



P R E C U S T O M P R O G R A M

# N O R M A N D Y B E A C H E S T O H O L L A N D

---

## YOUR TOUR INFORMATION

---



APRIL 26th – MAY 2nd 2025  
**PARIS – ARNHEM**

# TOUR PICK-UP POINT

Sat  
April  
26  
2025



## 11 AM Paris Charles De Gaulle International Airport

Your tour guide **Ian Cowan** will meet in arrivals hall with an identifying sign

**NORMANDY BEACHES PRE-TOUR** and will take you to meet up with your fellow travellers on the coach!

For **Air Canada** Passengers meet at **2C** from **10:30AM**

please note **West Jet** Passengers will be met at **2F** from **11:00AM**



Fri  
May  
2  
2025



# TOUR DROP-OFF POINT

At Arnhem Train station after 4:30PM. TBD.

## TOUR GUIDE

IAN COWAN



**Ian Cowan** is the CEO and founder of Connection Custom Travel and The Battlefield Tours for over 34 years. He began encouraging and escorting Canadian veterans and their families to the Battlefields of France & Belgium in 1986, and has gone on to lead incredible programs for Canadian families, choirs, performance groups, government associations, student groups, and others who have a common desire to understand the history of Europe and the UK.

Ian has played a very active role on the Connection Tours / Battlefield Tours team-taking a real interest in the implementation and execution of all of our tour programming.

## TOUR MANAGER MELODY JOHNSON

**Melody Johnson** is an honours graduate of University of Toronto's world and fine art history specialist program and Liaison Culinary Arts College. Melody brings all things creative when out exploring the world and curating group tours. She has an extensive background in event planning & curation.

Melody often accompanies the battlefield tours and runs the fine art & culinary programs in Western Europe for Connection Custom Tours.



## TOUR TRANSPORT



- ★ 51 places
- ★ 4 star configuration
- ★ Air conditioning & heating
- ★ DVD
- ★ Radio
- ★ Toilet
- ★ 2 fridges
- ★ Coffee maker
- ★ USB charging plugs



Vermeeren Coach Services | <http://www.vermeeren.be/>

Phone: 056 71 28 85 | address: Marktstraat 89 8530  
Harelbeke, BE



# YOUR ITINERARY OVERVIEW

## DAY 1 Saturday, April 26th | Arrival in France to Normandy

Your journey begins with your arrival at **Charles De Gaulle International Airport** this morning, where you will be warmly greeted by our expert tour guide and friendly driver. From here, we will embark on a scenic journey through the beautiful French countryside as we head towards the historic region of Normandy, known worldwide for its profound connection to World War II and its key role in the liberation of Europe. With our first stop, we will visit **Verrières Ridge**, the site of fierce fighting during Operation Spring in July 1944, when the **Black Watch** (Royal Highland Regiment) suffered significant casualties. This operation, aimed at breaking the German in the area, was one of the bloodiest for the Canadians during the campaign in Normandy. The ridge itself offers a solemn and reflective setting to pay respects to those who lost their lives in the battle and to learn more about the complexities of the campaign. As we continue our journey through Normandy, we will make our way to the Canadian Memorial Garden located at the **Abbaye des Ardenne**, a poignant site that honours the sacrifice and bravery of the Canadian soldiers who fought here during World War II. The Abbaye des Ardenne itself has a rich history and was the site of the first major Allied battle in Normandy. The Canadian Memorial Garden serves as a tribute to the Royal Canadian Artillery and the Canadian Army, who played an instrumental role in the liberation of France. Our last stop is the iconic **Pegasus Bridge**, a site of remarkable historical importance. In the early hours of June 6, 1944, the men of the 6th British Airborne Division famously landed here by glider, capturing the bridge and liberating the first house in Europe, the **Café Gondree**. This daring and strategic mission was essential for the success of the D-Day landings and remains a symbol of the bravery and precision of the airborne forces.

### [Overnight – Hotel St. Aubin Saint Aubin sur Mer] (Dinner Included)

This day sets the tone for an unforgettable journey through Normandy, immersing you in the region's incredible history and paying tribute to the men and women who shaped its legacy during one of the most pivotal moments in world history.



^ Pegasus Bridge

Pegasus Bridge, originally called the Bénouville Bridge after the neighbouring village, is a road crossing over the Caen Canal, between Caen and Ouistreham in Normandy. The original bridge, built in 1934, is now a war memorial and is the centrepiece of the Memorial Pegasus museum at nearby Ranville.

## DAY 2 Sunday, April 27th | The Canadian Story at Normandy

Today, we continue our immersive journey through the D-Day Normandy invasion, with a special focus on Canada's critical role in the liberation of France during World War II. The day begins with a solemn visit to the **Beny-sur-Mer Canadian Military Cemetery**, where nearly 2,000 Canadian soldiers rest. This cemetery is a place of remembrance for the many brave Canadians who gave their lives during the D-Day landings and the subsequent battles in Normandy. Here, you will have the opportunity to pay your respects and reflect on the immense sacrifice made by these soldiers.

Next, we will head to the Juno Beach area, specifically the Juno sector, where Canadian forces made their historic landing on June 6, 1944. We will visit the **Queens' Own Rifles House**, the first house liberated by Canadian forces on that fateful day, marking the success of the initial assault. From here, we will proceed to the **Juno Beach Centre**, a museum dedicated to the Canadian 3rd Division landings and to showcasing Canada's broader involvement in World War II. The centre offers a comprehensive and moving tribute to the soldiers who fought on **Juno Beach**, providing historical context and personal stories of heroism.

After a meaningful morning of remembrance, we will continue on to the **Mulberry Harbours** in **Arromanches**. These temporary harbours were constructed by the Allies to facilitate the unloading of troops, vehicles, and supplies during the invasion, and their remains still stand as a testament to the ingenuity and resilience of the Allied forces.

Our next stop is **La Chaos**, the site of a German offshore battery that remains impressively intact even 75 years later. This battery was a key German stronghold during the invasion, and today visitors can explore the preserved site, which offers a chilling reminder of the formidable defenses the Allies faced during the Normandy landings.

We will continue our journey to **Omaha Beach**, where we will delve into the American experience on this infamous stretch of sand. Bloody Omaha was the site of some of the fiercest fighting during D-Day, and we will explore the challenges faced by American troops as they stormed the beach under heavy fire. The harrowing stories of bravery, loss, and determination come to life as we walk the very ground where these battles took place.

Our final visit of the day will be to **Pointe du Hoc**, where the US Rangers famously scaled the cliffs to capture a strategic German artillery position. The site remains marked by deep craters and the remnants of the German battery, providing a striking and evocative landscape to reflect on the courage of the Rangers and the fierce battles that unfolded here.

After a day filled with powerful historical sites and emotional moments, we will return to our hotel in Caen for a well-deserved dinner. You'll have the chance to unwind, share thoughts from the day, and prepare for more exploration of Normandy's rich history tomorrow.

**[Overnight – Hotel Saint Aubin sur Mer] (Breakfast & Dinner Included)**

This day offers an unforgettable journey through some of the most significant locations of the D-Day landings, focusing on the Canadian contribution and sacrifice, while also exploring the broader challenges faced by the Allied forces. The sites visited today provide deep insight into the events that shaped the outcome of World War II and forever changed the course of history.

**DAY 3 Monday, April 28th | Dieppe**

Today, we bid farewell to the Somme region and shift our focus from the First World War to the Second World War as we head towards the French coast and the historic seaside town of Dieppe. Our journey begins with a visit to **Blue Beach at Puys**, where the Canadian forces faced devastating casualties during the Dieppe Raid on August 19, 1942. From here, we'll view the German gun emplacements situated on the cliff tops, which were a major source of fire during the raid and contributed to the heavy losses suffered by the Canadians.

Next, we'll visit the **Dieppe Canadian Cemetery**, a poignant site dedicated to the brave soldiers who lost their lives in the raid. This serene place of remembrance honours their courage and sacrifice during one of the war's most costly and controversial operations.

Our journey continues to **Green Beach at Pourville**, another key location during the raid, before heading to the main landing beaches of Red and White along the Dieppe seafront. These beaches were where many of the Allied forces landed during the failed raid, which, despite its tragic outcome, provided valuable lessons for future operations like the D-Day landings.

After our deeply reflective morning, we will continue our journey to **Arras**, where we'll check into our hotel for a well-earned rest. In the evening, we will enjoy a dinner together and reflect on the significance of the day's experiences.

**[Overnight – Mercure Arras] (B, D)**

Today's visit to Dieppe offers a sobering look at one of the most difficult chapters in Canadian military history, as well as the broader story of the Allied struggle during World War II. The lessons learned from the Dieppe Raid were critical in shaping the success of later operations like D-Day, and visiting these historic sites provides a deeper understanding of the courage and sacrifices of the soldiers involved.



^ The Dieppe Canadian Cemetery

The Dieppe Canadian Cemetery honours the Canadian soldiers who died during the Dieppe Raid on August 19, 1942. Located near Dieppe, France, it contains the graves of nearly 1,000 Canadians who lost their lives in this failed operation. The cemetery serves as a place of remembrance for their sacrifices and provides a poignant reminder of the cost of war.



^ Beaumont-Hamel

The Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial honors the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, which suffered heavy losses during the Battle of the Somme on July 1, 1916. The memorial features a Caribou statue and preserves the trenches and battlefield where the regiment fought. Of the 700 soldiers who fought that day, only 68 survived. The site serves as a poignant reminder of their bravery and sacrifice during one of the bloodiest battles of World War I.

**DAY 4 Tuesday, April 29th | Somme**

Today, we will immerse ourselves in the profound history of the Somme region, one of the most significant and somber battlefields of World War I. Our first stop will be the **Memorial to the Missing at Thiepval**, a monumental structure dedicated to the memory of over 72,000 British and South African soldiers who fell during the Battle of the Somme and have no known grave. The memorial stands as a poignant reminder of the heavy losses sustained during the battle, offering visitors a chance to reflect on the devastating impact of the war.

Next, we will visit **Beaumont-Hamel**, where we'll explore the preserved battlefield memorial park dedicated to the Royal Newfoundland and Labrador Regiment. This location is especially significant as the regiment suffered catastrophic losses on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. **The Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial** is a moving tribute to the soldiers who fought bravely and paid the ultimate sacrifice, and the park is a powerful reminder of the courage and devastation experienced here. You'll have the opportunity to walk through the preserved trenches and witness firsthand the landscape where these soldiers fought.

In the afternoon, we'll continue our journey with a visit to the **Lochnagar Crater**, one of the largest and most impressive craters on the Western Front. Created by the British forces as part of a massive explosion during the Battle of the Somme, this enormous crater remains a testament to the brutal destruction of the war. The site provides a striking visual representation of the scale of the conflict, offering a moment to pause and reflect on the violence and scale of the battle that unfolded here.

After exploring the Lochnagar Crater, we will head to the medieval city of **Amiens**, known for its stunning gothic architecture, including the famous Amiens Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage site. You'll have some free time to wander through the historic streets, explore the beautiful city centre, and enjoy some of its charming cafes, shops, or landmarks.

**[Overnight – Mercure Arras] (Breakfast & Dinner Included)**

Today offers an in-depth and reflective exploration of the Somme, focusing on key sites that honour the incredible sacrifices made by soldiers during World War I. The memorials, preserved battlefields, and craters we visit are not only historical landmarks but also provide a personal connection to the lives lost and the tremendous courage displayed during one of the most brutal conflicts in history.



## DAY 5 Wednesday, April 30th | Vimy + Hill 70

Today is dedicated to exploring two of Canada's most significant World War I memorials: Vimy Ridge and Hill 70. Our journey begins at the **Vimy Ridge Memorial Park**, one of the most iconic landmarks in Canada's military history. On April 9, 1917, Canadian forces made a decisive assault on Vimy Ridge, a strategic position that had been strongly fortified by the Germans and previously failed to be captured by other Allied forces. The Canadian Corps, fighting together as a unified force for the first time, succeeded in capturing the ridge after a fierce battle. This victory marked a turning point in the war and is often considered a key moment in Canada's development as a nation, establishing its military reputation on the world stage.

At Vimy, we will tour the trenches and tunnels that were used by soldiers during the battle, gaining insight into the harsh conditions they endured. The Vimy Memorial itself, a striking structure built on Hill 145, stands as a tribute to the 61,000 Canadian soldiers who died during the First World War and whose bodies were never found. The new interpretation centre, which opened in 2017 for the 100th Anniversary, offers a detailed look at the history of the battle, as well as the story of Canada's contribution to the Great War. The park's significance extends beyond the historical and military importance, serving as a powerful symbol of the enduring bond between Canada and France.

Following this immersive experience, we'll enjoy a locally prepared picnic lunch before heading to our next destination: Hill 70 in **Loos-en-Gohelle, France**. This site commemorates the **Battle of Hill 70**, fought from August 15 to 25, 1917. Though often overshadowed by other battles like Vimy, Hill 70 was a crucial victory for Canadian forces and is sometimes referred to as "Canada's Forgotten Battle". Here, the Canadian Corps successfully captured the heavily fortified hill, despite fierce German resistance. This battle helped secure the Allied advance and was a testament to the tactical brilliance and bravery of Canadian soldiers.

We will explore the new Canadian Memorial at Hill 70, which honours the fallen soldiers of this important but less-recognized battle. In Loos-en-Gohelle, we'll also visit the state-of-the-art museum that opened in 2017 for the centenary of the battle. This museum offers a comprehensive view of the Battle of Hill 70, its impact on the war, and the pivotal role played by the Canadian Corps in the conflict.

As we finish our exploration of these battlefields, we will make our way to Ypres, Belgium, a city that holds its own deep significance in World War I history. You'll have some time to relax and reflect on the powerful experiences of the day before we conclude with a group dinner. As the day concludes, we experience the unforgettable **Last Post Ceremony** at the **Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing**. This iconic ceremony takes place every evening at 8:00 PM and is performed by the Ieper Fire Department and the Last Post Association. It's a deeply emotional tribute to the soldiers who gave their lives in the Ypres Salient and have no known grave. This ritual of remembrance has been held since 1928, and it is a moving experience that honours those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

After the ceremony, we'll return to our hotel, having witnessed one of the most important and poignant acts of remembrance, as we prepare for the next stage of our journey. The day's experiences leave an indelible mark, reflecting the bravery, sacrifice, and resilience that defined the First World War.

### [Overnight – Ypres Novotel] (Breakfast & Dinner)

Today's visits to Vimy Ridge and Hill 70 allow us to reflect on the monumental contributions of Canadian soldiers in shaping the outcome of World War I. Both sites provide an emotional and educational experience, offering a deeper understanding of the courage, sacrifice, and strategic importance of these battles. They also shed light on Canada's growing national identity on the world stage, making this day an unforgettable chapter in our journey through history.

**DAY 6 Thursday May 1<sup>st</sup>** | Today we will take the full day to explore the **Ypres Salient Battlefields**. We begin our introduction with a visit to **Essex Farm**, the place where John McCrae wrote the famous poem "In Flanders Fields". We then head north to visit the **Tyne Cot Commonwealth Cemetery** - the largest Commonwealth Cemetery, of any conflict, in the world. We will also discuss the Battle of Passchendaele, with visits to the Crest Farm Memorial, in **Passchendaele**. We continue further to explore the **German Cemetery of Langemark**, and the **'Brooding Soldier' at St Julien**, to commemorate the first gas attacks against the 1st Canadian Corps in 1915. Lastly, we take a visit to the **Hooge Crater**, and Hill 62 - a small area of the original battlefield and part of the Canadian Front Line. We finish our orientations today in the medieval city of **Ypres**, also known as the 'City of Peace' with an early group meal in the heart of Ypres' Grote Markt. Tonight, at 8PM, we will witness the iconic and historic Last Post Ceremony, at the **Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing**, led by the Ieper Fire Department & the Last Post Association. This daily act of homage is among the most memorable acts of remembrance that we will witness on our tour. After the ceremony is through, we will head back to our hotel to prepare for tomorrow's departure. **[Overnight – Novotel Ypres] (Breakfast & Dinner Included)**



#### ^ Vimy Ridge

Vimy Ridge is a key site in Canadian history, where Canadian forces achieved a pivotal victory on April 9, 1917, during the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The battle was part of the Arras Offensive, and it marked the first time all four divisions of the Canadian Corps fought together. The capture of this heavily fortified ridge solidified Canada's military reputation, but it came at a heavy cost, with over 10,000 casualties.

Today, the Vimy Memorial stands on Hill 145 as a tribute to the 61,000 Canadians who died in World War I, with the memorial and surrounding battlefield preserved for visitors. The site includes trenches and tunnels, as well as an interpretation centre that opened in 2017 for the 100th anniversary. Vimy Ridge remains a symbol of Canada's sacrifice, national identity, and its bond with France.



#### ^ The Menin Gate

The Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing, located in Ypres, Belgium, commemorates over 54,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient during World War I and have no known graves. Unveiled in 1927, the memorial features the names of the fallen engraved on its walls. Each evening at 8 PM, the Last Post Ceremony is held, with buglers playing "The Last Post" to honor the soldiers, a tradition that has continued daily since 1928. The Menin Gate is a powerful symbol of remembrance and sacrifice.

## DAY 7 Friday May 2<sup>nd</sup> | Departure to Holland

After enjoying breakfast, we'll bid farewell to Leper and begin our journey to [Mechelen](#), a town that played an important role in the liberation of Belgium during World War II. Here, we'll delve into the region's strategic importance, particularly in the lead-up to the [Breskens Pocket](#)—a key area of the Battle of the Scheldt. This operation was vital for the Allied forces to secure control of the ports along the Dutch and Belgian coast, which were essential for supplying troops and resources.

Next, we'll visit the [Canada-Poland War Museum](#), a fascinating private institution dedicated to preserving the memory of the war and the liberation of Belgium. The museum houses an extensive collection of original uniforms, weapons, artifacts, and scale models that tell the story of the soldiers who fought for freedom, with a special emphasis on the contributions of both Canadian and Polish forces. It's one of the most significant museums in the region, offering a unique insight into the war's history.

As we continue our journey, we'll cross into Holland and make our way to the [Canadian Military Cemetery at Bergen op Zoom](#). This solemn cemetery honours the Canadian soldiers who gave their lives during the liberation of the Netherlands. It's a moving tribute to their bravery and sacrifice, offering a peaceful and respectful place to reflect.

After a day of exploration and remembrance, we'll return to our hotel in Nijmegen-Lent, where we'll enjoy a group dinner to reflect on the meaningful experiences of the day. The evening provides an opportunity to relax and bond with fellow travelers before we rest for the night.

**[Overnight – Van der Valk Nijmegen-Lent] (Breakfast & Dinner Included)**





# HOTEL LIST

Every hotel in our hotel list has been handpicked especially by our team. From the beaches of Criel sur Mer, to the centrally located Albion Hotel in Ypres to the Ibis along the harbour in the historic port town of Ouistreham

**26 & 27  
APRIL**

2 nights



**Address:** rue de Verdun place du Canada 14750 Saint Aubin sur Mer

**Phone:** 02 31 97 30 39

**Website:** [www.saintaubin-hotel.com](http://www.saintaubin-hotel.com)

**Email:** [contact@hotelsaintaubin.com](mailto:contact@hotelsaintaubin.com)



#### Hotel Details:

- Seafront location
- Free WiFi throughout the hotel
- walking distance to the market square
- The property does not have a lift

**28 & 29  
APRIL**

2 nights

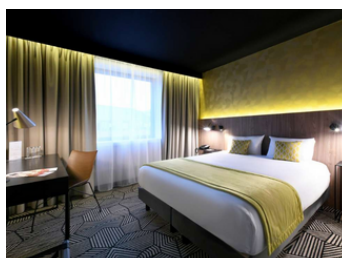
**MERCURE**  
HOTELS

**Address:** 58 Bd Carnot, 62000 Arras, France

**Phone:** +33 3 21 23 88 88

**WEBSITE:** [https://all.accor.com/hotel/1560/index.en.shtml?](https://all.accor.com/hotel/1560/index.en.shtml?utm_campaign=seo+maps&utm_medium=seo+maps&utm_source=google)

[utm\\_campaign=seo+maps&utm\\_medium=seo+maps&utm\\_source=google](https://all.accor.com/hotel/1560/index.en.shtml?utm_campaign=seo+maps&utm_medium=seo+maps&utm_source=google)  
+Maps



#### Hotel Details:

- Downtown, a few minutes' walk from the train station and historic centre
- Restaurant offering cuisine made with fresh, seasonal ingredients
- 538-sq.ft. air-conditioned fitness room with natural light

**30  
APRIL  
1  
MAY**

2 nights

**NOVOTEL**

**Address:** Sint Jacobsstraat 15, 8900 IEPER, Belgium

**Phone:** +32 57 42 96 00

**Website:** <https://all.accor.com/hotel/3172/index.en.shtml>

**Email:** [H3172@accor.com](mailto:H3172@accor.com)



#### Hotel Details:

- Fitness centre
- Free WiFi throughout the hotel
- walking distance to the market square
- 3-minute walk to In Flanders Field Museum
- 50-minute drive to Ostend-Bruges Airport



*You keep the history that comes with this monumental journey alive.*

**- Thank you -**

For additional resources please visit:  
<https://www.thebattlefieldtours.com/resources>



**QUESTIONS? Contact us.**

Connection Custom Travel Inc. | The Battlefield Tours  
info@thebattlefieldtours.com  
+1-416-894-8900 (whatsapp) | +1-416-844-4228

DH TOUR (host agency)  
2289 Fairview St Suite 209,  
Burlington, ON L7R 2E3  
DH TOUR OFFICE  
1-888-597-3519  
+1-905-639-9954

