



The Forgotten Battlefields of Libya



British Veterans Travel offers the opportunity for those who fought in North Africa during WWII, particularly in Libya, to return to their battlefields and remember lost comrades. This short trip is supported by the Heroes Return scheme which provides funding to eligible individuals and a partner or carer.

Until now, visiting all the battlefields of the Western Desert Campaign of WWII has not been easy due to closed borders and red tape. British Veterans Travel, working with operators in Libya, is pleased to announce a trip that visits the strategic points of the campaign from Sidi Rezegh, Gazala, Tobruk and on to Benghazi. This Commemorative Tour will take place in October 2010 and offers the chance for WWII Veterans to visit Libya, for so long a country closed to tourism, and remember comrades whose graves remain carefully tended.

Highlights

- A jeep drive into the battlefields near Tobruk, including Sidi Rezegh and Gazala
- Opportunity for Remembrance at the Knightsbridge and Commonwealth War Cemeteries
- Chance to see the Australian Fig Tree Dugout Hospital, Rommel's Operations Bunker, Tobruk Harbour and the remains of the Lady Be Good aircraft lost on a sortie in 1943
- Visits to the ancient cities of Leptis Magna & Cyrene

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The Tour

British Veterans Travel is working with a trusted in-country tour operator to run the 8 night commemorative trip for veterans of WWII who served in North Africa. This will enable them to visit the battlefields and memorials from the Western Desert Campaign. The first of two tours to the region will take place from the 7th to 15th October 2010.

A representative of British Veterans Travel will lead the tour and a local guide with knowledge of the battlefields will accompany the group to provide information, answer any questions and bring the battles to life. Temperatures in the region at this time of year should be comfortable, however, consideration of the health & wellbeing of Veterans will always be a priority.

The Itinerary

The itinerary is as follows (subject to change)

Day 1 – Thursday 7th October
PM Flight to Libya; London to Tripoli
Internal flight Tripoli to Benghazi
Overnight Benghazi

Day 2 – Friday 8th October
AM Visit Commonwealth War
Cemetery and Liberation Square
PM Drive to Al-Bayda
Overnight Al-Bayda

Day 3 – Saturday 9th October
AM Visit Cyrene
PM Drive to Tobruk
Overnight Tobruk

Day 4 – Sunday 10th October
All Day Tobruk Harbour, Lady Be Good,
Rommel's Ops Room and
Gazala Battlefield
Overnight Tobruk

Day 5 – Monday 11th October
All Day Bardia and Fort Capuzzo (Optional)
Overnight Tobruk

Day 6 – Tuesday 12th October
All Day Sidi Rezegh Battlefield, German
Memorial, Commonwealth Cemetery
and Fig Tree Hospital
Overnight Tobruk

Day 7 – Wednesday 13th October
AM Knightsbridge Cemetery and
drive to Benghazi
PM Internal flight Benghazi to Tripoli
Overnight Tripoli

Day 8 – Thursday 14th October
AM Visit Leptis Magna
Overnight Tripoli

Day 9 – Friday 15th October
AM Visit British War Cemetery
PM Flight to UK: Tripoli to London

Travel

Return flights from London to Tripoli and return internal flights from Tripoli to Benghazi (taxes, duty and service charges included). Transport by air-conditioned coach throughout the tour, including all airport to hotel transfers. All flights are ATOL Protected (Licence Number 6512) through our partners Anglia Battlefield Tours Limited.

Accommodation and Meals

The tour includes 8 nights accommodation on a full board basis in Tourist Standard hotels, including refreshments while travelling and bottled water/soft drinks at meals.

Cost

The cost for the trip has been kept to a minimum and should be covered predominantly by 'Heroes Return 2' funding:

- £1,545 per person sharing
- £277 single supplement
- Deposit of £100 will be required to secure a place

The cost includes:

- All meals on a full board basis including bottled water/soft drinks
- Accommodation on a twin/double share basis (unless single room booked and paid for)
- All entrance fees and amateur camera fees
- Visa sponsorship, passport registration and travel permits
- English speaking local guide, local World War II historian and mandatory tourist police

Not included in the cost:

- Visa acquisition costs (£25 per person at current rates – subject to change)
- Personal items such as telephone calls, extra drinks, laundry, room service and tips

Administration

Passport A 10 year passport valid for 6 months beyond the dates of travel is required. Other passport conditions apply – please contact British Veterans Travel for advice.

Visa British Veterans Travel will arrange for your Visa at a current cost of £25 per person.

Inoculations/Health Your GP should be consulted for up-to-date advice.



Information and Contact

For more information about the tour, how to apply for 'Heroes Return 2' funding or to book a place, please contact

British Veterans Travel: Little Troys,
Faulkbourne, Witham, Essex CM8 1SL
Telephone; 01376 513215
email; info@britishveterans.co.uk
or visit www.britishveterans.co.uk

British Veterans Travel is part of British Veterans Recognition Card, the sole provider of a formal photo identity card for ex-servicemen and women. Run as a not-for-profit company, the organisation has been operating for 7 years.

In Retrospect

Where men's shadows, long since departed
From this stretch of battle scarred land,
Fell upon dugouts, minefields uncharted
Now silted up with coarse shifting sand.

There lie the tins of herring and bully
Rusted with age, but intact to see,
Here lays a button, glinting more dully
Than on the coat where it used to be.

A piece of a boot, Size 7, now shrunken
Cracked and distorted with nails falling free,
Some beer cans left, all of them drunken
Tragic remains of a light hearted spree.

Gone is the dread of a passing shell whining
The curse of a man now minus a hand,
Gone is the slaughter 'midst sun ever shining
The bloodshed and turmoil of a final last stand.

Spirits will wander the slopes and escarpment
The beaches and wastelands forever a day,
No one hereafter, writing on parchment
Will tell of such men more valiant than they.

The Desert's the same, unchanged by the action
As it has been for age after age,
What has passed is only a fraction
Measureless, timeless, on God's earthly stage.

*A personal thought from Frank Lamb
written in 1962 whilst in the desert near Tobruk, Libya.*

Heroes Return Scheme

Second World War veterans from across the UK, Channel Islands and Ireland are being awarded grants from the Big Lottery Fund to return to places across the world where they saw action.

Through the 'Heroes Return 2' programme veterans can apply for grants to cover travel and accommodation costs to revisit the places where they saw active service. Widows and widowers of veterans can also apply, and carers and spouses can receive funding to accompany them.

The funding for Heroes Return is due to cease in January 2011 so this year may be the last chance to access such financial support. British Veterans Travel will be conducting one more trip to the region in November, dates to be confirmed.

About the Western Desert Campaign (1940-1942)

The epic Western Desert Campaign of WWII was a continuous back-and-forth struggle between the Allied and the Axis forces, chiefly the British 8th Army and Rommel's Afrika Korps. Throughout this series of battles and stalemates both sides consistently showed fortitude, ingenuity and determination.

After an initial Italian invasion of Egypt, Italian forces were driven back into Libya, and Rommel was sent with the specially trained Afrika Corps to stem a further Italian retreat. The British were driven back to the Egyptian border, though they defended Tobruk. They counter-attacked late in 1941, and fighting continued the following year, with Rommel once more gaining the initiative at the prodigious Battle of Gazala. In October, British troops under Montgomery defeated Rommel at the Battle of El Alamein, and drove the German troops west once more.

So many famous British cap badges served as part of the 8th Army or attached to Commonwealth troops that, with recent amalgamations, most current regiments and corps will have Veterans who served in North Africa as part of their Association Memberships.

