



80th
ANNIVERSARY
D-DAY & BATTLE
OF NORMANDY

★
SAINTE-MÈRE-ÉGLISE
THE PARATROOPERS MUSEUM OF
D-DAY



PRESS KIT 2024

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A tribute to the American paratroopers of D-Day

Located just a few kilometers from Utah Beach, the Airborne Museum is Europe's largest museum dedicated to **the American paratroopers of the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions** who took part in the Normandy Landings in 1944, during the Second World War.

These paratroopers were **among the first Allied soldiers to land** on the night of June 5-6, 1944, and 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 throughout the Cotentin region, **ultimately establishing a solid bridgehead** that would enable them to regain control of France from Germany.

As soon as these paratroopers arrived, a real friendship developed between them and the Normandy villagers, a friendship that was considerably strengthened, 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**. For 4 years, between 1944 and 1948, the Normandy villagers cared for the graves, flowering them, paying tribute to them, and keeping up epistolary correspondence with the families of the deceased in the USA. This is one of the reasons why the anniversary of D-Day in Normandy quickly became a key annual commemoration for the region - as early as 1945 - and remains so to this day.

This unbreakable link 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 the paratroopers, and makes a point of **recounting their genesis, their history, and their achievements during the Second World War, as part of the duty of remembrance**, increasingly important now that so much time has passed and the last living witnesses to the events are becoming rarer and rarer.

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

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. Mosley, the 503rd of Lt. William H. Miley and the 504th of Colonel Reuben H. Tucker.

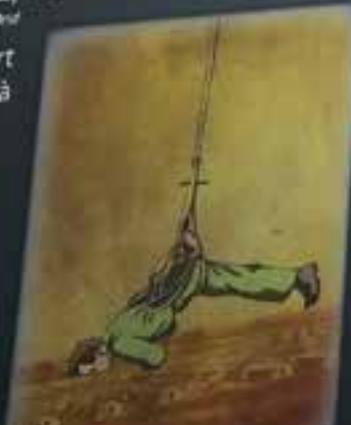
Lastly, on March 23, 1942, under the direction of Colonel Lee, the Airborne Command was created.

Four additional regiments would swell troop numbers: the 505th of Lt. James M. Gavin, the 506th of Lt. Robert F. Sink, the 507th of Lt. George V. Millett Jr and the 508th of Lt. Roy E. Lindquist.

Having been made Brigadier General, on August 15, 1947, Bill Lee persuaded the Chief of Staff to create two Airborne Divisions: the 82nd at Fort Bragg and the 101st at Camp Gaijorn.

Le 25 juin 1942, 48 soldats de la 501st PIR ont été tués.
Major William H. Miley
Début octobre 1942, le Major William H. Miley s'ajoute à la 501st PIR.
Robert F. Sink
une Parachute
Puis, les soldats deviennent des soldats de la 501st PIR.
Howard R. Johnson
Colonel George V. Mosley
Lt. William H. Miley
Colonel Reuben H. Tucker
fin, le 23 mars 1942, la 501st PIR est réorganisée.
Commandant voit le jour. Quatre régiments supplémentaires viennent renforcer les effectifs: le 505th du Lt. James M. Gavin, le 506th du Lt. Robert F. Sink, le 507th du Lt. George V. Millett Jr et le 508th du Lt. Roy E. Lindquist.

le Brigadier General, Bill Lee a décidé l'Etat-Major de créer, le 23 août 1942, deux Airborne Divisions: la 82nd à Fort Bragg et la 101st à Camp Gaijorn.





THE AIRBORNE MUSEUM, a perpetually evolving museum

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, **the ticket office and gift store** were refurbished and expanded in 2019, followed by the upgraded Neptune Hall in February 2021. **Finally, in 2022, the C-47 building will unveil a completely revamped scenography.**

For 2024, the year of the 80th anniversary of D-Day, as well as the 60th anniversary of the Airborne Museum, the museum undertook **the construction of a new building to house its WACO glider, entirely dedicated to this theme.** The original WACO building, historic and the very symbol of the Airborne Museum, was redesigned to house **an exhibition dedicated to “Sainte-Mère-Eglise under the Occupation”.** Last but not least, the museum’s historic grounds were redesigned and enhanced with a number of new features and infrastructures.

The aim of these extensions and renovations is to improve the quality of the buildings, thus enabling the collections to be better preserved and showcased, as well as to rethink the museography from a chronological and thematic point of view, and to offer an attractive and immersive scenography for the more than 200,000 annual visitors.



2019 - 2022 : RENOVATION PHASE

2022 - The renovated C-47 building

In November 2021, after a year's work, the Airborne Museum unveiled an unrecognizable building, where almost everything has been redesigned and modernized - with the exception, of course, of our legendary C-47 aircraft. It now sits proudly at the center of a spectacular scenography featuring deployed parachutes, suspended mannequins and realistic statues that call out to visitors.

This new visitor experience is designed to be :

PEDAGOGICAL AND CHRONOLOGICAL: From the creation of 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 scale of the operations carried out, discovers the key players as well as the ordinary soldiers, and can cross the Allied and German points of view.

EMBODIED: A tribute is paid to the men who worked to create the paratroopers, who conceived the disinformation operations or who took part in D-Day, through objects that belonged to them, archive films, interviews, testimonies or even more realistic-than-life statues.

INVOLVING: Thanks to a wide range of mediation tools, visitors are constantly challenged and surprised, moved by an interview with a veteran recounting his D-Day experience, attentive during the briefing given by an officer appearing as a hologram, a little anxious when they don their parachute harness to experience a virtual jump, or captivated by the discovery of the superbly displayed and explained collections.

SUITABLE FOR ALL AUDIENCES: Given the museum's international vocation, all texts are translated into English. In the mediation tools, different levels of reading are proposed, satisfying both the neophyte and the enthusiast. For the hearing-impaired, all films and videos are subtitled in French and English. For children, there's a special children's trail with specially adapted graphics and texts.



2021 - The enhanced lobby of the operation neptune building

Since the beginning of 2021, the hall of the Opération Neptune building has been equipped with new museographic features:

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



- **The history of Sainte-Mère-Eglise's temporary cemeteries** is highlighted by a wall on which the names and faces of fallen soldiers appear and disappear. The film showing the three cemeteries and Theodore Roosevelt's funeral is still available. As in the past, it is sure to move our visitors.



- **Civilians during the Liberation:** In this section, we look at the destruction caused by the bombing raids, as well as the first encounters between civilians and American soldiers.



- **Building memory and remembrance:** Cemeteries, ceremonies, the return of veterans and cinema are just some of the factors that have made Sainte-Mère-Eglise a place of remembrance.
- **After Normandy:** With the help of a timeline and videos, we follow the progress of Allied troops as far as Germany.



1964

AIRBORNE  MUSEUM

2024

THE NEW EXTENSION-RENOVATION PROJECT

DEUX ANNIVERSAIRES, DEUX PROJETS

The year 2024 marks not only the 80th anniversary of D-Day, but also the 60th anniversary of the museum, founded in 1964. To commemorate this double anniversary, the Airborne Museum opened a new building dedicated to gliders, and a renovated former WACO building is now home to an exhibition on the Occupation and the Resistance, as well as an open-air museum in the completely redeveloped museum grounds.

Until now, the museum's original space was devoted to gliders and their use during the Normandy landings. It housed an exceptional piece of history, an authentic Waco glider. It is the only one of its kind to be seen in France in this state of preservation. Visitors of the museum had the privilege of boarding the glider and imagining what it felt like to be a soldier in 1944.

First project: the creation of a building dedicated to gliders

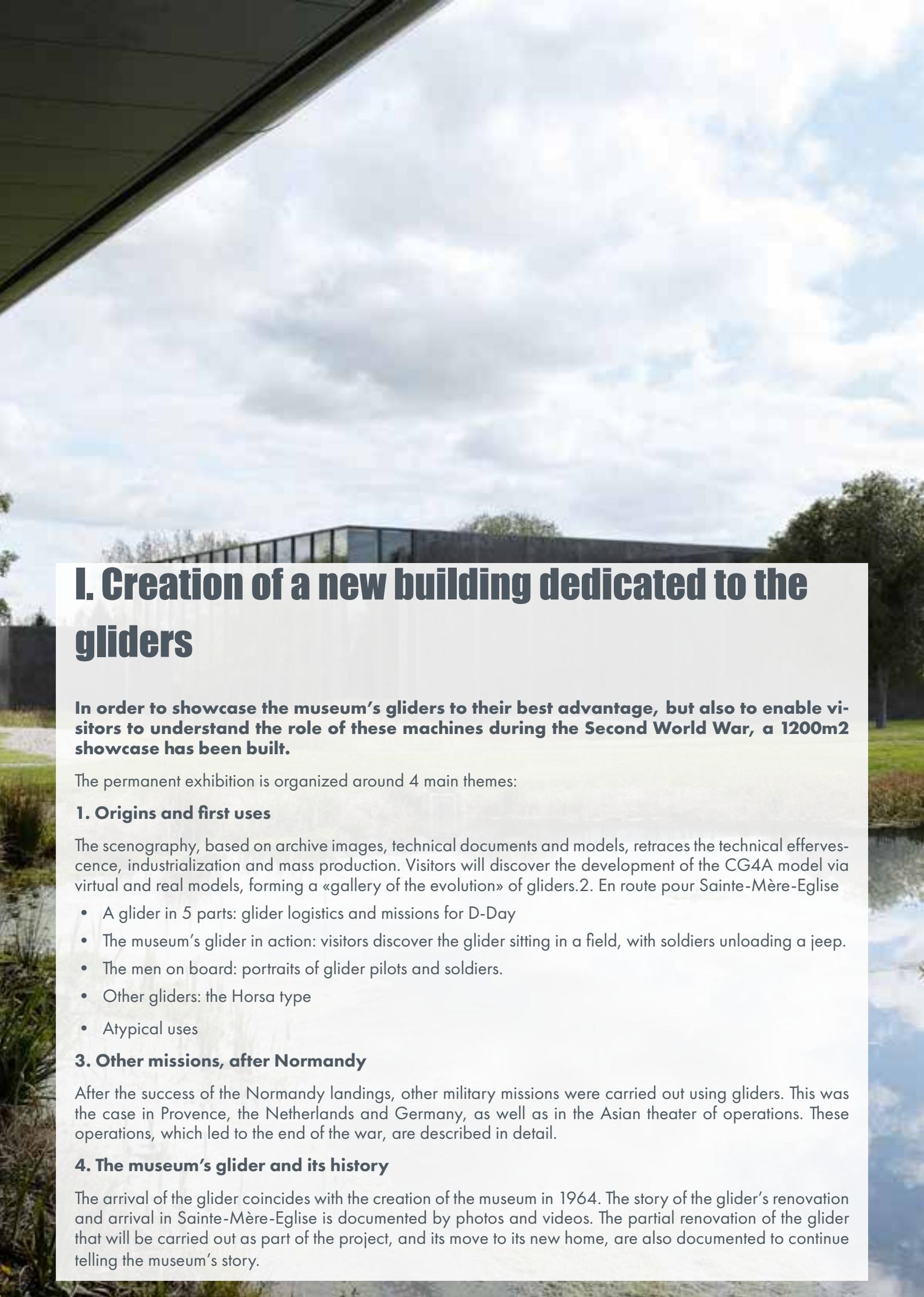
To meet the needs of conservation, visitor reception and content enrichment, **a new building of over 1,200m²** was constructed at the museum's southern entrance. It now houses the **legendary WACO glider**, and is the first building of its size entirely dedicated to american World War II gliders. Now, 60 years after its arrival at the Airborne Museum, the glider has a fitting home.

Second project: renovation of the historic building and grounds

The old historic building, with its **emblematic architecture**, has been renovated and redesigned. The tour begins with a presentation of the **history and life of the inhabitants of Sainte-Mère-Église**, from the arrival of the Germans in July 1940 to the Liberation.

Requisitions, rationing, movement control, compulsory labor, curfews and resistance will be the topics covered, as well as the German forces present: who and how many were there? where were they based? how did cohabitation work? etc. All subjects of great interest to our visitors! Topics of great interest to our visitors!

The Haule park, where the museum is located, has been enriched with vegetation, transforming it into a veritable bocage park. The paths have been redesigned, **new vehicles are on display in the open air, and a snack area has been set up** in the museum's former reception area, to enhance visitor comfort.



I. Creation of a new building dedicated to the gliders

In order to showcase the museum's gliders to their best advantage, but also to enable visitors to understand the role of these machines during the Second World War, a 1200m² showcase has been built.

The permanent exhibition is organized around 4 main themes:

1. Origins and first uses

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

2. En route pour Sainte-Mère-Eglise
- A glider in 5 parts: glider logistics and missions for D-Day
 - The museum's glider in action: visitors discover the glider sitting in a field, with soldiers unloading a jeep.
 - The men on board: portraits of glider pilots and soldiers.
 - Other gliders: the Horsa type
 - Atypical uses

3. Other missions, after Normandy

After the success of the Normandy landings, other military missions were carried out using gliders. This was the case in Provence, the Netherlands and Germany, as well as in the Asian theater of operations. These operations, which led to the end of the war, are described in detail.

4. The museum's glider and its history

The arrival of the glider coincides with the creation of the museum in 1964. The story of the glider's renovation and arrival in Sainte-Mère-Eglise is documented by photos and videos. The partial renovation of the glider that will be carried out as part of the project, and its move to its new home, are also documented to continue telling the museum's story.

II.a. Renovation of the Occupation building

After passing through the reception/ticket office, visitors begin their tour in the Occupation building. They discover a scenographic space setting out the historical context of the proposed tour.

Staged objects and narrative devices (physical or digital) immerse visitors in occupied Sainte-Mère-Église between May 1940 and June 1944, and tell the story of civilian life in this context of suffocating freedoms. This pavilion also houses 2 rooms, enabling mediators to welcome groups on guided tours.

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 military and administrative control, restricting the freedom of civilians and disrupting their daily lives. The relationship of domination is embodied in the constant oppression of civilians. Isolated Sainte-Mère-Église was plunged into shadow, its life punctuated by curfews and the sound of German troops' boots. The harsh atmosphere of the set evokes the mixed feelings of fear, constraint and restriction imposed by the Germans.

2. Civilian life

After an abrupt break in daily life, the inhabitants were able to reorganize their lives during the four years of occupation. From 1942 onwards, some were requisitioned for forced labor as part of the German war effort, with the most daring evading the risk of deportation. Under the German yoke, new behaviors emerged among oppressed civilians, ranging from accommodation and indifference to rejection and resistance. With varying degrees of disobedience, this forced cooperation is recounted through the many objects and personal effects bearing witness to civilian life.

3. Organized Resistance

Requisitions, Germany's defeats, rumors of an Allied landing and the acceleration of German repression in late 1943 and early 1944 led to a growing rejection of German domination among civilians. They became more intensely involved in the Resistance, multiplying acts of sabotage and strategic destruction, and forming a veritable communications network that made the Allied landings possible. Paying tribute to their daring and courage, the scenography conveys the hope and determination that lifted the Resistance fighters, key players in the liberation.



The background image shows a park-like setting with various trees, some bare and some with green leaves. In the foreground, there is a red hedge. To the right, the overhanging roof of a building with a grey gutter is visible. Two people are seen from behind, walking along a path. The sky is overcast.

II.b. Creation of an open-air museum

Park landscaping - an open-air museum

Previously, access to the green spaces was not formally forbidden to the public, but it was not an invitation to visit them. A comprehensive landscaping project now creates a real promenade, more than a crossing of green spaces, and gives a stronger sense of the Airborne Museum's garden-park dimension. The landscaping is designed to recreate a Norman bocage and marsh landscape.

The valorization of vehicles and cannons also creates a veritable open-air museum.

South reception area - A new visitor experience

Visiting time has been significantly extended, from the previous 2 hours (122 minutes) to an estimated 2.5 hours. The aim is to enhance the visit with breaks along the way.

A 27m² reception pavilion has been redesigned as a permanently sheltered snack bar open to visitors. Easily identifiable, visitors can gather here to relax, picnic or enjoy a snack (hot and cold beverage machines, snacks).

The space extends outside, where convivial moments can be extended in a lunch area equipped with all the necessary amenities (benches, tables, garbage bin).

PRACTICAL INFORMATION ON THE CONSTRUCTION WORKS

PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE:

- **March 2023:** Start of work on the 5th building
- **Mid-November 2023:** Start of work on the old WACO building, and redevelopment of the park
- **Opening to the public:** May 8, 2024
- **Inauguration:** June 2024

RATES

As the museum expands, admission rates are being increased slightly, while maintaining the accessible pricing policy that has historically characterized the Airborne Museum. Here is the timetable for the introduction of the new rates. Please note that reduced rates will apply from February to May 2024, as the Occupation building will be closed for renovation.

Rates	Rates from February 10 to May 7 2024	Rates starting from May 8 2024
INDIVIDUALS		
Adult entry	8,90€	11,50€
Child entry	5€	7,50€
Reduced rate	6,40€	8,50€
Family rate	24€ 4€ per additional child	33€ 5,50€ per additional child
Adult entry + visit of the reserves	13,90€	16,50€
Child entry + visit of the reserves	9€	11,50€
GROUPS		
Adult group	6,40€	8,50€
Guided visit adult group	7,50€	11,50€
Child group	4€	5,50€
Guided visit child group	5€	8,50€
Self-guided tour + school workshop	6,50€	8,50€
Guided tour + school workshop	11€	10,50€



2024 NEWS

New temporary exhibition, June 6 commemorations culminating in Camp Geronimo, conferences and ephemeral events, 2024 is truly a historic year!





EVENTS CALENDAR

February 10: Museum reopens to the public

March 30: Lecture «American gliders at Landing Zone W» by Philippe Esvelin and the association Patrimoine Local Été 44

April 13: Debate on the Resistance in La Manche by Michel Boivin and Michel Leblond

May 8, 2024: Opening of the new spaces to the public

May 23: Opening of temporary exhibition «Eisenhower-De Gaulle: from friendship to alliance in war and peace

May 31: Olympic flame passes through the museum

June 1 to 9: Camp Geronimo

September 21 and 22: Temporary exhibition «Les forces spéciales de la Libération» (Special Forces of the Liberation)



AIRBORNE
SAINTE MÈRE ÉGLISE



MUSEUM

EXPOSITION
22 MAI > 30 NOV.
MAY 22 > NOV. 30

DE L'AMITIÉ À L'ALLIANCE
DANS LA GUERRE ET DANS LA PAIX

EISENHOWER

DE GAULLE

ALLIANCE AND FRIENDSHIP
IN WAR AND PEACE

AIRBORNE MUSEUM

14, rue Eisenhower - 50480 Sainte-Mère-Église
Tél. : 02 33 41 41 35 - airborne-museum.org



Musée
de l'Armée



IKÉ



TEMPORARY EXHIBITION

«EISENHOWER-DE GAULLE: FROM FRIENDSHIP TO ALLIANCE IN WAR AND PEACE».

After the «Assault from the Air: Paratroopers in World War II» exhibition which remained in place for 2022 and 2023, the new temporary exhibition will be open to the public for 2024 only, with no renewal. The choice of this exhibition was made in keeping with the exceptional year of 2024 for the remembrance sector. «Eisenhower-De Gaulle: from friendship to alliance, in war and in peace» opened its doors to the public on May 23, and will remain open until November 30.

«Eisenhower-De Gaulle: de l'amitié à l'alliance, dans la guerre et dans la paix» is a traveling exhibition designed jointly by the Charles de Gaulle Foundation and the Eisenhower Presidential Library, and has been on display at the Musée de l'Armée des Invalides. It was produced with the support of The First Alliance Foundation (TFA).

The exhibition is a cross-view of these two great figures not only of the Second World War, but also of the 20th century, both of whom left their mark on their countries and influenced the course of events around the world. For its stay at the Airborne Museum, it has been officially recognized by the Normandy Region as part of the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

Exhibition curators:

Eisenhower Presidential Library: Dawn Hammatt, Director, assisted by Pam Sanfilippo and Mary Burtzloff.

Fondation Charles de Gaulle: Catherine Trouiller, Director of Exhibitions and Publications.

Musée de l'Armée: Vincent Giraudier, head of the Historial Charles de Gaulle department.

Graphic design: Robaglia Design. Antoine Robaglia assisted by Nathalie Bigard.

Photo credits :

Eisenhower Presidential Library

Charles de Gaulle Foundation

Bridgemann-Giraudon





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

Who hasn't been intrigued by what might be sleeping in a museum's storerooms? Walking through the corridors and halls of these establishments often sparks the imagination, as much for what you see as for what you don't see. What exactly is the purpose of these spaces? Perhaps there are some wonderful objects in the storerooms, just unlucky enough to find no 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?

The idea of opening the doors of the museum's storerooms was born. This new 30-minute approach gives each visitor the chance to ask questions and, above all, get answers. The guide selects a few special objects that are constantly changing, and explains the history behind them, proving once again that the small story is part of the big story.

Visit the reserves every Thursday during school vacations only:

- 13,90 € per adult (museum visit + reserves)
- 9 € per child (museum visit + reserves)
- 4 people minimum - 12 people maximum per group for the reserves tour

THE OLYMPIC FLAME PASSES THROUGH THE MUSEUM

2024 is certainly the year of the 80th anniversary of D-Day, but it is also be the year of the Olympic Games in France. An event of national scope, which was preceded by the traditional journey of the Olympic flame. The flame passed through 7 towns in the Manche department, including Sainte-Mère-Eglise.

On June 23, 2023, the Normandy stopover towns for the Olympic flame were revealed. After leaving Piraeus in Greece on April 16, the flame arrived in France via Marseille. After passing through Calvados on May 30, the flame crossed the Channel on May 31. Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue, Cherbourg-en-Cotentin, Sainte-Mère-Eglise, Saint-Lô, Granville, Villedieu-les-Poëles-Rouffigny and Mont-Saint-Michel welcomed the flame.

The flame passed through Sainte-Mère-Eglise, crossing the Airborne Museum park in the middle of the day on May 31. Perfect timing, to kick off the 80th anniversary of D-Day with a bang.



CAMP GERONIMO - FROM JUNE 1ST TO 9 2024

The 2024 edition of Camp Geronimo, the American re-enactment camp organized by the Airborne Museum, was held from June 1 to 9, and was open from 9am to 8pm. As usual, admission was free. The event was supported by the Département de la Manche and approved by the Département de la Manche, the Région Normandie and the French government as part of the 80th anniversary of D-Day.

With a host of period vehicles and a plethora of stages and demonstrations, Camp Geronimo is an essential part of the D-Day festivities in Normandy, and has become **one of the biggest American re-enactment camps in France**.

In order to recreate the atmosphere and scenes of life in a Normandy military camp, the museum calls on the services of several seasoned re-enactment associations, including V for Victory, MVCG Bretagne, 39th ITD, Enfer Normand and Eure Liberté 44. Whether couples, families, enthusiasts or collectors, everyone was able to discover the world of the American Forces as they strolled through the camp's alleys. The re-enactors were be on hand throughout the opening to talk with visitors, give demonstrations and sometimes even invite them to climb into a vehicle.

New this year: the Camp organized not 1, but 4 different parades during the commemorations: a first parade representing the civilians and resistance fighters of the 40s, a second representing the Allied nations with vehicles, a third with 60 WWII veterans, and the traditional parade that brought the commemorations to a close.



SAINTE-MÈRE-ÉGLISE
01 > 09 JUIN 24



L'AIRBORNE MUSEUM PRÉSENTE LE

CAMP GERONIMO

OUVERTURE DU 1^{ER} AU 9 JUIN • 09H-20H • ENTRÉE GRATUITE

2024 PROGRAM



SATURDAY JUNE 1

- > 9am: Opening of Camp Geronimo

SUNDAY JUNE 2

- > 4pm: Parade of civilians and resistance fighters from the 40s
- > 4-6pm: Philippe Esvelin book signing in the museum shop
- > 8:30-10pm: Philippe Esvelin's conference on american gliders in FR

MONDAY JUNE 3

- > 4-6pm: Philippe Esvelin book signing in the museum shop
- > 7-8pm: Vehicle exhibition (church square)
- > 8-9:30pm: Philippe Esvelin's conference on american gliders in ENG

TUESDAY JUNE 4

- > 10:30am-12:30pm: Car show (church square)
- > 11am: Signing of "Mother of Normandy" by D. Stebleton and J. Stoffer in the museum shop
- > 2:30-3pm: Glider demonstration (church square)
- > 3-4:30pm: Book signing of "How Ike Led" by Susan Eisenhower in the museum shop
- > 6pm: Harley-WLA-WLC-Indian exhibition (church square)

WEDNESDAY JUNE 5

- > 11am: Parade of historic allied military vehicles
- > 11am-2pm: Signing of "Histoires insolites du Jour-J" by J-J. Lerosier in the museum shop
- > 3-3:30pm: Para-boarding demonstration (church square)
- > 4pm: Parade of some sixty World War II veterans through the village centre
- > 11:30pm: Demonstration of two searchlights (church square)

THURSDAY JUNE 6

- > [Times to be confirmed]: Glider demonstration (museum's WACO building)
- > 10am-4pm: Signings of "Road trip sur les plages du D-Day" by C. Larquemain and A. Bertrand, and "44 destins extraordinaires du D-Day" by P. Bertin in the museum shop
- > 12:15-12:45pm: Pathfinders demonstration (church square)
- > 2:15-2:45pm: Para demonstration - first fights (church square)

FRIDAY JUNE 7

- > 10:30am-12:30pm: Vehicle exhibition (church square)
- > 2:15-2:45pm: Pathfinder demonstration (church square)
- > 3-3:30pm: Para demonstration - first fights (church square)
- > 3:45-4:15pm: Glider demonstration (church square)
- > 4pm: Performance by The Enduring Freedom Honor Team on the Camp

SATURDAY JUNE 8

- > Until 10pm: Night-time opening of the Airborne Museum
- > 11:30pm: Fireworks in Sainte-Mère-Eglise (organized by the town hall)

SUNDAY JUNE 9

- > 10am: La Fièvre parachute drops (organized by the town hall)
- > 7pm: US historical parade with tanks and troops
- > 8pm: Closing of Camp Geronimo



CAMP GERONIMO



PHOTO LIBRARY & RESSOURCES

Photo credit: ©airborne museum

PHOTOS OF THE MUSEUM



PHOTOS OF THE C-47 BUILDING



ALL AVAILABLE THROUGH THIS QR CODE:





PRACTICAL INFORMATION

OPENING HOURS

- From May to August: 9am-7pm
- April and September : 9:30am-6:30pm
- October to Mars : 10am-6pm

RATES

- Adult : 11,50€
- Child : 7,50€
- Family : 33€

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