



Flanders
State of the Art

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Landscapes – Feel Flanders Fields

A series of special events and exhibitions begins in West Flanders

Landscapes - Feel Flanders Fields is a new WWI theme year devised by VISITFLANDERS and regional partners to put the panorama of the region into the spotlight. From April 2023 to August 2024, a series of new exhibitions, events and tours created for visitors to explore the region will provide a focus on the history of the region, the significance of World War 1 on its topography and how its legacy will shape the landscape for future generations. The area around Flanders' Westhoek region, more commonly known as Flanders Fields, provides some of the most thought-provoking and inspirational war landscapes in the world. The human sacrifice endured here and the remainder of the military cemeteries that dot the region, serve as a sad memory of the tragic cost of what was hoped to be a "war to end all wars".

The opening of new permanent experiential memorials, sound and light events, augmented reality experiences, specifically curated exhibitions and other events will dominate the calendar:

The **"For Evermore"** exhibition at the *In Flanders Fields Museum* (**29 April 2023 – 18 Feb 2024**) in Ypres will use the presentation of personal stories, unique objects and stimulating interactive experiences, to present an overview of how the landscape was sculpted by the conflict and provides a good introduction to the theme year. In addition, the exhibition will provide a podcast and an adapted children's trail (designed for ages 10+) to make this history accessible to all generations.

Visitors to Ypres who attend the daily Last Post ceremony will be able to visit the ***Witnesses in the Landscape*** exhibition (**29 April 2023 to 31 August 2024**) at the *Commonwealth War Graves Commission Information Centre* in Ypres to view their scaled installation with stories and facts about 25 of its local cemeteries. With no two CWGC cemeteries designed the same, an immersive drawing and interactive experience will provide interesting facts and stories about bite-sized facts about over 20 of its cemeteries, plus a mix of well-known and hidden sites.

Just over 3 miles/ 5km from Ypres is *Hooze Crater Museum*. As part of its role in the Landscapes theme year it has created the **"Front Eye" viewpoint (end April 2023 to end of 2024)**, which offers a unique new vista-point over the historic front's Ypres Salient, as well as several nearby cemeteries. Formerly a Chapel, this listed building boasts a large rose

window, providing a bird's eye view over the front's Hill 60, Hill 62, Sanctuary Wood Cemetery, Hooge Crater Cemetery, Kemmelberg and the Ypres Salient. A panoramic map and exhibition offer an insight into the landscape's all-important role with the surrounding landscape.

During World War 1, *Talbot House*, in Poperinge, close to the French border (but behind the Front Line) was created by Rev. Tubby Clayton. Over half a million soldiers (referred to as Talbotousians) visited this haven of peace and what was created here was an initial role in the creation of battlefield/memorial tourism via post-war family pilgrimages to the region. Following the end of the First World War, Rev. Clayton also went onto to create the TOC H global organisation. ***The Talbotousians in War and Peace (30 April 2023 to summer 2024)*** tells the story of the support offered to many bereaved families, via anecdotes of bereaved families and veterans of the TOC H clubs.

A number of walks and cycling routes have also been specially created for Landscapes. In particular, the ***"The Landscape Bears Witness" (29 April 2023 to 31 August 2024)*** route, in the town of Vletern, north-east of Ypres. This accessible walk, available from October 2023, uses paved roads and paths and provides a walking route with viewing boxes to discover what would have been visible at those exact places in wartime.

Elsewhere, in Koekelare, ***"The Yellow Ribbon Trail" (14 May 2023 to 31 August 2024)*** experiential route weaves a path along German-occupied territory. Some ten commemorative sites, that have long since vanished, are brought to life with photographs and audio content via a QR code linked to a heritage site. The route passes through Vladslo German Military cemetery and the Lange Max M Museum via foot or by bike. Yellow ribbons mark the path of the route.

The *Yser Tower* will host ***"Traces in the Landscape" (Summer 2023 to Autumn 2024)*** – high up in the panoramic room of Yser Tower, to relive the construction of the first tower and the deliberate flooding of Yser during WWI.

Elsewhere at the *Poperinge Visitor Centre*, the ***'Forgotten Tracks'*** immersive experience ***(from 30 June 2024)*** will be housed in an underground annex alongside the visitor centre at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery. Floor, wall and ceiling projections, coupled with surround sound and lights, will transport visitors to a train station during wartime: trains arrive and depart, soldiers march towards the front lines, wounded are taken away and bombs fall in the night...

The Flanders Fields outdoor Art Trail ***'Invisible Landscape' (end June 2023 to end Summer 2024)*** – will host impressive art installations which bring faded battlefield sites back to life. The land art trail marks places where the fallen were buried, wounded were cared for, tram tracks ran carrying supplies to the soldiers and more. There are two trails to choose from, ideal for cycling or walking.

In the centre of Ypres, a new permanent ***'Peace Bridge' (opening 29 April 2023)*** will create a harmonious memorial combining art, monument and architecture that will invite visitors to walk and reflect. Constructed in weathering steel, the guard rail is embellished with the word 'peace' in 86 languages and leads to Pacific Island, a small lake island that was constructed around 1640, by Spanish occupiers to deter the enemy and housed an ammunition depot.

A number of other smaller initiatives, experiences and events will take place throughout the year and will add to a varied programme that is aimed at putting this region of Flanders Fields in the spotlight and offer visitors an insight into how this small region of Flanders still bears the scars of war beyond its centenary.

-Ends-

24 April 2023

Notes to Editors:

For a full list of all exhibitions and events in Flanders visit:

<https://www.visitflanders.com/en/landscape-flanders-fields-witness-world-war-i>

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About VISITFLANDERS

This Flemish government agency is the official tourist organisation for Flanders. The organisation strives for the sustainable development and promotion of tourism to and within Flanders, with a view to boosting the economic return, employment and the well-being of its inhabitants. www.visitflanders.com

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