

Knee Deep Into History Battlefield Tours

**June '44: Normandy Landings and Airborne
Small Group Battlefield Tour
10 - 15 June 2024 (6-days / 5-nights)**



Omaha Beach 2019, photo by Laurie Gaulke

Knee Deep Into History... In planning since 1942, the Allied landings on the beaches of Normandy on 6 June 1944 would go down in history as the largest amphibious invasion ever attempted. The first day landings alone would involve three American infantry and two airborne divisions, three British infantry divisions, two Canadian infantry and one airborne division as well as other specialized units. The landing would be accomplished using more than 4,100 landing craft supported by more than 1,200 naval combat vessels, 1,500 other ships plus more than 11,500 aircraft! The above-mentioned numbers do not reflect the role of intelligence gathering, deception and the French resistance.

In spite of the overwhelming numbers, success was far from insured: Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, who became General Inspector of the Western Defenses in November 1943, embarked upon a rapid expansion and strengthening of the Atlantic Wall. Even if thinly manned, the fortifications and obstacles along France's coastline posed significant threats to any invasion attempt. Also, there was the risk that German intelligence would discover the plan.

In hindsight, it is easy to see that weather, Allied boldness and deception won the day. Convinced that the landing would not take place in the unsettled weather of early June, key German leaders were away at a war game; Rommel was in Germany celebrating his wife's birthday. Also, Hitler's conviction that the main Allied invasion would take place near Calais resulted in an unfavorable disposition of enemy forces, thus delaying German response time.

Nevertheless, the Allied hold on Northern France remained tenuous until the Allied breakouts in July..

Prepare to get knee deep into history as we explore the various aspects of this monumental invasion! This tour will take place JUST AFTER the 80th anniversary celebrations. We do not plan on offering a tour during the commemorations because of the massive increase in traffic. Of course, participants could attend the ceremonies on their own and get knee deep in the Normandy battlefields thereafter.



Pointe du Hoc



Deutscher Soldatenfriedhof La Cambe



Saint-Pierre-du-Mont Church along the Normandy Coast. Site of an early Allied airfield. Photo by Laurie Gaulke.

Schedule: (Subject to Modification)

Pick-up and return point for this tour will be CDG Airport. A specific meeting point will be provided later. Participants are responsible for arranging their own transportation to and from the meeting point. Participants with their own vehicles can arrange to meet us at the starting hotel.

Day 1—Monday, 10 June—Pick up at CDG at 12:00pm. Drive to Normandy. Evening briefing followed by introductory dinner. Hotel TBD.

Day 2—Tuesday, 11 June— Utah Beach, Airborne operations around Sainte-Mère-Église, German Cemetery at La Cambe and a German battery in the Cotentin Peninsula. Afternoon tour of famous Normandy cookie or caramel factory. Hotel TBD.

Day 3—Wednesday, 12 June— Omaha Beach, German battery at Longues-sur-Mer, Pointe-du-Hoc and the Normandy American Cemetery at Colleville-sur-Mer. Afternoon Calvados tour and tasting. Hotel TBD.

Day 4—Thursday, 13 June— British and Commonwealth Landing Beaches and Arromanches. Hotel TBD.

Day 5—Friday, 14 June— Pegasus Bridge (Airborne Operation), Hillman Bunker, Canadian Cemetery at Bény-sur-Mer. German radar station at Douvres. Hotel TBD.

Day 6—Saturday, 15 June—Partial coverage of the push inland, the Falaise Pocket and the story of German Panzer Ace Michael Wittmann. Then depart to CDG airport. We expect to arrive at CDG around 18h00.

Participants are responsible for their own lodging arrangements for further travel after we reach CDG. Options include: booking a hotel near the airport, booking a hotel in Paris and taking a train or taxi to the hotel, or traveling further on via rental car or train on Saturday.



Opportunity to meet a veteran at Normandy American Cemetery, June 2019

About Knee Deep Into History, LLC and its Battlefield Tour Philosophy

Knee Deep Into History, LLC 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. Getting clients into the field as much as possible; in contrast to a "museum and memorials" tour.
2. Guiding small-group tours to ensure greater interaction with the guides.
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—What can you Expect from a KDIH Tour?

- This small-group tour is designed to enable maximum interaction between participants and guides; size is limited to a maximum of 12 participants.
- Unless otherwise noted in the tour brochure, there will be two guides on each trip, normally including one non-American guide to enhance the international nature of the tour.
- Clients will be picked up and returned to the designated meeting point at the times indicated.
 - Clients desiring other arrangements need to communicate their needs to Randy Gaulke in advance with the understanding that KDIH has to balance an individual client's needs with the group.
- The tour will be conducted in one or two nine-person vans or possibly one minivan and one car.
- We plan to stay in three-star traditional European hotel / restaurants.
- The evening of day 1 will include our first tour briefing followed by an introduction dinner.
- On tour days, participants should expect to be "in the field" from 09h00 to somewhere around 17h00, regardless of weather. This will be followed by a short break and dinner around 19h00 or 19h30.
 - 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.
- On our 7-day tours we pledge that at least half of our hotel nights will be in large towns / small cities, making it easier for those less interested in military history to "opt-out" for a day or two. We also pledge that we will structure at least two cultural events into the tour.
 - Depending on the region, this could include visits: to unique churches or other buildings; to alcohol producers (champagne, calvados, etc.); or to Mirabelle orchards, dairies, specialty food producers, etc.
 - It could also include dinners with key locals and their spouses.
- Regarding meals:
 - Continental breakfast will be served at the hotel.
 - Modest sandwich lunches (with wonderful European bread) will generally be eaten "in the field" to conserve time.
 - Snacks of water, soda, fruit and sweets will be available for free in the van to recharge one's batteries. Depending on the schedule and other factors, we will sometimes stop for coffee in a local café.
 - Multi-course dinners will generally start at the hotel restaurant around 19h00.
 - Traditional European dinners often last two hours +/-; this gives participants a chance to socialize and share their thoughts on the days' activities among each other and the tour guides.
- Most costs are included in the tour price. Costs not included are: 1) all dinner drinks, 2) dinners or lunches specifically excluded, including the dinner "on your own" mentioned above, and 3) souvenirs.
 - Also, transportation costs, including airfare, to the pick-up and return location is not included.
- We plan to visit key American Battle Monuments Commission Cemeteries and Memorials as well as German (and other national) military cemeteries and memorials in the area.
- We hope to make our tours international in nature and the tour is being marketed to European clients too, but no promises can be made.

If this tour format sounds attractive to you, we look forward to getting you knee deep into history!

Meet Tour Guides, Randy Gaulke and Markus Klauer

Randy Gaulke has been studying military history for decades as a wargamer, reenactor and battlefield visitor. 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 also visited the Ardennes and Normandy several times since 2010. In total, he has lived in Europe for more than two years and he speaks fluent English and German and intermediate French. He lives in Winchester, VA, not far from the National Archives.

Markus Klauer is a retired Bundeswehr Officer whose military career included five years in an armored battalion and professional work with American and French units. Like Randy, Markus has been studying military history and visiting battlefields for decades. He has written five books in German covering WW1 and his website can be viewed at <https://gb.weltkriegsbuch.de>. Since retiring in 2018 Markus has been expanding his battlefield research to the battlefields of WW2, including the Ardennes, Sedan 1940, Normandy and the Seelow Heights near Berlin. Markus lives in Lille, France and he speaks German, English and French fluently.

Randy and Markus have known each other for nearly 30 years. Their first major collaboration was a Small-Group Battlefield Walk Series of the Meuse-Argonne and St. Mihiel Salient and a Meet and Greet Dinner during the 2018 Centennial Commemoration. This was followed by a successful 2021 Knee Deep Into History tour season. 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.



Select Feedback from Knee Deep Into History, LLC's 2023 Tour Season

“This week has been a dream come true for me, thanks to the meticulous preparation and execution of the two of you. I truly felt as if I was walking in the footsteps of my grand-uncle in WW1 and of my dad in WW2, seeing what each of them was seeing and trying to imagine what each of them might have been thinking and feeling during their respective wartime experiences. I couldn't have asked for a more meaningful experience and the way the two of you embraced my entire family made the experience even more magical and memorable for me. I can't thank you enough!” John Decker.

“You have both far exceeded my expectations on this trip. I have been on many tours and know how they should be done and you two have surpassed them all. The time you both put in to personalize the trip details was extraordinary. This most thrilling part for me was sharing this experience with ALL my brothers. We have never traveled like this all together and I was not sure how that would work out. Thanks to you two it was fabulous. And to have Aidan and my grandson Jake as part of this is the thrill of a lifetime. They will never forget this experience. Thank You!” Bill Decker.

“On behalf of the men, women and horses of the Second Company Governor's Horse Guard, we can't thank you enough for your professionalism, organization and friendship on this tour. Being able to walk in the footsteps of our unit and men during the Great War has been a tremendous experience. However, visiting the cemeteries and honoring our fallen has been very emotional and the highlight of this journey. With kindest regards and admiration.” Capt. Paul Mazzara, Lt. Col. Stephen L. de Friesse, 1st Lt. Barbara Spremullo and Lt. Col. Gordon Johnson.

Pricing and Payment Details:

- The price is \$2,700.
- Single supplement please add \$500.
- An initial deposit of \$600 is required, with the balance due 11 April 2024 (60 days prior to departure.)
- Both the initial deposit and the balance can be paid by check or via PayPal invoice.

Refunds and Cancellation Policy:

- This tour requires a minimum of 4 participants.
 - If we do not have 4 participants by 10 April 2024 (61 days prior to departure), we will cancel the tour and refund your payment, less any transaction fees.
 - **For this reason, we caution you about booking non-refundable airfare prior to that date.**
- Please see the terms and conditions for our 2024 cancellation policy.

Terms and Conditions:

- Please review our separate 2024 Terms and Conditions.

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.
- Most American insurance policies do not extend overseas.

Tour Hotel(s) :

- We anticipate staying at the Hôtel du Brunvile in Bayeux and eating at La Table de Grand Luxembourg in Bayeux.
- As stated elsewhere, the hotel is subject to change due to unforeseen events.

Cultural Events:

- We anticipate having the following cultural events on this tour:
 - A visit to the world-famous Bayeux Tapestry
 - Details of the second cultural event are still being worked out.

Questions or Concerns:

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

2024 Tour Registration Form
June '44 Normandy Landings and Airborne Tour
10 – 15 June 2024 (6-days / 5-nights)

Participants: _____ (Names and ages)

Primary Contact: _____

Address: _____

Contact Email(s): _____

Contact Phone(s): _____

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: _____

Participant Signatures: _____

Reminder: To complete your registration you must send: 1) signed copies of the registration form, 2) signed copies of the 2024 Terms and Conditions page 4, and 3) a \$600 per-person deposit.

Please mail / email / text a copy of this form to:
Randy Gaulke, 124 East Clifford Street, Winchester, VA 22601 USA
kneedeepintohistory@gmail.com 908.451.0252