



## Prologue

### Planning for a Canal Boat Trip in France

Search for “French Canal Boat Rental” and you will find all sorts of information. We chose [Locaboat](#) for our previous trip in France based on a recommendation from a fellow boater in Bellingham. Later we would learn that one of our friends represents the company in the U.S. Based on a favorable experience two years prior, we chose Locaboat for this trip as well because they offer the location, boats, timing, and prices we wanted.

Once we had an idea of what was available, we had to choose a starting (and ending) point and a route. Waterway guides are very useful. We have used the Guide Fluvial, published by Éditions du Breil, on two different trips and find them top-notch. We ordered the one that covers the area of interest for this trip:

- [\*Waterways Guide n° 07 - Canal du Midi\*](#)

You will want to do more than just ply the canals, and a guidebook to the country is helpful. We do not follow all his advice, but we still recommend a book such as [Rick Steves' France Guidebook](#). Even if you never get to France, the books are amusing reading.

Once you have selected company, region/canal, and must-see sights, you can determine a specific starting place and duration. Use these two numbers when planning:

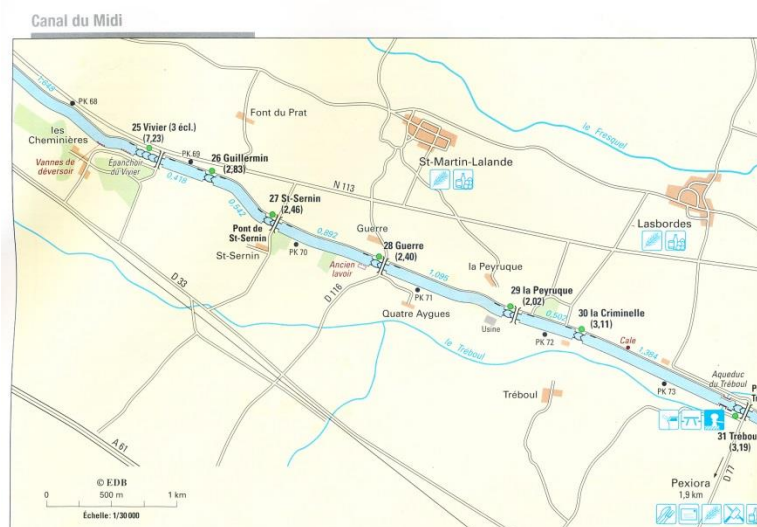
- Under ideal conditions, the boat will go a maximum of 9 kilometers per hour (the speed limit is 8 kph or less in some spots) – but to be safe figure that it will take an hour to go six km.
- Under ideal conditions, you can traverse a lock in about 15 minutes – but to be safe figure it will take an hour to traverse three locks. In France, most locks are staffed by lockkeepers (éclusiers), who have defined hours to be on duty and a designated lunch period. (The Waterways Guide gives specific

times. Also, some locks are multi-chambered, and will take slightly longer than a single-chamber lock.

The specific route we chose had 55 locks and slightly over 260 km – so 18 hours for locks plus 44 hours for travel  $\approx$  62 hours of cruising. A week's charter is 6½ days, two weeks is 13½ days. Using the latter, we had to cruise about 4½ hours each day on the average, which gave us the flexibility to spend a few afternoons sightseeing or on the internet at a friendly pub. In our planning, we failed to anticipate the days we would be unable to proceed due to weather – better to plan on a day's stoppage, or an optional side trip, just in case. Some would stop their planning here, and just cruise and see what happens. That was our approach on our first canal boat trip ten

years ago. This time, however, we went a bit further.

Using the Waterways Guide and Google Earth, we were able to come up with a detailed itinerary – which we followed fairly closely. The picture at left is one of the pages from the *Guide*, reduced about 50%.



#### Ecluse de la Peyrue (PK 71.5)

La Boutique de l'Écluse : création artisanale d'objets en céramique et vente de produits locaux

**Pexiora.** Ce petit village, à deux kilomètres du canal, possède un bureau de poste, une très bonne boulangerie et une épicerie.

**Villepinte.** En arrivant à Villepinte, vous passerez devant trois ouvrages intéressants : un lavoir, encore en service il y a quelques années, l'aqueduc de Mezuran et un épanchoir de belles proportions qui envoient les eaux excédentaires du canal vers le Fresquel.

Si vous avez besoin de faire vos courses, vous trouverez tout ce qu'il vous faut dans ce bourg. Il y a une pharmacie et à la sortie du village et une station-service doublée d'un vrai supermarché, ouverte toute la journée le dimanche.

• Aux Deux Acacias : 04 68 94 24 67 (7/7)

**Bram.** Ce village est construit selon un plan circulaire dont l'église du xii<sup>e</sup> siècle est le centre.

À l'époque antique, Bram était déjà une étape importante sur la route de Toulouse à Carcassonne et à la Maison de l'Archéologie vous pouvez observer des résultats de 30 ans d'excavations (amphores, objets funéraires etc.). Au centre du village, vous trouverez tous les commerces de base y compris une excellente cave spécialisée dans les vins de la région.

Office du tourisme : 04 68 78 91 19

Cave à vin, Histoire de Papilles : 06 23 15 70 89

★ Marché : mercredi matin

• Auberge du Pigné : 04 68 76 10 25 (7/7)

#### The Peyrue Lock (PK 71.5)

La Boutique de l'Écluse : sale of hand made objects in ceramic and local produce

**Pexiora.** This little village, two kilometres from the canal, has a post office, a very good bakery and a grocery store.

**Villepinte.** As you reach Villepinte, you will go by three interesting canal structures: a wash basin, still in service a few years ago, the Mezuran aqueduct and a big spillway which sends the excess waters of the canal into the Fresquel.

If you have some shopping to do, you will find all you need in town. There is a chemist shop and a service station which doubles as a supermarket, open all day n Sundays.

• Aux Deux Acacias: 04 68 94 24 67 (7/7)

**Bram.** A pretty village built on a circular plan with a 13th century church in the centre.

In ancient times, Bram was an important staging point on the road from Toulouse to Carcassonne and at the Maison de l'Archéologie you can see the results of 30 years of excavations (amphors, funerary objects etc.). In town, you will find all the basic shops and a wine cellar specialised in local wines.

Tourist Office: 04 68 78 91 19

Wine Cellar, Histoire de Papilles: 06 23 15 70 89

★ Market: Wednesday morning

• Auberge du Pigné: 04 68 76 10 25 (7/7)

#### Schlusse La Peyrue (PK 71.5)

La Boutique de l'Écluse : kunsthandwerkliche Keramik-Objekte und Verkauf von lokalen Spezialitäten

**Pexiora.** In diesem kleinen Ort (2 km vom Kanal entfernt) finden Sie ein Postamt, eine sehr gute Bäckerei und ein Lebensmittelgeschäft.

**Villepinte.** Bei Ihrer Ankunft in Villepinte fahren Sie an drei interessanten Konstruktionen vorbei: ein Waschhaus, das vor einigen Jahren noch benutzt wurde, der Aquädukt von Mezuran und ein recht großer Döhr, der das überschüssige Wasser aus dem Kanal in den Fresquel ableitet.

Wenn Sie einkaufen wollen, finden Sie in diesem Ort alles, was Sie brauchen. Es gibt eine Apotheke, und am Ortsausgang eine Tankstelle mit einem richtigen Supermarkt, der sonntags den ganzen Tag geöffnet ist.

• Aux Deux Acacias: 04 68 94 24 67 (K. Ruhetag)

**Bram.** Das Dorf wurde nach einem Ringschema rund um die Kirche aus dem 13. Jh. erbaut.

Schon in der Antike war Bram eine bedeutende Stadt. In der Maison de l'Archéologie sehen Sie, was die Ausgrabungen der letzten 30 Jahre an den Tag gebracht haben: Amphoren, Grabbeigaben usw. Im Ortszentrum finden Sie alle nötigsten Einkaufsmöglichkeiten, darunter auch einen ausgezeichneten Weinkeller, der auf Weine aus der Region spezialisiert ist.

Verkehrsamt: 04 68 78 91 19

Weinkeller, Histoire de Papilles: 06 23 15 70 89

★ Markt: mittwochs morgens

• Auberge du Pigné: 04 68 76 10 25 (K. Ruhetag)



**Villepinte.** As you reach Villepinte, you will go by three interesting canal structures: a wash basin, still in service a few years ago, the Mezuran aqueduct and a big spillway which sends the excess waters of the canal into the Fresquel.

If you have some shopping to do, you will find all you need in town. There is a chemist shop and a service station which doubles as a supermarket, open all day n Sundays.

★ Aux Deux Acacias: 04 68 94 24 67 (7/7)

On the right are full-size detail of map and text.

The top picture on this page is from Google Earth, showing two of the locks in the area. We plotted the whole trip on Google Maps (bottom picture shows a portion of the trip); you can see the whole trip [here](#).

