

Anzac Day - France 2012



What to expect and how to prepare

Anzac Day Dawn Service – Australian National Memorial site, Villers-Bretonneux, France

The official Anzac Day Dawn Service in France commences at 5.30 am, Wednesday, 25 April 2012. The site opens at 3.00 am and people attending the service are asked to be seated no later than 5.15 am.

Entrance to the site is via the cemetery – attendees will walk 300 meters uphill through the cemetery to the memorial site. The surface is grass and may be slippery if damp. Safety lighting will be installed at the entrance and through the cemetery, but visitors may wish to bring a torch to assist with visibility.

Temporary seating will be installed at the Australian National Memorial site. Seating will be made available for 4600 people. Reserved seating is only available for official delegates and people requiring special needs assistance. If seating is full, there will be standing room on grassed areas to the side and rear of the seats.

Traffic arrangements at the Australian National Memorial site 24 – 25 April 2012

Traffic management is the responsibility of, and is managed by, French Authorities.

The road (D23) running between Corbie & Fouilloy and Villers-Bretonneux towns will be **closed to all private vehicles** from 1700 hrs on 24 April. It will not reopen until after 9.00 am 25 April 2012.

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

Those not travelling as part of an organised tour bus are encouraged to book a **shuttle bus** from one of the regional hubs. For those travelling in private vehicles, there will be limited parking in Corbie & Fouilloy or Villers-Bretonneux.

The walk to the Australian National Memorial from Corbie & Fouilloy is approx 2 km and 3.7 km from Villers-Bretonneux taking 30-60 mins. Care should be taken as the road is not lit, the surface is uneven and coaches will still be using this road.

Shuttle buses to the memorial site

Shuttle buses, coordinated by Somme Tourist Board, will run on 25 April from nearby centres to the Australian National Memorial site before the Dawn Service. Seats are **limited** and must be **booked and paid for before 25 March 2012**. Please note that a shuttle ticket does not guarantee a seat at the Dawn Service.

Bookings can be made at www.anzac-france.com

Buses will depart from the following towns in the region:

- Amiens
- Longueau
- Albert

These buses will return to these centres after the service, from 8am.

Please be advised that there is no shuttle service coordinated from the Australian National Memorial to Villers-Bretonneux Town Service. Visitors who make their own way to the town centre can return to Amiens by train. Please refer to the French railway site www.sncf.com (available in English).

Tour company buses will have access to the closed road and be able to drop visitors off at the Australian National Memorial entrance. Buses will then be directed to Corbie & Fouilloy or Villers-Bretonneux to park until after the

service. More information for tour operators is available on the DVA website.

You should check with your tour operator that they have allowed plenty of time to reach the Australian National Memorial site, especially given the change of traffic arrangements.

Special needs assistance

Limited special needs assistance will be available for people who have registered a health or mobility issue that will prevent them walking to the Australian National Memorial site from Corbie & Fouilloy or Villers-Bretonneux. Reserved seating at the Memorial is available for people requiring special needs assistance.

People requiring assistance can obtain further information about the special needs application and assessment process from the Department of Veterans' Affairs by emailing france@dva.gov.au or telephoning (02) 6289 6261 well in advance of Anzac Day.

Alternatively a seat on a shuttle bus can be arranged at www.anzac-france.com before 25 March 2012.

Wreaths

Members of the public may place a wreath at the end of the Dawn Service. The MC will advise you when to move forward to lay your wreath. Please note – DVA has no capacity to receive wreath deliveries at the Australian National Memorial.

What about the weather?

The weather in the Somme region in April can be extremely cold (close to freezing). The Australian National Memorial site is exposed to the elements and is normally very cold before and after dawn. Visitors should ensure they are appropriately equipped for cold, wet, and windy weather, and that they take appropriate clothing with them when they disembark from their coach on arrival. The ground surface of the Australian National Memorial is grass, so warm, waterproof shoes should be worn.

Visitors planning to attend later town services should note that it can get quite hot during the day and layers of clothing are encouraged.

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?

- Temporary toilets, including disabled toilets, and hand washing facilities
- First Aid Services
- Rubbish bins
- Limited **special needs assistance** is available for people with mobility issues – applications must be made in writing to france@dva.gov.au well in advance of Anzac Day.

Locating graves of deceased relatives

Many visitors to the Anzac Day Dawn Service at Villers-Bretonneux 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 France and Belgium, including the cemetery at the Australian National Memorial in Villers-Bretonneux.

Visitors wishing to locate a particular grave or name on a memorial to the missing should consult the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website at www.cwgc.org to determine the exact location of the grave or name on a memorial to the missing prior to travelling to France or Belgium.

Villers-Bretonneux Town Community Service – 8:30am, 25 April 2012

After the Anzac Day Dawn Service at the Australian National Memorial site, visitors are invited to make their way to the French Monument, Town Centre for the **Villers-Bretonneux Town Community Service commencing at 8.30 am**. Special traffic arrangements will be in place and visitors should follow the direction of the French police on the day. No shuttles are available to Villers-tonneux Town Community Service – visitors should make their own arrangements.

Bullecourt Community Services – from 11am, 25 April 2012

After the ceremonies in Villers-Bretonneux, the Anzac Day program continues with ceremonies in **Bullecourt and Digger Memorial. Services start at 11.00 am** at the Commonwealth and French Monuments in the Bullecourt village centre. Bullecourt is approximately 45-60 minutes by car from Villers-Bretonneux, and 15 minutes from Bapaume.

Due to the large crowds expected, it is likely that the roads through the village of Bullecourt will be closed for local Anzac Day commemorations. Visitors may need to park outside the village and walk into the town for the service in the town centre, and to the service at the 'Digger' Memorial on the village outskirts. Please allow plenty of time when travelling between the two services. Local police and ceremony staff will be present if attendees require assistance.

The Anzac Day Wreath Laying Service at The Australian 'Digger' Memorial on the village outskirts will commence at 12.00 pm.

Please note that there will be no seating at the Anzac Day wreath laying service in Villers-Bretonneux town nor at the services in Bullecourt.

No shuttles are available to Bullecourt – visitors should make their own arrangements.

The Bullecourt Museum will be formally re-opened at 3.00 pm on Anzac Day 2012. Australian Forces fought costly battles at Bullecourt on 11 April and again between 3-17 May 1917. Some gains were made – but at the cost of 10,000 Australian casualties. These battles are the main focus of the Museum which closed in 2011 for major improvements. The refurbished Museum, together with upgraded interpretive displays, forms an important element of the project to establish an Australian Remembrance Trail along the Western Front prior to the centenary of the First World War.

Registration

All visitors attending Anzac Day commemorations are encouraged to register their interest at www.franceregistration.com

Once registered, you will receive important updates regarding changes to commemorations, conditions and traffic arrangements. For many this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience and it's important to come prepared.

Registration is optional and visitors can still attend commemorations if they have not registered.

Visitors are also encouraged to register on the Smartraveller website at www.smartraveller.gov.au. Registering on the DVA France registration page does not automatically transfer information to Smartraveller. Visitors are encouraged to register on both systems.

It is important to note that just prior to Anzac Day, DVA plans to share the name and mobile phone contact details of those who have registered on DVA with the DFAT consular team. This information will only be used by DFAT in case of an emergency.

Emergency contact details

Australian Embassy, France

4 Rue Jean Rey, Paris 75724, Cedex 15, France
Telephone: +33 1 4059 3300 / Fax +33 1 4059 3315

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.