

VICTORY in EUROPE

65th ANNIVERSARY TOUR



To commemorate the 65th Anniversary of the end of Second World War, EF Educational Tours designed five very special and unique Victory in Europe tours. Each tour focused on different and very important elements of this massive conflict.

On Tuesday, April 27, the first of 80 tour groups comprised of over 2,000 Canadian teachers and students from provinces, territories, cities, towns and villages all across Canada began their journey to Europe.

While in Europe these young Canadians discovered firsthand the places where the most remarkable moments of the war occurred!



APRIL 27, 2010

EF helped 20 Canadian Veterans of the Second World War and Afghanistan travel to Europe so they could attend Victory in Europe celebrations. The veterans were chosen from videos submitted by students that are currently being compiled into a video library to be shared with schools across Canada. EF is proud to have helped our veterans travel to Europe so they could play a role in the commemoration of this important event.



MAY 1, 2010

Many EF groups travelled through Normandy and explored Juno Beach, the place where Canadian soldiers came ashore and began the slow and bloody push to liberate Europe from Nazi tyranny. The students were very moved to see the place where so many brave Canadian soldiers, many not much older than them, gave their lives.



MAY 2, 2010

EF travellers visited Vimy Ridge, the scene of one of the most influential events in Canada's history. It was here where Canadian soldiers fought together for the first time, under the command of Canadian officers and gained a momentous victory over their German foes during the First World War. Historians agree that Vimy Ridge marked, 'The birth of a nation'.



MAY 4, 2010

A large contingent of EF students visited Holten Canadian War Cemetery, participating in a remembrance ceremony organized by the Dutch community. Princess Margriet of the Netherlands was present; she was actually sheltered in Ottawa during the Second World War and each year, the Netherlands sends tulips to Canada in thanks.

Other EF student travellers participated in Groesbeek's Silent March to commemorate war victims from all countries. Students carried the Peace Tower Flag presented to them in Ottawa prior to the Victory in Europe tour, they also waved memorial flags they made with the names of Canadian soldiers written upon them in an act of remembrance. The flags were donated to the Dutch for display around the Netherlands.



MAY 5, 2010

Liberation Day! A day of celebration in Wageningen, with music, debates, a ceremony of remembrance, a great parade, and fellowship with over 100,000 Canadian students, veterans, and Dutch citizens! EF student travellers had the honour of interviewing Canadian veterans for a video library being compiled by the Dutch. Today, students had the opportunity to become fully immersed in the colourful culture of the Netherlands.

MAY 3, 2010

Today the young people touring with EF travelled to Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery in Holland, where 2,300 Canadian soldiers are buried. The moving tribute to Canada's wartime efforts and the men who fell involved Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands and a Canadian delegation which included the Minister of Veterans Affairs Jean-Pierre Blackburn as well as hundreds of Canadian veterans and students. EF student travellers participated by reciting 'The Commitment to Remember' which reads:

*They were young, as we are young,
They served, giving freely of themselves.
To them, we pledge, amid the winds of time,
To carry their torch and never forget.
We will remember them.*





MAY 6, 2010

Today 200 EF travellers had the unique privilege of participating in a special remembrance ceremony at Bergen Op Zoom Canadian War Cemetery with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende. It was a moving and special day for all involved.

Many EF student travellers also visited a Nazi concentration camp in Tilburg, Holland and the home of the brave heroine Coba Pulskens who sheltered three allied airmen including a Canadian before being discovered by the Nazis.



MAY 7, 2010

EF student travellers had the pleasure of watching a spectacular evening of festivities at The Voorthuizen Military Tattoo. This year the event was titled, 'Tribute to the Veterans' because of the 65th Anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands. It was a musical extravaganza with military bands from around the world, including Canada, performing incredible synchronized acts. It's a night the EF travellers, and everyone present, will remember forever.



MAY 8, 2010

Today, some of the EF groups began their journey home while others travelled to Berlin, Germany.



MAY 9, 2010

The final remembrance ceremony for the Victory in Europe tour groups occurred at the Canadian cemetery in Berlin, where over 500 Canadian soldiers are buried. The participants had the chance to join Canada's most senior military officer, General Walter Natynzyk, Chief of the Defence Staff, in laying a wreath and flags at the graves to remember Canada's brave fallen soldiers.

In the evening, there was a final send-off party at the Berlin Conference Centre which the students agreed was a wonderful way to wrap up a memorable trip to Europe. The EF travellers then began their travels home to Canada.

FACEBOOK

EF created a Facebook page (www.facebook.com/VEDay) so students, parents, teachers and EF could all communicate with one another before and during the Victory in Europe tours.

Students commented on the trip, posted pictures, spoke with parents and friends back home and kept everyone up to date. EF posted important information, links to news stories and media coverage and kept a running dialogue about the tour on a daily basis. Parents used Facebook to keep in touch with their children and see what they were up to in Europe.

The page was incredibly popular, with over 8,000 fans participating regularly! WOW!



The screenshot shows the Facebook interface for the 'VE Day : Countdown to 65th Anniversary' page. The page header includes the Facebook logo, a login field, and a 'Keep me logged in' checkbox. Below the header, there is a 'Sign Up' button and a message: 'VE Day : Countdown to 65th Anniversary is on Facebook. Sign up for Facebook to connect with VE Day : Countdown to 65th Anniversary.' The main content area features a cover photo with the text 'VICTORY in EUROPE' and 'OFFICIAL CEREMONY MAY 2012'. Below the cover photo, there is a section titled 'Join us in honouring all those who fought for the freedom we share today. We kindly ask that you refrain from using vulgar or slanderous language, including derogatory remarks regarding race, creed and nationality. Thank you.' To the right of the cover photo, there is a 'Like' button and a navigation menu with options: 'Wall', 'Info', 'Discussions', 'Poll', 'Photos', and 'Join Us!'. The main feed shows a post from 'VE Day : Countdown to 65th Anniversary' dated May 12 at 8:15am. The post text reads: 'Now that everyone has arrived safely home, we want to send a big thank you to everyone that shared in this once-in-a-lifetime experience! More than 2,500 students and teachers from across Canada came together to celebrate the 65th anniversary of the Liberation of the Netherlands an...'. Below the post, there are several comments from users like Holly Easterbrook, Cynthia Williams-Amundsen, Lisa Munday, Cindy Lennox Noble, and Sharon Robins. On the left side of the page, there is a '7,844 People Like This' section with profile pictures of Ken Plut, Braydon Jones, and Billy J Mitchell. Below that, there is a 'Vimy Ridge Tours 2012' section with a 'CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE' button. At the bottom left, there is a poll titled 'Have you ever visited a battle site that one of your relatives fought at?' with 'Yes' and 'No' options and a 'Vote' button. The page also has a 'Photos' section at the bottom left.

MEDIA

Over 200 media stories have been reported in a variety of mediums, including print, web, radio and television including reporting by both international and domestic media.

Some of the Media that covered the EF Victory in Europe tours:

Sun Media, Metroland, CBC, CTV, Global, The Globe and Mail, NOS (Holland)