

Sights & Sounds of Belgium & Northern France

April 14 ~ 24, 2015



**Land only-- Hotel, & Tour Package
\$3685 per person, double occupancy**

(This trip is limited to 14 participants)

Deposit \$500 per person at time of booking

Price is per person **land only** in a shared double room.
Airfare is not included in the above listed price.
Single rooms are available upon request.

www.gailspeckmann.com

763-218-2031



Belgium & Northern France

A rich array of travel adventures await you....including gorgeous seacoasts & villages of Brittany and Normandy, charming medieval towns, glorious spring gardens and fruit trees in bloom, the dramatic Mont St. Michel, Normandy's D-Day landing beaches and memorial sites, the over 2000 standing stones (older than Stonehenge or the Pyramids), guarding the Brittany coast line. cathedrals with exquisite stained glass, Chartres labyrinth, and the historic Bayeaux Tapestry. Free time built in to enjoy the delightful cafes, shops, and walks in cobbled streets. All the while you will learn of the fascinating history, entertaining stories, and the culture of the areas we will travel. Additionally there will be professional local guided tours of the world class cities of Brussels, Ghent, & Paris.

Special trip feature: For your maximum experience, this tour is a small group, limited to 14 participants. [Reserve now!](#)

**To book your trip or, for more information contact
Gail Speckmann at 763-449-8640**

high praise for travel with Gail....

"...wandering with Gail through any country is an adventure of good times, great places and wonderful memories." Pat & Karen Stewart

"No one researches or leads a tour better than Gail Speckmann. I was privileged to be driver/guide on two of Gail's tours in the UK in the late '90s and I have to say that in 12 years of being a tour guide those were the most intricately planned and interesting trips I ever did." Tom McIver, Professional European Driver/Guide

"Gail is a seasoned traveler, but more than that, she made the entire trip a delight. I got way more than I bargained for! I am hopeful that I will be able to travel with Gail on future occasions." Meg Corrigan



What is a “SIGHTS & SOUNDS TOUR” by Gail?

Gail Speckmann, artist, photographer, writer/poet, and music lyricist, brings a full artistic perspective as your guide. This highly integrated approach will broaden and deepen your experience. Gail has led 11 European tours, including parts of Belgium & France.

Each day will include a focus idea to help enhance composition for your photography. Gail will introduce you to the work of some of the past & contemporary visual artists in from here.

Daily, we will also experience words and sounds pertaining to particular poets/writers and musicians (contemporary and past) from these countries. These “voices” will help us immerse fully into the rhythms of a particular area, but they also strike a universal chord.

Prior to the tour a notebook will be provided to help acquaint you with what we will cover. A daily journal may be kept by volunteers and shared after the tour to help fill out your memories.

Our professional travel guide will provide us with interesting history and stories of the areas where we will visit. Time is allowed for personal enjoyment and exploration within these stops.

Your tour experiences will continue to enrich your lives with great images and stories, improved skills in photographic and artistic composition. You may be inspired to venture further into the art, history, music, & writings of the Flemish and French peoples. An ongoing gift in your life.....



Note: This is NOT a painting tour, but I thought you'd enjoy seeing one that I created after a previous travel tour.

Program travel Itinerary

PLEASE NOTE: I have only included a day for departure from home and for your return flight home. We do encourage considering coming an additonal day early as noted below. Actual touring days, listed numerically, are April 14 - 23 (10 nights lodging).

MONDAY, APRIL 13 or TUESDAY, APRIL 14 Departure from your home airport. It is highly recommended to come a day early in order to re-acclimate from the travel.

You may enjoy time exploring **Brussels** on your own starting in the “**Grand Place**”, the central square with its unique mix of beautiful 17th century architecture and modern social life. Notable are the Gothic-style elegant **Town Hall** and the **Chocolate Museum**. In easy walking distance are **Brussels City Museum** which houses the Mannekin Pis costumes, **Royal St Hubert Galleries** which are home to lively cafes and one-of-a-kind boutiques and also the **Place du Grand Sablon** with its Classic European architecture, now housing high-class antiques stores, restaurants, and chocolate shops. Further out enjoy the **Musical Instrument Museum**, the **Comic Book Museum**, and the **Cathedral of Saints Michael and Gudula**.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15 * Day 1 of Tour**

We will be met by our Touring Driver Guide and Driver to board our vehicle. Our travel guide who will accompany us is an expert on the areas we will be visiting on this tour. He will share his knowledge and insight into the places where we visit and can recommend places to shop, have a drink, and dine in the various towns and villages and cities that we visit. Our guide will help us find the best locations to maximize our opportunity for world class images on our photography tour of Belgium and Northern France.

9:00 am Tour of Brussels

Our tour begins in Brussels for an overview city tour together.

A nearby castle garden offers the opportunity to walk in a virtual flower labyrinth, Groot-Bijgaarden. Here, flower lovers will have the opportunity to discover 500 varieties of Spring bulbs including 300 tulip varieties. This experience is only available for about 4 weeks each year!

Gent/Ghent is the capital of East Flanders; a university city, a port city criss-crossed by waterways and canals, home to two castles and dozens of museums featuring the works of the



'Flemish Primitive' Artists. Nowhere else will you find so much history per square metre in a pedestrian historical city centre. Enjoy a stunning city view from St Michael's Bridge, meander the Grote Markt and entrance into St Bavo's Cathedral featuring the VanEyck masterpiece, the 'Adoration of the Mystic Lamb.'

Overnight in Bruges Classic Twin Room/s on Bed & Breakfast basis. Grand Hotel Casselbergh or similar

THURSDAY, APRIL 16 * Day 2** Full day in Bruges at to explore at leisure.



Perhaps the most famed of all Flanders cities is Bruges/Brugge. This medieval gem with its scenic canals and cobbled streets, beautifully decorated houses, old guild halls and churches never fails to surprise and delight its visitors. Here there is the opportunity for a horse drawn carriage ride around the city, for shopping in the famous lace shops or for simply wandering the cobbled streets, soaking up the lovely atmosphere, munching a waffle or some frites.

There are a staggering 40 chocolateries with enticing shop windows full of authentic Belgian chocolates, plain and filled with a wide range of ingredients! There is even a Chocolate Museum showing the history from the Mayans, a factory tour, demonstration and, yes samples!

We'd most definitely recommend the Flanders Folk Museum where daily life has been wonderfully recreated. Also available, Groeninge art museum featuring the Masters; Gruuthusemuseum, a former medieval merchant's house with an interesting collection of tapestries and musical instruments and the Memling Museum, part of the St. John's Hospital chapel. Hans Memling is considered one of the most important 'Flemish primitives', although he was born in Germany.

Overnight in Bruges Classic Twin Room/s on Bed & Breakfast basis. Grand Hotel Casselbergh or similar

FRIDAY, APRIL 17 * Day 3**

A full day to today as we make our way into France and the Normandy coast. Our first stop is the maritime/coastal resort town of Oostende. Known for its lovely sandy beaches and Esplanade, it is a top holiday destination for the locals of Flanders.



A glimpse of mediaeval Rouen, an overview of this historical "capital city of Normandy" also dubbed the "City of a Hundred Spires" for many of its important edifices are churches. Even the briefest of visits to Rouen would not be complete without seeing the site where Saint Joan d'Arc was burned to death in 1431. Towering above the city is Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Rouen, the tallest spire in France immortalized by Claude Monet in a series of paintings.

Honfleur is your base this evening, a quaint harbour fishing town that is so pretty that it inspired many great artists. This lovely place also saw the launch of daring expeditions to the 'New World.' There are local art galleries, unique shops and atmospheric ancient back alleys as well as the opportunity to sample a snack of freshly caught local seafood.



Overnight in Honfleur Classic Twin Rooms on Bed & Breakfast basis Les Maisons de Léa or similar

SATURDAY, APRIL 18 ** Day 4**

There is the option to linger a bit in Honfleur this morning should we choose. We will spend our day along the scenic Normandy Coast. Along the way we will see Etretat, the famous coastal arch so often depicted in paintings.

Meander the local beach resort towns where upper crust French locals like to spend their holidays, towns such as Trouville-sur-Mer and Deauville, where Coco Chanel had her first boutique.

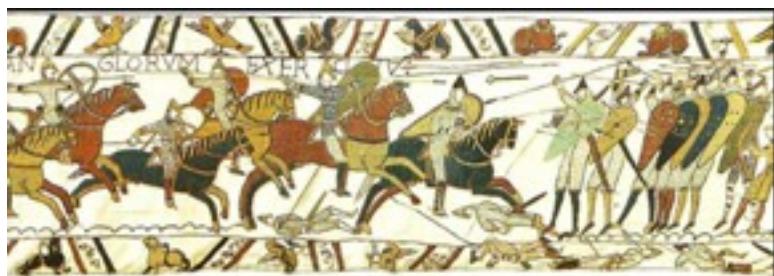


Later this afternoon, explore some of the D-Day Landing Beaches.

Our focus will be on the American involvement, visiting St Mere Eglise, where paratrooper John Steele landed on the roof of the church, and the poignant American Cemetery and Memorial at Omaha Beach.



Tonight we stay in the medieval town of Bayeux. As one guidebook says, 'Bayeux's perfectly preserved ensemble of medieval cathedral and world-famous tapestry of the battle of 1066, make it one of the high points of this part of Normandy'. In addition to the truly breathtaking tapestry and Cathedral Notre-Dame, you may also enjoy poking around the atmospheric streets and squares of the old town.



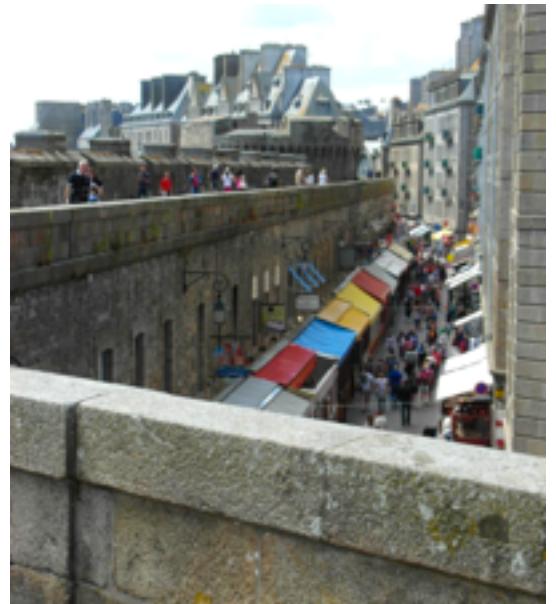
Overnight in BAYEUX Classic Twin Rooms on Bed & Breakfast basis Le Lion d'Or or similar

SUNDAY, APRIL 19 * Day 5**

We may choose to linger a bit in the town of Bayeux this morning but we've another full day today!

While Mont St-Michel may not still be the 'Mount in Peril' from the sea, this 10000 year old religious complex still appears to rise from the surrounding waters. This is one of the most popular attractions in France, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Guests may choose to climb the 8th Century Abbey, meander through the ancient narrow streets and enjoy the stunning views of the surrounding landscape over the bay.





Later, historic St Malo is sure to delight too, step back in time into its maritime past, but beware of pirates!

Our base for these two evenings is Dinan. Mediaeval magic awaits! The cobbled streets of Dinan make this one of the most attractive and best preserved small towns in Brittany. With its 1.8 mile/3km long ramparts, half-timbered houses, attractive port, art galleries and craft shops, this is a place well worth some of our time.



Overnight in Dinan Classic Twin Rooms on Bed & Breakfast basis Best Western Jerzual or similar



MONDAY, APRIL 20 * Day 6**

Rose/Pink Granite Coast or option to stay in Dinan independently

Today a glimpse into this unique area of France known as Brittany. A Celtic region with closer ties to Great Britain than France, we can explore some of the most stunning stretches of coastline! The Pink or Rose Granite Coast, so-called because of the colour of its rocks, is renowned for its unusual rock formations. The best of which can be found on the coastal path between Perros-Guirec and the port of Ploumanac'h.

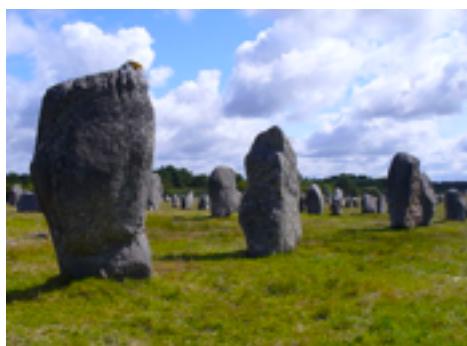


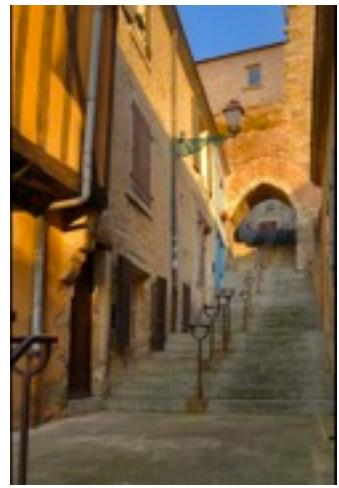
Overnight in DINAN Classic Twin Rooms on Bed & Breakfast basis Best Western Jerzual or similar

TUESDAY, APRIL 21 * Day 7**

Time this morning to linger in Dinan.

It will be the alignments at Carnac that will be the highlight of our day and surely provide one of the lasting memories of the region. Here some 2000 menhirs (standing stones) older than Stonehenge or the Pyramids, stand like sentinels guarding the Brittany coast line. Of course, like all prehistoric monuments, their origin can only be guessed at but astronomical clocks or temples to the gods of natural forces are the favoured explanations. Passing through Laval on the way to Le Mans

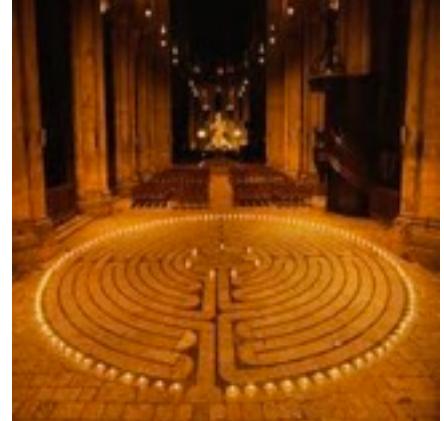
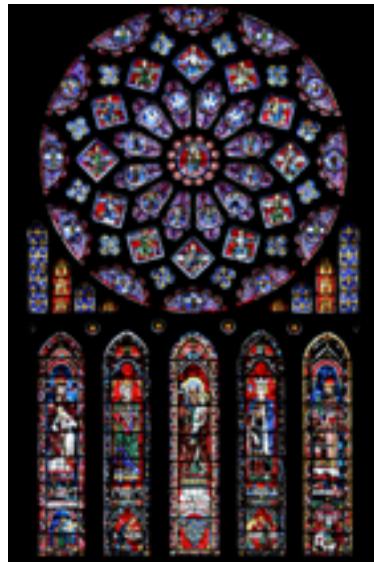
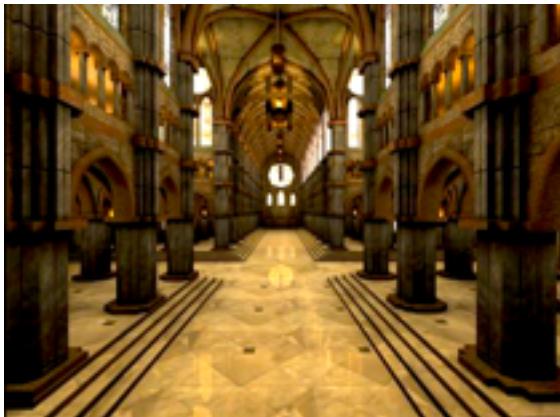




Overnight in LE MANS *Classic Twin Room/s on Bed & Breakfast basis*

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22 * Day 8**

Our final destination prior to Paris is the stunning masterpiece Chartres Cathedral. Pilgrims have been coming here for eight centuries to admire and seek inspiration from the most magnificent, and certainly most extensive stained glass windows to be seen anywhere in the world.



On arrival into 'the city of light' Paris, enjoy a panoramic orientation tour seeing an overview of the iconic highlights.

Overnight in PARIS *Classic Twin Room/s on Bed & Breakfast basis*

THURSDAY, APRIL 23 * Day 9**

Free day in Paris for individuals to do as they please; on own option to purchase a Paris Museum Pass and/or to take optional day trips to either Versailles or Giverny.

No driver/guide/vehicle services today

The PARIS MUSEUM PASS gives you direct access to over 60 museums and monuments of Paris and the Paris region, entrance fees and 'jump the ticketing queue' advantages included. Some of the major attractions included are: Louvre, Arc de Triomphe, St Chapelle, Notre Dame, Versailles...A 2 day pass costs \$89 USD each including shipping fees. There are also 4 and 6 day passes for those extending their stay. Note Giverny is NOT on the pass. <http://en.parismuseumpass.com/rub-museums-monuments-by-name-5.htm>

Giverny is where Claude Monet and his family settled in 1883, where he created a garden full of "perspectives, symmetries and colours." The garden is set into two main sections, a flower filled walled garden bordered by orchards and trees and a water park, made famous by his series of water lilies paintings.



You are free to choose from many wonderful options. Because there may be a wide variety choices made by participants, payment is on your own.



Overnight in PARIS Classic Twin Room/s on Bed & Breakfast basis Hotel Cecilia or similar

FRIDAY, APRIL 24 * DAY 10**

Free day in Paris for individuals to do as they please; option purchase a Paris Museum Pass and to take optional day trips to either Versailles or Giverny.

No driver/guide/vehicle services today



The Palace of Versailles, Louis XIV's greatest example of regal indulgence, was the seat of French Royal Court for 100 years until its demise in the French Revolution. At this UNESCO World Heritage site see the Sun King's royal apartments, the Hall of Mirrors (where the treaty of Versailles was signed to end WWI) and the overwhelming opulence of the park and gardens. The Gardens of Versailles cover some 800 hectares of land, much of which is landscaped in the classic French Garden style featuring meticulous manicured lawns, parterres of flowers and the famously unique fountains. Note that the palace can be very crowded, time of day recommendations apply.

Same options as on previous day in Paris

Overnight in PARIS Classic Twin Room/s on Bed & Breakfast basis Hotel Cecilia or similar

SATURDAY, APRIL 24

Optional airport transfers available or extend your stay in Paris independently.

Belgium & Northern France

Come Join the Journey!

April 14-24, 2015

Land only - Hotel, & Tour Package

\$3685 per person, double occupancy

(Pricing is based on a minimum of 12 participants).

Deposit \$500 per person at time of booking



SpecialGroupTours



What's Included

- Chauffeur Driver with a 16-seater mini-coach, parking fees, & tolls
- Overnight lodging in 3 - 4 star hotels in double occupancy rooms
- Full Breakfasts daily and taxes at all hotels

ENTRANCES:

- Spring Garden Display at Groot-Bijgaarden (Grand-Bigard) Castle
- Saint Bavo's Cathedral (with audio-guide)
- Alignements of Carnac (guided visit)
- Chartres Cathedral
- Guided visits with local guides in Brussels, Ghent, and Paris (panoramic tour)
- Guidance from Special Group Tours for additional lodging pre and post tour days

Prior to the tour:

Informational gathering at Gail's

Notebook with Photography Lessons and "Daily Sheets" for the featured Artists, Writers, Musicians, etc.

Suggested reading material and movies

Following the tour:

Festive post tour gathering at Gail's,

Includes a music CD and a photographic DVD of our tour, created by Gail



What's not Included

- Lunches and Dinners each day
- Optional entry fees
- Tip to your driver/ guides at the end of the trip
- Excess baggage
- Airfare
- items listed as OPTIONAL add-on -- available to be added for appropriate supplemental cost, such as Brussels accommodation, airport transfers, additional nights Paris etc.
- **Travel Insurance** is not included but highly encouraged. Ask for recommendations.



To join the journey, book your trip or, for more information contact:

**Gail Speckmann at 763-449-8640
2545 Queensland Lane North * Plymouth, MN 55447**

REGISTRATION FORM

INSTRUCTIONS: Please read and complete the information on this **form** and send to Gail Speckmann along with a **copy of your signed passport** (Includes photo).

One registration form per passenger, is required in order to be confirmed on the tour.

Name:

Address:

City, State, Zip

Home Phone

Cell Phone

email address:

Traveling companion

Emergency contact:, including phone number and relationship:

Terms and Conditions:

Initial Deposit: \$500 per person at time of booking

Final payment: Due by February 14, 2015

Cancellation Policy: All cancellations must be received in writing and are effective upon receipt by Gail. The following amounts will be withheld based on the cancellation time period.

120-90 days prior to scheduled departure	\$150.00 per person*
90 – 61 days prior to scheduled departure	25% of total price per person*
Within 60 days of scheduled departure	Non-refundable

*Trip cancellation insurance is available and is strongly recommended.

FULL BROCHURE IS ALSO ON www.gailspeckmann.com

