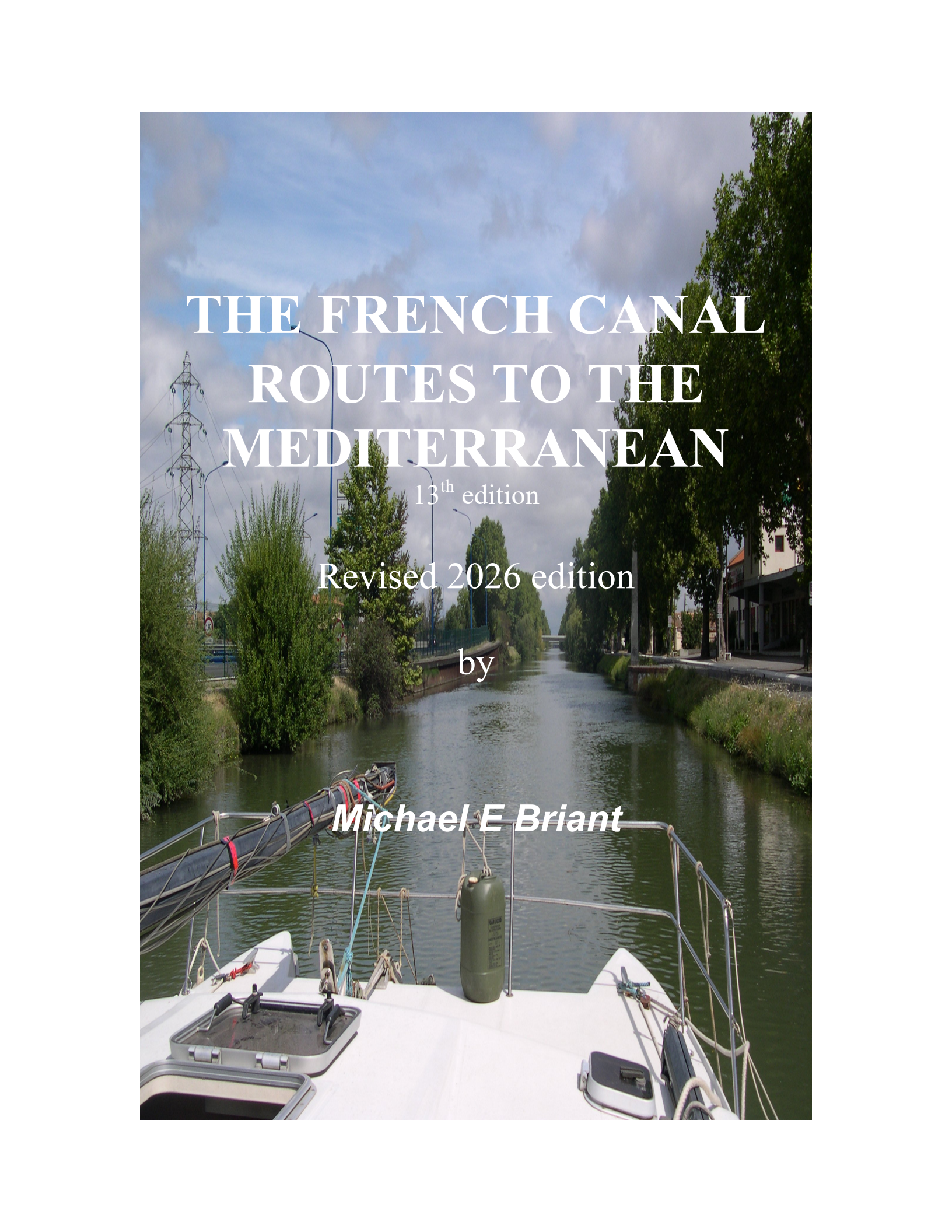


The background image is a photograph of a narrow canal in France. In the foreground, the white deck of a boat is visible, with various pieces of equipment like a green fuel tank and ropes. The canal water is calm and reflects the sky. Lush green trees line both banks, and a few buildings are visible in the distance under a blue sky with scattered clouds.

THE FRENCH CANAL ROUTES TO THE MEDITERRANEAN

13th edition

Revised 2026 edition

by

Michael E Briant

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Chapter One

OPTIONS



There is little doubt that the French river and canal system provides a very pleasant and enjoyable method of moving boats from the UK to the Mediterranean and a nicer far less expensive alternative to loading your boat on a lorry or a ship in the UK.

For British passport holders it is no longer possible to spend the entire summer moving the boat south because you are only allowed 90 out of 180 days in the European Union and therefore France. However that only applies

to you and not your boat. If you did run out of time you can just leave your boat in a marina or similar and go back to the UK.

It is just possible to do the river and canal trip from say Le Havre to the Mediterranean in 10 to 14 days, if you are lucky with the locks, and work very hard at it. You must be at the first lock, at opening time and continue all day, without stopping, only 'mooring up' in the evening when the locks close and never taking a 'day off'. A more reasonable time is 3 to 4 weeks!



There is a speed restriction of 6 km/h (4 knots) throughout most of the canal system with a few exceptions. It is not so much the speed limit that slows you down, as the time it takes to get through each lock. This can vary from 15-20 minutes if you are lucky, to 1 hour if you are unlucky. In the canals, some of the locks close for lunch.

All the routes, except the Canal du Midi, include the River Saône to Lyon and then the Rhone to the Mediterranean. Both these rivers have relatively few locks and are busy commercial waterways with a speed limit of between 15km/h and 35km/h. Unlike the canals, they are fast flowing.

The size and draft of your boat is the main factor in deciding if you can get your boat through the canals and they have a variety of depths, heights and widths which are governed by the bridges and locks you will encounter on the way.

For the most used routes the following measurements apply.

Length: 38.5 metre (124ft.7ins)

Beam: 5. metre (16ft.4ins)

Draft: 1.8 metre (5ft.9ins)

Height: 3.5metre (11.4ins)

The 16.4ft Beam is the absolute maximum beam available in a lock. If your boat is 'wide' you should include room for fenders and board. Be aware there are frequently considerable cross current in front of lock entrances that can 'push' the boat sideways.

If you are close to the beam limit of 5 metre, (16ft.4ins) this can be very challenging, particularly after some rainfall.

The 'Draft/depth' shown is in the middle of the canal and is frequently less at the sides. Whilst the lock system is used to maintain the posted level, fed by rivers and streams, in mid summer if there is a drought it can be less.

Heading north, from the Mediterranean, on the Rhone, you can encounter up to 4-knots of adverse current, but normally 2 or 3-knots. When the Saône is in flood, in winter, it will be more. Both rivers have been widened and carry an authorised draft of 3 metres with an air height of 6 metres so should present no problems for most pleasure craft. The River Seine from Paris to the Channel has the same depths and air height, but is tidal, so it is essential to work with tides and currents.

The Canal du Midi is another ballpark!

]The dimensions are different:-

Length: 30 metre (98ft 4ins)

Beam: 5.5 metre (18ft.)

Draft: **1.6 metre (5ft 2ins) less in droughts**

Height: **3.30 metres** in the MIDDLE

and **2.40** metres at 5.5mtrs SIDES = 2.25 metres from the centre line on each side.



The ‘air height’ is also a problem – many of the bridges are narrow (**Beam: 5.5 metre -18ft.**) they are curved – arched, not square so the height at the sides may be as low as **2.40** metres on a 5.5 metre beam. It is without doubt, the most beautiful canal in France despite all the hundreds of self-drive holiday boats.

The ‘**draft**’ is an absolute maximum and because the canal is fed by reservoirs, if there is a drought then it will be lower and the ‘floor’ of the canal is not mud but rock for much of the distance. It was a considerable engineering feat to construct this waterway between the Mediterranean and the Atlantic. Every year one or two yachts (frequently French) go aground and have to be lifted out by crane and put on a lorry!

In all the Canals theoretically you’re not allowed to pump out either ‘black or grey water’ into the canals but should use holding tanks. In reality, there are very few ‘pump out stations’ and this regulation is aimed at commercial

barges, hotel barges, hire boats and local craft. It's not normally enforced on visiting boats.

GETTING TO THE CANALS



- **(route 1) CALAIS** (it is also possible via Dunkirk to enter the canal system)

The shortest possible sea voyage to France, is from Dover or Ramsgate to Calais, which brings you into the Canal d'Aire, that leads to some of the most scenic routes to the Mediterranean.

- **(route 2) ST VALERY SUR SOMME**

Leaving from Eastbourne, Brighton or the Solent bound for Dieppe where you can stop for a night or two waiting for the tide before heading for St Valery sur Somme and into the Canal de la Somme. This route takes you through numerous WW1 battle sights as well as passing a steam railway system similar to the Bluebell line. The canal is a delightful backwater which links to the 'barge motorway' Canal du Nord, from where you can either follow a country route or make the detour to Paris then south to the Med on either of the fast routes.

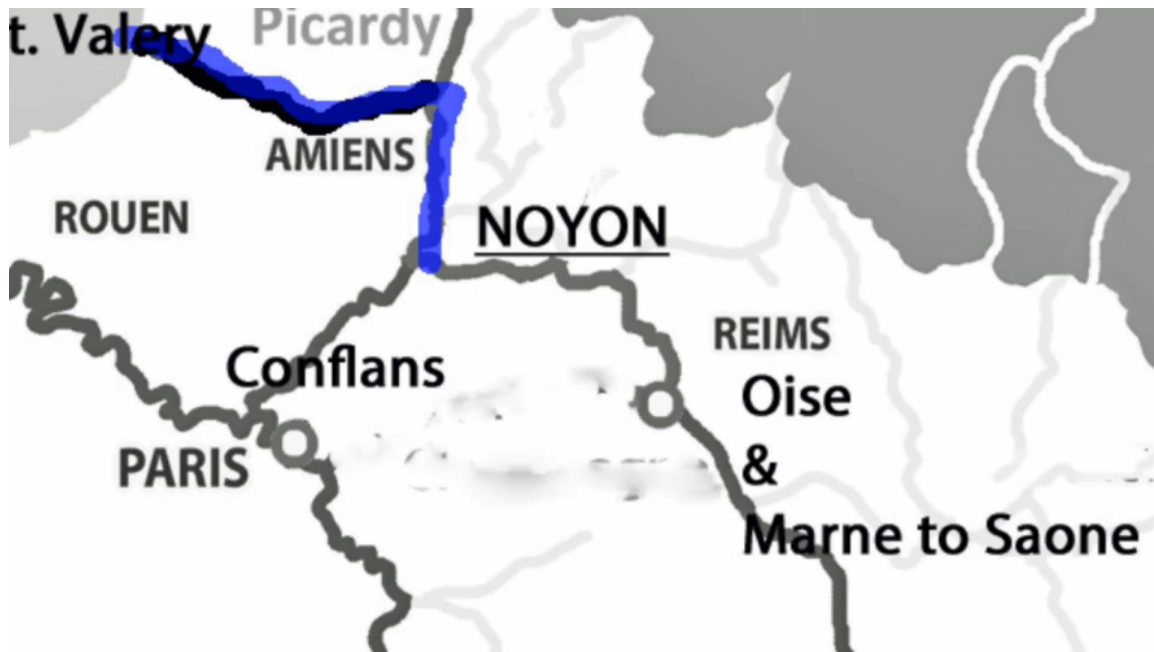
- **(route 3) LE HAVRE**

Cross the channel to either Le Havre is at least an overnight so the alternatives are to head for either Cherbourg or Dieppe and make your way along the coast to Le Havre marina where you can drop your mast, then carry the tide up the River Seine to Rouen.

Motor up the River Seine for 365 kilometres to the heart of Paris. The choice is then the 'fast route' with fewer locks but a longer distance or the 'Scenic route' with more locks. Both routes join the River Saône to Lyon, into the River Rhone and finally the Mediterranean.

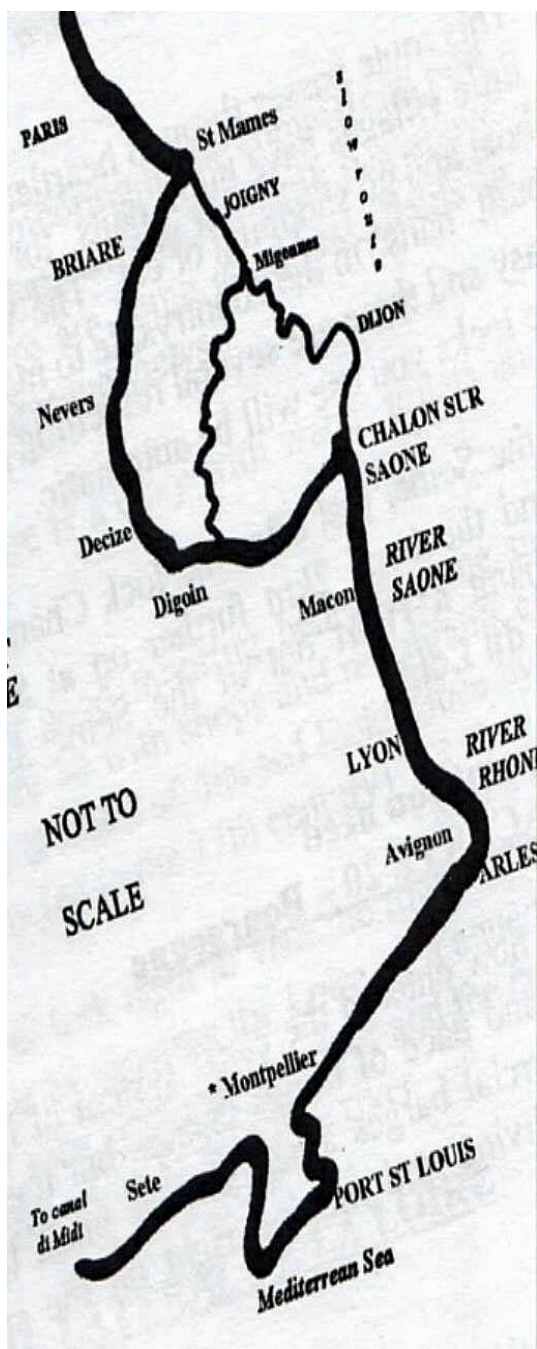
Routes 1 & 2 will add at least a week to your trip, but are very rewarding, picturesque and less crowded than the 'fast' routes. You have the choice of avoiding Paris and the River Seine altogether and using some charming country canals, with some very long tunnels, all the way to the Saône.

Alternatively you can spend an extra day or two heading for the Seine and joining the river at Conflans and proceeding through Paris.



CHAPTER TWO

OVERVIEW OF THE ROUTES



The 'fast' route (thick dark line)

Get to Le Havre, up the river Seine through Paris

River Seine to Paris (368 kilometres = 229 miles)

Into the canal system and then the Saône to Lyon (643 kilometres = 400 miles) then the Rhone to the Med (312 kilometres = 194 miles).

Total Distance 1323 kilometres = 823 miles

This route is fastest because it has the least locks to negotiate.

The 'scenic' route (via Joigny & Dijon)

Again, cross the channel to Le Havre drop the mast in Le Havre then up the River Seine for 365 kilometres to the heart of Paris. Just past Paris you continue into the **Canal de Bourgogne** with more locks but shorter actual distance to the Saone.

This route features a tunnel that is 3.3 kilometres long with a head height of 3.10 metres controlled by traffic lights at each end.

Without doubt, this route goes through some of the most beautiful parts of France and is full of charming villages, interesting châteaux and you are in the wine areas of Champagne and Burgundy. If you are a Francophile then this is perhaps the route for you.

The 'scenic' route - River Seine to Paris (368 kilometres = 229 miles) –
into the canal system and the Saône to Lyon

(629 kilometres = 391 miles)

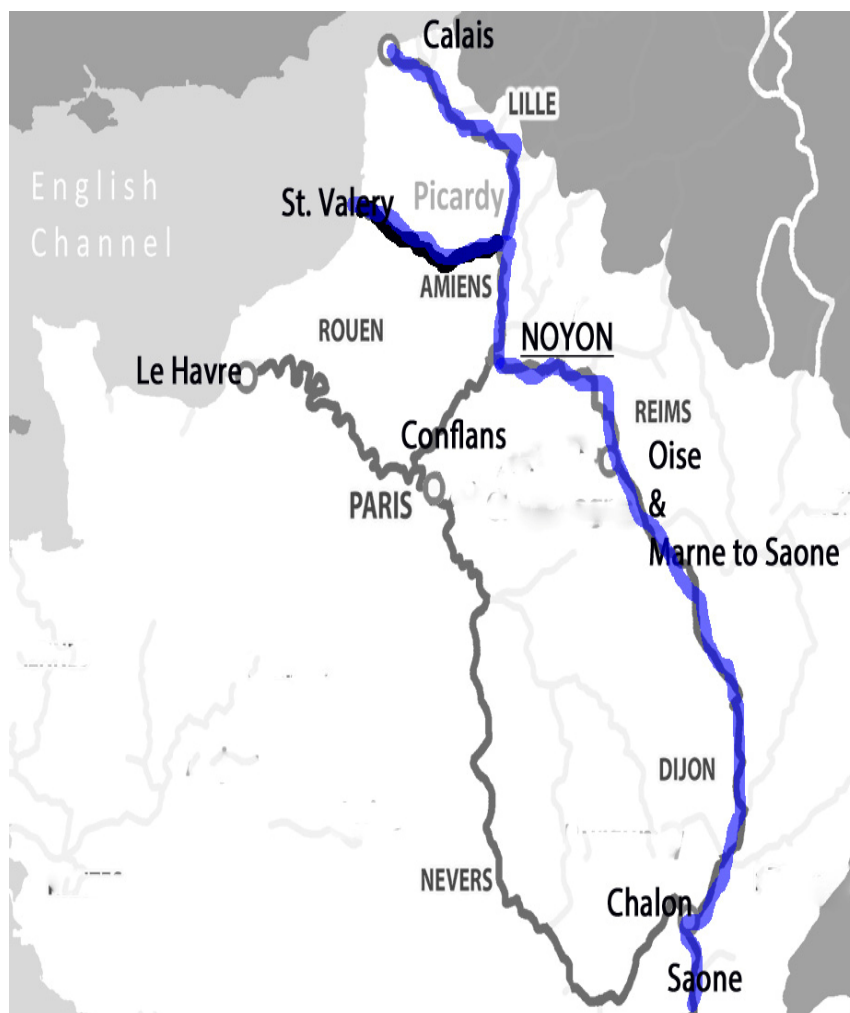
Rhone to the Med

(312 kilometres = 194 miles)

Total Distance 1309 kilometres = 814 miles

This route is much slower because it has many more locks to negotiate.

- **The Calais and St Valery sur Somme Routes –**



The Calais and St Valery sur Somme Routes – In both cases you drop the mast in either town marina and proceed up a 'feeder' canal to the big industrial **Canal du Nord** and head for the l'Oise and head down some charming canals to the Marne. You eventually join the Saône and the Fast

Route on down to the Rhone. There are long tunnels and ‘flights of locks’ on this route.

It will probably take a week longer than the optimum fast route.

- **Canal du Midi Route.**

This involves a long sea trip from the UK to the Gironde River south of La Rochelle.



Then, as the Cockleshell Heroes did in 1942, up the river to Bordeaux and into the sea lock entrance to the Canal du Midi.



This is arguably the most beautiful canal in the whole of France. A minimum of ten days travelling fast or you could spend all summer

transiting this wonderful canal, which eventually leads you to Sète on the Mediterranean.

Compared to the other routes there are remarkably few locks and you are unlikely to be asked for your CEVNI, because the drivers of the three to four hundred hire boat craft, of up to 40ft LOA, will not have a CEVNI or be required to have one. They all have lots of fenders but in high summer it's sometimes hard to find a place in the little shore side marinas

Total Distance 503 kilometres = 312 miles.

(You need to add a day for getting from Royan to Bordeaux, then another day from Bordeaux, down to the canal sea-lock entrance of the Canal du Midi.)

There are of course many more variations and routes in the waterway systems of France and most French canals are still commercial waterways.

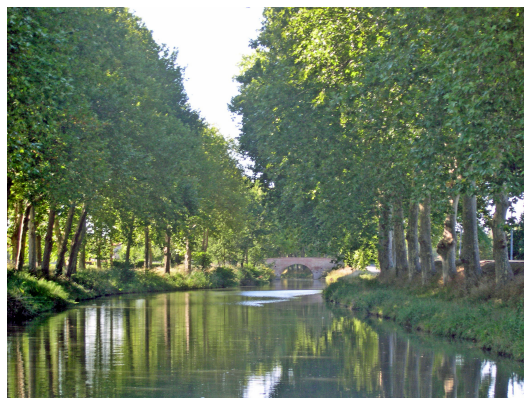
On all the rivers and major canals, you will encounter sea-going ships, commercial barges and push-tows of up to 5,000 tons, who will not give way or scenic down, as they are not required to. At locks, they always have priority even if you got there first!



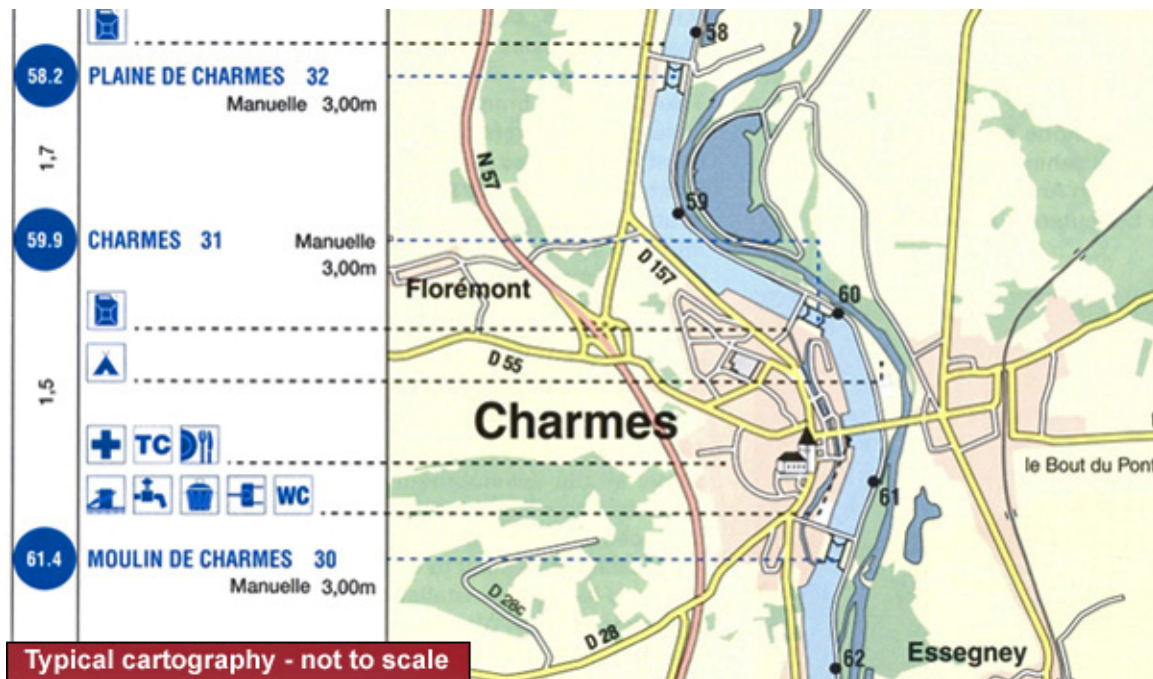
On smaller canals, there are commercial barges, 'peniche', who will hold position in the centre of the canal, forcing 'pleasure' boats into the side. Frequently the deep keels of yachts will go aground, and you will lose control as the water is 'sucked in' by the deep barges as they pass. You need good fendering.



On the other hand, you will see rural France at its best. Wonderful, old, charming villages, towns, and stopping places on a canal bank, alone in the countryside, for the night. All of this makes the canal experience truly memorable.



Fluviacarte



You really need to invest in the chart books that cover the voyage that you are making and I think that Fluviacarte are the best.

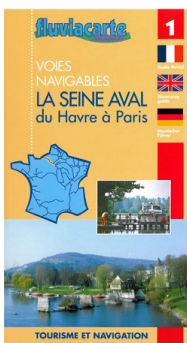


They are not cheap (20- 25 Euros each) I suppose if your budget is really tight you could just do it with this book and Fluviacarte 21. Even just for planning the voyage I really recommend Fluviacarte 21



Fluviacarte #21 - Navigable Waterways of France is a one-sheet chart of the entire French waterway systems. There are details of marinas, fuel places, boat-yards and all canal - lock dimensions. Very useful for an overview and to decide which routes you want to follow. (+- 8 Euros)

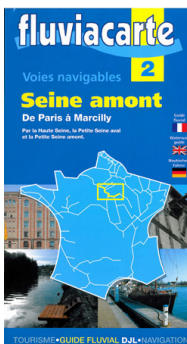
The following six 'Fluviacarte' cover both 'Fast and Scenic' routes.



#1 La Seine Aval

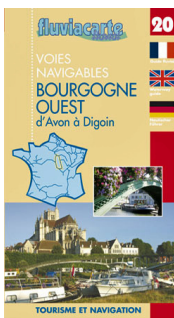
This book covers from Le Havre or Honfleur up the tidal River Seine to Rouen where you will probably take down your mast then onto Paris.

It contains detailed information on tidal flow and currents, the buoyed channel out of Le Havre and the ship channel up the big river estuary.



#2 La Seine Amont

You need this book for the section between Paris and Saint Mammes where you leave the River Seine and enter your first canal. Essential for both scenic and fast routes. Details of where to park up in central Paris and how to navigate the traffic light system in the very centre.



#20 Bourgogne Ouest

This book covers the central canal system From Saint Mammes down to Digoin. Essential for both the scenic and fast routes to the Med.



#19 Bourgogne Est

This takes care of the final section after Digoin to the Saône. It also covers the ‘**scenic**’ route which is shorter but has more locks



#10 La Saone

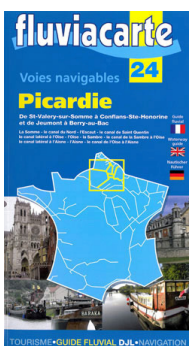
This is the book which runs down the SAÔNE from Heuilley, St Jean de Losne and Chalon sur Saône to Lyon. The Saone can be really challenging in winter and if it’s in flood.....



#16 Le Rhone

The Rhone joins the Saône at Lyon and goes all the way to the Med. (Port St Louis.) The Rhone is a very big river and you must have this book. The stopping places are few and far between and each day needs to be carefully planned.

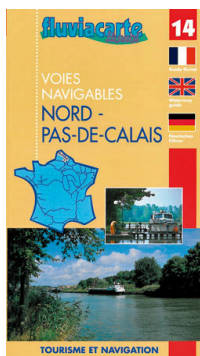
The following are the Fluviacarte you will need for the ‘Scenic route’ from Calais or St Valery sur Somme.



#24 Picardie

Entering the system at St Valery sur Somme, use this chart. It shows the offshore buoy ATSO. It get you to the big Canal du Nord and to Conflans if you decide to divert through Paris.

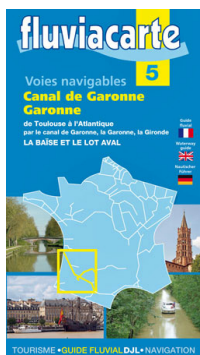
It starts you on the country and shorter route to the head of the Saone. You would then only need 10 Saone & 16 Rhone



#14 Nord Pas-de-Calais

You only need this chart if you enter at Calais. It takes you SE to join chart #24 - Picardie.

You would then also need Fluviacarte #8, Champagne, #10 Saône and #16 -Rhône



#G004 & #G005 Canal du Midi

These two books are needed for the Canal du Midi. They cover the waterways from Royan/Bordeaux to Port St Louis, with a plan of the Gironde Estuary, listing the stopping places and their facilities for fuel and cranes for the mast.

The coverage of the Gironde Estuary from Bordeaux Port to the start of the Canal du Midi is in Fluviacarte

#G005.



The French publishers have an English web site

<http://www.fluviacarte.com/en>

Because of Brexit and import restrictions it has become harder to source these charts in the UK. The first place to try is **UK Amazon**.

Next is **BookHarbour** – Although they do not always have the full range.

<https://www.bookharbour.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=fluviacarte>

Imray sometimes have a few -

<https://www.imray.com/products/?search=fluviacarte>

<https://www.librairie-gallimard.com/> **Librairie Gallimard** are French publishers of nautical books and will ship all over the world. The web site is all in French but contact will connect you to their message service and they will read English I am sure.

Accastillage Diffusion – Le Havre can obtain all Fluviacarte for you.

120, Rue Augustin Normand Le Havre, 76600 Tél : +33 (0)2 35 43 43 62

Accastillage Diffusion – Cherbourg can obtain all Fluvia carte for you.
Port Chantereyne Cherbourg, 50100 Tél : **+33 (0)2 33 94 15 50**

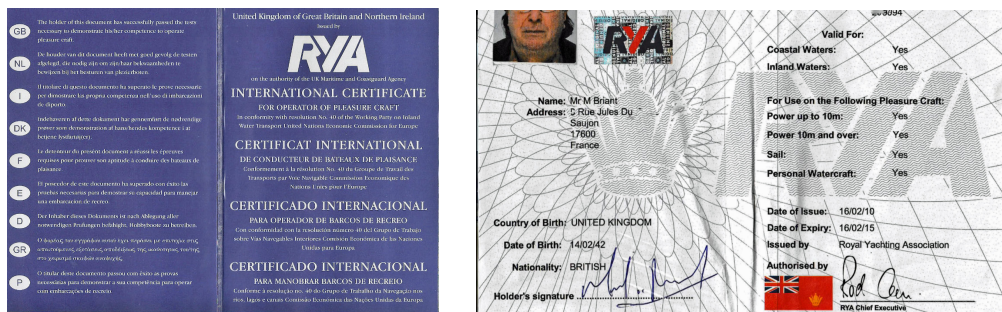
FORMALITIES

Essential papers:-

- **Passports:** - for all members of the crew with at least 3 month validity
- **Ships registration papers:** – either SSR (small ships register) or Part 1, for UK vessels – national registration papers for vessels of other
- **Copy or original boat insurance policy** (not a legal requirement but most French marinas ask to see it)

VHF Radio Operators License (**NOTE:** in all the years I have used the French Canals I have never, ever, been asked for this)

- **ICC. International Certificate of Competence.**



Whilst in the UK, you are not required to have any qualification to skipper a motorboat, most other European countries, including France, do require a 'certificate'. The French require one for using a motorboat with an engine bigger than 3hp and they require that certificate to have an endorsement for French inland waterways ~CEVNI~.

Once you take the mast down your sailboat is legally a motor boat. You must have a motorboat endorsed ICC.

The ICC allows UK Citizens and bona fide UK residents in the UK, with UK registered pleasure craft, (up to 24m in length) to visit the waters of France/Belgium/Netherlands, without the need to comply with local laws.

The ICC is an RYA qualification that requires the completion of RYA courses.

To obtain an ICC you must prove your competence. If you have attended a RYA practical training course presenting your certificate with your ICC application form may be sufficient, otherwise you will need to take a practical test at a RYA recognised training centre.

The ICC has five categories. When an ICC certificate is issued, only the categories for which competence has been proven will be validated.

1. Coastal

The RYA practical training course or practical test must have been taken on coastal waters.

2. Inland

The applicant must have passed the CEVNI test at a RYA recognised training centre.

3. Power up to 10m

4. Power up to 24m

5. Sail up to 24m

Which of these categories are validated, depends on the certificates presented with the application form.

Once you have established how to prove your competence, to ensure you receive an ICC validated for the categories you require, you need to complete an ICC application form on the RYA website. This should be sent, together with a passport size photograph, and payment or take an annual subscription to the RYA which is slightly cheaper.

NOTE: in all the years I have used the French Canals I have never, ever, been asked for my ICC!

- **CEVNI - Code Européen des Voies de Navigation Intérieure.**

It is the code governing navigation on the interconnected European inland waterways and is the basis of the various countries' own regulations. This is not a practical test rather a 'classroom', multiple choices – pen and paper test, that needs a few hours/days study in order to prepare.

NOTE: in all the years I have used the French Canals I have never, ever, been asked for my CEVNI!

The French will always ask for, and are far more interested in is

- **The VIGNETTE - Boat Licence**

Which is tax for using French waterways.

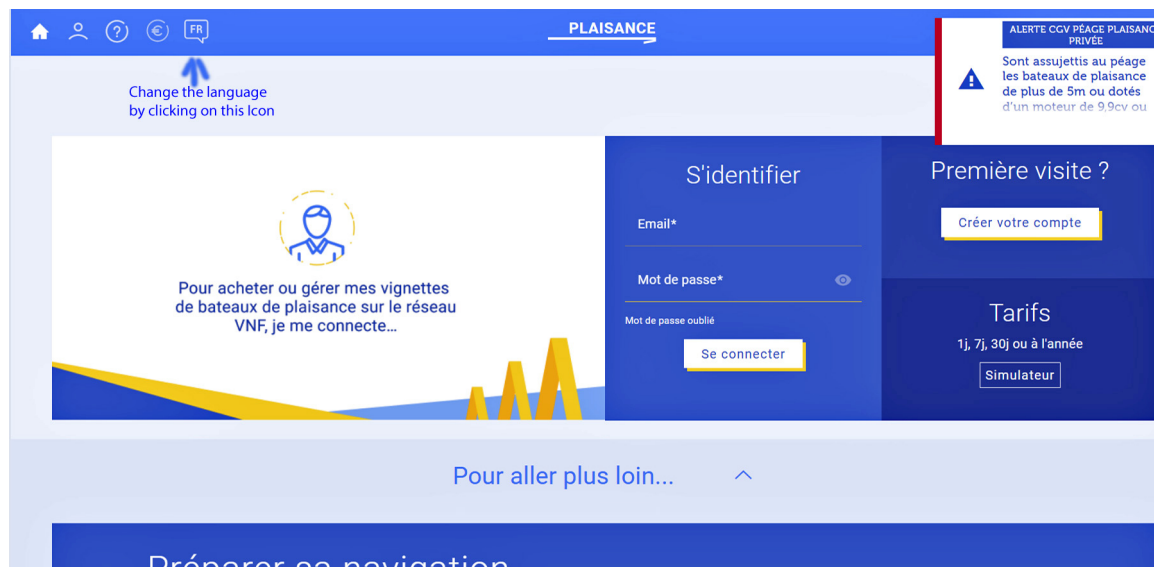
It is essential that you display one of these in the window (Starboard side) of your boat when you are on French Canals and Rivers. Lock keepers will look and ask for it.



They are issued for 1 day, 7 days 30 days 1 year

You can buy your vignette online from:-

<https://vignettes-plaisance.vnf.fr/paiement-en-ligne/> (Change to English by clicking top left FR)



The river Seine from Le Havre to the marina at Rouen is considered to be a sea way so you do not need the vignette for this section.

You could buy the vignette at the Rouen office of the VNF but they will probably ask to see your ICC with its CEVNI endorsement.

The link below is to a French VNF PDF file which explains most things about the Vignette in English:

https://www.vnf.fr/vnf/app/uploads/2019/09/carte_bienvenue_2020_EN-web.pdf

And this is an excerpt from that PDF showing the approximate prices of the Vignette for your passage through the canals and rivers

2020 toll prices for pleasure boating

(valid during the calendar year)

Package	No engine	I but under 8 ML	II 8 ML and over but under 11 ML	III 11 ML and over but under 14 ML	IV Over 14 ML
1 Day⁽¹⁾	-	€3.1 x Length + €11.5	€3.1 x Length + €17.4	€3.1 x Length + €22.8	€3.1 x Length + €28.4
7 Days⁽²⁾	-	€4.1 x Length + €15.7	€4.1 x Length + €23.7	€4.1 x Length + €31.5	€4.1 x Length + €39.2
Leisure⁽³⁾	-	€7.7 x Length + €28.3	€7.7 x Length + €41.1	€7.7 x Length + €53.8	€7.7 x Length + €68.7
Freedom⁽⁴⁾	€41.9	€8,8 x Length + €88.8	€8,8 x Length + €203.7	€8,8 x Length + €388.0	€8,8 x Length + €506.4

(1) issued for 1 specified day, this rate offers total flexibility for planning trips.
 (2) issued for 7 days for specific dates (consecutive).
 (3) issued for 30 consecutive days for specific dates (start date and expiry date). This package allows those who prefer longer trips to enjoy 30 days' boating.
 (4) issued for the calendar year (from 1 January to 31 December). The Freedom package offers unrestricted access, to use the waterways whenever you wish, throughout the year.

In accordance with the French Transport Code, prices are calculated on the basis of the period of using the network and the characteristics of the boat. They are rounded up to the nearest decimal point.

Calculated as follows: A variable amount, depending on the duration of network use and the specifications of the boat, defined by its length (value expressed in Euros x boat length quoted on registration certificate) + a fixed rate depending on the level of access to the network).

A 17% reduction is applied solely for "Freedom packages" passes bought by 31 March 2020 at the latest.

Fees are payable cash.

Please send all correspondence concerning the sale of toll stickers to the following



Chapter Four

PRACTICALITIES

Be aware that boat yards are very few and far between and if you have a breakdown you can't fix yourself then a local motor mechanic from a garage may be the only solution.

Engine:

You are about to motor more during the next two to four weeks, than you will normally during an entire season.

The motor should be serviced, with an oil change and you should carry spares – a fan belt, raw water pump impeller, water filter, oil filter and fuel filter. The biggest danger to the engine is overheating, caused by the water inlet or the water filter becoming blocked.



The amount of rubbish, (weed, leaves, broken branches, and plastic bags) you can encounter, will cause you clean the intake or the filter at some point. Make certain the engine raw water inlet 'sea cock' works easily and that it's possible to get the hose off, so you can poke a wire

or screwdriver down, to push away the plastic bag or whatever that has been sucked into the water intake.

I normally close the sea cock, take off the hose, open the cock again, push a wire coat hanger down till the water flows freely, close the cock and put the hose back on then open the cock again... and sponge up the water that's now in the bilge!

You should clean the raw seawater filter and check the engine oil, daily as a matter of course.



Fuel is not always easily obtainable, frequently only from a supermarket or filling station close, but not adjacent, to the canal..



It is essential to carry spare fuel jugs – plastic jerry cans of around 6-gallon size. A couple of little folding baggage trolleys to transport them on are invaluable. Carrying 6-gallon jugs of diesel for a several kilometers, on foot, under the hot sun can be tiring.



Fendering:

It is impossible to have too many fenders and if you decide to use motorcar tyres as well, you are required to have two lines on them in the Paris area. They should be covered or the black will come off all over your hull. One solution is to cover them in several plastic bin bags fixed with gaffer or wide Sellotape.



The biggest fender problem is in locks that fill to within a couple of inches of the top. Normal fenders just float up and tyres can slide upwards as you come alongside the rough concrete edge. A strip of 2x1 inch wood batten, suspended to the waterline can help.

A scaffold plank suspended between the fenders and or tyres can also stop the side of the boat making contact with the rough sides of shuttering that are sometimes used in locks.



Taking the Mast down:



There is the choice of carrying it on deck or having it collected by a French lorry at the port of commencement and having it delivered to the port of arrival a few weeks later. This will probably cost around 1,000/1500€ but you should get quotes. Several French haulage companies offer this service and one of the biggest is:

<https://www.augizeau-te.com/fr/transport-exceptionnel/bateau>

Probably the largest boat transporters in France/Europe based in La Rochelle



The Mast

When you un-step the mast, it is possible to have the mast collected by a transport company, stored at their depot then delivered to you, when you arrive at your destination.

Most people carry the mast on the deck. To do this you need two wood 2x2s, 'X shaped crosses', with a bolt through them, fore and aft and possibly a T shape in wood or just sail bags, half way along the coach roof to stop the mast bending in the middle.

It's sometimes difficult to find the wood and the bolts, to construct a couple of X, so it is something you might consider making, before you leave your home port.



Having arrived at the final French port, prior to entering the canal or river system, the first thing to do is to book the crane. There are cranes available in the marinas or yacht club at Calais, St Valery sur Somme, Le Havre, Bordeaux, Sète, and Port St Louis.

Normally you book on arrival. They are either self-operated or by someone from the club or marina.

You will need at least two people on the deck of the boat preferably three or more. Masts in slings, swinging about, together with furling forestays, need a lot of attention, in several places at the same time!

De-Masting:

- Take the sails off the main and forestay and bag them.
- Take off the boom and kicker and fasten them to the deck so they don't roll into the water.
- Disconnect all the electrics that run down to the base of the mast. Some will be deck fittings with plugs and sockets and some will be through deck, but all need to be either undone or cut.
-
- Take pictures of each coloured wire connection particularly something like the radar that has 10 – 15 connections. (I normally back the photos up with a rough drawing kept in the logbook showing the wire connections.)
- Disconnect the power from the VHF radio set in the cabin so nobody transmits with it by accident – with no antenna, it will wreck the set.

- At the bottle screws slacken all the shrouds and back stay - forestay as well, if it is without furling gear. Take all the split pins - wires out of the bottle screws so the whole rig is loose - bit floppy - (You are in a marina - no waves). The mast has no pressure on it, so it can move about a bit, perfectly safely.



- You are ready to 'pull' the mast – At the appointed time motor under the crane and tie up - breast & spring lines. It is important to make the boat is tightly moored.
- Now carefully undo the 'inners' and (with gaffer tape?) tie then to the mast. As the crane lowers the strop, you want it to go around the mast and slide up to rest under the spreaders. It cannot go up the mast if the lowers are in place.
- Once the cranes strop is in place under the spreaders, you need to release or take off, what ever it is holding your mast to the deck. The mast step bolts, tabernacle or whatever.
- You should assign someone to look after the forestay with the roller furling on as it is very heavy and you do not want to damage it. The crane tightens the strop on the spreaders – you and the crew/assistants run round letting go the final shrouds and stays and the mast goes up in the air.
- You need someone on the foot of the mast so it does not swing around as it leaves the deck.
- Then you must either lay the mast in the two X shapes, 1 fore 1 aft, which you have previously prepared or **put it on land and tie all the shrouds and stays up, possibly removing the spreaders....** Try not to get gaffer tape on the mast itself as after a while it deteriorates and can be difficult to unstuck!



- Do the same with the mizzen, if you have one and make it all tidy, so the shrouds/stays are all safe and secure.
- It is worth taking all the delicate items off the masthead – Windex, anchor, tricolour lights, wind instruments etc and fix a bucket over it to protect the end.
- Crane operators are normally doing dozens, if not hundreds of masts each season. It is sensible to be guided by them.

Note: Do not use Gaffer or any other sticky tape, if you intend being more than 3 weeks on the trip. It will become a horrid stick mess and difficult to remove.

If you intend using a ‘Mast Transporter then it’s best to wrap the mast in plastic wrap. If you have problems locating one and they seem difficult to find,

The office at Port Napoleon at the Mediterranean end of the canals:

+33(0)4 42 48 41 21 info@portnapoleon.fr

Stepping the mast

Reverse of above - take off all the ties etc get ready with pliers and bottle screws and **new split pins**. Put the mast strop around the mast over the lowers under the spreaders, and then put someone strong on the foot of the mast, to hold and guide it and another strong person on the forestay.

It is the furling gear on the forestay that is most vulnerable and difficult to maneuver, so get the foot to just above the deck fixing or thru deck and tell the crane to lower it onto the deck. Fix forestay first, then outers, then backstay and hand tighten the bottle screws before taking the weight off the strop.

Lower the strop and take it off then fix lowers.

Head back to pontoon and make fast again, leaving the crane free for the next boat. (it's useful to have previously fixed a line to the strop, to haul it down)

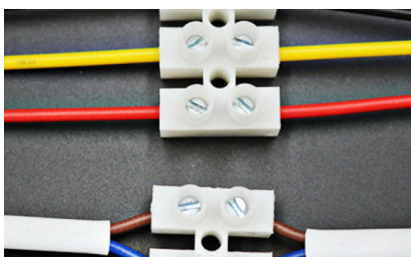
- Without tightening everything up, get the mast upright - go ashore and from the bows, look to see if the mast seems straight with the boat. Adjust it until it appears to be at right angles to the deck by upper shrouds... then tighten it all up a bit.

Look up the sail track and see if it is 100% straight

- it will not be. Gradually tighten / loosen up the shrouds till it is straight - Now tighten the back stay. Depending on if you have an adjuster or bottle screw - you need it tight to get the furling gear taut... should be able to twang it but not rock solid.
- Tighten the shrouds a couple of turns at a time on each one equally Keep checking by looking up the track - go round a couple of similar sized boats and feel their rigging to get a sense of how tight you should go! If you have a tension gauge this is the time to start using it.
- When you are next sailing hard on the wind the lee shrouds should be slightly loose but not flopping all over the place. If they are rock solid, close hauled in 15-18 knots then they are too tight... if floppy as hell, then too loose.

It will probably have taken at least a couple of hours to 'set up' the mast.

It is worth buying sufficient split pins to replace them in all the shroud and stays .



It's useful to have a supply of chocolate box (or similar) wire connectors for Radar and navigation light connections... Not always easy to source in the correct size without a car!

Mooring stakes & mallet:



Normally you will find somewhere to moor for the night that has either mooring bollards or rings, but occasionally you will be out in the country on a bare canal bank.



Generally, there is a towpath running beside the canal and just beyond that, trees or a fence.

The problem is that walkers, cyclists, and VNF officials (with little vans or scooters) use these paths and do not take kindly to tripping over or being knocked down by your mooring line which crosses

the path to a tree or fence!

You need a couple of strong metal stakes, about 15 inches long, ideally with rings in the top and a heavy hammer or mallet.



Coming alongside in canals:

Be careful not to damage your propeller in the shallows trying to swing your stern in.

It's safer to angle the bows into the bank first. Let the crew get ashore so they can pull the stern of the boat in with a line, keeping propeller stationary.

If you cannot get close enough, back out and try a bit further on.

In a mono hull I have frequently left the stern sticking out a considerable way rather than try too hard to pull it in. Overnight there is little or no traffic and so long as there is space in the middle of a canal for a barge to pass it's no problem.

Warps mooring lines:

Because of the frequency of the locks, you need to have lines permanently fixed to the boat, which can be adjusted from the cockpit. One way of achieving this is to fix a couple of blocks on the bows – one to port one to starboard so that the head-lines is led back to the cockpit, and onto a winch. With this method who ever is in the cockpit can adjust the head-lines and the crew ashore deals with the stern lines, as the lock fills or empties.

Sometimes it is difficult for one crew to adjust both lines, when the locks fill or empty quickly.

Deck knife:

It is worth keeping something like a diver's knife, with a saw edge, permanently in the cockpit. Hang-ups can happen in locks when ropes get jammed in worn concrete sides or other reasons. It is better to cut the warp fast when this happens, rather than let the weight of the boat eventually rip out the cleat or break the rope letting the boat drop several metres.

Boat Hooks: A long one and a short one are very useful for placing the fixed loop of a mooring line over a bollard. They are very good for giving what is technically know as 'a good shove off' from the side of dirty lock wall, which you really do not want to touch with your hands.

Binoculars: Very useful for reading traffic signs up ahead and spotting out mooring places in the wide rivers.

Plank/ Passerelle/Gang Plank:

- As mentioned it is useful for lying along outside the fenders to protect them from getting destroyed by the rough concrete walls of some locks.
- The plank may be used as a Passerelle to get ashore when you can't get the boat close to the canal bank for the night.

- If your bow goes aground a couple of metres from the canal bank it will earnable you to get ashore and fix mooring lines.
- Scaffold boards are excellent for this.

Fog Horn: very useful for ‘waking’ lock keepers, who are frequently students, busy reading a book or having a doze and do not see or hear you coming.

Fuel: You need at least two 6-gallon plastic jerry jugs/cans mounted on ‘wheels’ to carry fuel, to the boat, from more distant fuel stations.

Gas:



Calor gas is a non-starter in France – and indeed most of the Mediterranean.

Virtually impossible to get the cylinders refilled. The simplest solution is to abandon your Calor system and replace it with full **Camping Gaz 907 cylinders**

(for about 70 Euros in France 2023) which is readily available everywhere sometimes cheaply in supermarkets. (Refills from 18 Euros)



I put a Camping Gaz bottle regulator (for about 17 Euros with tube 2023) onto a Camping Gaz bottle and then just run it into the system via the old fixed regulator

There are pressure differences but you will probably not notice it. Calor UK, supply fittings to change the threads of the fittings to Camping Gaz Camping Gaz is expensive in France and cheap in Spain.

Power Cable:



The French provide electricity points and although they are nominally 220volts, you will notice no difference between that and our nominal 240v.

Most of the power points will take the blue marina electricity plugs as used in the UK.



A very few others use little round sockets that take a round 3-pin French plug. (The plugs have only two pins with a hole to take the earth pin from the socket.) Standard European system.

You can buy these in all French chandleries and most supermarkets. Use one to make up a short adaptation cable, with a female blue marine socket at the other end, so you can adapt your long cable to either system.

Hand Held VHF: Never use your ‘in boat’ fixed VHF to transmit, unless you have a proper aerial attached to it. You will blow it up!

A hand-held is perfect for the canals if you can speak any French at all. It helps to call the next lock, when a couple of miles from it, and give your ETA. This is particularly true in the rivers, with the huge commercial locks, but the little canal locks are also connected to VHF system. Ask any lock keeper for the channels to use.

In the mighty Rhone your Fluvicarte will tell you which channel, normally VHF 20 or 22, depending on the proximity of the next lock. The Fluvicarte book also lists the emergency and intership channels.

Water: Is normally obtainable at all locks (except the big Rhone locks) and is drinkable – ‘potable’. Often the canal locks have a neatly coiled hosepipe near the control hut, and, with the permission of the lockkeeper, if there is one there; you can fill your tank during or immediately after, the locking operation.

In summer months, tapped water may not be used to wash the decks – use canal water for this. In the Rhône, most stopping places have a water tap beside the electricity point, but you will need your own hose and the screw fittings. The rubber ‘push on’ type will normally work.

GPS: Running your GPS is a very good way of judging the progress on rivers, showing actual speed, rather than speed through the water from the log.. Particularly in the Saone and Rhone rivers.

PK or Km Kilometre stones or posts:



are on nearly all the banks of the canals and rivers and make 'finding a mooring before dark' problem easier to solve.

In the Fluviacarte books, there are signs on the maps saying PK something or Km something and you will find corresponding markers on the bank. They all mean the same thing – a certain distance to or from the end of a canal or river.

I have used the Km way of expressing it throughout this book. It is a useful way of knowing how far to the next fuel or mooring place without having to measure the distance on the charts.

Note: I have only listed a few of the more important stopping places on the routes as so much depends on boat speed and more importantly how lucky you are with the locks and what time you finished breakfast before setting off!

The exception is the Rhone where I have listed every stopping place I know of. The only possible stopping places are very few and require careful planning to get to the next one in daylight hours. It is a very industrial river and it's almost impossible to moor to the river banks except in designated places.

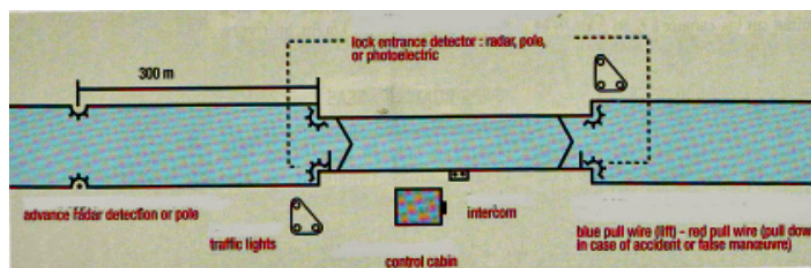


Chapter Five

Locks



Locks come in all shapes and sizes, some manual operated by lock keepers, But most electric, automatic and self operated.



Apart from the Rivers and parts of the Canal du Midi the French Waterways authority has tried to automate most of the locks. Only the more complicated or on the more northern routes now have lock keepers.

The rise and fall of the water level can be 10 to 15 centimeters, to 20, or 30 metres, in the giant Rhone locks. (You tie to floating bollards and it rises or falls with the changing water level)



Some have straight sides, some have sloping sides and some (particularly in the Canal du Midi) have oval sides which makes ‘parking’ challenging and exiting requires a good push off sideways.



Where the locks are manned, the lock keeper will not take your lines. It is not his/her job.

They expect you to be able to handle the warps and mooring of the boat yourself. If they do help because you are having a problem, then it is correct to give them a small tip – say 1 or 2€.



Lock keepers will always give priority to commercial barges. Occasionally the gates will open, the lock empty of boats, but the traffic lights remain red.

Some time later a commercial barge will arrive and go in ahead of you. If there is room the lock keeper will signal you to follow, if not you just have to wait for the next lockage. In worst circumstances, you will have to wait for up to half an hour but after that, you will be allowed in first, as the priority boat, as a matter of right.

Nowadays the majority of canal lock keepers are male or female students on summer holidays from university. They work hard, are very helpful, friendly, and are generally considerate in opening or closing the shutters, slowly, in order to keep the speed of the water flow down so it is easy for you to control the mooring lines. Sometimes the 'regular' lock keepers are less considerate.



On flights of locks, the 'lock keeper' will travel with you on a moped, scooter, or van from lock to lock, so that the gates are already open when you arrive. In the late afternoon, they will ask if you are going on through the next lock and, if not, what time you will start in the morning. It is important you keep to the given time. They will be going to make a special trip to open the gates for you.

Where there are resident canal lock keepers, they will call ahead to the next lock to inform the lock keeper of your imminent arrival and that keeper will 'prepare' the lock for you and open the gates.

It is courteous to inform the keeper of the lock you are leaving that you intend stopping before the next lock for lunch or the night, otherwise 'water' can be wasted in 'preparing' the lock and perhaps delay a boat going the other way.

Opening times vary with the canal system or river. Almost all work from 08.00 to 18.00 with a 'lunch break' between 12.30 and 13.30. On the rivers, some of the locks work 24/7 but pleasure craft are not permitted to travel after sunset.

FLUVIACARTE Canal Chart Books will tell you what the opening times are for each particular canal or river. The times are far more restrictive in the winter months, so progress can be a lot slower than summer.

The VNF is gradually modernising all the locks to being automatic.

It appears to be a matter of luck as to if an ‘automatic’ lock works during the lunch break or not.



They all have an emergency button or pole that, if activated, produces the presence of a lock keeper, on a moped or in a van within minutes, which is perhaps why, sometimes, at lunchtime, they are inoperable.

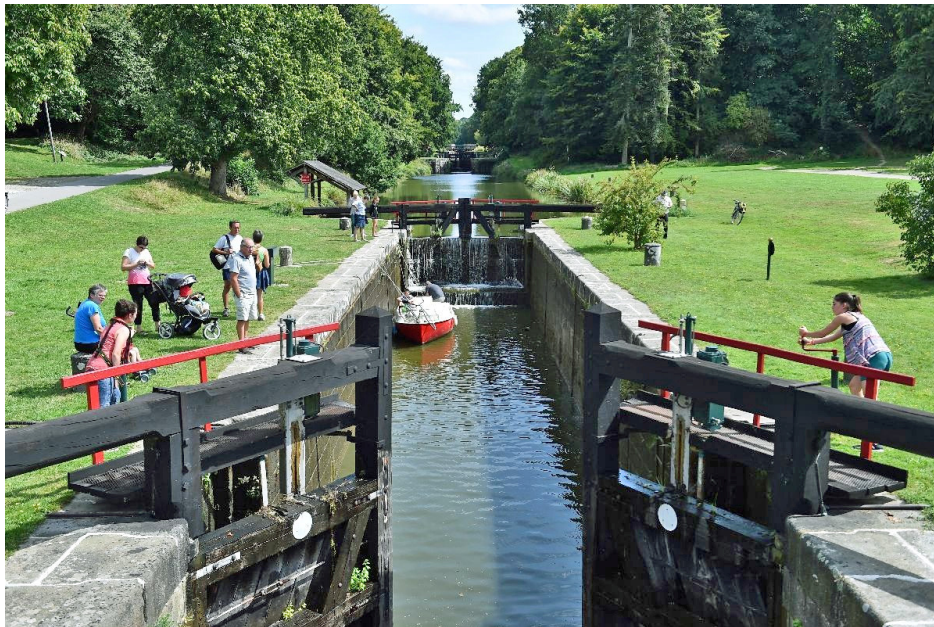


Manual Lock systems also frequently work with traffic lights but if not, the lock keeper will wave you in. When you arrive at a lock, and the gates are closed, and the lights are red.

You have the choice of parking up on the canal bank and putting the crew ashore to hold the two mooring lines or drifting in the middle of the canal, with small adjustments of position by engine.

If you have just missed a lockage, then the delay is going to be at least half an hour. The lock has to fill, gates open, boats untie and leave, next boats enter and tie up, gates closed, shutters opened, water level changes, gates open, boats leave – and only then do you go in. More like $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour!

As you approach the gates of the lock (and this applies to almost all types of locks), there will be a cross current! Normally seen on the water but pre-judging the strength is very difficult. As your boat gets into this current, it will push or pull you to one side or the other. This effect is difficult to handle entering the lock as you are going slowly but easier on leaving, where you can use more throttle and there is room to maneuver.



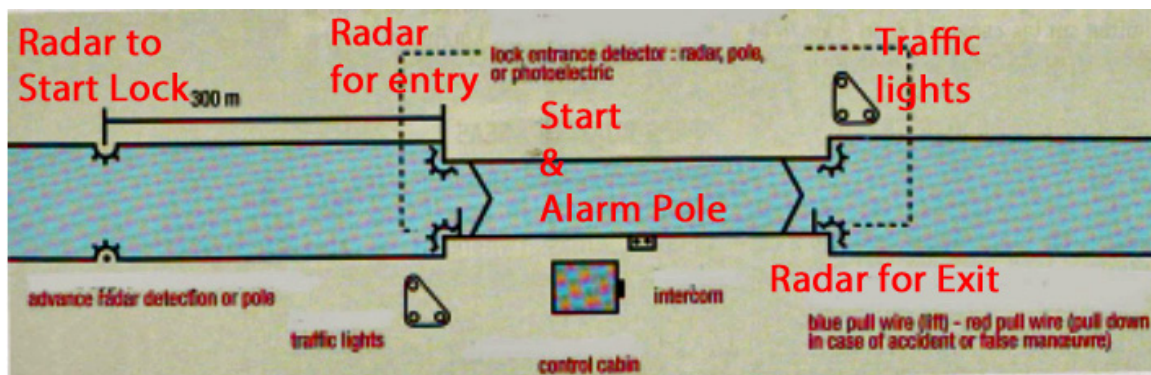
It is normal to ‘park’ on the starboard side – but this is not obligatory and sometimes not possible because of the boats ahead of you. When going into locks that are ‘empty’, it may be easier to put the crew ashore, either on the towpath or on the steps at the side of the lock entrance. They can be up on the side of the lock ready to take the lines as you throw them.

When you are in and parked, and any other following boats have completed the entry, the keeper will close the gates. If they are manual, then it is OK for you or the crew to help the lock keeper with closing the gate on your side then walking to the next gates and helping to open or close the shutters and then the gates.

(Shutters are the panels on each lock gate, under the water, near the bottom of the gate. They are raised or lowered from the walkway, to admit or contain the water.)

Often the lock keeper will wait for a 'nod' from the skipper to indicate the boat is properly moored up and ready for the lockage, before starting to open the shutters and releasing water in or out.

Once the level has changed and the gates open, you are free to recover the lines and go. If you have gone down in the lock, your crew should have looped the two mooring lines over bollards and got back in the boat with the loose end. When you pull the lines back down onboard, do it slowly or the 'loose' end will wrap around the standing part and the rope will be locked at the top!



Automatic Locks come in various forms. Some have a 'radar beam' situated across the canal banks which, as the boat 'breaks' the beam, signals to the lock of the presence of the boat. The traffic lights will turn from red to flashing red or amber. You then hang around while the lock 'prepares' itself and the light turns green. After the boats already in the lock have left, you motor in and tie up. If you are following another boat it is important you keep close as there is another radar beam just in front of the gate which, when broken, indicates to the automatic lock you have entered and after a

few moments the lock gates start to close. Some beams 'count' the boats, and some do not, which is why you should follow boats ahead as closely as is reasonable.



As the gates close, you need to park up as near to the fixed poles on the starboard side of the lock. One is red and the other blue or green. When you are happy with the mooring, 'lift' the blue or

green pole and the shutters will start doing their thing and letting water in or out of the lock. The Red pole is the emergency alarm switch. If you pull that, bells will ring; the lockage will stop altogether and a lock keeper will arrive by moped or van. Only he can reset the lock!

When the water level is correct, the gates ahead of you open up and you should leave promptly. There is a ‘radar’ beam on the exit side and some sort of timing as well. If you leave it too long after the gates open, to cast off and exit, the gates will start to close again. A loud alarm bell rings to indicate the gates are now closing!

If you are ever trapped between two closing gates, don’t panic, they will push closed to a certain pressure then just stop.... They then loosen slightly but not enough to release the boat, hopefully without damaging it. An alarm will sound and a lock keeper arrives.

Automatic Locks Type 2 do not have radar beams. Instead, there is a high wire slung across the entire canal supported by telephone poles or a gallows arm, from which, a piece of plastic hosepipe is suspended.



This pipe, requires a ‘twist’ of a quarter turn – you can hear it click as the circuit is ‘made’ -sending a signal to the lock, that the boat is there and ready to enter. The plastic pipe is soft, so you can run the boat under it and it won’t damage your superstructure if it touches.

Again the traffic lights will change to indicate the lock ‘knows’ you are there and as before, you wait for the green. Once inside the same lifting ‘pole’ system operates the gates as type 1. Again, it is important to leave as soon as the gates open as these gates run only on a timer. On exiting, you will see another plastic pipe suspended from a high wire. Do not touch this as it is only for approaching boats not departing boats. The gates will close automatically behind you after you have left.

Automatic Locks Type 3 are only on the Canal du Midi and present a special challenge for the single hander. They run on the pole entry system as **type 2**, but when you get in and moor up there are no red and green poles.



Instead, beside the disused and abandoned control hut, there is a box two buttons. The first button closes the gates behind you and opens the shutters automatically. The second button will open the gates for you to leave but ‘catch 22’ is that it only becomes operational once the shutters are fully open.

The lock water starts going down the moment you press button one - the shutters open and the water level starts to fall and the boat goes down. If you watch the rods on the lock gate very carefully, you can see when the shutters are fully open and the 2nd button becomes operable. If at that moment, you press the 2nd button and jump back in the boat, it has probably only gone down a metre or so and when the water equalises, the gates will open. The alternative is to obey the rules and stand on the side of the lock until the water level has equalised then press the 2nd button to open the gates and climb down a ladder to the boat, clutching the mooring lines. You will possibly have to pull the boat into the side manually, in order to get back on board. Easy if there are two of you or more – less so if single-handing.

Entering an ‘empty’ lock of this type you are committed to climbing up one of the steel ladders, clutching the warps, but once the water has filled the

lock, you just press button number 2, step aboard, push off as the gates open and motor out.

Oval locks are encountered on the Canal du Midi. Mainly lockkeepers operate them, but work appears to be going on to automate even this more difficult type. They were designed oval, to make the water flow swifter, but not violent thus filling and emptying the lock faster without inconveniencing the barges. Apparently, the water moves round the ovals with less turbulence for a given amount, than in a straight-sided lock!

Maneuvering the boat in and out of the oval is not as easy as in a lock with straight sides. For departure, a good push off then let the boat drift towards the centre of the lock seems to be a good solution. Going in, putting the bows into the oval, and then going astern with the helm over should swing the stern inwards.

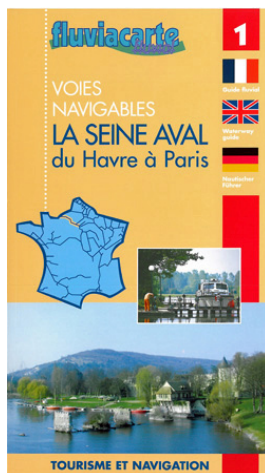


There are slope sided locks but these will not be encountered on the main Channel to Mediterranean routes described in this book.

If you do however encounter a slope sided lock, either **stay in the middle under power** or moor on the knuckle, close to the top or bottom gate, where the sides are vertical.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ENGLISH CHANNEL/SEINE ROUTE TO PARIS



Seine to Paris From Le Havre to Paris it is approximately 368 kilometers.
There are 6 locks after the tidal reaches.

From Rouen the authorised draft is 3.50 metres.

In Paris, the draft is **3.00 metres**.

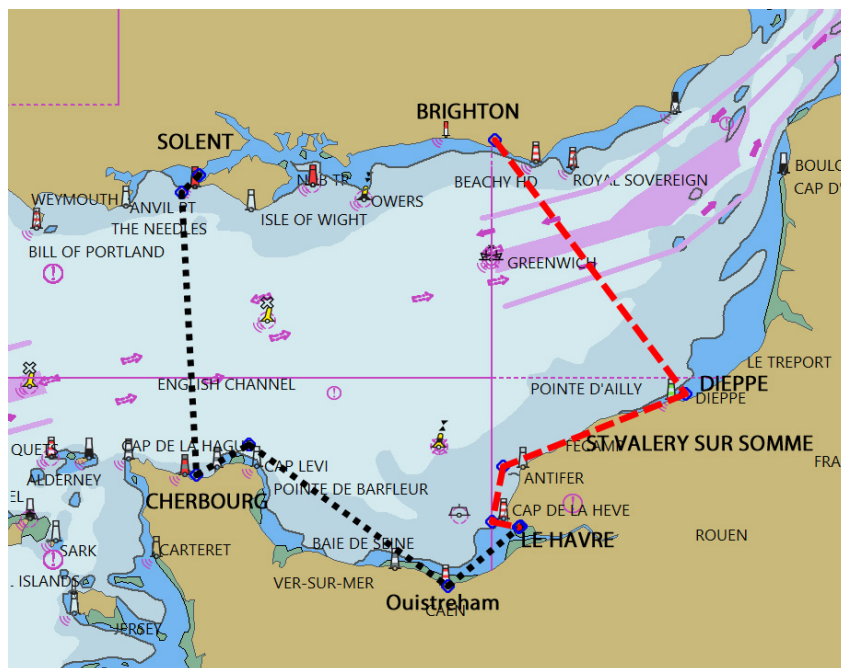
Air height is 5.69 metres to Amfreville,

Air Height 5.75 to Paris then

Air Height 3.70 in Paris - all at HW

For this section you need: FLUVIACARTE no 1

Le Havre and Honfleur



If you want to use the River Seine route though Paris into the canals then you will almost certainly want to go via **Le Havre** which is the best place to get the mast down and wait for the tide,

Getting there without spending a night at sea is best done by crossing to **Cherbourg** from the Solent then heading for **Ouistreham** where there is a visitors pontoon that you can spend the night on without going through the lock and the next morning make the passage to **Le Havre Marina** which can be entered at any state of the tide,

Alternatively you can cross from near Brighton to Dieppe, spend the night there then day sail round to **Le Havre**. On the way you will pass **St Valery sur Somme** which is another entry point to the Canals possibly avoiding Paris.



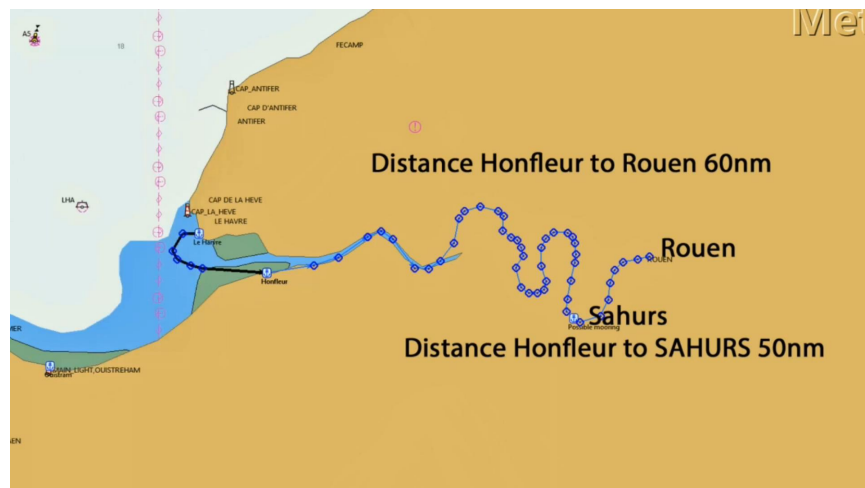
You can enter Le Havre at any state of the tide. The moment you pass the main harbour outer breakwaters turn to port and follow the markers round into the Marina. Moor up on the visitors pontoons in any spare space.

It is then a long walk to Marina Office where they will switch on power and water for your berth. There is a fuel dock beside the travel lift area which is self service with a debit/credit card.

It is possible to have your mast taken down here at or near high water and the marina offices, who all speak great English, will organise this for you.

Use the Le Havre marina berth to refuel, and time your departure for the river trip up the Seine which must be commenced before low water so as to carry as much favorable tide up to the Rouen Marina.

THE DEPARTURE UP THE SEINE



It is essential you pass Honfleur and are in the main 'Chenal de Rouen' at least by the time the tide turns and the flood begins or preferably an hour or two before. Provided you do this, you should be able to make Rouen, on the one tide.

The strength and speed of the tide, added to the hull speed, should enable you to complete the 122 kilometers. You are not permitted to navigate $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before sunset and $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before sunrise.

Keep near midstream, to gain the strongest tidal advantage, but all ships have priority, as they are 'constrained by their draft'.

There are a couple of possible stopping places just before Rouen but you should not count on there being a berth for you available:

Chaudebec-en-Caux 58 km up the river (331 from Paris) has got a possible mooring but has lots of commercial pleasure craft.

Duclair 61 km up the river (277 from Paris) has huge mooring buoys and pontoons for commercial pleasure boats.

After Duclair it is almost impossible to moor up anywhere else on this river until Rouen.

This lower part of the Seine is considered to be part of the sea so you do not strictly need the Vignette, boat license for inland waterways, until you get to Rouen where there is a VNF headquarters. It is essential you have the vignette before you proceed any further.

ROUEN is a major city with fuel docks, chandlers, Marina/Port de Plaisance, launderette and repairs.

Once you get to Rouen the pressure is off. You can relax and start moving in easier stages. Almost everything is closed on Sunday and Monday morning.



It is only 40km under a load of bridges from Rouen Marina to the first lock at **Amfreville**, but you should still ‘work the tide’ if possible.

Everybody on deck must wear a life jacket in French Locks

Tout le monde sur doit porter un gilet de sauvetage en écluses françaises

The rest of the time it’s optional.

Amfreville (202 from Paris) Is the first **big** Sea Lock. VHF 18.

Les Andelys (174 from Paris) is a nice historic town but the quay only has a depth of 1.20mtr. and can be very crowded.

Port St Gabriel (157 from Paris) and is after the 2nd big sea lock Notre Dame de la Garenne. There is a proper little port de Plaisance.

Vernon (150km from Paris) A big town with a proper Port de Plaisance with all facilities except fuel.

Rollbois (119km from Paris) just after the next lock at Mericourt there is a purpose built fuel point at Rollbois. The fuel is not cheap here but you may need to refuel before heading into Paris.

Limay (110km from Paris) a yacht harbour and marina under small bridge with 3 mtr air height together with other mooring possibilities in the area.

Ecluse d'Andresy (73km from Paris) This is an important lock as just after it is the junction with the l'Oise on the left at CONFLANS, which is a major commercial barge centre.

Conflans/ l'Oise For those yachts coming down from Dunkirk, Calais or St Valery sur Somme etc,



this is where you join the River Seine to pass through the centre of Paris and may then choose the 'Fast' or 'Scenic' route down to the Mediterranean.

Between Conflans and Paris there are mooring possibilities every 10km or so culminating in a Fuelling pontoon at:

Issy-le-Moulineaux (10km from Paris) On the L bank just before a bridge.

There is a very busy and susceptible to wash from passing barges, mooring place at:-

The Old Port de Plaisance by the Pont de la Concorde.

There is also a 45mtr long mooring quay near the **Eiffel Tower**, at the 'Port de Grenelle', that is only open during the summer.

A more comfortable and secure place is obtained by locking into the



Arsenal Yacht Harbour.

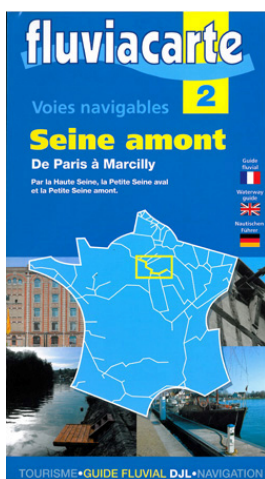
Advance booking in the season is recommended (01 43 41 39 32)

There is Video surveillance controlling the lock gates.

Contact HM on VHF ch 8 to lock you in. This is perhaps the best place to visit Paris from, if that is on your schedule.

The next bit of magic is the trip through the very centre of Paris, past Notre Dame on the Ile de la Cité. It's really unforgettable going under the bridges of Paris, in your own boat, as you head for the canals.

The route is controlled by traffic lights and works like this:- Up stream between 0 and 20 minutes past each hour. Down stream between 35 and 50 minutes past each hour.



From this point you need:

FLUVIACARTE 2. (LA SEINE – amont de Paris a Marcilly)

Having transited the centre of Paris – continue along the Seine as far as the junction with the Canal du Loing.

The following leads to both the 'fast route' and the scenic route.

There is again a bit of a shortage of good overnight mooring places so you need to plan ahead.

Port de la Rein Blanch is a small marina with modest facilities at Melun about 50km from the Arsenal .

There is another at 10km further on beside the **lock le Cave 3 at Chartrettes**.

Champagne-sur-Seine is another 10km further on. It has a marina with fuel and local shops.

ROUTE DECISION POINT

Just after the lock, Champagne 2, is where you decide on the shorter but with more locks 'Scenic Route' with its tunnel of 3km or the longer, but fewer locks 'Fast Route' which tends to have more commercial traffic

For the Fast Route:- Just after the lock

Champagne 2 and round the bend 2km further on, at **St Mammès**, you hang a right out of the Seine and into the Canal du Loing.



For the Scenic Route:- Do not turn to the right into the Canal le Loing, after the Lock Champagne 2, but continue along the Seine under the bridge. You pass the big EDF power station into the lock - **VARENNES 1 – (VHF ch 22)**

under one more bridge and arrive in

MONTEREAU.

This is a large town with a commercial boat yard, a VNF local head office and fuel available from service stations in the town. At the next Y junction with a bridge across it, fork to the right, enter the River Yonne.

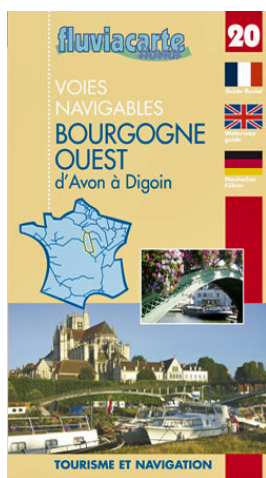


See Chapter 7.

Chapter Six

THE FAST ROUTE

On the Seine, just after the lock Champagne 2 and around the bend 2km further on at St Mammes, you hang a right out of the Seine and into the Canal du Loing



Canal du Loing & Briare

Canal Lateral de la Loire

Canal du Centre

At this point you need
FLUVIACARTE 20 – Bourgogne

This route passes through heartland France, where little villages have built ‘halts’ for you to park your boat and go shopping or eat.

The VNF have also built ‘halts’ in the countryside to make mooring up easy and there are several refueling points. Most of the locks you use will be automatic.

You have now entered the canal system of France. The scale and pace of things change but there are still commercial barges albeit smaller ones, trying to make a living and moving right on the speed limit. Many of the locks will be automatic and you can moor anywhere overnight, except on bends where you might impede other traffic.

CANAL DU LOIN AND CANAL DE BRIARE

103 km – 7 locks.

Nemours: is the first little town with a ‘Halt’ with electricity and water with shopping in the town supermarket.

Montargis: skip the mooring in the commercial port and continue to a 'halt' on the left bank just above lock 33 where there are some good restaurants in the area with picturesque views.



Montbouy: There is a quay with water, toilets and showers.

Rogney: has a good mooring beneath some trees just below lock 18 with shops and restaurants close by. (There is a flight of disused locks close by that were constructed in the 17th century)

Briare you fork right to visit the town or fork left to continue by crossing the Loire on a aqueduct and the canal runs alongside the river and the canal now follows the route of the Loire river



CANAL LATERAL DE LA LOIRE

196 km 7 locks.

There are numerous purpose built 'Halt Nautiques' all the way and some beautiful mooring places on the canal banks. Several fuelling points and delightful villages.

NEVERS. Is a big town situated on the Loire. If you want to visit you need to lock in at Verville 22b and follow the spur up to the Halt Nautique

DECIZE. Is the junction with the Canal du Nivernais by crossing the Loire River. You should not take this junction but carry straight on.

DIGOIN. Just before arriving in the town, you pass the junction into another canal on the right. Do not take this, but continue ahead into Dijon, where you will find a large Port de Plaisance with a hire boat centre, where you can fuel up, shower and take on water.



Your canal now becomes the

CANAL DU CENTRE.

112 km 61 locks.

Many of the locks in this section are automatic.

This is a very beautiful canal and the last chance to enjoy the slower pace before entering the two giant rivers that take you down to the Mediterranean.

you pass:

PARAY-LE-MONIAL, which has an excellent quay and the famous basilica of Sacré Coeur and aquaduct.

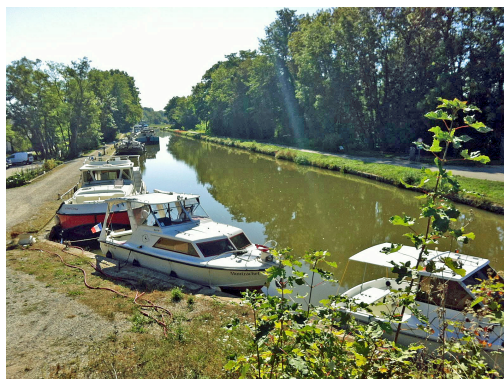


GENELARD has a little Halte Nautique and is a pretty village with a service station.

MONTCEAU-LES-MINES is the local industrial centre but has excellent shops and you can also moor in the canal basin. There is a quay side market on Saturdays.

ST LEGER SUR DHEUNE has got fuel by the quay, and a Halt Nautique. Some good restaurants and is set in lovely countryside.

CHAGNY is the centre of the Burgundy wine trade and once you have negotiated the flight of 8 locks after it there is a very nice café on the left bank.



CHALON SUR SAÔNE



is off to starboard as you reach the last canal lock and having passed through it you arrive at the T junction with the

SAÔNE RIVER.

Turn right and make your way down to the extensive marina complex of CHALON SUR SAÔNE boat harbour.

Phone +33 3 85 48 83 38

E-mail port.plaisance@chalonsursaone.fr

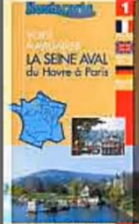
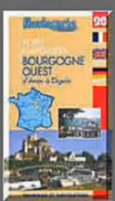
VHF 10

This is major boat yard and marina where boats may be left for extended periods and all sorts of repairs and installations are carried out. If you have used up your 90 days then this could be the place to leave your boat.

The island itself has wall to wall restaurants that set their tables in the streets for the evening meal. Some excellent food at reasonable, but not cheap, prices! You can also moor to the quay beside the town on the main river if there is room.. The footbridge across to the island and then the bridge into town, is a pleasant walk and has a different view of the river.



For the fast route from Le Havre/Honfleur/Rouen to the Mediterranean, you need the following:

 #1 La Seine Aval This 2010 book covers from Le Havre or Honfleur up the tidal River Seine to Paris. It contains detailed information on tidal flow and currents, the buoyed channel out of Le Havre and the ship channel up this big river estuary. 25€ Add to Cart	 #2 La Seine Amont You need this book for the section between Paris and Saint Mammès where you leave the River Seine and enter your first canal. Essential for both slow and fast routes 20€ Add to Cart
 #20 Bourgogne Ouest This book covers the central canal system From Saint Mammès down to Digoin. Essential for both the slow and fast routes to the Med. 20€ Add to Cart	 #19 Bourgogne Est This takes care of the final section after Digoin to the Saône. It also covers the 'slow' route which is much shorter but has more locks. 23€ Add to Cart
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Fluviacarte 20 Bourgogne Ouest
Fluviacarte 19 Bourgogne Est
Fluviacarte 10 La Saône
Fluviacarte 16 Le Rhône

And Fluviacarte 21 which is a map of all French waterways is an excellent planning tool



Chapter Seven

THE SCENIC ROUTE



RIVER YONNE

(Montereau to Laroche) = 86km with 17 locks.

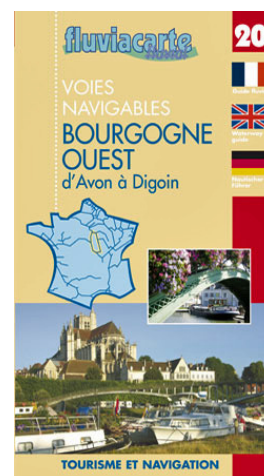
CANAL DE BOURGOGNE

(Laroche to St Jean de Losne) = 242km 189

Locks.

FLUVIACARTE 20 – Bourgogne Ouest

FLUVIACARTE 19 – Bourgogne Est—



If you have chosen the scenic route at by continuing straight ahead **St Mammès** instead of turning off to the right, you will now be on what many people consider to be one of the most beautiful waterways in France, after the Canal du Midi. 10k south is **Migennes**, where, if you wish, you can branch off into the **Canal du Bourgogne** and follow that

delightful route for 242K and 189 locks. It has a depth of 1.50mtrs and a low bridge of 2.70mtrs



The long tunnel at **Pouilly** has an air height of 2.70 metres at its highest part, but be careful the tunnel roof is sharply curved. If your boat is a bit square, near the maximum height, I wouldn't risk it!

Although it is actually a shorter distance than the 'fast' route there are far more locks, so it takes longer but the canals are less commercial and busy. The barge traffic is very light but there are many hire boats.

On many public holidays, the locks are closed.

MONTEREAU (km 108) You can more on the right bank on a quay above the bridge. It is a large town with a commercial boat yard, a VNF local head office and fuel available from service stations in the town.

At the next Y junction with a bridge across it, fork to the right and enter the River Yonne and leave the Seine.

PONT-SUR-YONNE (km 79) Has and excellent Halte Nautique, if it is not full of hire boats with all facilities except fuel.

SENS (km 67) Has a Port de Plaisance with all facilities.

JOIGNY (km 31) is a particularly pretty and picturesque little town. It has a hire boat base where they speak English and have fuel, water, electricity, and some spares. It might be possible to lift out the boat and it could be left here for extended periods, by arrangement.

LAROCHE-MIGENNES (km 23) has also got excellent repairs facilities at the boatyard Chantier Fluvial de Migennes.



This is the Junction with the Canal de Bourgogne.

(If you carry straight on along **the Canal Nivernaise**, you encounter:

Depths of only 1.10 metres,

Air height of 2.71 mtrs,

Beam of 5.05 mtrs

and 110 locks until **Decize**, where you would rejoin the 'fast route'. (Because of these limitations few 'cruising boats' use this canal route)

You branch off left into the Canal du Bourgogne, which has depth at 1.50mtrs and has a low bridge of 2.70mtrs at the centre of the arch.

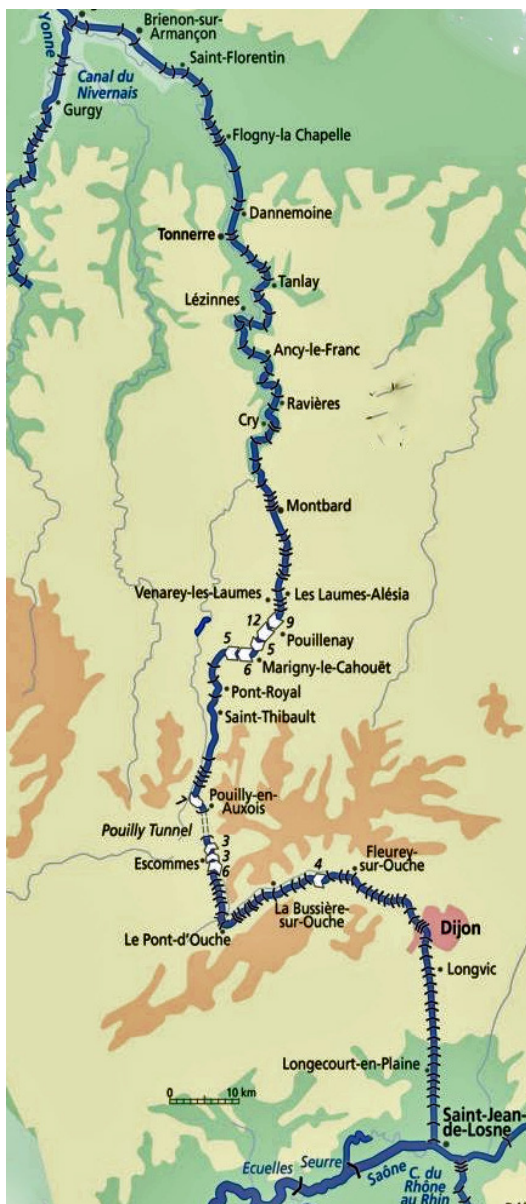
It's somewhat meandering course takes you through a quite **challenging 189 locks, mainly in long flights, over the 242 kilometres.**

For some, this canal is the high point of their passage to the Med, for others it represents very sore hands from line handling.



At the summit of the canal the 3.3K Pouilly tunnel is controlled by traffic lights.

You will pass **Dijon** (of mustard fame) and after, a very long flight down of locks, into the **River Saône**.. You will probably look back on it as the high point of your trip through France by boat.



ST FLORENTIN has a hire boat centre and all repair facilities but finding a space can be difficult in high season.

TONNERRE has a port de Plaisance with all facilities. Very nice little town.

ANCY-LE-FRANC. Has a lovely renaissance chateau and a quay to park on.

MONTBARD has a Port de Plaisance. Plenty of stopping places everywhere to

POUILLY-EN-AUXOIS which has a Port de Plaisance and a pleasant town. More interestingly, it is the summit of this canal and through the top of the hill is a tunnel of 3.3km long and a height of 3.10km. The entrance is controlled by traffic lights and is lit. The walls do slope down on either side so it is important to keep to the centre.

VANDENESSE-EN-AUXOIS has the village of Châteauneuf with its castle which is well worth a visit. Very beautiful stopping place.

DIJON Famous for its mustard is a large city with all the facilities you would expect in such a place. There is a Port de Plaisance and a hire boat base which can be useful, in case of breakdown, as they speak excellent English.

ST JEAN DE LOSNE has a mooring spot just before the last lock and just after it. It is the end of the canal section of the trip to the Mediterranean and where you **join the River Saône**.

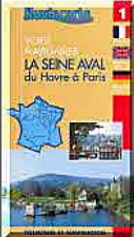
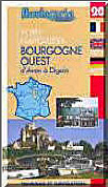
Having cleared the last lock, immediately on your left, is the very big **Marina of Joel Blanquart**. Everything is available in terms of repairs,

spares, Gardiennage (they will look after your boat whilst you return home for the winter) – main dealer for several engine manufacturers plus almost everything you need for your boat!

Marina of Joel Blanquart
11 quai du Canal de Bourgogne
21170 Saint-Usage
FRANCE
+ 33 (0) 3 80 29 11 06

<https://www.blanquart-yachting.com/fr/le-port>

A little further along on the left corner entering the Saône, is a fuel station selling reasonably priced diesel.

The following 6 Fluviacarte get you from Honfleur/Le Havre to Port St Louis in the Mediterranean	
	#1 La Seine Aval This 2010 book covers from Le Havre or Honfleur up the tidal River Seine to Paris. It contains detailed information on tidal flow and currents, the buoyed channel out of Le Havre and the ship channel up this big river estuary. 25€ Add to Cart
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For the 'Scenic' route from Le Havre/Honfleur/Rouen to the Mediterranean, you need the following

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Fluviacarte 20 Bourgogne Ouest
Fluviacarte 19 Bourgogne Est
Fluviacarte 10 La Saône
Fluviacarte 16 Le Rhône

Chapter Eight



THE RIVER SAÔNE

From St Jean de Losne to Lyon it is 170km.

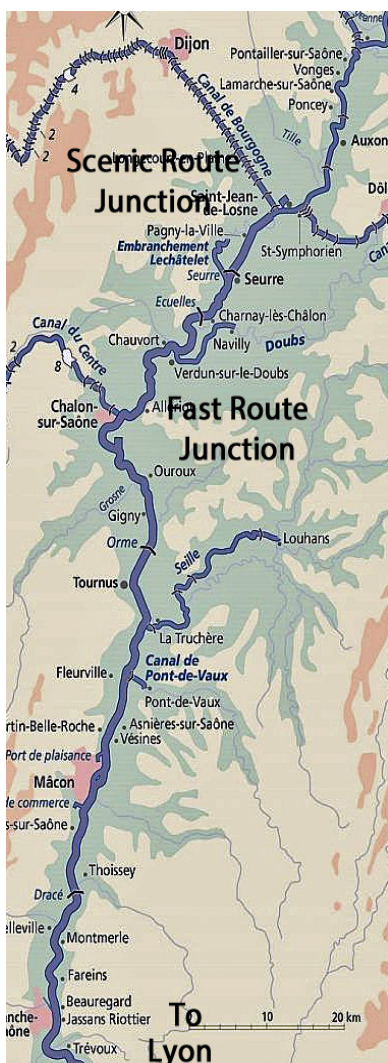
(Scenic route junctioin with Saône)

From Chalon-sur-Saône to Lyon it is 142km.

(Fast route junction with Saône)

Five big Locks

Fluviacarte 10 - La Saône – de Corre à Lyon



There are only 5 locks heading downstream to **Lyon**, where you will enter the mighty **Rhone**.

I find the **Saône** the least interesting part of the journey. Once you have got used to the very long, tree lined reaches, which mask the countryside, it all begins to feel a bit the same.

Much of the Saône has been ‘modernised’. Dredged, widened and many of the natural twists and turns have been straightened out to make the river navigable for sea going ships and giant 5,000 ton push tows.

The speed limit through the lower parts is 35km/hour and the push-tows and hotel barge-ships are all going flat out.

From here to the sea, it is obligatory to wear life jackets in all the locks. (Every member of the crew on deck) You are supposed to wear them whilst underway, but that rule is not widely enforced. The largest locks are 185 metres long – 12 metres wide with a depth of 4 metres over the sill.



Commercial traffic always has priority and will enter the lock, against the red signal, even if you are waiting outside. You will then be allowed to enter, if there is room.

If you are travelling alone, without other small boats, then the lock keeper will wait 20 minutes, to make certain no other craft turn up, before locking you. When there are a group of pleasure boats together, they will not be kept waiting. The use of the VHF, to warn the lock of your approach, is very useful, even if you can manage only basic French.

It is very tempting to ‘straighten’ out the bends – take the racing line - to cut down the distance you have to travel, particularly if there are no other boats in sight. This puts you on the ‘wrong’ side of the river and if you encounter a big push-tow, making 15 knots, coming at you, unable to stop it can be challenging.



The river becomes very wide, with long reaches boarded by trees. This makes mooring up for the night a problem, as the branches hang down into the water, making approach to the bank impossible.

In the FLUVIACARTE chart book when referring to moorings you will see reference to ‘**vertical quays**’ and ‘**inclined quays**’.

The vertical ones are no problem but the ‘inclined’ ones are impossible to moor against. They slope away, out of the river and if you pull up alongside you will end up scraping your boat against the concrete under the waterline.

Basically ‘Steps’ and ‘Inclining’ are useless for mooring so discount them when planning your next stopping place.

It is important to ‘plan’ your overnight mooring, as unlike the canals, there are many areas where it is impossible to find a mooring place.

Anchoring is sometimes possible but there is a lot of debris (trees etc) underwater. The Saône is a mixture of long boring reaches, which all look the same after a while, canalised sections that are industrial looking with wide dull pastures continuing for hours, interspaced with big locks and a few nice towns.

Others may feel differently about the *SAÔNE* of course.

THE SCENIC ROUTE ENTRANCE TO THE SAÔNE

Having refueled at St Jean de Losne, you turn right under the bridge and start your river experience.

SEURRE (km 187) there are pontoons with finger berths after the lock. Shops and restaurants close by.

VERDUN-SUR-LE-DOUBS (km167) There is a Relais Nautique and a vertical quay right in the centre of town. Just after Km 145 you will pass, on your right, the entrance to the Canal du Centre.

THE SCENIC ROUTE NOW JOINS THE FAST ROUTE.

CHALON SUR SAÔNE boat harbour. (km 142)

Town and boat harbour.

This is a place to leave the boat for an indefinite period or to simply chill out for a while.

The footbridge across to the island and then across the bridge to the town is a pleasant walk with a different view of the river. The 'island' itself has wall to wall restaurants that lay out their tables in the streets for the evening meal.

You can also moor to the quay beside the town on the main river if there is room.

MACON (km82) This is a must see stop even if you do not like wine. Just after the Port de Plaisance, which is a little way out of town, there is a stepped quay and just past that a vertical quay- if you can find a spot there, it is ideal.



PORT ARCIAT (km 73) has a vertical quay – there is a hypermarket 3km away! Water on the quay.

Warning: the Fluviacarte suggests there are many marinas between here and Lyon, but mainly they are designed for small boats – runabouts - and are not big or deep enough for the average yacht..

LYON (km 1) I think the outer approaches to Lyon are beautiful, spectacular, and as the 'island' splits the traffic, the buildings become lovely and very romantic. After the long succession of bridges you will find a



parking spot beneath the willows on the left hand side, just before the VNF offices.

There are normally quite a few boats of passage there and you can moor up anywhere there is a space.

Lyon is a lovely city with wonderful shopping facilities and a place to enjoy and take a breather, having completed 80% of your trip.

Just after the VNF offices on the left there is a fuel barge where you can top up to a full tank so you can do all the Rhone without having to stop for fuel and it is not easy to find a place fill up the diesel tank in the Rhone River,

It is worth stocking up for the next week with all provisions as there are very, very few possible stopping places in the River Rhone and it's difficult to find provisions until you get to Avignon or Arles.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RHÔNE

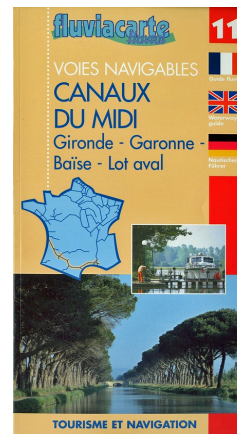
From Lyon to Port St Louis it is 312km and 12 giant locks.



FLUVIACARTE 16 – le Rhône – de Lyon à la Méditerranée.

(This Fluviacarte covers to Port St Louis/Port Napoleon)

If just before Arles you want to turn off the Rhone River route and go onto Sète, you need the Fluviacarte # 11 Canal du Midi as well.)



The current in the Rhône does not normally exceed 4 knots and most of the time is much less. It has been reported, in times of flooding, to reach 6knots, when it is dangerous for small craft.

The Mistral is a very powerful wind that blows up the river against the current, sometimes for days on end. It creates a wind over tide situation, which can produce waves that will break over the bows. It can make maneuvering in front of locks and mooring up in them very difficult.

The locks are giants compared to anything else encountered so far in France. The turbulence is however very slight and the ‘floating’ bollards make it easy to ride up and down with the water without having to adjust the warps.



All the locks are equipped with VHF on channel 20 or 22. It is worth warning the lock keeper of your arrival time if your French is up to it.

It will probably take 3 days to descend and 4 days to ascend between Lyon and Port St Louis, unless you are caught by a mistral and have to stay put for a while. It's very difficult to spend longer in the river because there is a shortage of tenable mooring places.

The following are all the places I know of in the Rhone. It is almost impossible to park elsewhere,

Most – but not all the locks - have a small boat 'waiting pontoon', frequently awkwardly placed behind the 'waiting piles' that are used by ships and barges.

I suppose if you really were 'caught out' at sunset you could moor up to one of these for the night.

You are not permitted to navigate at night.

There are some stopping places listed in Fluviacart of other places with sloping quays that I would not use in a sailing or motor boat, as there is no way I know to properly fender and protect the boat from wash.

Up to now, I have only mentioned a sample selection of overnight mooring places for each part of the trip. The following is the full list.

THE FULL LIST OF STOPPING PLACES ON THE RHONE.

Setting out from **Lyon** on the left there is the **LYON Halt Nautique** under willows near VNF office - just before 3 bridges - left bank going downstream.

Inexpensive fuel from barge, just past bridges, on same side, heading for the Rhone. Opens 08.30.

Vienne (29K from Lyon) Public Quay on L bank past 2nd Bridge

Les Roches de Condrieu (km 41) Proper Yacht Harbour - Fuel – Shops

St Valier (km 76) Quay on L bank

St Valier (km 78) Quay on L bank

Tournon (km 91) Yacht harbour and Quay. Both little depth + - 1.30Mtr.

La Roche de Glun (km 98.5) in the branch to the barrage on right side, with assorted Pontoon moorings for 6+ boats, near a sweet little village with everything. Do not moor to low pontoon as they are for sailing dinghies only.

Valance (km 110) Good Quay in town

Valance (km 112) large Port de Plaisance - fuel, travel lift, restaurant etc.

La Voulte (km 128) Quay on Right Bank

Le Pouzin (km 133) Quay on Right Bank before bridge

Montelimar (km 160) Public Quay 3k down stream from town past bridge.

Viviers (km 166) Public Quay - Port de Plaisance (shallow I think)

Derevation de Donzere (km 171- 177) straight shuttering by using stakes
it's possible to park along here.

Nr Eurodif (km 186.5) Right Bank - just into barrage branch - Not very attractive and has shuttering on low commercial wharf.

ST Etienne des Sorts (km 204) Floating pontoon for 2 boats max - possible 'dodgy' parking places just before village.

Caderousse (km 218) Good anchorage in the backwater - lots of space. I think there is a pontoon there as well?

Roquemaure (km 225) Public Quay - very exposed to mistral waves.

It's a small detour into **Avignon** and the famous bridge that has the song about dancing on the bridge - '*Sur le pont d'Avignon*'... When you see the state of the bridge you will wonder what inspired the song! The town is really pretty and interesting.

Avignon (km 241) Public and paying pontoons or quays. You have to leave the river to get there but together with the famous bridge and walled town, it is well worth the visit.

EXIT TO PETIT RHONE TO SETE



Just before **Arles** there is an exit on the right into the **Petit Rhône**. This eventually leads to Sète and the Canal du Midi.

Eventually you lock out of this pretty, little river, with its sandbanks and overhanging trees, into a big sea lock where you are raised six inches! You don't need to tie up just stay in the middle with the engine ticking over!

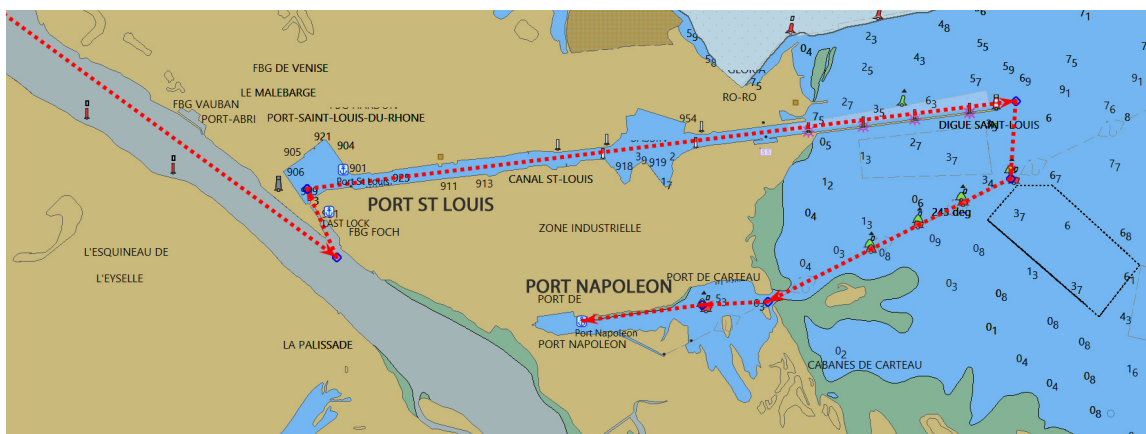
NOTE: Chapter 13 - *SÉTE TO THE RHONE* has the details of this route, for which you need FLUVIACARTE #11.

BACK TO THE RHONE RIVER ROUTE:

Arles (km 282) Pontoon mooring on Right bank.. This is the best place to leave the boat to visit Arles. A wonderful town with a coliseum that is now used for bull fights, without killing the bulls – lots of fun. You moor on the right bank where there is a pontoon then walk across the bridge in order to visit the town... Well worth the visit.

You must do the next 40 km run, in one hit, from Arles to Port St Louis, as there is nowhere to moor up in-between. If the mistral is blowing it can be really rough with wind over tide – I actually got half way down once then turned back, as I was taking it ‘green’ over the bows!

Although the canal/river runs through the wonderful Camargue countryside, you can see very little of it as much is hidden by the trees and hedge rows on either side.



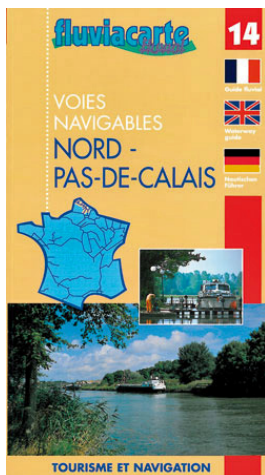
Port St Louis (km 322) At km 322 there is a final sea lock to negotiate which lets you into the big basin, which is now the marina of Port St Louis.

Or you motor through it and out into the bay then back into **Port Napoleon** where there are all facilities you could wish for, but it is actually quite a long way from anywhere. Wash the dirt off the decks, step the mast and bend on the sails – you are now in the middle of the French Mediterranean.

A good supply of mosquito repellent is required in the Camargue!

CHAPTER 10

CALAIS & ST VALERY SUR SOMME



FLUVIACARTE14 – Nord-pas-de-Calais

FLUVIACARTE 24 – Picardie

From either port, you enter the canal system and have the choice of dropping down to the Seine and passing through the centre Paris, then taking either the ‘fast’ or ‘scenic’ routes, or taking the charming ‘scenic route’ down to the Saône by using the Marne.



CALAIS

This is a very busy ferry port. You are required to obey the traffic lights system at the entrance or use VHF ch12 to contact harbour control..

Whilst there is lots of water in the main harbour as you approach the lock, in the Bassin des Chasses it shallows to 0.5 of a metre so you must work the tides.



Entrance and Exit to the marina is 1 ½ hours either side of HW and you are not allowed to anchor or wait alongside outside the Marina Bassin.

The marina shop runs the mast crane in Calais. Telephone no. 0033 (0)321960757. It is a 3ton crane to take down the mast.



Canal de Calais 30km. 1 lock. 5 automatic lifting bridges, controlled by your boat breaking a radar beam. . (If they do not work VHF ch. 10.)



This canal gets a lot of weed growth in summer, so watch the temperature gauge in case the engine overheats and you need to clean your water intake and filter. There are several mooring places along the route, where you can overnight, before turning right into the ‘barge motorway’ **Canal du Nord**.



The pace and size of everything changes abruptly. Commercial barges from the Netherlands and Belgium compete with French barges to make their deliveries as quickly as possible.

You can make a detour to **Arras**, an interesting WW1 museum town or carry on to the ‘**Ruyaulcourt Tunnel**’ (4354 metres long!) towards **Peronne** with its ‘**Historial de la Grande Guerre**’ - an excellent WW1 museum.



A tunnel of only 1058mtrs awaits, then half a dozen locks, before arriving in **Jonville** near the junction with the **Oise** which then runs through 7 big locks down to **Paris**.



It's far more gentle and much faster to head east on the Oise & Marne to the Canal Lateral à Aisne towards Berry au Bac, into the calm meandering waterways of rural France passing the cathedral city of **Reims** with its marina / Port de Plaisance and excellent shopping.

La Liaison de Grand Gabarit – at the fork go right into

Canal Du Nord – (10 locks + 1 tunnel to **Peronne**) this canal is like a motorway and goes all the way to Paris. It is used by fast heavy barges heading north and south.- you join it at:

Arleux – (km 1) where there are shops and a barge museum and famous for its garlic production.

Ruyaulcourt Tunnel – (km 25) is 4354 mtrs – 4 ½ kilometres long! There is a passing zone half way up. It is controlled by traffic lights at each end.

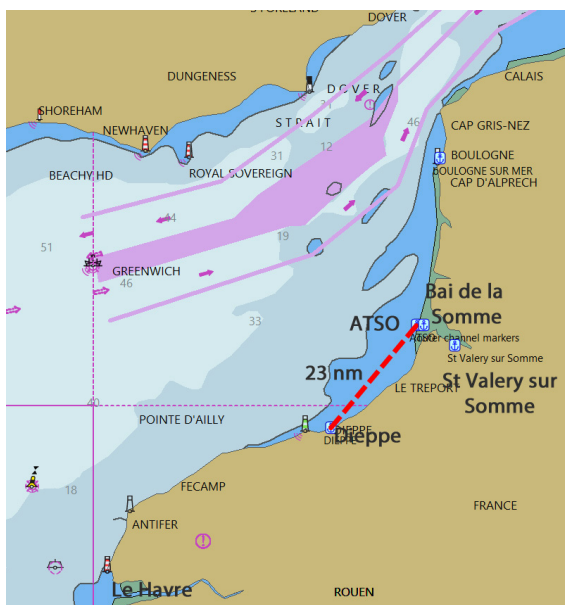
VHF ch 22 to tunnel control.

Peronne – (km 44) The Junction with the Canal de la Somme (now silted and closed) to **St Valery su Somme**

ST VALERY SUR SOMME

For this route you need

FLUVIACARTE #24 Picardie St Valery to Canal du Nord – 120km 18 locks after the sea lock.



You must work the tide correctly to cross the big Bay de Somme.

If coming from a UK port it is probably easier to go to either Boulogne and then down to Dieppe first. fuel up and wait for a convenient tide to make the relatively short trip to the North Cardinal Buoy ATSO positioned approximately at $50^{\circ} 14.5'N$ $001^{\circ} 28'E$.

From here you should be able to see the outer channel buoys (roughly $50^{\circ} 13'N$ $001^{\circ} 30.5'E$) that lead you up to the yacht club marina at St Valéry.



Allow at least 2 hours to get from the north cardinal buoy **ATSO to St Valéry sur Somme Yacht Club**

You need to be at the ATSO buoy about 2 ½ hours before local HW. Do not attempt this in strong onshore winds or indeed in bad weather.

The channel is very well buoyed and relatively easy, so long as you follow carefully, the very winding route, which changes constantly, and criss-crosses the bay.

A large number of sailboats and motorboats are moored in a harbor. The sailboats have tall masts and are mostly white with blue or red accents. The motorboats are smaller and also mostly white. The water is calm, and the sky is clear blue. In the background, there are green trees and a low wall. The foreground shows a grassy bank on the left.

Having dis-masted and ready to leave, ask the yacht club to contact the ‘Sea Lock’ which opens between 1 hour before and 1 hour after HW. This is a big

lock with sloping sides. You don't need to tie up in this lock just hold position inside and wait for the gates to close behind and those ahead to open – normally only a few minutes.



There's a mooring pontoon just beyond the lock on the right, (km156) opposite the boat yard. After the slightly unattractive long straight section, this becomes an absolutely charming, gentle and delightful canal, all the way to **Peronne**. The 2nd bridge is very low with a clearance of only 2.50mts. If you think you cannot get under it ask the lock keeper to open it.



Abbeville. (km 141) has an excellent little quayside mooring place under the trees with water and electricity. A supermarket is 30 metres away with a fuel facility – closer than the one at St Valery!

Pont Remy 23 Lock (km131) There are some very strong currents around this lock entrance and it is better to wait well back then use quite a lot of power to get in so the cross currents affect you for less time.

Amiens (km 94) Several overnight stopping places on banks and a little port. Junction with Canal du Nord (km 37) you go under the bridge and straight ahead for two kilometres towards:-

PERONNE (km 49- new numbering system)

This is where **the Calais** and **St Valerie Sur Somme** routes combine.

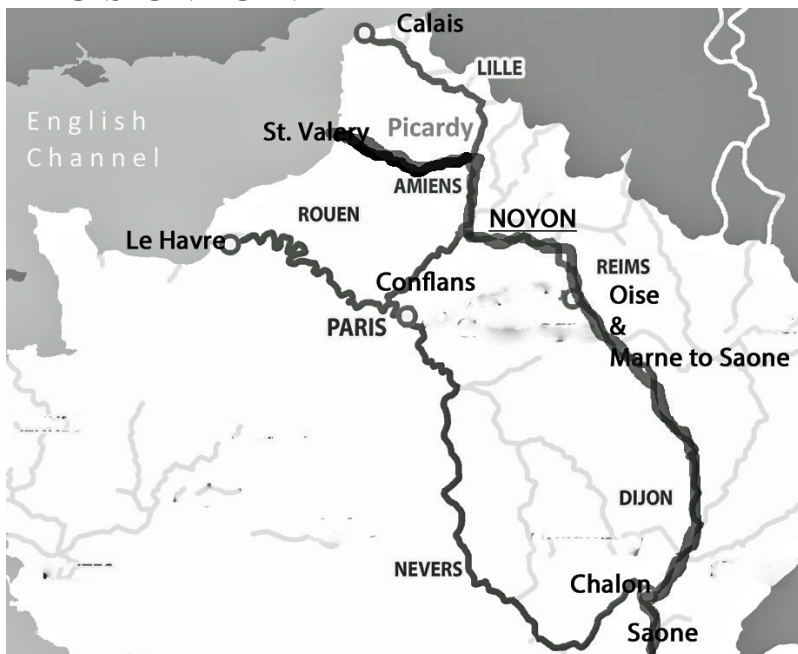
There is a choice of a marina type port in the cut and just past that, on the right, is a long concrete wall with a few mooring rings on it. High-speed barges thunder by!

Junction:- continuation of the Canal de la Somme (km 65) This canal is now closed – buoys strung across it and it has silted up in parts.

Tunnel 1.058 kilometres long. (km 78) traffic lights control entry and it is well lit.

Noyon km 93. Moorings and a major barge harbour on junction with **l'Oise**.

THIS IS A DECISION POINT



Continue southwest – straight on to the **Canal Latéral** (80km 2 locks) which becomes the **l'Oise** (99km 7 locks) again and flows all the way to **Conflans**, just outside **Paris** where you join the route in chapter 5 through Paris and into the main canal system.

OR

Via the **Oise and Marne to the Saône** by turning left off this busy waterway into the **l'Oise** and head down some charming canals to the Marne and eventually join the **Saône** and the down to the **Rhone**. (561 Kilometres Locks 164 to the Saône)

Via the Oise and Marne to the Saône



In addition to the FLUVIACARTE 24 Picardie which got you to Noyons you will need:-

FLUVIACARTE 8 – Champagne–Ardenne.

Noyon to Abbécourt = 15km 3 locks

Abbécourt to Bourg et Comin = 48km 13 locks

Bourg et Comin to Berry-au-Bec 20km 1lock

Berry-au-Bec to Condé sur Marne 58km 24 locks

Condé sur Marne to Vitry-le-Francois 58km 10 locks

Route Notes:

Noyon to Abbécourt = 15km 3 locks and is a rather industrial little canal. It is a relief when you hang a right at Abbécourt into the lock from where it is all absolutely charming.

It is worth noting that if you go on past the lock to **Chauny**, you will find a Hire Boat base, where you could leave a boat for a while with spares and fuel nearby, as well as other moorings and shopping facilities.

Abbécourt to Bourg et Comin = 48km 13 locks.

Anizy-le-Chateau km25 is a useful stop on the right by a bridge. Supermarket and fuel just behind the building.

Braye tunnel km 40 is a 2.365 kilometre long tunnel controlled by traffic lights and well lit.

Bourg et Comin to Berry-au-Bec 20km 1 lock

You join the **Canal de l'Oise a l'Aisne** going to the left until you arrive at **Berry** where you enter a lock and as soon as you exit you turn right into the next lock (rather than go straight ahead and you change onto:- FLUVIACARTES to number 8 - Champagne – Ardenne.

Berry-au-Bec to Condé sur Marne - 58km 24 locks

Come out of the lock at km19 and turn left heading south.. There are numerous stopping places along the route until you enter the suburbs of **Reims**.

Port Colbert - Km21 has a possible fuelling point.

Reims - km23. This is a big city with a Port de Plaisance on the left which is remarkably inexpensive but situated by a flyover. It has all facilities except fuel, which is a long way off. Good shopping close by. Good showers and a secure place to leave the boat for an extended period.

Mont-de-Billy Tunnel km 46 Another tunnel out in the country controlled by traffic lights and 2.302 kilometres long and well lit.



It is actually quite narrow as it has a 'path' running down one side of it. – control telephone no: 03 26 03 90 28.

Most of the locks and control points seem to use the telephone rather than VHS perhaps because hilly nature of the terrain makes VHS difficult.

Condé sur Marne 58km this is the Junction with the Canal Lateral du Marne – turn left when you reach the junction.

Condé sur Marne to Vitry 48km 63 locks (km 48)

Chalons-en-Champagne 32km. You can park just upstream lock no 9 which is the 'control' lock for the next flight. There is also a commercial port, in the branch under the bridge, where you are 'tolerated' – allowed to go, if you can find room.

Vitry le Francois 1 km has excellent facilities on the Port de Plaisance Quay and a big boatyard where they 'convert' barges.

(If you decided to buy a barge and have it converted to your own design then this is the place to bring it.)

The canal becomes very narrow as you leave lock no 1. This is because of all the barges parked up on either side of the boatyard.

You **fork left to the T junction** and then turn right under the bridge. The Port de Plaisance is straight ahead or you swing round to the left to

Vitry to the Saône 224km – 114 locks



There are several 'flights of locks' on this canal and you are accompanied through the flight by a lock keeper (normally a university student making money during the holidays).

It is essential to keep to the agreed time of departure in the mornings – a lock keeper may travel a considerable distance to meet up with you.

If you intend stopping early then you should let the lock keeper know so that they can report back to 'control'.



If you mess them about you may find considerable 'delays' before you can be slotted back into the system!

The lock keepers stop for lunch and so will you - normally one hour or slightly more if the lock keepers have a long way to travel to their base for lunch.

Vitry km 1

Saint-Dizier km 28 Port de Plaisance, fuel and all facilities – a somewhat industrial town. There are lots of stopping places for the night along this canal which is pleasant and meandering. The VNF have built several mooring places with straight sides, mooring bollards, water, electricity and rubbish bins.

Conde km 106 has an interesting bridge which is controlled by 'radar' and opens automatically for you.

Chaumont km 110 has a 'port de Plaisance' on the left with good facilities except fuel. Just before it at km 109 lock 25

Ralencourt, there is a supermarket complex with fuel. If you can park up in the area of the lock it is a 5 minute walk. If you wait till you get to the Port de Plaisance it is a long way!!]

If you spend the night in the Port de Plaisance then the lady in charge will take note of your intended departure time and inform the 'lock keepers' so there is a lock keeper to travel with you on their moped.

Batilles km 155 is a very long tunnel – almost 5 kilometers long. Simply because of the length there can be a considerable wait. It is controlled by traffic lights and well lit.

Maxilly-sur-Saône km 224 is the junction with the **River Saône**. You have completed the canal part of your voyage.

As you turn right there is a big Saône River lock just ahead. The little locks and narrow canals are a thing of the past!



You join the Saône at km254 – finding mooring places for the night is not as easy as the canals.

Change to

FLUVIACARTE 10 – La Saône et la Seille

Lamarche-sur-Saône km 245 – mooring under the bridge – nice restaurant

Auxonne km 234 There is a straight quay just before the bridge and a stepped quay which is no good for yachts just after the bridge.



SAINT-JEAN-de-LOSNE. km 215 on the right corner with the Junction with the Canal de Bourgogne. is a fuel berth selling reasonably priced diesel. If you turn towards the entrance to the Canal de Bourgogne on your right is the very big Port-Marina of Joel Blanquart. Everything is available in terms

of repairs, spares, gardinage – main dealer for several engine manufacturers plus what ever.

Another place to leave the boat for a considerable length of time.

You have now completed the The Calais or St Valery sur Somme route. From St-Jean-de-Losene, you connect with the ‘Fast Routes’ to continue own the Saône and Rhone to the Mediterranean. (Chapter 8)

Chapter Eleven

FROM NOYANS TO PARIS

– (If you came from Calais or St Valery) -

From the decision point in **chapter 10** you continue south-west – straight on to the:

Canal Latéral (80km 2 locks) which becomes the l'Oise (99km 7 locks again and flows all the way to **Conflans**, just outside Paris and join the fast route - **Chapter 5**.

THIS IS A BUSY & IMPORTANT BARGE ROUTE.

Noyon km 93. Moorings and a major barge harbour on junction with l'Oise. Instead of turning off to the left into the l'Oise carry straight on ahead.

Longuiel Annel km33 There is fuel available on the left bank as well as repairs and breakdown service, shops etc.

Junction with l'Aisne canal km 99 – an alternative route to Reims.

Margy-les-Compiègne km 97 This is the first proper Port de Plaisance on the left as you head down to Paris. – Showers, electricity, water, rubbish bins. A little further down in the town is a **Fuel Depot** where you can fill up. This is a very historical town and worth a visit – the Kings and Queens of France came here to 'relax' – it also has good shops.

Plle de Verneuil-en-Halatte km 62. Good mooring on left bank just after the bridge with water available.

Creil km 59. good mooring on right bank just before the bridge.

Noisy-sur-Oise km 39 there are two purpose built mooring places in the little backwater – the charted depth is 1 metre and I would not risk it and would go onto

Persan-Beaumont km 35 and moor up in the 'Harbour Area' just before the town bridge if there is a space amongst the barges.

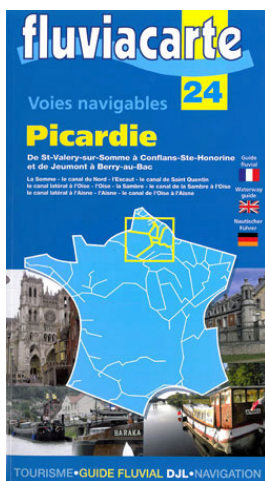
Parmin km 28 just after lock L'Isle-Adam, there is an island with bridges joining it and immediately on the left there is mooring place with water etc and not far from the shops. A little further on is pontoon only to be used by passenger barges.

Pantoise km 12 which is after the town there is a 'base nautic' with all facilities on the left hand side. Certainly petrol is available there and possibly diesel? Just round the bend is a 'bassin de vitesse', which means small motor boats may be driven

around at very high speeds, sometimes towing water skiers!

Pille de Cergy km 9 on the right has a little boat harbour that boasts showers, water, rubbish bins, washing machine etc.

Conflans-St-Honarine km1 is the major barge centre where they wait to pick up loads and to generally congregate. It may be possible to get fuel here but they are more used to selling it by the ton rather than the litre!



More importantly, you join the **River Seine** just north of **Paris** and are ready to explore this wonderful city.

Chapter 5 for details and the route though Paris onto the Fast Routes to the Mediterranean.

All the above route is in FLUVIACARTE 24 – Picardie

Chapter Twelve

THE CANAL DU MIDI.

The route between the Atlantic coast of France and the Mediterranean



From Bordeaux to Sete 503km 139 locks

FLUVIACARTE G004 & G005

Dimensions:

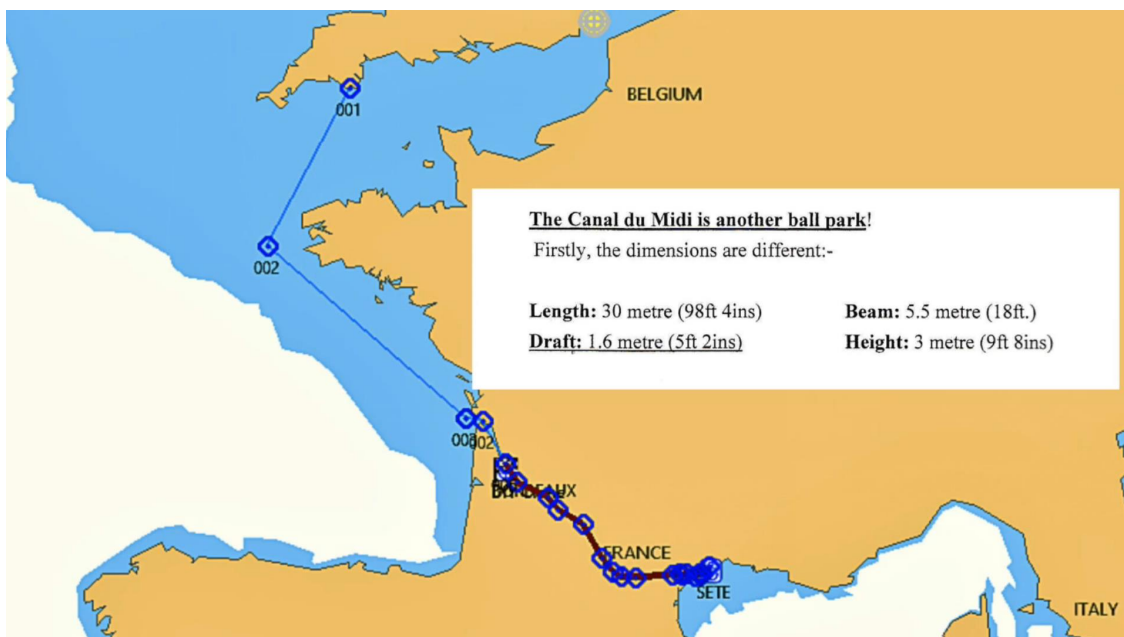
Length 30 metres (98ft.4ins)

Beam 5.5 metres (18ft)

Draft 1.6 metres (5ft 2ins)

Air Height: 3.30 metres, in the

middle of arched bridges, but **only 2.40 metres** at **2.5mtrs** either side of the centre line.





The Canal du Midi with its 503km and 139 locks from Bordeaux to Sète, on the Mediterranean, is the most delightful way to cut the corner off the long sea route.

Having made your way to **La Rochelle** on the west coast of France, you need to travel the next 50 miles down to the Gironde river entrance in one go.

A serious amount of water flows out of the estuary, so you need to carry the tide to **Royan Marina** and then to the waiting pontoon outside **Bordeaux docks**. There are some stopping places in the Gironde River but they all dry at low water.

Use the tide for the next leg of around 58Km up the Gironde river to the sea lock of **Castetes 53** and into the **Canal Latéral à la Gironde** which leads to the real Canal du Midi.

Buying fuel at hire boat centers is very expensive but often there are few other options.

The draft of 1.6 metres (5ft 2ins) is normally the reason boats cannot use the Canal du Midi. In some places it was blasted out of rock so if you run aground then you will not be pushing mud rather stuck solid!

You should also bear in mind that in mid summer, during a drought, the VNF may not be able to hold this level because the canal is fed from a series of purpose built reservoirs.

If they are low then there is no way to replenish them until it rains! If you get stuck, the only solution is to hire a crane and a lorry and have the boat lifted out and deliver by road.



Another limiting factor for some boats, is that the bridges are oval shaped, and although there is the stated height in the middle, **it can come as low as 2ft at the sides.** Having said all that, it is the most beautiful canal, perhaps in the whole of France.

There is virtually no commercial traffic except for Hotel and site seeing barges but there are 3-400 self drive hire boats operating, so many 'Port Plaisance' are full with them. There are however, lots of other parking places and the canal is maintained with a view to encouraging the tourist trade.



Entrance to the Canal du Midi Is beyond Bordeaux up the Gironde.

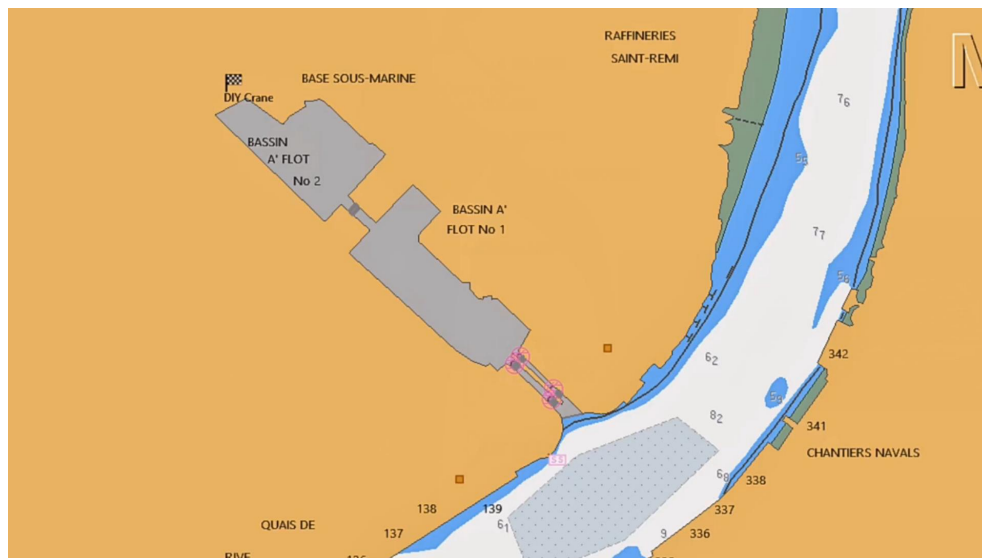
FLUVIACARTE #5 has a good chart of the river from Royan all the way to Bordeaux and into the canal system at **CASTETES-EN-DORTHE** and then onwards to the junction with the Canal du Midi where **LUVIACARTE #4** takes over.

The Gironde is a big fast flowing river at the mouth of which are a large area of sand banks and a relatively narrow channel that is well buoyed.

You need proper charts for the approach because of the shallows and sand bars. Do not cut across the approach, even though the chart show enough depth, as it can be very lumpy. Big holes in the sea!

Royan situated just inside the estuary has all the facilities you would expect of a major town including fuel and a crane so the mast could come down here. This is the place to wait for low water and take the flood all the way to **Bordeaux..**

Alternatively stop at **Paulliac**, which is a popular and efficient place to move the mast. There is a fixed crane that pulls and sets many masts each season but you need to enter at least after half tide as it is shallow alternatively wait till you get into Bordeaux to ‘pull’ the mast.



There is a waiting pontoon outside the ‘**Bassin a Flot**’ where you enter, via the lock, + or -1 hour either side of high water.

Proceed into the marina (**2nd basin**) and there is a DIY crane, at the far end, you can use for about €50 a half day – you get the key from the chandlers

just beyond the crane. There is also a supermarket just across the road from the crane and useful chandlers etc.

Even after Bordeaux, the Gironde is still a big fast flowing river, , with a lot of debris floating around

From either **Pauillac** or **Bordeaux** you must carry the tide up to the lock gate at:

CASTETES-EN-DORTHE where you actually leave the Gironde, via a big double lock, into the canal system.

There are a couple of possible stopping places at **Langoiran** (km49) and more likely at **Cadillac** (km36).

Personally I prefer to do the section in one go, arriving at the big double lock of **Castetes 53** on the tide and ready to lock in. If you are early, there is a good floating waiting pontoon just before the lock.

Immediately after **Castetes 53** there is small lock **Gares 52** after which there is private Port de Plaisance with a bar and restaurant, where you can relax and prepare for the gentler part of the delightful trip down to the Mediterranean.

The first part of the trip is on Le Canal Latéral á la Gironde Le Canal Latéral á la Garonne to Toulouse and the junction with the Canal du Midi at Toulouse, is 193 kilometres and 49 locks.



The locks are all automatic – self-service and work by twisting the hanging pole as you approach to make the lock fill/empty and the gates open for you. On the green light, you enter, moor up and operate the switches on the side of the abandoned control hut. When the water level has changed and the gates open leave fairly promptly as they are on a timer.

Although there are many proper mooring quays or Port de Plaisance, there are also lots of areas where you can just moor up to the canal bank.

At all the hire boat centres – Crown Blue Line, Emeraude Navigation, Aquitaine, Locoboat etc. you should be able to buy fuel. The only problem is that they sell it to you and to their customers, at a premium price, sometimes as much as 30% above the price from a service station. Their private ‘marinas’ may not be quite the place you want to spend the night. Not cheap either!

The ‘Port de Plaisance’ or ‘Halt’, that have been established by small villages or towns by their Syndicate d’Initiative are mainly free, except for electricity and water.

Ferme de la Falotte (km 146) 17th century farm restoration (km 146) free mooring – pay to visit farm, water, restaurants etc.

Sérignac-sur-Garonne (km 119) Little village and you can jerry jug fuel from its service station.

Agen (108 km) Major town with a couple of places to park. Quite interesting ‘flight of locks’ leading to a big aqueduct which is one way and controlled by lights. Views from the aqueduct are impressive.



Valance-d’Agen (km 81) Free Syndicate Initiative mooring with pontoons. Water and electricity. Pretty little town up the hill with a small supermarket and big outdoor market.

Castelsarrasin (km56) Has a little boat yard for repairs with a 24 ton crane and all facilities except fuel (jerry jug from garage)

Montech (km43) there is a Halte Nautique with everything except fuel. Just after the lock there is a canal to the left which goes up to Montauban. To Toulouse and the C du M carry straight on.

Grisolles (km 27) fairly ordinary little village but with a couple of good moorings.

From here on as you approach **Toulouse**, the area becomes more and more industrial and the graffiti approaches the concept of art! You pass extensive railway sidings, factory areas and at (km 0) you arrive in a big basin – pretty shallow and hang a sharp left into the **Canal du Midi** at Km 1.

None of this area from **Saint-Jory** (km 15) to perhaps **Port St Sauveur** (km6) is where you would want to spend the night. Very industrial and run down but the graffiti is amazing!

Locking through the middle of the city of **Toulouse** is a scenic business. The locks are controlled by lock keepers and the traffic lights, (with hanging sticks) are some distance and out of site of the locks.

They must be obeyed despite some long waits. The canal now becomes pretty narrow and canalised!

Interesting experience being in the middle of a major city in a boat.

As you come out of Toulouse, you enter the world of barges. Mainly converted to homes, they are parked up all the way to a big barge boat yard at

Ramonville-St-Agne (km 11) and just a little further south at

Port-Sud (km12) the Port de Plaisance de Ramonville-St-Agne, which has everything including fuel. This is still all quite industrialised.

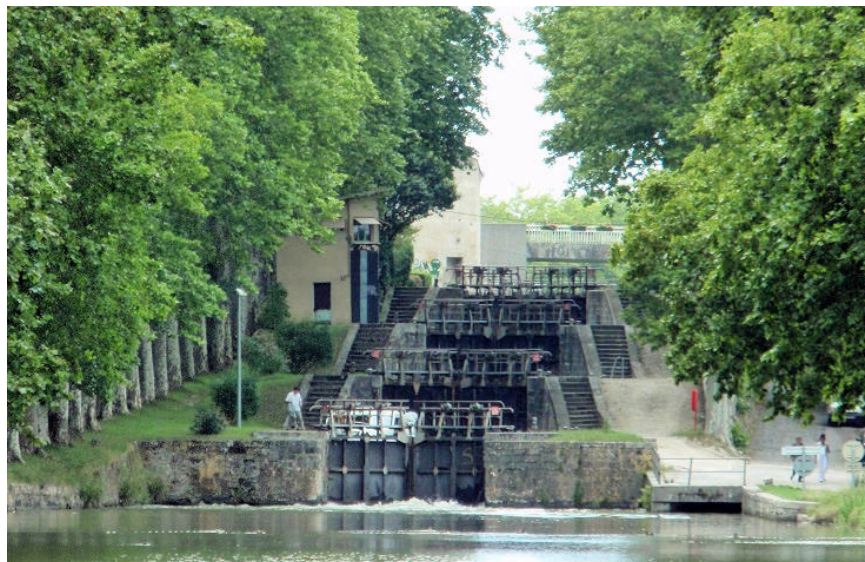
Castanet (km 15) there is quite a pleasant ‘halt’ here and the lock is the first of the oval locks you will encounter from here to the Mediterranean. You are now out of the sprawling suburbs of Toulouse.

Montferrand (km 50) There is a proper Port de Plaisance here with everything except fuel. Nice village on the other side of the canal from the Port.

SUMMIT km 46 to km 56 after this the Canal du Midi starts it's scenic descent to the Mediterranean.



Castlendaudary (km65) having passed some beautiful Châteaux and in delightful tree lined canal reaches you pass under 3 bridges with some pretty tight turns into the 'lake' basin. There is a fuel station on the far side. Park up along side the 'door' ring the bell, and a few minutes, 'the man' will come down from the service station on the road above and use his long hose to fill your fuel tank



The next flight of 4 locks controlled by a lock keeper are very impressive.

The skill of the lockkeeper in 'moving' groups of boats up and down through the flight at the same time with new 'fleets' joining at top and bottom every time is amazing. Worth trying on well as a lot of water runs through this flight.

Carcassonne (km105) A beautiful and historic town with a problem.

It has become a sort of rendezvous place for people who are SDF - *Sans Domicile Fixe*, No fixed abode, who are mainly young people 'travelling' under the generous French social security rules.

They frequently have dogs with them (or occasionally other pets) which are not allowed in 'homeless dormitories' so they become entitled to a financial hand out in order to find their own accommodation.

There is a double problem – a lot of dog 'merde' everywhere, to the extent the Mayor has designated some streets in Carcassonne, 'dog free'.

It is not a place to leave your boat for very long.. There is a good spot after the basin and the lock in the town centre, before the railway bridge, but you have to be lucky to find a vacant berth. After that – you must make up your own mind. Once you are clear of the flight of locks at km109 there is no problem.

Port la Robine (km168) This is the junction with another canal that goes down to the sea at Port la Nouvelle. It has a maximum draft of 1.60 metres. There is a part of it that goes under some houses in Narbonne with a maximum air height of 3 metres. There is then another bridge which only has 1.85mtr but will open on demand. You have to use part of the River Aude which has rocks and sand banks.

Depths below Narbonne, towards Port la Nouvelle, may be as low as 1.20mtrs. Check with lock keepers.

Capestang (km 188) fuel available at the little port here and the bridge is particularly narrow.

Colombiers (km201) Is a port de Plaisance with all facilities including fuel in the small basin. The canal in this area is just lovely. The best restaurant in the port, overlooking the basin, gave me a major attack of diarrhoea, which put me out of action for a day!

Beziers (km 208) is famous for wine and for rugby. It also has a flight of 7 locks which operate on a one way basis.

Downstream 08.00-09.30 & 13.30–15.30

Upstream 10.00-11.45 & 16.00-18.45.

A lot of Beziers is quite industrial.



Agde & the round lock (km232) The famous '*écluse ronde de Agde*' is quite interesting and a little challenging to park in – because it is round with 3 exits. There is an exit out to the sea at Le Grau d'Agde by taking the River l'Hérault. Check with the lock keeper for water levels if you choose this route.

There is a boat yard with a crane near the mouth of the river so it may be possible to step the mast there and if not in Cap D'Agde, the big yacht marina is only 4km up the coast.

Most boats will continue on down the Canal du Midi towards **Sete**.

Marseillan (km 240) This is the Mediterranean base of the famous Brittany Sailing school Glénans. There is said to be a crane for raising or lowering masts but if they are busy I am not sure how interested they would be. Most people wait to get to Sète.

SÉTE

Entrance to SÉTE

There is a railway bridge then a road bridge just inside the two breakwaters. The air height of the railway bridge is 2.20 metres so you will probably have to wait until it opens.



SNCF RAILWAY BRIDGE OPENING TIMES

Du Lundi au Vendredi : Monday to Friday

Le matin : 10:15 Morning

Le soir : 19:30 Evening

If you miss the last bridge, do not be broken hearted.

You can moor up for the night Free Of Charge, on the breakwater to port as you approach – where the boats are in the picture.

The unprepossessing café on corner nearest to the big railway bridge becomes a place of magic in the evening.

Tables appear in the street and on the canal bank beside the water.

French people, in cars, come from miles around to sample the most delicious and most inexpensive fresh seafood I have ever found! You order lots of tiny little portions for €2 or €3 each, a bottle of fine local wine and some water and ... well its worth staying outside for the night just for the meal!

Once the Rail Bridge opens head down to the Vieux Port – straight ahead and park up.

The marina has a crane and operator which you book via the office and they who can put the mast up and you can leave your wood supports – car tyres fenders and all the canal stuff you no longer need, beside the crane for the next boat coming in from the sea heading for the canals.



The marina has all the facilities needed for a yacht including fuel, travel lift, mechanics etc and has good access to the town

The canals around the town are very crowded with lots of liveaboards because it is such a relatively inexpensive and nice place.

A town to be enjoyed before setting out into the Mediterranean Sea



Chapter Thirteen

SÈTE TO THE RHONE



FLUVIACARTE G004 canal du midi.

This route assumes you want to return to the English Channel via the conventional routes of the Rhone and Saône rather than the Canal du Midi and is an alternative to going into the Rhone via Port Napoleon/Port St Louis.

When you arrive at Sète from the sea, make your way to the marina where they have a crane and can take your mast down.

If you are lucky, you will find spare tyre fenders and wood to make crutches for the mast and maybe even a plank left by the last boat.

You need to get out of Sète via the big railway bridge which opens twice a day but confirm locally as opening times do frequently change.

10:15 Morning

19:30 Evening

Having gone through the bridge you enter the Etang du Thau, hang a right and follow the marked channel up to the entrance to the

CANAL DU SÈTE A RHÔNE. (Km 97)



This runs through an industrial estate and is pretty ugly and even worse when you get to **Frontignan** there is an even lower railway bridge that opens 8h30, 13h, 19h

For goodness sake, check the above times locally, for both bridges, as they seem to change the schedule quite frequently!

Frontignan (km 92) is a sort of OK little town but the shops are far from the bridge. Good mooring available on either side of the bridge.

You then cross the **Etang de Prévost in a canal**. There are ‘drain’ gaps from the canalised sides into the Etang de Prévost and when it’s windy some pretty strong currents run in and out.

Palavas-les-flots (km 75) is a crossroads junction with a branch canal that goes down to the marina and the sea. Catch 22 is a bridge with only 2.20mtrs / 2.65 mtrs.

There is a ‘**halte nautique**’ just before the bridge, and traffic lights control the entry into this ‘spur’.

The other side of the cross roads has a branch that goes up to Montpellier.

Go straight ahead to the **Petite Rhone**.

Carnon (km 70) Hire boat base with fuel just past the town.

Aigues-Mortes (km 53) You have the choice of bypassing Aigues-Morte or taking a dogleg through the town – the main mooring place has a depth 1.3 to 2 mtrs.

Gallician (km 39) Mooring on finger pontoons with water and electricity normally full of hire boats – long walk to town centre. Less crowded after the bridge where there are livaboards and ‘travelling’ boats.

Canal Junction (km 29). Fork right into the lock cut for the écluse de Saint-Gilles and the Petite Rhone river. It is better to wait until you have a full day to make it to Arles or beyond as it is difficult to moor up in the Petite Rhone because of over hanging trees and sand banks. The water can drop during the night and leave you stranded!

Écluse de Saint-Gilles (km 299) is a huge great sea lock 12mtrs x 195 mtrs. Moor up near the control hut so the lock keeper can take your particulars and the lock raises or lowers you a good **6 inches** unless the river is in flood!

When the lights go green, out into the Petite Rhone turning left.

21 km to Arles The charted depth is 2.20mtrs (air height 4.70mtrs) and you need to keep to the centre of the dredged channel between the buoys or posts. It shallows off steeply closer to the marks.

Fourques & junction with Rhone (km280) As you exit into the mighty Rhone you have the choice of turning right – down stream towards **Arles** and mooring up on the right bank to the pontoons for the night, visiting this lovely city, or going left to **Avignon** (km 241) .

See chapter 9 for list of parking places, which are few and far between on the Rhone!

Do not forget you are now going upstream and the river can reach 4 knots although generally is less than this.

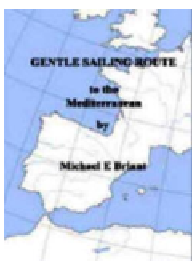


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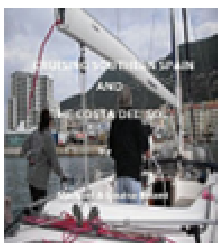


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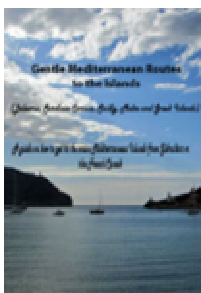
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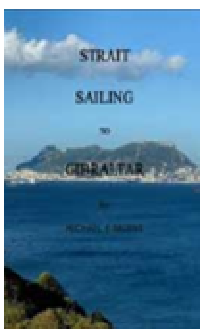
[Caribbean Islands Cruising Guides](#)

There are so many Islands in the Caribbean and so much great sailing to be had together with anchorages and marinas



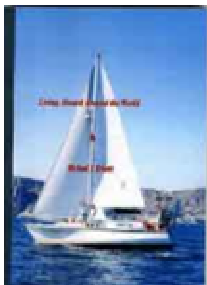
[Easy Navigation](#)

You do need to know some basic navigation methods even if you use the very best electronic equipment – even how to operate that gear!



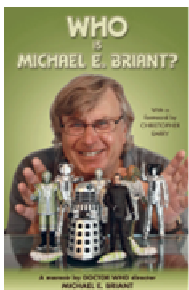
[Strait Sailing to Gibraltar](#)

The final challenge is to get through this tidal gate into the Mediterranean Sea from the Atlantic Ocean.



[Living Aboard Around the World](#)

I lived in my boat for years all round the world and these are my thoughts and opinions on the best or at least one of the ways to do it!



[Who is Michael Briant - Autobiography](#)

My theatrical career from child actor to Dr Who telly director and onto Secret Army and A Tale of Two Cities. Then sailing a 36ft boat around the world and being attacked and robbed by pirates in the Gulf of Aden

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