

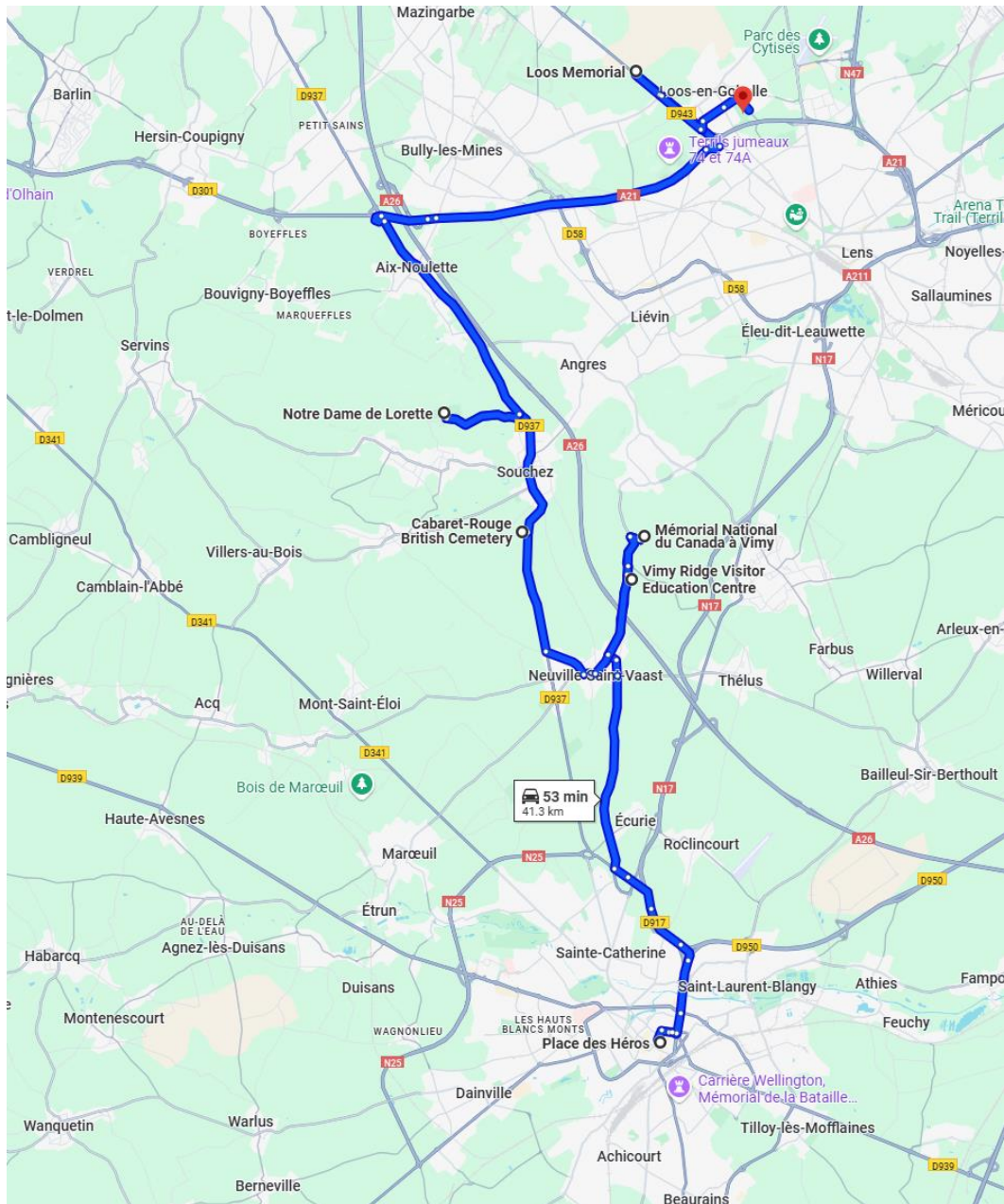
# Tour of Vimy Ridge (Arras)

This tour covers the Vimy Ridge memorial and other important locations around Arras. You can copy the link to your phone for driving directions.

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/KHKCJz3QZP8qhw6a7>

Details of the tour are provided in the blog:

<https://www.paulsbattlefieldtours.com/post/rachel-tours-arras>



## Tour Locations

- Vimy Ridge
  - Visitors Centre
  - Tunnels and Trenches
  - Memorial
  - Centennial Park
- Cabaret Rouge Cemetery
  - Unknown Soldier Plot 8 row e grave 7
- Notre Dame de Lorette
  - French Cemetery
  - Ring Of Remembrance (Connelly, Henry Goodfellow)
- Hill 70 Memorial
- Loos Memorial to the Missing
  - Walter Goodfellow

# Vimy Memorial

## Visitor's Centre

The first stop was at the visitor's centre at the Vimy Memorial. The centre offers tours of the underground tunnels and reconstructed trenches but you can't reserve in advance, so we stopped there first to sign up for an early tour before all the tourists hit the hill.

The visitor's centre has a number of artifacts and a good movie on the battles that provides context. In the display area, they have a Lego model of the Vimy Memorial. Very impressive, the model uses 11,285 bricks, the exact number of names listed on the memorial. The model took more than 200 hours to build.





## Underground Tour

The area underground is chalk, good for tunneling. Both The Allies and the Germans dug a series of tunnels to access the front lines and to dig galleries for mining operations. Since the Germans had the high ground, the Allies dug an extensive networks of subways to allow the troops to get to the front line safely and unobserved. By the time the Canadians were ready to assault the ridge, there were 14 subways from the rear areas to the front lines to support the attack.

The Grange subway is accessible by a guided tour. The tunnels had been widened slightly, some supporting structure and electric lights added but other wise are the same as 100 years ago. There were side tunnels for deep mining operations.







## Rebuilt Trenches

The subway lets out into a front-line trench. The trenches were rebuilt while the Vimy memorial was being constructed. There was a pause while Walter Allward found the perfect stone for the memorial, and the workers filled sandbags with concrete, and built cement duckboards to preserve the trenches.





Both Allied and German trenches were rebuilt. The aerial photo shows the proximity of the Canadian (on the left) and German trenches.



## Mine Craters

The trench lines were very close together, in some areas 25 m apart, making it easy to dig short galleries and set off mine craters. Both sides had blown more than 30 mines throughout the more than two years of conflict. The map shows the number of craters as well as the underground subways dug by the Canadians.



The mine craters are still visible from the reconstructed trench lines.





## Vimy Memorial

The memorial, in most people's opinion, is the most beautiful monument on the Western Front.



This is the approach to the monument, but it is actually the back of memorial. The Front of the monument overlooks the Douai Plain, and the high wall represents a fortress that appears to arise out of the top of the ridge.

The Vimy foundation has produced a website to honour the Vimy Memorial and highlight the sculptures. The introduction also has some awesome aerial photography of the monument and is well worth a look.

<https://allward.vimyfoundation.ca/en>

The theme of the memorial is peace and not victory. I looked at the symbolism of the statues in a previous post.

<https://www.paulsbattlefieldtours.com/post/in-search-of-the-lost-vimy-models>

## Front of the Memorial

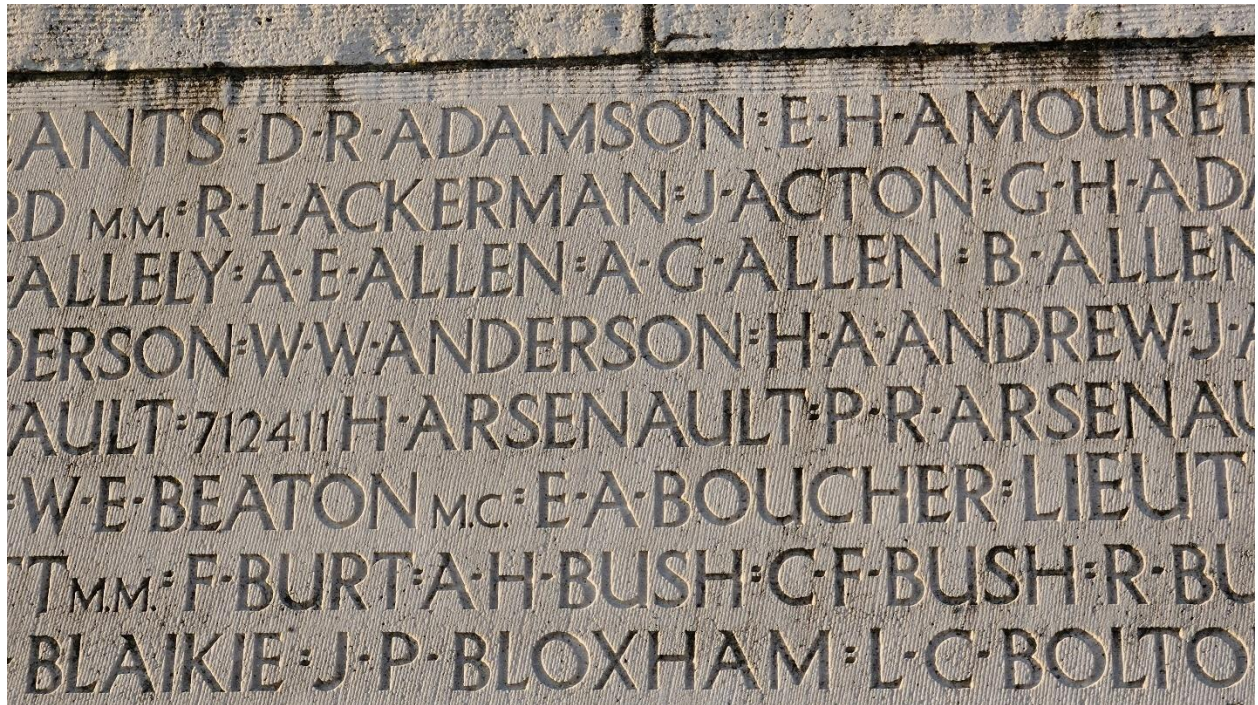


The entire park is 250 acres, much of which is untouched battlefield. The area around the monument was fully cleared of explosives, but the wooded areas are off limits due to the potential of unexploded ordinance. The shell craters are visible around the monument, and the shell and mine craters are visible throughout the forest. There is said to be one tree planted for each of the 60,000 Canadians who lost their lives in the war.



## Names of the Missing

The memorial is so spectacular, that you sometimes forget its purpose is to commemorate the Canadians soldiers missing in France. In total, more than 600,000 Canadians served in WWI, with more than 60,000 losing their lives. More than 18,000 Canadians have no known grave. 11,285 soldiers missing in France are named on the Vimy Memorial. A further 6,925 Canadians with no known grave in Belgium are listed on the Menin Gate and 820 missing Newfoundlanders are listed on the Beaumont Hamel memorial.





## Vimy Foundation Centennial Park

Just beside the upper parking lot next to the memorial is the Vimy Foundation Centennial Park. The park was opened on 09 November 2018 to mark the centenary of the end of the First World War, and provide a reflective space near the memorial. The park is on a 4-acre site purchased from a farmer and cleared of ordinance before the park could be created.



The park features 100 Centennial Oak trees that are descendants of acorns taken from Vimy Ridge in 1917. The acorns were taken by Leslie Miller and planted on his farm in Scarborough. The trees were repatriated to Vimy and planted in the Centennial Park.

## Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery

Our next stop was the Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery, just down the road. The Cemetery was opened in 1916 and populated with Canadians during the battle of Arras in 1917. After the war the cemetery was expanded through the concentration of over 100 smaller cemeteries and now has 7,650 burials, 4,465 of whom are unknowns. The cemetery is the sixth largest Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery and one of the most beautiful



The cemetery has a very unique shape, with many of the headstones in a circle centred on the Stone of Remembrance.



## Notre Dame de Lorette French Cemetery

We moved on to Notre Dame de Lorette, a massive French Cemetery. The cemetery was first opened in 1915 during the Battle of Artois. It was inaugurated in 1925 as a National Military Cemetery, and within the grounds are the remains of more than 40,000 soldiers in individual graves as well as eight ossuaries.

The cemetery is built on the peak of hill 165 and the sloping ground masks the number of grave markers.





## Ring of Remembrance

Adjacent to the Notre Dame de Lorette cemetery is the Ring of Remembrance, a memorial built in 2014 to commemorate all of the fallen in the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region.

The ring alphabetically lists the names of more than 576,000 soldiers from more than 40 different countries, without rank or nationality.



The ring consists of 500 3 m high panels listing the names of the fallen.

## Hill 70 Memorial

Our next stop was the Hill 70 Memorial at Lens. This site was developed with private funds, as for 100 years there was no memorial to the first Battle that the Canadian Corps served under a Canadian, Gen Sir Arthur Currie. The memorial was dedicated on 08 April 2017 by Governor General David Johnston. Since the memorial was only recently constructed, it is not located at the actual Hill 70, but is in a park about 1.5 km from the original site, the jumping off point for the assault.



The site has many information boards, and a Hill 70 app that tells the story of the battle and a description of the actions of the Victoria Cross Winners. The app has audio and video clips, and is worth looking at for pictures and stories of the battle.

## Loos British Cemetery

The Memorial is adjacent to the Loos British Military Cemetery which is also worth visiting. The Cemetery recently had an extension added as excavations in the area are expected to uncover many remains.





## Loos Memorial to the Missing

The Loos Memorial forms the sides and back of Dud Corner Cemetery. The Loos Memorial commemorates over 20,000 officers and men who have no known grave, who fell from the first day of the Battle of Loos to the end of the war. On either side of the cemetery is a wall 15 feet high, to which are fixed tablets on which are carved the names of those commemorated. At the back are four small circular courts, open to the sky, in which the lines of tablets are continued, and between these courts are three semicircular walls or apses, two of which carry tablets, while on the centre apse is erected the Cross of Sacrifice.



This memorial is special to me as one of my maternal grandmother's cousins is commemorated here. There were 4 Goodfellow brothers who served in the war, Henry who was killed on 26 Aug 1914 at Le Cateau, Ernest who was killed on 08 May 1915 at Frezenberg ridge and Walter who was killed on the 03 Nov 1915 at Hohenzollern Redoubt nearby. Thomas, the fourth brother survived the war but had been gassed and suffered for the rest of his short life.

The panel listing the Suffolk Regiment is near the back of the cemetery on the left-hand side.

