

Please note; travelling by car on the toll roads (from Calais towards Le Havre – 'Pont de Normandie' - Caen, etc), take into account the cost of it; toll roads; ± 20 € (very convenient is toll vignette or a credit card (Visa) due to the smooth flow), Pont de Normandie; €5.40 (also accepts vignette and credit card).

Recommended; Michelin map 303 Local.

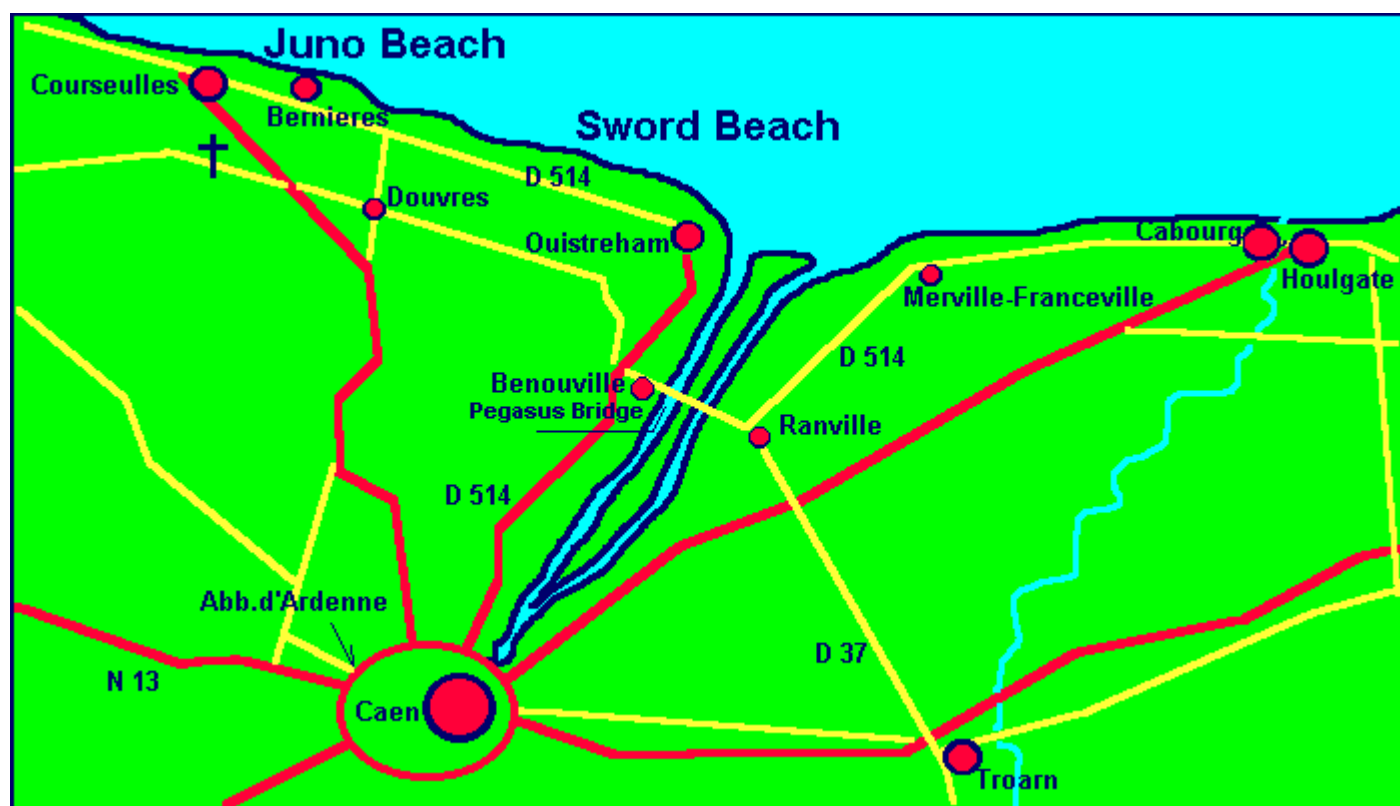
All trips start from the Bayeux area.

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Daytrip Normandy 'Pegasus', Merville, Ouistreham and Douvres

THE TOUR BELOW TAKES YOU TO THE FAMOUS BRIDGE OVER THE CAEN CANAL, "PEGASUS BRIDGE". THEN WE DRIVE ON TO MERVILLE WHERE WE VISIT THE BATTERY THERE. THESE TWO OBJECTS WERE TARGETS OF THE 6TH AIRBORNE DIVISION.

FROM BAYEUX THE N13 TO THE EAST, TOWARDS CAEN. FROM CAEN (D515) TOWARDS OUISTREHAM. FOLLOW THE SIGNS TOWARDS BENOUVILLE/RANVILLE (D514) "PEGASUS BRIDGE" Gps: **49°14'32.37" N, 00°16'27.25" W**



Over the Caen canal and the Orne (a few hundred meters further) there are two bridges. The first is the famous Pegasus bridge. Here, three Horsa gliders from the 6th Airborne Division led by Major John Howard landed on the east bank 10 minutes after midnight on June 6, 1944. Within 10 minutes, the bridge fell in British hands. Two people were killed and 14 injured on the British side. The owners of café Gondrée were the first French to be freed. At the landing site of the Horsa weavers there is now a bust of Major Howard.

Worthwile is the museum dedicated to the Pegasus bridge. The museum can be found on the piece of land between the two bridges on the north side of the road (D514), right after the (new) Pegasus bridge left. The museum includes Bill Millin's original bagpipe. The original bridge was replaced in the early 1990s and is now fully restored behind the museum. Clearly the holes and dents of a German bomb can be seen at the rear of the counterweight. There is also a restored Bailey bridge and a replica of a Horsa glider. In a shed you can admire original debris from a Horsa. There is also a striking memory of the battle, a Centaur IV with a 95mm cannon. These tanks, only 80 of them, were deployed by the Royal Marine Armoured Support Group to shoot from LCTs. To guide the fire, markings were placed around the tower to point the cannon in the right direction. Unfortunately, the LCTs proved unsuitable as a 'battle base' and the Centaur was only deployed ashore. This museum is highly recommended!

Opening hours:

January/March: 10 am to 1pm, 2pm-5pm

April/September: 9.30am to 6.30pm

October/December: 10am to 1pm, 2pm-5pm

FROM PEGASUS BRIDGE TO RANVILLE (D 514).

It's a short drive to Ranville. Through the first roundabout after the River Orne (second bridge) and take the Exit Merville/Franceville. After a few hundred meters immediately after the slight bend you can make a stop at a small monument on the right side of the road. This is one of the most important LZ's (Landing Zone) for the gliders. South of the monument, in the V-shaped grass area, a Horsa had also come down. But most ended up heading east and north of this point.

Now turn right at the monument and drive to Ranville. In front of you, you can see the loose-standing bell tower of the village looming. Behind the church is the main war cemetery located for the fallen of the 6th Airborne Division. There are 2563 victims buried under immaculate white stones. Behind the northern church wall are also some fallen from the first two days of landing, including Lt. D. Brotheridge who is the first to be listed as a fallen soldier during D-Day. He died at Pegasus Bridge. The Gondrée family, from the café next to the bridge, honoured him with a plaque. A lone unknown German soldier is also buried here.

CONTINUE THE ROAD NORTH TOWARDS MERVILLE/FRANCEVILLE AND CABOURG (D 514).

At the first major intersection with traffic lights turn right into Merville and follow the signs.

JUNE 6, 1944, 00.20 OBJECT: THE BATTERY OF MERVILLE. **Gps: 49°16'12.49" N, 00°11'47.01" W**

Just south of Merville lies the battery complex that the Allies feared that the 150 mm cannons would endanger the invasion fleet. It was Major Terence Otway's job to disable this object. Lancaster bombers bombarded the complex just after midnight. Unfortunately, the bombs fell next to the target.

Four hours after the paratroopers landed, Otway managed to reach the complex with 150 men. This was only 25% of the men who jumped. Most of the men were hopelessly lost or wrong. The attack began at 4:20 a.m. that was violent and bloody. Seventy men on the British side died or were injured. Of the German garrison, 20 were captured, the rest was killed or injured. By 5:00 a.m., it was all over. In the bunkers there were not 150 mm, but 100mm Skoda cannons. These were eliminated. After Otway moved his men, the battery was recaptured by the Germans. The next day the Germans were driven out again after bitter battles between the bunkers and in the tunnels that connected the bunkers.

THE BATTERIE DE MERVILLE MUSEUM:

One bunker is decorated as a tribute to the men of Otway. He himself explains the attack on the battery via a video presentation. In another bunker, several spaces have been set up where a light and sound show is displayed to get an impression of how things must have been during the attack.

Na. Pay attention to the tight finish of the concrete. This is especially noticeable around the machine gun nest on the right side of the casemate, and that for a ferocious weapon of war to be used!

Also striking is the C-47 Dakota that is here, with explanations about its purchase and restoration.

Opening hours:

1 April to 30 September: daily 10am-6pm

March 15-31: Mondays, Wednesdays and weekends from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

1-31 October: Mondays, Wednesdays and weekends from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

TO OUISTREHAM (SWORD BEACH): Gps: 49°17'14.97" N, 00°15'08.32" W

Return to "Pegasus" heading for Ranville/Benouville.

JUNE 6, 1944, 7:25 AM

UK AND SECTOR COMMONWEALTH: 'SWORD', 'JUNO' AND 'GOLD'

OUISTREHAM: Gps: 49°17'14.97" N, 00°15'08.32" W (idem als boven)

Start your visit to Ouistreham, in the SWORD sector, with the Musée Le Grand Bunker. This fire conduction bunker was responsible for guiding the batteries that covered the port mouth of Ouistreham. It was not until 9 June that the tower, led by Lieutenant Bob Orell of the Royal Engineers, was attacked with three men. The heavy doors were blown out with explosives. This operation alone lasted five hours! Constantly, the attackers were bombarded with machine gun fire and hand grenades that were thrown from the tower. Once inside, the garrison, of 50 men, surrendered and the last resistance heart of Ouistreham was thus rolled up.

Opening hours:

1 April to 30 September: daily 9am, until 7pm

1 February to 31 March: daily from 10:00 a.m. to 6 p.m.

1 October to 15 November: daily from 10:00 a.m. to 6 p.m.

The casino that featured in 'The Longest Day' can no longer be found here. However, on the coastal road, 200 meters west of the current casino, a monument can be found on a German bunker 'cupola' to commemorate the fallen fighters of the Free French Commandos who carried out the attack on the casino. In Ouistreham there is little else to be found of the battle.

Leave Ouistreham and follow the coastal road, the D514

Sector SWORD (QUEEN)

Coming from Ouistreham via the coastal road D 514, follow Sword Beach west. In Queen sector, of Sword Beach, is the place Colleville-Montgomery-Plage. At the main intersection of Rue de Riva Bella with traffic lights turn left and turn left immediately. Here you can see the statue of Field Marshal Bernhard Montgomery. Park on the large parking lot to the right of the statue. Cross the road towards the beach, via the Avenue de 4ème Commando. On the left you can see the monument to Captain Kieffer and his commandos who marched through this route to Ouistreham. Across the street, on the corner is the monument commemorating that there was once a temporary British cemetery to house the first fallen.

Continue to the beach. Follow the beach to the left. You now walk into Wn 18 where you will soon encounter a huge casemate. This casemate possessed a 7.5cm cannon that could only bring westward fire over Sword Beach. It was protected from the sea by heavy concrete side protection. A tank, probably an AVRE tank with a Petard mortar, managed to disable the casemate from close range. Nowadays, a house has been built against which uses the roof as a walled terrace. Walk

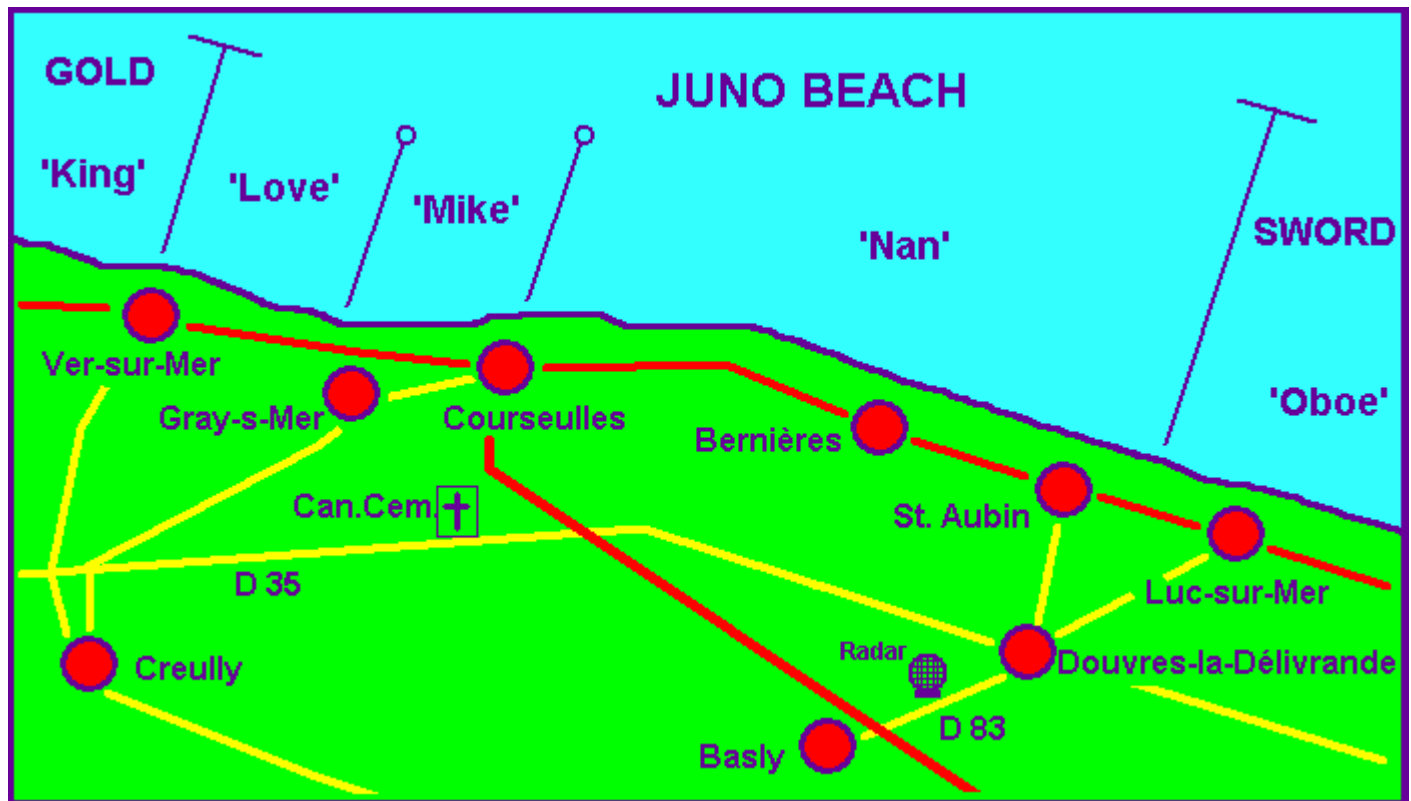
straight ahead (150 meters) to view Bill Millin's statue. Return to the casemate and turn right. After a 150 meters you will find an old fortress from the 18th century. This was part of the fortifications that had to protect Ouistreham. The Germans put it back into use by placing armaments on it. It is unfortunately closed with a fence and therefore you can't visit. Return to your vehicle.

LA BRECHE D'HERMANVILLE SECTOR 'SWORD' , 07.25

As you approach HERMANVILLE from the east, you will first come across a Centaur with 95mm howitzer.

Just west outside the village is a Churchill AVRE tank. This is the middle of sword named Queen. Thanks to the 21 DD tanks that made it to the beach (2 were lost) and the 'Funnies' the landing here went quite well. At 08.20 the No 4 (Kieffer) and No 6 Commando (Lord Lovat) landed here under the bagpipe sounds (Highland Laddie) of Bill Millin.

There were minefields, but thanks to the 'Deutsche Gründlichkeit' these were neatly marked! During the landing, a tragedy took place when German fire mowed down several commandos jumping out of landing boats. They shouted to call for first aid but this was lost in the tumult. A CRAB tank drove out of a landing boat with a spinning mine sweeper. He did not notice the wounded and dying men and swished right through it, at least about 10 to 12 men were pounded to a pulp. Lord Lovat's No 6 Commando quickly moved inland to reinforce the paratroopers at Pegasus Bridge. Lord Lovat's Brigade caused a lot of confusion among the French people by the labels on their uniforms. These bore the letters 'SS' of 'Special Service'. This was later changed.



SECTOR 'JUNO' 6 JUNI 1944, 07.45 UUR

The Canadian 3rd Division (15,000 men) and 9,000 supporting British troops were assigned the 'JUNO' sector. The sector started at St-Aubin-sur-Mer and ran all the way to La Rivière (Ver-sur-Mer).

After the preliminary bombardment, first by the British and later by the U.S. Air Force, 11 navy ships attacked the shoreline. Despite the resistance of the Germans, the Canadians managed to occupy the vast piece of territory of all the units that landed that day (up to nearly 10 kilometers into the country). Unfortunately, no connection could be made with the 'SWORD' sector.

LUC-SUR-MER/PETIT ENFER

Here's the boundary of SWORD with JUNO Beach. This was the hole where in the evening of the 6th of June a small part of the 12. SS Panzer Division 'Hitler Jugend' took on the defense. The Allied units managed to circle the German unit that night and the next day it was eliminated, partly thanks to the landing of the 46th RM (Royal Marines) Command at 09:00 on the 7th of June.

DOUVRES RADAR STATION: 6-17 JUNE 1944, Gps: 49°17'09.72" N, 00°24'11.86" W

The Wurzburg radar station of Douvres is located in the gap between SWORD and JUNO, between the towns of Douvres-La-Deliverande and the western Basley and Bény-sur-Mer. Here is a small museum and for several years now, there is also a Wurtzburg radar. It is open in July and August. This radar post was manned at the time by 200 luftwaffe personnel. There were several attacks on it. It was not until 17 June that the attack was actually deployed with the help of the 22nd Dragoon, 41st RM Command and the 26th Assault Squadron RE. With the deployment of four flail tanks, to clean up the mines, and 12 AVRE tanks, to shoot the bunkers with mortars, the radar post was finally taken after a short but fierce battle. Eight tanks were damaged and four written off. There had been 'only' 12 victims, but it would have taken 11 days for the post was disabled.

Daytrip Juno Beach, Gold Beach, Arromanches

All trips start from the Bayeux area.

SECTOR 'JUNO' 6 JUNI 1944, 07.45

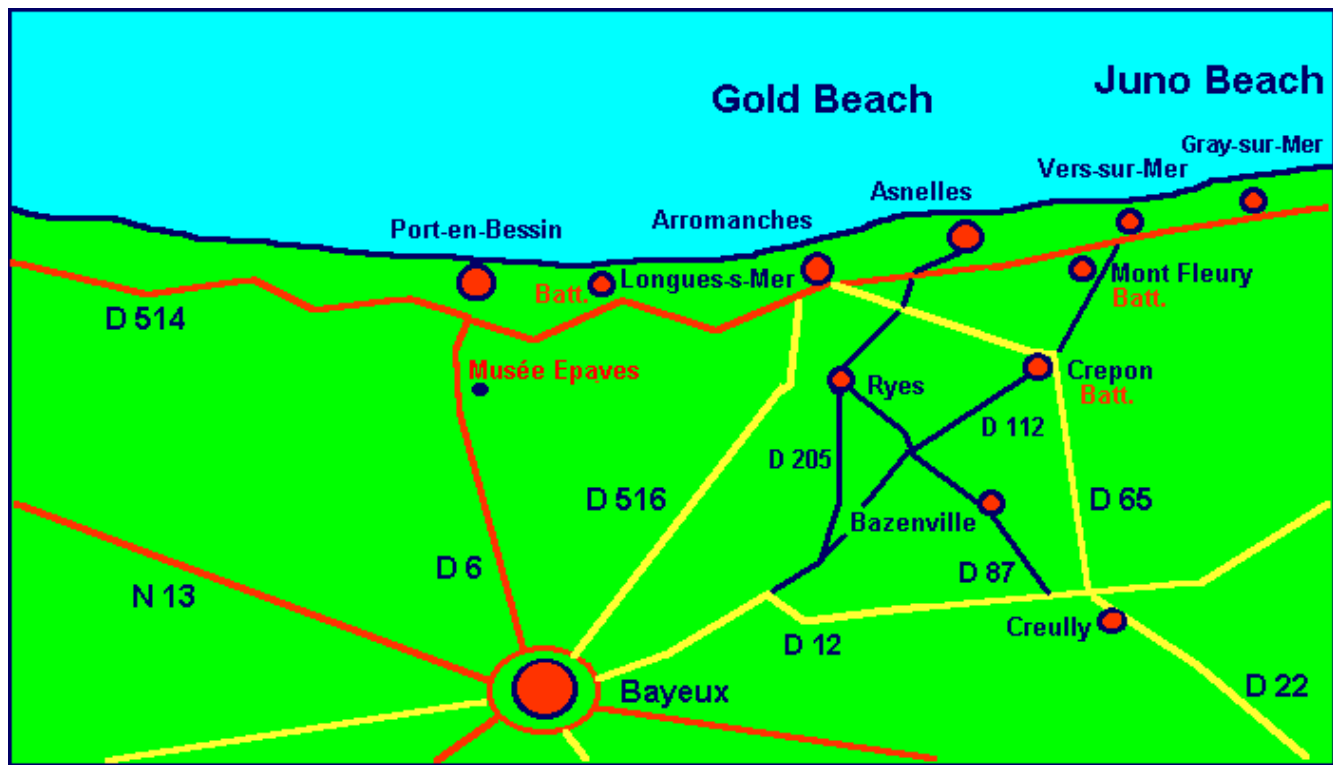
BERNIÈRES, 08.15

This was the object for the Queens Own Rifles of Canada of the 8th Canadian Brigade Group. This is where most of the Canadian victims fell. From their concrete bunkers, the Germans had a free shooting range. The landing here was at 8.15am without tank support and 200 meters to the east and directly in front of a 'Widerstandnest'. The first wave of Canadians lost half their men. Thanks to a gunboat, which almost came on to the beach, the Germans were silenced. At 'the first liberated house' is the monument that recalls the landing by the Canadians. About 250 meters to the east stands a German bunker with more (tarnished) remembrance plaques.

From Bernières-sur-Mer it is a short drive over the D79A southbound to visit the Canadian cemetery. After three kilometers on the D79A go to the right on the D35, towards Reviers. After a mile you will find the resting place for 2044 dead Canadians.

COURSEULLES-SUR-MER, 08.00

Here, on this section of JUNO Beach, the 7th Canadian Brigade Group landed at 8 a.m. Despite the resistance, the landing here went quite well. Also because most DD tanks were unloaded here at close range (800 meters). In 1970, a DD Sherman tank was salvaged off the coast and now serves as a monument in Courseulles.



Courseulles-sur-Mer is also home to the Juno Beach Centre. It's a modern museum. Don't expect any halls with dolls in military clothing or display cases full of weapons. It is a center of information with attention to the landings by Canadians here, and how the Canadian country and its culture have developed to date. The film at the end in the museum is a must see.

To the left of the museum are striking columns. These are arranged to carry small plaques on which the names of Canadians who fought in The First and Second World Wars can be engraved. Soldiers who participated in other conflicts or served in the Canadian army can also be honored. Through sponsorship one can purchase a so-called 'brick' with which one supports the Juno Centre. Each column can contain 755 names, with the sea-facing side of a column reserved for Veterans of the Canadian Army.

At the front of the museum are several bunkers, including those recently excavated. These can be visited between the beginning of April and the end of October under the guidance of a guide. In July and August every half hour (starts from 10.30 am, and the last at 17:00). In the other months every hour, the last one starts at 3.30pm. There are tours in French and English (the first is in English). For exact times, see the leaflet at the Juno Centre and which can be found all over Normandy.

GRAY-SUR-MER

If you are departing from the Centre Juno Beach in Courseulles-sur-Mer, don't turn left across the bridge again, but go straight along the dunes. About 50 meters after the intersection is a beach entrance, park here.

Go on the beach. Halfway up, you can see a huge casemate skewed into the sand on the right. This is the so-called 'Cosy's Pillbox', named after Sergeant Cosy who died here during the heavy fighting around this casemate. A sign with explanatory text states: 'Cosy had been instructed to work with 15 other Canadians from the Royal Winnipeg Rifles to take out this casemate. With machine guns and hand grenades, this target was taken, with Cosy fatally struck in the lungs. A short time later, about 150 troops arrived here to bring explosives. The huge explosion moved the casemate and it slumped crookedly into the sand. The Germans of this complex surrendered afterwards.' But is this true?



I would like to comment on the report above. I found a picture of this casemate, an H 612 with 7.5cm cannon, from after the fight. On top of it, six men pose, as it looks like they're from the Navy. There's a barrage balloon in the background. When studying this photo with a picture of the present, one sees many similarities. The most obvious is the shape of the blocks in the side protective parapet that proves that we are dealing with the same casemate here. And what is striking is that the casemate has not slumped into the sand at all. This will probably have been due to erosion of the dune over the years.

There are still some striking concrete objects to be found in this sector. Cross the narrow road and enter the tall dune grass. Here, for example, lies on the spur of the River La Seulles (which looks like an inner harbour), a (Tobruk) Bauform Vf69 Ringstand (later the Vf207). This Ring stand had one room for an 8cm Granatwerfer 34. In addition was switched a smaller room for observation or a machine gun. There is also an overgrown fire bunker and an open artillery platform.

Continue your way along the dunes westwards up to a hundred meters past the huge Lorraine cross. Stop here at the beach entrance where there is an AVRE-Churchill tank.

From every position here you can see the great cross of Lorraine. It is placed here in memory of the return, on 14 June 1944, of General De Gaulle on French soil. De Gaulle was transferred with the destroyer 'La Combattante', of which he switched to a DUKW for the last bit to the beach. From here he made a triumphant ride in a Jeep to Bayeux.

In this sector 128 victims fell on the Canadian side. Behind the DD tanks that landed here came the AVRE tanks 07.55 hours. An anti-tank well was dug at this 'EXIT'. An AVRE tank would have been throwing wood in front when the edge broke down and the tank slid into the hole. The tank was full of water and the six crew members hid behind a dune against the German fire. A mortar shell killed four of them. The tank remained buried under the road surface until 1976. Since then it has been excavated and is now listed as a monument at the beach exit.

GOLD BEACH

CONTINUE THE D 514 WESTWARDS:

In Ver-sur-Mer is a central square where a Sexton motorized howitzer is placed as a monument. At the trafficlight here, turn right. You are now entering the KING (Gold Beach) sector.

Follow the Boulevard de la Plage to the west. After 300 meters you pass a heavy H 667 casemate from which an 8.8cm Pak 43/41 cannon took out two AVRE tanks. A Sherman Crab, which could no longer drive, managed to silence this cannon with the cannon. Here, at KING-RED, the DD tanks were unloaded directly on to the beach. The weather was too bad. The Hobart's Funnies were also successfully deployed here. Take the Voie de Débarquement west to the junction and go left up the dike path. Between the beach and the road (D 514) it was an open area and very soggy.

After Ver-sur-Mer (La Rivière), head straight into the D 112 inland towards Crépon.

A little inland was the Fleury Battery with 150 mm guns (it is still there but mostly hidden behind the new buildings). After crossing the D 514, take rue Claude Debussy, turn right, go left through the bend and drive out the entire street. In front of you, you'll see the first casemate looming from Battery Mont Fleury (to the right you'll find more fleury battery casemates).

In this area, CSM Hollis won the only Victoria Cross on D-Day. Stanley Hollis, a veteran who landed with the 8th Army in North Africa and Sicily, was full of resentment. During the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940, he had seen so many civilians killed by Germans in a street in Lille that he was already carrying 90 carvings in his coat of arms until the 6th of June, for every German killed one. As Hollis marched his unit to Fleury's battery, some bunkers were found to have passed that suddenly opened fire. Instead of taking cover, CSM Hollis rushed toward the bunker. He threw a hand grenade in and fired his stengun, killing three Germans. He disarmed the others in the bunker and were captured. He then ran to some trenches and made it 'free' from Germans. This action probably saved many British lives. (This location has now disappeared under the buildings).

Later, Hollis tried to shut down a gun post (which turned out to be part of Wn 36a with 4 X 100mm cannons and the 8.8cm Flak cannon) with a PIAT. Because there were some men trapped behind the farm 'le Pavillon', on the D 112, Hollis took a Bren machine gun to open and expose cover fire to distract the Germans. Then the Germans shot, with a cannon, the chimney of the house where Hollis and his men were hiding behind. At the end of D-Day, his number of 'carvings' stood at 102!

Continue your way towards Crépon. Immediately after leaving Ver-sur-Mer there's a country road on the left, Rue Marefontaine, to the D 112 leading to the Marefontaine Battery.

Pass the hotel and go straight up the dirt path, and after a few hundred meters, four huge casemates appear. Here were 100mm cannons placed that had a scope of 9 km. This battery was controlled by fire conduction that was housed in Widerstandnest 35b. Wn 35b was tucked away in the forests of Maromme on the plateau of Meuvaines. During D-Day, 250 grenades fell on this battery within two hours. With the deployment of flamethrower tanks of Troop 13, 141st RAC, the surrender was enforced.

Continue the D 112 to the D 65 to the junction with the D 12. Cross and follow the narrow road. Just before crossing the River Seulles, Creullet castle can be seen over the right shoulder.

At the castle, Château Creullet, General Montgomery parked his caravan on June 9 and set up his headquarters here, where he hosted Winston Churchill on June 12 and King George IV on June 16. Spicy detail: Montgomery found out that the caravan lacked a toilet. He was allowed to borrow a 'pispot' of porcelain decorated with pink flowers from the castle!

Continue the road across the river and up the hill and turn left at the First World War monument. Here in this castle (the town hall) the BBC sent out its reports on the progress in Normandy in June and July 1944. During business hours, the turret can be climbed and the studio can be visited.

Now your visit to Creully, take the D 12 towards Bayeux. After two kilometers go right to Bazenville (the D 87).

At the church there is a striking monument in the form of a Spitfire wing. This monument was erected in memory of the temporarily constructed ALG 'B2' airport, which was operational from 16 June to 15 August 1944. From this ADVANCED Landing Grounds (ALG), the Canadian RAF squadrons operated 403, 416 and 421. The 83rd Group Control Center for the 2nd Tactical Air Force was also located here from June 7 to August 10, 1944.

Return to the coastal road D 514 and go to Asnelles. If you drive into Asnelles from Ver-sur-Mer, head to the right at the first major intersection, rue de Débarquement. If you come from the west, take the exit left right after 'Gold Beach Evasion'. Drive to the promenade and park your car near the large casemate.

This casemate, an H 677, belonged to Wn 37, and possessed an 8.8 cm cannon responsible for six disabled British tanks that landed here. The Sexton under the command of Sergeant R.E. Palmer finally silenced the cannon from 300 meters. What also stands out here on the casemate is that the artillery covers the beach and not the sea. The Germans assumed that the flood invasion would take place so that the landing boats would sail over the obstacles erected by the Germans. The firing field of the cannons in the bunkers was arranged in such a way that the fire would cover the beach at its narrowest (flood). Fortunately for the landing troops it landed at low tide and the turning circle of the artillery was tight, otherwise there would certainly have been more casualties from this cannon.

From this point (especially at low tide) there is a good view of the 'Phoenix' elements of the Mulberry port of Arromanches (see below).

TO ARROMANCHES, THE 'MULBERRY' HARBOR, 'PORT WINSTON'

Gps: 49°20'25.26" N, 00°37'17.76" W

Arromanches was liberated in the afternoon of The 6th of June 1944 by the 1st Battalion Royal Hampshire Regiment that had landed at GOLD Beach. Despite heavy shelling by the navy on the city, only 6 civilians were killed. Due to a shortage of ports around the invasion beaches, it was decided to build two artificial ports, one at OMAHA Beach and the other at Arromanches. From 1943, 37,000 men worked on it on the south coast of England. Outside the two artificial ports, the three other invasion beaches (UTAH, JUNO & SWORD) were only equipped with a wave-breaking screen. This screen of 60 old ships codenamed 'Gooseberry's.

Theater Arromanches 360 GPS: 49°20,35.6' N 00°36,88.0' W

Highly recommended is the round theatre Arromanches 360, which is located on the east side of the city, on top of the cliff (you will pass by from Asnelles). Here is a film projected around the audience which carries the visitors with it during the perilous landing on June 6, 1944.

Opening hours:

June, July, August:	9:40 a.m. to 6:40 p.m.
April & May - September & October:	10.10am to 5.40pm
February & March, November & December:	10.10am to 5.10pm

The Musée Du Débarquement at Arromanches.

The movable model of the Mulberry harbour is definitely worth it, but the rest of the museum adds nothing to, and often better, museums in Normandy. And half the museum is a souvenir shop. But don't let that stop you from forming your own opinion.

Opening hours:

February, November, December:	10am to 12.30pm, 1.30pm-5pm
March, October:	9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
April:	9am to 12.30pm, 1.30pm-6pm

May, June, July, August: 9am to 7pm (+Easter weekend)
September: 9am to 6pm
(Open Sundays from 10:00 a.m., excluding June, July, August: 9:00 a.m.)

Recommended: 'Liberators Museum - Normandy 1944'

There is a new museum on the 9 Rue Colonel René Michel, 14117 Arromanches. It is worth visiting this. It is run by Dutch people and they are more than willing to explain to you about the things on display. These were donated exclusively to the museum by the Veterans of D-Day. Open daily in the summer months from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m..

Daytrip Bayeux, Batterie de Longues, American Cemetery

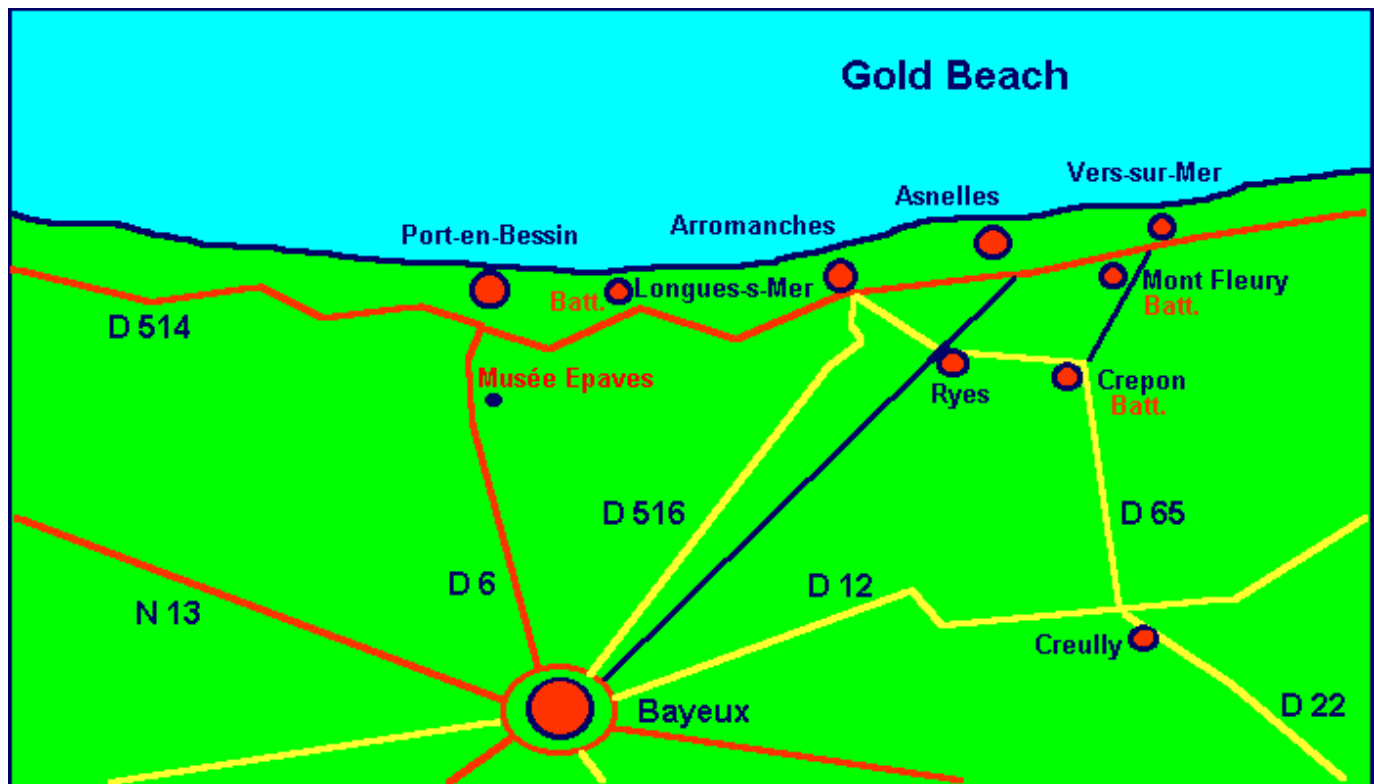
Bayeux

The Musée Memorial de la Bataille de Normandie in Bayeux endured a difficult period when almost the entire collection was taken away by the collector who lent it. In the spring of 2006, the museum was reopened. It's less full than it was before, which meets the commandment. The vehicle park has remained almost untouched. The motorized cannon, the Sexton, is still present, plus several other vehicles, including a large American Caterpillar bulldozer, a Bren carrier and a Half Track. For the Musée Memorial de la Bataille de Normandie one must spend at least 2 hours. Especially if you visit the well-equipped shop. It is situated on the old inner ring road around Bayeux, on the south-west side of the city.

Opening times: daily 9.30am-6.30pm (pre-season 10am-6pm and closed between 12.30pm and 2pm)

GPS: 49°16'20.89' N 00°42,39'.01' W

Across the street, slightly to the north, is the Bayeux War Cemetery, here 4648 British (Commonwealth) soldiers are buried, and 466 Germans. On the other side of the road is the Bayeux Memorial, in which the names of 1805 soldiers killed are engraved, which have no known grave.



FROM BAYEUX TO THE NORTH (PORT-AND-BESSIN-HUPPAIN AND LONGUES BATTERY) FROM THE RING ROAD AROUND BAYEUX TAKE THE D6 NORTH-WEST TO PORT-EN-BESSIN.

Several hundred meters before reaching the roundabout of Port-and-Bessin stop on the right side of the road. Here is the unique museum, **Musée de Epaves sous-marines de Débarquement**. It consists entirely of sea-salvaged objects that disappeared in the waves during the invasion. Striking here are the so-called DD tanks ('DD' = Duplex Drive). These tanks were put out into the sea and carried like a boat to the beach.

Opening times: daily from 1 June to 30 September (and in May weekends)

TO PORT-EN-BESSIN-HUPPAIN: Gps: 49°20'58.99" N, 00°45'25.87" W

At Port-en-Bessin follow the signs 'Le Port'. This port is hard fought. It was not until 7 June (D+1) that the last Germans were driven from the bunkers that were near the tower on the dunes.

Here, one of the fuel-supply pipelines 'PLUTO' (Pipe line Under The Ocean) was carried in from the south coast of England (300 miles!). Of the 5.2 million tonnes of oil landed on the mainland of Europe until 10 May 1945, 370,000 tonnes were contributed by the PLUTO line, whose main line 'Bambi' ran through Cherbourg and a smaller one via Port-en-Bessin. Cherbourg came into operation far too late and that pipeline was taken over by a line to Boulogne ('Dumbo'). Furthermore, from 14 June in Port and Bessin 1000 tonnes of cargo per day were unloaded.

FROM PORT-EN-BESSIN TO THE BATTERY OF LONGUES: Gps: 49°20'38.78" N, 00°41'38.69" W

Return to the main road (D 514) and turn left towards Longues-sur-Mer/Arromanches. At the junction after the church in Longues turn left and follow the signs 'Batterie de Longues'.

From September 1943 the construction of these four M272 artillery installations was started. In March 1944, only two were ready. But in May, the theorem was ready for action. Each casemate required 600 m³ of concrete and four tons of steel armament. The two-metre-thick walls and ceiling were resistant to Allied bombardment.

The battery opened fire on the Allied fleet early in the morning. The first shot was delivered at 5:37 a.m. That was 20 minutes before dawn. Fire was emitted towards the destroyer US Emmonds and to the battleship Arkansas that was off the coast of Omaha Beach. The battleship fired back with twenty 305mm grenades and one hundred 127mm grenades. Today, Batterie de Longues is the only theorem in Normandy that still has her guns in place.

Three hundred meters in front of the casemates is centrally the fire conduction bunker (Leitstand Type M262) which determined the fire for the batteries behind it. To slightly remove this fire conduction bunker from view, it is placed in a carved space in the cliff edge. A walk to the fire conduction bunker of Batterie de Longues is well worth it!

The Longues battery is open to the public for free the entire year.

As mentioned on the previous page where Port-en-Bessin was visited, there was also a fuel unloading point in **Ste. Honorine-des-Pertes**. 5 kilometres to the west from Port-en-Bessin on the D 514 is located this village. Here are some nice points to visit, but also hard to find.

One of these points that is easy to find is the small bay of Ste. Honorine-des-Pertes.

Once you see the town, watch the large parking lot on the right (if you are driving west).

Here's a small street that descends (there's a sign that it's forbidden for trucks and campers). One hundred meters before you reach the bay, at the exit to the right, you see a large (school?) building on the left, park here.

Ste. Honorine-des-Pertes was freed by the 16th Regimental Combat Team, 1st US Division, on June 7. Here was the connection point of a 'minor' PLUTO from tankers off the coast. This so-called Tombola system consisted of two pipelines of 6 inches each. These met, with the lines of Port-and-Bessin, in Mont Cauvin, near Etréham.

To commemorate this PLUTO part, a small sign with explanations is placed on the edge of the parking lot. **Gps: 49°21'11.46" N, 00°48'00.48" W**

From the parking lot you can now see a street to the right. At the end of this road, on the outside of the bend, stands the house that was used for a scene in the feature film *'The Longest Day'*. **Gps: 49°21'10.45" N, 00°47'54.86" W**

Namely that of the over-enthusiastic Frenchman who waves a flag like an idiot at the invasion fleet. Pass this house and return to the D 514.

Head west again, again through Ste. Honorine-des-Pertes, towards Colleville-sur-Mer.

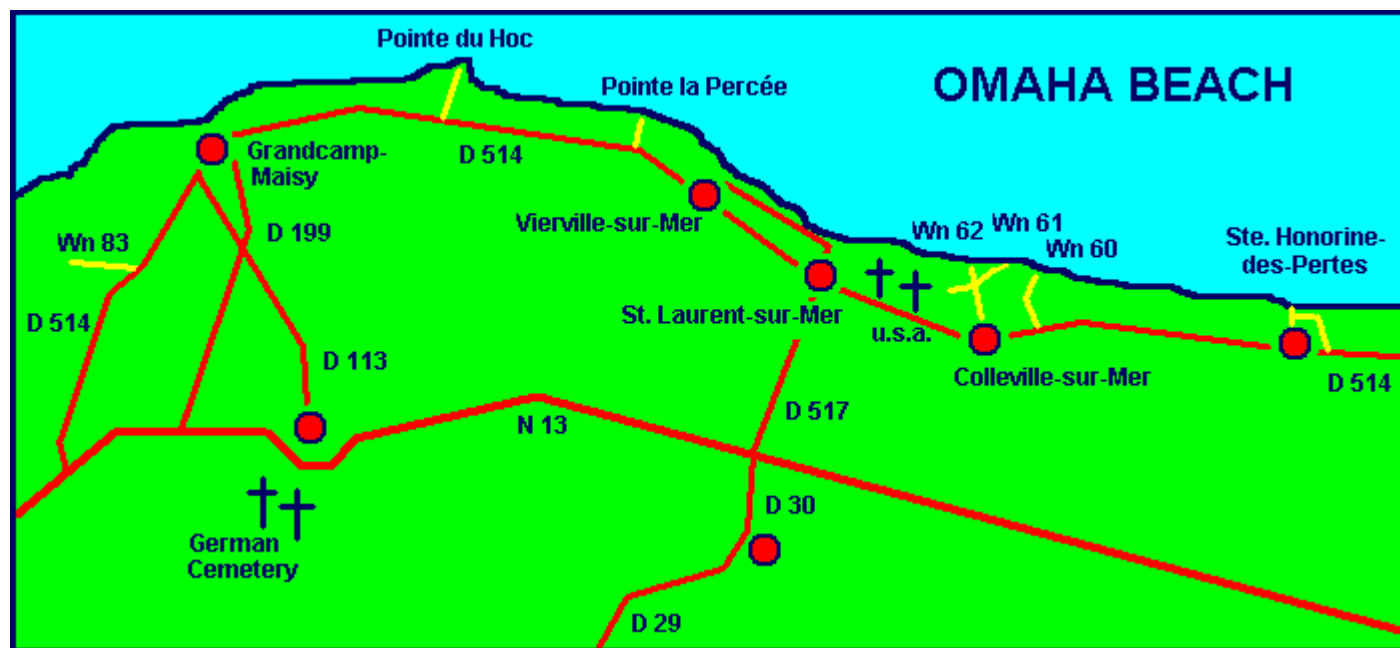
Widerstandsnest 60 (from Major Pluskat)

A hard-to-find point is Widerstandsnest 60 where Major Pluskat saw the invasion fleet approaching on its coast of Normandy (one of the most famous scenes from 'The Longest Day').

For the enthusiast who wants to have seen everything, I recommend Wn 60 for a visit.

Follow the D 514 west. After Ste. Honorine-des-Pertes and the hamlet of Grand Hameau, you'll come across a right-hand exit about a kilometre away with the sign 'Cabourg' (it's located for a slight bend, 150 meters after entering Colleville-sur-Mer, handy tool is the red fire hydrant at the exit to the right). Go in here and follow the messy road through tree-rich areas. Turn this out completely (lots of turns, but keep on globally right) until you get to the end of the grove and views of agricultural fields that extend to the coast. You'll see a path on the left that goes down steeply, but also **a path that seems sealed by a rough barrier, go in here. After 50 meters you will arrive at Wn 60.**

This day trip may end (or start the next day) with Omaha Beach.



NORMANDY AMERICAN NATIONAL CEMETERY & MEMORIAL

Between Colleville-sur-Mer and St-Laurent-sur-Mer, from the D541 up the N814.

(please note, opening hours are from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Gps: 49°21'33.26" N, 00°51'11.96" W

It's a short drive to the Normandy American Cemetery & Memorial. This impressive cemetery is nearly 70 hectares in size and contains 9,387 American tombs of which 307 are unknown. On entry first visit the visitor centre, a museum in itself, very impressive. (NOTE: Bring your passport/ID card. It's American territory, and they can ask for it, and your belongings are taken through an x-ray machine (just like in airports and you have to go through a metal detection port). The most famous grave here is that of Brigadier General Theodore Roosevelt (son of President "Teddy") on Plot D, Row 28, Grave

45 (July 12, 1944, he had a heart attack in an orchard near Carentan (57 years). Next to Theodore is his brother Quentin, a World War I aviator who died on July 14, 1918. There are 32 'couples' brothers and a father and son (Col. Ollie Reed and Ollie Jr.) on Plot E, Row 20, Grave 13. 14,000 fallen comrades were sent back to the United States.

The Memorial overlooks a rectangular pond from where you can take an impressive look over the white gravestones. The Memorial shows battle cards on both sides in coloured enamel. Flanked by two bronze urns is the statue The Spirit of American Youth Rising From the Waves, by Donald de Lue from New York. Behind the Memorial is the 'Garden of the Missing' with the names of 1557 missing.

Daytrip Omaha Beach, Point du Hoc, Grandcamp-Maisy, Le Cambe

From St-Laurent-sur-Mer to about 6 kilometers to the west, to Vierville-sur-Mer, OMAHA Beach runs, the sector assigned to the Americans. OMAHA Beach was divided into the sectors; "FOX," "EASY" and "DOG." Pointe du Hoc was also part of this sector. The tour below takes you from Colleville-sur-Mer to Grandcamp-Maisy.

Sector 'Easy en Fox'

Wn 62, Colleville-sur-Mer (eastside of american national cemetery).

The German combat complex, Widerstandsnest 62 (Wn 62) in the 'Fox-Green' sector, was a hard nut on June 6 to crack. The gun was pointed right on OMAHA Beach. There's still a lot to see here, even the tracks of the trenches are still in the grass. It took until mid-morning for the American troops to take out Wn 62. Of the 20 Germans still alive, only three were not injured.

At the foot of the complex are two casemates of the type H669. During the landing, there were 7.65 cm czech-made cannons.

On the highest casemate is a monument placed in honor of the 5th Engineer Brigade. Furthermore, the monument in honour of the 1st Infantry Division (Big Red One) can be found on this complex

6 JUNI 1944, 06.36 OBJECT:

OMAHA BEACH, "DOG" SECTOR, VIERVILLE-SUR-MER

On "Dog" the 116th Infantry Regiment would land, on "Easy" the 16th Infantry Regiment. From the beginning everything goes wrong, the DD tanks are turned off too far at sea and reach the beach (all but a few) the preliminary bombardment by bombers had failed, the bombs fell way too far inland. The well-trained German 352nd Division let the landing boats come to the beach quietly.

As soon as the valves (at 6:36 a.m.) fell, all hell broke loose. 30 men from LCA (Landing Craft Assault) No 1015 were all killed by machine gun fire. Within 7 to 10 minutes, all officers from Company A of the 116th Inf. Reg. Ten minutes later, the attack force was reduced to a small rescue team trying to rescue their mates from the blood-swirling water. The 116th fell to the 29th Division of the National Guard Division. As a result, the 116th was one big circle of friends. Some of them knew each other since they were kids. Of the 1st Battalion, Company A, B & D were recruited from the towns of Bedford, Lynchburg and Roanoke, Virginia. From the 3,000-population in the town of Bedford, 23 young men died here in Omaha! Also 3 "sets" brothers died here. Further on "Easy", near Colleville-sur-Mer, the same scenes were played as on "Dog". Here, the 16th Infantry Regiment of the 1st Division (The Big Red One) fell victim to the minefields.

FOUR MUSEUMS FOR OMAHA BEACH

To make the battle visible, four museums are located in the Omaha Beach area. The **first** we encounter on our route is the '**Big Red One Museum**' in Colleville-sur-Mer. It is, as already indicated, dedicated to the 1st Infantry Division. It is not very large and has the expected layout, uniforms, some weapons and lots of photo material. Outside is an eye-catcher with a loose valve of an LCVP. But it is well worth a visit, because of the personal approach.

At the roundabout leading to American Cemetery you will find the '**Overlord Museum**' in Colleville-sur-Mer. In front of the grey building there are as an eye-catcher a Sherman tank, an M-10 tank destroyer and a Sexton. The name already indicates it, it's not just about 'Omaha Beach', but covers

much more. Despite the beautiful decoration of lifelike dolls, there is no 'emotion' to the uphill battle that both sides (and the civilian population) experienced in Normandy. The museum is completely full, so that there can be no exchange exhibition, which means that once one has been there, one never goes back to it, a missed opportunity. The personal aspect is completely lacking, and no sense of history is conveyed.

The museum is open daily, in the low season from 10:00 a.m. to 5 p.m., mid-season from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and high season from 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. The entrance fee for 2013 was the odd amount of €6.90 (adults) and €4.90 (children, students, soldiers and disabled people).

The **third** museum on our route is '**Omaha Beach Memorial Museum, Musée Omaha 6 Juin 1944' at St-Laurent-sur-Mer**. The museum shows a lot of uniforms, photo's, badges and weapons and over all just a good museum.

The fourth museum, '**Musée D-Day, Omaha**' is located at **Vierville-sur-Mer**, on route to Pointe-du-Hoc. Here is where you just want to see the objects standing outside of the museum. This museum is also responsible for the restoration of a part of a mulberry harbor that is being on display just outside Vierville (don't forget to look behind the building, leftside of the parkinglot). The inside of the building is more like a storage of a lot of objects!

6 JUNI 1944, 06.30 OBJECT: POINTE DU HOC Gps: 49°23'45.42" N, 00°59'19.23" W

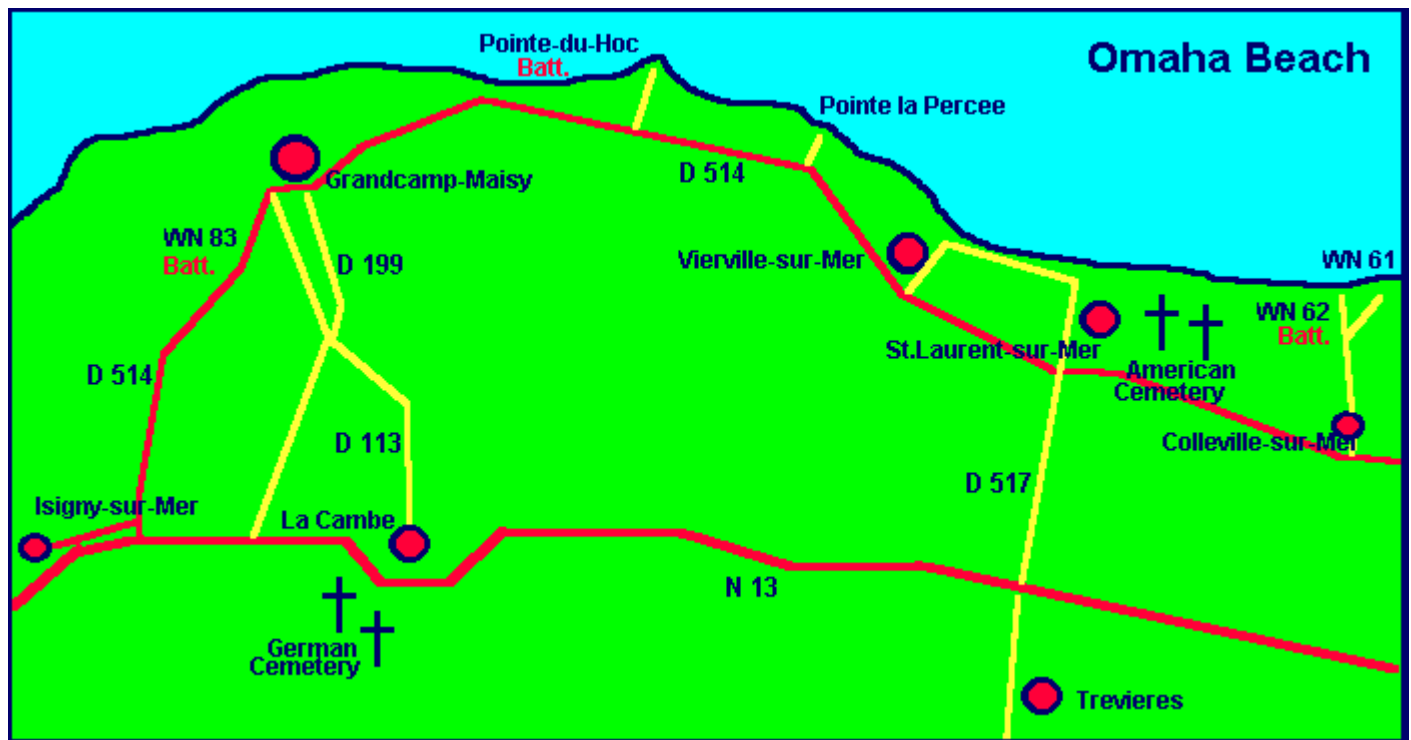
About 6 kilometres after Vierville-sur-Mer on D514, you'll arrive at a roundabout, turn right up the Rangers Road to a large complex of 6 gun-line-ups atop the cliffs. Halfway through, a guard station was placed guarding the only access. At the end of the road we find the battery of Pointe du Hoc. The Allies assumed that 155 mm cannons were placed in it with a range of 25 kilometers. The artillery was a major threat to the invasion fleet for both UTAH and OMAHA Beach. From May 1944, the complex was regularly bombed. The threat was so great that the 2nd Ranger Battalion was tasked with clearing the complex as quickly as possible from the 100-man garrison.

6 juni 1944, 05.45

After the preliminary shelling by the battleship TEXAS at Pointe du Hoc, the Rangers departed with 12 LCAs and 4 DUKW's towards the steep rocks from the two Liberty ships, HMS Ben Machreet and HMS Amsterdam. Almost 20 kilometres from the coast, one LCA turned into the ferocious waves. Of the LCA 914, only one man survived this disaster. LCA 860 also capsized, but the 21 men on board managed to save themselves. Another LCA was driven too far. Attack time was 6:30 a.m., but at 7:10 a.m., the remaining 9 LCAs landed under the cliff of Point du Hoc.

STANDING NEAR THE CLIFF THAT RUNS INTO THE SEA (THE RANGER MEMORIAL ON THE FIRE CONDUCTION BUNKER):

About 400 meters to the right is where the Rangers came on the narrow beach. From here, Rangers began climbing up with ladders, ropes and even daggers. This was difficult because of the crumbled steepness that was severely pounded by the naval artillery. Once upstairs, the purge began quickly and purposefully. When the casemates were taken, the cannons were not found to be on the aphded. The commander, Colonel Rudder, sent a group towards the D514. Here the battle-ready cannons, camouflaged in an orchard, were found and destroyed. Up to this point, the losses were light, 30 to 40 men, given the difficulty of conquering the complex. In the afternoon, the Germans launched counter-attacks and the losses quickly increased. The Rangers were cornered but held out, thanks in part to fire support from some navy vessels. A day later, the Germans withdrew. It would take until the afternoon of the 8th of June for the repayment to come. At that time, of the 225 Rangers landed, 135 were killed, injured or missing.



Pointe du Hoc has changed little since June 1944. The site is dotted with bomb craters and casemates and bunkers. More than impressive!
CONTINUE YOUR DRIVE WEST TO GRANDCAMP-MAISY

Until 2015 there was the Ranger Museum in (Musée des Rangers) in Grandcamp-Maisy. You don't have to look for this anymore, it's closed due to disappointing visits. As you approach the city, the huge chrome image that welcomes you with staggered arms stands out. At the foot of the statue in the small park a monument stands on a tobruk bunker that recalls the struggle seen by the American National Guard in this area. The monument, called 'Espace Frank Peregory', recalls peregrory's heroic efforts to earn his Medal of Honor in this area. Continue your drive the town towards the port area. One hundred metres away, towards the port, a large monument has been erected for the French who flew for the RAF at Bomber Command.

Battery Perruques WN83 Gps: 49°22'35.22" N, 01°03'42.48" W

Since 2007 there is a new complex to visit just south of Grandcamp-Maisy. British amateur archaeologist Gary Stern has uncovered a scaffold below ground level here. All objects can be visited via a trench system. There is still a lot of work to be done, but it is well worth a visit. According to Gary, the cannons that were on open concrete slabs would have caused many casualties on Omaha Beach, about 15 kilometres to the east. A claim that is viewed skeptically by some because the guns would not go beyond 10km. On June 9, this battery was taken up after a morning battle by the 5th Rangers with the help of the 2nd Rangers and reinforcements of the 116 Reg. of the 29th Div. (5 euro entry).

Battery WN84 Gps: 49°22'22.52" N, 01°04'09.51" W

About 500 meters to the west on the same path where WN83 lies, one finds three large, above-ground calots of the type H669. This battery is located on a private property but can be visited via an unpaved path on the right.

LA CAMBE, the German cemetery Gps: 49°20'34.97" N, 01°01'36.36" W

The most impressive monument to the slain German soldier is the cemetery near the village of La Cambe, 5 kilometres south of Grandcamp-Maisy (23 kilometres from Bayeux on the N13 towards Carentan). This was originally a combined cemetery for American and German dead. In 1947, the

American soldiers were repatriated or re-buried at St-Laurent. The following year, British and French War Grave organizations brought German dead to La Cambe and the other five cemeteries. The Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge was established to maintain the graves. This work is carried out by German schoolchildren and students. The Allies could take an example of this. Young people here are confronted with the futility of war, as a lesson for the future.

Inside the field are scattered small groups of black crosses. This symbolizes for the German 'camaraderie in death'. More than 21,200 people are lie here, including 296 in a mass grave (a hill in the middle of the site). The hill can be climbed and gives a view over the cemetery.

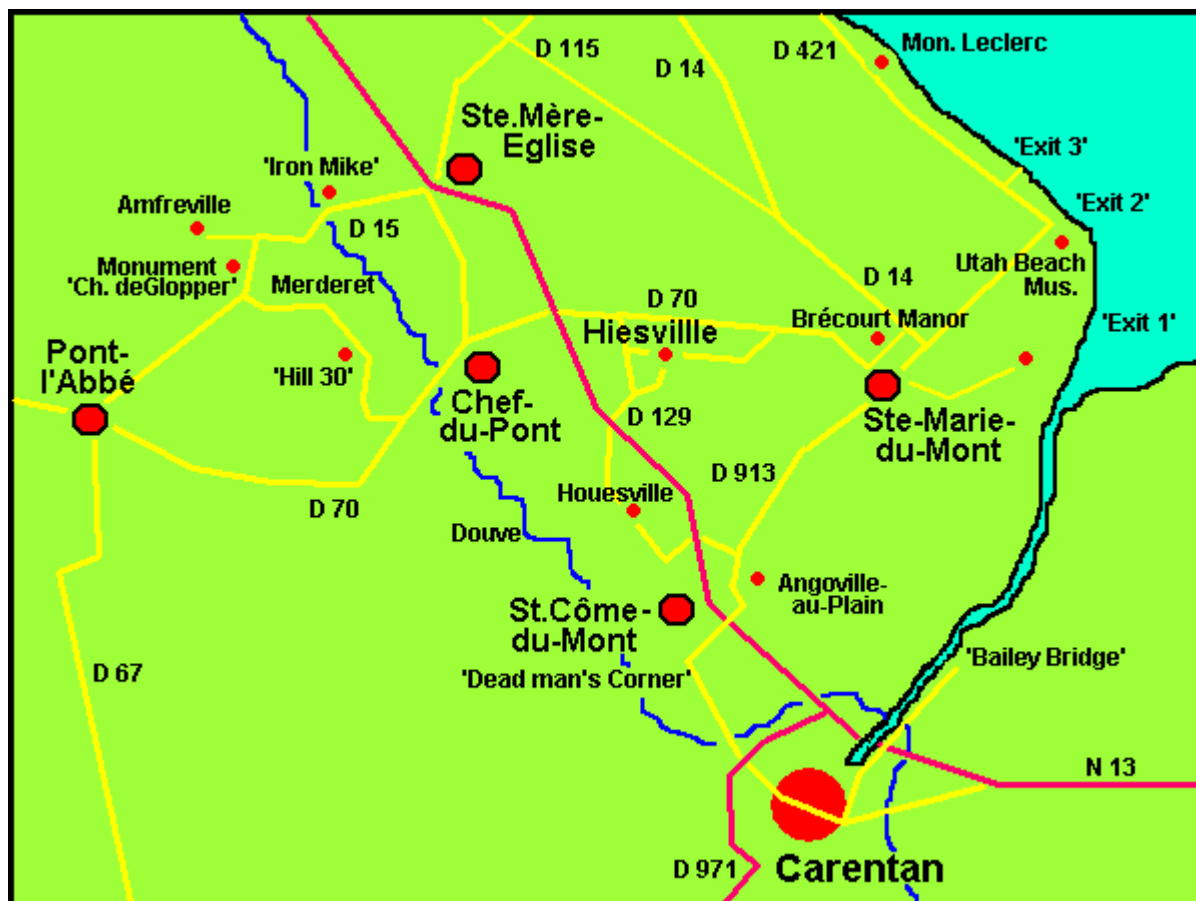
(When you have time)

In Le Moulin, just beyond Brévands, since 2009 there is a monument commemorating the actions by 3rd Battalion, 506th PIR, 101st Airborne Division and C-Company 326th Airborne Engineer Battalion and the Regimental Demolitions Squad, a legend known as 'Filthy Thirteen'. Her nickname stemmed from the ill-discipline shown by the men during their 'work'. They did not do what the army prescribed them, but did more during action than the army expected them to do. **Since 2015, a plastic image of a paratrooper has been added.**

After visiting the Le Moulin I recommend driving a kilometre towards Carentan for a visit to an original Bailey Bridge.

Daytrip Utah Beach

This route takes you to Utah Beach, via Carentan and ends in Ste-Mère-Eglise. From Bayeux (take the N 13 towards Cherbourg) it is a half hour drive to Carentan. Leave the highway here and drive through Carentan. Here you can stop at the monument near the town hall.



Only via a narrow corridor from the north could Carentan be attacked by the Paratroopers of the 101st

Airborne Division. Their German opponents were paratroopers of the 6th Regiment. Despite bloody fighting taking place a few meters apart, the Americans began shelling the city with artillery for three days on June 7. On June 10, 6,000 shells were fired into the city within 24 hours. On June 12, the city was declared free. Despite a fierce tank attack the next day by a German Panzer division, which could be repelled at the last minute by rapidly advancing tanks from Omaha Beach, Carentan remained in American hands.

Continue the route north towards St. Côme-du Mont and St. Marie-du-Mont.

After two kilometers, the museum, **Dead Man's Corner**, appears right in front of you. Because you are now in the area where the 101st Airborne Division landed, this museum is entirely dedicated to the paratrooper.

Gps: 49°19,72.2' N 01°16,15.4' W

The D 913 was the only road from Exit 2, via St.-Marie-du-Mont towards Carentan which was firmly in the hands of the Americans. On 7 June, the first tank, an M5 Stuart, will come to the aid of the paratroopers of the 101st AB near the Y-junction of the D 913 with the D 270 to St. Côme-du Mont. A German 88mm struck the tank on which the entire crew died. The commander still hung out of the tank some days later. For the Americans, this place was forever "Dead Man's Corner."

A simulator has been installed next to the museum in which you can experience the nightly jump from a C-47.

The décor of the museum is small, but is very tastefully conceived and décor is of high quality. Also the things on display are very worthwhile. In the back is the possibility to buy authentic souvenirs.

Angoville-au-Plain Gps: 49°20'56.39" N, 01°15'12.38" W

A few kilometres on the D913 (right right) you will find Angoville-au-Plain. In the small church was a first aid post of the Americans. The injured were cared for here by two medics, Robert Wright and Kenneth Moore of the 101st Airborne Division, 501st PIR. To commemorate this fact, a special stained glass window has been installed. Not only were their own troops cared for here, but also civilians and German soldiers. While there was fierce fighting around this area this was a safe haven (weapons in the church were forbidden by the two caretakers).

Some Germans who invaded reversed after being convinced of the humanitarian operations. A stained glass has also been installed for the air landing in itself. On one of the benches in the back (right side), you can still see a huge blood stain. Not all the injured survived here, at least one paratrooper died here from his injuries.

Ste-Marie-du-Mont: Gps: 49°22'42.81" N, 01°13'31.85" W

Head to St. Côme-du-Mont on the D 270 and on to Houesville, turn right to La Croix-Pan (underneath the N 13) Drive on through the D 129. After one kilometer you will arrive at the monument to General Pratt, the first fallen general on June 6, 1944.

At the intersection, turn right towards Hiesville and then to Vierville on the D 329. Just outside Hiesville, you'll pass the farm where General Pratt's successor, General Taylor, spent a week. A plaque has been placed next to the entrance as a reminder.

After Vierville, left to Ste-Marie-du-Mont, over the D 913.

In these surroundings, the 506th of the 101st Airborne Division fought, later known from the miniseries Band Of Brothers. In Ste-Marie-du-Mont the church has got new stained glass and a restored tower after the war. Other than that, this little town hasn't changed in over 60 years. On many houses there's a plaque placed with information about what the building was used for during the German occupation and invasion. Near the church is a 'dumpshop'(La Boutique du Holdy) with lots of authentic material from June 1944 (the opening hours vary, but usually open at the end of the afternoon). Follow the road out the village east, (to the coast) over the D913. This road is known as 'Exit 2' (EXIT 1 was at Pouppeville). One kilometre after Ste-Come-du-Mont is the D14 (take a left turn here) One kilometre on this road takes you to the monument of the 506th action at Brecourt Manor. (disabling of a German artillery nest)

6 JUNI 1944, 06.30 OBJECT: UTAH BEACH

Five hundred meters before you arrive at the museum on the 'Exit 2', is an exit to La Madelèine, where a visit to the chapel there can possibly be a must see. Here, a service was held by the American soon aft the battle. Now head to the beach and museum area of Utah Beach.

THE UTAH BEACH MUSEUM: Gps: 49°24'55.59" N, 01°10'29.78" W

The museum is built around a German bunker (Blockhaus W5). Take at least an hour to visit this museum, it's well worth it!

Opening hours:

June to September: 9.30am to 7pm
April, May and October: 10 am to 6pm
February, March and 1-15 November: 10am to 12.30pm, 2pm to 5.30pm
16 November to 31 December only on weekends and public holidays (Closed January)

At the beach entrance there is a kilometre pole '00' (a similar one, also with a 'zero' number, stands in front of the town hall of Ste-Mere-Eglise). This is where the 4th Division Liberty Highway begins. It continues through France to the Netherlands. Throughout Normandy one finds these poles with the date and the advanced distance since D-day The restaurant opposite the museum is also built around a bunker. At the time the bunker was built, it was not yet a restaurant but a storage for the local fishermen. The bunker has been completely restored and is occasionally open to the public where it can then be used as an internet café.

FOLLOW THE COASTROAD NORTH: Leclerc Mon. : Gps: 49°26'37.68" N, 1°12'33.33" W

The next exit is 'EXIT 3'. Around 7:30 a.m., there was a section of the 502nd PIR (Parachute Infantry Regiment), of the 101st Airborne Division, led by the 3rd Battalion. At 09.30 a large group of Germans appeared driven by the advancing invasion on the beach. In the firefight, 75 Germans died here. Utah Beach was also the landing site of General Patton's 3rd Army. There are still a lot of remnants of bunkers and casemates here. In the meadows behind the dunes you can still clearly see the pits of the bombing.

A kilometre away, the Leclerc Monument is flanked by a Sherman tank. Behind the Monument of Leclerc and his Free French is 250 meters to the north Wn 10. Here lies a large H667 casemate for a 75mm cannon. 250 metres south of the monument is St 9 with two H677 casemates for 88mm cannons.

AGAIN FOLLOW THE ROAD NORTH:

Batterie de Crisbecq

Five kilometres after the Leclerc Monument, turn left to D 69 and follow the signs 'Batterie d'Crisbecq' just past Saint-Marcouf (or head further inland up the D 69).

Here are some huge casemates for heavy artillery. A small museum has been set up since this location was completely uncovered in 2003. Two 210mm cannons were set up in two Type H 683 casemates, defended by three 21 mm cannons, six 75 mm anti-aircraft guns, three 20 mm's and seventeen machine guns. There were two more casemates under construction, plus the plan for a fifth. Everything was all around protected by landmines and barbed wire. In the early morning of the 6th of June, 600 tons of bombs fell here without causing damage. The cannons came into action in daylight and sunk a frigate and damaged a cruiser and other ships. The counter-fire destroyed much smaller guns but the 210mm's remained in action until the 12th of June ! On this date, the Germans withdrew with the abandonment of 78 dead. The casemates were then blown up by the army engineers of the Americans. From the former fire conduction bunker you have a good overview of how the complex is organized.

Batterie d'Azeville

After Crisbecq, head a little further inland to the Batterie d'Azeville. This is definitely worth a visit. Here are four casemates to be found; two H671 and two H650 (one of which had an extra bannister on top for a 37mm anti-aircraft gun). Throughout the night from June 5 to 6, 1944, this battery was attacked by American paratroopers. Yet in the morning it managed to point its guns at Utah Beach. The heavy defense of the battery forced the Allies to pull the position around. But after intense fighting, the battery fell on June 9.

Nowadays it is a well-preserved battery that can also be admired outside the visiting hours. Pay attention to the original 'fake stone' painting that is still sitting on the casemates here and there. Remarkably, these casemates have an extra 'slit' to the right so that the cannon had a further range to that side, the southern tip of Utah Beach. Traces of grenade and bullet elements seen all over the cademats. In June 1944, 4 X 105mm Schneider 331 (f) French-made cannons were set up here. It is possible to visit the tunnels, about 300 meters, that connect the casemates.

From Azeville it is a short drive to Sainte-Mère-Eglise. A key place during the nightly landings of the paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division and made world famous by the feature film 'The Longest Day'.

6 JUNI 1944, 01.30 OBJECT: SAINTE-MÈRE-EGLISE Gps: 49°24'31.56" N, 01°18'58.83" W

Ste-Mère-Eglise was the object to be occupied by the 82nd Airborne Division. A well-known scene from the film 'The Longest Day' is about the capture of this town. During the jump of the paratroopers, a house was on fire here (where the museum now stands). As a result, many civilians were on the streets to help put out the fire. The pump in question is still in the church square. Private John Steele made his perilous leap here. He hung from the church tower for hours to later becoming a prisoner of war taken by Germans (from which he later managed to escape). He wasn't the only one who was grabbed by the church tower, Ken Russell also fell victim to the church with his parachute. But he soon managed to get loose and get away. (little note here, the puppet hanging from the churchtower, is hanged on the wrong side of the tower, he actually hung on the other side)

In the church you can admire two stained glass windows commemorating the nightly jump. Above the main entrance was designed by Paul Renaud, son of the mayor at the time, Alexandre Renaud. The Virgin Mary is pictured flanked by paratroopers. The other window has been donated by veterans of the 82nd Airborne Division. This is depicted by St Michael, patron of the paratroopers.

THE MUSEUM IN STE-MÈRE-EGLISE:

The museum, with its roofs in the form of parachutes, slanted across the church is very worthwhile, pull out at least 1 to 2 hours. Under the first roof is a Waco CG-4 swimmer. Under the second roof is a C-47 transport plane. Out there various 'hardware', such as a Sherman tank. In recent years, the museum has been extensively expanded with additional exhibition spaces. This museum is a must for true lovers of original objects.

Opening hours:

February, March and October and November: 9.30am to noon, 2pm to 6pm

April to September: 9am to 6.45pm

December and January closed.

The bridges over the Merderet: Gps: 49°24'03.71" N, 01°21'48.54 W

Leave St-Mère-Eglise in a western direction, via the D15 (Picauville/Etienville). Underneath the N13, at the Y-junction hold right. After three kilometres you will arrive at the bridge of la Fièrè over the River Merderet.

Park your car on the right in the parking lot. Here is the memorial to the paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division.

Looking out at enemy troops, a bronze paratrooper (Iron Mike) stares over the green plains. At this place, about 500 paratroopers had gathered around noon on The 6th of June. Several heavy fighting took place here for three days. But the paratroopers of the 505th and 507th PIR did not let any Germans through. General Gavin, the Assistant Divisional Commander, (his gunner's pit is on the D15, a hundred meters back in the bend you just made through) took 75 men towards the bridge over the Merderet a few kilometres south of here, at Chef-du-Pont. The small unit ran into a persistent German opposition.

Cross the Merderet and continue west on the D15. After about a kilometer at the Y-junction, keep to Helpiquets on the right. On the right, the monument will appear in memory of the landing of the 507th PIR of the 82nd Airborne Division. The 507th PIR came closest to her DZ here. It was a huge distance though, about 50 km between north and south! North of here, the 508th PIR came down over a distance of 'only' 9 kilometers. Here the Germans had put everything under water, the narrow river Merderet looked like a big lake here. Several unfortunate paratroopers drowned in this area.

Return to the D15. Go to the Y-junction on the right. You can continue to Etienville/Pont L'Abbé and via the D70 to Chef-du-Pont, or at Caponnet south to Le Feirage and take the D70 left to Chef-du-Pont. The route via Caponnet is not indicated but is easy to follow (always keep a bit left). Gps: 49°22'35.60" N, 01°21'15.35" W

OR: Continue your route along the D 15 south towards Pont l'Abbe. After a few kilometres you will arrive at a Y-junction where there is a large stone cross, here you go left, to Picauville (there is no signage!). If you see the church of Picauville appear, that's your landmark. Turn up the parking lot at the church and on the left you will see the large monument to four of the five crashed C-47 Dakota aircraft in this area where paratroopers of the 101st Airborne were transported.

Just before you enter Chef-du-Pont, stop right immediately after crossing 'Pont du Capitaine Creek'. The battle around this bridge was also a fierce one, executed between the Germans and men of the 507th PIR, 82nd Airborne. General Ridgeway, the division commander, arrived at the bridge of la Fiére and ordered that more troops should come to that bridge. As a result, only one platoon was left to defend this bridge, where you are now. By chance, a glider with an anti-tank cannon landed nearby. Captain Roy Creek managed to keep the Germans at bay with this weapon, but could do little more than maintain his position.

The bridge bears the name of Captain Creek, who, thanks in part to the support of two companies of the 508th PIR, managed to retain this bridge with a small team. There is so much to see in this area and choices have to be made. The above takes you to the main points of Utah Beach. Yet there is more to see, such as the Musée de la Liberté in Quinéville. This museum shows how the Normans lived at the time of the occupation. There are no weapons in this museum but it is very fascinating.

So much for the printable version that takes you past the main points, but is far from complete but hopefully could serve you as a guide.

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