

CHATEAUX, BOULEVARDS AND BATTLEFIELDS

14 MEMORABLE DAYS – PARIS TO PARIS

IMAGINE... A leisurely paced tour of the grand sights of France and Belgium plus a sensitive immersion into the life of the ANZAC Diggers throughout the sheer enormity of the tragedy of World War 1 in Northern Europe. From the grand boulevards of Paris and the Palace of Versailles, to the cobbled stone streets of picture perfect Bruges and the medieval squares of Ypres. Add dramatic Mont St Michel, the Normandy D-Day beaches, Bayeux Tapestry, stunning Chartres Cathedral and the glorious chateaux in the Loire Valley. Now blend all of this with the staggering devastation of the trench warfare through the Somme and Flanders battlefields and the moving 'Last Post' under the Menin Gate in Ypres. This exceptional tour offers you a unique and personal experience.



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DAY 1 PARIS

Your tour commences this evening with a welcome dinner in your hotel. This is an ideal chance to meet your Tour Manager and fellow travellers. (D)

Your Paris Hotel – Mercure Paris Montmartre

DAY 2 PARIS

This morning we are joined by an expert guide for a Paris panoramic city tour which will bring alive the city; from the Eiffel Tower, Champs Elysées and Arc de Triomphe to the Louvre and Notre Dame. Your afternoon will be free to explore the shops, cafes, museums and grand boulevards that Paris is famous for. This evening we will take an Illuminations drive to see Paris' major landmarks bathed in glorious light. We will also be stopping at the Latin Quarter, located on the 'left bank' of the River Seine, which is renowned for its narrow winding streets packed with cafes, bars and bistros. You will have free time to select a restaurant and enjoy a romantic dinner in this very Parisienne atmosphere. (B)

DAY 3 YPRES

We depart Paris and mid morning cross the uplands of the Somme to visit the 2nd Australian Division memorial at Mont St Quentin, on the outskirts of the historical town of Péronne. In 1918 the 'Diggers' stormed and took this heavily fortified town under

intense machine gun fire. Lunch time is at leisure in the old town of Péronne. Later this afternoon we continue to Ypres where we stay the next four nights. Between 1916 and 1918 thousands of Australian and New Zealand soldiers came to Ypres where some of the heaviest fighting in World War 1 took place. Completely destroyed in the war, the town was lovingly re-built, carefully restoring the grand old buildings and picturesque square. Tonight, after a buffet dinner in your hotel, you will attend the sounding of the Last Post at the Menin Gate, a moving ceremony repeated every night since 1928. (B, D)

Your feature Hotel in Ypres – Novotel Ieper Centrum. The hotel is modern and certainly not unique. It is a feature hotel because of its incredible location in the very heart of the old town; 50 metres from the gothic town square and barely 200 metres from the famous Menin Gate. Our selection of this hotel is very important as we stay here four nights.

DAY 4 YPRES

This morning your Tour Manager will take you on a walking tour through the centre of town, to see the magnificent Cloth Hall, St Georges Chapel





Palace of Versailles

and St Martin's Church. We have also included a visit to the 'In Flanders Fields' Museum - a remarkable interactive experience of World War 1 located in the Cloth Hall. The remainder of the afternoon and evening is free. Time to dine out in one of the numerous local Belgian cafes and restaurants, and of course you can again attend the sounding of the Last Post at the Menin Gate. (B)

DAY 5 YPRES

A fascinating day to discover the battlefields and memorials associated with some of the most costly operations fought in by Australian soldiers – the battles of the 'Flanders Offensive' of June to November 1917. In the morning we visit the site of the Battle of Messines, the New Zealand Memorial, the beautiful Toronto Avenue Cemetery and the Island of Ireland Peace Park. After time at leisure for lunch in Ypres, we drive up the famous Menin Road to visit Hooze Crater Cemetery and Museum (this small, private museum is in a renovated Chapel and small school), Hill 60, the 5th Australian Division Memorial and New Zealand Memorial at Polygon Wood, and the British Commonwealth's largest war cemetery at Tyne Cot. What happened in this area east of Ypres in 1917 was eventually summed up in one terrible word – Passchendaele! (B)

DAY 6 YPRES

We have included a delightful excursion today to the charming city of Bruges. Recognised as one of Europe's best preserved medieval cities, Bruges is riddled with canals, bridges and quiet back streets and is often called the Venice of the North. Wander the quaint and picturesque cobbled stone streets lined with tiny lace boutiques, tempting chocolate shops and cosy cafes. Maybe take a cruise along the canals or a ride in a traditional horse drawn carriage through the old town to admire the historic architecture. Or simply relax in one of the pavement cafes on the glorious old market square. On our return to Ypres, we will visit Essex Farm Cemetery, the site of the composition of the poem 'In Flanders Fields'. (B)

DAY 7 AMIENS

Today we journey through the old Western Front battlefields from Ypres in Belgium to Amiens in France. After crossing the border, we will stop at VC Corner (Australian Cemetery), Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery and the Australian Memorial Park at Fromelles, scene of Australia's first major battle on the Western Front. From there we visit the most spectacular British Commonwealth memorial in France – the Canadian National Memorial on Vimy Ridge. Later this afternoon we will travel across the old Bullecourt battlefield and view the moving statue of an Australian soldier at the Bullecourt 'Digger' Memorial. You will be staying the next two nights in Amiens, the capital of the Picardie region, and a city which has been declared a World Heritage site by UNESCO. Your hotel is located in the city centre within easy walking distance to the picturesque city canals, Jules Verne's House and the Notre-Dame – Amiens' masterpiece 13th century gothic cathedral. Dinner tonight is included in your hotel. (B, D)

Your Amiens Hotel – Mercure Amiens Cathedrale

DAY 8 AMIENS

In 1916 Australian and New Zealand soldiers fought in the Battle of the Somme. Today we experience the tragedy of the 1916 Somme Battlefield including the Adelaide Cemetery (site of the exhumation of Australia's Unknown Soldier in November 1993) and the Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux. We have included a visit to the Franco-Australian Museum at the Victoria Primary School in the village of Villers-Bretonneux. We also visit the Australian memorials at Pozieres. In the taking of this small village, over 23,000 Australians were injured with 8,000 losing their lives. The memorial at the windmill simply reads, "This spot was the centre of the struggle in this area and was captured by Australian troops who fell more thickly on this ridge than on any other". Later we visit the New Zealand Memorial at Longueval and the vast and tragic Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme. Returning to Amiens your evening is free. Make sure you visit the grand old market square and the glorious gothic cathedral. (B)



Mont St Michel, Brittany

© Atout France/Sudres

DAY 9 CAEN

Your morning stop will be in the medieval city of Rouen, where Joan of Arc was burned at the stake in 1431. We continue to Normandy where we spend a fascinating afternoon exploring the Normandy landing beaches and visit Arromanches-les-Bains, and the Landing Beaches Museum. Here you discover the remains of Mulberry 'B' Harbour, often referred to as the 'key to Normandy'. We will also visit the Pegasus Memorial and Museum, at Ranville, dedicated to heroic men of the 6th airborne division who played a pivotal part in the 1944 invasion. Your next two nights will be spent in William the Conqueror's city – Caen. Dinner tonight is included in your hotel. (B, D)

Your Normandy Hotel – Holiday Inn Caen City Centre

DAY 10 CAEN

Driving through the lush Normandy countryside, dotted with small, pretty villages, ancient farms and apple orchards, we visit the amazing structure of Mont St Michel. The abbey is perched atop a rocky outcrop linked to mainland France by a narrow causeway. The giant monastery dominates the tiny village below, and the entire complex has been listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. On our way back to Caen we visit the magnificent Bayeux Tapestry, depicting William the Conqueror's invasion of Britain in 1066. The remainder of your afternoon will be at leisure in Caen with its well preserved historical old town, heritage buildings, castle and abbeys. (B)

DAY 11 AMBOISE

Today we make our way to the verdant Loire Valley where, during the 15th and 16th centuries, the Kings of France and their courtiers had their holiday palaces. Driving south we reach the town of Usee with its 16th century chateau overlooking the Loire and Indre River Valley. Accredited as the castle in Charles Perrault's story 'Sleeping Beauty' it is also sometimes called the 'Castle of Dreams'. Lunchtime will be spent in the village of Azay-le-Rideau with its graceful chateau, which sits on the lakeside. We then visit the gardens of Chateau Villandry. Inspired by the classic gardens of the 16th and 18th century, different levels of the gardens include ponds, topiary, ornamental hedges and an extraordinary kitchen garden covering 12,500 square metres. We spend the next two nights nearby in the charming royal city of Amboise. Dinner tonight is included in your hotel. (B, D)

Your Loire Valley Hotel - Hotel Novotel Amboise

DAY 12 AMBOISE

Today you have the opportunity to explore two of the region's wonderful chateaux. Firstly Chenonceaux, where you enjoy both the interior and also the stunning gardens (audio guide included). Possibly one of the most photographed of the Loire Chateaux, the former home of Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de Medicis, spans the river Cher on a series of arches. We also stop and view the magnificent Chateau of Chambord. This enormous chateau was created by King Francois I as a hunting lodge within the surrounding grounds, which consisted of over 5,000 wooded hectares. Lunchtime is taken today in Blois, known for its historic castle and old town with narrow cobbled stone streets. This afternoon we return to Amboise with its Royal Palace and the famous Manor House 'Le Clos Luce' - where Leonardo da Vinci once lived as a guest of King Francois 1st. Your afternoon and evening will be entirely free to explore and enjoy the city sights. (B)

DAY 13 PARIS






First stop of the day will be at Chartres to take in the inspirational cathedral with its soaring aisles, beautiful stained glass and delicate carvings. This afternoon we take a guided tour through Louis XIV's magnificent Palace of Versailles, where the Versailles Treaty, which brought World War 1 to an end, was signed. The royal state rooms, with the 'Sun Kings' Hall of Mirrors, are extraordinary. On arrival in nearby Paris we check into our hotel where we spend our last night. Our farewell dinner tonight is in a traditional French restaurant. (B, D)

Your Paris Hotel – Mercure Paris Montmartre

DAY 14 PARIS

Sadly, your Chateaux, Boulevards and Battlefields tour ends this morning after breakfast. (B)

Compare the Albatross Difference

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Albatross gives you more...

Highlights

- Experience Paris – guided panoramic city tour plus an evening Illuminations drive to see the major landmarks bathed in glorious light
- Visit Péronne, Mont St Quentin and charming Bruges
- Stay 4 nights in gothic Ypres and visit the 'In Flanders Fields' Museum
- Be moved by the Sounding of the Last Post at the Menin Gate
- Visit Hooge Crater Cemetery and Museum
- Visit the Flanders Commemorative sites including Messines, Hill 60, Polygon Wood, Essex Farm Cemetery, Tyne Cot, Toronto Avenue Cemetery and Island of Ireland Peace Park
- Visit the Somme Commemorative sites including Australian National Memorial at Villers-Bretonneux, Fromelles Memorials, Vimy Ridge, Bullecourt 'Digger' Memorial, Adelaide Cemetery, Australian Memorials in Pozzières, New Zealand Memorial at Longueval and Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme
- Visit the Franco-Australian Museum in the village of Villers-Bretonneux
- Explore Joan of Arc's Rouen and historical Caen
- Take in Normandy's landing beaches and museum and the Pegasus Memorial and Museum at Ranville
- Marvel at the Monastery of Mont St Michel in Brittany
- See the magnificent Bayeux Tapestry and Chartres Cathedral
- Visit the Loire Valley Chateaux including Chenonceaux and Villandry Gardens
- See magnificent Chateau Chambord
- Be guided through the magnificent Palace of Versailles

Inclusions

- All excursions, scenic drives and sightseeing (as per the itinerary)
- Fully escorted by our experienced specialist Battlefield Tour Manager
- Local guides in Paris and Versailles
- First class air-conditioned touring coach
- End of tour tips to Tour Manager, drivers and local guides
- 13 night's accommodation as described
- Hotel portorage (1 bag per person)
- Buffet breakfast daily, 6 dinners including welcome and farewell dinners
- Entrances: 'In Flanders Fields' Museum, Hooge Crater Museum, Franco-Australian Museum at Victoria Primary School in Villers-Bretonneux, Arromanches Landing Museum, Pegasus Memorial and Museum, Bayeux Tapestry, Mont St Michel, Chateau Villandry gardens, Chateau Chenonceaux interior and gardens with audio guide, Chartres Cathedral, Versailles Palace
- Quietvox personal audio system whilst on tour

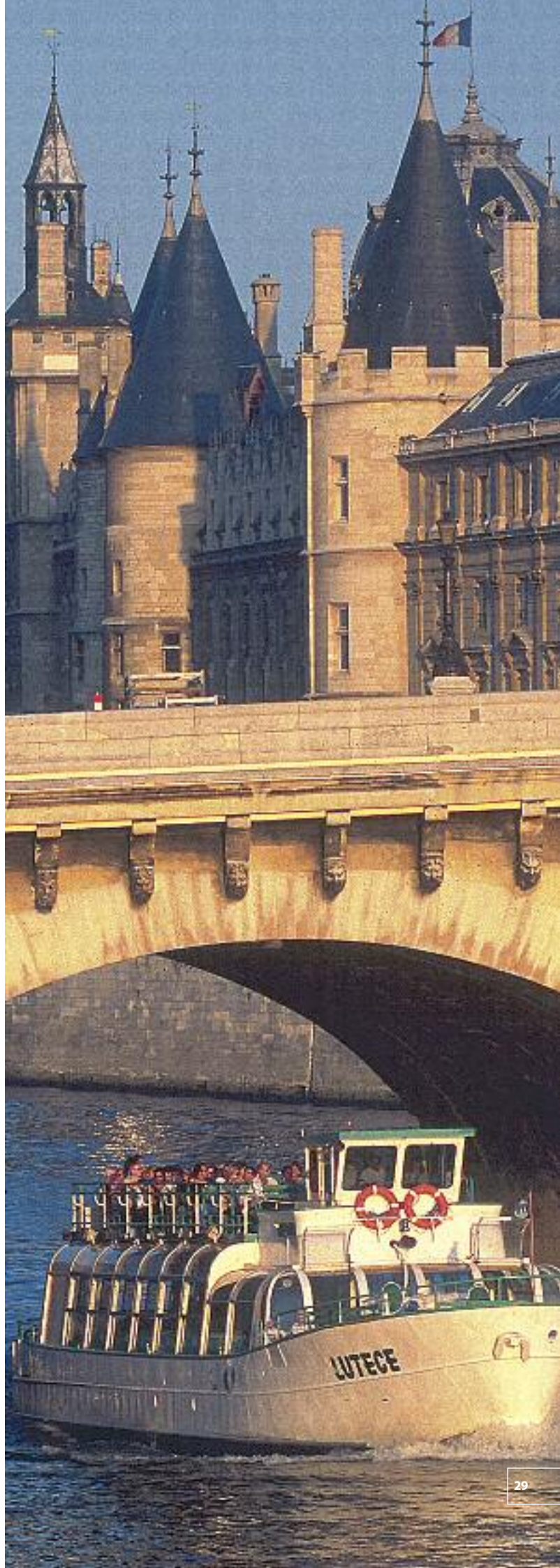
Tour Price

14 days only **\$4,339** pp twin share
Single supplement \$1,169 (land only prices)

Special 2011 Departures

31 May; 13 July; 7 September

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River Seine, Paris