



**SMU** | CENTER FOR  
PRESIDENTIAL HISTORY



## **World War I History Tour: An American Journey through "The Great War"**

**June 1-10, 2023**

It has been just over 100 years since the guns fell silent and World War I ended. Still, the events of that era continue to shape and affect our world today. Four major monarchies and empires collapsed in history's greatest shift in European and world power. The United States and the Soviet Union became major global players out of the ashes. The new map of the world created from the war continues to have significant impact on current events.

The war had been underway for nearly three years when the United States entered WWI on the Allied side in April 1917. However, it would be another year until the American forces finally made their impact on the battlefield. And it was a decisive impact that demonstrated the unflinching resolve of freedom-loving peoples and brought an end to the bloodiest conflict in human history to that point. If your mind is set on a belief that World War I was nothing but static trench warfare and no movement, you will be surprised to encounter the American fighting forces involved in one great maneuver offensive after another. We now, at the centennial plus five, have the incredible opportunity to follow in the footsteps of these young Americans in the Great War tour.

This America in World War I history tour will bring guests to the verdant fields; and villages, towns and cities where the youth of America made their most indelible mark. From the Big Red One in the

first fight at Cantigny, to the Marines at Belleau Wood; from American infantrymen assaulting the lines at St Quentin Canal and the St Mihiel Salient, to the largest battle in American history in the Meuse-Argonne. From the story of the Lost Battalion, to Sergeant York's exploits, to the four Roosevelt brothers, and so many other iconic stories and sites. We will also pay respect to our allies by visiting the British battles at Mons and Ieper/Passchendaele, the Canadians at Vimy Ridge, the Australians in the Somme and the French at Verdun.

The World War I history tour unfolds over ten days with stories of all the allied participants as well as those of the German defenders. In addition, Essential History Expeditions guests will visit amazing heritage sites in the regions where the Americans fought, including:

- Ieper/Ypres: the Flemish town that saw non-stop fighting from 1914 through 1918. Its famed Cloth Hall and Menin Gate Ceremony will inspire you. For the British, there is no more sacred place in all the war. Four American divisions fought here in the summer and fall of 1918.
- Epernay: the justly famed Champagne district where we will visit the "capital" of Epernay and its vineyards, gastropubs and more.
- Compiègne: where the Germans surrendered in WWI and the French initially surrendered in WWII. It is also an amazing small city of rich history including the capture of Joan of Arc, and where Louis XIV and the two Napoleons had chateaux and palaces.
- Reims: the city of Kings! In its great Cathedral Notre-Dame de Reims nearly every French monarch was crowned over the long centuries. We will also visit Eisenhower's final WWII headquarters, including the map room where the Germans surrendered to the Western Allies on May 7, 1945 (V-E Day!).

The rich farmland, the quaint villages and the dramatic hills and forests of France create an incredibly memorable backdrop for this World War I centennial history tour.

### **Trip Historians**

Dr. Jeffrey A. Engel is founding director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University and Professor in the Clements Department of History. A Senior Fellow of the Norwegian Nobel Institute and of the John Goodwin Tower Center for Political Studies, he graduated magna cum laude from Cornell University. He additionally studied at St. Catherine's College, Oxford University, and received his M.A. and Ph.D. in American history from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, before holding a John M. Olin Postdoctoral Fellow in International Security Studies at Yale University.

Expert historian and guide, LTC Dr. Brian DeToy (Ret.) served as Director of the Defense & Strategic Studies program at the United States Military Academy, West Point from 2007-13. His previous assignments include Assistant Professor in the Academy's History Department, Chief of Research and Publications in the Combat Studies Institute at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and Professor of Military Science at the University of Kansas. An Airborne Ranger, DeToy also possesses the Expert Infantryman and Air Assault badges. DeToy graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a BA in History and earned a PhD from Florida State University in European History. He has presented papers, and chaired and commented on sessions at numerous conferences both in the United States and Europe.

Cecily Zander is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University, in Dallas, TX. She received her PhD in American History from Penn State in 2021. Her research and teaching interests include the Civil War era, American military history, memory, and popular culture. She is currently working on a book manuscript entitled “Republicans and Regulars in the Civil War Era,” based on her Penn State dissertation.

## Day 1, June 1: Brussels and Introductions

- Meet at 2pm at our central Brussels hotel, with introductions to the expedition and each other.
- Walking tour of central Brussels, the capital of Belgium. Occupied by the Germans throughout most of the war, today it is home to the European Union and NATO, among other international institutions. We will walk by the Royal Palace, Grand Place, the Mannekin Pis and more.
- Social hour (optional) and group dinner in central Brussels.
- Hotel: Marriott Grand Place in Brussels.



## Day 2, June 2: Mons, Passchendaele and Ieper/Ypres

- Breakfast, check-out and depart lodgings.
- Drive to Mons and visit St Symphorien military cemetery. Here the soldiers are almost equally divided between Germans and Commonwealth. In addition, the first Commonwealth soldier to be killed in the war (August 1914) and the last Commonwealth soldier killed (November 11, 1918) lie here. The battlefield at Mons was Britain's first in the war. After briefly holding up the German advance, the BEF began its long retreat toward Paris.
- Visit a portion of the battlefields near Ieper/Ypres. The Americans participated in the last major offensive that crossed the Scheldt River at Audenarde in the war's final days.
- Visit Ieper/Ypres. Three battles for this Belgian town (the last is sometimes called Passchendaele, as well) were some of the bloodiest and hardest fought of the war. We will visit the Passchendaele Museum for lunch on your own and tour of its magnificent collections including a WWI trench system. Visit Essex Farm British cemetery, where John McCrae (of *"In Flanders Fields"* poem fame) is buried.
- Social hour (optional) and dinner on your own in Ieper.
- Attend 8pm ceremony at the Menin Gate for the soldiers of Ypres (a nightly tradition for 100 years).
- Hotel: Ariane Hotel in Ieper.



### Day 3, June 3: Vimy and Arras

- Breakfast, check-out and depart lodgings.
- Visit sites associated with the siege of Ieper, including American actions at the Kemmelberg and Messines Ridge (scenes of some of the largest mine warfare in the entire conflict).
- Drive to Vimy Ridge Canadian Memorial, one of the most moving national monuments anywhere. Discuss the battle that helped establish Canadian national consciousness.
- Group Lunch near Vimy.
- Afternoon drive to Arras and visit Commonwealth battles sites in the vicinity including the huge underground barracks complex of Carrière Wellington Underground Tunnels and subterranean warfare.
- Social hour (optional) and group dinner in Arras.
- Hotel: Best Western Plus the Fairway in Arras.



### Day 4, June 4: The Somme, Cantigny and St Quentin

- Breakfast, check-out and depart lodgings.
- First, we drive to and visit Cantigny – site of the Americans' first battle, May 1918, where the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division (the "Big Red One") helped stem the major German Spring Offensive that is designed to end the war!
- Next up is the Somme – site of the incredible offensive in July 1916, the defining moment of the British participation in the Great War. Over 57,000 British soldiers fall as casualties the first day, as do an addition 14,000 French and Germans. But the weight of this attack, in combination with the intense fighting going on simultaneously at Verdun, leads the Germans to make strategic errors that

bring the Americans into the war. Our focus will be on the 1918 Australian battle at Villers-Bretonneux. The incredible Australian National Memorial is located here, as well.

- Group lunch in the nearby town of Corbie, outside of which the Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron, was shot down and killed in April 1918.
- Drive to and visit the battlefields along the St Quentin Canal (September-October 1918) – the Americans, alongside Australian and other British troops, break through the Hindenburg Line in the last months of the war, turning the stalemate into a race toward Germany.
- Visit the Somme American Cemetery, where the first American officer killed in the war is buried (Lieutenant Fitzsimmons – the famed Denver hospital is named for him).
- Continue on to Reims.
- Social hour (optional) and group dinner in central Reims.
- Hotel: La Caserne Chanzy Hotel & Spa, Marriott Autograph Collection.



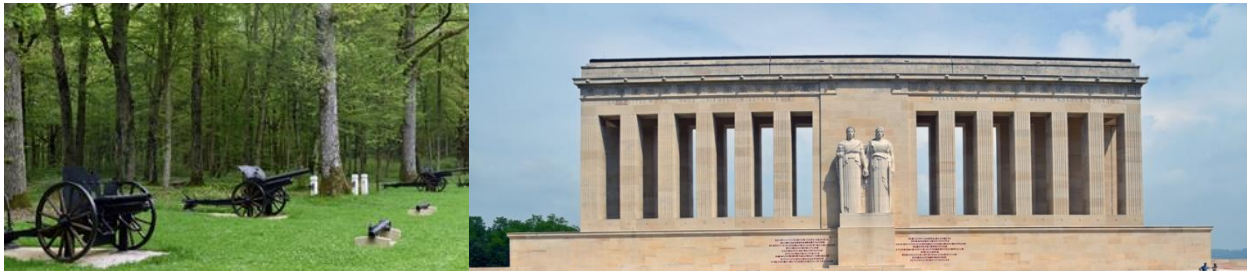
### Day 5, June 5: Reims and the Champagne Region

- Breakfast
- Morning walking tour of Reims, one of the most famous and beautiful cities in France:
  - The Cathedral Notre-Dame de Reims, which played an important ceremonial role in French monarchical history as the traditional site of the crowning of the kings of France.
  - Surrender Museum, a former school building, where the Germans surrendered to Eisenhower on May 8, 1945, in the map room that remains set as it was on that day!
- On your own afternoon to explore this historic city and/or to take a champagne tasting tour in one of the world's most famous wine regions! Right in central Reims are tastings and cave explorations with renowned labels such as Taittinger, Mumm and Veuve Clicquot!
- Dinner on your own in Reims.
- Hotel: La Caserne Chanzy Hotel & Spa, Marriott Autograph Collection.



## Day 6, June 6: The Marne and the Aisne-Marne Offensive

- Breakfast
- In Belleau Wood (June 1918) – we will see the 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division and its attached Marines counterattack into the thick forest where the Germans have approached near the Marne. To this day it remains sacred ground for the “Devil Dog” Marines
- American Aisne-Marne and German Cemeteries at Belleau Wood
- Chateau-Thierry (May-July 1918) – The 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division (the “Rock of the Marne”) stops the German attack and the tide of the battle shifts to the allies. This is a major turning point.
- Group lunch in Chateau-Thierry.
- Visit Mezy Moulins where the allies begin their counteroffensive in July 1918
- Visit Epernay, on the Marne River, home to numerous iconic champagne houses including a tour of the cellars at the world-famous Moët & Chandon (Dom Perignon).
- Return to Reims.
- Dinner on your own in one of the many wonderful restaurants in Reims.
- Hotel: La Caserne Chanzy Hotel & Spa, Marriott Autograph Collection.



## Day 7, June 7: The Aisne-Marne and Oise-Aisne Offensives

- Breakfast, check-out and depart lodgings.
- Aisne-Marne and Oise-Aisne offensives (July-September 1918) – the Americans’ first major Army-size attack drives the Germans back in the summer of 1918. These are slogging battles that see the Americans push deep into the German lines. One of the major assault units is MacArthur’s 42d Infantry (the “Rainbow Division”) and we will follow its advance, including a visit to the famed Croix Rouge Farm where lies the division’s moving memorial. We will have a boxed lunch on the battlefield this day.
- Visit the small village of Chamery and the Roosevelt Family memorial fountain, placed in honor of their son, Quentin, an Army pilot shot down and killed nearby in July 1918.
- Visit Oise-Aisne American Cemetery
- Visit the Butte de Chalmont, where an impressive hilltop monument commemorates the Allied victory in the battles of 1918.
- Visit the riverside towns of Fismes and Fismettes, scenes of some of the bloodiest urban fighting of the war, where the American 28<sup>th</sup> Division fought German stormtroopers to a standstill.
- Return to Reims.
- Dinner on your own in Reims.
- Hotel: La Caserne Chanzy Hotel & Spa, Marriott Autograph Collection.



## Day 8, June 8: Verdun and the St Mihiel Offensive

- Breakfast
- Verdun – site of the epic French defense and victory in 1916; this battle shapes the remainder of the war through its intense fighting and the incredible casualties sustained by both French and Germans. We will visit the incredible museum, walk the forests and see the famed forts of Vaux and Douamont.
- Group lunch at café in the destroyed town of Douamont
- St Mihiel Salient (September 1918) – Before the major offensive can be conducted by General Pershing’s Americans in the Argonne Forest, he first has to eliminate a bulge in the allied lines. The attack succeeds when the Americans break into the salient led by Colonel George Patton’s tanks. We will visit a number of sites in the battle area, including the commanding heights of Montsec.
- Visit St Mihiel American Cemetery.
- Return to Reims.
- Social hour (optional) and dinner on your own in Reims.
- Hotel: La Caserne Chanzy Hotel & Spa, Marriott Autograph Collection.



## Day 9, June 9: The Meuse-Argonne Offensive

- Breakfast, check-out and depart lodgings.
- Meuse-Argonne Offensive (September 11 to November 1918) – the largest American battle in history, and the biggest American contribution to Allied victory. This day will find us at many remarkable sites, including Harry Truman’s artillery battery, Sergeant Alvin York’s capture of 132 Germans in his one-man crusade, and the incredible story of the Lost Battalion and its fight.
- Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery – the largest resting place of Americans in Europe.
- Montfaucon Monument and Sommepey Memorial – dramatic monuments to the Americans in the Great War. Montfaucon was a significant German defensive position, and its capture and control will allow the Americans to advance deep into the heart of the German line, breaking it apart for the final drive to victory! Box lunch at Montfaucon.
- Return to central Reims.
- Social hour (optional) and final group dinner.
- Hotel: La Caserne Chanzy Hotel & Spa, Marriott Autograph Collection.





## Day 10, June 10: The Surrender and Departures

- Breakfast, check-out and depart lodgings.
- Drive to Compiègne
  - Historic town of Joan of Arc.
  - Château de Compiègne, a royal residence built for Louis XIV and restored by Napoleon
  - Railway car site for the surrenders in November 1918 and June 1940. The victory monument placed here by the people of Alsace and Lorraine is a truly dramatic image. A tremendous museum has recently opened at the site.
  - Lunch on your own in one of the numerous restaurants in the center of the beautiful town.
- Drive to Paris Charles de Gaulle International Airport to drop guests with flights that day, while the others will return to central Paris and end of the expedition.



## Important Information for Your Upcoming Trip to Belgium & France

**Contact Information:** Brian DeToy phone 253.468.7374 and email [brian@historyexp.com](mailto:brian@historyexp.com) or Sheryl Shafer phone 303.517.9676 and email [sheryl@historyexp.com](mailto:sheryl@historyexp.com).

**Lodging:** All lodging will be four-star quality at a minimum. For our first night in Brussels, we will be staying at the Brussels Marriott Grand Place. In Leper, we will stay at the Ariane Hotel, just steps from the Cloth Hall and the Menin Gate. In Reims, we will stay at the charming Marriott Autograph Collection in the heart of Reims. This location, near the beautiful cathedral, will provide a wonderful location for exploring while in the city. In Arras, the Best Western Plus the Fairway is a beautiful location for a relaxing evening.

**Transportation During Tour:** We will have a bus for transportation during the tour.

**Onward Journeys:** At the end of Day 10 after visiting Compiègne, we will return to Paris by way of a stop at CDG Airport at approximately 4pm to drop off guests for an evening flight and then continue into central Paris, arriving at approximately 5pm. A hotel is not included on the night of the 10th, so we will coordinate a central drop off point, likely a train station, in Paris when we learn where everyone will be going for their onward journeys. As you determine your destination for the post-tour, please let me know so that we can coordinate what's most convenient for all.

**Packing:** Bring layered clothing for warmth, a rain jacket, an umbrella and good walking shoes. Some years in the summer it is quite cool and other years it has been hot. (Note: If you have a small gym or duffel bag, you can roll/fold it up empty in your suitcase and then bring it with extra clothing items in the bus each day of the touring).

**Travel Insurance:** We offer travel insurance through TravelEx. Please click on [this link](#) if you are interested in a quote for travel insurance.

**Family Connection:** As we prepare for this trip, could you let us know if you had any relatives with ties to World War I in France? Perhaps a parent or grandparent who served at that time? If you can give us the name and unit or organization, we will identify a time/place we can include that story in the touring.

**Character Presentations:** Brian has developed a list of roles for people to portray. This is entirely voluntary for the non-students but highly encouraged! For those who would like to do this, it will make the trip even more worthwhile as you dig into understanding a person who was critical to the history. Here's how it works: Brian will let you know at what location(s) he will ask you to speak to the group and for how long. He will give you a short list of possible talking points and questions you may want to address. We are confident it will be more enjoyable if we hear some other voices. Here is an initial list of possible characters and topics; if you have another that you would like to add, do not hesitate to suggest them:

- Edith Cavell, "Brussels Dawn"
- John Pershing

- Manfred Richthofen
- George Marshall
- Theodore Roosevelt Jr
- Lieutenant Hervey Allen (company commander at Fismes)
- Quentin Roosevelt
- Douglas MacArthur
- George Patton
- John Arthur Hughes (Marine battalion commander at Belleau Wood)
- Charles Whittlesey (commander of the Lost Battalion)
- Alvin York
- Douglas Haig
- Harry Truman
- Philippe Petain
- Ferdinand Foch
- Mata Hari, spy
- Major Julia C. Stimson, head of US Nurse Corps

If you would like to participate, please be in touch with Brian at [brian@historyexp.com](mailto:brian@historyexp.com) regarding your character preference.

**Movies:** Some World War I films to watch:

- 1917
- They Shall Never Grow Old
- Paths of Glory
- War Horse
- The Blue Max
- Flyboys
- Sergeant York
- The Lost Battalion
- Midnight in Paris, for a lighthearted look at Paris today and in the 1920s

**Reading:** If you want to do some reading beforehand, we recommend:

- *Pandora's Box: A History of the First World War*, by Jorn Leonhard  
This is a large, 1100-page, yet incredibly comprehensive examination of the war. Easily the best book Brian has read on the Great War.
- *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque  
Remarque served in the German army during the war and was wounded five times. Some regard this as the greatest war novel of all time. Honorable Mention: *Company K*, by William March.
- *A Farewell to Arms*, by Ernest Hemingway

When poor vision kept him out of the service, the eighteen-year-old Hemingway volunteered to serve in France and later Italy as an ambulance driver. His war-time love story is often cited as the greatest American novel to come out of World War I. Honorable Mention: *To the Last Man: A Novel of the First World War*, by Jeff Shaara.

- *The First World War*, by Hew Strachan

The best shorter one-volume history of the war from one of its leading historians. This is a condensed version of a larger, multi-volume project. Honorable Mention: *The First World War*, by John Keegan.

- *Goodbye to All That: An Autobiography*, by Robert Graves

English poet Graves' bitter account of his life has been called by scholar and critic Paul Fussell "the best memoir of the First World War."

- *The Great War and Modern Memory*, by Paul Fussell

Winner of the National Book Award and hailed as one of twentieth-century's 100 Best Non-fiction Books, Fussell challenges the way we think about the war in this landmark study.

- *The Guns of August*, by Barbara Tuchman

Tuchman captured the Pulitzer Prize and won international acclaim with this classic account of the opening month of the Great War. Honorable Mention: *The Zimmerman Telegram*, by Barbara Tuchman.

- *Once an Eagle*, by Anton Myrer

The acclaimed novel of two wars and two very different Army officers. A favorite among military professionals, it has been on the Army Chief of Staff's list of recommended reading and the Marine Commandant's Reading List. It doesn't get much better than this.

- *The Price of Glory: Verdun 1916*, by Alistair Horne

A classic account of one of the battles that represents the horror of trench warfare. More than one million men died fighting for a scrap of land "little larger than the combined Royal Parks of London."

## **Monthly Historical Update:**

In each update, we will continue to add to this list of the major war events in the lead-up to our arrival in June 2023.

### **January 1917**

- 16                    The German Foreign Secretary Arthur Zimmermann sends a telegram to his ambassador in Mexico, instructing him to propose to the Mexican government an alliance against the United States.

### **February 1917**

1 Germany resumes unrestricted submarine warfare.

### **April 1917**

6 US declares war on Germany and joins the Allies

### **1918**

#### **January**

8 Woodrow Wilson outlines his Fourteen Points. This document will form the basis for the peace negotiations and the creation of the League of Nations.

#### **March**

3 Peace signed between Bolshevik Russia and Central Powers, Bulgaria and Turkey at Brest-Litovsk, together with supplementary treaties by the signatories. **Russia is out of the War and the Germans can concentrate on the Western Front**

21 First Battles of the Somme 1918 or **German OPERATION Michael begins** with Battle of St. Quentin (21st/23rd) **German 1918 Spring Offensives to Break the Deadlock**

26 **"Doullens Agreement" concluded. Decision taken to appoint General Ferdinand Foch to co-ordinate efforts of British and French Armies**

#### **April:**

21 *The Red Baron is shot down over Vaux-sur-Somme.*

#### **May**

May 7 Treaty of Bucharest between Romania and the Central Powers; never ratified.

May 14 Clash at Chelyabinsk station between Hungarian POWs heading west to be repatriated and Czechoslovaks going east. Trotsky orders the arrest of the Czechoslovak Legion, but they revolt and seize several towns along the Trans-Siberian Railway.

May 21-29 Ottomans invade Armenia.

May 27 – June 6 Third Battle of the Aisne (also known as Operation Blücher-Yorck, third phase of the Spring Offensive). After initial gains, the German advance is halted.

**May 28 Battle of Cantigny. First American Division in an offensive battle.**

#### **June**

**June 1–26 Battle of Belleau Wood, part of the German Spring Offensive. US Army and Marines near Chateau-Thierry.**

June 8 Action of Arsuf.

Ottomans re-enter Tabriz.

June 8            The Czechoslovak Legion forms the Committee of Members of the Constituent Assembly in Samara. Stanislav Čeček calls to join forces with anti-Bolshevik Russians to overthrow the Communist government and reignite the Eastern Front.

June 8 – October      Germany interferes in the Caucasus.

June 9–12      Fourth phase of the Spring Offensive, Operation Gneisenau (aka Battle of Matz). Despite substantial territorial gains, the Germans do not achieve their strategic goals

June 13            Provisional Siberian Government formed in Omsk.

June 13–23      Second Battle of the Piave: the Austro-Hungarian offensive is repelled.

June 15-31      Ottomans occupy Dilman, Khoy and Urmia.

June 30            Battle of Moreuil Wood.

## **July**

July 4            Battle of Hamel.

July 14            Battle of Abu Tellul.

**July 15 – August 6      Second Battle of the Marne and last German offensive on the Western Front, which fails when the Germans are counterattacked by the French. American forces in great numbers involved.**

**July 15–17      Champagne-Marne Offensive (consisting of the Fourth Battle of Champagne and the Battle of the Mountain of Reims), a phase of the Second Battle of the Marne. last phase of the Spring Offensive and last German offensive of World War I. American forces in great numbers involved.**

July 17            Nicholas II and his family are executed by the Bolsheviks, out of fear that they might be released by Czechoslovak and White troops.

**July 18            Battle of Chateau-Thierry, a phase of the Second Battle of the Marne. 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division “The Rock of the Marne”**

**July 18–22      Battle of Soissons, a phase of the Second Battle of the Marne. Large American battle.**

July 19            Battle of Tardenois, a phase of the Second Battle of the Marne.