

FRANCE

Normandy Beaches Trek



Duration: 5 days

This unique route takes us along the beautiful coastline of Normandy, passing the sites and scenery of the World War II D-Day Landings on Normandy Beaches. This coastal region played a vital part of Operation Overlord, a codename for the WW2 Allied invasion of Normandy, to liberate Europe from years of German military occupation.

Our journey begins in Grandcamp-Maisy, at the foot of the Cherbourg Peninsula, where we head east along the coast. We take in sites of significant military action including Pointe du Hoc, the Mulberry Harbour of Arromanches, and Pegasus Bridge. There are beautiful views across the now-tranquil coastline, but as we walk over varied terrain of dunes, grass and tarmac, it is all-too-easy to imagine events of the past. We pay our respects to the Allies at the Normandy American Cemetery and Juno Beach Memorial. Our route finishes north of Caen at Ranville War Cemetery where we will lay a wreath, a poignant end to an unforgettable journey.

DETAILED ITINERARY

Day 1: London - Calais - Caen

We meet in Blackheath and board our coaches for Dover and across the Channel to Calais. From Calais, we drive down towards Caen. Shortly before arriving at our destination, we make a stop at Merville Gun Battery, where we'll have time for a tour and our historian will set the scene for the next 4 days. From here, we continue onwards to our hotel where we will be staying for the next 4 nights. Night hotel.

Day 2: Caen – Grandcamp Maisy – Normandy American Cemetery – Caen

The day starts with a drive to our trek starting point at the Maisy Battery, which will put into context the challenge that awaits us, as we will be walking this distance back to Caen over the next four days. On the way to our start point, we visit La Cambe German War Cemetery where 21,222 German soldiers are buried, not all of whom had chosen either the cause or the fight. The Maisy Battery was one of the largest German defensive positions in the American landing area on D-Day. From here our route takes us north-east to the coast and on to Pointe Du Hoc, the site where U.S. Army Rangers scaled the 100-foot coastal cliffs and seized the German artillery pieces, to prevent them from firing at the American landing troops on to the beaches of Omaha and Utah. We walk the length of Omaha beach to the Normandy American Cemetery, where we then board the coaches to return to our hotel in Caen. Night hotel.

Trek approx. 12.5 miles

DETAILED ITINERARY (cont.)

Day 3: Caen - Normandy American Cemetery - Arromanches - Caen

We begin the day again with a transfer, this time made shorter by our efforts the day before, returning to the Normandy American Cemetery. The early start we make today will be worthwhile, as we begin with a ceremony to raise the flag at the cemetery and lay a wreath, before continuing our trek east along the Normandy Beaches. Our route today takes us through Port-en-Bessin, which was the meeting point between the American Troops moving in from Omaha beach and the British coming west from Gold Beach. After the town was taken under allied control, it was used to bring vital fuel ashore via submerged pipes from ships moored up 1km offshore. Today's route finishes at Arromanches, the site of a Mulberry Harbour erected by the British to facilitate rapid offloading of cargo. We once again board our awaiting coaches and return to Caen. Night hotel.

Trek approx 12.5 miles

Day 4: Caen – Arromanches - Courseulles-sur-Mer – Caen

Today we start once again from where we finished yesterday at Arromanches. We head inland leaving the coast behind for a while as we head through fields to the village of Crepon, which saw an enormous amount of action before being liberated from the Germans by the Allies in 1944. We continue onwards to the battery at Sainte-Croix-les-Delles and onto Saint-Croix-sur-Mer, the site of the B3 Advanced Landing Ground. After lunch we turn north and return to the coast and visit the site where the legendary Stan Hollis received his Victoria Cross. We then follow the coast once again along Juno Beach to the Canadian Museum in Courseulles-sur-Mer, where we meet our coaches and return to Caen. Night hotel.

Trek approx. 12 miles

Day 5: Caen – Juno – Ranville War Cemetery – Caen

Our transfer this morning is very short, which we'll no doubt be feeling in our heavy legs from the previous day's trekking. Today we start from the Canadian Memorial. Our final day of walking takes us along the lengths of Juno Beach and Sword Beach, the sites of the Canadian and British efforts respectively. From Sword Beach we head inland to the Hillman Fortress, a German bunker named Hill 61 by the British and taken by the Suffolk Regiment. The delay in taking the bunker complex has been cited as a reason for the Allies not completing their major D-Day objective of taking Caen. The final section of our trek takes us across Pegasus Bridge made famous by the 1962 film *The Longest Day*. The Bridge was captured in the early hours of 6th June by troops of the 6th Airborne Division, who landed nearby by parachute and glider. Our route continues to Ranville, which was the first village to be liberated in France after Pegasus Bridge was captured. Many of 6th Airborne Division's casualties are buried in Ranville War Cemetery and the adjoining churchyard. The cemetery contains 2,236 Commonwealth burials and makes a poignant end to our challenging trek.

Trek approx. 14 miles

Day 6: Caen – Calais – London

Early start for drive back to London.

Discover Adventure reserves the right to change the route or itinerary for safety reasons should local conditions dictate.

Copyright DA2018 / Updated 2018

CHALLENGE GRADING

Trips are graded Yellow, Orange or Red, in increasing level of challenge. This ride lies within the **Yellow** range.

The grade is determined by factors such as terrain, distance, climate, altitude, etc. Each colour grade has a **spectrum** which reflects the difficulty of these factors; trip duration, accommodation and living conditions are also taken into account.

The Challenge Factor icon shows the most challenging aspect – an extra-long day on undulating terrain.

The grade reflects the overall trip; some sections will feel more challenging than others. Unusual weather conditions also have a significant impact, and not all people are tested by the same aspects.