



## NORMANDY AND VIMY 95<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY TOUR

11 days

**\$3,165**

Departs Apr 5, 2012



Join us and celebrate the 95th Anniversary of the Victory of Vimy on a unique tour to historic battlefields of France and Belgium.

Travellers will join the Memorial rededication atop Vimy Ridge. Guided visits include: the Somme, Beaumont-Hamel, as well as Belgian war sites at Passchendaele, the shooting post at Poperinge and Ypres where every night the downtown pauses to pay tribute to Allied soldiers who died in the fields of Flanders.

The tour returns to JUNO Beach, where Canadian D-Day troops launched the liberation of Europe in WW II.

Finally the tour ends in Paris where travellers will have a full day tour to see the charming village of Montmartre where many artists (Van Gogh, Renoir, Picasso) settled to enjoy the simple and peaceful country life towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. From Montmartre, the tour heads to the Louvre Museum, where a guided visit will take you through its many exhibits such as the Winged Victory, the Venus of Milo, and Da Vinci's famous Mona Lisa.

### INCLUDES

- Return air
- Accommodation: five nights hotel accommodation in Ypres, two nights accommodation in Caen, plus two nights accommodation in Paris\*
- One participant gets FREE LAND for every six paying participants
- Tour Director for the direction of the tour
- Excursions and entrance fees as per the itinerary
- Transportation in a luxury coach
- 18 meals: nine European breakfasts and nine dinners
- Gratuities
- Airport transfers
- Airport departure taxes
- Local taxes & service charge

CDN\$, per person, quad occupancy. \*Based on 2.5 to 3 star hotels. Air is from Toronto. Please enquire about airfares from other Canadian gateways. Trip based on min. 42 paying participants.

1.866.341.1777

[www.meritvacations.com](http://www.meritvacations.com)

**merit**  
...for the experience



## FULL ITINERARY

### Day 1, Apr 5: DEPART TORONTO

Board your flight to Europe and prepare for your Normandy and Vimy 95th Anniversary Tour.

### Day 2, Apr 6: PARIS – YPRES

Arrive in Paris at Charles de Gaulle airport and meet your Tour Director who will remain with you throughout your Normandy and Vimy 95th Anniversary tour.

Board our travel coach for our transfer to Ypres. After checking in to the hotel, your tour director will give you a tour of the city centre including a visit to the In Flanders Field Museum at Cloth Hall.

This evening we will enjoy a **Welcome Dinner** with the entire tour group – a great way to begin the tour.

### Day 3, Apr 7: BATTLEFIELDS OF THE SOMME

In the summer of 1916, nearly a year before the historic Canadian Army victory at Vimy Ridge, the allied armies of Britain, the Commonwealth countries (including Canada) and France launched the largest offensive of the war thus far – to relieve the French troops at Verdun, to inflict as heavy losses as possible on the German armies and to gain as much territory along that sector of the Western Front as possible. Allied generals set the date for the commencement of the offensive for July 1, 1916. Although thousands of Canadians took part in the operation, they did so as members of Britain's Expeditionary Force. The offensive, which lasted until November, achieved very little. But it cost tens of thousands of lives.

Near Albert, France, stands the **Thiepval monument** that pays tribute to the nearly 60,000 men lost in the extended battle. Key to the first day of the offensive was the role played by the Newfoundland regiment. In just 40 minutes of fighting, the Newfoundlanders advanced into German machine-gun fire, and were decimated. Barely 60 of the 700 men answered roll call the next morning. The site of the Beaumont- Hamel battlefield is considered sacred ground to Canadians and Newfoundlanders alike.

### Day 4, Apr 8: YPRES, BELGIUM AND AREA

In 1914, when Britain declared war on Germany, so did Canada. While most of the recruits in the Canadian Expeditionary Force were British-born, they had lived in Canada long enough to sense

a unique role in the liberation of Europe. Within weeks of the start of the war, German armies were on the doorstep of all the major cities of France and Belgium. Among them was **Ypres**, where the first Canadians overseas took a stand in defence of the Ypres salient. The 1st Canadian Division, exhibited extraordinary valour, particularly in the face of one of the first gas attacks of the war; despite more than 5,000 casualties near where the Menin Gate stands today, Canadians held. We will visit important Canadian memorials and cemeteries in the area, including **St. Julian**, and **Tyne Cot Cemetery**.

During the Great War, the city of Ypres was virtually levelled. Throughout the siege, the remnants of the spires of the Cloth Hall stood eerily behind the Allied troops. Today rebuilt exactly as stood before the war, the building has become the **In Flanders Field Museum** and offers a tactile, engaging eye-witness account of life in Ypres for soldiers and civilians during those first years of the war. The tour will take in the museum and allot time to take in the shops and churches around the Ypres Grote market or Grand Place. One of our evening here will include witnessing one of the most moving ceremonies of the trip.

**The Last Post ceremony** has been held nightly at the Menin Gate since November 11, 1929 (with an interruption during WW11, when Germany occupied the city). Every night at exactly 8 p.m., Ypres police halt all traffic through and around the gate. As silence falls, uniformed members of the local fire brigade arrive and buglers sound the Last Post and Reveille. This is the community's nightly tribute to all those who fought to defend their ancestors in Flanders Fields.

### Day 5, Apr 9: VIMY RIDGE

Today we will spend a full day at Vimy Ridge for the **95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**. It was here, on Easter Monday, 1917 that 49 battalions – nearly 100,000 Canadian men – rose from the trenches in front of No Man's Land and accomplished the impossible. Where, for two years, neither the British nor French Armies had succeeded in overcoming the German Army occupation of the ridge, the Canadians – in a matter of hours – managed to seize and hold the most strategic heights of the Western Front. Some say the even signified the birth of Canada as a nation. See the memorial, the museum, trenches, tunnels, cemeteries and the landscape, still marked from the masses of artillery shells, and where Canadians from coast to coast came together to fight, die and ultimately triumph.



### Day 6, Apr 10: YPRES, BELGIUM AND AREA

Among our stops today will be a fitting tribute to another Canadian of the War, John McCrae, the young physician from Guelph Ontario, who interrupted his practice to serve in the CEF and who, in 1915, composed among the most enduring pieces of poetry – In Flanders Fields. We will visit **McCrae’s memorial** on the Canal Bank. We will also take in the extraordinary **Langemarck Cemetery**; where 44,000 German war-dead are buried. Also in our itinerary are the valleys and ridges of **Passchendaele** where Canadians made another Vimy-like push against German occupying troops in the fall of 1917.

Not as well known, but a unique window on military life overseas during the Great War, is a visit to **Poperinge**, the small Flemish town outside Ypres, where hundreds of thousands of troops took their leave. Here we will visit the **Talbot House** where beginning in 1915, thousands of soldiers tried to escape the horrors of the war. Poperinge is also home of the Shooting Post, where as many as 70 Allied soldiers (some Canadian) found guilty of alleged crimes and desertion were executed.

### Day 7, Apr 11: NORMANDY REGION AND CAEN

Our tour shifts the focus to the Second World War, and two of the most extraordinary moments in Canadian military history during that 1939 – 1945 conflict. We will have two dates in our minds en route to the coastal area of France – August 19, 1942 and June 6, 1944. Our bus trip southwest will stop at the seaside town of Dieppe. This is where Canadian troops made a first attempt to crack Hitler’s defences on the Atlantic Wall. That August day, 6,000 soldiers (most of them Canadians) launched the **Dieppe** raid.

Those nine hours on the beaches were the nine bloodiest hours in Canadian military history; more than half the assault troops became casualties that day. We will visit the **Theatre Museum** in the town, where artefacts and images tell much of the story of that day.

We also take time to walk that historic beach where nearly a thousand Canadians died. On to **Caen** as our home base for the second phase of the tour.

### Day 8, Apr 12: BEACHES OF NORMANDY

Today will give us a vivid impression of the role that the British and Canadian troops played in the greatest amphibious invasion in military history – the June 6, 1944 invasion landing at Normandy.

At **Arromanches** – the British sector code named Gold Beach; we will visit the **Invasion Museum** which showcases one of the wonders of the expedition – the creation of the artificial Mulberry Harbour. The highlight for Canadians of course will be our guided tour of the most recent addition to museum row along the Normandy beaches – the **Juno Beach Centre**. Opened in 2003, this veteran’s funded facility gives the visitor the strongest impression yet of the impact 15,000 Canadians in the D-Day operation made on that longest day.

We’ll also make time to visit **Beny-Sur-Mer Cemetery** where more than 2,000 Canadians who participated in the first days of the invasion are buried, and **Bernieres-Sur-Mer**, where the Queen’s Own Rifle Regiment landed.

### Day 9, Apr 13: BEACHES TO CAEN TO PARIS

Our final day in the Normandy D-Day landing area, we will go to the other British sector, code named Sword Beach and we will take in the **Pegasus Bridge Museum**, which houses the actual bridge which British infantry (landed there by scores of gliders) captured just minutes after midnight on D-Day morning.

In the afternoon we will take in perhaps the most enlightening museum available in the area, the **Caen Memorial**. Inaugurated on June 6, 1988, the Caen Memorial is among the most modern museums dedicated to the history of war and peace in the 20th Century. Innovative, accessible and emotionally charged, the exhibits and presentations (film, photographs, letter, artefacts and historical data), this museum takes visitors on a journey into the depths of war but also into the uplifting periods of peacemaking as well. Drive to **Paris** and check into the hotel.

### Day 10, Apr 14: PARIS

After breakfast, enjoy a full day city tour to discover the beauty of Paris. Highlights will include the **Eiffel Tower**, **Notre Dame Cathedral**, and the lovely **Montmartre**. Topped by the beautiful Sacre-Coeur white basilica, Montmartre is the highest Paris hill at 130 meters. Very rural until a century ago, Montmartre is nowadays the last village in the big city of Paris. Today, the many painters on Place du Tertre are always ready to sketch your portrait, a nice souvenir of Paris.

### Day 11, Apr 15: Home

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

## MERIT VACATIONS TERMS & CONDITIONS

### RESPONSIBILITY

Merit Travel Group Inc doing business as Merit Vacations, acts solely as agents for the Travel Service Suppliers such as hoteliers, airlines, ground service operators, bus operators, etc. who are providing their facilities as described in this brochure. We do our best to select such suppliers but exercise no control over them and cannot be held responsible for the failure of these suppliers to carry out any obligations. Any and all bookings made with these suppliers by us, for you, are subject to the terms and conditions of each and every such supplier. Supplier liability may also be limited by law, tariffs, or conditions set forth in their documentation, tickets, etc. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, Merit and its directors, officers, employees, affiliates, successors, assigns, agents and other representatives are not responsible for any and all claims for losses, damages (whether direct, indirect, special, punitive, or other consequential damages, lost profits or opportunities) delays, illness, injuries, inconvenience, loss of enjoyment, or anxiety (whether based in contract, tort, negligence, strict liability or otherwise, and even if Merit and the Travel Service Suppliers have been advised of the possibility of damages to such party or any other party) arising from:

- (a) Fault or negligence or omissions on the part of the said travel service suppliers;
- (b) Illness, theft, strikes, mechanical problems, quarantine, governmental intervention, weather conditions, acts of hostility or violence, and any other grounds beyond our control;
- (c) Your failure to obtain passport, visas, other travel documents or inoculations
- (d) Your failure to advise us the name of the traveler exactly as it appears on the passport;
- (e) Your failure to report on time at an airport or ground transfer facility;
- (f) Material damages, theft or other mysterious disappearances of your goods;
- (g) Personal injuries or death;
- (h) Force Majeure - an event(s) beyond our, or our supplier(s), reasonable control including, but not limited to, acts of God, strikes, lockout or other labour disputes or disruptions, wars, blockades, insurrections, riots, earthquakes, weather conditions, floods or acts of restraints imposed by governmental authorities.

### PRICING

All prices are per person in Canadian dollars unless otherwise noted. GST, HST and provincial taxes are applicable on tours as noted.

### INCREASE IN TOUR COSTS

Merit reserves the right to increase tour prices in the event of an increase in government and airport authority imposed taxes and fees, fuel and currency surcharges, supplier price increases, or any other cost increase. If the increase is greater than 7% of the tour cost, the client may cancel the booking within 7 days of notification and obtain a full refund.

### PAYMENT SCHEDULE

A deposit of \$500 per person is required at the time of booking. Full and final payment is due 90 days prior to departure.

**Deposit requirements for some tours may vary. You will be advised of such cases at time of booking.**

### LIABILITY

Merit cannot assume responsibility for any costs incurred for any travel arrangements purchased separately from the Merit tour. Merit's responsibility shall extend only to the provisions of advice as to industry-standard or supplier recommended connections and check-in times. Provided Merit supplies such advice, they shall not be responsible for missed connections or departures, regardless of the cause.

### TRAVEL PROTECTION PLAN (INSURANCE)

Trip cancellation and interruption insurance, medical and hospital insurance, baggage insurance, and various additional insurances are available and HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. If you choose not to purchase insurance, you are required to sign an Insurance Waiver Form. Note that if you choose not to purchase insurance, you are fully liable for any and all penalties imposed

as stated under Cancellation Policy on this page. Please speak to your representative at the time of making reservations about insurance.

### REFUNDS

The nature of travel involves risks and unpredictable weather and thus Merit cannot assure any departure or arrival times at any point of an itinerary. Your right to receive a refund is limited.

There will be no discounts or monies refunded for any missed or unused services.

Merit reserves the right to cancel the tour for any reason. Should this occur, a full refund will be made to the traveller.

### CANCELLATION POLICY

While Merit will do its utmost to minimize any penalties charged, there are irrecoverable costs associated with your tour. The following penalties will be considered the costs incurred with cancellation:

- (A) 90 days or more prior to departure: Loss of total deposit.
- (B) 89 – 60 days prior to departure: Loss of 50% of total tour cost.
- (C) 59 days or less prior to departure: Loss of 100% of total tour cost.

**Cancellation penalties for some tours will vary and there may be additional penalties associated with the airfare. If so, these policies will be noted separately at time of booking and will prevail.**

### TOUR CHANGES

We reserve the right to substitute itineraries, hotels, airlines or vessels due to conditions beyond our control. In such cases we will do everything possible to ensure the locations visited, the excursions taken and the hotels offered are similar to the ones originally planned. Any change to itineraries will not result in eligibility for a refund.

### REVISION FEE

Changes to your tour reservation might not be possible. Should you request a change and we are able to accommodate it, you will be subject to any charges imposed by the airline or tour suppliers. In addition, we reserve the right to charge a \$50 revision fee for any change made after the deposit is paid. A change in name or departure date may constitute a cancellation, and the corresponding penalties may apply.

### PERSONAL DOCUMENTATION

All passengers travelling internationally must travel with a passport. Many countries require the passport to be valid for 6 months beyond the traveller's return date. Visas may be required for some destinations. It is the passenger's responsibility to obtain at the passenger's expense, all documentation required by all relevant authorities. In the event that the passenger does not possess the correct documentation, the air carrier has the right to refuse passage.

### DESCRIPTION

Every effort has been made to describe and produce the travel services and photographs as accurately as possible in the printed tour description. However we reserve the right to correct errors and we will make all reasonable efforts to inform you should any significant changes occur.

Please note that the living standards and local conditions during your tour may be different from what you are accustomed to at home.

### CONSENT

Your retention of tickets, reservations or bookings after issuance shall constitute your consent to the above terms.

If you encounter any concerns during your tour, please inform your local travel service provider. If the matter cannot be resolved, please inform Merit Vacations in writing upon your return.

Merit Travel Group Inc Reg. No: ON- 4499372/4499356  
BC-33127/34799/34798 QC-7002238  
200-111 Peter Street, Toronto ON M5V 2H1

1.866.341.1777

www.meritvacations.com

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