

Knee Deep Into History Battlefield Tours

Battle of the Bulge 80th Anniversary, 7-Day / 6-Night Small Group Battlefield Tour 14 – 20 December 2024



Photo of the 277th VGD and 99th Inf. Div. Memorial by Hollerath. Photo by Graham Gaulke.

Hitler had decided to put all his eggs in one basket to defeat the Western Allies with one great push, the operation “Wacht am Rhein.” Starting on 16 December under terrible weather conditions the German Panzer Divisions broke through the thin American frontlines. Despite a strong resistance by several American units, the German Army made its way west. The famous “Kampfgruppe Peiper” advanced under circumstances that became tragic for all.

Soon the German units arrived at the main center of communication in that region, the town of Bastogne. The grim defense of Bastogne, mainly units from the 101st Airborne and 10th Armored Divisions, became famous and stands now for the strong will of the Allied Commanders and the simple GIs to finally defeat the Third Reich.

On Christmas Eve 1944 the reconnaissance battalion of 2nd Panzer reached the most western point of the Bulge, only a few kilometers away from the Meuse-River at Dinant.

Already from 22 December on, American counterattacks on the southern part of the Bulge had started to open the way to Bastogne. Finally, on 26 December the first Sherman tank made its way into the town. At latest from this day on, the German commanders realized that this offensive failed and that further fighting would be senseless. Nonetheless, the fights continued almost until the end of January 1945.

Note: This is our one and only 2024 battlefield tour that will coincide with the 80th anniversary of the Ardennes Offensive. We generally don't do this because of the increase in travel and VIP road shutdowns as well as the possibility of poor December weather. Please see the proposed schedule on page 3.



First evening briefing by Markus Klauer



7th Armored Division Memorial Sherman, St. Vith



Sanatorium St. Edouard, Stoumont, scene of heavy fighting against KG Peiper

Schedule: (Subject to Modification)

Pick-up and return point for this tour will be Brussels Airport (BRU). 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.

We are purposefully setting aside two half days for commemoration ceremonies during the tour and we will include a visit to one of Germany's most famous Christmas markets.

Day 1—Saturday, 14 Dec.—Pick up at BRU at 12:00pm. Visit to Henri Chapelle American Cemetery in Belgium. Afternoon rest time. Evening briefing and introductory dinner at the hotel.

Day 2—Sunday, 15 Dec.—Initial advance in the northern sector, with a focus on the area around Elsenborn and the Siegfried Line (Westwall), Skyline Drive, 106th Inf. Div. and St. Vith.

Day 3—Monday, 16 Dec.—Participation in the commemoration ceremonies TBD. Also, focus on the advance of Kampfgruppe Peiper: Büllingen, Baugnez, Stavelot, Malmedy, La Gleize and Neufmoulin.

Day 4—Tuesday, 17 Dec.—Focus on the defense of Bastogne, including visits to the Bastogne War Museum. Visit to the Deutscher Soldatenfriedhof Recogne.

Day 5—Wednesday, 18 Dec.—Focus on the German advance of the 2nd and 116th Panzer Divisions of the Fifth Panzer Army toward the Meuse River. Visit to Hotton War Cemetery, maintained by the CWGC.

Day 6—Thursday, 19 Dec.—Half day set aside for commemoration ceremonies TBD. Afternoon visit to the Luxembourg American Cemetery, followed by a visit to the Christmas Market in Trier, Germany.

Day 7—Friday, 20 Dec.—Morning departure at 9:00am to BRU. We expect to arrive at the return point around 11:00am, but delays are always possible. The tour ends with our arrival at BRU.

We encourage our clients to make plans to celebrate Christmas in Europe, if they desire to do this.

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.
- Specific to this 80th Anniversary Tour we have set aside two half days for commemoration ceremonies and we will be visiting a German Christmas Market.
- 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, 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 just moved to Waterloo, Belgium 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 three successful 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 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. The 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 \$2,800.
- Single supplement please add \$263.
- An initial deposit of \$600 is required, with the balance due 15 September 2024 (90 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 14 September 2024 (91 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 spending three nights at the Hotel Reiff, a family-owned three-star hotel in Fischbach-les-Clervaux, Luxembourg and three nights at the Hôtel du Lac, a three-star hotel in Bütgenbach, Belgium.
- While Bütgenbach is a small town, the Hôtel du Lac is situated near a lake offering some beautiful walking areas and a nearby bicycle / walking path.
- As stated elsewhere, the hotel is subject to change due to unforeseen events.

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
Battle of the Bulge 80th Anniversary, 7-Day / 6 Night Tour
14 - 20 December 2024

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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