

Knee Deep Into History Battlefield Tours

7-Day Meuse-Argonne / Saint Mihiel Salient International Small Group Battlefield Tour 25 September – 1 October 2021



Knee Deep Into History... By mid-1918 the rapidly expanding but still green troops of the American Expeditionary Forces had yet to undertake an offensive as an independent American Army. But things were changing! At meetings throughout the late Spring and early Summer 1918 General Pershing continued to insist that the A.E.F. should fight as a separate American Army as soon as practical. On 24 July Pershing issued an order announcing the formation of the First American Army, effective 10 August; and in early August Generals Pershing and Foch agreed that American First Army should eliminate the St. Mihiel Salient. Accordingly, Pershing and his staff refreshed plans to attack in the St. Mihiel Salient, an objective that had been studied in 1917. The German Supreme Command had already planned a retreat from the Salient to a more defensive position, and the first German troops started moving when the offensive began.

The rapid success of the St. Mihiel Offensive, lasting only from 12-16 September 1918, would give a shot in the arm to America's coalition partners and make the A.E.F. over-confident. In reality, the offensive featured overwhelming American numbers against a thinly held German line caught while withdrawing.

Allied attacks all over the Western Front in late 1918 happened in parallel to give the German Army the deathblow. However, things would not go as smoothly in the Meuse-Argonne (26 Sept. to 11 Nov.) as in the St. Mihiel Salient; and the green A.E.F. troops and leaders would suffer severe casualties in the face of a skilled adversary fighting for survival. That adversary had experience, knowledge of the terrain and time to plan and build multiple defensive lines. The U.S. learning curve would be steep indeed.

Briefings during this fascinating tour will also focus on the complexities of coalition war-making in late 1918, advances made by allies on other fronts, General Pershing and other key A.E.F. leaders, a comparison of U.S. and German casualties, and Germany's defensive strategy in the region. **Both sectors are rich in physical traces of the Great War, so walks will be plentiful as clients get knee deep into history!**

Schedule: (Subject to Modification)

The Tour Begins in Europe. Participants have the option of being picked up at the Meuse TGV Gare (Station) just south of Verdun, France or arranging their own transportation to the tour's base hotel, Le Tulipier, situated in the Argonne Forest outside of Vienne-le-Château, France. The TGV can be easily accessed from Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG) or from Paris. Guides Randy and Markus can assist participants in examining TGV schedules.

Day 1—Saturday, 25 September—Arrival at the Meuse TGV Gare and transport to the base hotel. 19h00 introduction dinner and briefing

Day 2—Sunday, 26 September—Meuse-Argonne Offensive, I Corps operations—To coincide with the anniversary date of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive!

Day 3—Monday, 27 September—Meuse-Argonne Offensive, V Corps operations

Day 4—Tuesday, 28 September—Meuse-Argonne Offensive, III Corps and operations East of the Meuse

Day 5—Wednesday, 29 September—St. Mihiel Offensive with focus on the 1st and 26th Divisions

Day 6—Thursday, 30 September—St. Mihiel Offensive with focus on the Southern flank, except the 1st Division

Day 7—Friday, 1 October—Morning departures to the Meuse TGV Gare



About Knee Deep Into History Battlefield Tours and its Philosophy

Knee Deep Into History Battlefield Tours was founded by Randy Gaulke after he spent eight months during 2017-18 as a freelance guide to the American battlefields of WW1. During those eight months (and the prior thirty years) Randy's tour philosophy has evolved. Key tenets of his philosophy include:

1. A preference for guiding small-group over large-group tours; to ensure greater interaction with the guides.
2. Getting clients into the field as much as possible; in contrast to a "museum and memorials" tour.
3. Attempting to present a balanced view of both sides of the story.
4. Designing a tour for those seriously interested in history.
5. Introducing clients to local, not American, culture.

General Tour Format

- Clients have the option of being picked up at the Meuse TGV Gare (Station) just south of Verdun and transported to the base hotel or arranging their own transportation to the hotel.
 - Connections from Paris or CDG to the Meuse TGV Station are quite easy.
 - We can arrange pick-up times closer to client arrival.
- The tour will be conducted in Randy's and Markus' cars; unless tour size grows to the point a coach is needed.
- We will be staying at Le Tulipier, a highly rated three-star traditional European hotel / restaurant situated in the Argonne Forest just outside Vienne-le-Château. (<https://letulipier.com>)
- This small-group tour is designed to enable maximum interaction between participants and guides.
 - Size is limited to about 16 participants and two tour guides.
- Each day will be organized into a morning / early afternoon "monuments tour" and an afternoon hiking session.
 - The monuments tour will visit key sites and markers in the area by car.
 - The afternoon hikes, of moderate pace and length, will focus on key actions for each sector.
- Participants should expect to be "in the field" from 09h00 to somewhere around 17h00, regardless of weather.
 - Participants should bring appropriate clothing for the field, and nicer clothes for evening meals.
- Spouses and mature young adults are welcome, but please understand that there will be limited down time for sightseeing or time off.
 - That said, they could elect to stay at the hotel for a day and walk into Vienne-le-Château, a quiet town in the Argonne Forest with a population of about 500 and a modest downtown.
 - We will have the opportunity to include some shopping / down time in Verdun during the tour.
- Regarding meals:
 - Continental breakfast will be served at the hotel.
 - Boxed lunches will generally be eaten "in the field" to conserve time.
 - Afternoon beverages and snacks will also be available.
 - Multi-course dinners will generally be eaten at the hotel restaurant starting around 19h00.
 - Traditional European dinners often last two hours +/-; and this gives participants a chance to socialize and share their thoughts on the days' activities.
 - Participants are responsible for their beverage costs at dinner.
- We will be visiting the Meuse-Argonne American Memorial and the Cemetery, the St. Mihiel American Memorial and the Cemetery as well as several German military cemeteries.
- German historian and retired Bundeswehr officer Markus Klauer is bringing his expertise as a second tour guide. (Many military history tours offer only one guide per tour.)
- We hope to make this an "international" trip, as the tour is being marketed to Markus' European clients too.



Meet Tour Guides, Randy Gaulke and Markus Klauer

Randy Gaulke has been visiting battlefields since the mid-1980s. In 2017 he left the corporate world and in 2017-18 he lived and worked eight months in France as a freelance guide to the WW1 battlefields during the WW1 Centennial. His experiences during those eight months convinced him to follow his passion and start a tour business. Randy has visited the Ardennes several times since 2010. He lives in Gillette, NJ and speaks English and German fluently. He is becoming more proficient in French. He also maintains the website, <https://meuse-argonne.com> and the Meuse-Argonne.com Facebook group.

Markus Klauer retired from the Bundeswehr in early 2018. His military career included five years in an armored division. With his newly-found free time Markus has been expanding his battlefield research to the battlefields of WW2, including the Ardennes, Sedan 1940, Normandy and the Seelow Heights near Berlin. Like Randy, Markus has been a passionate student of WW1 history for several decades, and he has guided countless German, French and American groups. He has also written five books in German and his website can be viewed at <https://gb.weltkriegsbuch.de>. Markus lives in Lille, France. He speaks German English and French fluently.

Randy and Markus have known each other for 27 years. Both share a deep love of historical research and a desire to get their clients into the field. With their language and cultural skills, both understand the “other side” and both strive to present a balanced view of the combat.



Feedback from Randy’s and Markus’ 2018 Small-Group Battlefield Walk Series

In September 2018 they organized a Small-Group Battlefield Walk Series: Meuse-Argonne and St. Mihiel that was very well received by tour participants. Additional feedback can be viewed on Randy’s Meuse-Argonne website.

“Randy and Markus, Thanks for a great tour experience. Well-chosen sites, good discussions in the field, great personal experiences—well done all around. I personally saw parts of the Meuse-Argonne in a completely different light, and so learned a lot.” John Snow, OK.

“These guys are the best. They truly walk you in the soldiers’ steps. My teenage son and I feel so lucky that we were able to have them as our guides. They provide you with a deeper understanding than any book or general tour.” Matt and Grant Treastor, KS.

“As your knowledge and great passion inspires. Thanks for helping me to connect to the American group—an aspect of WW1 you know I’m very enthusiastic about. Your organization was cool to enable great flexibility amongst people with a range of interests and great camaraderie resulted. I learnt tons and enjoy getting insight into the on-the-ground research you do. The detail appeals to me and it fits so well with my own project...” Andrew Mullen, UK.

Pricing and Payment Details:

- The price is €1,599.
 - At a €1.25 : \$1.00 exchange rate, this would be \$1,999.
- Single supplement please add €150. \$188 using the above exchange rate.
- The easiest form of payment is via PayPal using the email address lavarences@meuse-argonne.com.
 - **Please make sure to designate the payment currency as Euros.**

Refunds and Cancellation Policy:

- This tour requires a minimum of 4 participants.
 - If we do not have 4 participants by 17 June 2021, we will cancel the tour and refund your payment, less any PayPal transaction fees.
 - **For this reason, we caution you about booking non-refundable airfare prior to that date.**
- Clients may cancel at any time on or before 27 June 2021 and receive a 100% refund.
- Clients who cancel between 28 June and 27 July will receive a 75% refund. (25% penalty)
- Clients who cancel between 28 July and 26 August will receive a 50% refund. (50% penalty)
- Clients who cancel on or after 27 August will receive no refund, because of the tour's sunk costs. (100% penalty)

Insurance:

- Clients are encouraged to check into tour interruption / cancellation insurance to cover unforeseen incidents or family emergencies.
- American participants, especially those with chronic health conditions, are strongly encouraged to check with their health insurance provider regarding coverage overseas in case of emergency.

Terms and Conditions:

- Please review our separate 2021 Terms and Conditions; especially the Covid-19 provisions.

Questions or Concerns:

- Please contact Randy Gaulke at 908.451.0252 or lavarences@meuse-argonne.com with any questions or concerns. He is more than happy to assist you.

2021 St. Mihiel / Meuse-Argonne Tour Registration Form

Participants: _____ (Names and ages)

Primary Contact: _____

Address: _____

Contact Email: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Circle One: I/We need to be picked up at the Meuse TGV Station at _____pm.

I/We have our own transportation. Will meet at le Tulipier in Vienne-le-Château

Rooms Needed: _____ Double Rooms _____ Single Rooms

Emergency Contact(s): _____

Emergency Phone(s): _____

Health Concerns: **Per the Terms and Conditions, participants are required to factually state any health concerns that could affect their participation on this trip. Please outline these concerns in a brief letter.**

Other Needs: _____

Reminder: To complete your registration you must send: 1) your deposit, 2) a copy of this registration form and 3) a copy of the Terms & Conditions page SIGNED BY EACH PARTICIPANT.

Please mail / email / text a copy of this form to:
Randy Gaulke, 584 Valley Road, Gillette, NJ 07933, USA.
lavarenes@meuse-argonne.com 908.451.0252

The easiest method of payment is via PayPal to lavarenes@meuse-argonne.com. Be sure to select Euros as the payment currency. If you do not wish to pay via PayPal, please contact Randy Gaulke for alternatives.