

FROM WATERLOO TO D-DAY

AUSTRALIA'S EUROPEAN BATTLEFIELDS
WITH ANZAC DAY AT VILLERS BRETONNEUX



Villers-Bretonneux

OVERVIEW

Far from home but looming large in our national consciousness, the battlefields of Europe have witnessed more than 200 years of Australian military commitment and sacrifice.

This 18-day tour traverses France and Belgium as we visit the places that are writ large in Australian military history. Led by Battlefield Historian Brad Manera, the tour begins in Paris, including a visit to the Palace of Versailles, and crosses France via the tragic site of Verdun. Entering Belgium, we learn about the German's final push in World War II, the Battle of the Bulge, before exploring Waterloo and Brussels.

A full week is then spent visiting the sites and memorials associated with Australia's involvement in the Great War, with extended stays in West Flanders and the Somme Valley. Attendance at the Anzac Day Dawn Service at Villiers-Bretonneux will be an undoubted highlight of the tour. The tour concludes with a comprehensive exploration of Normandy's military sites and D-Day beaches.

In addition to the battlefields, the tour will travel through some of northern Europe's most picturesque areas with time to appreciate the local culture. As well as talks and lectures by Brad throughout the tour, there will also be the opportunity for a congenial drink and further discussion in the evenings.



TOUR LEADER

Brad Manera is a Military Historian and Museum Curator. A keen public historian, he has led battlefield tours around the world and featured in a range of documentaries.

TOUR DATES

April 13-30, 2024

TOUR PRICE

\$12,980 per person, twin share
\$2,220 single supplement

TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **20** in group

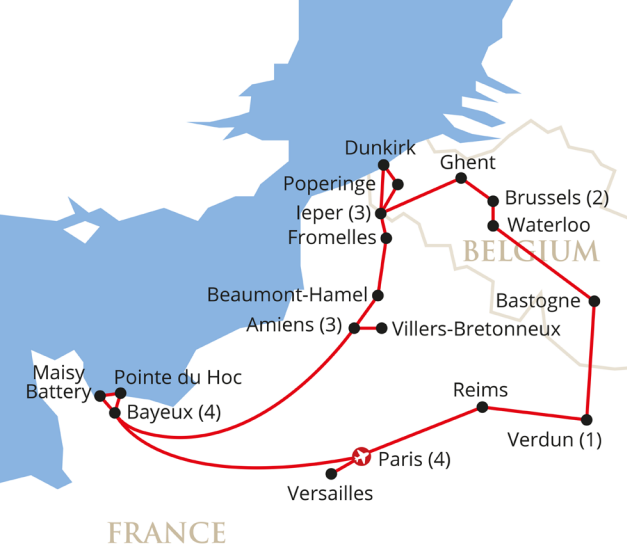
ITINERARY

Paris (3 nights), Verdun (1 night), Brussels (2 nights), Leper (3 nights), Amiens (3 nights), Bayeux (4 nights), Charles de Gaulle Airport (1 night)

INCLUSIONS

17 nights' accommodation in centrally located 3 to 4-star hotels. All breakfasts, 2 lunches, 5 dinners and 1 morning tea. Services of an expert tour leader and an experienced tour manager throughout. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.

DETAILED ITINERARY



Start & Finish

The tour starts at 6.00pm on Saturday 13 April, at the Hotel Edouard VII, Paris.

The tour ends on the morning of Tuesday 30 April, at Charles de Gaulle Airport.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D and MT for morning tea.

Saturday 13 April

Arrival

Meet Brad Manera and your fellow travellers for drinks and introductions at the hotel bar. Overnight Paris

Sunday 14 April

Versailles

The terms of the Treaty of Versailles had unforeseen consequences that reverberated throughout Europe and beyond long after its signing in 1919. Travelling to Versailles this morning, we meet our local guide and tour Louis XIV's extravagant palace, paying particular attention to the negotiations that brought the Great War to a close, with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in the famous Hall of Mirrors. There is then free time to explore the stunning gardens and relax at one of the picturesque cafes. After an afternoon at leisure, we return to Paris and meet for our welcome dinner. Overnight Paris (B, D)

Monday 15 April

Les Invalides and the AIF in Paris

This morning we begin our exploration of Paris with a visit to the Museum of the Grand Armée, France's largest military museum. As well as viewing the weapons, uniforms and equipment used on the Western Front and in the Normandy campaign, we will visit the impressive tomb of Napoleon. We then follow in the footsteps of the 1st AIF, visiting sites the Diggers frequented while on leave in Paris, or on their way to and from the Front in the Great War. We will also visit the Trocadero area with its view across the Seine to the Eiffel Tower, where Hitler was famously photographed during his sole trip to Paris in June 1940. After a scenic cruise along the Seine, the remainder of the afternoon and evening are at leisure to explore Paris's famous sites. Overnight Paris (B)

Tuesday 16 April

Verdun

Departing Paris this morning, we travel to the city of Reims. Restored following extensive damage in both the Great War

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Anzac Day at Villers-Bretonneux

As the sun rises over the Somme, experience the emotion of the Anzac Day Dawn Service at the Australian Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux.

The Ieper Salient

Learn about the defining battles of the 1917 campaign, as Australia's Diggers and Tunnellers left their mark on "Flanders' Fields".

In the Footsteps of Sir John Monash

Visit the sites and memorials associated with Australia's most decorated general, and walk the ground captured in his most celebrated battle, the 4 July 1918 offensive at L'Hamel.

Normandy

Explore the legendary World War II D-Day landing sites of Omaha, Gold and Juno beaches, and learn about the Australians who were part of the Allied invasion forces.

Personal Journeys

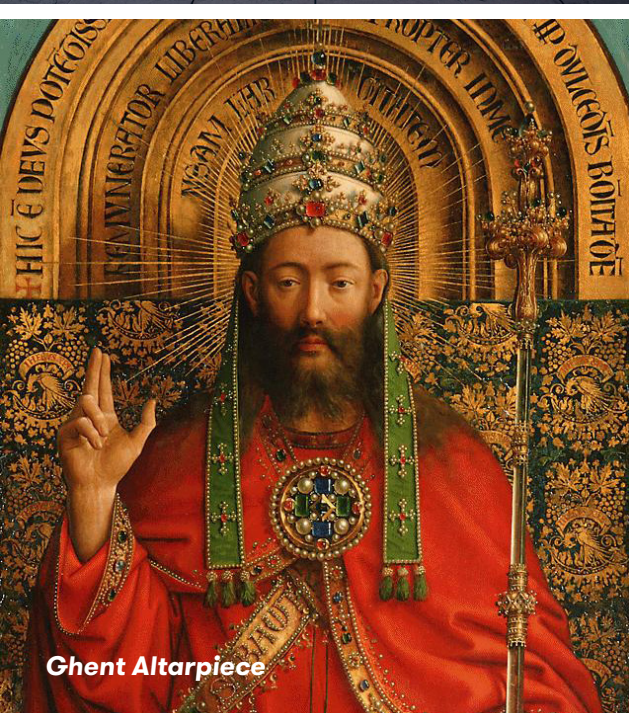
For many, the journey to the battlefields is a pilgrimage to commemorate family members who made the supreme sacrifice. Where possible, visits to personally significant cemeteries and memorials will be included in the tour program.



Napoleon's tomb



Trocadero



Ghent Altarpiece

and WWII, there is the opportunity to explore the historic city centre and Notre Dame Cathedral. We then continue to Verdun, site of WWI's longest battle which lasted for 10 bloody months in 1916, and now commemorated by the French as their most significant engagement. A local guide will provide a background to the battle as we visit the key sites, including French forts, cemeteries and memorials. Dinner this evening will be in the hotel. Overnight Verdun (B, D)

Wednesday 17 April

Battle of the Bulge & Waterloo

The Battle of the Bulge, launched in December 1944, was Germany's last major offensive on WWII's Western Front, with Hitler gambling that victory in the Ardennes would allow redirection of forces to the disastrous Eastern Front. Today we cross the border into Belgium and travel to Bastogne. Meeting a local guide, we will tour the battlefields and impressive museums that preserve the legacy of the Battle of the Bulge. After time for lunch, we continue to the legendary battlefield of Waterloo. Here, Brad will provide us with a detailed description of the events of 18 June 1815, walking with us through the fields that witnessed Napoleon's watershed defeat. Afterwards, there will be time to visit Lion's Mound and the on-site museum. Overnight Brussels (B)

Thursday 18 April

Brussels

The Royal Military Museum in Brussels has an extraordinary collection of artefacts, commemorating conflicts from the Belgian battles against the French in the Middle Ages to the destructive world wars of the 20th century. This morning, we will join Brad on a tour of the Museum, with a special focus on the Galleries dedicated to the Great War. The rest of the day is free to explore this charming city, whose historic Grote Markt is considered one of the most impressive squares in Europe. Overnight Brussels (B)

Friday 19 April

Ghent and to Ieper

Our day begins with a coach transfer to the medieval city of Ghent, where there is time to enjoy the well-preserved, picturesque city-centre. We will visit Saint Bravo Cathedral to view the famous Ghent Altarpiece, created by the Van Eyck brothers in the 13th century. As well as its priceless artistic value, the artwork has a fascinating military history and was seized by the Germans in both world wars. Returned to Ghent in 1920 as part of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the Altarpiece was stolen again and spent part of WWII hidden in an Austrian salt-mine. We then travel into West Flanders and onto Ieper, or Ypres in French. On arrival, there will be time to visit the impressive Cloth Hall, Ieper Cathedral and St George's Church before Brad provides a background talk on the Belgium battlefields. Overnight Ieper (B, D)



Tyne Cot



Dunkirk, May 1940



Brad at Beaumont-Hamel

Saturday 20 April **Ieper Salient**

Today we tour the battlefields, memorials and museums that are associated with the 1st AIF's West Flanders' engagement, visiting sites including the Passchendaele Trench Experience Museum, CWGC Tyne Cot, Polygon Wood and the 5th Division AIF Memorial. After lunch at a battlefield café, we will continue onto Hill 60, Messines and the moving Langemark German Cemetery. This evening, we will join other battlefield pilgrims to attend the Last Post Ceremony at Menin Gate. Held since 2 July 1928, and interrupted only during German occupation in WWII, the ceremony ensures those that fought for the liberation of the Belgians are never forgotten. Overnight Ieper (B, L)

Sunday 21 April **Essex Farm, Poperinge and Dunkirk**

The oft-quoted words of Colonel John McCrae CEF – “*In Flanders fields the poppies blow between the crosses, row on row...*” – capture the despair that so many felt as they waited behind the frontline, aware that each day could be their last. This morning we visit the site of Essex Farm hospital where McCrae penned his famous poem, before continuing onto the nearby town of Poperinge. Here we visit the unique Talbot House, which during the Great War was a place of R&R that welcomed all Allied servicemen, regardless of rank. After morning tea at Talbot House, we drive north and cross the border into France, arriving at the beaches of Dunkirk. Brad will provide a walking tour of the beachfront as we learn about the Allies' most famous and dramatic retreat of WWII. Returning to Ieper, the evening is at leisure. Overnight Ieper (B, MT)

Monday 22 April **Fromelles and to the Somme**

Departing Ieper this morning, we cross into France and visit the sites associated with the Battle of Fromelles, Australia's first major engagement on the Western Front in the Great War, learning about the mass graves lost for nearly a century and discovered in 2009. Continuing west, we explore the preserved trench system at Newfoundland Memorial Park at Beaumont-Hamel, where Brad will give a talk on the intricacies of trench warfare. Upon arrival in Amiens, there will be time to visit the extraordinary 13th-century Amiens Cathedral. Overnight Amiens (B)

Tuesday 23 April **North Bank of the Somme**

Today's focus will be the 1st AIF's 1916 battles, as we visit places that more than a century ago became household names, including Albert, Mouquet Farm, Pozieres and Bullecourt. There will also be the opportunity to pay our respects at a number of the cemeteries and memorials that are such a defining part of the Somme landscape. Lunch will be at the fascinating “Old Blighty Café”. Overnight Amiens (B, L)



Monash during the First World War



Villers-Bretonneux



Omaha Beach Memorial

Wednesday 24 April

South Bank of the Somme

Sir John Monash's leadership on the Somme during 1918 has become legendary, and today we visit the key sites associated with his defining battles. We begin at L'Hamel Battlefield Park, where we learn about the famous victory of 5 July 1918, where Monash was also the first Australian to command US forces. Continuing onto the Australian Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, we experience the cutting-edge "Sir John Monash Centre" with its interactive exhibits. There is free time for lunch in the café before we continue to other 1918 sites and the well-regarded Historial de la Grande Guerre Museum. Returning to the hotel, the evening is free to prepare for tomorrow's service and departure. Overnight Amiens (B)

Thursday 25 April

Anzac Day Dawn Service and to Bayeux

Joining hundreds of other Australian pilgrims, our day begins at 3:30am with a coach transfer to the Australian Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux. A packed breakfast will be provided to take to our pre-booked seats. The service is the main Anzac Day commemoration on the Western Front, and will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Following the end of formalities, we will return to our hotel where there is the opportunity to freshen up and complete packing. After free time for an early lunch, we journey west to Normandy. Our D-Day exploration begins en route at the strategically crucial Pegasus Bridge, before we continue onto CWGC Bayeux. Arriving at the hotel, we will join together for dinner and a well-earned early night. Overnight Bayeux (B, D)

Friday 26 April

Caen and the British Beaches

The Caen Memorial Museum provides a comprehensive and insightful introduction to the WWII Normandy landings and subsequent battles. This morning, we visit its numerous galleries, exhibitions and immersive experiences, and explore German General Richter's underground bunker, which has been preserved beneath the Museum. We then continue to the British landing beaches, Gold and Juno, observe the remains of the Mulberry Harbour at Arromanches, and learn about the role Australian airmen played in the D-Day invasion. Overnight Bayeux (B)

Saturday 27 April

The American Beaches

We begin today with a visit to the Nazi trenches and bunkers at Maisy Battery, buried for 60 years and only recently opened to the public. Continuing to the desolate Pointe du Hoc, we learn about the US Provisional Rangers Group who scaled the 35 metre high cliffs of the promontory and crucially captured the high ground. The afternoon is spent touring infamous Omaha Beach and the neighbouring Normandy American Cemetery. Overnight Bayeux (B)

HOTELS

Hotels have been selected principally for their central location. All hotels are 4-star standard, with the exception of our accommodation in Ieper, Amiens and Bayeux, where we have confirmed the best available 3-star properties.

Paris, Hotel Edouard VII

(3 nights)

www.hoteledouard7-paris.com

Verdun, Les Jardins du Mess

(1 night)

lesjardinsdumess.fr

Brussels, Renaissance Marriott

(2 nights)

www.marriott.com

Ieper, Novotel Ieper Centrum

(3 nights)

all.accor.com

Amiens, Ibis Styles Amiens Centre

(3 nights)

all.accor.com

Bayeux, Churchill Hotel

(4 nights)

www.hotel-churchill.fr

Charles de Gaulle Airport, Pullman Paris Roissy

(1 night)

all.accor.com

WEATHER

April is Spring in Europe, and the weather should be cool to mild, with an average day-time temperatures of 15°C in northern France and Belgium, falling to 6°C overnight. The Anzac Day Dawn Service will be held outdoors with no cover, so it is essential that you bring appropriate warm and waterproof clothing to wear to the service.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Grade Three

This tour is designed for people who lead active lives. The tour includes challenging historical sites, uneven ground, long days and 1 or 2 night stays.



Sunday 28 April Mont Saint Michel

Travelling south-west through picturesque Normandy this morning, we arrive at the iconic Mont Saint Michel. This tidal island, first inhabited by monks in the 8th century, is one of France's most recognisable landmarks. Occupied by the Germans during WWII and used as a look-out post, it became a favourite tourist attraction for German soldiers with well over 300,000 visiting the site. Today we will tour the island with a local guide, and learn about its military history. In the mid afternoon we return to Bayeux and visit the iconic Bayeux Tapestry, learning about its depiction of the 1066 Battle of Hastings. Overnight Bayeux (B)

Monday 29 April Giverny

Departing Bayeux this morning, we travel to the town of Giverny and tour the garden of its most famous inhabitant, Claude Monet. Monet remained at his property throughout the Great War, continuing to paint, and also delivering vegetables from his beloved garden to the local military hospitals. During this period he painted many of his best-known paintings, including irises and waterlilies, and his home was also a haven for his close friend, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau. After enjoying the garden, we join together for our farewell lunch before continuing onto our hotel at Charles de Gaulle Airport for our final night. Overnight Charles de Gaulle Airport (B, L)

Tuesday 30 April Departure

The tour concludes after breakfast with a transfer to Charles de Gaulle Airport. (B)



ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Jamal Fairbrother** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

jamal@academytravel.com.au