



The Esprit barge, our home away from home in France.

Canal Barging in France

OVER THE PAST DECADE I have heard from several of my friends about their wonderful experiences on barges in the small canals in several parts of France. In 2018, we rented an 18-passenger, 128-foot barge to ply the canals of Burgundy. The company, French Country Waterways, LTD., has been in business almost 40 years and it has perfected this venue.

Our group assembled in Paris where eight of us had an incredible dinner in one of France's greatest restaurants, Lucas Carton, on Saturday



Dave Cox in the Domaine Romani-Conti vineyard offers grapes to Jim Bryant.

night. The food was near perfect but the 'out of body' experience related to the wines, all of which were outstanding. The pièce de resistance was the Coche-Dury Corton Charlemagne 2010. This wine is essentially unavailable worldwide and would be priced at \$3-6 thousand dollars per bottle, if ever available. Key descriptors include intense floral citrus acidity, pure fruit, perfectly ripe and creamy, chiseled minerality spices, truffle white flowers, seashore salinity, all tightly wound and promising a multi-decade ethereal experience. This wine is truly in a league by itself. When I spied it at \$1,100 Euros a bottle, all agreed to have the wine so we each had three ounces for a once-in-a-lifetime event. Words don't exist to describe this wine.

The next day we left by motor coach for Dijon, where we embarked on the "Esprit" for the next six days and nights. Everything about this experience was first-class except for the size of the state rooms. The size of the barges is controlled by the width and length of the locks. Most of the barges have rooms for six couples, but we needed



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO

Barrington resident Jim Bryant is pursuing his passion and love of wine as an international wine consultant. This follows a 30-year career in senior financial and general

management positions at two Fortune 100 companies. He is the owner of James R. Bryant L.L.C.; contact him at profwino@comcast.net.

to accommodate 18 of our friends, so the rooms were smaller. In all other respects the accommodations were superb. The meals were very good to outstanding and limitless wines (at least 50% of which were either premier or grand cru) were poured at all meals. This was one of the most relaxing vacations anyone of us had ever had. In fact, I told the others that if I ran a large company and I lost a direct report, before I replaced him or her, I would insist on going on such a voyage to see how the prospective employee would deal with lack of stress.

It was not all about wine and food, however. We visited a medieval castle replete with moat, which is privately owned and had been occupied by the U.S. Military in WWII. We also visited Chateau de Rully and had a wonderful tasting with the owner, who regaled us with the history of



Our last dinner on the barge.

Elevate Your Expectations!



Elevate Construction, Inc.

**RESIDENTIAL ROOFING | SIDING
COMMERCIAL ROOFING | GUTTERS**



1000 N. Rand Rd. Unit 109 | Wauconda
847-505-3221 | elevateconstructionil.com



RESIDENTIAL & COMMERCIAL

- CARPET & UPHOLSTERY CLEANING ·
- CERAMIC TILE & GROUT CLEANING AND SEALING ·
- NATURAL STONE AND MARBLE CLEANING ·
- HARDWOOD FLOOR CLEANING & REJUVENATION ·
- EPOXY FLOOR INSTALLATION ·
- AIR DUCT, DRYER VENT AND FURNACE CLEANING ·



(847) 487-4812

**CONVENIENT
ONLINE BOOKING**



steamforcecarpetcleaning.com



Sights along the canal.

the property. One night we dined at one of France's top 10 restaurants, Lameloise in Chagny. The food and wine were over the top.

Cultural highlights included a tour of the Hospice de Beaune, the famous abbey and hospital with the highly colorful roof, from the Middle Ages. We also visited the famous Clos de Vougeot vineyard and winery, also from the Middle Ages where the most famous wine auction is held each November. These two visits were steeped in history and were extremely interesting.

One afternoon we spent much of the time driving through the most expensive vineyard real estate in the world. We actually stood in the vineyards and tasted a few grapes which go into the Domaine Romani-Conti wines ranging from \$1-15 thousand per bottle, but again almost impossible to buy based on scarcity.

The only negative of the trip involved your author having a bike accident leading to a four-hour ER visit in Dijon. The other "accident" happened because one of the locks malfunctioned and we exited the canal and entered a river where we beached the barge on a sandbar, just after finishing lunch. So, for two hours we sat on the deck in 75-degree sunny weather drinking world class wines while a passing barge pulled us to safety. This was a fitting end to a world fabulous week with friends. A vôtre santé! U



A drawing left behind by U.S. soldiers in World War II. The drawing of servicemen and their plane is on the garage wall of a castle they stayed in. The caption reads: According to my chart, we are somewhere in the North Klondike.