

# Knee Deep Into History Battlefield Tours

## Meuse-Argonne and St. Mihiel 7-Day / 6-Night Small Group Battlefield Tour 27 May – 2 June 2023



*Photo of Montfaucon Memorial and Village by Georg Snatzke*

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.

Briefings during this fascinating tour will focus on the complexities of coalition war-making in late 1918, advances made by allies on other fronts, German Pershing and other key A.E.F. leaders, a comparison of U.S. and German casualties, and Germany's defensive strategy in the region. **This tour is also timed to participate in the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery in Romagne-sous-Montfaucon!**



*The tunnels under Vauquois. Photo by Georg Snatzke*



*In search of traces of German positions. Photo by Dave Gaddis.*



*The remains of a German camp in the St. Mihiel Salient.*



## Schedule: (Subject to Modification)

***Pick-up and return point for this tour will be Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG). 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—Saturday, 27 May—Pick up at CDG at 12:00pm. Evening briefing and introductory dinner.

Day 2—Sunday, 28 May—Meuse-Argonne—I Corps. Walks will include the Lost Battalion Pocket, le Chêne Tendu and Vauquois Hill. **However, one walk could be cut, because of the time required to participate in the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery on this date.**

Day 3—Monday, 29 May—Meuse-Argonne III Corps and East Bank of the Meuse. Walks will include the destroyed village of Forges and areas around Molleville Farm.

Day 4—Tuesday, 30 May—V Corps operations, we plan to visit the Meuse-Argonne American Memorial at Montfaucon and the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery at Romagne-sous-Montfaucon on this date. Walks will include the German Wiesenschlenkenstellung (defensive position), Montfaucon and Nantillois to the Hindenburg Line.

Day 5—Wednesday, 31 May—St. Mihiel Salient with a focus on the Southern flank, including the St. Mihiel American Cemetery at Thiaucourt and the Deutscher Soldatenfriedhof Thiaucourt.

Day 6—Thursday, 1 June— St. Mihiel Salient, with a focus on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> Divisions, including the St. Mihiel American Memorial at Montsec and walks along the Tranchée de Calonne.

Day 7—Friday, 2 June—Morning departure at 9:00am to CDG. We expect to arrive at the return point by 12:00pm, but delays are always possible.



## 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 18 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.
  - If the tour exceeds twelve to fourteen clients, we will hire a small coach for greater comfort.
- 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.
- We make no such pledges for our shorter tours.
- 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.
  - On a 7-day tour we will generally include one dinner "on your own" in a large town / small city.
- 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.

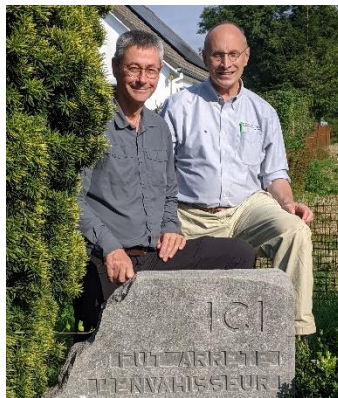
**If this tour format sounds attractive to you, we look forward to getting you knee deep into history!**

## 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. Randy also maintains the website <https://meuse-argonne.com> and the Meuse-Argonne.com Facebook group.

**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 2022 Tour Season

“...This is my second visit with you and I am working on my third and fourth visits in the future. Most of all I want to thank you for helping not just one, but now two, of my sons to gain an incredible appreciation for WW1 and their great-grandfather. There is nothing like walking in his footsteps...” *Matt Treaster, Kansas, 2022.*

“You have provided me one of the best experiences of my life in the historical arena. In many ways it is superior to the drama of the first “take” in filming the First Manassas battle scene in North – South Pt. II... While it was good, yours was better as it was on real ground and intellectually stimulating. Your scholarship is awesome and MAKES your program—especially through your analysis of period photography. I hope to use your talents again for my wife, Viola, to gain some perspective on her father in WW1.” *Matt Switlik, Michigan, 2022.*

“It is always a boon when your expectations of a great learning experience turn into a grand WW1 adventure with two guides whom are first-class historians. The two tours I took cleared my many uncertain opinions about the war... My interest in artillery and narrow-gauge railways was a cause that Markus and Randy accepted and lead me to many interesting sites...” *Ken Baumann, Michigan, 2022.*

### **Pricing and Payment Details:**

- The price is \$2,375.
- Single supplement please add \$335.
- An initial deposit of \$600 is required, with the balance due 28 March 2023 (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 27 March 2023 (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 2023 cancellation policy.

### **Terms and Conditions:**

- Please review our separate 2023 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 Le Tulipier Hotel in Vienne-le-Château and the Lac de Madine Hôtel in Heudicourt-sous-les-Côtes. Both are high quality, three-star hotels. The latter is situated near a beautiful lake and recreation area.
- As stated elsewhere, the hotel selections are subject to change due to unforeseen events.

### **Cultural Events:**

- Plans for the two cultural events are still being finalized.

### **Questions or Concerns:**

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

**2023 Tour Registration Form**  
**Meuse-Argonne and St. Mihiel 7-Day / 6-Night Tour**  
**27 May – 2 June 2023**

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 2022 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](mailto:kneedeepintohistory@gmail.com)      908.451.0252***