

Europe’s Heartland from Alsace to Belgium

A 14-day exploration of Europe’s heartland between the Rivers Rhine and Meuse, situated on the cusp of the Latin and Germanic civilizations, cradle of wonderful art and architecture but also witness of dramatic historical events, including battles such as those of Waterloo and Verdun. Tour the scenic Ardennes Forest, the Moselle Valley in Luxembourg and Germany, the vineyards of Alsace, and visit great historical and cultural centres such as Trier, Strasbourg, Metz, Nancy, and Brussels. Accommodation in excellent hotels, and fine food and wine! Tour escorted Jacques Pauwels, PhD, author, historian and lecturer, who has led all previous Guelph Arts Council tours.

DAY BY DAY ITINERARY

Day 1 - Tuesday, April 7: (D-B)

Evening departure from Toronto to Brussels on Jet Airways. Dinner and breakfast served on board.

Day 2 - Wednesday, April 8: Luxembourg (B-D)

Morning arrival in **Brussels** then travel south by private coach into the legendary Ardennes Forest, presumably the “Forest of Arden” of Shakespeare’s play *As You Like It*. The Ardennes Forest also witnessed the titanic “Battle of the Bulge,” fought in the winter of 1944-45 between American and German forces. Visit the impressive Mardasson Memorial, located near the town of **Bastogne**, erected in memory of the 76,890 American casualties of the battle, and to the nearby War Museum. Then on to the **Grand Duchy of Luxembourg**, a tiny but very prosperous independent country, strategically situated between France and Germany and featuring a fascinating mix of Germanic and Latin cultures. Dinner and overnight in the traditional 4-star Grand Hotel Cravat in the capital city of **Luxembourg**.

Day 3 - Thursday, April 9: Luxembourg (B-D)

After breakfast, sightseeing tour of **Luxembourg**, a historic fortress town sometimes called the “Gibraltar of the North.” Highlights will include the Casemates, a network of underground fortifications built in the 18th century, classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site; the old town with the picturesque square known as Place d’Armes; the equestrian statue of William II of the Netherlands; the Grand Ducal Palace; and the Cathedral. In the modern ‘Low City’ we will enjoy sights such as the European Union buildings of the Kirchberg District, Neumünster Abbey, the World War II American Cemetery and Memorial, the final resting place of approximately 5,000 GIs as well as General George Patton, and the German War Cemetery. Afternoon on your own. Fans of contemporary art may want to visit the MUDAM (Musée d’Art Moderne), designed by architect I.M. Pei of “Louvre Pyramid” fame. Dinner of Luxembourg specialties in a typical restaurant such as Mousel’s Cantine.

Day 4 - Friday, April 10: Luxembourg (B)

Full-day excursion to **Trier**, situated in the scenic Moselle River Valley and the lovely Luxembourg countryside. Trier functioned as capital of the Roman Empire, and its remarkable collection of Roman ruins has earned the city a spot on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Our sightseeing program will include the monumental Roman city gate known as Porta Nigra, “Black Gate,” the Roman amphitheatre and baths, the Main Square, one of the finest in Germany, the fortress-like Cathedral, the Basilica, originally part of the palace of Emperor Constantine, and the house in which Karl Marx was born in 1818. In the afternoon we tour the German-Luxembourg Nature Park and Luxembourg’s “Little Switzerland” region, pausing in the quaint little resort of **Echternach** with its prestigious abbey, associated with Saint Willibrord, before returning to our hotel.

Day 5 - Saturday, April 11: Strasbourg (B-D)

From Luxembourg cross into France and visit the Hackenberg, a completely intact fortress of the Maginot Line, situated near the town of **Thionville**, and on to the province of Alsace and the picturesque

fortified town of **Petite Pierre**. Explore the town and enjoy lunch. Afterwards continue to **Strasbourg**; located on the banks of the Rhine. This city is the capital of Alsace and co-capital, with Brussels, of the European Union. Dinner and overnight in the centrally-located 4-star Hotel Mercure.

Day 6 - Sunday, April 12: Strasbourg (B-D)

Morning sightseeing tour of **Strasbourg**, with focus on its historical centre, the ‘Grande Île’, classified entirely as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Highlights will include the magnificent Cathedral with the country’s highest cathedral tower, the Kammerzell House, the imposing Opera, the Venice-like ‘Petite France’ District, the Palais de l’Europe, and a boat tour on the canals. Afternoon at leisure to explore Strasbourg, or visit one of the superb local museums, such as the Musée Alsacien, the Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, and the Palais Rohan with its fine arts and archeology collection. Dinner of traditional Alsatian specialties, such as *choucroute*.

Day 7 - Monday, April 13: Strasbourg (B, L or D)

Full-day excursion into the Alsatian countryside, with visits to the enchanting Medieval wine village of **Riquewihr** situated in a sea of vineyards, and the town of **Colmar**. Tour the historical centre by electric train and visit the wonderful Unterlinden Museum, featuring the world-famous painting known as the Isenheim Altar, by Matthias Grünewald (a revolutionary Alsatian Renaissance painter), and paintings by Holbein the Elder, Renoir, and Picasso.

Day 8 - Tuesday, April 14: Nancy (B-D)

Travel west and enter Alsace’s sister-province, Lorraine, part of an early Medieval Kingdom known as **Lotharingia**, which also included the Low Countries, much of Germany’s Rhineland, and parts of western Switzerland. Visit to **Metz**, one of the province’s major historical and cultural centres, with sights such as St. Etienne Cathedral, famous for its sky-high nave and magnificent stained glass windows, some by Chagall; beautiful Place d’Armes Square with the city hall and the former episcopal palace, now a famous covered food market featuring regional specialties such as

Quiche Lorraine; the Medieval city gate known as Porte des Allemands; St. Pierre-aux-Nonnains, the oldest church in France, originally built in the time of Emperor Constantine; and some imposing buildings built when this city belonged to Germany from 1870 to 1918, including the monumental railway station. On to **Nancy**, the elegant capital of Lorraine. Dinner and overnight in the 4-star Hotel Mercure Centre, Place Stanislas.

Day 9 - Wednesday, April 15: Nancy (B-D)

Morning sightseeing tour of **Nancy**, with as highlights the wonderful Place Stanislas, one of the most impressive squares in France, named after a former King of Poland who was also Duke of Lorraine; the Ducal Palace; the Fine Arts Museum with its impressive collection, including works by local masters such as Claude Lorraine and the famous lithographer, Jacques Callot; and the exquisite museum of the School of Nancy, one of Europe’s leading Art Nouveau movements, exemplified by artists such as Daum and Gallé. This afternoon enjoy Nancy on your own. Shopping is excellent here, and other museums beckon, e.g. the Lorraine Historical Museum. This evening, dinner in the famous Brasserie Excelsior with its splendid Art Nouveau interior decoration, billed as the “flagship of the School of Nancy.”

Day 10 - Thursday, April 16: Dinant (B-D)

Travel north via the infamous WW I battlefields of **Verdun**, where we pause briefly to view the huge Douaumont Memorial, and where your guide will explain the historical importance of the famous Verdun Treaty, signed here in the year 843. Travel on through the bucolic valley of the River Meuse. Re-entering Belgium, break for lunch in **Bouillon** dominated by the huge castle associated with a local knight, Godfrey of Bouillon, one of the leaders of the First Crusade, taking Jerusalem in 1099. In the afternoon we continue through the forest-covered hills and deep valleys of the Ardennes Forest to the picturesque town of **Dinant**. Dinner and overnight in the 3-star hotel Castel de Pont à Lesse.

Day 11 - Friday, April 17: Brussels (B-D)

Morning sightseeing of **Namur**, capital of Wallonia, the French-speaking part of Belgium, a city whose mighty fortress towers over the strategically important confluence of the Meuse and Sambre Rivers. Sightseeing will include the Citadel, scene of heavy fighting in both world wars, the picturesque old town, the scenic banks of the Meuse, and the museum devoted to the work of a little known but rather naughty and fascinating 19th-century local painter, Félicien Rops. In the afternoon visit the town of **Mons**, including St. Symphorien Cemetery, featuring graves of soldiers of the three nations – Canada, Britain, and Germany - that were involved in the two battles fought in Mons during WW I, including the graves of the first British soldier to be killed in the war and the last Canadian soldier to fall - only minutes before the cease-fire on November 11, 1918. On to **Brussels** for dinner and overnight in the first-class NH Hotel Du Grand Sablon, very centrally located on the charming and lively Sablon Square, beside Wittamer, one of the city's finest chocolate and pastry shops.

Day 12 - Saturday, April 18: Brussels (B)

Morning tour of **Brussels**, capital of Belgium including the magnificent Grand'Place, the little statue of Manneken Pis, the Royal Palace, St. Michael's Cathedral, the huge Palace of Justice, Avenue Louise, the Cinquantenaire Complex, etc. Also visit to the Horta Museum, the home and studio of famous Belgian Art Nouveau architect and decorator Victor Horta, with its perfectly preserved mosaics, stained glass, and wall decorations. Free time to shop or explore with dinner on your own. Perhaps enjoy an optional classical music concert .

Day 13 - Sunday, April 19: Brussels (B-D)

Morning visit to the Royal Museum of Fine Arts, whose collection includes works by both ancient and modern masters such as Brueghel, Rubens, Ensor, and Magritte. Excursion to the nearby town and battlefield of **Waterloo**, site of the great battle of June 18, 1815 – exactly two centuries ago! We will view both Napoleon's and Wellington's headquarters and

visit the impressive Lion Monument as well as the adjoining museum and panoramic painting of the battle. Au Revoir dinner in a typical restaurant.

Day 14 – Monday, April 20: (B-L)

Early morning transfer to Brussels Airport and return flight to Toronto, with Jet Airways.



Included in the Cost:

- Return flight to Brussels, with Jet Airways
- Accommodation based on double occupancy in first-class/4-star hotels except on day 10, when a superior 3-star hotel will be used (single room supplement is \$785)
- Daily breakfast (B), mostly buffet-style, and daily dinner (D) except on days 4 and 12
- Overland transportation via private coach
- All visits and sightseeing as outlined in the itinerary, including admission to museums and monuments as shown in the itinerary
- Gratuity for the coach driver

Not included:

- ***The usual combination of airport taxes/security fees/fuel surcharges, presently (June 2014) approximately \$580, but subject to change;
- All expenses of a personal nature;
- Travel Insurance



Alsace Lorraine (National Geographic)



Entrance to the Cinquantenaire Complex in Brussels

Jacques Pauwels

Jacques has several degrees including Licentiate History, State University of Ghent, Belgium, 1969; PhD History, York University, 1976; MA Political Science, University of Toronto, 1984; PhD Political Science, University of Toronto, 1995. He lectured at various Ontario universities, including U of T, Waterloo, and Guelph. With his two PhDs, author of numerous articles and books, many languages and love of food and wine, Jacques continues to be a most popular tour guide. His wealth of information on any subject is always in abundance for participants on his personally designed and executed tours around the world.

Guelph Arts Council is a non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to the encouragement, stimulation and co-ordination of arts activities in the City of Guelph and surrounding area. Its programs and activities are supported through memberships; individual, business and corporate gifts; and government agencies

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*Guelph Arts Council presents its
17th annual arts & culture tour
to Alsace, Lorraine,
Belgium and Luxembourg*

Europe's Heartland from Alsace to Belgium

April 7-20, 2015

**Tour Cost from Toronto
\$3995**

Single Supplement \$785
Land only \$3745



Strasbourg with its Canals