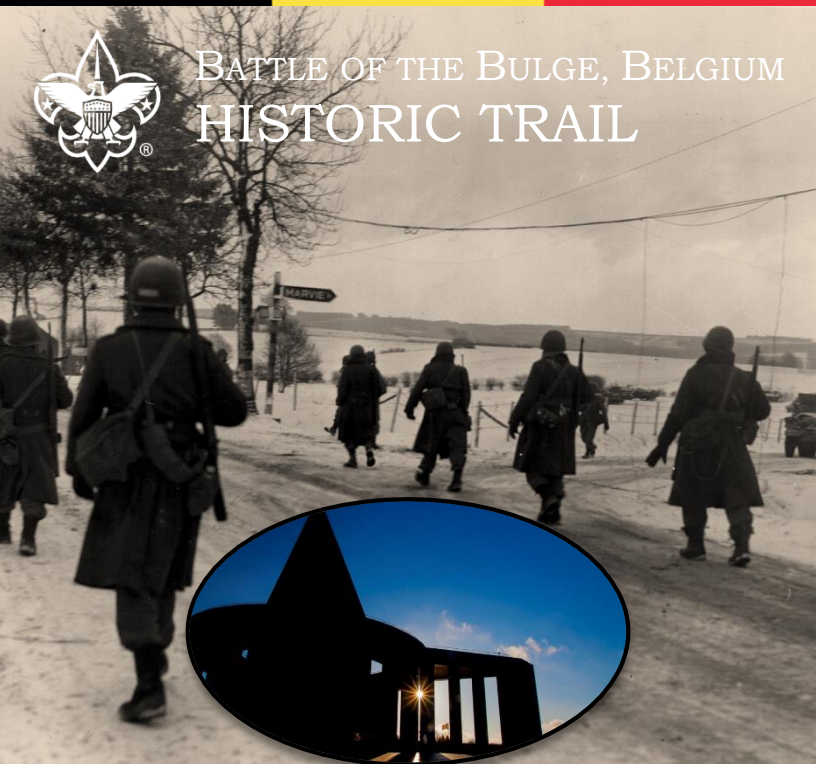




BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM HISTORIC TRAIL



FIELD GUIDE



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®
TRANSATLANTIC COUNCIL

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Field Guide contains information on the Battle of the Bulge Historical Trail first approved in 1980 and designed by Scouters of Troops 1 and 26 in Heidelberg, Germany. Mr Greg Pedlow, of the SHAPE Historians Office, updated the trail as part of his Wood Badge ticket in 1998 and he again updated it in 2002 and 2021. The guide is intended to be a starting point in your endeavor to learn about the history of the sites on the trail. Remember, this may be the only time your Scouts visit the Battle of the Bulge area in their life so make it a great time!

While TAC tries to update these Field Guides when possible, it may be several years before the next revision. If you have comments or suggestions, please send them to Admin@tac-bsa.org or post them on the TAC Nation Facebook Group Page at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/27951084309/>.

This guide can be printed as a 5½ x 4¼ inch pamphlet or read on a tablet or smart phone.



Front Cover: American Infantrymen move down the snowy roads around Bastogne
Front Cover Inset: The Mardasson Monument outside Bastogne.



BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM HISTORIC TRAIL

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GETTING PREPARED

Just like with any hike (or any activity in Scouting), the Historic Trail program starts with **Being Prepared**.

1. Review this Field Guide in detail.
2. Check local conditions and weather.
3. Study and Practice with the map and compass.
4. Pack rain gear and other weather-appropriate gear.
5. Take plenty of water.
6. Make sure socks and hiking shoes or boots fit correctly and are broken in.
7. Pack a first aid kit, "just in case."
8. Discuss the day's activities, so there are no surprises; discuss safe hiking.
9. Ensure Two-Deep Leadership at all times.
10. Check the Quick Quiz and keep it with you on the trail.



WHAT IS THE HISTORIC TRAIL?

In December 1944, when it seemed like Nazi Germany was beaten and the Second World War in Europe was just about over, the Germans launched a major attack on a weak portion of the Allied line held by US troops in the rough terrain of the Ardennes Forest in Belgium and Luxembourg. Caught by surprise, the American soldiers resisted fiercely but were forced back by the heavy German attacks, creating a huge “bulge” in the Allied lines, which gives the battle its name.

One very important city - Bastogne - was surrounded, but the 101st Airborne Division, which had been rushed there to prevent the Germans from capturing this vital road junction needed for their resupply efforts, continued to hold out, beating off a number of strong German attacks. The siege of Bastogne was broken by the advance of General Patton's armored divisions from the south, and the Germans were finally driven out of the “bulge” in January 1945.

The Transatlantic Council's Battle of the Bulge Historic Trail commemorates this important World War II battle, especially the valiant stand of the 101st Airborne Division in Bastogne. The trail's main objective is to provide Scouts and Scouters a better understanding of this important part of our American Heritage, as well as to provide opportunities for hiking and possible interaction with Scouts from other countries. Because of the strong international focus of Scouting in Europe and the fact that many BSA troops include non-US Scouts, unit leaders are encouraged to avoid a strongly nationalistic approach to this battle and to remind their Scouts that there were former Scouts and Scouters fighting on both sides of this battle (Germany had a very active Scouting (Pfadfinder) movement until Adolf Hitler took power in 1933 and forced all Scout units to merge with the Nazi Party's “Hitler Youth” organization).

Gute Reise! – Have a nice trip!



HISTORIC TRAIL ROUTE

Hike

Where and How to Start

The Trail starts at the Sherman Tank in the main city square in Bastogne, the Place Général McAuliffe. If you are staying at the Bastogne Scout Hut, you can walk to the start. If not, there is parking in the square around the tank and the surrounding streets.

Distance and Time

The Bastogne hike measures about 3.5 km in distance from the square to the Mardosson Monument and about the same distance back to the main square where you started. Experienced adult hikers completed the route in about 3 hours, stopping at each location to view the site. Younger and less-experienced hikers, and those who wish to take more time, will take longer, perhaps 4 hours or more.

The optional Bastogne Perimeter Hike will add about 8.5 km to your hike. Experienced adult hikers finished this route in about 3 hours while younger and less experienced hikers will take longer.

Please remember that the goal is not to rush through the hike. Take the time to learn and enjoy the hike.



BASTOGNE HIKING ROUTE

Start Point – Sherman Tank

This **Sherman tank** is a popular monument in the Belgian town. The tank belonged to the 11th Armored Division and was brought to a stop in the village of Renuamont on Dec. 30, 1944, after a German attack. Its crew was captured by the Germans and taken to a prisoner camp. Next to the tank is a monument to U.S. Army Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe for whom the square is named. Outgunned and outnumbered, McAuliffe received a letter from German commanders on Dec. 22, 1944, requesting the surrender of all American troops under his command. McAuliffe responded with the now legendary retort: 'Nuts!'

50°00'02.7"N, 5°42'55.0"E – Place Général McAuliffe 33, 6600 Bastogne

Head south along the N30 about 400m to the Patton Memorial Park on your right.

Checkpoint #2 – Patton Memorial Park

The **monument** in honor of General Patton was inaugurated September 8th 1963 in the presence of his grandson Lieutenant John Waters. General Patton led the Third US Army across France through the summer and fall of 1944. On Dec 16, he was ordered to turn his Third US Army north to help relieve the American troops in the Battle of the Bulge.

49°59'53.0"N, 5°42'58.5"E – Rue Merceny 11, 6600 Bastogne

Head back north along the N30 to the Place Général McAuliffe and continue northeast on the N30 for about 600m. Turn right on the Rue de la Porte Haute to our next stop, the Porte de Trèves.

Checkpoint #3 – Porte de Trèves

Porte de Treves is a saddening reminder of the war, being the only tower left from what used to be majestic ramparts. In English, **Porte de Treves** means the Treves gates. The tower is square and large, made entirely of sandstone.



BASTOGNE HIKING ROUTE

Checkpoint #3 – Porte de Trèves (cont.)

This means that the late-medieval ramparts of Bastogne were built using sandstone, enhancing the strength and beauty of a crucial building. The building itself, however, was burnt to the ground by the French in 1668. The tower, located near a famous church, is the only remnant of the ramparts.

50°00'17.7"N, 5°43'19.3"E – Place St-Pierre, 6600 Bastogne

From the tower, head north to the N30 and across the street is our next stop, the Bastogne War Monument.

Checkpoint #4 – Bastogne War Monument

This memorial commemorates the residents of Bastogne who gave their lives in World War I and World War II.

50°00'19.9"N, 5°43'18.8"E – Rue Gustave-Delperdange 1945, 6600 Bastogne

Head northeast along the Rue Gustave-Delperdange (N874) for about 650m to our next stop.

Checkpoint #5 – Sherman Tank Turret

On all the major roads into Bastogne, Sherman turrets of different types mark the places where the German advance to capture the surrounded city was stopped. This **turret** is marked with the insignia of the 10th Armored Division, the unit that broke through the encirclement of Bastogne to link up with the 101st Airborne Division.

50°00'30.9"N, 5°43'45.3"E – Rue Gustave-Delperdange 62, 6600 Bastogne

Continue along Rue Gustave-Delperdange for 150m to our next stop, a Belgian Bunker.



BASTOGNE HIKING ROUTE

Checkpoint #6 – Belgian Bunker Monument

This **monument** commemorates Corporal Emile Cady, the first Belgian killed during the defense of Bastogne. The monument recalls the withdrawal of Belgian troops on 10 May 1940, the first day of the declaration of war from Germany to Belgium.

50°00'32.1"N, 5°43'53.2"E – Corner of Rue Gustave-Delperdange and Rue de Clervaux, 6600 Bastogne

Continue along the Rue de Clervaux for about 400m to the Trail of Liberty Marker.

Checkpoint #7 – Liberty Road Marker #1147

Liberty Road (French *La voie de la Liberté*) is the commemorative way marking the route of the Allied forces from D-Day in June 1944. It starts in Sainte-Mère-Église, in the Manche département in Normandy, France, travels across Northern France to Metz and then northwards to end in Bastogne, on the border of Luxembourg and Belgium. At each of the 1,146 kilometers along the route, there is a stone marker or 'Borne'. The first lies outside the town hall in Sainte-Mère-Église while this marker in Bastogne is the final one on the road.

50°00'38.8"N, 5°44'11.8"E – Route de Bizory 6600, 6600 Bastogne

Follow Rue de Clervaux for about 250m to the Bastogne War Museum on your left.

Checkpoint #8 – Bastogne War Museum

The old Bastogne Historical Center closed in 2011 and was transformed into the **Bastogne War Museum** which opened in 2014. The updated museum covers the Second World War, from its origins up to the autumn of 1944, and then focuses on the Battle of the Bulge. Key events of the war and the combatants' ordeal are reproduced here with the aim of clarifying the broad sweep of its history. The museum provides a very clear picture of how the civilians lived during the occupation, during the battle itself, and afterwards. The many consequences of what was probably one of the most serious battles in world history are very clearly described.



BASTOGNE HIKING ROUTE

Checkpoint #8 – Bastogne War Museum (cont.)

Hours:

15 March to 15 November - 0930-1800

July and August - 0930-1900

16 November to 14 March - Tue-Sun 0930-1800, closed Monday except Holidays

Closed - 8 January to 8 February, 1 January & 25 December

Costs (as of February 2018)

Adult – 14€ Senior (65+) – 12€ Children (6-18) – 8€ Children under 6 – Free

Family – 2 adult + 2 children 36€ +7€ per extra child

School Groups – 7€ per student, 1 free adult per 15 children, extra teacher 7€

Youth Groups (6-18) – 7€ (groups of 20 or more)

Groups – 10€ per person (groups of 20 or more)

For groups, please book ahead of time. Call +32 (0)61 210 220 or email info@bastognewarmuseum.be to set up a group visit. You are encouraged to visit the museum website to check on updated prices and hours before you arrive at <http://www.bastognewarmuseum.be/home.html>.

50°00'37.9"N, 5°44'21.5"E – Colline du Mardasson 5, 6600 Bastogne

Head south from the Museum about 100m to the star shaped Mardasson Monument.

Checkpoint #9 – Mardasson Monument

The Mardasson memorial, which opened in 1950 on the outskirts of the town, is a big star-shaped structure with five points. The story of the battle is engraved on the monument's walls, and it lists the units that took part in the fight, also known as the Ardennes Offensive. There are excellent observation points on the roof, with bronze maps showing details of the battlefield visible from each point of the star. A steep, spiral staircase leads you to the top, where you can take in the hilly view and contemplate all the fighting that took place during the siege of Bastogne.



BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
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BASTOGNE HIKING ROUTE

Checkpoint #9 – Mardasson Monument (cont.)

50°00'33.6"N, 5°44'20.6"E – Route de Bizory 1, 6600 Bastogne

Congratulations, you have completed the Battle of the Bulge Historic Trail! For those intrepid hikers who like to see more, you can continue on the Battle of the Bulge Perimeter Hike described over the next few pages. To continue the hike, return to the Liberty Road marker at checkpoint #7 and turn right. Follow the road for about 2.5 km to the town of Bizory.

Optional Checkpoint #10 – Bizory

Bizory was first defended by Company B, 158th Engineer Battalion starting the morning of 18 December. Two platoons of B/158 took up defensive positions along the Neffe-Bizory and Bizory-Foy roads between Neffe and the Bourcy railroad tracks (Halt Station). A third platoon set up roadblocks forward of the company positions on the N28 highway in Longvilly and Mageret. The company command post was in Bizory.

The company was augmented during the night by two platoons of Company C, 9th Armored Engineers. At 2300 hrs 18 December German infantry overran the roadblock in Mageret and the forward roadblock in Longvilly was cut off. After a night of hard fighting, the 2nd Battalion, 502nd Infantry Regiment from the 101st Airborne Division relieved the engineers just to the east of Bizory and defended a line just outside the town until the unit attacked forward on 3 January 1945. You can still see marks of the heavy fighting on the walls of buildings in the town.

50°01'10.5"N, 5°45'47.4"E – Bizory 6, 6600 Bastogne

After leaving Bizory, follow the road southeast for about 1.5 km to the town of Mageret. If you wish to shorten this tour somewhat, you can leave out Mageret and go directly from Bizory to Neffe. This road lies just to the west of the lines defended by the 101st Airborne Division on the perimeter of the encirclement.



BASTOGNE HIKING ROUTE

Optional Checkpoint #11 – Mageret

During the evening of 18 December, the Germans overran the roadblock in **Mageret** and isolated several American units. Over the next two weeks, the town changed hands several times as the fighting ebbed and flowed across the battlefield. The town was finally recaptured by the 68th Tank Battalion during the afternoon of 1 January 1945. There is a Sherman tank turret near the intersection of the N874 and N821 to mark the areas of fighting.

50°00'52.0"N, 5°47'05.9"E – Mageret 21, 6600 Bastogne, Belgium

From Mageret, you can follow the N874 south and west for about 2.5 km to the town of Neffe.

Optional Checkpoint #12 – Neffe

During the fighting on the 19th of December, the 9th Armored Division Roadblock at the **Neffe** railroad station was overrun by the Germans. The town was retaken by the 69th Tank Battalion during fighting on 31 December. At the town of **Neffe** there is a historical display of photos from the battle next to the old church, which also shows scars from the fighting.

50°00'20.6"N, 5°45'50.8"E – Rue de Clervaux 107, 6600 Bastogne, Belgium

You can now follow the N874 back to Bastogne and checkpoint #6, the Belgian Bunker Monument. From there, you can continue back the start point or the Bastogne Scout Hut.



BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
HISTORIC TRAIL

OTHER NEARBY SITES

Optional Checkpoint #13 – Recogne German Military Cemetery

In February 1945, following the Battle of the Bulge, the US Army established a **cemetery in Recogne**, where some 2,700 Americans and 3,000 Germans were buried. After the war in 1945-1946, the remains of the fallen American soldiers were transferred to Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery and Memorial. In the meantime, the Belgian authorities started clearing all German cemeteries in the area, and transferred all German graves either to Recogne or to Lommel German war cemetery. Therefore, the cemetery also contains graves of Germans killed in 1940 or during the occupation. In the 1950s the cemetery was transferred to the German War Graves Commission.

50°02'56.7"N, 5°44'28.5"E – Recogne 27, 6600 Bastogne, Belgium

From Bastogne, head north on the N40 for about 5km to the town of Foy. At Foy, turn left toward Recogne and go about 750 meters. The cemetery will be on your left.



OTHER NEARBY SITES

Optional Checkpoint #14 – Easy Company Foxholes

Perhaps the most recognized unit to fight in Bastogne is Easy Company, 506th Infantry Regiment thanks to the book and miniseries “Band of Brothers.” During the Defense of Bastogne, the men of Easy Company defended the line in the Bois Jacques on the northeast side of Bastogne. Today there are several **memorials** near the woods and you can still see remnants of the **foxholes** they dug in the frozen ground during the battle.

Easy Company Monument

50°01'43.9"N, 5°45'23.3"E – Road between Bizory & Foy, 6600 Bastogne, Belgium

Easy Company Foxholes

50°02'09.6"N, 5°45'06.7"E – Road between Bizory & Foy, 6600 Bastogne, Belgium

From Bastogne, head northeast for about 4km to Bizory. At Bizory, turn left toward Foy and go about 1km to the monument and 2km to the foxholes. The foxholes will be off the road in the wood line on your left.



Monument



Foxholes



BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
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OTHER NEARBY SITES

Optional Checkpoints #15 & 16 – Luxemburg Cemeteries

About 55km southeast of Bastogne, just on the outskirts of Luxemburg City, are two military cemeteries. The **Luxemburg American Cemetery** contains the remains of 5,076 American service members. 22 sets of brothers rest side-by-side in adjacent graves. Most of the interred died during the Battle of the Bulge which was fought nearby in the winter of 1944/1945. Two flagpoles overlook the graves area. Situated between the two flagpoles lies the grave of General George S. Patton.

Not far from the cemetery entrance stands the white stone chapel, set on a wide circular platform surrounded by woods. It is embellished with sculpture in bronze and stone, a stained-glass window with the insignia of the five major U.S. commands that operated in the region, and a mosaic ceiling.

German fallen from the same battle are buried in the **Sandweiler German war cemetery**, about 1.5 kilometers away. It contains the graves of 10,913 German servicemen from the Battle of the Bulge in winter 1944 and spring 1945. The design of the tombstones are dark stone crosses compared to white tombstones of the American cemetery.

Luxemburg American Military Cemetery and Memorial

49°36'47.0"N, 6°11'13.5"E – 50 Val du Scheid, 2517 Luxembourg

<https://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries-memorials/europe/luxembourg-american-cemetery>

Sandweiler German War Cemetery

49°36'30.0"N, 6°12'11.4"E – CR234, 5239 Sandweiler, Luxembourg

<http://www.volksbund.de/informationmaterial/kriegsgrberstaetten/browse/12.html>





Luxembourg
American Military
Cemetery

15

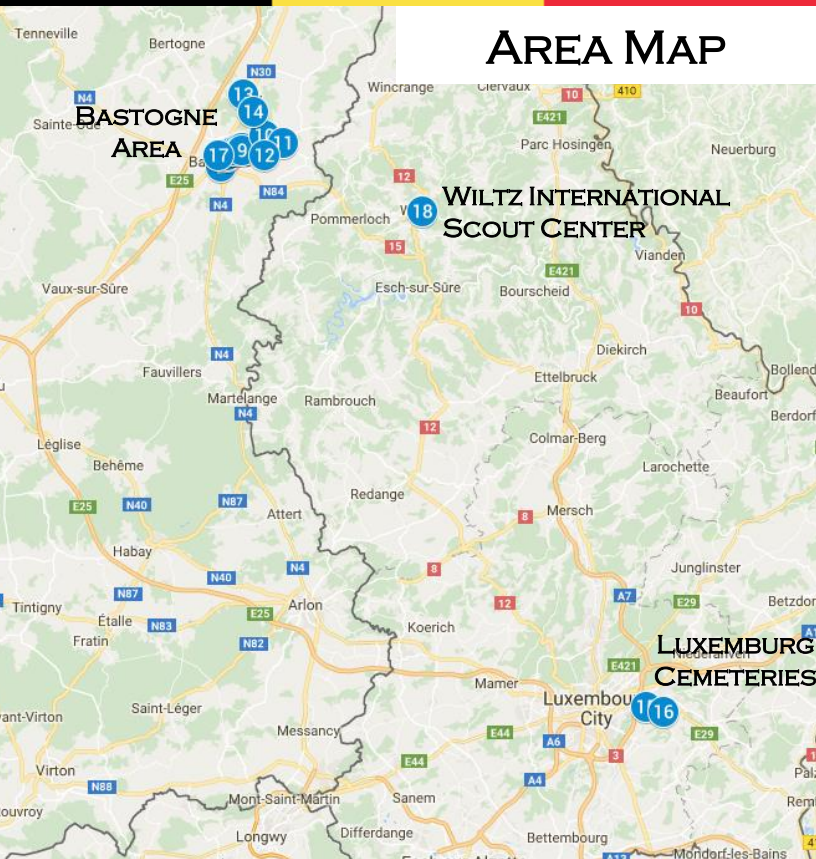


Sandweiler
German War
Cemetery

16



BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
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AREA MAP

**BASTOGNE
AREA**

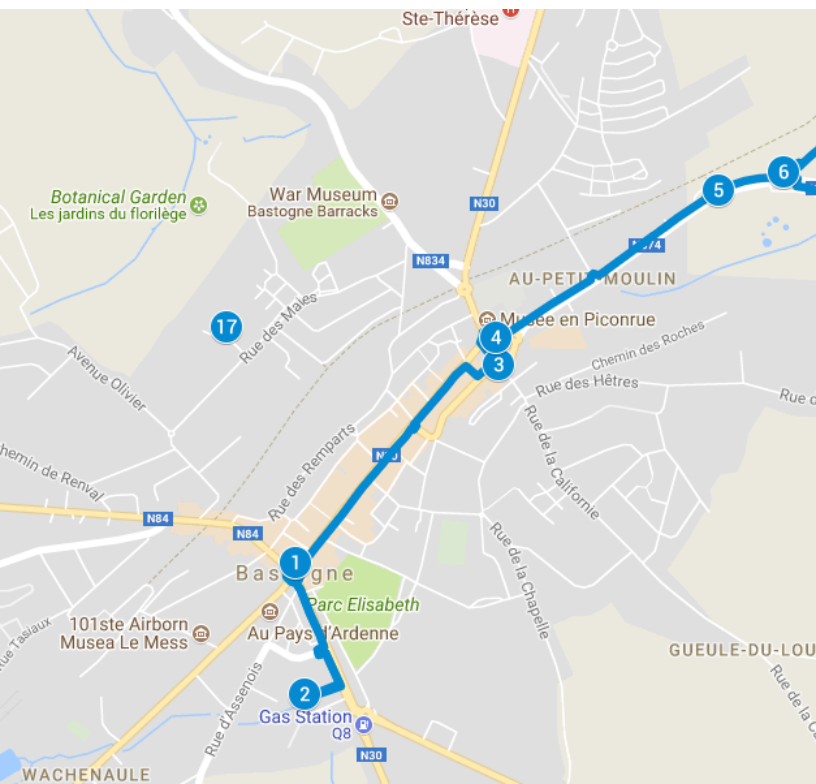
**WILTZ INTERNATIONAL
SCOUT CENTER**

**LUXEMBOURG
CEMETERIES**

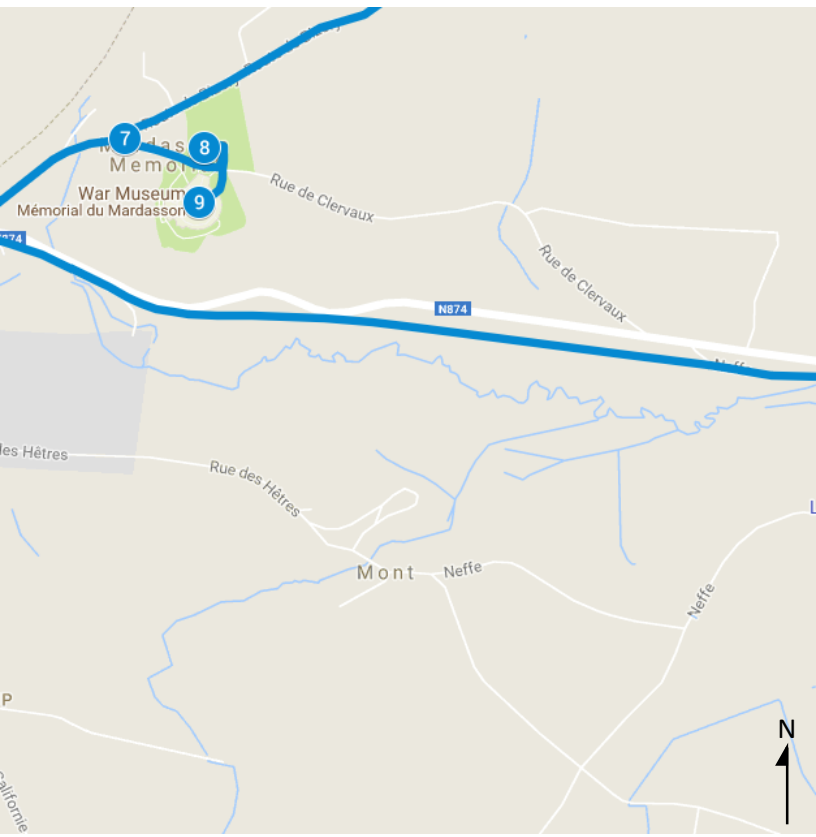


**BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
HISTORIC TRAIL**

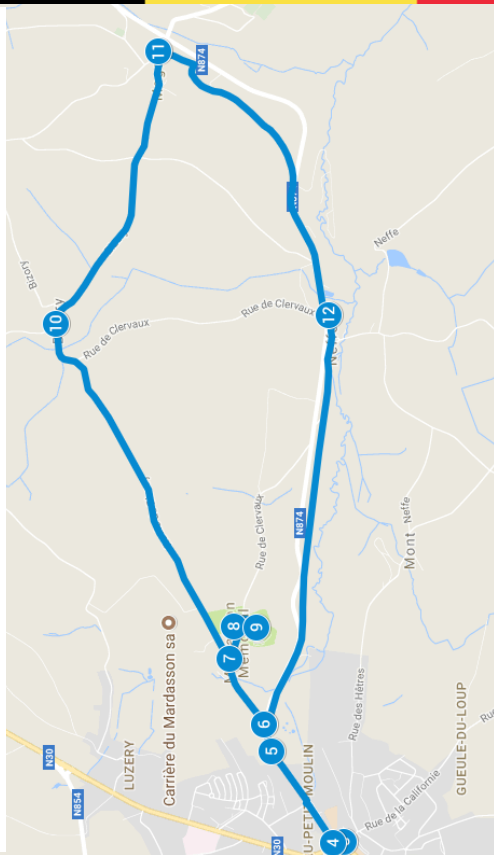
BASTOGNE HIKE ROUTE MAP



BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
HISTORIC TRAIL



BASTOGNE PERIMETER HIKE ROUTE MAP



BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
HISTORIC TRAIL



CAMPING — BASTOGNE SCOUT HUT

On the west side of the city there is a Scout hut run by the local Belgian Scout association. It is located at Rue des Maies 120 (#17 on the Bastogne Hike map).

The hut has a large heated room with 135 m² of available floor space and four smaller rooms of between 40 and 60 m² each. The estimated sleeping capacity of the hut is 50 people. The main meeting room has a large number of tables and chairs; if you use these, please put them back in stacks the way you found them. The Scout hut also has bathrooms containing 7 toilets, 2 urinals, 9 washbasins, and 2 showers. There is running water (but the hot water may be turned off in the winter), and a large kitchen with a 300-liter refrigerator, 2 gas stoves (4 burners each) and 2 ovens, 2 large gas-fired burners that can be used to heat large containers of water, and a microwave.

You can see photos of the Scout hut and its facilities in a PDF available at <https://atoutscamps.be/sites/default/files/PDF%20Local%20Scout%20de%20Bastogne.pdf> (google "locaux des Scouts Bastogne"). This PDF shows the street name as "Chemin des Maies" but the correct name is "Rue des Maies" and you will see the Guides Hut (locaux des Patros) and Scout Hut (locaux des Scouts) on Google Maps.

Additionally, the site also has a large grassy area suitable for camping. If your unit wishes to camp there, you should still rent the Scout hut so that you will have toilet facilities and running water available. You can also use the Scout hut for shelter or meetings if the weather turns nasty, as can happen quickly in the Ardennes.

The cost to rent the hut is 125 euros per day plus 50 Euros for utilities, making the total cost for a weekend 300 Euros (Friday evening until Sunday late morning). The hut must be reserved in advance by contacting Mme. Francoise Brabant, who is responsible for the Bastogne Scout Hut. She speaks English and French. She prefers to be contacted by e-mail but can also be reached by phone.

50°00'20.8"N, 5°42'46.9"E - Rue des Maies 120, 6600 Bastogne, Belgium
Contact: Mme. Francois Brabant, Telephone: (32) 61 215783 but preferably via e-mail at contact@leclosmarine.be.



CAMPING — WILTZ INTERNATIONAL SCOUT CENTER

The **Wiltz International Scout Center** is a much larger Scouting facility (the largest in Europe), and is located 26 kilometers east of Bastogne (#18 on Area Map). During the camping season, it hosts 80,000 Scouts a year from all over the world.

The Scout Centre is not a single building but eight chalets and seven campsites surrounding the town. While less convenient because of the distance, Wiltz offers chalets of different sizes with beds rather than just space on the floor (the number of beds per chalet ranges from 15 to 35), as well as campsites that can hold up to 200 people. In the chalets, the cost ranges between 145-362€ per night. Campsites cost 6.20-7€ per night per person. The cabins are open all year round, and the campsites (with toilet facilities and water points) are normally open from late March until the end of October, when the water is turned off to prevent pipes from freezing. There is also one campsite that is suitable for year-round camping because its toilets and water are located in a heated building. Check their website for the most up to date prices.

In the Scout Center in the Chateau de Wiltz, there is a small Scout shop run by the Luxembourg Scout Association. Because Wiltz is an internationally known Scout Center, you may have an opportunity to meet Scouts from other countries.

49°57'59.8"N, 5°56'14.6"E - Château de Wiltz, L-9516 Wiltz

Telephone: (+352) 95 81 99, Fax: (+352) 26 95 05 79

For more information, email scoutswi@pt.lu or visit their website at www.scoutswiltz.lu



BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
HISTORIC TRAIL

BASTOGNE HISTORIC WALK

Each year in early December, the Bastogne Historic Walk is held to commemorate the Battle of the Bulge and pay tribute to the thousands of soldiers that gave the ultimate sacrifice. It is typically held on the second or third Saturday of the month. Anywhere from 2500 to 3000 people typically attend the event including many reenactors dressed in period uniforms.

Walkers may choose 7-, 14- or 20-kilometer distances. The walk normally begins between 7 to 9 am at the Sports Center of Bastogne on Rue Gustave Delperdange. It is just outside the town, and it has ample parking for those arriving early.

There is a mandatory charge for walker's insurance (2017 - 6€). The fee includes a certificate from the city of Bastogne, a small souvenir map, a booklet and hot beverages along the route. Pre-registration and payment is strongly recommended, and refunds cannot be given

The walk finishes in time for three wreath-laying ceremonies in the center of Bastogne. The public is also invited to participate in a memorial parade, scheduled in the afternoon.

The traditional nut-throwing from the town hall balcony is immediately afterward, a ceremony inspired by Gen. Anthony McAuliffe's reply of "Nuts" to demands that his men, surrounded by German forces, surrender.

Visit www.bastogne.be or www.usagbenelux.eur.army.mil for the latest information on the next Historic Walk.



BACKGROUND READINGS

Scouts should read this before going on the trail, and they can use it to answer the first 10 questions on the questionnaire.

Lead up to the Battle

By the autumn of 1944 World War II in Europe had already been going on for 5 years. The expansion of Nazi Germany had been stopped at the end of 1942, and the Allies had been on the offensive since then, pushing the Germans back on all fronts. The Allied effort to liberate Western Europe began with the “D-Day” landings at Normandy, France, on 6 June 1944 (and to learn more about this, your troop should go on the “Omaha Beach - Normandy” Historical Trail). After overcoming German resistance on the beaches, the Allies succeeded in building up strong forces in the Normandy peninsula and with the help of massed Allied bomber attacks on the Germans, the Allies broke out of Normandy and raced across France toward Germany. The defeated German forces did not try to resist in France any longer but headed back toward the “West Wall”(also known as the “Siegfried Line”), a line of fortifications along Germany’s western border. Here the Germans finally had time to organize an effective defensive line because they forced the advancing Allied troops to stop and wait until their supplies (especially fuel for the vehicles) caught up with them.

To clear up the Allied supply problems once and for all and also to get across the Rhine River and into Germany by going around the fortified “West Wall”, the Allies tried a bold airborne and ground attack to seize a number of key river crossings. This attack, known as Operation MARKET GARDEN, included parachute attacks by US and British airborne units deep into German-held territory. The paratroopers captured and held two major river crossings for use by the advancing armored units, but the Germans were too strong at the last key bridge in the Dutch town of Arnhem (which became famous in the book and movie known as A Bridge Too Far) and the Allies failed to achieve the hoped-for breakthrough in September 1944.



BACKGROUND READINGS

Afterward heavy fighting continued in a number of areas as the Allies slowly ground their way forward against strong German resistance. In November, the British finally gained control of the rivers leading to the important port of Antwerp in Belgium, so that Allied ships bringing in supplies could use it. The US First Army even fought its way through a small portion of the "West Wall" and captured the German city of Aachen, while farther south the US Third Army under the command of the famous Lieutenant General (3-stars) George S. Patton beat back a German counterattack near the city of Metz and slowly advanced through strong German resistance toward the West Wall. By the middle of December 1944, Allied armies had advanced up to the Germans' main defenses all along the line.

The Calm Before the Storm

There was one area where little fighting was going on, the large Ardennes Forest in southeastern Belgium and Luxembourg. The heavy forests and hilly terrain of this area made it difficult for the Allies to move large forces here, so this portion of the Allied line did not have many troops defending it, and many of the US units there had been worn out fighting on other portions of the line and had been sent to this "quiet sector" to get a rest and build up their strength again. Most Allied leaders thought that the war was almost over, and they certainly did not expect the Germans to make a major attack at this time, especially because Germany was threatened by not only the US and British armies attacking from the west but also the large Soviet (Russian) armies coming in from the east.

But Nazi Germany's leader (and that was his official title - Der Fuehrer which means "The Leader"), the feared dictator Adolf Hitler, still thought that he could win the war with new secret weapons that the Germans were beginning to produce - weapons like rocket-propelled long-range missiles and jet fighters/bombers - if German troops could win one last major victory in the West and gain the time he needed. Hitler decided that this big German offensive should come in the Ardennes Forest, where the Allies would not expect the Germans to attack.



BACKGROUND READINGS

This was also the area where the Germans had broken through the Allied lines in 1940, leading to the defeat of France. Hitler's goal was for German troops to break through the Allied lines in the Ardennes Forest, capture badly- needed supplies, and then advance to the port of Antwerp, cutting the Allied armies in two. All of the Allied Forces to the northeast of Antwerp would be cut off from their supplies and could then be destroyed. Such a tremendous victory - combined with the new secret weapons - would make the Western Allies willing to make peace with Germany, Hitler thought, and then the Germans could switch forces to the East and defeat the Russians. Actually, Germany no longer was strong enough to carry out such an ambitious plan, but no one dared say this to the Fuehrer!

For the German plan to succeed, they had to catch the Allies by surprise, and this would not be easy because the Allies had a big advantage. They had built special machines which were actually very early computers, enabling Allied codebreakers to read most of the Germans' secret coded radio messages. As a result, the Allies usually knew in advance what the Germans were going to do, but to protect this very important secret so that the Germans did not find this out and change their codes, the information gained from reading the German secret messages was classified as TOP SECRET ULTRA, which was much higher than TOP SECRET, and very few Allied officers and leaders knew about it. Because of the ULTRA Secret, the Allies didn't think that the Germans could make any surprise attacks, but when Hitler ordered planning and preparations for his Ardennes Offensive to begin, he also ordered radio silence (he didn't know that the Allies could read the German messages, but he thought they might become suspicious if they saw a lot more message traffic taking place next to the Ardennes Forest). As a result, there were no radio messages about the attack, which meant that the ULTRA Secret could not give advance warning, and the Germans caught the Allies by surprise when the attack began in the early morning hours of 16 December 1944.



BACKGROUND READINGS

The Attack Begins

In the north, the German Sixth S.S. Panzer Army (“Panzer” means tank, and the S.S. were the infamous Nazi “Schutzstaffel” troops who were much more fanatical than regular German soldiers and who also committed a number of war crimes) ran into stiff American resistance and did not advance anywhere near as far as it was supposed to, while the southernmost German army, the Seventh Army, made slow progress because it did not have very many tanks. Only the central German Force, the Fifth Panzer Army, succeeded in making a major breakthrough in the Allied line, and it began racing westward. Bad weather aided the German advance, which kept Allied airplanes from being able to launch attacks. The result of the German breakthrough in the center was a huge bulge in the Allied lines, which soon led to the battle being given the unofficial name of the “Battle of the Bulge”.

To assist their advancing units, the Germans had also created a special force of troops wearing US uniforms and driving captured US vehicles or German vehicles modified to look like US ones. Many of these soldiers spoke English, and their job was to dash forward through the holes created in the Allied line and capture key road junctions and bridges while also cutting telephone and telegraph lines and possibly even attacking US units from behind. A few were even dropped by parachute. Very few of these fake US troops actually succeed in getting behind the Allied lines, but word of their existence quickly spread, and US soldiers started questioning any strangers in US uniforms to see if these men were real Americans or German spies. The strangers were asked detailed questions about American movie stars or baseball players, which Germans would not be able to know, even if their English was good. The result was lots of confusion behind the lines, and anyone who was not interested in sports or movie stars had a lot of explaining to do, but the Germans did not succeed in carrying out their original mission and some of these Germans in US uniforms were captured and then executed for being spies.



BACKGROUND READINGS

Defense of Bastogne

As soon as the German attack began, the Supreme Commander of the Allied armies in Western Europe, General of the Army (5 stars) Dwight D. Eisenhower (later President of the United States from 1952-1960) started rushing reinforcements to the threatened area. Eisenhower sent one of the reinforcing divisions, the 101st Airborne Division, to the Belgian town of Bastogne and told them to hold this key road junction at all costs so that the Germans would not be able to bring their supplies forward.

When the battle started, the division commander, Major General Maxwell D. Taylor, was back in Washington trying to get his division moved from this “quiet area” to the Pacific to fight the Japanese and the assistant division commander was at a conference discussing the lessons learned from the recent parachute landings in Operation MARKET GARDEN.

Because of their absences, Brigadier General Anthony C. McAuliffe, who normally commanded the division’s artillery, was temporarily in overall command. Arriving in Bastogne just ahead of the Germans on 19 December, the paratroopers (along with smaller armored units from several other divisions) began setting up a strong defense that soon became a circle around the town as the Germans started going around Bastogne after they were not able to break through from the east.

By 21 December (see map on pages 32-33) , the Germans had surrounded Bastogne, and on the following morning, the Germans sent a messenger to General McAuliffe saying that his division was surrounded and the situation was hopeless, so he should surrender. General McAuliffe’s reply was “Nuts!” which meant that he thought that the Germans were crazy to think that the 101st Airborne Division would surrender just because it was surrounded.



BACKGROUND READINGS

While the siege of Bastogne began, German Panzer divisions continued to advance westward and even came very close to their initial objective of the Meuse River by December 24th, but their supplies were not getting through (thanks in part to the 101st Airborne Division's stubborn defense of the important road junction at Bastogne) and their tanks began running out of fuel.

In addition, the bad weather that had been keeping Allied aircraft on the ground finally ended on December 23rd, and Allied air attacks soon began causing heavy losses to German troops and vehicles.

During the days immediately before, during, and after Christmas, the defenders of Bastogne had to beat back a number of German attacks on the besieged city. But help was on the way. General George S. Patton had stopped his Third Army's attack on the Germans far to the south, turned his force in a completely new direction faster than anyone had thought possible, and was now heading with all possible speed toward Bastogne.

On 26 December (see map on page 34), tanks of the 4th Armored Division broke through the German circle and reached Bastogne, but the fighting in the area was not yet over. Hitler insisted that Bastogne must be captured, and the town now became the Germans' main objective. The Germans tried attacks at various points around the town in the days that followed but were always stopped by the defenders, who were constantly being reinforced by General Patton's troops.

The last German attack against Bastogne took place on 4 January 1945, and that same day the German High Command ended the attempts to capture the city and ordered a retreat. At the same time, the Germans were being pushed out of the rest of the Bulge. On 16 January 1945 Allied troops attacking from the north edge of the Bulge linked up with those coming from the south edge, and the battle was over, with the Bulge in the Allied lines just about completely gone.



BACKGROUND READINGS

Aftermath

The 11,000 officers and men of the 101st Airborne Division who defended Bastogne during the battle suffered 3,400 casualties; losses among the Germans trying to take the town were much higher. The successful defense of Bastogne was one of the main reasons why the Germans failed to break out of the “Bulge” and accomplish their original goals.

As for the battle as a whole, a total of around 650,000 Allied troops were eventually involved in the battle, and their losses were approximately 82,000 men killed, wounded, missing, or captured. The Germans, who used around 500,000 men in the battle, lost at least 120,000 men. Both sides lost large numbers of tanks and assault guns; the Allies could easily replace these losses with new equipment, but the Germans - whose factories were under constant Allied aerial bombardment - could not. Hitler's attempt to win the war had failed, and the heavy German losses actually hastened the end of the war in Europe, since fewer troops and tanks were left to defend Germany.

US Army Divisions in the Defense of Bastogne



9th Armored Division

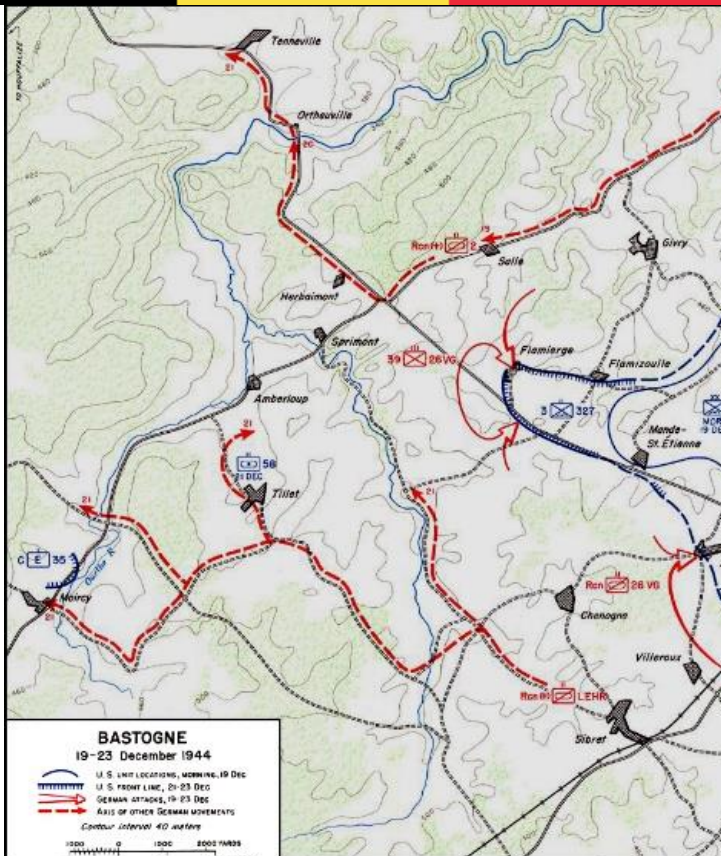


101st Airborne Division

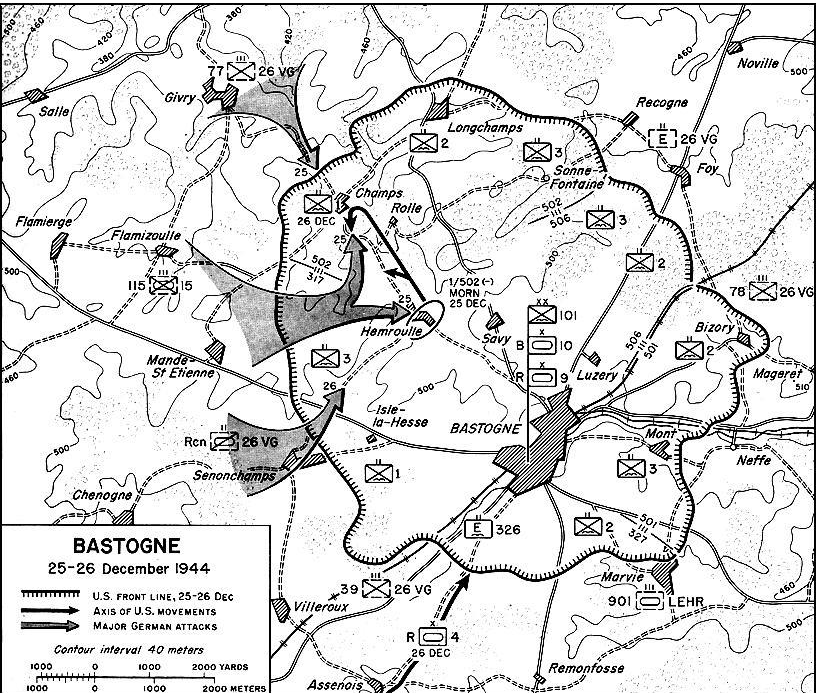


10th Armored Division





BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
HISTORIC TRAIL



BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
HISTORIC TRAIL

HISTORIC TRAIL QUIZ

Background (from the reading on the battle)

1. During World War Two the most powerful man in Germany was Adolf Hitler, and it was his idea to attack the Allies in December 1944 even though the war seemed lost for Germany. What was Hitler's official title? ANSWER: _____

2. Who was the Supreme Commander of the Allied armies fighting against the Germans in Western Europe? How many stars did he have? ANSWERS: Name _____ Stars _____

3. By late 1944 the Allies thought the Germans would never be able to make a surprise attack because Allied codebreakers had figured out how to read most of the Germans' secret messages and thus usually knew in advance what the German were planning to do. Naturally the Allies did not want the Germans to know that their secret messages were being read, so this very important codebreaking ability of the Allies was given a security classification which was much higher than TOP SECRET. What was this classification? ANSWER: TOP SECRET _____

4. Which famous Belgian port was the place the Germans hoped to reach in order to split apart the Allied armies? ANSWER: _____

5. On what date did the German attack begin? ANSWER: _____

6. At the start of the battle the Germans sent in special troops dressed as US soldiers and speaking English. Their job was to capture key bridges and road junctions for use by the main German attacking forces. When American soldiers ran into strangers in US uniforms, how did they try to find out which ones were real Americans and which ones were German spies?
ANSWER: _____

7. Who commanded the 101st Airborne Division troops when Bastogne was surrounded?
ANSWER: _____

8. What was his normal job? ANSWER: _____

9. What was this general's famous reply to the Germans' demand that the US troops surrounded in Bastogne surrender? ANSWER: _____

10. When did the Allied troops attacking from the north side of the "Bulge" meet up with the Allied troops coming from the south side, thereby getting rid of almost all of this Bulge in the Allied lines?
ANSWER: _____



HISTORIC TRAIL QUIZ

On the trail, starting at the tank on the corner of McAuliffe Square

11. What kind of tank is parked at the corner of McAuliffe Square?

ANSWER: _____

12. What is its serial number?

ANSWER: _____

13. Take a close look at this tank, which was damaged during the Battle of the Bulge. Two hits are visible, but only one of these caused enough damage to knock out the tank. Where is this hit?

ANSWER: _____

14. When was the central square of Bastogne given the name "McAuliffe Square"? (Hint: look around the area near the tank.)

ANSWER: _____

15. One of the reasons why the Germans wanted to capture Bastogne so much was that the city was a major road junction. At the road intersection by the tank on McAuliffe Square there are road signs showing that 5 major Belgian National Roads ("Routes Nationales," which have "N" numbers). What are these five National Roads?

ANSWER: Routes N-_____, N-_____, N-_____, N-_____, and N-_____

16. How many stars are shown on General Patton's helmet at the memorial to him? How many did he actually have during the battle? (Check your reading.)

ANSWER: _____, _____

17. Until recently the US flag flying at the front of the Patton memorial was the version used in World War II, but now it is the normal 50-star flag. How many stars were on the US flags of World War II?

ANSWER: _____

Extra Credit: Which two states have been added to the flag since World War II?

ANSWER: _____ and _____

18. The Patton Memorial also contains a stone memorial to a Belgian unit that was commended for meritorious and outstanding performance of duty while serving with General Patton's Third Army. What was the name of this Belgian unit?

ANSWER: _____



HISTORIC TRAIL QUIZ

19. Right before you leave Bastogne on the road to the Mardasson Memorial and the Bastogne War Museum, you pass a large stone gate on the right that is the last remaining part of Bastogne's old city walls. What is the name of this structure? (Hint: there is no sign on this old stone gate, so you may have to look at the closest street sign to find the answer.)

ANSWER: _____

20. How many steps lead up to the wooden entrance of this gate on the south side?

ANSWER: _____

21. When you return to the main road from the old stone gate and continue a very short distance to the intersection where a road leads out of town to the Bastogne War Museum, you will see a large memorial to the citizens of Bastogne who died in World Wars I and II. How many inhabitants of Bastogne were killed during World War II while fighting against the Germans as resistance fighters ("Resistants")?

ANSWER: _____

22. On the way to the Mardasson Memorial you will pass a US tank destroyer turret on a monument. What division was this tank from?

ANSWER: _____

23. If you look carefully at the turret you will see where it was hit by an enemy shell or rocket. Where is this hit located?

ANSWER: _____

24. Right before you turn left from the road out of Bastogne to walk up to the Mardasson Memorial, you will see a concrete bunker used by the Belgian Army to defend the area against the German invasion of 1940. On what day did Corporal Emile Cady of the 2nd Regiment of Ardennes Riflemen (Chasseurs d'Ardennes) die next to this bunker?

ANSWER: _____

25. While going uphill you will make one more turn to the right just before you reach the Bastogne War Museum and Mardasson Memorial. At this intersection there is a stone marker (milestone) that is part of a long trail of such markers that begin at Normandy and stretch across France and Belgium, ending at the Mardasson Memorial. What is the name of this trail marked by these milestones? (You can answer in English or French.)

ANSWER: _____



HISTORIC TRAIL QUIZ

At the Bastogne War Museum (Museum next to the Mardasson Memorial)

26. What are the names of the 4 narrators in the museum?

ANSWER: _____, _____, _____, & _____

27. What units are the two Soldier narrators from?

ANSWER: _____, _____

28. There are two Sherman Tanks exhibited in the Museum. What are their names?

ANSWER: _____, _____

29. During your immersion in the basement of a pub in Bastogne, what day is the bombing raid?

ANSWER: _____

30. The museum has a kind of German jeep known as the KFZ 1 Kübelwagen, which was made by a very famous German automobile manufacturer that is still making cars today. What is the name of this company?

ANSWER: _____

31. Near the German jeep, the flags of the 10th Armored Division and 101st Airborne Division are on display. What two main colors are used on each flag?

ANSWER: _____

32. What is the bumper number on the US Army jeep displayed in the museum?

ANSWER: Left - _____, Right - _____



HISTORIC TRAIL QUIZ

At the Mardasson Memorial

33. How many flags fly outside the Mardasson Memorial?

ANSWER: _____

34. What shape are all of the US armored division patches?

ANSWER: _____

35. Wood Badge is the highest level of training for adult Scout leaders, and its symbol is an axe sticking in a log. Which US infantry division at the Battle of the Bulge used the same symbol on its division patch?

ANSWER: _____

36. What is the symbol of the 101st Airborne Division?

ANSWER: _____

Extra Credit: What is this division's nickname?

ANSWER: _____

37. Panel 9 shows how the Belgians of Bastogne helped the US soldiers camouflage themselves and their equipment to blend in with the snow. What did the Belgians do:

ANSWER: _____

38. According to the panel 10 at the Mardasson Memorial, how many US soldiers were killed, wounded or listed as missing during the Battle of the Bulge?

ANSWER: _____

39. In the Crypt underneath the Mardasson memorial there are three altars. What three religions do these represent?

ANSWER: _____, _____, and _____

Answers on page 43



BSA REQUIREMENTS

Completion of the Battle of the Bulge Historic Trail may complete the following Requirements:

Cub Scouts:

Tiger:

My Tiger Jungle
Tigers in the Wild
Tiger Tales

Req 1
Req 1, 2, 4
Req 7

Wolf:

Paws on the Path
Finding Your Way

Req 1-5
Req 4

Bear:

Fur, Feathers, and Ferns
Paws for Action

Req 1
Req 2B

Webelos:

Webelos Walkabout

Req 1-6



Scouts BSA:

Tenderfoot:

Req 4d, 5a, 5b, 5c

Second Class:

Req 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, 6c

First Class:

Req 4a, 4b



*Note: Requirements for the Citizenship in the Community, Citizenship in the Nation, Hiking, Orienteering, and American Heritage Merit Badges and the Cub Scout Outdoor Activity Award can be earned by completing this hike and learning about sites found on this hike.



BATTLE OF THE BULGE, BELGIUM
HISTORIC TRAIL

[illegible]

[illegible]

NOTES

Quiz Answers: 1) The Leader (Der Fuehrer); 2) General Dwight D. Eisenhower, 5 stars; 3) ULTRA; 4) Antwerp; 5) 16 December 1944; 6) Asked questions that only Americans could know - sports, movie stars, etc.; 7) Brigadier General Anthony C. McAuliffe; 8) Division Artillery Commander; 9) Nuts!; 10) 16 January 1945; 11) Sherman (M-4); 12) 3081532; 13) Left side (the hit on the rear of the tank did not penetrate into the hull); 14) 15 July 1950; 15) Routes N-4, N-30, N-85, N-834, N-874; 16) 4,3; 17) 48 EXTRA CREDIT: Hawaii, Alaska; 18) 11th Belgian Fusiliers; 19) Porte de Treves; 20) 15; 21) 6; 22) 10th Armored Division; 23) Left side of turret; 24) 10 May 1940; 25) Voie de la Liberté (Trail of Liberty); 26) Emile Mostade, Mathilde Devillers, Lieutenant Hans Wegmüller, Corporal Robert Keane; 27) Corporal Keane - 101st Airborne Division, Lieutenant Wegmüller - 26th Volksgrenadier Division; 28) ABSENTEE and BLOCKBUSTER; 29) 22 December 1944; 30) VW or Volkswagen; 31) 10th Armored Division - Red and Green, 101st Airborne Division - Red and Blue; 32) Left - 101-AB-327-I, Right - HQ-5; 33) 4; 34) Triangle; 35) 84th Infantry Division; 36) Eagle EXTRA CREDIT: Screaming Eagles; 37) Tore up bedsheets to make white camouflage; 38) 76,890; 39) Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish



This Historical Trail was first approved in 1980 and designed by Scouters of Troops 1 and 26 in Heidelberg, Germany. Mr Greg Pedlow, of the SHAPE Historians Office, updated the trail as part of his Wood Badge ticket in 1998 and he again updated it in 2002 and 2021.

Additional Historic Trails in the Transatlantic Council area can be found at <http://tac-bsa.org> or by scanning the QR Code below.



UPDATED 13 SEPTEMBER 2021