

WHISPAS

PICTURE YOURSELF IN A BOAT ON A RIVER.....
IT WON'T BE ANYWHERE NEAR AS GOOD AS THIS.
SALLY MORGAN CRUISES INTO TRUE RELAXATION
VIA LUXURY AND DECADENCE

Drifting away

The Burgundy region of France is famous for its incredible wines and gourmet delicacies, but there is also a floating treasure here waiting to be discovered.

WhiSpas is a new company offering all-inclusive spa holidays on board Le Premier, a luxurious canal barge. If you think barges are all dark mahogany and painted watering cans, you'll be in for a surprise. Le Premier is as light and airy as a spring conservatory with pale French oak floors and furniture, cream linens and curtains. The three roomy double cabins each have their own ensuite with permanently hot showers, TV, DVD, CD and direct dial telephones. In fact I couldn't believe I was on a boat. It felt much more like a modern London boutique hotel. The treatment room is a tranquil retreat and the hot tub on deck is big enough to bubble seven at once.

Owners Richard Shields and Kathy Williams have approached every detail with passionate attention. The signature pale oak interior, for instance, is covered with fewer than 12 coats of glossy varnish. Painstakingly, they re-built Le Premier from the hull upwards, the innovative layout reflecting their 23 years experience in the yacht charter industry.

Kathy and Richard possess an extraordinary ability in creating an atmosphere at once welcoming and deferential. Kathy is a superb chef and both she and Richard have a rich

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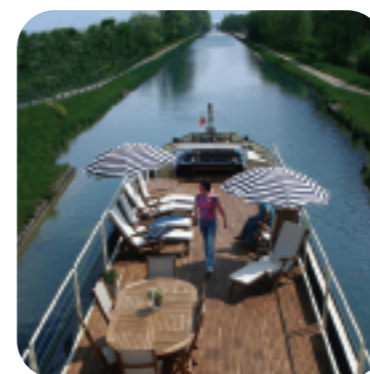
knowledge of local produce. The stunning meals are a main reason among many for taking this holiday.

Le Premier and its crew were inspirational to the concept that lies at the centre of WhiSpas' spa break. But the treatments, products and combination of gentle exercise and sheer indulgence are the ideas of WhiSpas founders Simon and Laura Aplin. Laura smiles, "this is something really new and fresh in the spa world." This charming British couple have lived in the Burgundy region since 1997 and their local knowledge is exemplary. Whatever you ask about, from cheese to the Nazi occupation, they will have a story to tell you.

Both are fully qualified in their chosen fields; Laura holds a History degree and British diploma in beauty therapy and Simon studied Sports Science for three years. I can vouch for Simon's ability as a masseur - after my deep tissue massage I felt taller and straighter than I had in weeks. Both have worked as tour guides too: there really isn't any point of interest that they don't know about.

Simon walked us around the 12th century stronghold, Chateauneuf. He recounted the whole troubled story of this fairy-tale castle and the medieval village jumbled outside its walls, as we strolled through cool stone rooms and the courtyard bathed in warm sun. Owners, long dead, came back to life with his tales and he revealed details in the décor that we would otherwise have missed. Such as footprints in the ancient floor tiles made by dogs treading in the clay as it was drying 900 years ago.

Just as we were starting to feel a bit peckish, Simon guided us into the old market place, where the car seemed to have magically appeared. We didn't even have to walk back down the hill for one of Kathy's spectacular lunches on deck. Perfect.



Our degustation meal at the restaurant of the Olivier Leflaive Frères in Puligny Montrachet is another memory that will stay with me, despite the excellent food being overshadowed by the wine. The Leflaive family have been making wines here for three hundred years and the restaurant, which feels like somewhere Dumas' Musketeers should have knocked back a few, was the family home for ten generations. Sommelier, Pascal, explained the influence of grape, terroir and vintage transforming each sip into a remarkable journey. Sun, rain, earth and toil culminated in the riot of taste in the glass.

Simon and Laura are so inspired by the centuries of Burgundy winemaking that they are developing their own range of spa products using grape extracts that don't make it into the bottles. Laura explains, "the grape vines, skins and seeds contain compounds called polyphenols which are ten times more effective than vitamin E at preventing

ageing." These extracts are so fresh that they must be kept refrigerated until Laura mixes them just prior to application. Until their own products are established, Laura and Simon will use the exclusive Vinothérapie range from Caudalie alongside Susan Harmansworth's E'Spa products.

A WhiSpas trip can be as active, restful, spa-orientated or cultural as you like. Yoga on deck every morning can be replaced with lazy lie-ins; culture indulged in at the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Dijon. And if partners can't agree on what makes a good holiday, he can play a round of golf while she gets her nails done. It's absolutely up to you.

While you soak up local history, sample fine wines and food and enjoy the magic of a WhiSpas treatment, the peace of life on the water will lull you away until life really does feel like a dream.

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WhiSpas

WhiSpas, in conjunction with Spavox magazine, are offering a six night all-inclusive spa cruise package at a promotional price of £3000 per person based on six sharing.

This all-inclusive trip will be tailored to you: spa treatments, full board, guided visits to local places of historic interest and return travel from Paris to Dijon.

A choice of massage and beauty vinotherapie treatments using products made from the famous Burgundy grapes can take place either in the treatment room or on deck. Pre-breakfast yoga and stretching sessions and meditation classes are optional.

**For more information
and to book call WhiSpas
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FURTHER
INFORMATION

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