

2023 PRESS KIT

BRINGING HISTORY TO LIFE



AIRBORNE ★ MUSEUM SAINTE-MÈRE-ÉGLISE

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A tribute to the American paratroopers of D-Day

Located a few miles from Utah Beach, the Airborne Museum is the largest museum in Europe dedicated to the **American paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions** who participated in the Normandy invasion in 1944, during World War II.

These paratroopers, among the first Allied soldiers to land on the night of June 5-6, 1944, played a key role in the success of the Battle of Normandy. After liberating the village of Sainte-Mère-Eglise, they fought valiantly against the Nazi enemy in the whole Cotentin area, allowing in fine to **establish a solid bridgehead** which was going to allow to take back the control of France from Germany.

From the arrival of these paratroopers, a true friendship was created between them and the Norman villagers, friendship which was considerably reinforced, in a very intimate way, following the establishment of **3 temporary cemeteries within Sainte-Mère-Eglise**. These cemeteries were intended to give a decent burial to the **13 000 American soldiers who died during the Battle of Normandy**. During 4 years, between 1944 and 1948, the Norman villagers took care of the graves, flowering them, paying tribute to them, and maintaining correspondence with the families of the deceased in the United States. This is one of the reasons why the anniversary of D-Day in Normandy quickly became a major annual commemoration for the region - as early as 1945 - and remains so to this day.

This unbreakable bond between the United States and Normandy, and the eternal gratitude that Normans have for the soldiers who sacrificed themselves for their freedom, are the reasons for the existence of the Airborne Museum, **founded in 1964**. As such, the museum puts the spotlight on this very special army corps, the paratroopers, and makes a point of **telling their genesis, their history, and their accomplishments during the Second World War**, as part of the duty of remembrance, which is increasingly important now that so much time has passed and the last living witnesses to the events are becoming rarer.

In the heart of Sainte-Mère-Eglise, in front of the bell tower on which the paratrooper **John Steele** hung and made famous in the film **The Longest Day**, the Airborne Museum intends to give a faithful account of the events of D-Day, from the preparation in England to the conquest of freedom, through the prism of these American paratroopers.

On July 10, 1941, a Parachute School was opened. The 4 battalions then became regiments; the 501st PIR was placed under the command of Colonel Howard R. Johnson, the 502nd of Colonel George V. Moseley, the 503rd of Ltc William M. Miley and the 504th of Colonel Reuben H. Tucker.

Lastly, on March 23, 1942, under the direction of Colonel Lee, the Airborne Command was created. Four additional regiments would swell troop numbers: the 505th of Ltc James M. Gavin, the 506th of Ltc Robert F. Sink, the 507th of Ltc George V. Millett Jr and the 508th of Ltc Roy E. Lindquist.

Having been made Brigadier General, on August 15, 1942, Bill Lee persuaded the Chief of Staff to create two Airborne Divisions: the 82nd at Fort Bragg and the 101st at Camp Claiborne.





The AIRBORNE MUSEUM, a museum in perpetual evolution

After the construction phase that saw the birth of the **Operation Neptune building in May 2014** and then the **Ronald Reagan Conference Center in 2016**, the Airborne Museum has **entered a renovation phase since 2019**.

First it was the **ticket office and store** that were refurbished and expanded in 2019, followed by the upgraded Neptune Hall in February 2021. **Finally in 2022, the C-47 building unveils a completely revised scenography.**

For **2024**, the museum will undertake the **construction of a new building that will host our WACO glider** and will be entirely dedicated to this theme. The WACO building, historical and symbol of the Airborne Museum, will be redesigned to accommodate a course dedicated to **"Sainte-Mère-Eglise under the Occupation"**. Finally, the historical park of the museum will be redesigned and improved with various new features and infrastructure.

These extensions and renovations are intended to improve the quality of our buildings, thus allowing for better preservation and enhancement of our collections, but also to rethink the museography with a chronological and thematic focus and to propose an attractive and immersive scenography for our more than 200,000 annual visitors.



2019 - 2022 : RENOVATION PHASE

2022 - THE FULLY RENOVATED C-47 BUILDING

After a year of work, the Airborne Museum unveiled in November 2021 a building that is unrecognizable because almost everything has been redesigned and modernized, except of course our legendary C-47 aircraft. It now sits proudly at the center of a spectacular scenography made of deployed parachutes, suspended mannequins and realistic statues that challenge the visitor.

This new experience of visit is designed to be :

PEDAGOGICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL : From the creation of the American airborne troops in June 40 to their embarkation for D-Day in Great Britain, the visitor understands the sequence of events, measures the diversity and scope of the operations carried out, discovers the key players but also the ordinary soldiers and can cross the Allied and German points of view.

INCARNATE : A tribute is paid to the men who worked for the creation of the parachutists, who conceived the disinformation operations or who participated in the D-Day through objects that belonged to them, archive films, interviews, testimonies or even statues more realistic than life.

COMPELLING : Thanks to the multiplicity of mediation tools implemented, the visitor is constantly solicited, surprised, moved by an interview with a veteran recounting his D-Day, attentive during the briefing given by an officer appearing in the form of a hologram, a little anxious when he puts on his parachute harness to experience a virtual jump or captivated by the discovery of the collections superbly displayed and explained.

ADAPTED TO ALL AUDIENCES : Because of the museum's international vocation, all texts are translated into English. In the mediation tools, different levels of reading are proposed to satisfy the neophyte and the passionate. For the hearing impaired, all films and videos are subtitled in French and English. Children have their own dedicated tour with adapted graphics and texts.



2021 - THE LOBBY OF THE OPERATION NEPTUNE BUILDING ENHANCED

Since the beginning of 2021, the lobby of the Operation Neptune building has been equipped with new museum areas:

- **Wartime medicine** highlighted by the exhibition of an ambulance and a scene reconstructed inside it.



- **The history of the temporary cemeteries of Sainte-Mère-Eglise** is highlighted through a wall on which the names and faces of the fallen soldiers appear and disappear. The film presenting the three cemeteries and the funeral of Theodore Roosevelt is still present. As in the past, it will not fail to move our visitors.



- **Civilians during the Liberation:** In this part, we evoke the destruction linked to the bombardments but also the first meetings between civilians and American soldiers.



- **The construction of the memory and remembrance:** The cemeteries, the ceremonies, the return of the veterans, the cinema are so many factors which raised Sainte-Mère-Eglise as a high place of memory.
- **The aftermath of Normandy:** With the help of a timeline and videos, we follow the progress of the allied troops to Germany.



AIRBORNE

1964—2024

THE NEW EXTENSION-RENOVATION PROJECT



TWO ANNIVERSARIES, ONE PROJECT IN THREE PARTS

The year 2024 will mark not only the 80th anniversary of D-Day, but also the 60th anniversary of the museum, founded in 1964. On this unique occasion, the Airborne Museum will open a new building dedicated to gliders and will offer a renovated WACO building. Finally, the park of the museum will be entirely redesigned and will be enhanced with various new features

Today, the original space of the museum is dedicated to gliders and their use during the Normandy landings. It hosts an exceptional historical piece, a real Waco glider. It is the only one of its kind to be seen in France in this state of preservation. Visitors to the museum have the privilege of being able to board the glider to imagine the sensations that a soldier might have experienced in 1944.

In order to meet the requirements of conservation, reception of the public and enrichment of the contents, a **new building of more than 1,000 m²** will be built at the southern entrance of the museum. It will house the legendary WACO and will be **the first building of its size entirely dedicated to the gliders of the Second World War**. Sixty years after its arrival at the Airborne Museum, the glider will have a setting worthy of it.

The old historical building, with its emblematic architecture, will be renovated and revised in its scenography. It will propose, at the beginning of the visit, a presentation of **the history and the life of the inhabitants of Sainte-Mère-Église since the arrival of the Germans in July 1940 until the Liberation**.

Requisitions, rationing, control of movements, compulsory work, curfew, resistance will be the themes evoked as well as that of the German forces present: who and how many were they? where were they based? how was the cohabitation? etc. Subjects that are of great interest to our visitors!

The Haule Park, where the museum is located, will be enriched with vegetation, transforming it into a true bocage park. The paths will be revised, new vehicles will be exhibited in the open air, and a snack area will be developed in the former museum reception area to improve the comfort of the visit.

I. The new building dedicated to the gliders

It was decided to create a new pavilion fully dedicated to the roles of wartime gliders, including the WACO, and totalling 1,200 m². It will ensure good conditions of exhibition offering the necessary distance for the integral visualization of the glider and the conservation of the only WACO model remaining in France, as well as the objects of the collection exposed.

The permanent exhibition will be based on 4 main themes:

1. The origins and first uses

The scenography based on archive images, technical documents and models will trace the technical effervescence, industrialization and mass production. The visitor will discover the development of the CG4A model via virtual or real models constituting a «gallery of the evolution» of gliders.

2. On the way to Sainte-Mère-Eglise

- A glider in 5 pieces : the logistics around the gliders and the missions of the gliders for D-Day
- The discovery «in situation» of the glider of the museum: the visitors discover the glider posed in a field from which soldiers unload a Jeep.
- Men on board: portrait of glider pilots and soldiers
- Other gliders : the Horsa type
- Atypical uses

3. The other missions, the post-Normandy period

Other military missions were carried out with gliders after the success of the Normandy landings. This was the case in Provence, the Netherlands and Germany. These different operations leading to the end of the war will be told.

4. Le planeur du musée et son histoire

The arrival of the glider coincides with the creation of the museum in 1964. The history of the renovation, the arrival of the glider in Sainte-Mère-Eglise are documented by photos, videos. The partial renovation of the glider that will be made within the project and its move to its new home will also be documented to continue to tell the story of the museum.

II. Renovation of the WACO building

After passing through the reception/ticket office, visitors will begin their visit in the Carpentier building (named after its architect). They will discover a scenographic space exposing the historical context of the proposed tour.

The objects staged and accompanied by narrative devices (physical or digital) will immerse visitors in Sainte-Mère-Église between May 1940 and June 1944 then occupied, and will tell the life of civilians in this context of suffocation of freedoms. This pavilion will also host 2 rooms will allow mediators to accommodate groups in guided tour.

The scenography is organized around 3 sequences:

1. The German occupation

From July 1940, the Germans controlled the peaceful canton of Sainte-Mère-Église, where they suddenly imposed a discipline based on both military and administrative control, restricting the freedom of civilians and upsetting their daily lives. The relationship of domination is embodied by a constant oppression on civilians. Sainte-Mère-Église is isolated and plunged into the shadows, its life punctuated by curfews and the sound of the German troops' boots. By a severe atmosphere, the scenography will evoke the mixed feelings of fear, constraint and restriction established by the Germans.

2. Civil life

After a brutal break in daily life, life was reorganized for the inhabitants during the four years of occupation. From 1942 on, some were requisitioned for forced labor to support the German war effort, and the most reckless would evade the risk of deportation. Under the German yoke, new behaviors appeared among the oppressed civilians, between accommodation, indifference, rejection and resistance. With more or less disobedience, this forced cooperation will be told through the numerous objects and personal effects testifying to civilian life.

3. Organized Resistance

The requisitions, the defeats of Germany, the rumors of an Allied landing, the acceleration of German repression at the end of 1943 - beginning of 1944, led to an increase in the rejection of German domination by civilians. They became more intensely involved in the resistance, multiplying acts of sabotage and strategic destruction and constituting a real communication network that made the Allied landings possible. Honouring their audacity and courage, the scenography will translate the hope and determination that raised the Resistance fighters, key actors of the liberation.



The background image shows a park scene. In the foreground, there's a dark, overhanging roof of a building. Below it, a dense green hedge runs across the frame. Behind the hedge, several trees are visible, some with bare branches and others with green leaves. Two people are standing in the park, looking towards the trees. The sky is overcast with grey clouds.

III. Park redevelopment

Landscaping the park - An open-air museum

At present, access to the green spaces is not formally forbidden to the public, but it does not invite them to be visited. A global landscape intervention will allow the creation of a real walk, more than a crossing of green spaces and will make the dimension of the Airborne Museum as a park-garden more strongly felt.

The valorization of vehicles and cannons will also allow the creation of a real open-air museum.

Development of the South reception area - A new conviviality offer

- The visit time of the tour will increase significantly, from 2 hours currently (122 minutes) to an estimated 2h30. It will be necessary to add breaks during the visit.
- A reception pavilion of 27m² will be redesigned to become a snacking area open to visitors and sheltered, permanently. Easily identifiable, visitors will be able to gather there to relax, have a picnic or a snack (hot and cold drink machines, snacks).
- The space will extend outside where convivial moments can be prolonged on a lunch area equipped with all the necessary amenities (benches, tables, waste bin).

PRACTICAL INFORMATION ON THE CONSTRUCTION WORKS

PROJECTED TIMETABLE:

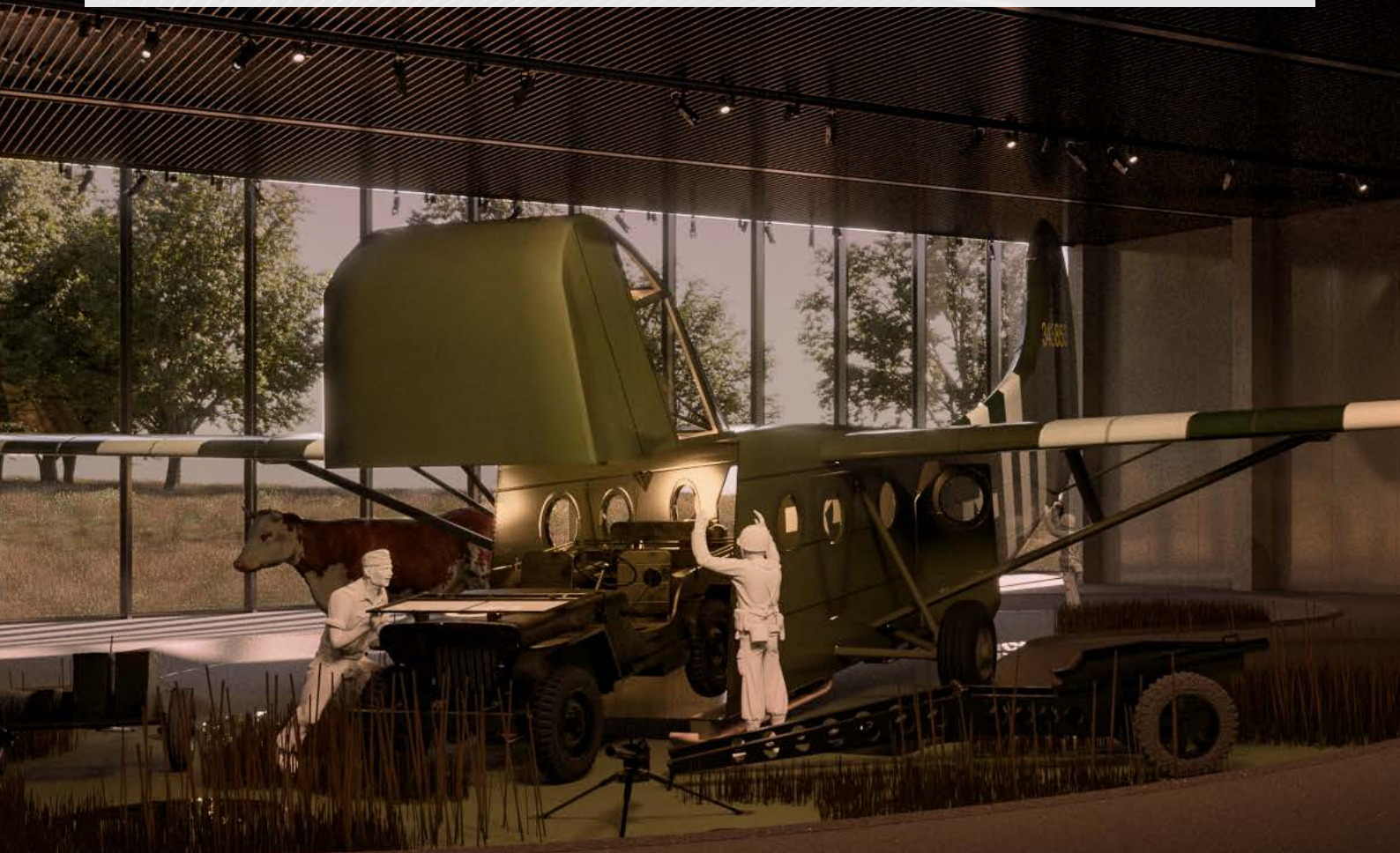
- **March 2023:** Start of the 5th building
- **Mid-November 2023:** Beginning of work on the old WACO building and the redevelopment of the park
- **Project opening:** June 2024

WINTER HOURS

Due to construction, the Airborne Museum will close for its winter vacation for a longer period of time. The museum will be closed from November 12, 2023 to February 10, 2024. The old WACO building will remain inaccessible to visitors until the entire work is completed.

RATES

Since the museum is going to expand, the entrance fees will be slightly increased, while keeping the accessible pricing policy that historically characterizes the Airborne Museum. More information soon.





2023 NEWS

Temporary exhibition, festivities on June 6 with the highlight being Camp Geronimo, a new offer: a great program in prospect!

AIRBORNE  MUSEUM
SAINTE MÈRE ÉGLISE



L'ASSAUT PAR LES AIRS

Les parachutistes de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale

à partir du 21 avril 2022

TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

« AIRBORNE ASSAULT »

The temporary exhibition «Assault from the Air» inaugurated in 2022 has been extended for the year 2023. For the occasion, it has been enhanced with many new objects that rival those of rarity.

Through numerous objects, uniforms and testimonies often unpublished, the Airborne Museum offers an exhibition that traces the history of paratroopers in the various armies involved in the Second World War.

- Why, how and when were the airborne troops created?
- What types of operations have they been engaged in?
- In which theaters of operation did they fight?

There are as many answers as there are countries. Whether these countries are part of the Allies such as the USA, Great Britain, Canada, Poland or the USSR, France (Free France but also Vichy), or the Axis forces: Germany, Italy, Japan.

Through a magnificent collection assembled for the first time, mainly from private collections, with pieces as rare as the equipment effects of a British veteran of the Bruneval Raid in 1942, the testimony of a former SAS of Free France, the extraordinary history of these elite troops is told.

Following the extension of the exhibition, here are some of the new additions:

- 3 US daggers, the V-42, the Pancake and the Marine Raider Stiletto, as well as several Fairbairn-Sykes daggers: the 1st type with its scabbard, as well as all the variations of the 2nd type
- A tanker MK1 helmet of the 1st type Mark 1, used at the beginning of 1940 by the first British and French paratroopers, in a temporary way
- An American paratrooper's M1 helmet shell, with remains of triangular side markings of the 507th PIR
- The patches of the various phantom units that made up the FUSAG, notably those of the 5 US airborne divisions (the 6th, 9th, 18th, 21st and 135th)
- Personal effects of the Canadian parachutist Captain Jamieson Quick (letter to his wife, German/Dutch lexicons, map of France...)
- 2 reinforced M42 jackets, one belonging to Edwin Armil Jr, HQ 506th of the 101st Airborne Division, the other to Elmer Kolebab of the 377th FAB Battalion
- Various rare grenades, including a Gammon 82 in cloth; a British MK1 n°69 grenade; an Italian Breda model 35



BEHIND THE SCENES OF HISTORY: THE GUIDED TOUR OF THE RESERVES

Who has never been intrigued by what might be sleeping in the storerooms of a museum? The imagination is often piqued when one walks through the corridors and rooms of these establishments, as much by what one sees there as by what one does not see there. What exactly is the purpose of these spaces? Perhaps there are some wonderful objects in the storerooms, which are just unlucky not to find a place in the museum's exhibition, for reasons unknown? What story can they tell, when they don't usually have the opportunity to share it with visitors?

It is following these reflections that the idea of opening the doors of the museum's reserves came up. This new 30-minute approach gives each visitor the opportunity to ask questions and, above all, to get answers. The guide selects a few particular objects that are constantly changing, and details the history behind them.

The exchanges prove once again that the small story is part of the big story and that it has often changed the course of things.

Visit of the reserves on the 3rd Friday of each month:

- 14,90 € per adult (visit of the museum + reserves)
- 10 € per child (visit of the museum + reserves)
- 4 people minimum - 12 people maximum per group for the visit of the reserves

CAMP GERONIMO - JUNE 3 TO 6 2023

As it does every year, the Airborne Museum is organizing an American reenactment camp from Friday, June 3 to Monday, June 6, 2023, near the museum, open to all free of charge.

With many period vehicles, a plethora of scenes and demonstrations, Camp Geronimo is a must for the Normandy Landing festivities and has now become one of the largest American reenactment camps in France.

In order to best render the climate and scenes of life in a military camp in Normandy, the museum calls on several associations of re-enactors such as V for Victory, MVCG Bretagne, 39th ITD, Enfer Normand and Eure Liberté 44.

Couples, families, enthusiasts or collectors, all will be able to discover the world of the American Forces in the alleys of the camp. The re-enactors will be present throughout the opening to talk with visitors, give demonstrations and sometimes even invite them to climb into a vehicle.





L'AIRBORNE MUSEUM PRÉSENTE



**03-06
JUN
2023
09H-22H**

ENTRÉE LIBRE

AIRBORNE-MUSEUM.ORG - 02 33 41 41 35

LE CAMP GERONIMO





2023 PROGRAM



THE CAMP GERONIMO WILL FEATURE MANY CONTINUOUS WORKSHOPS AND ANIMATIONS, SUCH AS:

- THE PRESENCE OF 7 TANKS OF AN ARMORED PLATOON CAVALRY US
- THE PRESENCE OF A TRANSMISSION HEADQUARTERS AND A SUPPLY AREA
- THE PROJECTION OF ARCHIVE FILMS
- A POST EXCHANGE (US ARMY RETAIL STORE)
- A FIELD KITCHEN
- A MODEL OF THE OPERATIONS COMMENTED BY A SPECIALIST
- THE RECONSTRUCTION OF AN AMERICAN DORMITORY
- WORKSHOPS OF ALL KINDS LED BY SPECIALISTS



SATURDAY MAY 27

- > 7:15PM: CONFERENCE BY GÉRARD DE CORTANZE: "LOUIS XVI, THE KING WHO WANTED TO SEE THE SEA", AS PART OF THE SALON DU LIVRE, AT THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM.

SATURDAY JUNE 03

- > 9AM: OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 2023 EDITION OF CAMP GERONIMO
- > 10-11AM: COMMENTED DEMONSTRATION (IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH) OF THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEPARTURE FROM ENGLAND (PLANES, PILOTS...) ON THE CHURCH SQUARE.
- > 1-3PM: BOOK SIGNING OF THE BOOK "GAVIN AT WAR" BY HIS DAUGHTER CHLOE GAVIN IN THE STORE OF THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM.

THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM WILL REMAIN OPEN AT NIGHT UNTIL 10 PM.

SUNDAY JUNE 04

- > 10-11AM: COMMENTED DEMONSTRATION (IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH) OF THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEPARTURE FROM ENGLAND (PLANES, PILOTS...) ON THE CHURCH SQUARE.
- > 10-12AM: EXHIBITION OF VEHICLES ON THE SQUARE AROUND THE CHURCH.
- > 6PM: PARADE OF MILITARY VEHICLES OF COLLECTION.

MONDAY 05 JUNE

- > 10-11AM: COMMENTED DEMONSTRATION (IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH) OF D-DAY COMBAT JUMPS, ON THE CHURCH SQUARE.
- > 4PM: BOOK SIGNING BY CLÉMENT HORVATH, AUTHOR OF 3 BOOKS INCLUDING THE 2 VOLUMES OF TILL VICTORY, WHICH COMPILE LETTERS FROM THE FRONT BY ALLIED SOLDIERS, IN THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM STORE.
- > 8PM: SCREENING OF THE DOCUMENTARY FILM "TILL THE JOB IS DONE" BY CLÉMENT HORVATH.
- > 11:15PM: COMMENTED DEMONSTRATION (IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH) OF THE USE OF A SEARCHLIGHT ON THE CHURCH SQUARE.

TUESDAY JUNE 06

- > 10-11AM: COMMENTED DEMONSTRATION (IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH) OF D-DAY COMBAT JUMPS, ON THE CHURCH SQUARE.
- > 2-4PM: BOOK SIGNING OF "GAVIN AT WAR" AND "THE HUMAN FACE OF D-DAY" BY KEITH NIGHTINGALE, IN THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM STORE.
- > 8:30PM: CONCERT OF CELLO SOLIST MICHAEL FITZPATRICK AT THE MUSEUM
- > 10PM: END OF THE 2023 EDITION OF CAMP GERONIMO.

CAMP GERONIMO

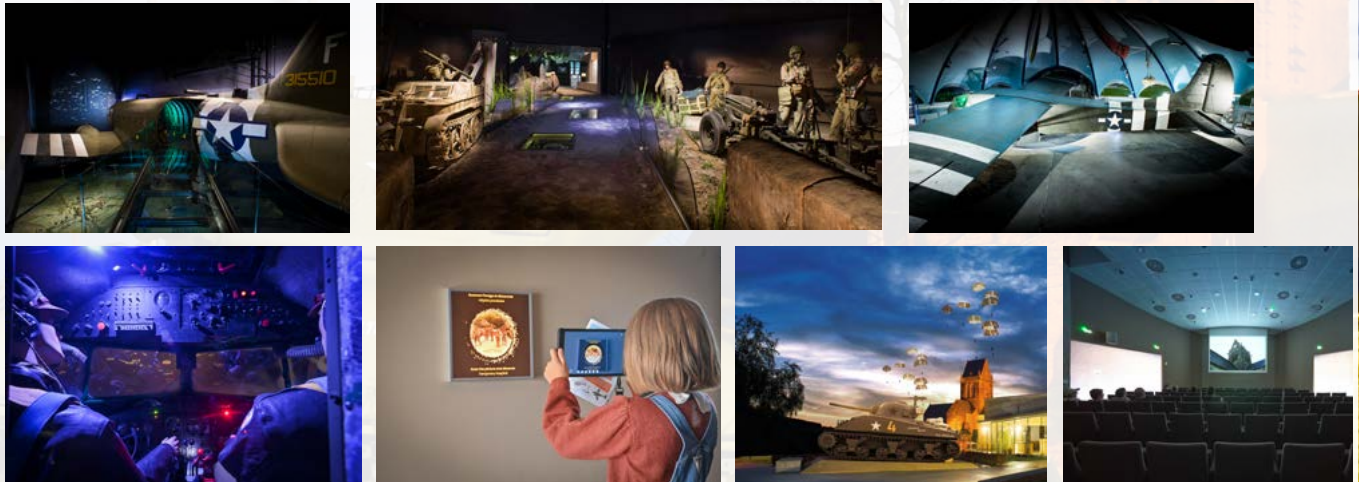


PHOTO LIBRARY AND RESOURCES

GENERIC PHOTOS OF THE MUSEUM

Photo credit is ©airborne museum

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1OOpVLefvPzPSxgnWwlzODRqemPH5kp35?usp=sharing>

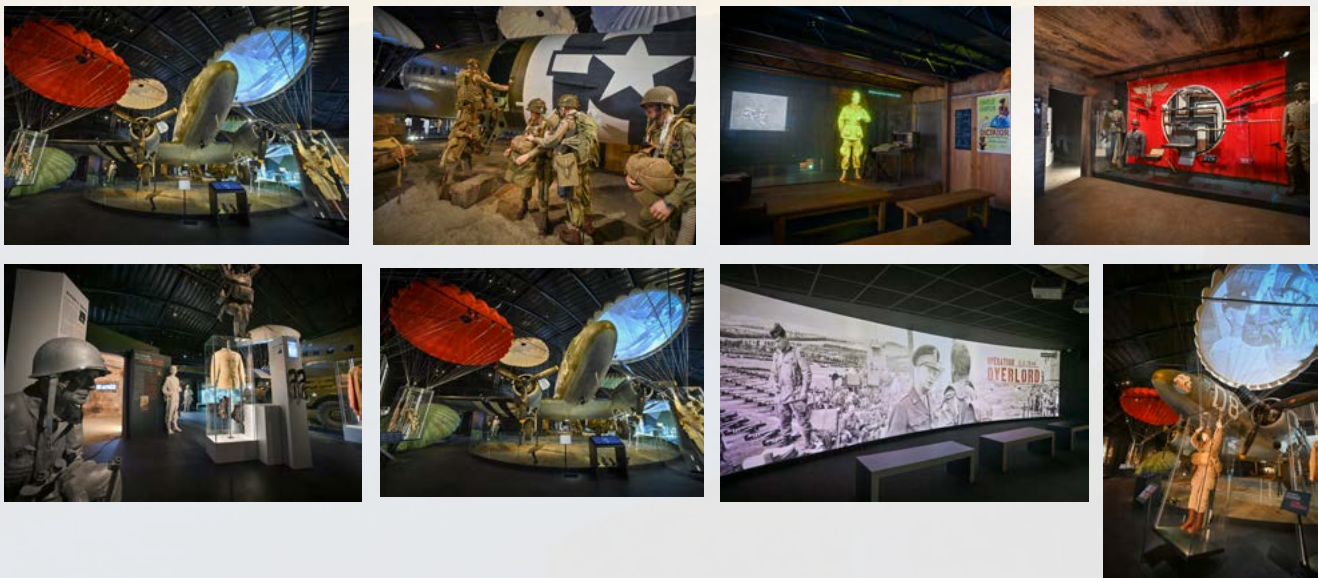


PHOTOS OF THE C-47 BUILDING

A selection of photos of the spaces in the C-47 building can be found in the link below.

Photo credit is ©airborne museum

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1b0Cci_VFkrGduj3wJzqq6BOpaBNVcA4H?usp=sharing



VIDEO OF THE C-47 BUILDING

A video was created to showcase the new C-47 building :

<https://youtu.be/ZCJlvXDDRhM>



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

SCHEDULE

- May to August: 9am-7pm
- April and september : 9:30am-6:30pm
- October to March : 10am-6pm

Closed from November 12 2023 to January 31 st 2024

RATES

- Adult : 9.90 €
- Children (6 to 16 years old) : 6.00 €
- Family (2 adults and 2 paying children minimum) : 28 €

PRESS CONTACT

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airborne-museum.org