



Varsity Travel
THE SCHOOL TRAVEL EXPERTS

***Itinerary For a Five Day History & English Study Tour
to The IWW Battlefields of Belgium & France.
Prepared For Mrs. L. Laszcz, Head of History,
Henley-in -Arden School, Stratford Road, Warwickshire.
B95 6AF.***

Dates: 10th - 14th July 2017



The itinerary is designed to balance visits of the greatest interest with recreative activities. It aims to make the maximum use of time without exhausting participants. The itinerary we have proposed is flexible and is only finalised after discussion with the Party Leader(s). Flexibility is also built into the holiday itself as changes can be made at very short notice according to weather conditions etc. The visit will be guided throughout. All excursions are well-prepared and are backed by notes and a commentary. The director is able to run the holiday according to Party Leader wishes. In this way Party Leaders will be free to concentrate on the care of their pupils rather than the organisation of the tour. The visit is underpinned by excellent, catering, transport and security.



ACCOMMODATION



The Hotel Ibis Tourcoing, Lille.**

Centre Gen De Gaulle, Avenue Gustave Dron, 59200 Tourcoing.

Tel: 0033 (0) +33 3 20 24 84 58.

This two star hotel is situated on the outskirts of Lille and offers comfortable accommodation for our Study Visits of Ypres and The Somme. Pupils are accommodated in twin bedded rooms, each with en-suite facilities, televisions and telephones. There is a pleasant meeting room for breakfasts and evening meetings, and the shopping complex of Lille is within a few minutes' drive. Both Ypres and The Somme battlefields are within an hour's drive from our hotel, allowing for rapid transfers between visits. We have found this hotel to be very suitable for our school groups in the Ypres and Somme regions of France.

DAY ONE

- 08.30 Meet coach and load luggage.
- 09.00 Depart Henley in Arden School. Onward transfer to Dover.
- 13.00 Collect lunch supplies from Booker C&C, Folkestone.
- 13.45 E.T.A. Port of Dover. Check in for next sailing.
- 14.45 Depart Port of Dover.
- 17.00 E.T.A. Calais. Transfer to Ypres.
(Note: Continental time is 1 hour in advance of U.K. time).
- 18.30 **Visit to Essex Farm**

Probably the most visited and most famous site in the Ypres Salient, Essex Farm was named after a small cottage that stood beside the Boesinge road at the entrance to the canal access track. In the grounds of Essex Farm Cemetery are concrete dugouts that were used between 1915 and 1917 as a dressing station. It is here that Canadian Medical officer Colonel John McCrae, who had served with the Artillery in the Boer War, had written 'In Flanders' Fields' - perhaps the war's best-known poem. First published in PUNCH on 8th December 1915, the poem became an instant popular success & led to the symbol of the poppy for the British Legion & in remembrance of those who gave their lives in the Great War and subsequent conflicts.

- 19.30 **Dinner at 'The Eiland' Restaurant, Ypres.**
- 21.00 Coach transfer to Hotel Ibis.
- 21.45 E.T.A. Hotel Ibis.

On Arrival at the Hotel: Luggage will be unloaded onto the forecourt just outside the main entrance to the hotel. Participants are requested to identify their luggage and take it into the vestibule. Rooms will be allocated and participants given their keys.

DAY TWO

08.00 Breakfast.

09.15 Onward transfer to Ypres.

10.00 **Visit to Hooze Crater**

Participants will have a guided tour of the water-filled crater and blockhouse. Locals believe that an Allied Tank lies at the bottom of the lake crater. Hooze was the scene of some of the most ferocious fighting and it was here that the Germans first used flamethrowers. One section of original trench is currently being excavated and pupils will see the original duckboards, rivetting and other material that has been unearthed.

11.00 **The Sanctuary Wood Trenches and Museum**

A large French howitzer marks the entrance to this museum. These are probably the best preserved trenches in the region and pupils can walk through the trenches and tunnels that made up this section of the line. Of particular interest are the wooden viewing boxes in the museum, where participants can see three dimensional photographs of the hardships endured by the troops in the Sanctuary Wood region. Many of the original shell-blasted tree stumps still remain, as well as several mounds of original battle debris such as barbed wire, many shells, helmets, rifles and buttons.

12.00 Picnic lunch at the Hill 62 Cafe.

13.00 **Tyne Cot Military Cemetery**

Tyne Cot is the largest British Military Cemetery in the world and stands on a gentle incline that witnessed some of the most fierce fighting and miserable conditions during the Battle of Paschendale in 1917. Two German concrete bunkers still remain at the entrance to the cemetery. The graveyard was designed in the style of an English garden and holds many thousands of graves. The back wall of the cemetery holds the names of many soldiers with no known grave. The list continues on the Menin Gate in Ypres. By observing the dates of death and the regiments involved, students are able to discover when particular regiments were ordered 'over the top' and in which sector of the front.

14.15 **The German Military Cemetery of Langemark.**

Visiting the cemeteries of the opposing sides is useful for comparison purposes. The German cemetery of Langemark is a comparatively grey, foreboding and depressing visit. The headstones are not a clean white, as in the Allied cemeteries, but a dark grey, with the name, the dates of birth and death the only details at all. Many graves hold two or even three bodies to symbolise comradeship in death as well as in life. The centre of the graveyard holds a mass grave for those soldiers of 'First Ypres', many of whom were students who sang as they went over the top to confront the Allies.

15.30 Transfer to Bowling Alley, Ypres.

16.15 **Bowling at The Ypres Bowling Alley.**

We always combine visits of the greatest interest with recreational activities & pupils will be able to enjoy some time bowling. The Tour Director will provide prizes for the highest scoring individuals.

18.30 **Dinner at 'The Eiland' Restaurant, Ypres.**

20.00 **The Menin Gate Ceremony.**

From the Old Cloth Hall, pupils will walk the short distance to The Menin Gate to view the thousands of names who have no known grave. At 20.00, traffic is stopped and the Last Post is played under the gate by volunteers from the local fire brigade, as it has been for the past 80 years. The ceremony is both moving & haunting.

20.30 Coach transfer to Hotel Ibis.

21.15 E.T.A. Hotel Ibis.

DAY THREE

08.00 Breakfast.

09.00 Onward transfer to Bruges.

10.30 **Visit to Bruges - 'The Venice of The North'**

Bruges is one of the most beautiful towns in Belgium, with its winding canals, cobbled squares, ancient town hall & historic cathedral. We will walk through the ancient cobbled streets to arrive at the central square, where we will enjoy some free time to explore the town & visit the shops. Afterwards, we will have the opportunity to climb to the top of the cathedral spire for magnificent views over the rooftops below. Some pupils opt to pay a small amount for a guided tour around the canals by boat. This can be organised by the Tour Director for those pupils who would wish to participate in this activity.

12.15 Lunch.

13.15 **Ascent of The Bruges Bell Tower**

Pupils will have the opportunity of climbing the spiral staircase to reach the top of the Bruges bell tower, from where spectacular views of the city can be enjoyed.

16.00 **Canal Cruise Around Ancient Bruges.**

During the late afternoon we will enjoy a guided cruise around the network of canals in the Bruges, viewing some of the ancient brick houses & sights of the city that are inaccessible on foot.

17.30 Coach transfer to Lille.

19.00 Dinner at Flunch Restaurant, Lille.

21.00 E.T.A. Hotel Ibis.

DAY FOUR

- 08.00 Breakfast.
- 09.00 Coach transfer to Arras.
- 10.30 **Visit to The Wellington Quarry - The Battle of Arras Memorial.**

Pupils will discover the preparation for the Battle of Arras in April 1917, when 24,000 soldiers of the First, Third & Fifth British Armies were gathered underground for the most surprising & largest attack of WW1.

During the Great War Arras was destroyed as early as 1914. From 1916 the New Zealand tunnellers were given the task of linking the ancient network of tunnels under the city so that 24,000 soldiers could be secretly quartered in preparation for the start of the enormous offensive.

After descending 20 metres underground in a glass lift, pupils will experience life in the underground world beneath Arras. Imagining that they are ascending to the Front Line to attack on 9th April 1917 at 5.30am, pupils will then walk to the surface where they will experience the shock of the battle through a film projection.

This new visit will be a memorable & poignant experience for students & will give them a taste of life in the front lines for a British infantry soldier.

- 12.30 Lunch.
- 13.00 Transfer to The Battlefield of Beaumont Hamel.
- 13.45 **The Beaumont Hamel Battlefield.**

Beaumont Hamel is an authentic section of the trench line that has been preserved as part of a memorial to the soldiers who perished there. It is associated with the Newfoundlanders who were virtually wiped out in one attack here. From the Newfoundland Memorial our guide will take us through the particularly well preserved allied trenches and out across no-mans-land to 'Marker Tree' that still stands in an advanced position. We will continue to inspect the remains of the German Trenches, which contain debris from the battle. Behind this front line we will see 'Y Ravine,' a steep sided valley that afforded the enemy protection from the massive shelling to which they were subjected and which enabled them to return to their positions to wreak terrible carnage on the allied soldiers as they advanced. Our tour will end with a visit to the allied cemeteries.

15.15

The Thiepval Memorial and Battlefield.

The Thiepval War Memorial is dedicated to those British soldiers who fought and died on the Somme and who have no known grave. Some of our groups choose to plant some commemorative bulbs here, or lay a wreath. There is a new Visitors Centre here explaining the events that took place at Thiepval during the Great War.

16.15

Lochnagar Crater

We will pay a short visit this crater created by a land mine and so huge that it will cause participants to gasp. The crater was exploded during the launch of the huge Somme offensive & the explosion could be heard across the Channel in London.

17.00

Transfer to Flunch Restaurant, Lille Englos.

18.30

Dinner at Flunch Restaurant.

20.00

Transfer to Hotel Ibis.

20.45

E.T.A. Hotel Ibis.

DAY FIVE

- 08.00 Breakfast.
- 09.00 Onward coach transfer to The Somme region of France.
- 10.15 **Visit to Vimy Ridge IWW Trenches and Monument.**

Vimy Ridge was a particularly well defended area of vital strategic importance. After a number of failed attempts, it was the Canadians who, after weeks of careful preparation, finally took it. Vimy Ridge and nearby Arras were also sites of important military action during the Second World War. It was here that the B.E.F. met to counter attack against the German advance. Their valient efforts forced the enemy to pause and gave time to withdraw via Dunkirk.

As we approach the front line in our coach, participants will be impressed by the landscape pitted by thousands of shell holes. The Tour Director will conduct a tour of the allied front line, no-mans-land and the German trenches. The tour will end with a visit to the Canadian Memorial, towering above the valley on the highest part of the ridge.

- 11.45 Lunch at Vimy Ridge.
- 12.15 Transfer to Calais.
- 13.15 **Final Shopping at The Cite de Europe Hypermarket, Calais.**

The Cite of Europe hypermarket is the largest in Europe and is popular with the many British shoppers who take advantage of the great differences in price between the same goods in Calais and in the UK. Most shops in the complex take Pounds Sterling as well as Euros.

- 14.30 Transfer to Port of Calais.
- 15.00 E.T.A. Port of Calais. Check in for next crossing.
- 16.05 Depart Calais.
- 16.30 E.T.A. Port of Dover. Onward transfer to Henley in Arden School.
(Local time)
- 20.30 E.T.A. Henley in Arden School.**