

Outlook for Touring in Europe Next Autumn: But Promoter of Pleasure ...

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New York Times (1857-1922); May 18, 1919; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times

pg. 84

Outlook for Touring in Europe Next Autumn

But Promoter of Pleasure Travel, Just Returned, Says Conditions Will Be Far Below Normal Until Spring of 1920

FRANCE wants American tourists. So does Belgium. So does Italy. England does not.

By next Autumn, probably, tourists will be welcomed on the European Continent. American visitors to the battlefields of Northern France may be able to see them at a cost about two and a half times greater than the cost of European travel in normal times before the war.

Transatlantic steamship fares, when tourists are once more permitted to visit Europe, will probably be from 50 to 75 per cent. higher than in normal times. The scarcity of passenger steamships is expected to continue for some time.

The best time to see the battlefields of France and Belgium will be within the next year, as much of the area fought over is rapidly being restored to its pre-war condition. France, however, intends to preserve indefinitely certain battlefields and devastated places exactly as they are now.

These are among the statements made by Gilbert E. Fuller, President of the American Association of Tourist and Ticket Agents, who has just returned from a three months' trip to Europe. He went overseas to ascertain the feeling and prospects as regards American tourist travel. His trip took him to France, Belgium, England, and Italy. It included a ride in an American military automobile through Northern France and the Belgian battle area, and conferences with Government officials and representatives of tourist associations.

"France is keener to have American tourists than business men just now," said Mr. Fuller, "because she has as yet nothing to sell to the latter, whereas the former only ask to see the battlefields where the Americans and their allies fought.

"Château-Thierry and Belleau Wood may be visited in a day's trip from Paris. To see the Argonne, the Verdun district, and St. Mihiel, a trip of several days will be necessary. Already the French are

running sight-seeing cars seating twenty people to the battle area, at a cost of 150 francs (\$30) a day a person. The trip takes eight days. As there is practically no good hotel accommodation in the principal towns along the route, such as Château-Thierry, Rheims, and Verdun, the cars make detours to other towns less affected by the war.

"Château-Thierry is not badly damaged, and the interest of a trip there for Americans will be principally historical; the same is true of Belleau Wood. But when the traveler reaches the Argonne and the Verdun area, he will have infinitely more than historical associations to interest him. This is also the case in other sections of the great battle zone between Switzerland and the North Sea.

"For the guidance of tourists I would say that there are four kinds of areas which they should see in order to get a complete idea of what the war meant, namely:

"Districts showing the horror of war.

"Cities which were practically under constant shellfire and must be rebuilt.

"Districts showing the desolation of war.

"Districts showing the difficulties under which armies fought.

"The first of these is best typified, I think, by the road from Ypres to Menin, as it now is and must continue to be for many months. Nowhere else did I get such an idea of the horror of battle. On all sides were German 'pill boxes' shot to pieces, tanks lying in ponds many feet deep, at the bottom of vast shell holes, smashed by artillery fire. A ruined tank is a most pathetic animal; it is more human than any other kind of machinery. The sight of these monsters out there on the Menin road, lying among blackened stumps and seas of mud, was most mournful.

"Ypres is terribly impressive. We got there late one afternoon and saw the ruined Cloth Hall in the rays of a sombre sunset. It is a question in my mind

which is the more beautiful of the ruins made by this war—the Cloth Hall of Ypres or Rheims Cathedral. The Belgian Government has announced that Ypres is to be left just as it is, as a monument to British valor.

"The best examples of cities that were under incessant shellfire throughout the war are Rheims and St. Quentin. When you first enter them you do not realize the destruction wrought; many houses are standing and in some places the cities seem quite normal. But, after a second look, you see gashes and fissures and tottering walls, and you realize that not only must the entire city be rebuilt, but, on account of the shakiness of what is left standing, everything must first be torn down. I don't think there is a single building in places like St. Quentin and Rheims which must not give way to a new one.

"The Cathedral of Rheims is still closed to visitors, as stones often drop to the ground and it is considered dangerous to have persons inside. There is some fear that the whole structure may crumble; serious restoration work has not begun yet. As it now stands, it is a most beautiful ruin.

"In the Verdun area whole towns, villages, and forests have been blotted out. In Montfaucon, one of the places captured by the Americans in the Argonne battle after desperate fighting, only the vestiges of two houses remain. One is the observatory from which the German Crown Prince watched the battle of Verdun. He stood at one end of a periscope some fifty feet underground; the other end projected about forty feet above the ground.

"They tell a tale of an American General ordered to occupy a village in this devastated area who failed utterly to find the village because six inches of snow had fallen. And there is another story of a French officer, ordered to occupy a wood after a heavy bombardment, who could not find even a stump.

"For getting an idea of the difficulties of warfare there is no better place than the Argonne, through which the Americans fought their way last Fall. It is a lot of V-shaped valleys, where the Americans had to go down one slope and charge across marshy country and up the other slope in the face of terrible German machine-gun fire. No wonder the Germans thought the Argonne impregnable!

"The Argonne has not been cleaned up yet and is full of things that will be of the greatest interest to tourists. Deep trenches and thick wire entanglements are everywhere—I don't doubt that searchers can find skeletons without much trouble, if they want to. Among the most interesting features are the huge German 'permanent' camps, in which the German troops lived for four solid years before being driven away by the Americans and French. The Argonne, in the first years of the war, was so strong that it was looked upon as a rest area, and the camps there were constructed with extraordinary elaboration to house soldiers for long stays. Not far from Varennes is the so-called Prince Rupprecht's camp, a regular city, with electric-lighted dugouts, concrete walls, theatre, bandstand—in fact, equipped with all sorts of luxuries.

"As soon as tourists are allowed in France, the best short tour for them to take in order to see the battlefields where Americans fought and get a good idea of the war in general will be as follows: Paris to Château-Thierry, to Rheims, to Verdun. (Side trips from Verdun to the Argonne, St. Mihiel and back to Verdun.) Verdun to Paris.

"In Belgium I was told that everything was in readiness even now for tourists. Food is plentiful—more so than in any other European country I visited—but prices are high, as they are everywhere else. The Belgians have made no definite plans for handling tourists, but they have got as far as to map out tentatively automobile tours from Brussels to Louvain and other places made famous in the German invasion. Nor have the French yet reached the point of making definite plans on a large scale for meeting the expected influx of Americans, though there is no question about their eagerness to receive them. The Tourists' Association of France has suggested to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that tourists be allowed to visit France, but that all details of their trip—expenses, duration, and route—be prearranged. One reason for this is that the French have grown sensitive at the criticism leveled at them by American soldiers on account of the high prices, and feel that, if tours are prearranged, there will be no chance for tourists to accuse the French of extortion, since the cost of the trip will be paid in advance and the tourist will not be compelled to argue about rates for travel and hotel accommodations.

"At first the representatives of French tourist associations whom I met showed a tendency to limit the freedom of tourists quite seriously as to routes and the like, but their attitude changed later, and it is probable that, when American tourists get to France, they will have considerable latitude in the choice of routes and will be allowed far more freedom of movement on the actual battlefields than the French originally planned to give them.

"Tourists must bear in mind that prices in Europe are very high. Much of the traveling must be done in automobiles, the charge for which is somewhat more than \$1 a mile. Gasoline, when I was in Europe, cost \$5 a gallon. Food prices are up everywhere. In Paris a good dinner, not including wine, comes to about \$15 per person. Once I had

an order of asparagus that cost me \$16—one dollar a stalk!

"Italy wants tourists, but food is scarce there just now and no definite plans have been made. Excursions are being run from Venice to Monte Grappa, the centre of the defense against the Austrian attack of last June. I understand that the lower Piave presents much of interest, but nothing definite regarding tours to that region has yet been arranged. Venice is almost deserted at present.

"Switzerland wants tourists, but just now it is one of the most difficult countries in Europe to enter or leave.

"England's principal reasons for unwillingness to have tourists just yet are lack of food and the fact that most of the great London hotels have been commandeered for Government offices and their interiors entirely transformed, so that, even if they were again available as hotels, they could not be made ready for tourists for some time. In Paris comparatively few hotels were taken over by the Government—palatial private residences were preferred—so that the Paris hotel men are only too ready for Americans.

"Another reason for the reluctance to receive tourists in England is that, during the war, many English families gave up their homes and went to live in hotels, and they resent being dispossessed in favor of American tourists.

"Before there can be much tourist travel, of course, the question of passports must be settled. Few except those with business to transact are allowed to travel. At present passports are demanded everywhere. To go from England to France, for instance, I had to have my passport vised six times—by the American Consul, the English police, the French Consul, (to whom I had to present three photographs of myself,) the French Military Control, the inspector on the boat crossing the Channel, and the police at Paris. To go from France

to Italy was even worse, as I had to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning for the first visé.

"Germany is not on the map so far as prospective tourist travel is concerned. Aside from the fact that people don't want to go there, no tourist agency is making any plans for travel in Germany. This applies to the Rhine area occupied by allied troops as well as to the rest of Germany.

"The French hope that many Americans who formerly sojourned at German and Austrian health resorts, like Wiesbaden, Homburg, Marienbad and Karlsbad, will stay instead at French watering places—such as Aix-les-Bains. They hope that Americans, instead of visiting old German cities and regions of natural beauty, will go to see the French châteaux such as Pierrefonds, comparatively little known to our tourists, and beautiful old French cities like Caracassonne. The Italians expect their visitors to show an interest in the sections of Tirol and the Dolomites which will be Italian, and to pay more attention to the Italian lakes.

"As for the new countries of Europe, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, nothing has been done in the way of arranging for tourist travel. Conditions are too unsettled in these regions for anybody to think of such things.

"Shortage of steamships for the transportation of tourists will continue, I think, for a considerable time after travelers are permitted to go from America to Europe. At first only the few steamers now carrying passengers across the Atlantic will be available for sightseers—those of the French, Holland-America, Scandinavian-American, Norwegian-American, Swedish-American, and Spanish lines. England will probably not release any ships for passengers for some time, and the same is true of the United States. There is, however, a possibility that the German steamers now being operated by the United States



Signal Corps, U. S. A.

American Soldiers Sightseeing in Germany. It is a Strange Sight for the Old Schloss Montebaur to Look Down Upon, But One of the Commonest Sights Nowadays in the Countries of the Old World. A Veteran of the 27th Division Who Lately Applied for Re-enlistment at the Government Recruiting Station, 461 Eighth Avenue, Said That He Was Rejoining the Army Because He Wanted to "Make Another Sightseeing Trip Through the Old Countries."

as transports may be made available for tourists. These include the Leviathan, Amerika, George Washington, President Grant, and President Lincoln. Travel to the Mediterranean will be particularly difficult for a time. In fact, although Europe will be ready for tourists in the Autumn, I do not expect to see European tourist travel anywhere near normal until next Spring."



U. S. Official Photo.

Refugees in the Railroad Station at Ekaterinburg, Siberia. Whole Families of Russians Have Lived Herded Together for Months. Daily Many Are Moved to the Hospitals With Typhoid Fever and Other Diseases.