Join historian & best-selling author Ted Barris to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Victory at Vimy Ridge, on a unique tour to historic battlefields in France and Belgium.

Travellers will join the memorial rededication atop Vimy Ridge and attend guided tours to World War I sites such as: the Somme, Beaumont Hamel, Passchendaele, and Ypres—where the downtown pauses nightly to pay tribute to fallen Allied soldiers. The tour finishes in Juno Beach, Normandy, where Canadian D-Day troops launched the liberation of Europe in the World War II.

**INCLUDES:**
- round-trip airfare from Toronto to Paris
- full time tour director for the duration of the tour
- all airport transfers and transportation with deluxe motor coach as mentioned in itinerary
- accommodation in Lille, three nights
- accommodation in Ypres, two nights
- accommodation in Caen, four nights
- nine European breakfasts and nine dinners
- excursions and entrance fees as mentioned in the itinerary
- all airport departure taxes and all gratuities

**NOT INCLUDED:**
- travel insurance
- telephone calls
- personal expenses (i.e. alcoholic beverages, soft drinks, etc.)
- any meals or items not mentioned

**$5,390* p.p.**

**11 days**
Departs Toronto
April 6, 2017

**Plus: optional 2-night post extension in Paris for**

**$695* p.p.**
Day 1 – Thursday, April 6, 2017 | DEPART TORONTO
Please arrive at Toronto Pearson Airport at least three hours before your flight departure. Board overnight flight to Paris, France. Upon arrival in Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport, there will be a guide holding a Merit Travel sign.

Day 2 – Friday, April 7, 2017 | ARRIVE IN PARIS, TRANSFER TO LILLE (D)
Arriving in Paris at Charles de Gaulle Airport, we will be met by our guide and drive to Lille. This evening, we gather for the Welcome Dinner with the entire Ted Barris tour group. It’s become a tour tradition; as we get our land legs in new surroundings in France, we’ll gather for a “get acquainted” supper on the first night. This is our first opportunity to meet and greet one another and share the anticipation of the coming days of travel and exploration.

Hotel in Lille: Hotel Ibis Lille Centre Gares or similar
29 Avenue Charles Saint Venant, 59000
Hotel front desk: 33-3-28-36-30-40

Day 3 – Saturday, April 8, 2017 | BATTLEFIELDS OF THE SOMMES (B,D)
Full day in the battlefields of the Somme, Thiepval, Beaumont Hamel, and area. 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 Memorial that pays tribute to the more than 72,000 men lost in the extended battle. Key to the first day of the offensive was the role played by the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, which went over the top at Beaumont Hamel. 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. We shall visit both these Somme battleground areas and the related museum exhibits.

Return to our lodgings in Lille at the Hotel Ibis Lille Centre.

Day 4 – Sunday, April 9, 2017 | VIMY RIDGE BATTLEFIELD AND MEMORIAL (B,D)
Travel by coach to the anniversary observances at Vimy Ridge Memorial and take in sightseeing and events – a full day on the grounds of the Battle of Vimy Ridge. Today is the actual 100th anniversary of the famous Battle of Vimy Ridge. Just as the Canadian Corps troops did on April 9, 1917, we shall rise early and make our way to the site of the battle. It was here on Easter Monday 1917, when 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 event signified the birth of Canada as a nation. There will be opportunity to visit the new museum facility (specially designed for the centennial) and explore some of the many kilometres of trenches and tunnels the Canadians dug in preparation for the battle. The day comes to a climax with the 100th anniversary observances in front of Walter Allward’s extraordinary sculpture, the 125-foot high Vimy Memorial. (Note: In past, the weather has not been the best, be prepared for the wet & cold.)

Return to our lodgings in Lille at the Hotel Ibis Lille Centre Gares.

Day 5 – Monday, April 10, 2017 | YPRES, BELGIUM AND AREA (B,D)
Travel by coach to Ypres, Belgium (Ypres to the French, Ieper to the Belgians and Wipers to the British). In 1914 when Britain declared war on Germany, so did Canada. While many 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 the major cities of France and Belgium. Among them was Ypres, where the first Canadians overseas took a stand defending what was known as the Ypres salient. The 1st Canadian Division exhibited extraordinary valor 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. During the Great War, the city of Ypres was virtually leveled. 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 Fields Museum (recently renovated for the Great War centennial). Our tour will allow time to take in shops and churches around Ypres Grote Markt or Grand Place. We will also visit important Canadian memorials and cemeteries in the area, including St. Julien & Tyne Cot Cemetery.

Hotel in Ypres: Albion Hotel or similar
St. Jacobsstraat 28 8900 Ieper
Belgium Hotel front desk: 032 57 200 220

Day 6 – Tuesday, April 11, 2017 | YPRES, BELGIUM AND AREA (B,D)
A second day in the area around Ypres, Belgium. This additional day will allow us to take in more of the sights and memorials to the Great War in Belgium. Among our stops will be the Essex Farm Cemetery, which offers a fitting tribute to John McCrae, another Canadian hero of the war. The young physician from Guelph, Ontario, interrupted his practice to serve in the CEF and, in 1915, composed one of the most enduring pieces of wartime poetry in Flanders Fields. We will visit his memorial on the Canal Bank. We will also take in the extraordinary Langemarck Cemetery, where 44,000 German War Dead from the campaign along the Western Front in Belgium are buried. During the course of our visits to battlegrounds of the Western Front in the Great War, we have encountered many local personalities, who have given much of their time to preserve and raise awareness of the Allied efforts during the First World War. One of those acquaintances is restaurateur and amateur history buff, Johan Vandewalle. At his now famous Café de Dreeve, in Zonnebeke, we will enjoy a midday meal and discover some of the work Vandewalle has accumulated about the work of Allied army tunneling troops during WWI. Since his exploration has most to do with the autumn 1917 Battle at Passchendaele, we will take in the Passchendaele museum while in the area. One evening in Ypres 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 Nov. 11, 1929 (with an interruption during WWII when the Germans occupied the city). Every night at exactly 8:00, Ypres police halt all traffic beneath 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.

Overnight at our lodgings Hotel Albion or similar in Ypres.

Day 7 – Wednesday, April 12, 2017 | TRANSFER TO NORMANDY (B,D)
Long drive today towards Normandy with an en route stop at Dieppe. Onwards to Caen base for final portion of the tour. With our travels through the Great War sites complete, we move to a new base as our focus shifts to the Second World War and two of the most extraordinary moments in Canadian
military history. 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 Atlantic Wall. That August day, 6,000 soldiers (mostly of them Canadians) launched the Dieppe raid. Those nine hours on the Dieppe beaches were the nine bloodiest hours in Canadian military history; more than half the assault troops became casualties that day. We will visit the Dieppe Museum located in a refurbished theatre, where artifacts and images tell much of the story of that day. We also take time to walk that historic beach where nearly 1,000 Canadians died. On to Caen which will serve as our home base for the second phase of our tour. We will spend the next few days returning to some of the locations that hold so much meaning for Canadian descendants of veterans of the D-Day landings.

**Hotel in Caen for the next two nights**

**Hotel Mercure Caen Centre or similar, 1 rue Courtonne, 14000 Caen**

**Hotel front desk: 33-2-31-47-24-24.**

**Day 8 – Thursday, April 13, 2017 | NORMANDY D-DAY BEACHES (B,D)**

Entire day in the D-Day invasion area. Visits to Arromanches (Mulberry Harbour), Courselles-sur-Mer (Juno Beach Centre), and the Canadian war cemetery at Beny-sur-Mer. During our return to Normandy, today will give us a vivid impression of the role that 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. On the heels of the invasion forces, 115 concrete caissons (some still plainly visible off the Arromanches beach) were towed from England to form a five-mile breakwater. Enclosed an instant harbour for the processing of millions of tons of supplies to keep the momentum of the invasion moving inland. 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 veterans-funded facility gives visitors 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 fought and died in the first days of the invasion, are buried.

**Overnight at our lodgings at our Hotel Mercure Caen Centre or similar.**

**Day 9 – Friday, April 14, 2017 | D-DAY NORMANDY BEACHES (B,D)**

Return to the D-Day invasion area. (Note: The sites visited on April 12 and April 13 are interchangeable; the order/day visited may be altered to accommodate scheduling.) Those sites visited include: in Ouistreham (Pegasus Bridge) and Bernieres-sur-Mer (eastern portions of Juno Beach). While the main focus of tourists and veterans over the past decade has been the museum and beachhead area in front Courseulles-sur-Mer (where the Juno Beach Centre is situated), the Juno Beach zone also included Bernieres-sur-Mer to the east. Located here is the famous Tudor-facade building where members of the Queen’s Own Rifles of Canada and Le Regiment de la Chaudiere landed on D-Day. The house and its environs (including a memorial with one of the Canadian “Swimming Tanks”) comprises our first stops this day. As well, on a more somber note, the activity in and around the previously little-known, thousand-year-old Abbaye d’Ardenne, will be explored. It was here – on June 7 and 8, 1944 – when members of Kurt Meyer’s Hitler Youth SS regiment captured and systematically executed scores of Canadian infantrymen and tank crewmen. A small memorial has been erected on the grounds of the abbey, where we will pay tribute to the 45 Canadians killed in the earliest days of the Allied liberation of Normandy. Not far away, in the British D-Day landing sector, code-named Sword Beach, 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. What most visitors don’t realize is that many of the objectives captured on the morning of June 6 came courtesy of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion who jumped into Normandy there with the British Airborne.

**Overnight at our lodgings at our Hotel Mercure Caen Centre or similar.**

**Day 10 – Saturday, April 15, 2017 | NORMANDY (B,D)**

Our final full day in the Normandy D-Day landing area, includes perhaps the most enlightening museum experience available in the area. 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, letters, artefacts and historical data), takes visitors on a journey into the depths of war but also into the uplifting periods of peace-making as well. The museum attracts half a million visitors a year and we will allow a comfortable length of time to explore this vast facility. Enjoy your afternoon at leisure in the Caen area. Tradition on our trips also brings all of our tour travellers together for a last evening together. The Farewell Dinner offers a memorable conclusion to our French sojourn.

**Overnight at our lodgings at our Hotel Mercure Caen Centre or similar.**

**Day 11 – Sunday, April 16, 2017 | DEPART NORMANDY - PARIS FOR TORONTO (B)**

Early departure for the transfer by coach to the Charles du Gaulle Airport in Paris for return flight home.

**OPTIONAL 2 NIGHT POST EXTENSION IN PARIS**

**Day 11 – Sunday, April 16 2017**


**Day 12 – Monday, April 17, 2017 (B)**

Enjoy a half day city tour to discover the beauty of Paris from the comfort of our air-conditioned motor coach. This tour will give you an overview of the city and afford you the opportunity to choose where you would like to return to spend more time during your stay.

**Day 13 – Tuesday, April 18, 2017 (B)**

Transfer to the Charles de Gaulle Airport for your flight home.

**END OF SERVICES**
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, revolutions, riots, earthquakes, weather conditions, floods or acts of restraint 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 $750 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.