



Liberation  
Route  
Europe

TOUR & TRAVEL GUIDE

BELGIUM &  
LUXEMBOURG

## Melvin ‘Bud’ Biddle

Melvin ‘Bud’ Biddle was a soft-spoken young man who adored Leona, his childhood sweetheart.

War tore him away from his quiet Midwest town and plunged him in the middle of the ferocious fight for the Belgian Ardennes. Much to his own surprise, Bud returned home a hero.

It was a small and unassuming place surrounded by farmland. But Melvin ‘Bud’ Biddle found everything he wanted in his hometown. He held a high-school degree, had good times with his girlfriend Leona, and worked at Delco Remy, the town’s biggest employer and the manufacturer of motor parts for cars.

The World War II abruptly changed all that. Suddenly Bud was shipped overseas and sent into combat as a replacement with the 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment in the Ardennes. Around Christmas, his company was sent out to help rescue Americans trapped near Hotton. Bud barely had time to

process what was happening around him. Within minutes, he saw his sergeant get killed with a shot through the head. Next, he was made the lead scout for his company. Bud pushed his way through snow and underbrush, killed three snipers, eliminated four machine-gun nests, and helped destroy two German tanks. Early in 1945, Bud was struck in the neck by a shrapnel that just missed his jugular vein. He was rushed to a hospital in England. It was there that he learned he had been awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest American award for courage under fire.

After the war, Bud hurried home to marry his sweetheart Leona. “I’m not a hero,” he told a newspaper. “When the Army put me out front, you think about that responsibility instead of the fear.”



Bud and his proud family at the White House Medal of Honor ceremony. ©Congressional Medal of Honor Society

*"I'm not  
a hero"*

## Stanislaw Maczek

A philosopher by education, a tankman by calling. Soldiers adored him, for he cared about their lives. Dutchmen and Belgians started to love him after he liberated their towns taking great care not to cause too much damage.

Born on 1892 in Szczerc near Lvov, Stanislaw Maczek first saw action during the First World War when he fought as an officer on the Italian front. In 1918 he joined the army of Józef Piłsudski and fought for an independent Poland. “Independent, quick and bold in decision and realisation” – wrote the commandant of the War College of Warsaw, general Serda-Teodorski.

After military studies Maczek served in the Eastern Borderlands. In Autumn 1938 he took command of the first motorized unit in the Polish army – the 10th Motorized Cavalry Brigade. During the first days of the war Maczek’s unit managed to slow down the German advance, but when the Soviet Union invaded they soon received orders to leave

Poland. On 19 September they crossed the Hungarian Border. Maczek, along with his wife and two children, managed to get to France. Soon he was given the command of the rebuilt 10th Armored Cavalry Brigade, but in Spring 1940 France was defeated, so the general got to Great Britain. In 1941 he took command of the 1st Armoured Division. In August 1944 his division landed in France. During the ensuing battles he proved his military talent – he never lost one. After the war he didn’t return to his motherland, which was ruled by communists, who took away even his Polish citizenship. Until his late years he engaged in combatant organisations’ activities. In 1989 Maczek regained his Polish citizenship after democratic changes took place in Poland. He died on 11 December 1994 in Edinburgh. According to his last will, his remains lie in the Polish Military Cemetery in Breda together with his soldiers.



Stanislaw Maczek



Polish liberators in Sint-Niklaas

## The Liberation of Belgium

### WALLONIA

Most of Wallonia was liberated in September 1944, also following heavy fighting in the Mons Pocket. The future of the German Army did not look bright.

However, they decided on one last big gamble to change the course of the war. On 16 December the German Army launched an attack in Wallonia and burst through the Allied lines. Heavy fighting followed, with the Battle of Bastogne, one of the most famous operations of the Ardennes Offensive. By 25 January 1945, the German forces had been pushed back to their starting positions of 16 December. From that moment onwards, they were on the defensive until the end of the war.

### FLANDERS

Flanders was liberated by Allied forces in September 1944.

Antwerp, with its vital port, fell to the Allies intact. While the Allies were doing everything in their power to enable free passage along the river Scheldt, which flows through Antwerp, the German army tried to block the harbour by holding on to the banks of the river. After heavy fighting in the south of the Netherlands the Allies succeeded. The first ships were able to enter the port of Antwerp at the end of November. The Allies finally had an important port close to the frontline again.

### BRUSSELS

Brussels, the capital of Belgium, was liberated by Allied troops on Sunday 3 September 1944.

There was some fighting in the city but the German forces were quickly overrun. Most damage to the city was caused prior to the arrival of the Allied forces as the German troops set fire to several buildings before starting their retreat. The Allied troops, especially the Belgian Piron Brigade which entered the city on 4 September, received a hero’s welcome from the Belgian population.



Liberation of Brussels



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du Conseil de l'Europe



PARTNERS & SPONSORS



Key events & commemorations

Last  
Monday  
of May  
Memorial Day  
Mardasson  
monument

2<sup>nd</sup>  
of September  
Commemoration  
of the Liberation of  
Mons

2<sup>nd</sup>  
of September  
Liberation Festivals  
in Antwerp

11<sup>th</sup>  
of November  
Remembrance Day

Week-  
end  
before  
16<sup>th</sup>  
of December  
NUTS weekend in  
Bastogne

Week-  
end next  
to 16<sup>th</sup>  
of December  
National  
commemoration at  
the Schumann’s Eck

## History

### Luxembourg

Luxembourg was invaded by Nazi Germany in May 1940, after which it was first put under a military and later a civil administration before being annexed in the German Reich. A large part of Luxembourg was liberated by American forces in September 1944. However, in December, the country was invaded once again by German forces, who penetrated the country in an attempt to break through to the west during the Battle of the Bulge. After an unsuccessful campaign, the German forces were pushed out of Luxembourg again in the beginning of 1945.

### Belgium

In May 1940 the German Army invaded Belgium and managed to encircle the Allied armies via a bold advance through the Ardennes. During the occupation, which lasted for four years, thousands of Belgians lost their lives and a large part of the Jewish population was deported. In 1944, Belgium again gained large strategic importance as the Allies tried to bring the port of Antwerp into use and the German Army made a last attempt to turn the tide of the war during the Battle of the Bulge.



Bastogne in ruins

## Battle of the Bulge

The Ardennes played a crucial role during the World War II on two occasions.

In 1940, the German army launched a surprise attack through the Ardennes which led to their victory in Western Europe. In the winter of 1944-1945 the German forces tried to repeat this success with another attack. By this point of the war, the balance of power had shifted in favour of the Allies. The German troops offensive, known as the Ardennes Offensive or Battle of the Bulge, appeared to be unsuccessful.



Port of Antwerp

## Battle of the Scheldt

After D-Day, one of the main problems was that the supply lines from the French coast were much too long.

Clearing the (Western) Scheldt and the port of Antwerp was the crucial solution. Subsequently, a heavy battle was waged around the Scheldt estuary and off the Belgian and Dutch coast. The Canadians played an important role in these clashes. It was not until 28 November 1944 that the first Allied ships were able to dock in Antwerp. But the German troops refused to surrender and spread terror with their new V1 en V2 (‘Vergeltungswaffe’) retaliatory weapons.



Allies walking past the German 88mm gun close to Joe's Bridge in Lommel

## Operation Market Garden

Operation Market Garden, which began in Belgium in September 1944, paved the way for the liberation of the Netherlands.

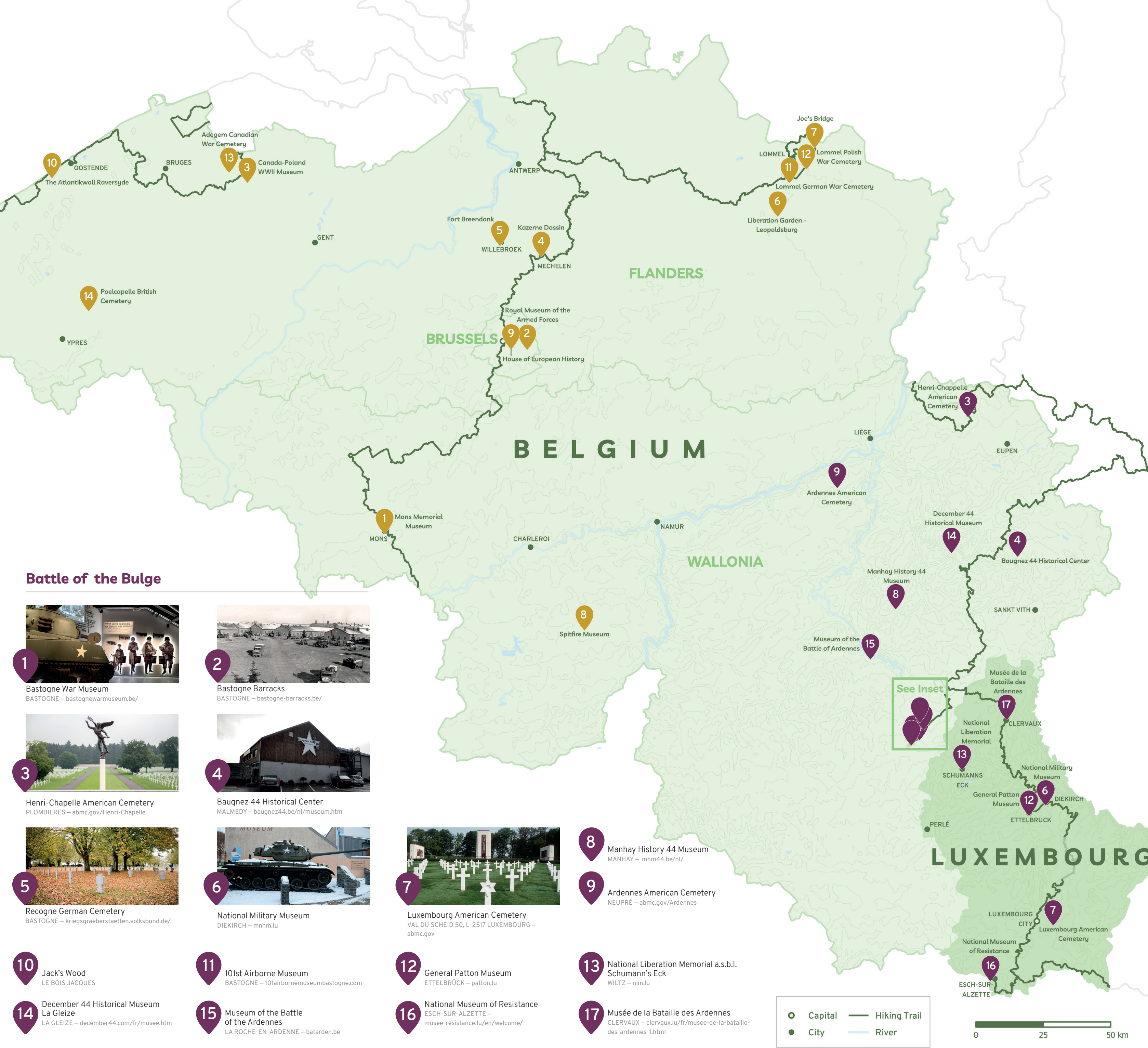
After the turbulent liberation of Limburg (BE), including the battle for Hechtel, a crucial operation followed in the direction of the Netherlands, with the objective of crossing the large rivers. The operation was given the code name ‘Market Garden’ and combined multiple airborne operations over Eindhoven, Nijmegen and Arnhem (Market), as well as a ground offensive (Garden). British General Brian Horrocks gave the order on 15 September 1944 in Leopoldsburg.

## The first liberation of Luxembourg

On 9 September 1944, forces of the US 5th Armored Division crossed the border from France and entered the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg near Pétange.

The next day, on 10 September, the division reached Luxembourg City and the rest of the country was liberated shortly afterwards. It had endured just over four years of occupation, during which more than five thousand Luxembourgers were killed, around two thousand of whom were Jewish.





## The Liberation of Belgium

1

**Mons Memorial Museum**  
MONS – visitmons.nl/musea/mons-memorial-museum-tijdelijk-gesloten-582112

2

**Royal Museum of the Armed Forces and Military History**  
BRUSSELS – klm-mra.be

3

**Canada-Poland WWII Museum**  
MALDEGEM – generalmaczekmuseum.com

4

**Kazerne Dossin**  
MECHELEN – kazernedossin.eu

5

**Fort Breendonk**  
WILLEBROEK – breendonk.be

6

**Liberation Garden (opens in 2022)**  
LEOPOLDSBURG – liberationgarden.be

7

**Joe's Bridge**  
LOMMEL

8

**Spitfire Museum**  
FLORENNES – museespitfire.be

9

**House of European History**  
BRUSSELS – historia-europa.eu/en/welcome-house-european-history

10

**The Atlantikwall Raversyde**  
OOSTENDE – raversyde.be

11

**Lommel German War Cemetery**  
LOMMEL – kriegsgraeberstaetten.volksbund.de

12

**Lommel Polish War Cemetery**  
LOMMEL

13

**Adegem Canadian War Cemetery**  
ADEGEM – cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2000022/adegem%20canadian%20war%20cemetery/

14

**Poelcapelle British Cemetery**  
POELCAPELLE – bit.ly/3nugaAY

## Battle of the Bulge

1

**Bastogne War Museum**  
BASTOGNE – bastognewarmuseum.be/

2

**Bastogne Barracks**  
BASTOGNE – bastogne-barracks.be/

3

**Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery**  
PLOMBIERES – abmc.gov/Henri-Chapelle

4

**Baugnez 44 Historical Center**  
MALMEDY – baugnez44.be/nl/museum.htm

5

**Recogne German Cemetery**  
BASTOGNE – kriegsgraeberstaetten.volksbund.de/

6

**National Military Museum**  
DIEKIRCH – mnhm.lu

7

**Luxembourg American Cemetery**  
VAL DU SCHEID 50, L-2517 LUXEMBOURG – abmc.gov

8

**Manhay History 44 Museum**  
MANHAY – mhm44.be/nl/

9

**Ardennes American Cemetery**  
NEUPRÉ – abmc.gov/Ardennes

10

**Jack's Wood**  
LE BOIS JACQUES

11

**101st Airborne Museum**  
BASTOGNE – 101airbornemuseumbastogne.com

12

**General Patton Museum**  
ETTELBRÜCK – patton.lu

13

**National Liberation Memorial a.s.b.l. Schumann's Eck**  
WILTZ – nlm.lu

14

**December 44 Historical Museum La Gleize**  
LA GLEIZE – december44.com/fr/musee.htm

15

**Museum of the Battle of the Ardennes**  
LA ROCHE-EN-ARDENNE – batarden.be

16

**National Museum of Resistance**  
ESCH-SUR-ALZETTE – musee-resistance.lu/en/welcome/

17

**Musée de la Bataille des Ardennes**  
CLERVAUX – clervaux.lu/fr/musee-de-la-bataille-des-ardennes-1.html

