




Motorbike Trip Along the Burgundy Canal

Leaving from : Nogent-sur-Seine (10) - Distance : 444 km

Joy of driving 

Tourist attractions   

Ease for two  

To many people, Champagne and Burgundy stand for delicious food and wine. But don't forget the gently rolling hills, verdant valleys and beautiful buildings. This is a tranquil trip along wonderful, rarely-used roads, accompanied by the lazy waters of the Burgundy Canal.

Nogent-sur-Seine > Montbard

Two elves with pointed ears spit water into two pools. Perched on the embankment, a cat watches the road. He doesn't see the little mouse behind him on the plinth of the fountain. They are made of stones, just like the elves, sculpted in 2003 by Varangin. The cat watches the St-Laurent-de-Nogent main road. Slightly further on you will find the Seine flowing, and see the two enormous, smoking chimneys of the nuclear power plant. This contrasts with the half-timbered houses, survivors of an ancient past.

Take a little detour to the right to **Avant-lès-Marcilly**: the church and cemetery are enclosed by large stones, the rotten teeth of a giant that has disappeared; these even predate the Gauls.



Passing Marcilly on the way to St-Florentin you'll come across the hills – the wheat tells the forest to 'budge up!' and the forest replies: 'not a chance!'. With aromas of earth and scents of mushroom, this battle continues as far as Chailley. During the week, you'll be riding through clouds of roast chicken: the Duc factory, which you pass on leaving the village, endlessly plucks and cooks poultry.

The road suddenly climbs, turns, veers round and plummets, and you find yourself in St-Florentin. Head on down to the Place des Fontaines: three dragons are spitting water, Eve is naked, Adam is biting an apple, snails crawl about, and nearby, behind the windows of the estate agency, an incredible collection of owls count the drops!



As your motorbike hurtles down the main road, head left towards Troyes and then on to Marcilly-le-Hayer. There's a dive underneath the motorway and the wheat fields of the Champagne region stretch out before you, nothing particularly intoxicating.



Sightseeings

Dubois-Boucher Museum

rue du Gué de la Loge
10400 Nogent-sur-Seine
T 03 25 39 71 79

www.musee-nogent-sur-seine.fr

Dedicated particularly to the work of Alfred Boucher and Camille Claudel, as well as sculpture of the 3rd Republic. Entry €3.20. Open Wed-Sun 2pm-6pm.



Megalith trail

Dolmens, menhirs and polishing blocs can be seen at Saint-Aubin, Avant-les-Marcilly, Marcilly-le-Hayer, Bercenay-le-Hayer and Soligny-les-Etangs. For more information call T 03 25 39 42 07 (tourist office).

Grande Forge de Buffon

21500 Buffon - T 03 80 92 10 35

www.grandeforgedebuffon.com. Entry €6. From 1st April to All Saints Day. Closed Tues outside high season. 10am-12pm and 2.30pm (2pm in summer) - 6pm.

Ancy-le-Franc Castle

89160 Ancy-le-Franc - T 03 86 75 14 63

www.chateau-ancy.com. Entry €9. March-November. Closed Mon except public holidays. Guided tours at 10.30am, 11.30am, 2pm, 3pm, 4pm (and 5pm from April to the end of September).

From St-Florentin to **Tonnerre** is 27km along a big road speeding through the Armançon valley, and suddenly, accompanied by large trees, the Burgundy canal appears running along the embankment. With the smell of the water and the reflection of the branches on the surface, everything becomes calm. You arrive at Tonnerre, where Margaret of Burgundy built a hospital as beautiful as cathedral and where the Fosse Dionne, set in a courtyard, offered its waters to Roman soldiers. In the evening it is illuminated by spotlights, and its green waters become a jewel at the heart of the town.

Woods, fields, little traffic: the motorway swallows up the lorries and people in a hurry. Sometimes the canal shows its face, sometimes it disappears again.



Ancy-le-Franc offers a magnificently decorated chateau, and 10km further on **Nuits** has a very small example. Everything sumptuous has been taken by thieves, leaving only the very pretty, so you feel if you really are in someone's house. Heading down towards the chapel, don't miss the little carved devil on the doorway which chases the wicked away. As you leave, take the first left heading towards the stadium. You'll like the monument at the entrance: a wooden egg, as high as your bike, and a stone leg. But it isn't just waiting to be someone's false leg – the egg is a rugby ball and the leg, when it finds the rest of its body, will kick it!



The canal is back and sticks to the path, making everything magical again. The sign says 'Grande Forge de Buffon'. Cross the water for a little industrial tourism: in 1768, Mr. Buffon built a factory to produce iron bars. When he wasn't writing his *Histoire Naturelle* he would invite his friends to admire the flow of molten metal in the blast furnace building. These gentlemen with their wigs would stand on a double curved staircase worthy of an opera house and watch whilst 300 workers slaved away in the furnace, the Armançon river turned the paddle wheels and the machines hammered and sheared in an infernal racket.

Montbard > Pont-de-Pany

Buffon wrote his work in the huge tower overlooking **Montbard**. Heavy motorbikes should expect plenty of hill starts: the old town is on a steep slope with lots of hairpin bends. After 20 minutes of large road and a roundabout you'll come across Semur-en-Auxois, as steep and cobbled as Montbard and with magnificent walls. Cross the bridge and follow the little road to the right which runs alongside the ramparts, just for the fun of it.



A dam now stops the Armançon river in its tracks near Pont-et-Massène, 3.5km from Semur. This produced the Lac de Pont, long and undulating between hills green with forest. In summer you can swim, ski, row and camp here. The nearby Hôtel du Lac was the perfect backdrop for an Agatha Christie novel. Rejoin the road towards Pouilly-en-Auxois, and the canal soon does the same. Make a quick getaway to the left for **St-Thibault**, a pretty village containing an enormous abbey church. The carved porch alone is worth the detour: to its right, push the door and discover a nave which soars in the light and a chancel as finely crafted as a dream. If this makes you want to head up into the skies, then the nearby France Montgolfières balloon company can help.

At Pouilly-en-Auxois, the canal enters a 3.3km tunnel to pass from the Seine basin into the Rhône one. Stay on the surface and you will arrive at Sainte-Sabine. The church looks like a praying mantis wearing a pointed hat and the château is a hotel and restaurant. The countryside becomes lush, and you arrive at **Bligny**. This is the starting point for the Ouche valley, one of the high points of this trip. A tranquil road winds alongside the canal, everything is delightfully green and the riverside residents are furious: on weekends packs of motorcyclists race far too fast down here, making an infernal racket. Drive peacefully and stop off at the **Jardins de Barbirey**: a terraced orchard, a vegetable garden arranged in squares and a scene with trees, a pond, a river and flowers where everything seems natural, all designed two centuries ago.



Pont-de-Pany > Nogent-sur-Seine

Head from Nogent towards Pont-de-Pany, passing Prâlon, Blaisy-Blas and Thenissey. When you arrive at Fôlois make a detour via Darcey simply for the scenery, head back to Étormay and at Chaum-lès-Baigneux pick up the Les Riceys road for a wonderful drive through valleys, forests and peaceful villages.



At Laignes, pass by Place Victor-Gat: the former Café des Chiens is now a library, but the pseudo-gothic façade remains with its two white dogs holding up the balcony and four fat cupids playing with plants.



Between Nogent and the charming village of **Les Riceys** you will find **Chaource**, with one of the most beautiful crypts in all of France to be found in the St-Jean-Baptiste church. The village is as famous for its cheese as for its Laying in the Tomb, a 16th century Champagne sculptural masterpiece.



Life size soldiers guard the entrance and holy women weep over the body of Christ, and you get the strange feeling that you are disturbing them, somehow in the way. In the final chapel on the left, don't miss the little camel which looks like a dinosaur and the spinning maid with a hairstyle like the bride of Frankenstein. Finally, Nugent arrives to round off the trip.

Great little restaurants

Nogent-sur-Seine le Beau rivage

20, rue Villiers-aux-Choux - T 03 25 39 84 22. Closed 16th-31st Aug, 15th Feb-8th Mar, Sun and Mon eve. Menu €30/60. Contemporary dining room, pastoral terrace overlooking a bank of the Seine, seasonal cuisine (with vegetables from the garden).

Ste-Sabine Hostellerie du château de Ste-Sabine

When the weather is good, enjoy a grilled meat menu on the terrace with a splendid view: from €18. For reservations call T 03 80 49 22 01.

Barbirey L'Eire du temps

1, place de la Mairie - T 03 80 49 24 35.

An Irish lady and an English couple lovingly prepare salmon stew and both Burgundy and British dishes, with a wide variety of beers and whiskies from across the Channel. Set menu €11.50 to €25 weekday lunchtimes only & à la carte. Closed Mondays.

Chaource L'Auberge sans nom

1, rue des Fontaines - T 03 25 42 46 74.

The small €8.50/12.50 menu is remarkable, the sun terrace extremely pleasant. The owner spent a few years on Réunion island, bringing back an upbeat attitude, kindness and a love of music. Concerts are put on in the wet season to take your mind off the rain. He plans to open some rooms: if they are as good as the menu then this will be a great place to stay. NB: fuel pumps are rather scarce in this region – there is one at the Peugeot garage on the Troyes road.

Sightseeings

Chaource Church

Office de Tourisme de Chaource - T 03 25 40 97 22.

www.tourisme-en-chaourcois.com

The church conserves 60 medieval sculpture and an extraordinary masterpiece : a polychrome entombment dating back to 1515. Open every day from April to October from 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., from November to March from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Village des Riceys

Office de Tourisme des Riceys et son canton

14 place des Héros de la Résistance - 10340 Les Riceys

T 03 25 29 15 38 - www.lesriceys-champagne.com

Stop here and wander round this village with its 3 market towns, 3 churches and 3 AOCs. Suggestions for itineraries and visits available from the Tourist Office.

CHAMPAGNE  ARDENNE

TOURISME

www.tourisme-champagne-ardenne.com



Route taken from « 90 virées à moto France 2011 »

Michelin Cartes et Guides. Map : Michelin.

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Road book Along the Burgundy Canal

Leaving from : Nogent-sur-Seine (10) - Distance : 444 km

Stage	Direction	Towards	On	Km in section	Total km
1st Section					
Nogent-sur-Seine	↑	<i>Vulaines</i>	D54	35	35
Vulaines	←	<i>Saint-Florentin</i>	D30	31	66
Saint-Florentin	←	<i>Tonnerre</i>	D905	27	93
Tonnerre	↑	<i>Montbard</i>	D905	42	135
2nd Section					
Montbard	→	<i>Semur-en-Auxois</i>	D980	18	153
Semur-en-Auxois	←	<i>Bligny-sur-Ouche</i>	D970	60	213
Bligny-sur-Ouche	←	<i>Pont-de-Pany</i>	D33	25	238
3rd Section					
Pont-de-Pany	←	<i>Prâlon</i>	D905	2	240
Prâlon	↑	<i>Blaisy-Bas</i>		6	246
Blaisy-Bas	←	<i>Thenissey</i>	D10	18	264
Thenissey	→	<i>Frôlois</i>	D114	5	269
Frôlois	←	<i>Darcey</i>	D103	6	275
Darcey	→	<i>Villeneuve-lès-Convers</i>	D19A	4	279
Villeneuve-lès-Convers	↑	<i>Chaume-lès-Baigneux</i>	D19, D114	9	288
Chaume-lès-Baigneux	←	<i>Laignes</i>	D21	39	327
Laignes	↑	<i>Les Riceys</i>	D953	19	346
Les Riceys	←	<i>Chaource</i>	D17	22	368
Chaource	↑	<i>Estissac</i>	D34	37	405
Estissac	↑	<i>Marigny-le-Châtel</i>	D33	28	433
Marigny-le-Châtel	↑	<i>Nogent-sur-Seine</i>	D442	11	444