



Welcome to Rott's Manor

Europe 2014 Trip Report

70 years ago our "Greatest Generation", America's finest, boarded their vessels and sailed across the English Channel into Hitler's "Fortified Europe". We took a WWII tour in June that reflects the courage of these young men and the sacrifices that they made. Covering 4 European Countries, WW II and WW I Battlefields and the cities of Reims, Luxembourg, Frankfurt, Nurnberg & Munich, where we took in the history and architecture as well as the tourist sites of these vibrant cities. Come join us for this unforgettable historical experience of a lifetime.

On May 31st, days before joining our 4 country WWII tour in Paris, we began our adventure in Amsterdam (adding a 5th country to our European tour). We spent those days taking in the scenic canals, learning on a photo tour, visiting the Anne Frank House and sampling the food at a massive food truck gathering.

Our guide, Gen, from [Photo Exposure Tours](#) leaped for joy as she shows us how to use our camera settings to get the best photos in Amsterdam and beyond.

Tuesday, June 3rd we flew from Amsterdam into Paris Charles De Gaulle's International Airport, clearing customs & Immigration was a breeze. In the arrivals hall, we located our Custom Euro Tour's group escort. Soon we were transferred by motor coach to our hotel in central Paris for 1 night.

Check in was a bit chaotic since the coach dropped us off and took the rest of the group to other hotels, and even though we were told that there would be a tour representative in the hotel lobby none was found.. So we checked ourselves in without help of a tour representative. The biggest problem with this was we had no idea the schedule or place for dinner this evening.

The tour group had free time to relax and adjust to the time difference. Well, we had one important thing to accomplish in Paris. No not see the Eiffel Tower...but go find Rin Tin Tin's grave. Yup, Rin Tin Tin is buried in Paris Pet Cemetery.

After spending the afternoon on the subway getting to the pet cemetery, we made our way back to the hotel to clean up for the included welcome dinner, which thankfully our tour guide called our room to tell us when and where to meet for dinner.

At dinner our guide warned everyone that this would be an exhausting tour and not to start by burning the candle at both ends...go to bed early tonight...so what do we do, we hop on the subway ride it to the Eiffel Tour, just so we can see it sparkle at night. Well, right now the days are really long here and it doesn't get dark until well after 10 pm...so we stay out late, but have a really good time..and even ride the merry-go-round at the Eiffel Tour!

Wednesday, June 4th

After breakfast in the hotel our group took a bus tour of Paris. Our local city guide showed us all the famous sights: Eiffel Tower, Champs des Ellyses, Triumphal Arch, Louvres (we had no time to go through it – this time), Sacre Coeur, and many more. This really was the only day of the tour that we had icky weather, it was a bit drizzly.

On completion of the city tour, we had free time for lunch just outside of the Tuileries Garden before we departed for Normandy which lies 3 hours north of Paris. On arrival in the Operation Overlord area the group checked into the hotel for the next 3 nights.

Thursday, June 5th

Today's activities had originally been scheduled for tomorrow, but because the Queen of England and the President of the United States of America would be visiting the American Cemetery on June 6th the same day we had it on our original schedule...we had to swap days.

After breakfast, we started our tour of the "Operation Overlord" area, taking us into the American theatre of operations. Driving west our first stop of the day was in St. Mere Eglise. It was here that the west flank of the landing beaches had to be secured early in the morning of June 6, 1944. Here we visited the Airborne Museum dedicated to the 101st Division "Screaming Eagles" and the 82nd Division "All American". We also visited the church to view the beautiful stained glass windows which is dedicated to these 2 divisions. A parachute still dangles precariously from the steeple with an effigy of John Steele, an 82nd airborne trooper, who was entangled there after the drop.

Today in St. Mere Eglise a reenactment camp was set up and we spent some time wandering through looking at the tents, displays, and vehicles.

On leaving St. Mere Eglise, we deviated from the tour a bit to visit the landing spot of Clint, the veteran traveling on the bus with us. He co-piloted a glider on D-day and secured an important bridge for the allied forces. Near the bridge is a memorial marker.

Across the stream from where we stood was the field where Clint landed, he pointed to a farm-house far beyond and told us his early morning D-day story. The light from the pre-dawn bombing illuminated a farmer milking his cow, this farmer was kind enough to give Clint some warm milk which filled his tummy on that historic morning. And Clint showed us the bible which he carried in his shirt pocket throughout the entire war.

Our tour continued into S. Marie du Mont and here we dropped down onto Utah Beach. We had time to view the memorial before continuing over to Omaha Beach and Pointe du Hoc.

On Utah Beach a beautiful red, white, and blue marker marks the starting place that General George S. Patton came ashore. These markers continue every kilometer for 1147 kilometers marking the liberty route that Patton traveled. Soon after the end of WWII, Mr Guy de la Vasselais, French liaison officer to George S. Patton, suggested the idea of erecting a monument to commemorate the Liberation of France by the American Armies, and to honor the soldiers who sacrificed much in so doing: a monument that would symbolize the idea of Liberty. However he thought that a single monument would be inappropriate to express the immense gratitude of the French people toward their Liberators. He therefore suggested the installation of a distinctive marker placed at each kilometer interval along the roads followed by General Patton's Third United States Army.

Today there were many airplanes flying around.

On arrival at Omaha beach we had time to reflect on the bloody slaughter of many young Americans

that took place here 70 years ago. We visited St .Laurent-sur-Mer American Military Cemetery. And from there we descended the bluffs visiting Omaha beach.

We continued on to visit Point Du Hoc and the Ranger Monument. Point du Hoc has been left much as it was in June of 1944, a standing monument to the sacrifices and heroism of the 2nd Rangers.

There were a lot of interesting vehicles in this area.

During our two days in Normandy, we had a news crew from WBIR Knoxville embedded with us on our tour bus. Our honored veterans were treated like stars. Everywhere we went crowds gathered, people shook their hands and thanked them, some asked for their autographs, and they even got kisses from a few young ladies. [The news stories they captured can be view by clicking here.](#)

We also had special signage on our bus that allowed us to get past road closures and other blockades. We got to go places that other buses were denied access.

Friday, June 6th

After breakfast at the hotel, we had a tour of the Normandy landing beaches, starting with Ouistreham, where the British, French Commandos and Canadian 1st Airborne units secured the eastern flank of the landing beaches early in the morning of June 6, 1944. Here we visited “Pegasus Bridge” and the museum, which is dedicated to this daring feat of bravery. A glider-borne unit of the British 6th Airborne Division, commanded by Major John Howard, silently landed here in gliders, taking the bridge intact and held it until relieved. The successful taking of the bridge played an important role in limiting the effectiveness of a German counter-attack in the days and weeks following the invasion. In 1944 it was renamed Pegasus Bridge in honour of the operation. The name is derived from the shoulder emblem worn by the British airborne forces, which is the flying horse Pegasus.

Continuing west we drove the coastal route making various stops along the way through the British and Canadian landing zones on June 6, 1944 Sword, Juno & Gold Beaches. We deviated slightly from the itinerary for a short stop to the Canadian Cemetery in this area (for the Canadian tour participants).

A longer stop in Arromanches was planned for a visit and viewing the Mulberry Harbor, which was specially built-in England and towed across the channel to be put in place for the landing of supplies after the main landings.

After Arromanches, we squeezed in a visit to the Batterie allemande near Bayeux in Normandy which is a well-preserved German coastal defense battery with four guns used on D-Day still in place. Here a presentation of appreciation to our veterans, Clint and Ralph, was performed.

Saturday, June 7th

Right after breakfast this morning, we departed from the Bayeux/Caen area heading southeast to Reims.

En-route the tour stopped in the Compiègne Forest. In June 1940, just after his armies had smashed France, Hitler traveled to Compiègne. Here, in a forest clearing, on November 11, 1918, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the French commander, had humbled the Kaiser’s generals and accepted a humiliating German surrender, the armistice ending World War I. Foch held the fateful meeting in his railroad car, number 2419D.

On arrival in Reims, we visited the Little Red Schoolhouse. This is the building and room where German surrender was signed on May 7, 1945; effectively ceasing all combat operations in Europe.

Directly after this VE Day in Europe was declared. Among the displays in the Little Red Schoolhouse are the medals, cap and service jacket of General Mc Auliffe of the US 101st Airborne Division.

Transferring from the Little Red Schoolhouse to our Central Reims hotel and check in for 1 night.

The evening schedule read “free at leisure”. We don’t do leisure very well, so we took a walk to the Cathedral in Central Reims. There was a lot of activity in the square including some kind of marathon which we watched.

Sunday, June 8th

After a buffet breakfast at the hotel, we departed Reims. We continued west through the Champagne region to Verdun. We visited some of the WW I battlefield sites and visited the Douaumont Ossuary. The Douaumont Ossuary is a memorial containing the remains of soldiers who died on the battlefield during the Battle of Verdun in World War I. Here we took time to reflect on the horror, destruction and the terrible loss of life that took place in the great war of 1914 -1918.

After the Dauamont Ossuary visit, we toured other battle areas of WW I. We visited Fleury-devant-Douamont, the municipality was contaminated by corpses, explosives and poisonous gas in WW I, so no farmers could take up their work. The site of the commune is maintained as a testimony to war and is officially designated as a “village that died for France.” This small church and markers denoting what use to be here or there is all that remains.

Next we visited the “Bayonet Trench” Memorial. This site marks the location where some dozen bayonets lined up in a row were discovered projecting out of the ground after World War I. Under each rifle the body of a French soldier was discovered. These soldiers were most likely resting their rifles against the parapet of the trench they were occupying when they were killed during a bombardment. The soldiers were buried where they were found in the trench – and the rifles were left untouched. Crosses mark each soldiers location and one rusting bayonet is still visible.

Mid-afternoon we traveled into Luxembourg and visited the American Military Cemetery (Patton’s Grave). Our veterans were honored again with a presentation of certificates and medals.

After our visit to the Cemetery, we continued north into Belgium and the Ardennes region to visit the area known in WWII history as the Ardennes offensive (Battle of the Bulge) or “The Von Rundstedt offensive”. Then we checked into our hotel in Bastogne for the next 2 nights where we had a lovely dinner.

Monday, June 9th

Following breakfast in the hotel, we had a full day touring the Bulge area. Our local Bulge expert joined us today guiding our visit to many of the important combat areas.

La Gleize, Parker’s crossroads, Stavelot, St. Vith, Trois Ponts, Bastogne, McCauliffe Square, Nuts Museum, Mardasson Memorial, and sites dedicated to covering the areas that were very heavily fought over and defended by the Famous “Band of Brothers” Easy company of the 101st Screaming Eagles. We visited the peace woods and the village of Foy. Today could be called the day of the tour of tanks. During our visit to the Nuts Museum, Clint demonstrated his landing in the frame of a glider that they had on display.

The Mardasson Memorial is located near Bastogne, a municipality in the Belgian province of Luxembourg. It honours the memory of the 76,890 American soldiers who were wounded or killed during the Battle of the Bulge. And nearby is the final marker for General George S. Patton’s Liberty Route (1147 KM).

In one of the areas that were very heavily fought over and defended by the Famous “Band of Brothers” Easy company of the 101st Screaming Eagles, we stood in their foxholes.

We rode through the countryside to visit Malmedy where the infamous massacre of GI’s took place on the orders of S.S. Standartenfuhrer Joachim Peiper. On December 17, 1944, near the hamlet of Baugnez on the height half-way between the town of Malmedy and Ligneuville in Belgium, the leading element of Waffen-SS Kampfgruppe Peiper, named after its leader SS-Standartenführer Joachim Peiper encountered Jeeps and trucks of the American 285th Field Artillery Observation Battalion (FAOB). The German tanks fired on the U.S. vehicles, which were quickly abandoned by their occupants. With no anti-tank weapons, the Americans surrendered. About 150 of the prisoners of war were disarmed and sent to stand in a field near the crossroads. Some 72-84 of the prisoners were machine-gunned and killed, their bodies left on the field where they fell. An American patrol discovered the massacre that night.

And today we saw many many tanks.

A tank in Houffalize overturned while crossing the bridge during the war and ended up in the river upside down. Our day guide told how as a child he and two of his best friends used to play on this tank...a post war playground. Then one sad day, he had chores to do and so his friends went off to play. The children accidentally set off an unexploded WWII ordinance. They did not live to play on the tank ever again.

Back at the hotel that evening refreshments were plentiful.

Tuesday, June 10th

After a tasty breakfast, we departed the Bastogne area, our tour continued East through the Eifel mountains, following the advance of the US 1st Army through to Remagen. Our first stop was a quick bathroom break at McDonald’s. There were a couple of times on this tour that McDonald’s was where we stopped for either bathroom breaks or even lunch.

At Remagen we made a short stop to visit the museum and the remains of the bridge that once spanned the River Rhine. This bridge was crucial to the Allied advance into the heart of Germany and had to be taken intact. Units of the 9th US Armored Division under LT. Karl. H. Timmermann reached this bridge and captured it intact on March 7th 1945. On March 17th 1945 the bridge collapsed killing 28 American soldiers. One of the veterans touring with us, Ralph, was in the 8th vehicle to cross this bridge when the allies took it. Photo credit for photo of us with Ralph goes to Chris Moore, thank you Chris!

On leaving Remagen, we followed the course of the River Rhine south to Koblenz and Bopard where we boarded our boat for a 1 hour scenic cruise on the River Rhine to St. Goarhausen. Our hour-long cruise also served as our lunch stop. Thankfully we were near the front of the long food line so we didn’t miss seeing all of the castles we were cruising past.

From here we transferred to Frankfurt where we checked into our central Frankfurt hotel for 1 night.

Wednesday, June 11th

After breakfast, we departed for Nuremberg. On arrival in Nuremberg, we met our local expert on the “National Socialist Party – Nazi Party” to start our tour, we visited the Palace of Justice, site of the 1946 War Crimes Trials. A trial was under way so we visited from the outside only. Next we visited the Zeppelin Field on the immense Nazi Party Rally Grounds.

After touring the Luitpold Parade Ground, we visited the Munich’s superb Documentation Center an

education center that documents the city's critical role in Adolf Hitler's climb to power. Inside of the Documentation Center a section of railway has cards with the names of those sent to concentration camps.

The brick wall in the lady's room of the Document Center was an interesting photo opportunity for Mary.

Then we were off to our Bavarian hotel where we checked into our hotel late afternoon for 3 nights. On our way we passed a lovely sight, hops growing in the field.

The town near our hotel had some lovely buildings.

Dinner at the hotel was a feast tonight.

Thursday, June 12th

This morning after breakfast, we had a city tour with a local step-on guide.

Munich is the capital of the German Federal State of Bavaria. It is also Germany's third largest city and one of Europe's most prosperous. The city has a population of about 1.3 million and the Munich metropolitan area is home to around 2.7 million people. The city is located on the River Isar north of the Bavarian Alps.

The city's motto was The World City with a heart for a long time and has been recently replaced by Munich likes you. The figure on Munich's coat-of-arms is a monk referred to as the Münchner Kindl, the child of Munich. Black and gold – the colors of the Holy Roman Empire – have been the city's official colors since the time of Louis IV, Holy Roman Emperor.

We had a brief stop at the Nymphenburg Palace (Baroque palace in Munich). The palace was the main summer residence of the rulers of Bavaria of the House of Wittelsbach.

Our bus city tour of Munich finished at the Marienplatz before 11:00am for the world-famous Glockenspiel where we were given free time for an independent lunch. Never heard of the Glockenspiel...In the tower of the New Town Hall, 43 bells chime and 32 life-sized figures re-enact stories from the 16th century to the amusement of mass crowds of tourists and locals. The top half of the Glockenspiel tells the story of the marriage of the local Duke Wilhelm V (who also founded the world-famous Hofbräuhaus) to Renata of Lorraine. In honour of the happy couple there is a joust with life-sized knights on horseback representing Bavaria (in white and blue – not blue and white) and Lothringen (in red and white). The Bavarian knight wins every time, of course.

After lunch we had an excursion to Dachau on the outskirts of Munich. Dachau, once a pretty little painter and artist village on the outskirts of Munich, was transformed into Hitler's first concentration camp. We entered through the gate at the Jourhaus building, the same building and gate which the prisoner's were marched into the camp. On the gate is the slogan, Arbeit macht frei, or 'Work will make you free'. Here we had a guided tour with plenty of time to reflect and remember those unfortunate souls who perished at the hands of the Nazi regime.

Written in several languages: "May the example of those who were exterminated here between 1933 -1945 because they resisted nazism help to unite the living for the defence of peace and freedom and in respect for their fellow men."

Late this afternoon, we returned to Munich to enjoy a Bavarian style dinner with Bavarian music in the famous Munich landmark "Hofbrauhaus".

Friday, June 13th

After breakfast in the hotel, we had a full day excursion to Berchtesgaden. Driving up to the Obersalzberg area we transferred to the public shuttle buses which run up to the Kehlstein Haus

(Eagle's Nest).

The Eagle's Nest was a gift from the Nazi Party for Adolf Hitler's 50th birthday and used by him to entertain friends, high-ranking Politicians and members of the Nazi party.

After various bombing raids by the allied air forces the house was captured by the American 101st Airborne Division, the Screaming Eagles. After WW II the building was repaired by the Bavarian Government.

The main reception room is dominated by a fireplace of red Italian marble, presented to Hitler by Mussolini.

From here we had spectacular views overlooking the city of Salzburg in Austria and the Salzkammergut.

After visiting the Eagle's Nest, we drove back to Obersalzberg and visited the remains of Hitler's main residence, "The Berghof".

Saturday, June 14th

After our final hotel buffet breakfast, we transferred with some of the group to Munich's Franz Josef Strauss International Airport. The airport has a beer garden.

Check in for the flight back to USA was easy.