



FRANCE

WWI: SOMME & FLANDERS (TOUR CODE: 11918)

STARTS AND ENDS

Arras to
Ypres (Belgium)

TRAVEL PERIODS

01 Apr 2024 - 31 Oct 2024

EXPERIENCE

Battlefields

TRAVEL STYLE

Private Escorted Tours

Follow in the footsteps of the Australian forces during WWI in both the Somme and Flanders with this private, escorted 4 day package.

Highlights

- 4 days with your own **private Battlefields Guide**
- Freedom of Choice options - **Behind the front lines.**
- Carefully selected memorials, cemeteries and museums in remembrance of the **Somme & Flanders battles.**
- Hear the "**Last Post**" at the Menin Gate

The landscape of Flanders and the Somme tells the story. Both were major theatres of battle during the First World War where well over a million soldiers from more than 50 countries were wounded, missing or killed in action. Entire cities and villages were destroyed. Today, the now peaceful landscape, and the re-built cities and villages, remember their history through monuments, museums, cemeteries and the changed topography.

With this 4 day package, your own private Battlefields guide will take you on a journey in the footsteps of our Australian and New Zealand soldiers. Visit villages with names ingrained into Australian memory, such as Pozières, Fromelles and Villers-Brettonneux, visit well known sites such as Hill 60 and the trenches of Vimy Ridge, hear the haunting sounds of "The Last Post" being played at the Menin Gate in Ypres and an opportunity to see what life was like behind the front lines.

INCLUSIONS

- 2 nights in Arras at the Mercure Arras Centre Gare -4*
- 1 night in Ypres at the Ariane Hotel -4*
- Transport in private vehicle
- Daily breakfasts
- Lunch daily
- Battlefields Guide with more than 15 years experience
- Entrance Fees as per itinerary

Freedom of Choice Days

Freedom of Choice



Our Freedom of Choice program offers flexibility, by allowing you to choose from different options on pre-selected days.

Our per person price includes one tour on each Freedom of Choice day, as follows:

- One "Freedom of Choice" tour on day 2

Expand the itinerary below for more details.

Please note, if more than one room is selected during the booking process, our team will contact you afterwards to discuss options.

ITINERARY

Day

1

Arras Beaumont-Hamel Pozières Péronne Arras

Leaving Arras at 9.00am, you'll travel to the **New Foundland Memorial Park** at Beaumont-Hamel. Walk in the trenches and on the battlefield. We'll drive past Ulster Tower to the **Thiepval Memorial** and see the museum and visitors centre there. We continue on to stop at the "Moo Cow" Farm Memorial, with a visit to **Pozières**, the Memorial dedicated to the 1st Australian Division and the remains of the Gibraltar bunker, then on to the Windmill Memorial and later stand at the Lochnagar Crater.

We make our way to Péronne, where we will have lunch before visiting the **Museum of the Great War** in the old Citadelle. Visit the Memorial at Mont St Quentin before returning to Arras.

Overnight stay in **Arras** at the Mercure Arras Centre Gare in a standard room.

Lunch



Day 2

Arras Villers-Bretonneux Le Hamel Vignacourt or Naours Arras

Leaving Arras at 9.00am, you will travel towards Villers-Bretonneux, which was a key village on the Western Front. See the Victoria School, visit the **Australian National Memorial** and the **Sir John Monash Centre**.

After lunch, the tour travels towards Le Hamel to see the battlefield where Sir John Monash wrote history.

Then, see what life was like behind the front lines. With our pre-selected Freedom of Choice options, you will have the opportunity to choose a visit to the Vignacourt 14-18 Interpretation Centre (closed Mondays) or the Underground City of Naours.

There will be a photo stop opportunity at the Chateau de Bertangles where Sir John Monash was knighted by King George V on 12 August, only a few days after his victory, and again in Doullens, see the town hall where the Unified Command was given to Général Foch on 26 March 2018. Entry is not included in this tour.

Note: The Sir John Monash Centre will be closed on 01 May 2024.

Overnight stay in **Arras** at the Mercure Arras Centre Gare in a standard room.

Breakfast, Lunch

Freedom of Choice Options

- **The Underground City of Naours:**

One of the most fascinating places to visit on the Western Front is Naours.

Many Allied Soldiers visited the Underground City of Naours as tourists, a means of distraction for soldiers on leave or while they were recovering from injury behind the front lines. Many of them left their mark with graffiti on the walls of this underground city. In fact, there are over 3,000 instances of graffiti on the walls drawn by the WWI soldiers, 1,800 so far believed to be by Australians. The graffiti was forgotten and recently rediscovered in 2014.

Visit the Underground City* and the new Graffiti Museum.

*Note: Temperature in the underground city is approx. 9 degrees Celsius. There is a large number of steps and this visit is not suitable for wheelchair users.

OR

- **The Vignacourt 14-18 Interpretive Centre:**

A treasure trove of 4000 photo plates found in a farmhouse attic, forgotten for almost 100 years.

Vignacourt was an important military base located behind Allied Lines during the First World War.

During the war, local farmers, Louis and Antoinette Thullier, turned their farmhouse into a photo studio. Civillians and soldiers alike would come to have their photo taken. At the end of the war, the photo plates were stored in trunks in an attic and forgotten.... until 2011.

Now, the Vignacourt Interpretive Centre welcomes you to share the amazing story of this photo collection, which provides an insight into life in a village behind Allied Lines.

NOTE: This museum is closed on a Monday.



Day **3**

Arras Vimy Ridge Bullecourt Ypres

At 9.00am, travel towards **Vimy Ridge**, stand near the Memorial where Canadian troops conquered the ridge, walk in the German and Allied trenches, go down in one of the tunnels dug by Welsh tunnellers.

You will stand at **Notre Dame de Lorette**, the largest French WW1 cemetery 42,000 burials, see the Basilica, the Lighthouse and the Ring of Remembrance bearing more than 580,000 names of soldiers from all nations.

After lunch, visit the **Wellington Quarries** where New Zealand and British troops stood hours before their surprise attack in Arras in April 1917. Then drive towards **Bullecourt** with a stop at Neuville St Vaast German Cemetery. In Bullecourt see the "Slouch Hat Memorial", the Standing Digger in the Memorial Park and visit the **Jean & Denise Letaille Museum**.

End your day in Ypres, stand in the main square and admire the Cloth Hall and the Cathedral. Enjoy some free time in Ypres and attend the Last Post at the Menin Gate.

Overnight stay in **Ypres** at the Ariane Hotel in a comfy room

Note: The Commonwealth War Graves Commission has started a 2 year restoration project of the Menin Gate. The Menin Gate Memorial will not be fully accessible to visitors during renovations. Scaffolding will cover the Memorial and the name panels entirely. The scaffold covering features one of the original pencil sketches of the Menin Gate by Sir Reginald Blomfield. The drawing is believed to date to 1921.

The daily Last Post service at 8pm will still take place but its location will be moved to an alternative location near the Menin Gate, usually on the bridge in front of the Menin Gate.

Breakfast, Lunch



Day **4**

Ypres Fromelles VC Corner Messines Ypres

Starting at 9.00am, travel towards Fromelles where Australian troops saw their first action in Europe. You will see the **Museum of the Battle of Fromelles** explaining how the remains of 250 British and Australian soldiers were found, exhumed and buried.

Visit the **Australian Memorial Park**, on the German front line, and stand near to the "Cobbers" statue and see the remains of some German bunkers. Walk to the only exclusively Australian Commonwealth War Grave Commission (CWGC) cemetery in France. **VC Corner Cemetery** is the resting place of 410 Australian soldiers. Also stop at Rue Pétilion Cemetery where many Australians killed in July 1916 were laid to rest.

Driving through Armentières towards Messines stop on the battlefield of June 1917 when Australians and New Zealanders captured the ridge prior to the Battle of Passchendaele. See the **Messines Ridge** Visitor Centre, the statue of a New Zealand soldier and the New Zealand Memorial.

After lunch, we drive to **Hill 60** where the 1st Australian Tunneling Company detonated two mines on the 6 June 1917 at the opening of the Battle of Messines, stand near the Caterpillar Crater and the memorial dedicated to the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company.

This afternoon, you will also visit **Polygon Wood** to see the 5th Australian Division Memorial and the new "Brothers in Arms" Memorial, **Tyne Cot Cemetery** and Memorial as well as the Crest Farm Memorial. Visit Langemark German Cemetery and Essex Farm where John McRae wrote the famous poem "In Flanders Fields".

The tour will end in Ypres where you may choose to extend your stay (additional cost apply).

Lunch



VC CORNER CEMETERY | PHOTO ©FRANCES CUSACK

ACCOMMODATION

Ariane Hotel

Ypres

So quietly located and yet so close to the town centre. Nestled between the historic streets of Ypres, this family run 4-star hotel with 62 rooms, boasts every comfort to make you feel at home. The hotel rises modestly above the spacious gardens, creating a feeling of tranquillity and comfort.

The Menin Gate and the Cloth Hall are just a 5-10 mins walk away. Ariane's excellent restaurant serves mostly Belgian delicacies using daily fresh seasonal products is popular with locals and guests alike.



Mercure Arras Centre Gare Hotel

Arras

Ideally situated in the city centre, opposite the TGV station and in walking distance to the main squares. Enjoy the comfortable rooms and spacious living area at the Mercure Arras! Completely renovated, the hotel has a fun and chic setting. Different room types are available, whether you are traveling solo or with family. Have an enjoyable time at the bar and restaurant. Sporty guests can work at the fitness centre.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

French

LOCAL CURRENCY

EUR

On request this package may start in Amiens. Please contact us for a quote.

If you would like to incorporate a visit to a relative's grave, where it falls within the itinerary area, please advise details as early as possible and no later than 35 days prior to the package departure. If extra time is needed at a relative's grave, then the rest of the day's itinerary may need to be slightly altered.

For pre/post accommodation, please contact our Sales Team.

The order of visits in this package can be modified depending on availability.

Excluded

- International airfares and taxes
- Domestic airfares and taxes, unless otherwise specified in our holiday package
- Visa expenses, processing and issuance fees
- Meals other than as specified in our holiday package
- Travel Insurance or expenses of a personal nature (mini-bar, phone call, laundry, etc.),
- Tips or gratuities to guides, drivers, porters, hotel, restaurant or boat staff, etc.
- Or any other travel expense that has not been included in our holiday package