

NEWS RELEASE

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Battlefield tours offer ‘insiders’ view of Canadians in Europe *Military historian leads tours of WWI & II sites in Belgium, Holland and Normandy*

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WATERLOO – One of Canada’s foremost military historians is offering the general public a rare look at famous battlefields from the First and Second World Wars. Terry Copp, military historian at Wilfrid Laurier University, will lead a tour of Normandy in June and another of battlefields in Belgium and Holland two months later.

Copp, with the help of other military-history scholars and enthusiasts, will explain Canada’s roles in both wars while touring the battlefields of Normandy and northwest Europe. The tours offer a view of major world events that is usually limited to historians and military scholars.

“Walking the battlefields under the guidance of a military historian provides visitors with rare insights into events that impacted the entire world,” said Copp. “Veterans can revisit their war-time experience under more reflective circumstances, friends and family can pay tribute to loved ones who fought, and younger people can get a better understanding of a subject no more real to them than anything else they can find in a book.”

The Normandy battlefield tour runs from June 16 to 30. It begins with a stop at Vimy Ridge, where participants will get an overview of the battle and visit the Vimy Memorial. Over the two-week period, the tour continues to Dieppe, Juno and Omaha Beaches and Verrières Ridge, before finishing with a visit to Canadian military cemetery in Calais.

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Between August 25 and September 8, the second tour focuses on battlefields of the First and Second World Wars in Belgium and Holland. It includes visits to Ypres, the Scheldt Estuary, the famous ‘Bridge Too Far’ battlefields at Oosterbeek and Arnhem, and the Rhineland.

Copp has been organizing such tours of famous European battlefields since 1995.

“I had a great time,” says David Turner of last year’s tour to Normandy. “The organization, the number of sites we saw, the knowledge of the guides, well it was just amazing. Everybody that talks to me about the trip, my answer to them is it was everything I hoped it would be, only more.”

This summer’s tours are being presented by the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies and by the Canadian Battlefield of Normandy Foundation. For portions of one or both tours, Copp will be joined by Mike Bechthold, managing editor of Canadian Military History; Lee Windsor, a graduate student in military history at the University of New Brunswick; and Evert Steiber, a Dutch enthusiast of all things related to the Canadian army.

Each tour can accommodate up to 34 participants. The Normandy tour costs \$3,700 per person and includes return airfare from Toronto, double-occupancy accommodations, ground transportation, some meals, and local tours and sightseeing. The tour of Holland and Belgium costs \$3,900. These prices include a \$300 donation to the Canadian Battle of Normandy Foundation (tax deductible).

Anyone interested in learning more about the tours can contact Mike Bechthold at (519) 885-9518 or mbechtho@wlu.ca or visit www.canadianmilitaryhistory.com. To reserve a spot, contact Verstraete Travel and Cruises at (416) 969-8100 or 1-800-565-9267.