

GOD'S BOAT ~ GOD'S PROVISION ~ the journey July 2018



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The Vision ~ **One OM Riverboat** ~ to network through Europe ~ **reaching many thousands with the gospel message** ~ and to share a mission mobilisation message **with the church**.

From late December 2017 to March 2018, the Andante sailed through **six ports**, in **three countries**, to do just that.



Planning, staffing and volunteering

We started active plans mid-2015, with a full leadership and management team in place by November 2016. A schedule was confirmed in 2017, with teams in place to work on the line up of the individual ports by the middle of that year.

On 27th December 2017, crew began to arrive from all over the world to be a part of this exciting, challenging, new opportunity.

The onboard actors portrayed different roles from rebellious teenagers to homeless people to prostitutes and pimps: types of least-reached people in society, on the onshore segment of The Agency Experience. As a reinforcement of the mission of Jesus-followers, "It lets people get a feel of what it means to be a Christian and it certainly gives a lot to think about," expressed one participant.

The onboard leadership team and crew totalled 78, including the on shore executive team, plus OM Home Office staff and line up help who worked part-time for all six ports, in addition to their regular secular jobs.

How did you hear about the OM Riverboat?

we asked the 78 onboard, full-time crew members. "Presentations on the Logos Hope by the Project leaders", "FaceBook/Social Media/Internet", "Promotion by OM offices", and "Friends, Teen Street & Global Village" were their answers.

What was the attraction?

"Living in a community", "Chance to experience new cultures", "The type of ministry", "The chance to be involved in a Pioneer project", "The chance to serve in Europe", "The opportunity to find out what God wants next in people's lives" were just some of the responses. One even said: "The experience overall was way better than expected (more than good!)"

Ana Barros (Portugal) dreamed of "a long, green boat, sailing gently along the river," even before she had left her "perfect job" in costume and stage design to join the crew. While designing the escape room, she realised her two passions – design and missions - had come together. "I knew I was in the right place." Although the work took long hours, often stretching till 01.00 or 02.00 am, Ana enjoyed herself immensely. She believes God will continue to use her gifting in other Global Villages.

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"Because of what God did in me on the Riverboat, since coming home I see a huge difference in me: I have less fear of man and I am way more open about being a believer. I spoke about my faith in a deep way for the first time with my friend of 40 years and had the courage to send her a book of bible readings. I know she is reading them as she talks about them," said one crew member afterwards.

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More than 20 of the crew were in a life transition phase at the time, so we offered a life coach/mentor to give them help with their next steps, and support choices concerning options in missions.



One of the most encouraging things was the involvement of 117 local volunteers.

Some were locals, some were recruited by the OM office from further away, and others were drawn internationally from the specifically designed opportunities advertised on OM's internal network.

In the port of Strasbourg, France, 32 pre-registered volunteers were involved in onboard and onshore activities. All onshore events that took place were made possible by the collaboration amongst churches and organisations and the participation of believers, local and abroad.

In Strasbourg, France, the visit of the OM Riverboat inspired leaders from three churches to create a local evangelistic event through art performances under the theme: 'A new hope with Jesus'.

The visitor story

6,467 people came onboard, as paying Agency visitors, out of a total of 8,365 visitors registered. A further [unspecified] number of visitors came to enjoy the Café, with the majority coming at the weekends.

When asked about their visit experience, most had heard about the Agency Riverboat Experience either from a friend (32.76%) or church presentation (47.63%), and rated it as 'excellent' (43.11%) or 'good' (52.95%).

91.32% of visitors regularly attend church.

73.42% definitely recommend that we continue with this type of ministry.

Over 50 people were reported as making decisions for Christ after personal conversations.



With the help of OM France and Riverboat volunteers, both community members and port volunteers, 8,000 event invitations were distributed. Over 1,100 attended. Many local and international believers were mobilised by OM France and came to serve onboard for two weeks.

The presence of the OM Riverboat also gave churches a reason to collaborate as well as set an example to other churches to come together and unite under the Alliance of Churches in France.

And not just in France - this calling for local Christians to collaborate took place in every port where the Andante dropped anchor.

Port visitor numbers

Arnhem, Netherlands	832
Dordrecht, Netherlands	1,608
Bonn, Germany	1,354
Mainz, Germany	1,503
Strasbourg, France	1,120
Mannheim, Germany	1,948
TOTAL VISITORS	8,365

Brief literature facts

We gave out 3,000 Dutch Gospels of John, 5,000 in German, 3,000 in French and 750 in English – over 11,000 donated Gospels of John were printed for the project. Plus a further several hundred Gideon's Bibles in the local language, and 12,000 One Wish leaflets in all four languages. In total we received 20,000 inter-active Gospels of John to give away. 1,500 English language versions remain for Global Village during the Keswick Convention this summer.



"It was challenging as the three churches have never organised an outreach event together before," shared one of the organisers, Fred Pfister, who was glad that the churches pulled together their talents and resources.

"One church with great artists provided for most of the performers, while another church had more experience with logistics and audio-visual techniques."

"The goal for me was to support local churches, encourage and mobilise believers," said Paul Dixon (Short-Term Missions Coordinator, OM France).



The OM Riverboat has provided local Christians with a platform to connect and encourage local believers to reach out.

As a direct result of the Andante's visit to Mainz, the line-up leader is now in regular contact with 23 people through social media to pray and engage with local Christian events.

In Mannheim, another local leader connected with a small group of people who were so excited at reaching out in a new and refreshing way for God, after their visit onboard, that they set up 'Have a Beer with God' in a local pub to bring God to those who do not know they need Him.

Our brief observations ~ the basic concept worked!

The importance of timing

Whilst there are many opportunities in short term missions in summer, there are less from January to March. Furthermore, although over 850 passenger vessels sail the main European waterways from April to November, there is less demand outside those months. Hence less competition for other options, and less pressure on vessels, which has been advantageous for us.

Benefitting from gifts in kind

We received many gestures of goodwill and generosity. We received free berthing from the Viking Cruises Company in Mannheim, Mainz and a short stop in Speyer, equating to a monetary gift of over 15,000 Euros. We also received two significant fuel gifts from two Dutch companies equating to many thousands of Euros. Plus numerous food and drink donations in both the Netherlands and Germany. Let alone the sacrificial giving of time from the line up people in individual ports who were passionate about the project.

Gaining help in technical areas

We were blessed by gifted, qualified seamen, such as Captain Klaas Kattouw, and ex-deck officer on the Logos II, Gerle Blaak from Vlissingen, as well as help with sailing the OM Riverboat, and running onboard training. Any technical issues in port were very satisfactorily resolved.

The benefits of a mobile ministry

A mobile ministry keeps motivation and interest levels high as the onboard community is not based in one place for long periods of time. It also gives opportunity for many fields and churches to partner with, and be exposed to, this ministry platform. The onboard programme can thus stay constructed for a longer period of time through constantly encountering new audiences. Not to mention the benefits of bringing an international community to many door-steps!

People felt extremely welcomed on board. The Global Village Experience was well received as a valid mobilising tool, and reconnected well with ex OMers.

Although OM is generally known as a committed, passionate organisation, there is a perception that things are done at a lower cost/lower quality level. The OM Riverboat definitely lifted the level of that perception as now being "cool and innovative". OM's profile was raised as a result, and many people were motivated to think about mission.

We expect to hear stories of the OM Riverboat's part in believers' journeys in the future, as they become involved in mission.

What does the future hold for Riverboats?

In order to build on this pioneer project, we will need to develop a more permanent structure with sufficient governance, accountability, finance, fundraising and adequate personnel.

Key staff from OM Europe, OM Ships, OM Germany, OM International and others will be considering what is required to set up the vision and leadership needed to take the Riverboat Project forward into the next phase and whether God is calling OM into such a venture.

This inaugural launch was a success; the challenge is to understand how, when and if we should build on that success.

"God was present - An extraordinary sense of God's favour on the project from all involved," stated Hans van Baaren, OM Europe Director.

"Almost 7,000 people paid 10 euros to be on board for 2½ hours to engage around the Gospel."

We believe after all accounts have been paid there will be a healthy profit surplus! We couldn't have done it without every prayer and financial supporter - a huge thank you to you all.

