

Knee Deep Into History Battlefield Tours

Hamilton Coolidge Reburial: WW1 Airfield and Battlefield Small Group Battlefield Tour 10 – 16 Sept. 2024 (7-days / 6-nights)



Knee Deep Into History... As erosion brings the Aire River ever closer to Hamilton Coolidge's grave in the field where he crashed and is buried outside the village of Chevières, France, the Coolidge family has chosen to re-bury their famous 94th Aero Squadron son in a plot adjacent to the town cemetery. One hundred plus years after WW1, reburials are rare, especially with such a well-known aviator. **The reburial provides the perfect catalyst for an aviation-focused tour!**

We envision this Knee Deep Into History tour to be focused on the A.E.F. battlefields, but with a heavy mix of aviation worked into the itinerary in lieu of some of KDIH's daily battlefield walks. The tour will start with a visit to the Aisne-Marne Battlefields, where Coolidge scored his first victory in July 1918 and where his best friend, Quentin Roosevelt, was shot down during the same month. From there it will move to the Meuse-Argonne Sector and the St. Mihiel Salient (aka the Toul Sector), where the likes of U.S. Air Service aviators Eddie Rickenbacker, Frank Luke, Harold Goettler and Erwin Bleckley and others etched their names into American aviation history. It will also visit key Lafayette Escadrille sites, such as the Behonne and Senard airfields.

The tour will examine how the fledgling U.S. Air Service supported the attacking troops. It will still include some traditional Knee Deep Into History battlefield walks of moderate length and duration, such as the Lost Battalion site, allowing participants to explore the still visible remains of the battlefields. This will be supplemented by photos, maps and first-person accounts at key stopping points that focus on the ground war as well as the air war.

KDIH also strives to tell both sides of the story. In this regard we hope to paint a picture of the opposing German Luftstreitkräfte, sharing stories and photos of German aviators and airfields along the way.

The tour will culminate with participation in Capt. Coolidge's Reburial Ceremony on Sunday, 15 September 2024. We invite you to join the tour and get knee deep into AEF aviation history!



WW1 Remains in the woods in the St. Mihiel Salient



Gravestone rubbing at the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery



The peaceful Marne River today was a violent place in July 1918. Photo by John Decker.

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—Tuesday, 10 Sept.—Pick-up at CDG at 12:00pm. Drive to Château-Thierry. Stops at the Château-Thierry (aka Hill 204) Monument and Château-Thierry itself. Late afternoon Champagne tasting. Introductory briefing and dinner. Hotel TBD in Château-Thierry.

Day 2—Wednesday, 11 Sept.—Aisne-Marne battlefields and airfields. Battlefields will include Belleau Wood and related sites as well as the Aisne-Marne and Oise-Aisne American Cemeteries. A definite aviation site will be the initial gravesite of Quentin Roosevelt. Hotel TBD in Château-Thierry.

Day 3—Thursday, 12 Sept.—St. Mihiel / Toul Sector. Our examination of this battlefield will include its use as a training ground for numerous green AEF divisions (aka the Toul Sector) as well as the mid-September 1918 offensive by the American First Army. We will likely visit some of the key aerodromes in this sector, including the Lafayette Escadrille airfield at Behonne (near Bar-le-Duc) and the airfield at Souilly. Hotel TBD.

Day 4—Friday, 13 Sept.—St. Mihiel Sector in the morning, then drive to Verdun for some early afternoon shopping and down time before driving to our hotel. Stay at the Hôtel Restaurant Le Tulipier in Vienne-le-Château.

Day 5—Saturday, 14 Sept.—Meuse-Argonne battlefield. This will include a look at the story of the Lost Battalion resupply efforts and Frank Luke's Balloon Busting. It will also include a chance to visit the graves of pilots buried in the Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, including Bleckley and Luke. There will be a stop at Senard, one of the last Lafayette Escadrille airfields too. Stay at Le Tulipier.

Day 6—Sunday, 15 Sept.—Meuse-Argonne continued. **Participation in the Reburial Ceremony with the Cooldige Family and Village of Chevières, France.** Stay at Le Tulipier.

Day 7—Monday, 16 Sept.—Meuse-Argonne continued in the morning. Early afternoon drive back to CDG, with a last aviation stop at the rest area, "Aire de la Noblette," very close to the Lafayette Escadrille's last airfield. Return to CDG late afternoon or early evening.

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.

*****PLEASE READ*** WE WILL PREPARE A LIST OF KEY WW1 AVIAITION SITES IN AND AROUND PARIS, BUT WE WILL NOT BE VISITING THESE BECAUSE OF THE PARISIAN TRAFFIC. PARTICIPANTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO ARRIVE EARLY OR REMAIN AFTER THE TOUR TO VISIT SOME OF THESE SITES.**

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!



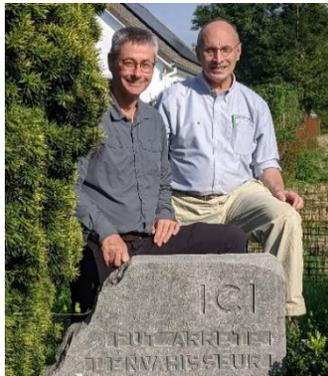
The Coolidge grave site in April 2022. Photo by Eric Mueller.

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 successful Knee Deep Into History tour seasons in 2021-23. 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 \$2,870.
- Single supplement please add \$400.
- An initial deposit of \$600 is required, with the balance due 12 July (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 11 July (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 a family-owned three-star hotel in the region. At the time of this writing, the exact hotel is still being selected.

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
Hamilton Coolidge Reburial: WW1 Airfield and Battlefield Tour
10 – 16 September 2024 (7-days / 6 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
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