Pizza bus on Sunday evenings with great pizza.

**PK38 Lock Semuy#26** (last lock of chain) – VNF collects remote control. It is not substituted because next locks are operated by turning the handle bar that hangs over the water on the right bank before each lock, starting from lock Attigny#5.



*Locks are operated by turning the handle bar*

**PK39 / PK12 Lock Rilly#27** – manned by VNF. From here the PK numbering changes and starts at PK12.

**PK18 Attigny** – very charming, shaded, free Halte Nautique. Nice little town with some shops including supermarket with fuel station.

### Should we have come by narrow boat?

On 19 September 2015 we leave the river Meuse at Pont-à-Bar to enter the actual French canals. We need a little time to adjust, the canal feels kind of narrow. The first day we permanently have one eye fixated on the echosounder because we fear we can run aground at any moment. But we stay in the middle and there is no depth problem whatsoever. Then we relax and experience the tranquillity of the pleasant canal. We pass through tiny villages and we see people looking at the boat like "what's that sailing boat doing on this ditch in the middle of France?". We also find it hard to believe that this modest waterway is part of an important North-South route.



*PK6.5 shaded mooring*

### What on earth is that?

In Le Chesne a very peculiar ship moored at the Halte Nautique across the canal from us. After we had a long hard look we walked across the bridge still puzzled. The friendly Danish skipper told us it was an old Venetian water bus that he turned into a very cool canal boat. He was already cruising the French inland waterways for over twenty years and had lots of information for us. Weeks after the first encounter we met him again in St-Jean-de-Losne.



*Venetian water bus in Le Chesne*

**PK37 Rethel** – decent Halte Nautique on North bank with water, electricity and very basic shower/toilet. We paid €5 for the night (someone came to collect in the morning). In summer/weekends youth may also hang around this waterfront. Cross the bridge, walk a few hundred meters, then you'll find a Leader Price on the left (like Lidl/Aldi). TGV railway station with service to Paris.

**PK40.5** – Lock Nanteuil#11 on North bank just above the lock there is a nice mooring space.

**PK57.7 Asfeld** – free quay on West bank. Very tidy town with bakery, butcher and some other basic shops. In summer/weekends youth may also hang around this waterfront.

**PK60 Vieux-lès-Asfeld** – Canal des Ardennes turns into Canal latéral à l'Aisne and PK numbering starts at 0.

**PK6.5 Pignicourt** – mooring possibility on East bank, middle of nowhere.

**PK11 Variscourt** – very nice mooring space with lots of shade on South bank.

**PK14-15** – keep close to the tow path, we ran aground here. See story: "Envasé" means silted up'

**PK18.5 Berry-au-Bac** – avoid staying here, shallow near the sides of the canal, lots of commercial barges coming through.

**PK18.5 Lock Berry#1** – gives access to l'Aisne à la Marne. To pass the lock you need to contact the lock keeper.



*Moored barges just South of lock Berry#1*

### Écluse en panne

Just before reaching our destination of the day, Rethel, we enter lock Biermes#9. We follow our usual lock procedure and when we are moored I push the blue bar up. But nothing happens after various tries. Via the intercom we tell VNF about the problem. They will send someone. While just enjoying a cup of tea a VNF mini-van arrives and the friendly VNF employee operates the lock manually by pushing some buttons. Within half an hour we had passed the lock. Merci VNF.



*PK57.7 picnic area Asfeld*



*PK11 very nice mooring space*

### 'Envasé' means silted up

We learned this after running aground just after we cleared lock Condé#2 at PK14. I deviated from the ideal line close to the tow path (usually the deepest part of the canal) because the canal widens here. Even though our speed was low, we got stuck in the clay real bad. We couldn't free ourselves using the engine and waiting for another boat to help us could take many hours or even days because of the light traffic on this canal. So I (reluctantly) went into the cold muddy water and swam to the shore with a long line. A group of fishermen was willing to help us and together we managed to pull the boat free. Happy and relieved we gave them some beers to thank them and continued our journey towards Reims. Later we found out that the 'envasé' spot was neatly marked on the Fluvicarte.



## 11. Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne & Canal latéral à la Marne (Berry-au-Bac – Vitry-le-Francois)

### The route

Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne takes you from Berry-au-Bac to Condé-sur-Marne, a total of 58km with 24 locks. Then Canal latéral à la Marne runs from Condé-sur-Marne to Vitry-le-Francois, a total of 48km and 11 locks.

### Special remarks

- Recommended map: Fluviacarte #8 'Champagne-Ardenne'.
- On Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne the locks operate automatically, no remote control required. All locks up to Tunnel 'Souterrain de Mont-de-Billy' (2.3km) are 'montant', after the tunnel the locks are 'avalant' up to the cross-point with Canal latéral à la Marne at Condé-sur-Marne.
- The locks on Canal latéral à la Marne operate via the lever hanging over the water.
- Water outflows near locks can create strong currents.
- More commercial traffic than on Canal des Ardennes because from Berry-au-Bac the Aisne
- At many locks you can moor for the night.
- Reims is definitely worth a visit.
- S.T.O.P.: Sillery and Châlons-en-Champagne



### Our experience

This part of the route is not as pretty as Canal des Ardennes, which meanders through the scenery, whereas Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne and Canal latéral à la Marne really give a 'canal'-feeling: professionally built, straight, wider, more traffic and therefore less romantic. From Reims onwards the environment is rather industrial. This is more or less the case up to Saint-Dizier (on Canal entre Champagne and Bourgogne).



*Souterrain de Mont-de-Billy*

**PK0 Lock Berry#1** – gives access to Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne. To pass the lock you need to contact the lock keeper.

**PK1** – many commercial barges are moored on the banks of the first km of the canal. We do not recommend staying here.

**PK5** – South of lock Alger#4 on the West bank is a small, quiet, nice picnic area where you can moor for the night using spikes.

**PK6** – North and South of lock Gaudart#5 on the West bank are mooring spaces with bollards.

**PK9.5 Loire** – North and South of lock Loire#6 on the West bank are mooring spaces with bollards.

**PK10** – West bank just south of lock Fontaines#7 has a nice quay with bollards.

**PK12** – North and South of lock Courcy#9 on the West bank are mooring spaces with bollards.

**PK12.5** – East bank offers nice picnic area with bollards.

**PK23.5 Reims** – Relais Nautique offers good mooring on finger pontoons. Shower available, laundry in town. You are right in the centre of town with its famous Cathedral. It's not a cheap marina (we paid €15 for the night) and it is very noisy due to the heavy traffic on the many roads around. In the vicinity of the marina we saw a few homeless people hanging around. Some use Sillery as a base to visit Reims.

**PK33** – West bank just North of lock Sillery#13 small mooring space.

### **PK34 Sillery S.T.O.P.**

**PK40** – South of lock Wez#16 on West bank mooring space with bollards.

**PK40.5** – bollards at Silo on West bank.

**PK46** – just North of Tunnel 'Souterrain de Mont-de-Billy' on East bank mooring space with bollards.

**PK49** – just South of Tunnel 'Souterrain de Mont-de-Billy' on East bank mooring space with bollards.

## **Reims**

Nice to be in a big city again. We visited the famous cathedral and ate Indian food, a big city's delight. The marina is right in the city centre and as everything this has pros and cons. The marina is surrounded by very busy and thus noisy roads. Furthermore there are homeless people hanging around in the vicinity. This made us a bit fearful of petty theft. We stayed just one night after which we moved to nearby S.T.O.P. Sillery.



*The famous cathedral in Reims*

## **Max to school**

Sillery is a nice place to stop and catch your breath for a few days. The marina has a laid back atmosphere and except from the main road, the small town is peaceful. When we were exploring the surroundings in search of a children's playground we did see one but it was behind a fence. It was part of a little school. Eveline and Max went in to see if Max could play there and when after a while they came out Eveline had actually arranged that Max could attend the whole next day at school (she had to accompany him). Max had a lovely day playing with all the children. And he painted a real masterpiece.

## **S.T.O.P.**

**PK34 Sillery** is a very nice, safe, quiet, small marina near a small village. Open from 1 May to 30 Sept. The facilities of this marina are excellent. Great showers, laundry and fast wifi. We paid €8 per night. The village has a great bakery and a large Intermarché with a fuel station on walking distance. You can take a bus to Reims since it is only 10km away. If you want to visit Paris you can take a taxi (10 min) to the nearest TGV station Champagne-Ardenne from where you can travel to Paris in about 40 minutes. You can leave your boat here for the winter, but living onboard is not recommended because the facilities close down.

<http://www.reims-tourisme.com>  
[accueil@reims-tourisme.com](mailto:accueil@reims-tourisme.com)

+33 3 26 49 17 86



**PK58 Condé-sur-Marne** – small village that does not have much to offer besides a bakery with excellent croissants aux amandes. There is a very small marina just South of lock Condé#24, but you can moor for free at the quay of the silo just South of the marina.

Condé-sur-Marne is at the junction of Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne and Canal lateral à la Marne. From here the PK numbering jumps from PK58 (Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne) to PK48 (Canal lateral à la Marne).

**PK39** – South of lock Juvigny#10 on East bank small mooring space with bollards and picnic. Not very charming.

**PK37 Recy** – small quay with bollards at village.

### **PK32 Châlons-en-Champagne S.T.O.P.**

**PK26.5 Sarry** – North and South of lock Sarry#8 on East bank small mooring space with bollards.

**PK24** – picnic area with bollards on West bank.

**PK22 St-Germain-la-Ville** – just South of lock Saint-Germain#7 on East side is a good concrete quay where you can moor.

**PK18 Pogny** – mooring and picnic on East bank.

**PK9 Soulanges** – small shaded Halte Nautique without facilities on East bank just South of lock Soulanges#4. Village has no shops.

**PK6** – quay with bollards on East bank. Not charming.

**PK3** – quay with bollards at old factory on East bank. Not charming.

**PK1 Vitry-le-Francois** – small quay with bollards on West bank at industrial site. Not charming.

**PK0 Vitry-le-Francois** – marina is very small, claustrophobic and shallow (<1.5m).



*S.T.O.P. Châlons-en-Champagne*

### **S.T.O.P.**

**PK32 Châlons-en-Champagne** is a mid-sized city with all facilities that you would expect. The relatively new marina is located just South of lock Châlons#9 on the East bank just off the canal. Not (yet) open in winter, although it's possible to leave your boat here for the winter. It has finger pontoons, electricity, water, laundry, wifi and good showers. Waste water pump available. We paid €10 per night. Capitainerie staff speak good English. Although the marina is in the city centre, the city wall reduces the noise from traffic. The many big trees provide shade. The surroundings are peaceful and beautiful. The marina is situated next to a large park with hundreds of chestnut trees. A playground can also be found here.

<https://www.chalons-tourisme.com/>

+33 3 26 26 17 98



*PK22 St-Germain-la-Ville*



*Crossing the Marne*



*Start of the canal 'Entre Champagne et Bourgogne'*

## 12. Canal entre Champagne et Bourgogne (Vitry-le-Francois – Maxilly-sur-Saône)

### The route

Canal entre Champagne et Bourgogne is the romantic name for 'Canal de la Marne à la Saône'. It runs from Vitry-le-Francois to Maxilly-sur-Saône and covers a total of 224km with 114 locks. The tunnel near Langres ('Souterrain de Balesmes', 4,820m) is the highest point of this route. On the North side of the tunnel there are 71 locks and on the South side 43. Numbering of the locks, either way, starts at the tunnel.

### Special remarks

- Recommended map: Fluviacarte #8 'Champagne-Ardenne'.
- Most locks operate via a remote control that someone from VNF gives you when you get in lock Désert#71. At lock Chemin-de-Fer#43 you need to put the remote in a box in the lock.
- Between Chaumont and Langres there are 18 manual locks. A mobile VNF lock keeper will travel your route by car to operate the locks.
- Between Saint-Dizier and Langres there are 16 very low moveable bridges. These open in different ways: by lever hanging over the water; by automatic detection; by remote control; or manually. Some of the bridges are permanently open and some are connected to a lock. VNF operates the manual bridges.
- Because of the manual locks and bridges VNF keeps close track of your movements. You are required to announce on a daily basis your departure times and destinations by calling the VNF at the number that they provide in the information pack that you receive with the remote control when you enter the canal.
- Very little (commercial) traffic.
- Rural mooring often limited on this canal due to the bad state of the (sloping) banks.
- Generally facilities (electricity, water, showers, shops, etc) are limited along this canal, but between Chaumont and Auxonne (on the Saône) there are hardly any facility, so stock up and expect remoteness.
- There are many waterplants on this canal, especially near the banks. If they get stuck in your propeller it often can be solved when you put your engine in reverse a couple of times.
- In some locks the water flows over the sides. Normal fenders will then float and become useless. You can fend off the boat with your boathook and use other protective measures.
- S.T.O.P.: Chaumont, Froncles



### Our experience

Although this canal is very remote and quiet and some people warned us for ghost towns and no facilities at all, we really enjoyed the beauty and peace of this canal. It has some very scenic areas. The Marne meanders beautifully next to the canal and offers great views. The manual locks and bridges sometimes made us feel a little bit restricted in our freedom. However, the stretch of manual locks had its own charm and it was fun to chat with the friendly VNF lock keepers and to help them operate the locks. We found this canal to be the most adventurous canal on our trip and we enjoyed it a lot.







**PK0 Vitry-le-Francois** – marina is very small, claustrophobic and shallow (<1.5m).

**PK6.5** – South of lock Luxemont#69 small mooring space. Depth unknown.

**PK9** – South of lock Écriennes#68 small mooring space and picnic. Depth unknown.

**PK14 Orconte** – South of lock Orconte#66 a good Halte Nautique. Small village with bakery and butcher. Internet at mediatheque.

**PK24.5** – South of lock Hallignicourt#61 small mooring space. Depth unknown.

**PK28 Saint-Dizier** – mooring in small shallow (<1.5m) basin. Not recommended.

**PK29 Saint-Dizier** – industrial free quay with bollards. Not charming.

**PK30.5 Saint-Dizier** – new Halte Nautique South of lock St-Dizier#58. Long free quay with water and electricity paid by 'jetons'. Get jetons at swimming pool. LeClerc supermarket and other shops closeby.

**PK33.5 Drawbridge Marnaval** – request VNF preferably one day in advance to open this bridge.

**PK39 Chamouilley** – North of lock Chamouilley#55 on East bank new pontoon with water and electricity. Depth probably <1.5m. Lots of waterplants.

**PK46** – in-between lock Bayard#52 and drawbridge small, quiet mooring space with three bollards.

**PK51** – quay South of lock Chevillon#50 on East bank. Depth unknown.

**PK61 Joinville** – South of lock Rongea#45 quay at Gîte offering water, electricity and wifi. Rate €10 per night. Some trouble with mooring due to depth, but all mud, so it's doable. If available the friendly gîte owner may offer hotel room bathroom at small extra charge. Restaurant at site. Across the busy road supermarket and fuel station. Lidl also in the area, but little further away.

**PK61.5 Joinville** – municipal stop with sufficient depth, water and electricity paid by 'jetons'. Beautiful medieval town and church. Electricity reported expensive.

### Hurry up, bloody fisherman

There are many fishermen alongside the canals. Some of them use up to five rods. There are not many boats passing and they are not always very vigilant. Often we would suddenly see a fisherman running around to wheel in his lines as quickly as possible after he spotted us far too late. After the lock Orconte#66 at PK13.5 it finally does happen. One of the fishermen is too late and he catches the Mallemok. The line snaps, but part of it spins around our propeller shaft. I try to lose it the way I do with water plants by reversing a couple of times. But this line only comes off after I get under the boat in my wetsuit weeks later. In the meantime our power was reduced, but is still sufficient for the slow speed on the canals of max 6km/hr.



PK33.5 Drawbridge Marnaval, contact VNF to open

### ELVIS

Going upstream to lock Joinville#44 the canal gets a bit narrow. Using the remote control on the lock it gives a red and flashing green light. Huh? First time we see that. We waited and waited but the lock wouldn't open. Then we realised there must be a boat inside the lock, coming our way. We got the feeling it was a péniche. It was far too narrow to pass each other there and I couldn't turn the boat around. I started backing up slowly, a bit awkward and hard and we were getting anxious as the lock was opening. Then finally we got to where the canal got a little wider, we tied up to the stone wall. We had friends onboard that afternoon and they found the whole thing rather exciting as Elvis passed us at about a metre distance.





**PK72 Donjeux** – small free Halte Nautique on West bank just south of bridge. Free water and electricity. Very small village, no shops. Nearby Rouvroy has some shops.

**PK78.5 Villers-sur-Marne** – very beautiful, sheltered mooring space with bollards and picnic.

#### **PK85 Froncles S.T.O.P.**

**PK89 Vouécourt** – small mooring quay on West bank.

**PK93.5 Viéville** – small Halte Nautique with water and electricity on West bank just South of bridge. (wrongly marked in Fluviacarte on East bank at PK92.5).

**PK98 Bologne** – East bank small mooring quay. Depth unknown.

**PK100.5 Riaucourt** – North of lock Riaucourt#29 on West bank small, cute mooring quay. Village doesn't offer shops.

#### **PK110 Chaumont S.T.O.P.**

From Chaumont Southwards facilities such as showers, electricity and shops become very scarce. The first place with decent facilities is Auxonne on the Saône. The distance to Auxonne is about 135km, and 68 locks. Stocking up on food, water and fuel is strongly recommended.

**PK115 lock Chamarandes#22** – between here and lock Jorquenau#4 all locks are operated manually. A mobile VNF lock keeper will travel your route by car to operate the locks. The day before your departure from Chaumont you need to call the VNF coordination centre to inform them about your departure time and destination. This can also be done through the Capitainerie in Chaumont.

**PK138.5 Rolampont** – free Halte Nautique on East bank with good depth, electricity, water, toilet and a small playground for children.

**PK144.5 Humes** – quay on West bank, looks fine, depth unknown.

**PK149 Langres** – free Halte Nautique on West bank with free electricity and water. Outside season electricity is limited to 3 hours per day. Depth can give problems, lying on the keel we could just pull the front of our boat towards the quay to get on and off.



*PK72 Donjeux*

**S.T.O.P. PK85 Froncles** is an excellent Halte Nautique along quay with bollards in beautiful surroundings. Relaxed atmosphere. Open all year round. Opening hours of Capitainerie are reduced in low season. Mooring rate €3, electricity for 24hrs €3, water for 24hrs €3, showers €2.50 per person per use. Wifi available. Laundry. Shower and laundry only available during opening hours of Capitainerie. Supermarket nearby. Children's playground in village, near supermarket. Market on Sunday morning.

[www.ccbvbf.com](http://www.ccbvbf.com) [cc.bbvbf@orange.fr](mailto:cc.bbvbf@orange.fr)

+33 3 25 01 48 59 / +33 7 63 11 30 14



*PK100.5 Heavy Metal moored in Riaucourt*

**S.T.O.P. PK110 Chaumont** – Halte Nautique with all facilities including laundrette. Open from 1 April to 31 October. We paid €8 per night. Additional charge of €2.50 for electricity and water. €2.50 for using showers. Use of showers and laundry is limited to opening hours of Capitainerie. Wifi available. Hypermarket LeClerc, fuel station and some other shops on 1km (see Fluviacarte). Steep climb (20 min) to town centre which is worth visiting. Some nice shops and restaurants. Beautiful children's playground in park opposite Hôtel de Ville. Market on Wednesday and Saturday morning in town centre. When travelling South-bound the day before your departure from Chaumont the Capitainerie will inquire about your departure time which they will communicate to VNF to organise a mobile lock keeper to operate the manual locks.

[www.ville-chaumont.fr](http://www.ville-chaumont.fr) +33 3 25 31 61 09

[sports@ville-chaumont.fr](mailto:sports@ville-chaumont.fr)

It's a long walk to the supermarket and an even longer walk (steep uphill) to the beautiful town of Langres.

**PK151 Peigney** – decent new picnic halte, depth unknown.

**PK155-160 Souterrain de Balesmes (Langres tunnel)** – Almost 5 km long. About thirteen degrees inside. Tunnel has lighting. People said to us that going in behind a barge is unpleasant because of exhaust fumes.

**PK161 Heuilley-Cotton** – quay on East bank, depth unknown.

**PK167.5 Villegusien** – on East bank good long silo quay with rings, good depth. Village has bakery van, no shops.

**PK169.5 Piépape** – quay on West bank North of lock Piépape#12, depth unknown.

**PK174 Dommarien** – small concrete quay for 1 boat with good depth next to small camp site with shower facility (open until end of September).

**PK181.5 Cusey** – good free Halte Nautique with good depth with water and electricity, open until end of October.

**PK196.5 St-Seine-sur-Vingeanne** – small concrete quay for 1 boat, good depth, picnic area.

**PK206.5 Champagne-sur-Vingeanne** – old silo quay on West bank with good depth, remote but small shop in village.

**PK211.5 Oisilly** – on West bank a small quay and picnic, depth unknown.

**PK214.5 Renève** – just South of lock Renève#39 on West bank a fine silo quay, depth unknown.

**PK216 Cheuge** – looks like a new small quay for 1 boat with water and electricity, depth unknown.

**PK222.5 Maxilly-sur-Saône** – just North of lock Maxilly#42 good long quay on East bank with good depth. Toilet and electricity (jetons for the electricity available in shops in the village). Good bakery in town.

**PK223 lock Chemin de fer#43** – remote control for locks are handed out or retrieved here.



### Manual locks

South of Chaumont a lock keeper will accompany you by car to operate the locks and bridges. The fact that the VNF wants to know when you leave the next day and what will be your destination limits your freedom somewhat. But the interaction with the lock keepers and operating the manual locks create a new dimension to canal cruising. While going up, the best way to help the lock keeper is by opening the lock door on the side that you are moored after a lock cycle. Coffee is appreciated. At lunch time we offered Louis a noodle pot but he turned it down politely. Then a fresh lock keeper with a full belly turned up for the afternoon shift and our morning operator hurried home hungry. This is France!



### Langres tunnel turning point

Just upstream of Langres the 5km long Souterrain de Balesmes forms an obstacle that most canal cruisers do not like at all. Early in the morning it's very foggy and going the last kilometres to the tunnel is a mystical experience. It's very cold, ice has formed on deck. But in the tunnel it's always about 13 degrees celcius and unlike in summer it's very pleasant now and we peel more and more layers of clothes off. The tunnel is lit and much wider than the tunnel de Ham and is very doable. When after 45 minutes or so we come out the sun is shining on the other side. We experience not only the contrast between cold and foggy versus nice and sunny. It's also just a short stretch of canal until we are back on the rivers Saône and Rhône. And from this tunnel onward it's all downhill, we will drop and drop till we've reached the Meditterreanean.



## 13. La Saône (Maxilly-sur-Saône – Lyon)

### The route

At Maxilly-sur-Saône you leave Canal entre Champagne et Bourgogne to enter the Saône. The route to Lyon covers 250km with 8 locks.

### Special remarks:

- Recommended map: Fluviacarte #10 'La Saône'.
- PK numbering at 'dérivations' follows the flow of the river and not the short-cut as it does on the Rhône. Therefore the total number of kms covered is smaller than the official number. From St-Jean-the-Losne to Seurre the total distance on the map is 28km, while the actual distance is 18km.
- Large commercial barges. Traffic much lighter than in Belgium and Netherlands.
- Hotel boats do not travel North of St-Jean-the-Losne.
- Large locks that operate relatively easy. Lock keepers can be reached on VHF 19, 20 or 22. About 15-20 minutes before your estimated arrival time you should contact the lock keeper. Wearing life vests in locks is compulsory.
- Drifting wood can be hazardous especially going upstream with high water level.
- Mooring at quays can be uncomfortable due to wash from wind and/or current or from other boats, either commercial or pleasure, like speedboats in summer.
- S.T.O.P.: Auxonne, Chalons-sur-Saône.

### Our experience

We enjoyed navigating the Saône and had a déjà-vu with the Meuse river, it's wide, deep and peaceful. The Saône is friendly with little current and some nice cities. We were there in October and often encountered mist, which is common in autumn.



### Flood gauges

The meaning of the flood gauges (signposts indicating water level) is the following:

above I: Pleasure boats are prohibited.

above II: Passenger boats are prohibited.

above III: All craft is prohibited.



**PK251.5 Pontailer-sur-Saône** is a village with a small port the plaisance with reported depth 1.30m at the entrance. Just South of the marina there is a quay. Mooring here is difficult due to reported rocks and shallowness.

**PK245.5 Lamarche-sur-Saône** has a sand quay with some facilities. Does not look very attractive and depth unknown.

### **PK233.5 Auxonne S.T.O.P.**

**PK233 Auxonne** – free mooring at pontoons with reasonable depth (min 1.70m) with water and electricity paid with jetons. Closer to town centre / shops than marina.

**PK215 St-Jean-the-Losne** – good, long concrete quay with free mooring. Electricity and water by jetons that you can buy at a machine at the top of the quay. €3.20 for 500L water. €3.20 for 4 hours electricity. Free wifi from Auberge de Marines. Laundrette next to the quay. Fuel pontoon (payment by credit card possible). Shops and supermarket in town. With Low water levels you might need a gangplank to reach the shore due to depth problems (reported by Heavy Metal).

**PK214.5 St-Jean-the-Losne** has two marinas located in a large basin accessible under bridge: Joel Blanquant, [www.captainjo.com](http://www.captainjo.com), +33 3 80 29 11 06 and H2O, [www.h2ofrance.com](http://www.h2ofrance.com), +33 3 80 39 23 00. Both offer chandlery services. Waste water pump available. Reported depth around 1.50m. St-Jean-the-Losne is a popular place for repairs and maintenance as well as wintering. Besides the services offered by the marinas there are two other parties: Atelier Fluvial +33 3 80 27 03 00 and Bouba Meca Boat, [www.appelboubal.com](http://www.appelboubal.com), +33 3 80 39 29 38.

**PK187 Seurre** is a friendly small town with good mooring options. A small marina with all facilities. Waste water pump. Closed off-season for visitors, although wintering is possible. Depth unknown. [www.rivesdesaone.fr](http://www.rivesdesaone.fr) [capitainerie.seurre@rivesdesaone.fr](mailto:capitainerie.seurre@rivesdesaone.fr), +33 3 80 20 31 05. Limited opening hours off season. Next to Capitainerie, outside of marina, a good pontoon with good depth offers electricity and water. Pay at Capitainerie. Nice children's playground next to Capitainerie. At pontoons near Île du Pont depth may be a problem when water levels are low. Town offers regular shops.

**PK186.5** – boat yard on West bank downstream of bridge. [www.enginepower.fr](http://www.enginepower.fr), +33 6 66 45 04 22. Vetus service centre.

### **S.T.O.P.**

**PK233.5 Auxonne** – Port Royal, good, relatively new marina run by a friendly English couple. Open all year. One spacious shower and toilet at Capitainerie. We paid €12 per night including water and electricity. Weekly rate slightly cheaper. Wifi available at Capitainerie. 10 minute walk to town centre with laundry facility and many shops. Lidl and other supermarkets including fuel station available. Market on Friday morning. Train station with service to Dijon-Besancon-Mulhouse. We particularly enjoyed Auxonne because it was the first civilized stop since Chaumont.

[www.portroyal.fr](http://www.portroyal.fr)

[magasin@h2ofrance.com](mailto:magasin@h2ofrance.com)

+33 3 80 39 08 08 / +33 6 02 34 40 75



*S.T.O.P. Auxonne Port Royal*

### **St-Jean-de-Losne**

Before we arrived we had high expectations of SJD.L. We read that it was an important centre for commercial and pleasure boats alike. Featuring marina's, chandleries, wharfs for boat, repairs, people wintering there. But it turned out that the decline of the péniche traffic also reflected on SJD.L. The marina's were too shallow for us and people told us the facilities were not that great in there. There didn't seem to be a lot of wintering people but perhaps we're wrong. The town is okay but not special and not that big.



*Good free quay in St-Jean-de-Losne*



*Good paid pontoon in Seurre*



**PK167 Verdun-sur-le-Doubs** is a small historical town with a marina that offers all facilities. Reported depth 1.40-1.80m. Capitainerie contact: [capitainerie-du-confluent@dbmail.com](mailto:capitainerie-du-confluent@dbmail.com), +33 3 85 91 85 06 / +33 6 52 27 24 76.

**PK159.5 Gergy** – small paid mooring on pontoon near small village. Pay at restaurant. Facilities (shower, electricity, water) only in high season. Depth unknown.

### PK142 Chalon-sur-Saône S.T.O.P.

**PK123 Ancienne écluse de Gigny** – small rural marina with full facilities in a former lock run by German-speaking couple. Restaurant on site and epicerie/dépôt de pain at nearby camp site. Marina open all year, restaurant only April-Sept. [www.saone-bateaux.com](http://www.saone-bateaux.com), [info@saone-bateaux.com](mailto:info@saone-bateaux.com), +33 3 85 44 76 84.

**PK111.5 Tournus** – good paid Halte Nautique located in town centre on pontoon South of bridge with water and electricity. Open all year. Little shops, nice restaurants and fuel station nearby in nice old town. Market on Saturday morning. [www.house-boat.net](http://www.house-boat.net), [contact@house-boat.net](mailto:contact@house-boat.net), +33 3 85 40 55 50.

**PK83 Mâcon** – Port de plaisance is a good marina with all facilities, but far from town centre (3km) and rather expensive. We paid nearly 20€ for one night. Fuel available. Waste water pump. Chandlery with crane (<15 t.). [www.port-de-plaisance.com](http://www.port-de-plaisance.com), [portdeplaisance@ville-macon.fr](mailto:portdeplaisance@ville-macon.fr), +33 3 85 38 35 71 / +33 6 65 51 42 61.

**PK80 Mâcon** – free Halte Nautique on pontoons in lovely town centre. Children's playground on boulevard. Many shops and restaurants in town. Laundrette in vicinity.

**PK73 Port d'Arciat** – small paid Halte Nautique with water and electricity on pontoon South of bridge open from mid-May to mid-Sept. Reported depth sufficient although reports of rocks. Facilities at adjacent camp site. 2km to village, 3km to centre commercial.

**PK69** – stone quay on East bank. Reported depth 1.80m. No facilities.

**PK63 Thoissey** – some mooring options. Reported depth 1.50m.



*S.T.O.P. Chalon-sur-Saône is sheltered*

**S.T.O.P. PK142 Chalon-sur-Saône** is a lovely old mid-sized town with very nice sheltered marina with all facilities not far from centre. Open all year. Entrance to marina from the South at PK142.5. Across the road from marina large shopping centre with hypermarché and fuel station. Also fuel available in the marina. English speaking staff. We paid €14.40 per night. In town many nice shops and restaurants. Market on Friday and Sunday morning.

[www.achalon.com](http://www.achalon.com) +33 3 85 48 83 38  
[portdeplaisance@achalon.com](mailto:portdeplaisance@achalon.com)



*Chalon-sur-Saône is a lovely old mid-sized town*



*PK123 Ancienne écluse de Gigny*



*Tournus*



*Mâcon centre has a good free pontoon*

**PK55 Belleville-sur-Saône** – small free Halte Nautique on pontoons South of bridge on West bank. Free water and electricity. Reported good depth. Shops on 1.5 km.

**PK52 Montmerle-sur-Saône** is a very nice town offering good paid (10€) mooring on pontoons with water and electricity included in price. Reported depth 1.80m. Deepest at South end. Shops nearby. The supermarket is really conveniently close to the boat ponton and only a 100m further is a 24h laundry. Charming stop.

**PK43** – Nautic 01 small marina for small boats, very shallow.

**PK40.5 Jassans-Riottier** – small free Halte Nautique on pontoons North of bridge on East bank. Water and electricity available in high season. Depth 2m. No showers. On-site restaurant. Nicely located next to green areas with picnic. Shops on walking distance.

**PK31 Trévoux** – paid Halte Nautique on pontoon just North of bridge. Water and electricity included in rate of €9 (electricity in winter). Reported depth sufficient, around 1.60-2.00m. Nice historical town. Children's playground near pontoon. Showers and laundry at nearby camp site.

**PK26 Ancienne écluse de Port Bernalin** – small private marina for boats <7.5m length. Reported good depth. Open 1 April – mid-Oct. All facilities available, some at nearby camp site. Fuel at near supermarket. [www.campingdelecluse.com](http://www.campingdelecluse.com), [campingdelecluse@wanadoo.fr](mailto:campingdelecluse@wanadoo.fr), +33 4 78 98 06 32 / +33 6 84 49 70 99.

**PK24 Nautic Auto** – small private marina on East bank for boats <10m length. Reported depth 1.50-2.00m. All facilities, except laundry. Chandlery with 20t. crane. Open all year. [www.nautic-auto.fr](http://www.nautic-auto.fr), [nautic.auto@wanadoo.fr](mailto:nautic.auto@wanadoo.fr), +33 4 78 98 24 24.

**PK22.5 Yachting-Saint-Germain** – small private marina on West bank with all facilities, except laundry. Reported good depth. Open all year. Repairs and service offered and 25t crane. [r.jacquelet@free.fr](mailto:r.jacquelet@free.fr), +33 4 72 08 96 77 / +33 6 37 49 98 19.



Montmerle-sur-Saône

### Scenic stopover?

In Chalon-sur-Saône we met a British family making their way South as we did. Onboard two kids around the same age as Max. So far we'd only encountered retired couples and men travelling alone. So this was a rare opportunity for the kids to play together and to enjoy each others company while steaming towards the Med together. But they did travel faster as we were used to. 60km from Chalon-sur-Saône to Mâcon on the first day. But because we wanted to visit Lyon we decided to break the 80km from Mâcon to Lyon in half. Right in the middle is Jassans-Riottier/Villefranche-sur-Saône and there we stopped for the night. The frustrating thing however is that beforehand on a map you can't see what a place looks like. Jassans-Riottier turned out to be a fine but not particularly scenic stopover right in between two very beautiful places: Montmerle and Trévoux.



Trévoux



Île de Barbe



**PK20.5 Neuville-sur-Saône** – free Halte Nautique on small quay in town centre on East bank just South of bridge. Reported good depth. Water and electricity should be available on request, probably at Mairie (+33 4 72 08 70 00). Open all year, except in periods of strong currents. Shops and laundrette nearby. Market on Friday morning. Picnic area and children's playground.

**PK18 Albigny-sur-Saône** – small private marina with all facilities, except laundry. Depth unknown. Public transport to Lyon in vicinity. Shops on 1km. [www.albigny-bateaux.fr](http://www.albigny-bateaux.fr), +33 4 72 08 83 97. [albigny-bateaux@wanadoo.fr](mailto:albigny-bateaux@wanadoo.fr),

**PK14.5 Fontaines-sur-Saône** – small quay. Depth unknown.

**PK12.5** – small pontoon for 1 boat on West bank, North of bridge. Near restaurant Paul Bocuse. Depth unknown.

**PK9.5** – Ancienne écluse de l'Île de Barbe, depth unknown.

**PK3 Lyon** – free long quay on East bank in city centre, opposite VNF office (somewhere near here is a water tab). No facilities. Children's playground nearby. Mooring possibly prohibited at times of flood. In Summer and on Friday/Saturday nights youth may cause noise.

**PK1,5** – fuel barge just a couple of hundred meters north of the confluence basin.

**PK1 Lyon** – secure marina in basin 'de la Confluence'. All facilities. Free wifi from shopping mall. Waste water pump. Open 1 May – 30 Sept. [capitainerie.lyonconfluence@gmail.com](mailto:capitainerie.lyonconfluence@gmail.com), +33 4 78 03 24 92 / +33 6 89 99 45 11. Oct-apr it's officially closed and full of boats wintering there, but you could find a place on the visitors pontoon with free electricity and water. Friendly people wintering there will provide the acces code and water/electricity.



*l'Île de Barbe*



### Milestone Lyon

We followed our new British friends on the last kilometres on the Saône. There was very little traffic and we had the river all to ourselves. The weather was glorious and entering the city from the Saône the city revealed more of its splendor to us with every curve. Lyon! What a milestone! The new marina was closed in November so we moored on the free quay right in the city centre. We walked around a bit and afterwards drank sundowners together while les Lyonnais strolling by along the promenade enjoying the sunny weather and looking at our boats. We did not feel unsafe here but a (free) quay in a large city always comes with the risk of vandalism and theft.









## 14. Le Rhône (Lyon – Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône)

### The route

Lyon is at the junction of the Saône and the Rhône. The route from Lyon to Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône, the last stop before entering the Mediterranean, covers 313km with 13 locks.

### Special remarks

- Recommended map: Fluviacarte #16 'Rhône'.
- Access to Mediterranean is possible in two ways only: 1) via Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône (shortest route) as covered in this guide. 2) via Rhône-à-Sète Canal (Fluviacarte #4). Large commercial barges. Traffic much lighter than in Belgium and the Netherlands and North of France.
- Hotel boats are common on the Rhône.
- Large locks that operate relatively easy with floating bolders. Lock keepers can be reached on VHF 19, 20 or 22. About 15-20 minutes before your estimated arrival time you should contact the lock keeper. Wearing life vests in locks is compulsory. For pleasure craft opening times are from 5.00am to 9.00pm. Operation for commercial craft is 24 hrs.
- Lock keepers normally allow stopover for the night at 'sauf plaisance' pontoons available on both sides of the locks. Ask the lock keeper for permission. Best to stay downstream of lock if conditions are not so good. In calm conditions staying upstream of a lock is fine.
- Because lock are stopovers we pk listed them.
- Mooring at quays can be uncomfortable due to wash from large commercial barges, wind (Mistral), and strong current.
- Drifting wood can be hazardous especially going upstream with high water level.
- Relatively little places to stop.
- It is critical to take into account current and Mistral conditions (see next page)
- Have anchor ready in case of engine failure.
- S.T.O.P.: Les Roches-de-Condrieu, Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône



### Our experience

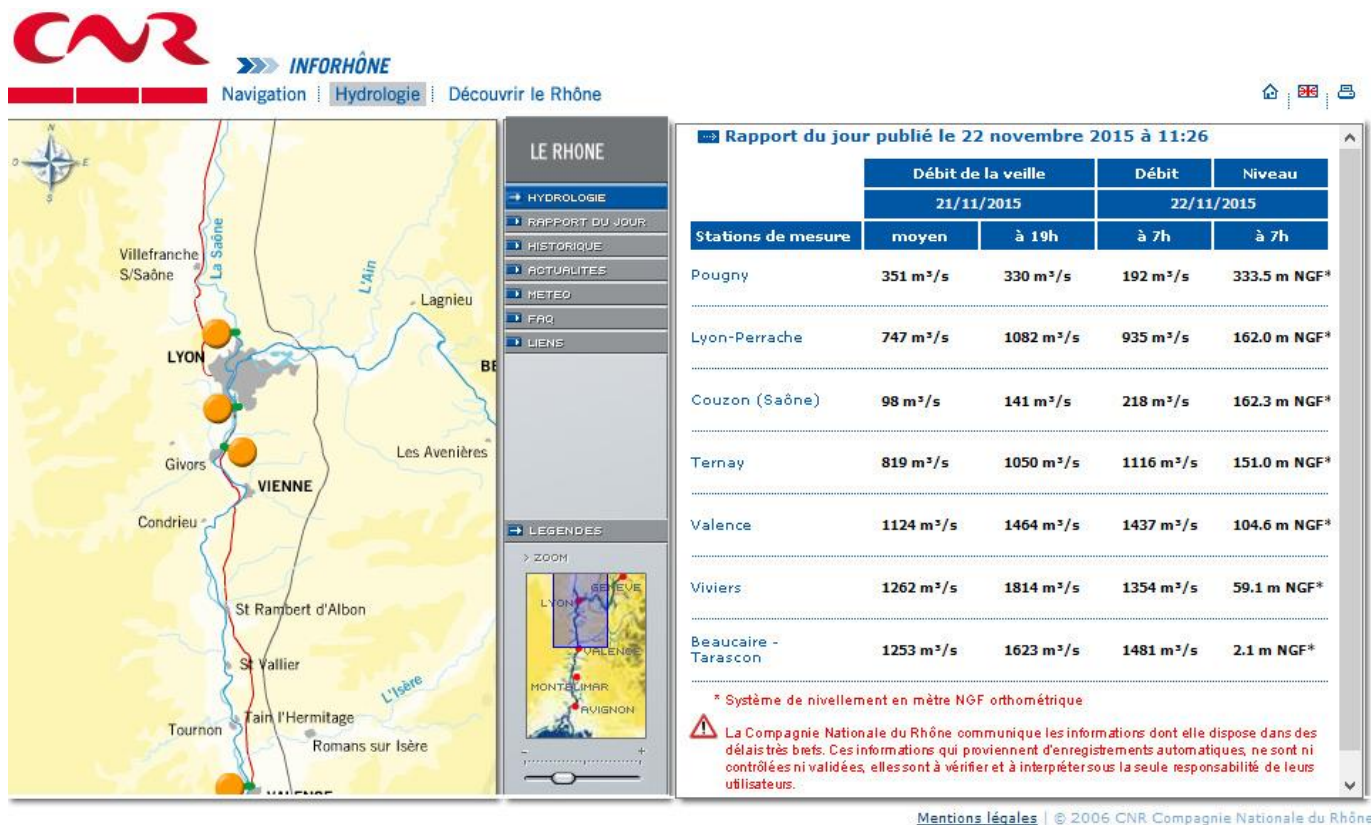
Although we had been warned for the Rhône in Autumn due to the possibility of it being rough due to strong currents, we had a great experience. Little rain had fallen in the weeks before we started our journey, so the current was mild. The water level was low, which led to some problems entering certain marinas. Stopovers are limited along the route, which meant long distances had to be covered and sometimes we stayed at a lock for the night. At times the river is impressively wide and we could well imagine how rough it can become if wind and current are both strong, especially when the wind blows from the South. We had carefully followed the weather and the flow (débit), in order to feel a bit more prepared. We were lucky. From others we have heard they experienced the Rhône as pretty intimidating. It's a long journey on one of Europe's mightiest river. In Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône we met Martin. He bought an Ovni28 in Martigues to bring to his home town in North Germany. He was the first user of this pilot going up the Rhône in April 2016. He was a bit anxious about the trip with an 15hp engine and quite some current. But with a nice South wind he reached Lyon in only 5 days. Staying at Beaucaire lock, l'Ardoise, then in 2 days to Valence.

## Respect the Rhône

From various different sources we had been warned for the Rhône. At times cruising can be unpleasant and even dangerous. After heavy rainfall the current can be very strong, up to 11 km/hr. Many rivers flow into the Rhône from all over France and Switzerland. A few days after a period of rain the river can be calm again. The Rhône often carries driftwood, logs and sometimes even whole trees. The Mistral – the extremely violent North wind that blows down the Rhône valley – can blow in any season and can create significant waves. South winds are also frequent and can produce unpleasant conditions when blowing against a fast current. Fluvicarte warns that “If you are going downriver with strong flow your speed will be very high and a collision with a fixed obstacle will most certainly mean shipwreck.” The British harbour master in Auxonne, who had navigated the Rhône for a long time with a commercial barge told us to “Respect the Rhône”. But he was also the one who comforted us by saying that it is definitely doable if you closely watch the weather forecast and flow conditions.

MétéoFrance gives excellent national and local weather information on its website [www.meteofrance.fr](http://www.meteofrance.fr) and on its app. Weather warnings per region can be found on <http://vigilance.meteofrance.com/> and you can consult [www.vigicrues.gouv.fr](http://www.vigicrues.gouv.fr) for up-to-date information on current (crue).

CNR (Compagnie Nationale du Rhône) controls an ingenious network of hydro-electric generators, barrages and locks. CNR also controls the traffic on the Rhône. From entering the first lock you will be in CNR's 'system'. On [www.inforhone.fr](http://www.inforhone.fr) CNR publishes twice daily reports on current flows referred to as 'débits', measured in waterflows in cubic meters per second (m<sup>3</sup>/sec). Weather conditions are also reported here. It is strongly recommended to closely watch the information on this website.



## Best time

Between May and September it generally is the best time to navigate the Rhône. But due to heavy rainfall the river may become very rough in any time of year. Autumn and Winter are also good, if you are prepared for somewhat colder weather, shorter days and if there hasn't been much rain just before and while you are getting on the river. Generally the Rhône is less good in Spring, because of the meltwater from the Alps that comes down the Rhône. Watching the débit levels and closely following the weather forecast is crucial whenever you navigate the Rhône.



## Calculation example

To get a very rough idea of current in km/hr based on the débits, these can be multiplied by 0.0072 near Lyon and by 0.0036 from Valence onwards downstream. The below table gives an overview of the débits at different water levels. For example with débits of 2400 in Valence, the estimated current is 8.6km/hr (2400x0.0036).

Débits (m3/sec)	Lyon	Valence	Beaucaire
Low	320	480	540
semi-permanent	810	1200	1460
maximum flow by powerstation	1380	2400	2490
PHEN (highest navigable level)	2700	3400	4100
centennial high water	6000	9000	12500

Source: CNR

When comparing the actual débits with the figures shown in this table, you get a good indication of the likely current. We were on the Rhône between 8 and 28 November 2015. There had been very little rain and water levels were low. Débits were therefore also relatively low. We kept an overview of débit levels and weather conditions in a xls file. That gave us good insights into the conditions, that can change rapidly. As you can see, the levels increased considerably between 19 and 22 Nov due to rain in most of the country, to drop again on 23<sup>rd</sup>. On 19 Nov the estimated current near Arles, which is South of Beaucaire was around 2.5km/hr (690x0.0036), which increased to 5.3km/hr on 22 Nov. This is still near semi-permanent level (1460).

Date	Location	National weather	Local weather	Lyon	Valence	Beaucaire
19 Nov*	Aramon	rain most of country	Dry	237	431	690
21 Nov	Arles	heavy rain except South	light rain	747	1124	1253
22 Nov	St Gilles	rain most of country	Dry	935	1437	1481
23 Nov	St Gilles	Dry	Dry	550	1222	1432

\*No débits data for 20 Nov, weather: heavy rain for most of the country, locally light rain. Before 19 Nov dry weather.

## Lock traffic

On a daily basis CNR publishes traffic through its locks. It is fun to see your boat listed here. On 28 November we took our last lock on the Rhône at Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône.

The screenshot shows the CNR website interface. On the left is a map of the Rhône river from Lyon to Montpellier, with various locks marked. The main content area is titled 'LE RHONE' and includes a sidebar with navigation links like 'MESURES', 'TRAFFIC AUX ECLUSES', and 'METEO'. The central part displays 'Derniers passages enregistrés à l'Ecluse de PORT SAINT LOUIS le 29 novembre 2015 à 11:59'. Below this is a table of boat passages categorized by type (Commerce, Plaisance, Voyageurs, Servitudes).

BATEAUX L(m) x l(m)	PASSAGES	CAT.
LORELEI L=88.2 x l=9	29/11/2015 10:15	Commerce
FRELON L=77.2 x l=11.4	28/11/2015 19:53	Commerce
PONTOMEDOUSA L=12 x l=3	28/11/2015 16:30	Servitudes
MALLEMOK	28/11/2015 12:15	Plaisance
RHODANUS L=89 x l=12.5	27/11/2015 20:26	Commerce
JULIETA L=88.8 x l=12.8	27/11/2015 15:11	Commerce

Mentions légales | © 2006 CNR Compagnie Nationale du Rhône

**PK4 Lock Pierre Bénite (VHF19)**

**PK18 Givors** – Halte Nautique with floating pontoons. Reported depth 2m. Open all year. Free mooring, additional charge for electricity by jetons. Shops and restaurants in vicinity. Children's playground in park.

**PK26.5** – small sheltered Halte on West bank without facilities. Reported depth 3.5m.

**PK29 Vienne** – unsheltered mooring on riverside quays, also used by commercial and passenger vessels. The wash bounces back from the quay ensuring a bumpy night. Vienne is worth a visit, an option is to visit it by train from Condrieu.

**PK34 – Lock Vaugris (VHF22)**

**PK35 Le Port** – pontoon, depth unknown.

**PK41 Les Roches-de-Condrieu - S.T.O.P.**

**PK47 Chavanay** – small mooring space but looked alright. Depth unknown.

**PK59 – Lock Sablons (VHF20)**

**PK68.5 Andancette** – small free pontoon on East bank, space for only one boat. Reported depth good and sheltered from current.

**PK69 Andance** – quay near village centre and children's playground. Not suitable with strong current and or wind.

**PK74.5** – small pontoon on East bank. Depth sufficient. But approach (and depart!) from upstream, there is a stone underwater dam reported downstream. Town is ok.

**PK86 – Lock Gervans (VHF19)**

**PK89** – **Warning:** reported underwater rocks inside the channel on West side, opposite 'Table du Roi' (the rock indicated on map).

**PK91 Tournon-sur-Rhône** – small marina and quay with reported depth under 1.4m. Quay has heavy wash from barges.

**PK98.5 La Roche-de-Glun** – reported depth 1.2m, free pontoons with electricity close to shops.

**PK106 – Lock Bourg-Les-Valence (VHF22)**



*Lyon 'Confluence' junction Rhône and Saône*

**S.T.O.P.**

**PK41 Les Roches-de-Condrieu** – large marina with all facilities. Open all year. Internet available. Waste water pump. We paid €19 for a night. Quite popular for wintering. Marina is located near village centre with supermarket and bakery. Market on Tuesday morning. Good depth. Train station with service to Vienne/Lyon. Lake for swimming nearby. The Accueil reportedly has a 1.5m undepth.

[www.condrieu-les-roches.fr](http://www.condrieu-les-roches.fr)  
[syripel@orange.fr](mailto:syripel@orange.fr)

+33 4 74 56 30 53 +33 6 64 47 76 58



*Large barges on the Rhône but not that many*



*Beautiful park and playground in Valence*



**PK110 Valence quay** – free quay on East bank with good depth. No facilities. Exposed to wash from barges, wind and current. Noisy because right next to motorway. Nice town accessible through underpass. Shops in town.

**PK112 Valance marina** – Port de plaisance de l'Eperivière. Normal depth 2m but with low water we could not get in as depth was only 1.5m. All facilities. Wifi and petrol/diesel available. [port.plaisance@drome-cci.fr](mailto:port.plaisance@drome-cci.fr), +33 4 7581 18 93. Restaurant on site. Chandlery with 30t crane [www.valence-mecanautic.fr](http://www.valence-mecanautic.fr). Supermarket unpleasant 1km walk along busy road.

**PK124 – Lock Beauchastel** (VHF20)

**PK142.5 – Lock Logis-Neuf** (VHF19)

**PK145 Cruas** – Port de plaisance Cruas. Reported depth 1.5-2.5m but with low water depth can be under 1.4m. Entry difficult, see Fluviacarte. Just go at an angle to the current and move slowly sideward into the marina. Price around €11,- per night. Open all year. All facilities, except laundry. Wifi available. [www.cruas.com/le-port-de-plaisance](http://www.cruas.com/le-port-de-plaisance), +33 6 83 21 36 07. Town 1km away with basic shops. Medieval town is strongly recommended.

**PK148-149.5 – Warning:** underwater rocks reported just East of the channel.

**PK160 Montélimar** – high concrete quay for commercial barges. Plaisance also allowed. Well protected against wind from the North. A rather industrial surrounding, not very charming and about 4km from the nougat city itself.

**PK164 – Lock Châteauneuf** (VHF22)

**PK166 Viviers** – small port de plaisance with all facilities. Open 1 May to 15 Oct. Reported depth very limited. Best to check upfront with Capitainerie. +33 6 33 40 48 84 16. Viviers is nice old town. Shops and restaurants in town.

**PK187.5 – Lock Bollène** (VHF20)

Bollène is the deepest lock on the Rhône with a rise of 23m. Tip: make a time-lapse.

**PK204 St-Étienne-des-Sorts** – there used to be a visitor pontoon, but when we passed in Nov 2015 the pontoon had been removed and there are no other mooring options here.

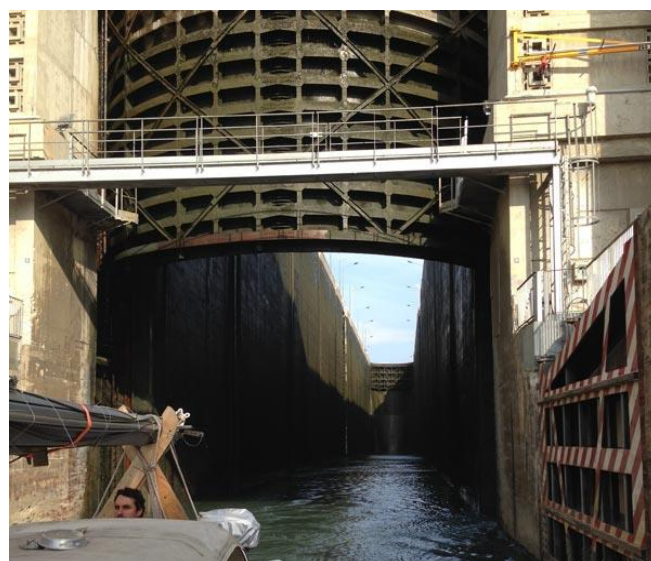
**PK214.5– Lock Écluse de Caderousse** (VHF19)

### Autoroute du Soleil

After a long hard day of steaming we arrive at the marina in Valence. Looking forward to tying up and having a well-deserved beer. They had put up a sign indicating that with these low water levels the depth was only 1.5m. Our English friends (1.6m draught) plow their way to a berth. We try to enter too but it's no use. We're not getting in there. We call the capitainerie and ask for advice. He suggests we try a pontoon just a few hundred meters North of the marina entrance. As we approach that pontoon we get the feeling it's very shallow and we are surrounded by waterplants. By now a bit agitated we go 2km back to the quay near Valence centre. Just before dark we arrive there. This quay, as it turns out, has some pros and cons. Depth is good, it's free and it's just a short walk to the nice town through a beautiful park. But it's so close to the motorway 'Autoroute du Soleil' that you get the feeling you tie your bow lines to the guardrail. The motorway is noisy also at night but something else woke us –twice - in the middle of the night. We heard a banging noise so we went outside to see what it was. A ridiculous amount of driftwood was caught between the boat and the quay. The quay was also exposed to wash from big barges passing by every now and then. So a bit of a restless night for us without strong current and Mistral even.



*Cruas nuclear powerstation*



*The mighty Bollène lock*

**PK218.5 (+5km) l'Ardoise** – Port2 is a small (Phone in advance to reserve a berth), friendly and sheltered marina of old Rhône. Enter at PK218.5, continue 5km upstream old river arm. All facilities including wifi. Restaurant open in season. Open all year. Rate per night €17,-.

[www.port-rhone-provence.com](http://www.port-rhone-provence.com), [port-lardoise@orange.fr](mailto:port-lardoise@orange.fr), +33 4 66 50 48 48, +33 6 77 08 11 10. It is a 1.5km walk to centre of village through industrial environment. In village you can find a bakery and some restaurants. Children's playground in park. Bus 22 direction Avignon leaves opposite the Tabac in the village. It takes about 45 minutes to reach Avignon. One hour to reach Avignon TGV station. Service several times a day, limited on weekends. For supermarkets (Lidl and Intermarché) you can take the same bus and get off at Roquemaure Centre Commercial, about 15 minutes on the bus.

**PK225.5 Roquemaure** – quay exposed to mistral, reported depth 4m. 10 min walk to shops, supermarket and restaurants in village.

**PK239 – Lock Avignon (VHF22)**

**PK244 (+3km) Avignon** – from PK 244 it is 3km upstream, past the famous bridge 'Pont d'Avignon' before you reach the Halte Nautique with all facilities. Mooring alongside long quay. In season also pontoons. The capitainerie has a new shower. Located next to busy road. Reported depth 3m. All facilities available from 1 March to 31 Oct. Short walk into the beautiful, historic town centre. There is also a conveniently located boat fuel station.

**PK254.5 Aramon** – small, relatively new, marina with all facilities, except laundry. Waste water pump available. Open all year. Capitaine lives on site on péniche. We paid €25 for one night. Third night is free. Lots of sightseeing in the area. Capitaine (gently) encourages you to book tourist trips through him. Small buoys mark a submerged dike. Make sure to go around these. +33 6 14 85 47 12. Very friendly small town with all shops just short walk from marina.

**PK261 Vallabrègues** – small Halte Nautique with pontoons with electricity and water. Quite exposed to wash and wind. Reported depth on outside pontoons 1.60m. Open all year. +33 4 66 59 02 17, +33 6 86 48 14 86.

Aramon and Vallabrègues are the last official stopover possibilities up to Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône (PK323).



*Friendly and sheltered marina l'Ardoise*



*Avignon, sur le Pont Saint-Bénézet*



*Avignon Pope's palace*



*Cool TGV bridge South of Avignon*



*Next to the péniche in Aramon*



### **PK265 – Lock Beaucaire (VHF20)**

This is first decent place to tie up if you go upstream. It seems possible to visit Beaucaire when moored on the downstream pontoon.

**PK267 Beaucaire** – no entry from the Rhône. There used to be a lock connecting the Rhône with the Rhône-à-Sète Canal, but this has been closed long ago. The only way to visit Beaucaire by boat is via the Petit Rhône at PK279.5 just North of Arles. Follow the Petit Rhône to PK300 and turn right to the 'Embranchement de Beaucaire'. Then it is 28km to Beaucaire. Quite a detour.

**PK267.5 Tarascon** – no mooring options for plaisance.

**PK279.5** – access to Petit Rhône and embranchement de Beaucaire and Rhône-à-Sète Canal (leading to Mediterranean through Camargue). Fluviacarte #4 'Canal du Midi – Camargue' covers the details.

**PK282.5 Arles** – no mooring facilities. There used to be a few visitor pontoon, but these have been removed. You could moor alongside the restaurant barge 'La Péniche', but then you should dine in the restaurant, which also has wifi. Check in advance. [www.la-peniche-arles.com](http://www.la-peniche-arles.com), [contact@la-peniche-arles.com](mailto:contact@la-peniche-arles.com), +33 4 90 93 31 10, +33 6 08 45 91 66. Shops and supermarket at 300m.

**PK284** – Canal d'Arles à Fos does not give access to the Mediterranean. Canal is closed off at the South end after 31km. Although part of the year open for tourist boats, we discourage navigating due to various reasons, including: lock only operates by 48hrs advance request, headroom 3.1m, draught max 1.6m, silted sides, no facilities.

**PK316** – Canal du Rhône à Fos (Liaison Rhône-Fos) is forbidden for plaisance. It is used by commercial traffic going to the Port of Fos/Marseille.

**PK322 Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône** – Port Abri Fluvial is a small fishing port. Depth unknown. It is managed by the main marina.



*Château du roi René in Tarascon*

### **'la Péniche'**

Arles, Vincent van Gogh's beautiful historic city is certainly worth a visit. Strangely enough Arles has no official mooring possibilities. The only option is tying up to restaurant barge 'la Péniche'. Cruisers on a tight budget are normally not into this kind of spending. But we will celebrate a special occasion: Max's third birthday! We've called ahead to the owner and it's settled. There was just enough time for family to send a package containing presents through the mail. The restaurant owner enthusiastically lowers the package onto our boat even before we're properly tied up. First we unpack all the presents, then we have some time to walk around the historic centre and after that it's time to dine in the restaurant. Brilliant surprise is that a little boy about the same age as Max lives on the restaurant barge and they have a lot of fun throughout the evening.



*Arles, we are moored alongside restaurant 'la Péniche'*

### **Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône - Rhône quay**

The Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône lock has certain operating times for pleasure craft. Wind and current in our favour we made great time from Arles to PSL but we nevertheless just missed the lock's opening hours and had to wait for 2 hours for the lock to open up again. The sun was already setting so we decided to stay the night at the Rhône quay. One last night on the river before going onto the Med. The quay is okay to stay. It can get a bit choppy with strong winds from the North and you're right behind large commercial barges that often have generators humming all night. But it's free and not far from the supermarket. The next morning we went through the lock to the Port de Plaisance.

### **PK323.5 Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône –**

Fluviacarte mentions that mooring is possible along the whole of the Rhône quay near the Saint Louis Tower, however we strongly discourage mooring here, because this quay is really meant for very large commercial barges, that come and go all day and night. Free mooring is possible on the far end of the Rhône quay just before the bend into the cut of the lock (see the map in the chapter on Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône).



*Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône, Rhône quay*

### **PK323.5 Lock Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône**

(VHF19) – this lock separates the Rhône from the Mediterranean. It only operates at certain times as indicated in Fluviacarte. Many cruisers agreed with us that this lock is difficult. Strange salt-fresh water currents and bollards very far apart. It takes a lot of time too. The quay in the cut for the lock is sheltered for current and wind, but usually full with local boats and it is shallow on the sides. The best alternative for waiting for the lock (or mooring for the night) is on the far end of the Rhône quay just before the bend into the cut (see the map in the chapter on Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône).

### **PK323.5 (+500m) Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône - S.T.O.P.**

**PK324** – the mouth of the Rhône is not navigable. You can't reach the sea this way.

#### **S.T.O.P.**

### **PK323.5 (+500m) Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône –**

An excellent marina in the large basin after Port-St-Louis lock. Visitor's pontoon and finger pontoons at NW corner of basin, right opposite the lock. Good new Capitainerie with all facilities. English speaking staff. Common room with couches, TV, books, refrigerator, microwave, stove and dining table. Bikes can be rented. Wifi available, but not free. Prices are reasonable. Marina is located in town. Large Intermarché on 150m. Children's playground nearby. Quay can be a bit noisy in Summer.

+33 442 86 39 11

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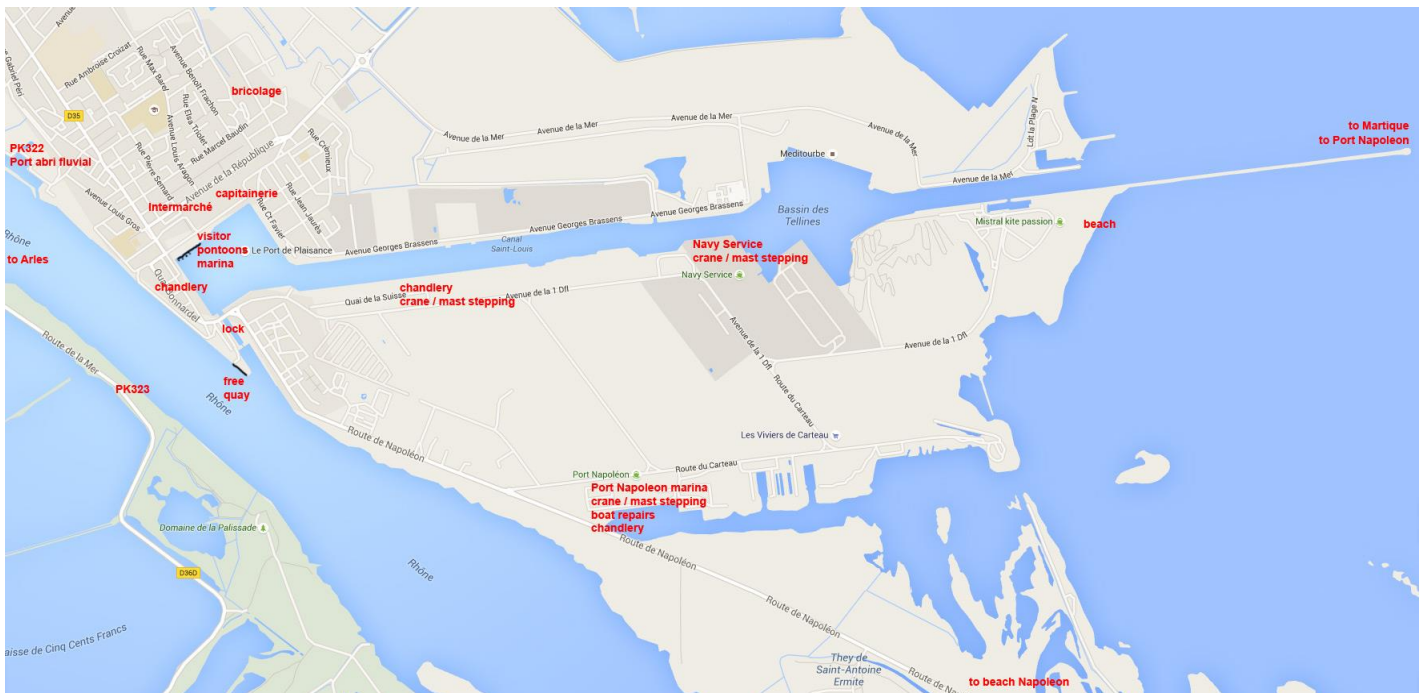
*Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône, S.T.O.P. le Port de Plaisance*



## 15. Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône

Coming down the Rhône we reached PSL end of November. We left our boat here for a Christmas trip to The Netherlands and after that we wintered here until mid April. PSL is a small town with an industrial/port atmosphere. It is not particularly beautiful, but the little quiet town grew on us. We started to feel at home here. The people are friendly and there are good shops and bakeries and some nice restaurants. Cheap bus services take you to nice places like Martigues, Istres and Arles. It is remote over land. The nearest town is Fos, 30 min by bus. There is a nice promenade along the Rhône. The Wednesday morning market is very good and takes up the entire main street. We made some local friends and also met other yachties wintering here or passing through sharing experiences on the canals and getting info on the Med. We took the bike to the nice Napoleon beach and on the ferry to Salin de Giraud, where the Camargue starts. Max got admitted to the local daycare 'Les Moussaillons' and had a great time there playing with other kids and learning some French. By rental car we explored the Camargue and visited nice towns in the area like Nîmes, Beaucaire, Aix-en-Provence and Montpellier. The Marseille Provence airport is about 55 min drive from PSL. By bus it takes about 2.5 hours, but only costs about €5. There are cheap flights from Marseille's budget terminal MP2 ([www.mp2.aeroport.fr](http://www.mp2.aeroport.fr)) to many destinations in Europe. We enjoyed wintering here, however, the biggest disadvantage is the often strong wind. PSL is a very windy place (we started calling it Port-Vent-Louis or PSL-du-Vent). The Mistral blows violently from the North and Southerly winds are also common. We experienced on average about 8-10 days per month of very strong winds. In Summer the winds are equally hard, with the advantage that mosquitos, that appear in large numbers, are blown away too. Besides the Intermarché there is also a Netto and a Casino in town. And about 4 bakeries.

PSL is a very good place to prepare to go out on the sea with many chandlers, boat repair sites, boat and mast cranes, etc. Or to prepare to go onto the Rhône. Navy Service and Port Napoléon have huge 'ports à sec' where many yachties put their boat on shore for the winter. Also many boats for sale here.



### Le Port de Plaisance (S.T.O.P.)

An excellent marina in the large basin after Port-St-Louis lock. Visitor's pontoon and fingerpontoons at NW corner of basin, right opposite the lock. Good new Capitainerie with all facilities (can also print your VNF vignette). English speaking staff. Common room with couches, TV, books, refrigerator, microwave, stove and dining table. Bikes can be rented. Wifi available, but not free. Prices are reasonable. Marina is located in town. Large Intermarché on 150m. Children's playground nearby.

[administration@portsaintlouis-tourisme.fr](mailto:administration@portsaintlouis-tourisme.fr) +33 4 42 86 39 11

We also saw boats mooring on the quay between the visitors pontoon and the lock. This is officially for barges waiting to go through the lock. So if you tie up there be sure to do it as far away from the lock as possible. Officials might send you away or you might spend a night or two for free. Who knows.

## Port Napoléon

A large full-service marina just outside Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhône. Water berths but also storage on land. Mast stepping, chandlery, boat repairs. Many boat-servicing companies are located in the marina area. Nice restaurant onsite with free good wifi. Children's playground.

[www.port-napoleon.com](http://www.port-napoleon.com) [capitainerie@port-napoleon.com](mailto:capitainerie@port-napoleon.com) +33 4 42 48 41 21

## Navy service

Navy service offers a boat crane. Heavy metal very pleased with professional boat crane. You can store your boat on land here. Drydock only, no water berths. Mast stepping, chandlery, boat repairs. Restaurant onsite with wifi. [www.navy-service.com](http://www.navy-service.com) [info@navy-service.com](mailto:info@navy-service.com) +33 4 42 11 00 55

## Fluid-elec/Seatex

First stop on the canal is Fluid-elec/Seatex next to the port de peche. Small businesses together in a red-and-white building. Chandlery, crane for boats and masts. Crane probably cheapest at 100,- euro but least professional. Boat repairs.

<http://fluidelec.free.fr> [www.seatex.fr](http://www.seatex.fr)





## Epilogue

We truly hope that this e-pilot was useful to you.

### *You just did it!*

By now you may have experienced the inland waterways yourself! If not yet, we hope you will do it. It is our objective to inspire more sailors to cruise the inland waterways of Europe. More than once we heard from local people and canal-cruisers alike that due to the decreased commercial traffic it becomes harder and harder to maintain the infrastructure and that if you want to travel the French inland waterways, you'd better not postpone it too long. We would be very sad if this would become reality. We want to reassure other sailors that you can actually do it and also that you can enjoy it a lot.

### *Join us!*

Be part of the community on the [e-pilots Facebook page](#) and share your findings, suggestions, experiences, pictures and anecdotes. We would love to keep this e-pilot up-to-date and continuously improve it, in co-creation with you. Your stories and pictures could be featured in the next version.

### *Share your experiences and feedback with us*

This e-pilot will be regularly updated to ensure that the content remains relevant and up-to-date and to continually improve it. We encourage you to share your experiences and feedback with us via [e-mail](#) or through the dedicated [Facebook page](#). Your input, photos and stories could be featured in the next edition. The first edition of this e-pilot was published in April 2016 and the second in April 2017.

### *Let's co-create it!*

e-pilots.net aims to become a platform for e-pilots about any route or sailing area in the world, based on experiences and stories of sailors, in addition to the more traditional pilot books. Co-created by sailors for sailors. We hope to have inspired you to consider starting your own e-pilot. We would be happy to assist you in the process and to publish your e-pilot on the website. [Email](#) us for more information.

## **Disclaimer**

Although this e-pilot has been developed with great care and attention, the authors are not liable for any loss, injury or damage as a result of the use of this publication.

Conditions and circumstances are subject to constant change.

This e-pilot is meant to be used in addition to official charts (like Fluviacarte).

It is strongly recommended that at least one person onboard is in the possession of the International Certificate of Competence (ICC).

Water levels are subject to weather conditions, waterway maintenance, lock procedures, etc. and therefore depth and headroom will vary. This e-pilot is based on experiences during the Autumn of 2015.



# Appendix

## Useful French words and sentences

bateau bateau de commerce bateau de plaisance bateau à voiles / voilier bateau de sauvetage bateau à rames naviguer tirant d'eau (T.E.) tirant d'air (T.A.) longueur largeur tribord bâbord péniche	boat commercial vessel yacht sailing yacht rescue boat rowing boat cruising draught headroom length width starboard port commercial barge	port de plaisance capitainerie capitaine électricité eau piquet machine à laver laverie grue carburant essence diesel/gazole station-service bouteille de gaz	marina harbourmaster's office harbourmaster electricity supply water supply mooring stake washing machine laundry crane fuel gasoline diesel fuel station gas bottle
chenal navigable chenal mouillage rive gauche rive droite permis plaisance voie navigable balise / bouée verte balise / bouée verte (navigation de) commerce (navigation de) plaisance montant avalant radio VHF courant débits envasé passage interdit barrage chemin de halage crue	navigable channel channel depth left bank right bank permit waterway green beacon / buoy red beacon / buoy commercial craft pleasure craft upstream downstream VHF radio current water flow silted access forbidden Weir towpath flood	écluse éclusier mécanisée automatisée manuelle bollard (flottant) amarrager / accoster amarres gilet de sauvetage horaire gaffe feu rouge feu vert manivelle chute sauf plaisance télécommande pont passerelle bief souterrain	lock lock keeper mechanical automatic manual bollard (floating) to moor mooring line lifejacket operating times boathook red light green light handle bar rise except pleasure craft remote control bridge footbridge waterway between locks tunnel
Qu'est-ce que c'est la mouillage? L'écluse est en panne. L'écluse ne marche pas. À quelle heure pouvons-nous passer votre écluse? Combien de temps prend l'éclusage?		What is the depth? The lock is broken. The lock is not working. What time can we pass your lock? How long does the lockage take?	
Example of Radio conversation with lock on Rhône			
Écluse Beaucaire bonjour, ici plaisancier Mallemok. Nous sommes avalant au PK 261. Pouvons-nous passer votre écluse s'il vous plaît? Qui, dans 20 minutes. Je prepare l'écluse. Merci.		Hello lock Beaucaire, yacht Mallemok here. We are downstream at PK 261. Could we please pass your lock? Yes, in 20 minutes. I will prepare the lock. Thank you.	

Date	From	To	Waterway	#km	#hrs	# Locks	€/night	# nights
6-aug	Amsterdam	Vianen	Amsterdam-Rijnkanaal	50	5	5	14.4	1
7-aug	Vianen	Wijk bij Duurstede	Lek	28	3	1	15	1
8-aug	Wijk bij Duurstede	Maasbommel	Amsterdam-Rijn/Waal/Maas	45	5	3	12	1
9-aug	Maasbommel	Niftrik	Maas	13	2.5	0	12	2
11-aug	Niftrik	Kraaijenbergseplas	Maas	18	2	1	15.7	1
12-aug	Kraaijenbergseplas	Wanssum	Maas	37	3.5	1	10	1
13-aug	Wanssum	Venlo	Maas	23	3.5	0	8	17
30-aug	Venlo	Roermond	Maas	32.5	3.7	2	15.5	1
31-aug	Roermond	Maasbracht	Maas	25	5.2	2	12	1
1-sep	Maasbracht	Maastricht	Maas	9	5.3*	3	14.4	5
6-sep	Maastricht	Luik	Meuse	20	3.2	1	9.7	1
7-sep	Luik	Huy	Meuse	35	5.5	2	12	2
9-sep	Huy	Namur	Meuse	30	5.4	2	12	1
10-sep	Namur	Dinant	Meuse	28	5.6	6	10	1
11-sep	Dinant	Hastière	Meuse	13	3.2	2	0	1
12-sep	Hastière	Givet	Meuse	10	3	2	8.55	1
13-sep	Givet	Vireux-Wallerand	Meuse	11	2.2	3	7	1
14-sep	Vireux-Wallerand	Revin	Meuse	26	6.1	6	7.65	3
17-sep	Revin	Bogny/Chateau-Regnault	Meuse	24	4.6	4	5.8	1
18-sep	Bogny/Chateau-Regnault	Charleville-Mezières	Meuse	17	3.6	3	11	1
19-sep	Charleville-Mezières	Pont-à-Bar	Meuse	19	4.5	5	0	1
20-sep	Pont-à-Bar	Le Chesne	Canal des Ardennes	29	5.5	6	0	3
23-sep	Le Chesne	Attigny	Canal des Ardennes	16	7.2	28	0	1
24-sep	Attigny	Rethel	Canal des Ardennes	18	3.7	4	5	1
25-sep	Rethel	Asfeld	Canal des Ardennes	20	4.3	4	0	1
26-sep	Asfeld	Lock Alger#4	Canal latéral a l'Aisne	26	7.7	7	0	1
27-sep	Lock Alger#4	Reims	Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne	19	4	5	15.6	1
28-sep	Reims	Sillery	Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne	10	2.2	4	8	3
1-okt	Sillery	Condé-sur-Marne	Canal de l'Aisne à la Marne	24	5.4	11	0	1
2-okt	Condé-sur-Marne	Châlons-en-Champagne	Canal latéral à la Marne	16	2.6	3	10.8	2
4-okt	Châlons-en-Champagne	Saint-Germain-la-Ville	Canal latéral à la Marne	10	2.1	2	0	1
5-okt	Saint-Germain-la-Ville	Soulanges	Canal latéral à la Marne	12	2.4	3	0	1
7-okt	Soulanges	Orconte	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	24	5.6	9	0	1
8-okt	Orconte	Saint Dizier	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	17	4.5	8	0	1
9-okt	Saint Dizier	Joinville	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	31	8	13	11	1
10-okt	Joinville	Donjeux	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	10	3.1	4	0	1
11-okt	Donjeux	Froncles	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	13	3	5	11	2
13-okt	Froncles	Chaumont	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	25	6.3	12	12.65	3
16-okt	Chaumont	Rolampont	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	29	7.1	15	0	1
17-okt	Rolampont	Langres	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	10	2.6	7	0	2
19-okt	Langres	Villegusien	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	18	5.3	10	0	1
20-okt	Villegusien	Cusey	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	15	5	14	0	1
21-okt	Cusey	St-Seine-sur-Vingeanne	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	16	3.6	6	0	2
23-okt	St-Seine-sur-Vingeanne	Champagne-sur-Vingeanne	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	10	3.1	7	0	1
24-okt	Champagne-sur-Vingeanne	Maxilly-sur-Saône	C. Champagne & Bourgogne	16	3.5	6	3	1
25-okt	Maxilly-sur-Saône	Auxonne	Saône	22	3.8	3	12	5
30-okt	Auxonne	St-Jean-de-Losne	Saône	19	3.3	1	3.2	3
2-nov	St-Jean-de-Losne	Seurre	Saône	18	2.7	1	0	1
3-nov	Seurre	Châlon-sur-Saône	Saône	45	5.3	1	14.4	2
5-nov	Châlon-sur-Saône	Mâcon	Saône	59	6	1	18.5	1
6-nov	Mâcon	Jassans-Riottier	Saône	43	4.5	1	0	1
7-nov	Jassans-Riottier	Lyon	Saône	40	4.6	1	0	1
8-nov	Lyon	les Roches-de-Condrieu	Rhône	41	5.6	2	19.3	1
9-nov	les Roches-de-Condrieu	Valence	Rhône	70	8	3	0	1
10-nov	Valence	écluse Logis-Neuf	Rhône	33	4.2	2	0	1
11-nov	écluse Logis-Neuf	écluse Châteauneuf	Rhône	21	2.2	0	0	1
12-nov	écluse Châteauneuf	L'Ardoise	Rhône	58	6.7	3	14.4	7
19-nov	L'Ardoise	Aramon	Rhône	40	4.1	1	25	1
20-nov	Aramon	Arles	Rhône	29	3	1	0	1
21-nov	Arles	Saint-Gilles	Petit Rhône	28	4.5	1	25	2
23-nov	Saint-Gilles	Gallician	Canal du Rhône à Sète	14	2.6	0	21.4	4
27-nov	Gallician	Port-Saint-Louis-du-Rhone	Rhône	78	7.5	1	0	1