

WALKING TO CONGO (2h)



What is so interesting about this walk?

Lucas Catherine is a renowned writer. He wrote a book on what's left of colonial heritage in the streets of Belgium (buildings, monuments, statues). Most people in the streets of Brussels, Antwerp and Ostend, don't notice when they walk past these monuments how much still remains.



In his guided tour through Brussels he highlights some of these buildings/monuments and tells their story. He explains the history, the symbolism and their significance. The colonial history of Belgium has many interesting and controversial facets. One monument is the prime example of how this heritage can still divide people but we'll let Lucas tell you why.

What will we do here?

Guided tour with Lucas Catherine.

FORTRESS LONCIN (2h)



Historical background of the monument/site:

The fortress of Loncin is one of 12 fortresses around the city of Liège. The Belgian defensive strategy during WW I was focused on 3 strongholds; Namur, Antwerp and Liège. Liège was the first Belgian city to be attacked by the German army. The siege of Fortress Loncin lasted for 8 days, in which the fortress was hit with over 15.000 grenades.

It is at Loncin that the famous howitzer, Big Bertha, earned its reputation. On August 15th a Big Bertha shell hit the ammunition storage of fort Loncin. The fortress was nearly completely destroyed and 111 soldiers died. 36 of them are still buried under the ruins. The Big Bertha's were later on used against other fortresses like the ones in Antwerp, Namur and even Belgrade in the 1915 offensive.



What is so interesting about this site?

It is one of the main WW I 'attractions' in the French speaking part of Belgium. It is a symbol of the Belgian armed resistance during the first months of the War. On 7 August 1914 the city of Liège was the first foreign city to receive the French *Légion d'honneur* because of its courage under fire.

What will we do here?

We will participate in a guided tour.

DINANT



Historical background of the monument/site:

At the onset of World War I, Germany invaded Belgium in order to rapidly capture Paris and destroy the French armies. The most direct route to Paris passed through a small town called Dinant. A fierce battle was fought between the French and advancing German army. The German army assumed that there were resistance fighters in the town and on August 23rd 1914 they rounded up the entire civilian population of Dinant. 674 Citizens -men, women and children- were massacred. Over a thousand houses and buildings were burnt down. The town was devastated. After the war, Dinant, together with 6 other Belgian towns where similar facts occurred, were recognized as 'Ville Martyr' (Martyr Town).

What is so interesting about this site?

Re-enactment: It is a whole different way of commemorating. In 2014, the town, together with two historians and a choreographer directed a theatre piece, re-enacting the events of 23 August 1914. Most actors were ordinary people living in Dinant and the surrounding towns.

Monument of the dead. They built a new monument, a 100 years after the war.

Monument to Charles de Gaulle. Apparently de Gaulle, as a soldier during WW I, was injured on a bridge in Dinant. The town erected a monument in his honour but also expresses the gratitude of the people of Dinant towards the French army who came to their rescue.

What will we do here?

Visit of several historical spots in town, related to what happened in 1914 and the commemoration in 2014. Our guide for the afternoon is Bruno Mathelart, the artistic director of the re-enactment event that took place in August 2014. After our visit we go to city hall for some pictures on the commemorative events and a drink, offered by the town's mayor.

MUSEUM ON THE YSER (2h)



Historical background of the monument/site:

The Yser Tower is a memorial and museum. The memorial commemorates the Belgian, and particularly Flemish, soldiers killed on the Yser Front during World War I and is an important remembrance site for the Flemish Movement.

The first Yser Tower was built in 1930 by an organization of Flemish war veterans and was given an inscription: AVV-VVK (All for Flanders – Flanders for Christ). It quickly became a symbol of the Flemish hardship in the trenches of the First World War. After the Second World War, it was considered a symbol of the collaboration. In 1946 the Tower was blown up, the perpetrators were never caught. Several years later the tower was rebuilt, taller than the first one. With the remains of the old one, the PAX-gate was built.

In preparation for the centennial, the Flemish government identified this monument/museum as one of 5 strongholds in the commemoration. The museum received extra funding for renovation of the site and the exhibition.

What is so interesting about this site?

It is a monument and a museum. As a monument it is adopted by the Flemish Movement and the peace movement. As a museum, it combines three narratives:

- The history of the First World War
- The history of the Flemish Movement
- A message of peace

What will we do here?

The curator, a young historian, will brief us on the how, when and why of the site. We will conduct a free visit of the museum, followed by a Q&A session.

IN FLANDERS FIELDS (2h)



Historical background of the monument/site:

The In Flanders' Fields Museum is devoted to the study of World War I and occupies the second floor of the Cloth Hall in Ypres. The building, just like the city, was almost completely destroyed by artillery fire during the First World War and has been reconstructed.

In preparation for the centennial, the Flemish government identified this museum as one of 5 strongholds in the commemoration. The museum received extra funding for a complete renovation of the exhibition.

What is so interesting about this site?

Two years ago the museum had the chance to completely reinvent itself and completely change its narrative if it wanted to. This museum is a very good example of how the memory of the First World War is kept alive today.

It carries the heavy responsibility, and sometimes burden, of being the ultimate museum when it comes to the First World War in Belgium. It wasn't unusual to see people queuing to visit the museum last year. Before the renovation it was a museum that focused on one battlefield of the War but now it doesn't have that luxury anymore. How does it cope with that responsibility?

It is a very modern and interactive museum. As a visitor you get a bracelet that helps you identify with a victim of the War throughout different stations in the exhibition.

What will we do here?

1. An introduction on the philosophy of the museum by one of their educational workers (45min)
2. A visit of the exhibition (1h), free visit
3. Q&A (30min)

LAST POST



Historical background of the monument/site:

The Menin Gate is a city gate of the city of Ypres and was built by the British in 1927 to commemorate their fallen soldiers. The Menin Gate has the names of 54,896 missing Commonwealth soldiers engraved in its walls. It soon became clear that, although the walls of the gate are impressive, they were not big enough to fit all the names of the missing. All those who went missing after 15 August 1917 are commemorated at other monuments and Tyne Cot Cemetery, the biggest Commonwealth cemetery on the European continent, a couple of kilometres from Ypres.

What is so interesting about this site?

Every night, at 8 pm, traffic through the Menin Gate is stopped for the Last Post ceremony. This ceremony is held to commemorate the Commonwealth soldiers that lost their lives during World War I. The ceremony was first held in 1929 and continued to be held, every night, ever since, with the exception of the years 1940-1944. Where there used to be hardly any participants, you now have to arrive nearly 1 hour in advance to have 'a good spot' for the ceremony.

What will we do here?

Take part in the ceremony.

HOUSE OF EUROPEAN HISTORY (2h)



Background of the project:

The European Parliament is establishing a House of European History (HEH) in Brussels which is scheduled to be opened in 2016, in a building in the immediate neighborhood to the European Parliament. The HEH will aim “to give visitors the opportunity to learn about European history and to engage in critical reflection about its meaning for the present day. The main focus of the permanent exhibition will be on European history of the 20th century and the history of European integration, viewed from a broad historical perspective and bringing together contrasting experiences of Europeans in history. The House of European History aims to convey a trans-national overview of European history, taking into account its diverse nature and its many interpretations and perceptions.” (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/visiting/en/visits/historyhouse.html>) At the heart of the HEH, on a surface of approx. 4.000 m², there will be a permanent exhibition focusing mainly on the 20th century, with a newly-assembled collection of objects and equipped with multimedia and interactive technology. The HEH aims to provide its main content in the then 24 official languages of the EU. Educational and cultural programmes are also planned.

Since the launching of the project in 2007, the HEH has also raised criticism: Some are questioning the necessity of such a Museum, others are criticizing its costs, while others estimate that there have not been enough public consultations during the development phase.

What is so interesting about this project?

Most historical museums throughout Europe are dedicated to national or local dimensions of history within a country; this ambitious and innovative project of a “House of European History” raises many questions which are also relevant for the work of *Memory Lab*: What is European history? How to represent the history of Europe, its complexity and its different interpretations? Is it possible to develop a balanced and critical narrative about the history of Europe? What will be the place for the history of nation-states, and what for transnational and supranational movements? What will be the place of the Yugoslav space within the HEH?

What will we do in relation with this project?

Members of the House of European History – team will present the project, we will discuss with them and we will visit the future site.