

A Balancing Act Educational Tours

Canada and the World Wars in France and Belgium

ITINERARY SUMMARY	
Days 1 & 2:	<p>CALGARY / PARIS Flights Tour representative to meet at airport & escort to hotel Private Coach Transportation from airport to Paris Hotel in Latin Quarter Walking tour of the Latin Quarter, (OPTIONAL entrance to Sainte-Chapelle & Conciergerie), Notre Dame Cathedral & the Archaeological Crypts of Notre Dame Cruise on the Seine River (may be after dinner) Welcome Dinner</p> <p>Meals: On Board flight / Dinner Accommodations: Paris Hotel in Latin Quarter – 3 nights Transportation: Paris Airport / Hotel Entrance Fees: Notre Dame Cathedral, Archaeological Crypts of Notre Dame, Seine River Cruise, OPTIONAL Sainte-Chapelle & Conciergerie</p>
Day 3:	<p>Versailles Sightseeing by Private Coach & Les Invalides Guided Excursion to Versailles Visit Les Invalides & Napoleon's Tomb (guided tour) Group Dinner</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast /Dinner Accommodations: Paris Hotel in Latin Quarter Transportation: Full Day Coach Hotel - Versailles - Les Invalides - Hotel Entrance Fees: Versailles Palace & Gardens, Les Invalides & Napoleon's Tomb</p>
Day 4:	<p>Paris Sightseeing by Private Coach & Eiffel Tower Paris Guided City Tour by Coach - Stops at Arc de Triomphe, Champs-Elysees, Place de la Concorde, Sacré-Coeur Basilica, Place du Tertre, Musee D'Orsay Visit The Eiffel Tower - Behind the scenes Eiffel Tower Tour Group Dinner</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast / Dinner Accommodations: Paris Hotel in Latin Quarter Transportation: Full Day Coach City Tour Entrance Fees: The Eiffel Tower (2nd floor observatory) Behind the Scenes Tour</p>
Day 5:	<p>Paris The Louvre / Arras by Private Coach Morning - visit The Louvre (3 hours) Lunch on own in Paris Afternoon Private coach transfer from Paris to Arras (about 2 ½ hours) Stop enroute at the Newfoundland Memorial Park in Beaumont-Hamel (20 minute stop) Wellington Quarry Underground Guided Tour</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast / Dinner Accommodations: Arras Hotel – 1 night Transportation: Paris – Arras Full Day Entrance Fees: The Louvre, Wellington Quarry Tour</p>

Day 6:	<p>Vimy Region / Ypres by Private Coach Vimy Ridge Historic Site with Tunnel & Trench Tour Cabaret Rouge War Cemetery Stop for Lunch in Vimy Area (<i>at own cost</i>) Transfer to Ypres (about 1-1/2 hour drive) St. Georges Memorial Church (short photo stop) In Flanders Fields Museum & Bell Tower Essex Farm Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Memorial Dinner in Ypres 8 pm - Last Post Ceremony at Menin Gate (be there by 7 pm)</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast / Dinner Accommodations: Ypres Hotel – 1 night Transportation: Arras – Ypres Full Day Entrance Fees: Vimy Ridge Historic Site Tunnel & Trench Tour, In Flanders Fields Museum & Bell Tower, Last Post Ceremony at Menin Gate</p>
Day 7:	<p>Ypres / Ghent by Private Coach Tyne Cot Cemetery Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 St. Julien Canadian Memorial at Vancouver Corner Hooge Crater Museum Optional Visit to The Hooge Crater site on the grounds of the Kasteelhof Hooghe (<i>small fee</i>) German War Cemetery of Langemark Sanctuary Wood Cemetery at Mount Sorrel Optional Sanctuary Wood Museum (Hill 62) (<i>at own cost</i>) Transfer to Ghent (about 1 hour Drive)</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast / Dinner Accommodations: Ghent Central Hotel – 1 night Transportation: Ypres – Ghent Full Day Entrance Fees: Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917, Hooge Crater Museum</p>
Day 8:	<p>Ghent Sightseeing Guided Walking Tour of Ghent including time at The Belfry & Castle of the Counts Lunch at a Belgian Waffle House (<i>at own cost</i>) Boat trip through Ghent Depart Ghent and travel to Brussels Check in hotel Dinner in Brussels</p> <p>Meals: Breakfast / Dinner Accommodations: Brussels Central Hotel – 2 nights Transportation: Ghent – Brussels Full Day Entrance Fees: The Belfry, Castle of the Counts, Boat Tour</p>

<p>Day 9:</p>	<p>Brussels Sightseeing Guided Bus tour of Brussels - see St Michaels Cathedral, the Chinese Pavillion, Japanese Tower, the Royal Residence of Laeken, Royal St. Mary's church. The tour includes time for visits to both The Atomium & Mini Europe Lunch break at Mini Europe (<i>at own cost</i>) Guided walking tour of Brussels - see Grand Place, Town Hall, Maison du Roi, Mannekin Pis, Galeries Saint-Hubert, the Bourse (The Stock Exchange), La Monnaie Opera House and St. Nicholas Church Chocolate Museum Tour & Demonstration Dinner in Brussels Meals: Breakfast / Dinner Accommodations: Brussels Central Hotel Transportation: Brussels Sightseeing Half Day Entrance Fees: The Atomium, Mini Europe, Chocolate Museum</p>
<p>Day 10:</p>	<p>Private Coach transfer to Brussels Airport for departure BRUSSELS / CALGARY Flights Meals: Breakfast / On Board flight Transportation: Private Airport Transfer</p>



A Balancing Act Educational Tours
 54 Bow Ridge Road, Cochrane, AB T4C 1T7
 Ph: (403) 852-1603 E-mail: tours@abalancingact.ca
www.abalancingact.ca

ITINERARY DETAILED

Days 1 & 2:

CALGARY / PARIS

Depart Calgary for overnight flight to Paris, France

Paris

Welcome to Paris! Once you clear Customs & Immigrations, your tour guide will greet you in the Arrival Lobby just outside of Customs and escort you by private coach to your hotel. Your **tour guide** will be fluent in both English & French, and able to assist you with anything you wish! The guide will be staying at the same hotels as you and on hand to help during your stay. Check-in to your hotel and have some time to rest and have lunch.

In the afternoon, meet with your Tour Guide for a **Walking Tour of the Latin Quarter**. This tour takes us through the heart of Parisian history and touches on everything from Roman ruins to the great intellectuals of France. This is where Paris began many centuries ago and continues to be one of the most popular areas of the city. See renowned churches **St. Etienne du Mont & St. Chapelle** (The stained glass walls are considered to be among the most impressive in the world), **Place St. Michel** (square in the heart of the Latin Quarter is dominated by the Fontaine St. Michel in which St. Michel, the archangel, is shown defeating two dragons. The square is also a popular spot at night for street musicians and socializing students), the **Panthéon** (the first great neoclassical monument & masterpiece of the architect Soufflot), **Pointe Zero** (this is the point where from which all distances in France are measured), **Les Bouquinistes** (line the banks of the Seine and sell everything from old books and posters to photos and trinkets), the **Sorbonne University** (the world's second oldest university), **Conciergerie** (formerly a royal palace and prison - the most notable of whom were Queen Marie Antoinette and Napoleon III), **Rue du Chat-qui-Pêche** (the narrowest street in Paris, with a width of only 1.8 meters).

Visit **Notre Dame Cathedral** - The most famous cathedral in the world is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture. Construction began in 1163 during the reign on King Louis VII and has stood as a symbol of Paris for almost nine centuries. On the top of the building sit 13 statues; 12 are the apostles and one is a statue of the architect himself.

Archaeological Crypt under the Parvis of Notre Dame - Converted in 1980 under the square in front of Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral to display archaeological remains discovered during excavations from 1965 to 1972, the crypt provides a unique overview of urban & architectural development of the Île de la Cité, the historical heart of Paris.

Discover some of the most beautiful monuments of Paris on a **Seine river cruise** with commentary. From the vantage point of the river, see the **Louvre Museum** (one of the largest & most important museums in the world with the Louvre Pyramid which functions as the museum's main entrance), **Alexander III Bridge** (the most luxurious bridge in Paris, built to commemorate the Franco-Russian alliance at the end of the last century), **Pont-Neuf** (the New Bridge is, in spite of its name, the oldest bridge of Paris. Finished under Henry IV in 1606, it was the first bridge of Paris built with stones), **Musée d'Orsay** (a museum housed in a grand railway station built in 1900 for the Paris World Exposition), **Hôtel de Ville** (Paris's City Hall).

Group Dinner in the Latin Quarter

Accommodations: Paris Hotel in Latin Quarter - 3 nights

Meals Included: Meals on board flight / Dinner

Day 3:

Versailles & Les Invalides

Versailles Sightseeing by Private Coach & Les Invalides

After breakfast this morning, you will depart for a Guided Excursion to Versailles. The magnificent **Château de Versailles** is a testimony of Louis XIV the Sun King’s extravaganza. The Palace and its magnificent formal garden became the quintessential model for palaces in Europe. The Château de Versailles, which has been on UNESCO’s World Heritage List for 30 years, is one of the most beautiful achievements of 18th-century French art. The site began as Louis XIII’s hunting lodge before his son Louis XIV transformed and expanded it, moving the court and government of France to Versailles in 1682. Each of the three French kings who lived there until the French Revolution added improvements to make it more beautiful.

The Hall of Mirrors has always played an important role in history including in 1919, as the First World War officially ended when Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles in this hall. The main feature of the hall is the seventeen mirrored arches that reflect the seventeen arched windows which look out onto Versailles equally- magnificent garden. **The Grand Apartment** was originally known as the Apartment of the Planets (the 7 salons of this apartment each featured a painting of a planet), this was King Louis XIV's apartment. **The Garden of the Versailles Palace** is Europe's largest palace garden. It was created in the 17th century by landscape gardener André Le Nôtre who designed what could be considered the quintessential formal French garden. The garden is laid out in a geometric pattern of paths, bushes, flowerbeds and trees.

After your return, stop at **Les Invalides (Hôtel des Invalides)** - The **Dôme des Invalides**, which contains **Napoleon tomb**, is the emblem of the Hôtel National des Invalides and an unmissable monument in the Parisian landscape. You will visit the museum's permanent collections, the Dome Church (Napoleon's Tomb), Charles de Gaulle Monument, temporary exhibitions and Museum of Relief Maps and the Museum of the Order of the Liberation with your guide.

You will have a **group dinner** this evening upon your return to the Latin Quarter.

Accommodations: Paris Hotel in Latin Quarter
Meals Included: Breakfast / Dinner

Day 4:

Paris & Eiffel Tower

Paris Sightseeing by Private Coach & Eiffel Tower

After breakfast this morning, embark on a half day sightseeing tour of Paris with your Guide by Private Coach. Drive through Paris and see all the famous landmarks and monuments like the **Arc de Triomphe** (one of the greatest arches in history commissioned by Napoleon in 1806 to commemorate his victories). Stop for a walking tour along **Champs-Elysees** (probably the most famous avenue in the world) to **Concorde Square** (with a surface of 84.000 square meters , the place offers a superb sight of the avenue of the Champs-Élysées in all its length and the Arch of Triumph, on a side, the Louvre and Gardens of Tuileries on the other side. **Place de la Concorde** is the where King Louis XVI, Marie-Antionette, and revolutionary Robespierre, just to name a few were beheaded and is now the site of **Cleopatra's Needle**, the 3200 year old obelisk from the temple of Ramses II at Thebes. Stop at the **Sacré-Coeur Basilica** on top of the Montmartre hill, an area where famous painters lived and worked in this beautiful hilltop part of Paris. The Savoyarde clock installed here is one of the worlds largest. Due to its location on the Montmartre hill, the basilica towers over the city; its highest point is even higher than the top of the Eiffel Tower). Next to Sacré-Coeur is the **Place du Tertre** (the charming artists square where works are painted and sold on the spot).

	<p>After your tour, we will stop at the Eiffel Tower. Once the tallest structure in the world, the Eiffel Tower is probably Europe's best known landmark and Paris's most famous symbol. The Eiffel Tower was built for the World Exhibition in 1889, held in celebration of the French Revolution in 1789. The tower rises 300 meters tall (984 ft); when it was completed at the end of the 19th century. Visit the 2nd floor observatory with its panoramic view over Paris.</p> <p>Behind-the-Scenes Eiffel Tower Tour - Discover the Eiffel Tower like you have never seen it before! Your guided tour will start in the bunker under the Champ de Mars. During World War I, the Eiffel Tower was used to house communications equipment for the army and an evacuation route was built underground, with several secret corridors and tunnels. In case the German army advanced, the tunnels were an escape route and lead from the bunker into the River Seine. Wartime secrets are revealed during this tour, with several accounts of World War II, when Paris fell to Nazi occupation in June 1940. As a privileged visitor, you will also have backstage access to the engine room where your guide will tell you more about the hydraulic system process which controls the Eiffel Tower's elevators. You will then go to the second floor where you will reach the roof of the famous restaurant Le Jules Verne.</p> <p>Accommodations: Paris Hotel in Latin Quarter Meals Included: Breakfast / Dinner</p>
<p>Day 5:</p> <p>The Louvre & Arras</p>	<p>The Louvre & Arras</p> <p>After your breakfast this morning, you will check out of your hotel & then transferred by private coach to The Louvre. Start your visit with a private guided tour, and then time to spend on your own exploring the museum.</p> <p>The Louvre - The Louvre was originally a fortress built by the French king Philippe Auguste. It was intended to reinforce the defenses that the king had ordered to be built in 1190 to protect Paris from attack via the Seine. Today, visitors can walk around the original perimeter moat and view the piers that supported the drawbridge. The Louvre became a museum in 1793, and now exhibits over 73,000 sq. m of Western artworks from the Middle Ages to 1848, as well as the art of the ancient civilizations that preceded and influenced them. Some 35,000 artworks are on display, the oldest of which date back over seven thousand years. The museum collections are grouped into eight curatorial departments: Egyptian Antiquities; Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Antiquities; Near Eastern Antiquities; Islamic Art; Paintings; Sculptures; Decorative Arts; and Prints and Drawings. The Tuileries and Carrousel gardens are immediately adjacent to the Louvre, between the museum and the Place de la Concorde. The Tuileries garden is the largest and oldest public park in Paris. With its stunning landscape art, perspectives and sculptures, it provides visitors with a relaxing setting in the heart of the city.</p> <p>Lunch in the area of The Louvre (<i>on your own</i>)</p> <p>This afternoon, transfer from Paris to Arras by Private Coach (about 2 hour drive).</p> <p>Stop enroute at the Newfoundland Memorial Park in Beaumont-Hamel for about 20 minutes.</p> <p>Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial - Pays tribute to all those Newfoundlanders who served in the First World War and specifically commemorates those who have no known graves. It was here at the opening of the Battle of the Somme, that the 1st Battalion of the Newfoundland Regiment suffered particularly grievous casualties. The battleground features encompassed by the site were largely preserved, retaining the trenches and other features of the time.</p>

	<p>Upon your arrival into Arras, visit Wellington Quarry.</p> <p>Wellington Quarry - an underground museum which has been carefully and sensitively created in a section of the many kilometres of tunnels dug by the British Army in the 1914-1918 war. The First World War tunnels connect with original tunnels and quarries dating back to the middle ages and Roman times underneath the city of Arras. The museum is founded to the memory of thousands of men of the British Army and Dominion Forces who lived under the city during the Great War of 1914-1918. In particular work of the tunnelers of the New Zealand Division is commemorated. The New Zealand Tunneling Company was based in this part of the underground tunnel system during the build-up to the Allied offensive, the Battle of Arras 1917, which was launched in the early hours of 9th April 1917. The guided visit to the tunnels shows a number of features of special interest which were found in these tunnels when they were discovered and excavated. These include mining trucks and bits of equipment, food containers such as glass bottles, tins and rum jars left in the tunnels. There are numerous examples of drawings and “graffiti” on the walls by soldiers.</p> <p>Group Dinner in Arras</p> <p>Accommodations: Arras Hotel – 1 night Meals Included: Breakfast / Dinner</p>
<p>Day 6:</p> <p>Vimy Region & Ypres</p>	<p>Vimy Region</p> <p>After your breakfast this morning, transfer to Vimy Ridge by Private Coach.</p> <p>Vimy Ridge Historic Site - Canada's most impressive tribute overseas to those Canadians who fought and gave their lives in the First World War is the majestic and inspiring Canadian National Vimy Memorial which overlooks the Douai Plain from the highest point of Vimy Ridge, about ten kilometres north of Arras. The Memorial does more than mark the site of the engagement that Canadians were to remember with more pride than any other operation of the First World War. It stands as a tribute to all who served their country in battle in that four-year struggle and particularly to those who gave their lives. Guided tour of the underground tunnels and front-line trenches included.</p> <p>Cabaret-Rouge British Cemetery - It is from this cemetery in 2000 that the remains of an unidentified Canadian soldier were exhumed and laid to rest within the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in front of the War Memorial in Ottawa. Oliver and Wilfred Chenier, brothers from Buckingham, Quebec, who died on the first day of the Battle of Vimy Ridge are also buried here. Caberet Rouge was a small, red-bricked, red-tiled café that stood close to this site in the early days of the First World War. The café was destroyed by shellfire in March 1915 but it gave its unusual name to this sector and to a communication trench that led troops up the front-line. Commonwealth soldiers began burying their fallen comrades here in March 1916. It is also the final resting place of over 70 officers of the Royal Flying Corps and Royal Air Force. Cabaret Rouge has a particularly close connection with the Canadian Infantry, however, as hundreds of Canadians who were killed at the Battle of Vimy Ridge in April 1917 were ultimately laid to rest here.</p> <p>Stop for lunch in the Vimy area.</p> <p>After lunch, transfer to Ypres (about 1 hour)</p> <p>Stop to see St. Georges Memorial Church enroute to In Flanders Fields Museum.</p>

St. Georges Memorial Church - was built to commemorate over 500,000 British and Commonwealth troops, who had died in the three battles fought for the Ypres Salient, during World War I.

In Flanders Fields Museum – This award winning museum is located in the famous Cloth Hall (called the Lakenhalle in Flemish) in the centre of Ypres (Ieper). In 1998 the original Ypres Salient Memorial Museum was refurbished and renamed In Flanders Fields Museum. In Flanders Fields museum features the latest technological museum applications, providing visitors with touch screens, video projections, soundscapes and an interactive Poppy Bracelet. It confronts the visitor with the consequences of The Great War and holds up a mirror and makes us reflect on how we deal with our past and that of all other countries involved

Bell Tower - The museum path from now on also enables you to visit the bell tower. After climbing the 231 steps you are rewarded with an exceptional view of the city and the surrounding battlefields.

Essex Farm - In the Essex Farm Cemetary, the Canadian field artillery established a small, basic dressing station near Essex Farm to tend to wounded casualties in the vicinity. British casualties who died near to the location of Essex Farm were buried in this cemetery. This is believed to be the location where Major John McCrae wrote his famous poem In Flanders Fields after burying a friend, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, on 3rd May 1915. The preserved Advanced Dressing Station bunker is located at the rear of Essex Farm Cemetery.

Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Memorial - The monument commemorates the Frezenberg Ridge attack by German troops on 8 May 1915, when the PPCLI held the south shoulder of the breach. By the end of the final German assault, the P.P.C.L.I. was reduced to 4 officers and 150 men out of an initial strength of 546. The "Princess Pats" were the first Canadian troops to arrive in Belgium and he first Canadians to die in combat on Belgian soil in the Great War.

Group dinner in Ypres

Last Post Ceremony at Menin Gate - The Menin Gate Memorial was erected to commemorate Commonwealth soldiers killed in battle during the First World War and who remain unidentified, and thus have no marked graves. It was inaugurated in 1927. The memorial is the central site to commemorate all Canadians missing in action in Belgium, 1914-18. Of the 54,962 names engraved on the Menin Gate, 6983 are Canadians. The Last Post ceremony under the Menin Gate, is where the soldiers who died in the Ypres Salient are remembered each day in a simple sunset ceremony. Since November 11, 1929, the Last Post has been sounded at the Menin Gate Memorial every night and in all weather, with the exception of the occupation of Ypres during the Second World War.

Accommodations: Ypres Hotel – 1 night

Meals Included: Breakfast & Dinner

Ypres / Ghent Sightseeing

Day 7:

After breakfast this morning, you will begin your day at the “Passchendaele Memorial Museum” in Zonnebeke with a stop enroute to see Tyne Cot Cemetery.

Ypres & Ghent

Tyne Cot Cemetery - is the largest Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in the world, containing 11,956 Commonwealth war dead, including 1,011 Canadians, most of them killed at Passchendaele. On the cemetery walls are engraved the names of 34,957 soldiers who have no known grave and died after August 15, 1917. A modern visitors' center offers views

over the battlefield the Canadians had to cross during the Battle of Passchendaele. The towers of Ypres are visible in the distance

Memorial Museum Passchendaele 1917 - This museum, renovated and extended in 2013, gets an especially good insight into the Battle of Passchendaele, in which Canadian soldiers played such a key role. Special features of the museum are the descent into the 6 meter-deep 'dug-out', complete with HQ, communication room, aid post and sleeping cots for the troops, as well as a network of trenches on the outside. Part of the new extension is dedicated to Canada's role in the Battle of Passchendaele. The museum is housed in the historic château grounds of Zonnebeke and focuses on the material aspects of World War I. Attention is paid to uniforms, battlefield archaeology and artillery.

Lunch in Passchendaele (on own)

St. Julien Canadian Memorial at Vancouver Corner - Visible for several miles from its site beside the main road from Ypres to Bruges, the impressive Canadian Memorial at St. Julien stands like a sentinel over those who died during the heroic stand of Canadians during the first gas attacks of the First World War. Nicknamed "The Brooding Soldier", unveiled in 1923, is one of the most visually attractive war memorials on the Western front. The 35 ft high shaft of granite features the bust of a Canadian soldier standing at "rest on arms reversed". The bowed head of the soldier faces towards the direction from which the gas came, and his hands rest on the butt of his rifle, as though he is keeping watch. The "rest on arms reversed" position symbolizes respect for a fallen soldier.

German War Cemetery of Langemark - More than 44,000 soldiers are buried here. The village was the scene of the first gas attacks by the German army, marking the beginning of the Second Battle of Ypres in April 1915. Today, visitors find a mass grave near the entrance. This comrades' grave contains 24,917 servicemen, including the Ace Werner Voss. Between the oak trees, next to this mass grave, are another 10,143 soldiers (including 2 British soldiers killed in 1918). The 3,000 school students who were killed during the First Battle of Ypres are buried in a third part of the cemetery.

Hooge Crater Museum - The Museum contains an outstanding collection of WW1 memorabilia, including uniforms, equipment, armour, weaponry, photographs and other artefacts; the central feature of the museum are life-size dioramas depicting trenches, dugouts and other battlefield scenes. The Hooge Crater is a massive crater that was a result of an explosion set off by the Germans, under a British bunker. Entrance to the trench system in the grounds at the nearby chateau can also be added to a combination visit.

OPTIONAL Visit to The Hooge Crater site on the grounds of the **Kasteelhof Hooghe** - The Hooge Crater site is today on the grounds of the Kasteelhof Hooghe, a hotel-restaurant that stands roughly on the site of the mansion's stables. The existing crater is the result of the merging of three smaller craters that were flooded and where you can see the roof of a half-submerged German bunker. A path leads around a water-filled crater, along a network of preserved trenches with numerous artifacts have been left in place in the grounds and are displayed all along the path, with photos displayed on information boards. Only one of the pillboxes built in 1916 (near the entrance) can be accessed, the others are partially or entirely submerged. There is a small fee of 1€ for Adults & .50€ for students.

	<p>Hill 62 (Sanctuary Wood) Canadian Memorial - The figure 62 in the name refers to the height of this feature above sea level. During heavy fighting on Hill 62 and nearby Mount Sorrel, the Canadian troops operated as a national unit for the first time, albeit at a cost of 8,430 killed, wounded and missing. In the entire Ypres Salient, Hill 62 and Mount Sorrel were almost the only places where the Germans did not occupy the heights. For this reason, it was fought over so many times. For Canada, the Battles of Hill 62 and Mount Sorrel marked the start of a progression that would ultimately result in becoming the most formidable attacking Corps on the Western Front.</p> <p>OPTIONAL STOP (<i>at own cost</i>) to Sanctuary Wood Museum (Hill 62) - Located near to the original front lines, the Sanctuary Wood Trenches were left in place by the owner of the land after the war and were preserved in-situ from that time. A museum was later opened at the site and the trenches were partially-restored to ensure they survived the increasing number of visitors. Today visitors can explore these trenches and covered passageways as well as a section of the underground tunnel system. The Hill 62 Sanctuary Wood Museum itself is a small, family-run affair and contains a number of artefacts from the site as well as images from the war – note these images are quite graphic in places. This site is now one of the few places on the Ypres Salient battlefields where an original trench layout can be seen in some semblance of what it might have looked like. Cost approx. €10</p> <p>Transfer to Ghent (about 1 hour)</p> <p>Ghent - Belgium's fourth-largest - and most beautiful - city is home to a quarter of a million people and a flourishing flower export trade. An important port, Ghent's city center is a pedestrian area that is like a museum to early Flemish architecture and a testament to the city's medieval might.</p> <p>Accommodations: Ghent Central Hotel – 1 night Meals Included: Breakfast</p>
<p>Day 8:</p> <p>Ghent to Brussels</p>	<p>Ghent Sightseeing / Transfer to Brussels</p> <p>After your breakfast this morning, embark on a guided walking tour of Ghent including time at The Belfry & Castle of the Counts</p> <p>Walking tour of Ghent – this walking tour takes you through the historic streets of Ghent and will include all the must see sights including St. Bavo’s Square, St. Bavo’s Cathedral, The Town Hall, Vrijdagmarkt, St. Michaels Church, Grote Triomphante and Fountain of the Kneelers. You will also spend time at the Belfry and the Castle of the Counts.</p> <p>St Bavo’s Square is to Ghent what Trafalgar Square is to London: the heart of the city. It is here, on this island, that the city of Ghent was born. And its name actually derives from Ganda, the Celtic word for confluence.</p> <p>St. Bavo’s Cathedral - Ghent may well be the most beautiful city in Belgium and the SAINT BAVO may be the most awesome cathedral in the country. It was named after Saint Bavo, a 7th century local nobleman who became a saint after he had given away his possessions to the poor and entered the monastery. The cathedral with its mighty uprising tower is perhaps the most visible sign of the pride of the citizens of Ghent.</p> <p>Civic Theatre - From the top of the Civic Theatre, the god Apollo, flanked by his muses, looks down on this superbly renovated square. On the terrace of the foyer you’ll enjoy a breathtaking view of Sint-Baafsplein, just like Apollo and his muses.</p>

The 91-metre-tall **Belfry of Ghent** is one of three medieval towers that overlook the old city centre of Ghent, at the top of this watchtower, the dragon keeps guard over both the inhabitants of the city and its freedoms, which it acquired in 1180. Since 1999 the belfry has been on the UNESCO World Heritage list of protected monuments.

The Town Hall - one of the most breathtaking buildings in Ghent. A portion of the building has an ornate Gothic design while another portion (on Botermarkt Square) was built in a Renaissance style.

Vrijdagmarkt - For centuries, this square was the heart of the city's public political and social life: this is where rulers were solemnly received, feasts were celebrated and feuds were settled. Today it hosts a weekly market and the occasional fair.

St. Michaels Church - Construction of this gothic church began in 1440 and, due to a variety of political and financial slowdowns, was finally completed 200 years later. The church tower was once planned to be the highest in Flanders, but, due to a lack of funds, never exceeded the current 47 meters and wasn't roofed until the early 19th century.

The Grote Triomphante - a bell cast from the remains of Klokke Roeland, was notorious in its day but was smashed to pieces in 1659. It hopes one day to be allowed to return to the Belfry as the 55th bell in the unique carillon.

Fountain of the Kneelers – (De Bron der Geknielden) is a masterpiece by Georges Minne, a contemporary of Rodin. These five young men have been staring into the water for more than a hundred years, in the hope of finding the answer to who they are.

The Castle of the Counts or the Gravensteen Castle, originally a fortress built by Count Boudewijn I in about 868, was rebuilt as a castle at the behest of Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders. The structure, situated in the heart of Ghent, was once a residence of the Count and was later used as a cotton mill but is now a tourist attraction in itself, as the only remaining medieval castle in Flanders. This impressively restored castle reveals much about its history, residents, medieval weaponry and jurisdiction. The icing on the cake is the unforgettable view over the historic centre of Ghent.

After your walking tour, have lunch at a Belgian Waffle House (at our own cost).

This afternoon, take a boat tour through the waterways of this Medieval city.

Ghent Boat Tour - A fun and thorough historical exploration of the whole city with a guide on board to tell you about Ghent's 1000 years of architecture and stories. This tour offers a surprisingly large amount of sights. An enthralling historical passage through Medieval Ghent admiring its wide range of monument, as well as other sites of the city: the Chinese Teahouses, the Pharmacodynamics Institute, the Bijloke, the Courts of Law, the Opera, the Handelsbeurs, the Vooruit, the St Peter's Abbey, the tunnels under the 'Laurentplein', the Castle of Gerald the Devil, the Episcopal Palace and more. You sail on the Leie and the Lieve, as well as on the Schelde and the Ketelvaart.

Afterwards, depart Ghent and travel to Brussels via private coach.

	<p>Brussels - Brussels is Belgium's capital city and one of the most famous historical cities in Europe. The city, popular for its famous beer, is also loved for its delicious handmade chocolates. Furthermore, Brussels is home to the headquarters of the European Union. The city has huge number of museums, monuments, and historical places that should not be missed. Brussels is a city that has grown from a 10th-century fortress town into a modern metropolis of more than one million inhabitants. It is a historical & enchanting place that unearths stories dating back to the early 17th century.</p> <p>Upon your arrival, check into your hotel prior to your group dinner.</p> <p>Accommodations: Brussels Central Hotel – 2 nights Meals Included: Breakfast / Dinner</p>
<p>Day 9: Brussels</p>	<p>Brussels Sightseeing by Private Coach</p> <p>After breakfast this morning, we start our guided city bus tour with a visit to the magnificent St. Michaels’ cathedral, then on towards the Laeken district: we see the Royal Residence, the Chinese Pavillion, the Japanese Tower and the world-famous Atomium and Mini Europe. The tour includes time for stops at The Atomium (1 hour) & Mini Europe (1 hour 45 min).</p> <p>You will have time for lunch at Mini Europe.</p> <p>Cathedral of Saints Michel and Gudule - This magnificent cathedral, tactfully dedicated to the male and female patron saints of Brussels, is located near Central Station. It was completed by the end of the 15th century in the Brabant Gothic style, but was damaged by the French shelling of 1695. The white stone facade is from the year 1250 and the interior is splendidly proportioned and stuffed with treasures.</p> <p>The Royal Palace (Palais Royal) - The official home of the Belgian king, you will always know if he is in the country when you see the Belgian flag flying on top of the building. The building is a highlight of Neo-Classical architecture and overlooks Brussels Park. The Royal Palace is open to the public during the summer months.</p> <p>Chinese Pavillion & Japanese Tower - Situated at the end of the domain of Laeken, along the Avenue Van Praet, the Chinese Pavillion was set up on order of King Leopold II, between 1901 and 1905, to complete the Japanese Tower. Facing the Chinese pavilion, this Japanese complex, was built to show two different structures - a high red tower and an adjacent wooden pavilion. Housing temporary collections of Japan, it is surrounded by a garden with many Japanese plants.</p> <p>The Atomium - Unmistakable symbol of Brussels and Belgium and unique feat in the history of architecture: the Atomium is today the most popular attraction in the Capital of Europe. Built for the 1958 World Exhibition, the Atomium is shaped on the model of an elementary iron crystal enlarged 165 billion times. Beyond surreal walks through tubes and spheres, the Atomium houses a permanent exhibition about its history as well temporary exhibitions for a broad public (sciences, design, society). The upper sphere offers unique and spectacular views across the city skyline. Cost - Atomium & Mini Europe Ticket Euros 12.25 per person</p> <p>Mini Europe - Located at the foot of the Atomium, MINI-EUROPE is the only park where you can have a whistle-stop tour around Europe in a few short hours. A truly unique voyage! Stroll amid the whimsical ambiance of the most beautiful towns of the Old Continent.</p>

	<p>This afternoon, embark on a Guided walking tour in the heart of medieval Brussels. Starting in the famous Grand Place, with its rounded cobblestones and gilded houses, we lead you through the winding streets and discover the sites of the beginnings of the city over 1500 years ago. From the 61cm high statue of Mannekin Pis, the brazen little chap with the well-stocked wardrobe - to the birthplace of Tintin, the star of Europe’s most popular 20th century comic. Galleries Saint-Hubert, a glass roofed arcade in the center of town has the distinction of being the first shopping arcade in Europe, the Bourse, the Stock Exchange, which looks like a Greek temple, with its Belle Epoque cafés, La Monnaie Opera House, this world-famous theatre that the revolutionary movement was born in 1830, and St. Nicholas Church, one of the oldest churches of Brussels with its unique asymmetrical design because in the earlier days an irregular and small brook used to run through this street.</p> <p>Grand Place - The Grand Place, with its ornate baroque and gothic guild houses, is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, and one of the most beautiful squares in Europe. A set of buildings consisting of the Town Hall, the Maison du Roi (King’s House), The Museum of the City of Brussels, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and other houses which mark the boundary of this magnificent quadrilateral.</p> <p>Afterwards, visit a Chocolate Museum in Brussels, one of Belgium’s most popular exports.</p> <p>Chocolate Museum, Demonstration & Tasting - an opportunity to learn all about the art of chocolate making All the steps in the manual production of chocolates are performed in front of your eyes: tempering, preparation and filling the casts, demoulding and packing. And of course, the crucial moment of tasting is not forgotten!</p> <p>Dinner in Brussels</p> <p>Accommodations: Brussels Central Hotel Meals Included: Breakfast / Dinner</p>
<p>Day 10:</p>	<p>After breakfast this morning, check out of your hotel & then a private coach transfer to the airport, where your guide will assist you with check in for your return flight home.</p> <p>Meals Included: Breakfast</p> <p>BRUSSELS / CALGARY</p>



A Balancing Act Educational Tours
54 Bow Ridge Road, Cochrane, AB T4C 1T7
Ph: (403) 852-1603 E-mail: tours@abalancingact.ca
www.abalancingact.ca