

Knee Deep Into History Battlefield Tours

“A Rendezvous With Death”: The Somme and Flanders Fields Small Group Battlefield Tour 4 – 7 Sept. 2024 (4-days / 3-nights)



Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing, Ypres, Belgium

Knee Deep Into History... Today, Flanders Fields and the Somme battlefields of WW1 stand as symbols of the futility of WW1 trench warfare and the thousands of casualties that it produced. More important, each of these battlefields also tells the story of changing strategies, tactics and weapons to try to break out of the Western Front stalemate.

Flanders fields is just 20 miles or so from the North Sea Coast. In 1914 it played a key role in the “Race to the Sea” during the First Battle of Ypres; with British and Belgian forces managing to hold on to a tiny sliver of Belgian territory. In 1915 the Imperial German Army launched its first gas attack during the Second Battle of Ypres; seeking to push the British lines west of Ypres and to reduce the threat of a British combined land / sea operation. In 1917 it was the British turn to attack; hoping to push the Germans back and to eliminate the North Sea U-boat bases that were wreaking havoc on British shipping. This Third Battle of Ypres (also known as Passchendaele) would become synonymous with the horrors of trench warfare, in part because of the incessant rains that reduced the battlefield to a morass.

The Somme has become equally symbolic. The two-week preparatory bombardment, combined with the blowing of mines on day 1, was unheard of until that time. In spite of this, Kitchener’s Army would suffer its worst day in history, producing 60,000 casualties in just one day, as leaders were slow to grasp the bombardment’s failure. The French Army would have better outcomes, but it would still suffer. In September 1916 the British Expeditionary Forces would use tanks for the first time; hoping to break the stalemate. However, the early tanks were far too unreliable to bring victory.

Today, the landscape of the two battlefields is dotted with countless cemeteries, memorials and preserved battlefield parks that tell the story of the once-giant trench warfare battles that occurred here. **Equally important, participants will attend the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate. Explore these two areas with us and get knee deep into history...**



Newfoundland Memorial Park, Beaumont-Hamel, Somme



Tyne Cot Cemetery & Visitors Centre, Zonnebeke, Belgium



Awaiting the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium

Schedule: (Subject to Modification)

Pick-up and return point for this tour will be 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—Wednesday, 4 September—Pick up at CDG at 12:00pm. Drive to the Ypres Salient and visit key sites. Introductory briefing and dinner in the evening. Stay overnight in Ypres Salient.

Day 2—Thursday, 5 September—Ypres battlefield sites and Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate. Stay overnight in Ypres Salient. Sites to be visited in the Salient include, but are not limited to: Langemarck gas attack and the Langemarck German Cemetery, Tyne Cot Cemetery, Polygon Wood, Passchendaele.

Day 3—Friday, 6 May—Drive to the Somme. Visit the Somme Battlefields. Stay overnight on the Somme.

Day 4—Saturday, 7 May—Somme battlefield visit continued. Late afternoon drive back to CDG. We anticipate arrive at CDG around 18h00. Sites to be visited on the Somme include, but are not limited to: The Lochnagar Crater, the Glory Hole, Beaumont Hamel, the Thiepval Memorial, Pozières and the Butte de Warlancourt.

Participants are responsible for their own lodging arrangements or 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.



Lochnagar Crater, La Boisselle, Somme—Always a moving experience !

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.
- 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.

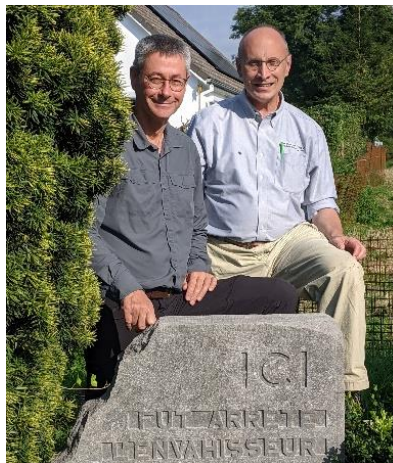
If this tour format sounds attractive to you, we look forward to getting you knee deep into history!

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. 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 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 successful 2021-2023 Knee Deep Into History tour seasons. 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 WWI and of my dad in WWII, 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.

“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 \$1,700
- Single supplement please add \$238.
- An initial deposit of \$600 is required, with the balance due 6 July 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 5 July 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 3-star hotels in the Ypres Salient for the first two nights and on the Somme for the third night.
- The exact hotels are still being selected. However, we try to stay at family-owned independent European hotels with a 3-star rating.

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
“A Rendezvous With Death”: The Somme and Flanders Field Tour
4 – 7 Sept. 2024 (4-days / 3-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