

# *D-Day & the Battle of Normandy*



*...discover the whole of the story*

**THE D-DAY LANDING BEACHES** are justifiably well known but the story didn't end there. We examine not only the largest amphibious landing in history but also so much more with this tour that follows the struggle for Normandy through to its conclusion in late August 1944. You will gain a real understanding of how the occupying Germans were defeated in what was a battle that sat on a knife edge on many occasions.

As well as the history you will enjoy some really fabulous cycling as we link the story together in a way that offers an almost chronological flowing of events. Normandy is fine cycling country, and early summer is a special time to visit, with fields at their most verdant, hedgerows full of flowers, and late sunsets under which to enjoy a glass of something local!

With your experienced battlefield guide we truly feel our tour is unique in offering you the very best of the whole battle.

## ***At a glance.....***

- 5 days' riding
- 221 miles (355 km)
- Daily distances from 38 to 48 miles (60 to 78 km)
- 4 nights in comfortable 3\*\*\* family run 'character' hotels.
- 3 dinners
- Historic Bayeux
- Flatter and hillier sections
  - Experienced Battlefield Guide
- Fully supported with vehicle back-up and luggage transfer
- The whole of the battle covered



**Day 1:** After disembarking at Ouistreham we familiarise you with the first morning's ride by way of original intelligence maps used by a friend of ours as he came ashore on the Landing Beaches in the first wave on D-Day. We follow the coast road west, along Sword and Juno beaches, and, passing Gold beach, we arrive in Arromanches where remnants of the artificial Mulberry Harbour are still very much in evidence. Along the way you will pass the spot where de Gaulle and King George VI landed on 14 and 16 June 1944 respectively. After lunch we continue along the coast to the Longues Battery, a well preserved part of the 'Atlantic Wall' and used in the opening scenes of the film 'The Longest Day'.

This is the end of the British and Canadian sector but we continue along the beaches to Omaha Beach and the American cemetery at Colleville; it is on a grand scale and is worthy of exploring. After this we ride to the Pointe du Hoc where US Rangers scaled ladders to assault the clifftops; this is living history as the battlefield remains pretty much unchanged since 1944 with plenty of craters and bunkers to allow you to envisage the scene.

From here we pedal to Bayeux, where there is plenty more to see in the form of the Bayeux Memorial, and of course the famous Tapestry commemorating another invasion 900 years previously. We stay the night in Bayeux where you are free to explore the town tonight (dinner not included) (80km / 50 miles).



**Day 2:** From Bayeux we head south through the country that saw much of the fiercest fighting of the Normandy campaign. Passing the small Jerusalem war cemetery, we go on to Tilly sur Seulle and then to Hill 112, where the 43rd Wessex Division met fierce resistance in late June to early August 1944. From this highpoint you can see Caen in the distance and Rommel said that 'whoever controls (Hill



112) controls Normandy'. From here we travel west to Villers-Bocage, where British forces took a pounding from Panzer Ace Michael Wittman (who later died elsewhere in Normandy), and onwards to our hotel on the other side of Mont Pincon which offers spectacular views over Normandy. (80km / 50 miles).

**Day 3:** The approach to Falaise crosses the beautiful 'Suisse Normande'; this is a hilly area but once at Falaise the hard work is done for the day. Falaise was virtually destroyed but William the Conqueror's castle remains and the church was rebuilt from the ruins. Falaise was the beginning of the end for the Germans





in Normandy as driving south, the Canadians aimed to link up the US army which was coming from the west, thus cutting off lines of retreat. Heading south through the lovely countryside of the Falaise Pocket we ride to a small town where our comfortable hotel displays photographs of a German panzer turned turtle in the river outside. (72km / 45 miles).

**Day 4:** From our hotel we ride around Argentan which was almost totally destroyed by allied bombing as it stood on a vital cross roads, and then on to Chambois, where the Falaise Pocket was closed on 19 August 1944. In the last days of the Battle of Normandy the entire German 7th Army was attempting to escape through the jaws of the pincer movement and we see the place where this occurred; relics are often found here, such as the destruction and the desperation of the Germans to get out with or without their equipment. It's a short (but uphill) ride to Mont Ormel where Polish troops, encircled by the enemy, fought off counter attacks from the 2nd SS Panzer Division before being relieved by Canadian troops on 22 August 1944, thereby ending the Battle of Normandy. The rest of the day is spent heading north to Lisieux, passing through the villages of Camembert and Livarot on the way, and some lovely and unspoilt countryside. These are home to the two most famous cheeses of the region, which we will taste tonight at dinner. (78km / 48 miles).



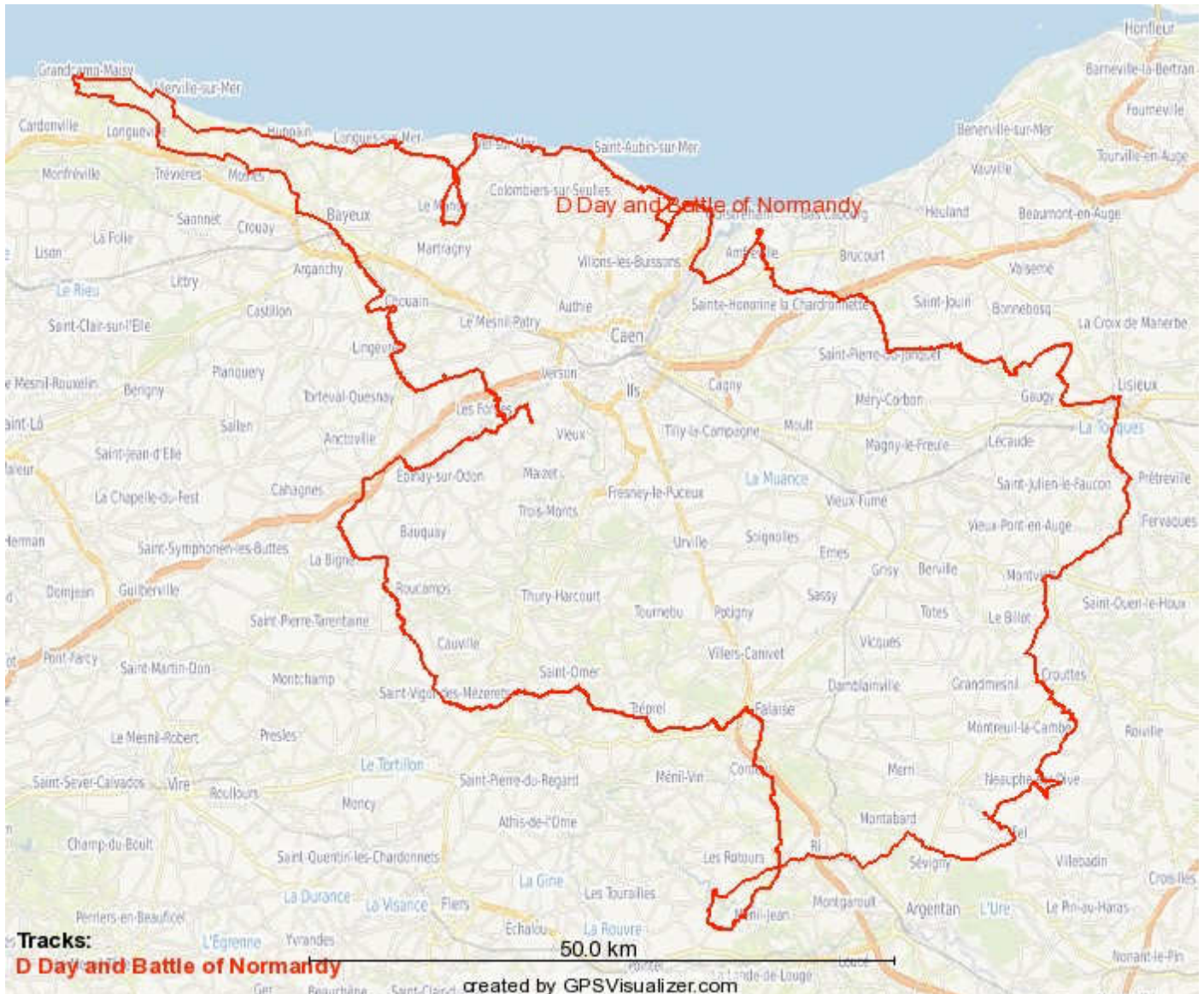
**Day 5:** Lisieux back towards Caen is a pretty ride through unspoilt countryside, predominantly flat, including the lovely village of Beuvron en Auge. This is apple and cider country. When we approach the coast it is at Merville, where the 9th Battalion Parachute Regiment, who with only 150 out of the planned 750 men reaching the rendezvous, nevertheless destroyed four German gun emplacements which could have wiped out the Sword landing beach on D Day. Our route brings us in the same way as these brave men. There are various displays here and it is well worth the entrance fee. Afterwards, we go south to Ranville with its war cemetery, then the short distance to Pegasus Bridge, where there is also an excellent museum. The last site of our trip is the first house to have been liberated, on the far side of the bridge, and then it's a quick 5km ride up the canal towpath back to Ouistreham, or south to Caen, for the journey home. (64km / 40 miles).

## BIKES & EQUIPMENT

People have ridden this tour on all types of bike. The cycling is not hard. All bikes are secure at night. You won't need panniers or bar bags as you will frequently see the van. Garmin / GPS are highly recommended; we also provide a printed route book with turn by turn instructions. We will send you out a kit list in advance of your holiday so you know what to pack.

## TRAVEL TO / FROM THE TOUR

The best method of travel is the Portsmouth to Caen ferry operated by Brittany Ferries, as the tour starts and ends at the ferry terminal in Ouistreham (the correct name for the Caen ferry terminal). There are hotels local if you wanted to come over the day before or stay the night after.







## **SUPPORT VEHICLES**

Our support vehicle caters for all speeds of rider and is there to provide everything you need to make your trip easier, so that all you have to do is pedal. We provide a coffee stop in the morning and snacks throughout the day but you will see us far more frequently than that as we sit by the side of the road to see you all through a tricky junction or to dispense suntan lotion. Everyone loves our homemade cake (you have to eat it all, because we get in trouble if we take any back at the end of the trip) and we also have a range of spares on board. You can leave a daybag in the van with waterproofs, gels, your iPad or whatever you may need to get at throughout the day—you will see us every hour on average and we are always only a phone call away. Various referred to by riders as ‘the mothership’, the ‘kebab van’ and ‘ride HQ’, our vans are all this and more (OK, no kebabs, but the Fortnum & Mason hamper does contain a lot of other goodies!).

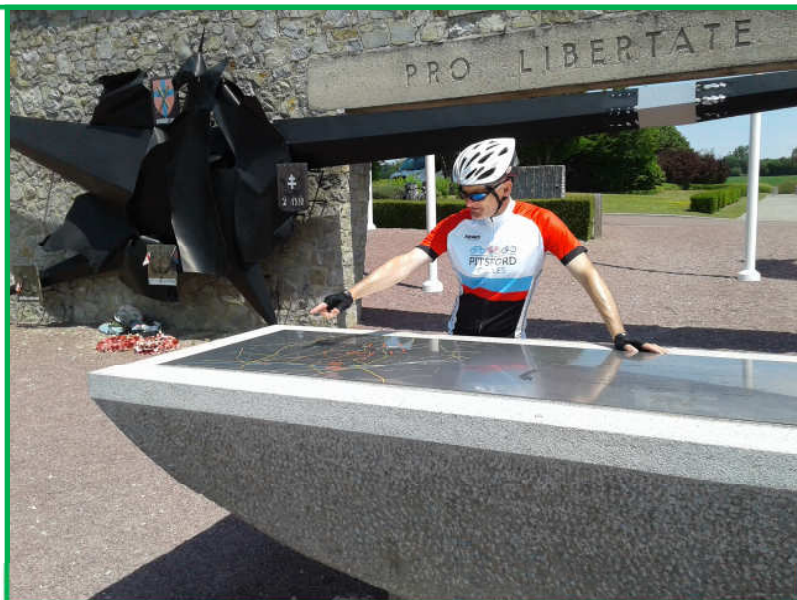
Your battlefield guide will either ride in the van and meet you along the way, or may ride with you, depending who is guiding that week.

## GROUP RIDING

Our group sizes vary from 4 up to 12. Sometimes we go to 14, but we are keen to keep the personal service that our returning customers love. On our feedback form a lot of people have told us that we should stress the benefits of our small groups—so we have!

You do not need to ride as a group as our support caters for everyone's speed. You will usually find someone else who rides at a pace that you are comfortable with, even if you did not know them before the holiday began. If you find yourself riding in a large group and are not familiar with group riding, ask us, or other riders, to explain about warning signals and how to pass information about hazards on the road between yourselves.

On our battlefield tours in particular, you will find riders regrouping naturally at the many historical stops where your guide will give a short talk about events that happened there.



## ABOUT US

We are a specialist family company and we care deeply that you have a good time. It's more than likely that one of the business owners will be leading your trip. This isn't just a livelihood for us, it's a vocation, so we'll do whatever we can to look after you and make sure you have fun! We're mad keen cyclists and want to pass on the joys of riding in France. This means is that if you want to ring us at 9pm on a Sunday with some questions, please do. If we can't come to the phone we will get back to you surprisingly quickly. You'll probably be speaking to the person who planned the route and has actually ridden it, or chose the hotels. If you have any questions at all, or wish to book, please call us on +44 (0)1300 350555 or email [info@greenjerseycycling.co.uk](mailto:info@greenjerseycycling.co.uk).



*'Of 6 companies that we have used for this format of holiday you are far and away the best.'*



## HOTELS & MEALS

We use small family-run hotels wherever possible where a generous breakfast is offered. All have en suite facilities. The average rating is 3-star. Final confirmation of actual hotels is decided in January / February each year. Accommodation is on a half board basis. If a hotel does not have a restaurant for dinner then we eat out (cost included in tour). We arrange tables together for the evening meals although you are of course free to come and go as you please. If you have any dietary requirements please let us know in advance. On one night (your guides' night off) dinner is not included and you are free to make your own choice.



Breakfast and dinner is included in the cost of your holiday and we also include your first drink (beer, soft drink or glass of wine) for your evening meal. Pre-dinner drinks, extra wine and coffee afterwards are not included and you should pay for these yourself at the time.

For lunch, we will tell you where you will find places to eat / buy food. On one day on this tour we provide a picnic lunch on two days (included in the cost of the holiday) where facilities are scarce due to the rural nature of our route.

## DATES AND PRICES 2020/2021

Please see our website.

## BESPOKE DATES

If you can rustle up a group of 8 or more we can put on a bespoke date just for your group.

**TO BOOK:** <https://www.greenjerseycycling.co.uk/bookings.php>

Green Jersey French Cycling Tours, March 2020.