ANZAC Day - Belgium 2015

What to expect and how to prepare

1. COMMEMORATIONS

JOINT AUSTRALIAN/NEW ZEALAND DAWN SERVICE AT
BUTTES NEW BRITISH CEMETERY – POLYGON WOOD

The ANZAC Day Dawn Service in Belgium commences at 6.00 am and takes place at Buttes New British Cemetery, Polygon Wood, Zonnebeke. The site opens at 5.00 am and those attending are asked to be positioned no later than 5.50 am.

Entrance to the cemetery site is via a 100 metre sometimes muddy path through Polygon Wood which leads directly to the Butte. Straight ahead stairs lead to the top of the mound where the 5th Australian Division Memorial stands. Access to the Butte is restricted before and during the Dawn Service to those helping officiate. To the right of the Butte is the cemetery itself and at its far side is the New Zealand Memorial to the Missing. The surface is grass and may be slippery if damp. Lighting is limited in the cemetery, and visitors are advised to bring a torch.

Limited temporary seating is available but can only be reserved for official delegates and people requiring special needs assistance. Standing room is available on grassed areas to the side and rear of the seats.

The service takes about 35 minutes and at its end the Australian Ambassador invites all present to place small wooden crosses on Australian graves.

Traffic arrangements at Polygon Wood 24 – 25 April 2015

Polygon Wood traffic management is the responsibility of Belgian authorities. The road that runs beside Polygon Wood, Lange Dreve, is expected to be closed again to all private vehicles from 1700 hrs on 24 April and reopens after 9.00 am 25 April. It is a typical Belgian country lane with very limited space for parking. Care should be taken as the road is narrow, not lit, its surface uneven and coaches will also use it.

Special needs visitors and authorised vehicles will have special access to the commemoration site.

Those not travelling as part of an organised tour bus are encouraged to park in Zonnebeke and use the Municipality’s shuttle bus service which starts at 5:30am and runs from Zonnebeke Chateau to Polygon Wood.
Directions for Drivers

It is recommended that coaches and cars drive to Buttes New British Cemetery along Lotegatstraat (please refer to the map below). When drivers have dropped passengers at the Cemetery they need to go along Lange Dreve turn left into Citernestraat, then left into Grote Molenstraat, and left again into Lotegatstraat to find the parking. A steward will be on hand to help drivers.

At the end of the ceremony, vehicles should come in front of the cemetery’s entrance to pick up passengers and go the same way but instead of going left into the Lotegatstraat, they need to take the right hand turn, then the first street to the right which is Tresorierstraat where the breakfast venue is located.

If travelling from Ieper/Ypres it is recommend that drivers take the Menenstraat, then left into Oude Kortrijkstraat, just over the motorway to the left into Lotegatstraat to Lange Dreve.

The black arrow indicates one-way traffic while the red arrow shows the recommended route to take to the breakfast venue.
TYNE COT SERVICE - ZONNEBEKE

A commemoration service will be conducted at Tyne Cot, the largest WW1 cemetery in Belgium. The service will begin at 9:35 and last for about 30 minutes. Included in proceedings will be prayers, speeches, the laying of wreaths, the singing of a hymn and national anthems and the Last Post.

No seating is available with the official party standing immediately before the Cross of Sacrifice with others on grassed areas to the side and rear.

Traffic arrangements at Tyne Cot

Passengers on tour buses or on the Embassy’s Bus (see the Embassy’s website for details) will be dropped off near the bottom entrance to the cemetery. Visitors will then walk on grass through the cemetery to the Stone of Sacrifice, in front of which the service will take place. There is a car park beside the Tyne Cot Visitor’s Centre which has paid toilets. Please note that parking will be limited and access may be controlled.

AUSTRALIAN/NEW ZEALAND CEREMONY AT YPRES (MENIN GATE) MEMORIAL

YPRES/IEPER

The ceremony at Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial in the centre of Ieper/Ypres starts with a procession from beside the city’s famous Cloth Hall to the Gate at 11.10am. Led by the official party, it will cross the Grote Markt and head down Meensestraat towards Menin Gate. Members of the public are welcome to join in. The walk takes about five minutes with the service at the Gate starting at 11.15am and including the “Last Post”, speeches, and the laying of wreaths.

Traffic arrangements at Menin Gate

Tour buses and the Embassy’s Bus will drop off passengers near Grote Markt which, along with Meensestraat and the Menin Gate, will be closed to public vehicles for the procession and ceremony. Parking will be congested in surrounding streets.

SERVICE AT TORONTO AVENUE CEMETERY

The small Toronto Avenue Cemetery is the only WWI cemetery in Belgium containing solely Australian graves. It is located in a wooded area, which is accessed by a rough, often muddy, 400 meter track (sturdy shoes or boots are recommended). Because of the cemetery’s small size, access will be restricted to official attendees involved with the service. Members of the public are asked to stand outside the cemetery walls.
The commemoration service will be similar to that at Tyne Cot and will commence at 4.00pm. People attending the service are requested to be at the cemetery by no later than 3.50pm.

**Traffic Arrangements at Toronto Avenue**

The cemetery is difficult to access with very limited parking nearby on the adjacent narrow country lanes. Organised coaches will drop off passengers a short distance away at Prowse Point Cemetery. From here, commencing at 3.30pm, a shuttle service organised by the commune of Comines-Warneton, will transport attendees to near Toronto Avenue Cemetery. Toilets will be available near the cemetery.

**“LAST POST” CEREMONY AT MENIN GATE**

The “Last Post” ceremony at will take place at Menin Gate at 8pm. The ceremony has occurred nightly since July 1928, except for the period of German occupation during WWII.

**Traffic arrangements at Menin Gate**

The gate is closed to vehicular traffic for the ceremony and parking will likely be congested in surrounding streets.

**2. OTHER MATTERS**

**Wreaths**

Members of the public may place a wreath during services at Polygon Wood (Dawn Service) Tyne Cot, Menin Gate and Toronto Avenue. At each place an announcement will be made advising you when to move forward to lay your wreath.

**What about the weather?**

The weather in Flanders in April can be very cold (close to freezing) in the early morning but can warm up later in the day. Hence, the wearing of layers of clothes is encouraged. The commemoration sites offer comparatively little shelter from the elements. Please note with the Dawn Service it is normally very cold before and after dawn. Visitors should ensure they are appropriately equipped for cold, wet, and windy weather, and take appropriate clothing with them when they disembark from their vehicle. The ground surface of the cemeteries is grass and often slippery, so warm waterproof shoes should be worn.
What should I take with me?

A small day pack or small bag may be useful containing the following:

- Wet weather jacket and pants
- Warm, thermal clothing, jacket, beanie, hat or cap, gloves, socks, scarf
- Comfortable, sturdy walking shoes
- Drinking water
- Lighter clothing during the day
- Sunscreen
- Torch (with batteries)
- Camera (with batteries)

What facilities are available during the Dawn Service?

No facilities will be available at the Dawn Service other than limited seating which will be reserved for the official party and people with special needs.

Locating graves of deceased relatives

Many visitors to the ANZAC Day commemorations are keen to locate the graves of deceased relatives who fought on the Western Front, or their relative’s name on a memorial to the missing if they have no known grave.

There are almost 1,000 Commonwealth war cemeteries on the Western Front in Belgium and France. Visitors wishing to locate a particular grave or name on a memorial to the missing may wish to consult the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website at [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org) to determine the exact location of the grave or name on a memorial to the missing prior to travelling to Belgium or France.

War memorabilia – what’s prohibited?

If you are intending to visit war commemoration sites in Belgium, you will need to pay particular attention to the country’s Customs regulations, should you wish to take away any mementos, notably weapons or munition remnants. Although you will find many such souvenirs for sale around war sites, not all items are allowed to be carried out of the country in personal luggage. To avoid being detained and fined, please read the information provided by Belgian Customs carefully.

Special needs assistance

Limited special needs assistance will be available such as seating at the Dawn Service at Polygon Wood.
Registration


3. EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

**Australian Embassy, Belgium**  
Avenue des Arts 56, 1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel: +32 2 2860 500  
Email: austemb.brussels@dfat.gov.au

**24-hour emergency number:** dialling from Belgium: 0800 73857

**Department of Foreign Affairs - Canberra**  
R.G. Casey Building  
John McEwen Crescent  
Barton ACT 0221 Australia  
Telephone: +61 2 6261 3111 / Fax +61 2 6261 3111

**Emergency helpline**  
Consular Emergency Centre 24 Hour Phone Service:  
Telephone: 1300 555 135 within Australia (local call cost) or  
Telephone: +61 2 6261 3305 from outside Australia.