




CAMPAIGNS
and Culture

Cavalié Mercer's G Troop RHA
'Journal of the Waterloo Campaign'
9 days Bespoke tour 2024

"The gentle Waterloo tour filled with real personality"

A Bespoke tour run to your dates and modified to your requirements



The Life & Campaign of Waterloo's most famous junior officer

Captain Cavalié Mercer's personal journey through the Waterloo Campaign

The momentous events of 18th June 1815 still shape the world we enjoy today. Amongst the many who participated and recorded their experiences, one man's record has risen to the very top. Captain Alexander Cavalié Mercer of the élite Royal Horse Artillery's famous 'Journal of the Waterloo Campaign', much admired, debated and critiqued by historians and enthusiasts, is often cited as the finest battlefield account of all time.

So what turned an ordinary man, faced with extraordinary events, into the legend he became? Drawing on unique and extensive unpublished research we establish the truth, the doubts, and how his experience compared to those around him in the incredible events they shared. And what of his life, before and after, what made Mercer the father and General that he became?

We discovered and led the restoration of his grave in 2015, which you can read about on our website (CampaignsandCulture.com/Research/G-Troop-RHA) and followed in his footsteps, from archives to places, we're rather well placed to illustrate the man and his times. On this journey we follow Mercer and G Troop's route to Bruges, staying where he stayed, dining where he dined, following the key parts of his route as he and his troop trained and enjoyed their leisure during the weeks before the fighting commenced.

We head across the countryside of the cavalry cantonments, his sojourn at Strijtem, the grand review and sightseeing at Kasteel Gaasbeek with the incomparable Marquis Arconati. Then follow his route on the roads packed with cavalry towards Quatre Bras, the confusion of awaiting orders, the view as smoke rose on the horizon as they approached with trepidation and excitement.

His life before Waterloo was incredible, his mother sadly died whilst he was young, we have tales of his brothers, his sister, his father, of harsh schooling, servants, pirates, how he almost become a cavalryman, all under the tutelage of his father, a General of Engineers who served in the American War of Independence.

Beyond Waterloo we share tales of his highs and lows in Paris, the tragic family events of the next few years, his service in Canada, his one surviving son and tales of visits to the old General Mercer who never retired.



Mercer's descriptive and often hilarious recollections of landscape, architecture, people and places, of feelings, failings and triumph will be fully brought to life, interspersed with revelations from our own study of his letters and manuscripts and our discoveries during his grave restoration.

Back on the tour we arrive at Quatre Bras, following Mercer's rearguard actions through Genappe, revealing many aspects of the campaign that remain virtually untold to this day, before arriving at Waterloo for the "Memorable day!" as Mercer describes it. We visit all his gun positions, absorb his words, explain what was happening around him, appreciate the impact of the French cavalry charges and follow his walking explorations the following day down to Hougomont.

Mercer's descriptions of architecture are memorably interwoven into his journal, none less so than in Grand Place, Brussels, which we visit alongside other Mercer sites in the capital.

Whilst we don't have time to include many of the more detailed tactical aspects of our Waterloo Anniversary Battlefield & Campaign Tour we do explore the context of the campaign in wider detail, from the plans and expectations of the Allies, how this impacted the unfolding campaign, and we can of course cover as much or as little as you wish on your Bespoke tour.

16th June 1815	Quatre Bras (the very tail end!)
17th June 1815	Genappe
18th June 1815	Waterloo

If you would like to combine your Mercer tour with a full Waterloo campaign tour covering the other battlefields in detail we can make that happen. We also cover the first two battles of Waterloo (yes there were two before 1815!) and so much more, fully adapting the itinerary to suit your requirements.

We'll happily discuss all the options and help you to decide what may suit you best.

Mercer left us the finest literary account of Waterloo, but besides the evocatively descriptive battle scenes, most notable are the little things that he mentions, those that most observers would never write. A keen observer of people, places, and countryside, this is truly the tour for those interested in the lives of the era.

Your Bespoke guided tour



Dates

To suit your requirements

Typical Duration

Eight days / Seven Nights

All-Inclusive Premium

We specify superior rooms in all of our historic 4/5-star hotels, each superbly located to meet our itinerary.

We use premium transport throughout, by four wheel drive or VIP minibus.

All guiding, transport, hotel rooms, breakfasts, light lunches, a la carte dinners with wine and entrance fees are included, plus a few extra treats along the way.

You will be responsible for your personal travel insurance and any non-itinerary purchases or extras required by you, such as room service, additional drinks and any medical treatment.

Getting There

We start in Bruges, and end in Waterloo, but will happily help you plan and assist your journey to and from there, whether that be London, Brussels or wherever suits.



Culinary Attractions



We delight in good food and wine

We do more than just enjoy great food and wine in our carefully tried and tested restaurant choices for our evening meals; we've ensured great tastes along the way.

In Bruges we make impromptu stops at numerous chocolate emporiums, including one named in the Michelin Guide! If beer is your tippie then a brewery tour awaits too.

In Ghent we enjoy one of the finest restaurants in the City, whilst in Waterloo we enjoy a range of our top restaurants, and one special lunch in our favourite spot in Brussels.

Everything is built around how we would like to enjoy a holiday, and how we think you will too!

Our chocolate stops include a visit to a true master chocolatier (and historian!) whose reputation is such that he has no website, but combines intoxicating flavours in his creations: Myrrh & Frankincense? Sunflower & Paprika? Wood & Tobacco? Ganache & Porcini? Wow!



Your Bespoke tour

Bruges, Ghent, Waterloo

Our research uncovered Bruges' Navarra, the original "Hôtel du Commerce" described in Mercer's Journal. Still boasting a staircase installed for Napoleon, this is where we stay for our first two nights. What a fabulous start!

We then enjoy the Grand Reylof for two nights, the "Pepper Street Palace" described by Mercer in Ghent, the city's finest and most historic hotel.

Our four night Waterloo sojourn is at its best hotel, originally built as a "sucrerie" when sweet tastes were all the rage.

Throughout we aim to provide the very best thoughtful, personalised experiences for all our guests, whether your interests are historic, geographic, cultural, gastronomic or a bit of each. We aim for quality through and through.

We plan our tours to make them as fun, responsive and memorable as they can be, rather than planned down to a cost.

We also journey at a comfortable pace so you have time to appreciate and absorb the incredible history of the places we visit.

Whilst we delight in sharing knowledge and enthusiasm, we promise never to lecture or talk at you, preferring a conversational, friendly style.



Typical Day by Day bespoke itinerary

DAY 1 Gather, Meet & Greet

We gather at our hotel where Mercer dined and slept. Welcome, tour introduction, Royal Guild of St. Sebastiaan (the founding place of the Grenadier Guards), the old cavalry barracks, acclimatisation sightseeing, era setting & dinner.

DAY 2 Cultural Bruges

Introduction to Mercer and G Troop RHA. Follow Mercer in his tour of the sights of Bruges including Markt Square & Belfort, Eglise Notre Dame, Michelangelo's Madonna & Child, canal trip, Burg Square & Stadhuis, tales from Mercer's early life, his first impression of the continent and continentals, chocolate & beer.

DAY 3 Ghent & King Louis XVII

To Ghent, checking into Mercer's 'Pepper Palace' hotel. We visit Louis XVII's rooms at Hotel d'Hane-Steenhuysse, talk of Marshal Massena, taste chocolate, view the great cannon, the castle, the hôtel where Mercer was careful of French spies, and enjoy an illuminated evening walk beside the canal.

DAY 4 Cantonments, Pleasures & Orders

Travelling through Mercer's eyes, we arrive on the banks of the river Dender, location of the grand cavalry review with Wellington & Blücher, the village of Strijtem to see the Chateau where Mercer was billeted, and we enjoy the Kasteel and grounds of fabulous Gaasbeek where Mercer loved to walk, before returning to Ghent for our second night in the hotel.

DAY 5 Off we go, the Campaign is here!

After a visit to Ninove, Uxbridge's HQ, we follow Mercer as he sets off on his route that will eventually take him to Quatre Bras via the Enghien park wall, Braine le Comte, Bois de la Houssiere and Nivelles. We follow this route without Mercer's alarm and concern, stopping at numerous points that he described. From Nivelles we head to our Waterloo hotel.

DAY 6 Mercer arrives at Quatre Bras & retreat

We rejoin Mercer's route travelling to Quatre Bras via Houtain le Val. We review the strategic situation of the 16th June, exploring aspects of the battlefield of Quatre Bras and the route of Wellington's retreat on the 17th. We find Mercer's firing position, the lane where he was nearly captured leading the horse artillery of the central rearguard, review what really happened at Genappe, then back to the sandpit from where he discovered the army in position at Waterloo.



Your Guide

Robert Pocock



The acknowledged authority on the life of Cavalié Mercer, the most famous junior officer at Waterloo and author of the finest first-hand account of any military campaign.

Robert's extensive original research casts an exceptional light on accepted history. His studies of Mercer's intimate diaries introduces us to a fascinating individual and life.

Robert has brought to life fresh knowledge on the soldier's sojourns in the medieval cities of Bruges and Ghent, visiting ancient chateaux and landscapes, bringing a fresh dynamic to the Waterloo story.

Robert is the Founder, Owner & Director of Campaigns & Culture Ltd.

We finish with a visit to the Lion Mound, Panorama & Memorial museum to enjoy some of the wider aspects of the era, the arms, the uniforms and how the battle is remembered today.

DAY 7 Battle of Waterloo & Mercer

Exploring aspects of the battlefield, we visit the French front line at Belle Alliance for an appreciation of the artillerymen's horizon during the battle, explain the actions of the French artillery and the initial French advance, bringing in the tale of all the Royal Horse Artillery troops and their leadership.

We then cover the centre of the allied line, the crossroads and La Haye Sainte, the hard hits to Ross' Chestnut troop and the rocket role of Whinyates' troop.

We visit Mercer's overnight and initial position in reserve at Mont St Jean, before moving to his first firing position near Braine L'Alleud and then his renowned position at the centre of the allied ridge, beside the Brunswickers and the Guards, close to the famed battalions of the former Light division of the Peninsular War.

Covering the grand French cavalry charges and defeat of the French Imperial Guard, and his colleague RHA troops, we explain the activities of the nearby in Bull, Ramsay and Webber-Smith, and where Gardiner's troop comes into the story.

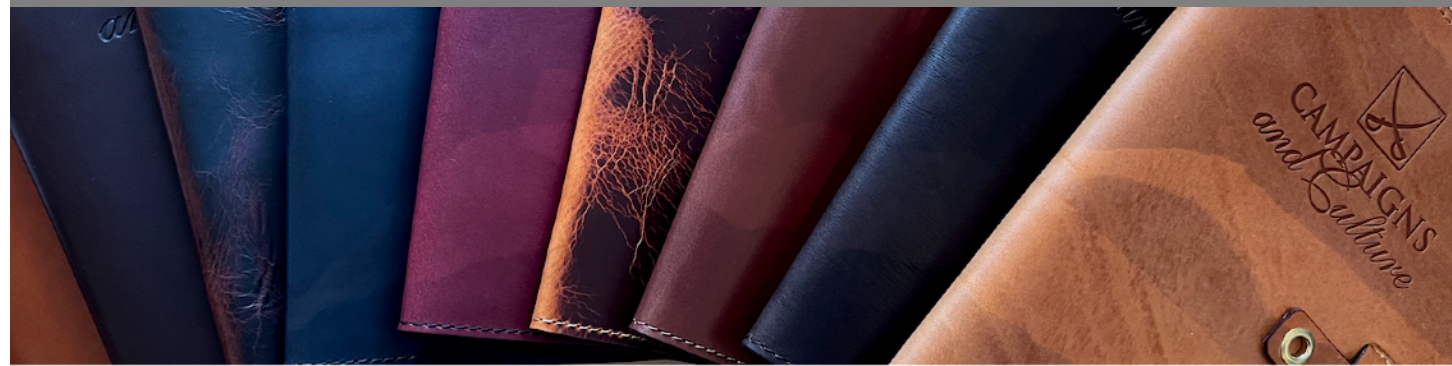
We visit Hougoumont just as Mercer did the day after the battle, the farm courtyard, and formal garden.

DAY 8 Brussels & Remembrance

We visit Brussels to view it through the eyes of Mercer, with his wonderful description of the Grand Place and other sights, with time for a little shopping, before returning to Waterloo after lunch. We visit the Wellington museum and the Royal Chapel, where memorials to many artillerymen and others who were less fortunate on the day of Waterloo can be found.

DAY 9 Farewell

Questions & Answers to fill any remaining gaps, head home.



Historic Sightseeing



including Mercer's experiences at ...

Hotel du Commerce, Bruges

The 'Pepper Street Palace', Ghent

The Grand Cavalry review

Strijtem Chateau

Kasteel Gaasbeek

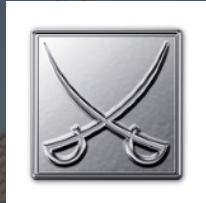
Quatre Bras firing positions

Uxbridge's one-way lane

Rearguard actions at Genappe

Mont St Jean, Waterloo flank position &
Mercer's Ridge at Waterloo

Your Journey



TOUR PRICE GUIDE

Bespoke Price guide £5,995 per person, assuming two guests travelling with our guide in one vehicle, guests sharing a double / twin superior room

Single occupancy supplement £995

Prices may vary depending on season, numbers travelling and bespoke choices made.

LOYALTY REWARDS

Former Guests receive a loyalty discount of £300 per person on each tour joined.





A few of our other treats



Cultural as much as Historical

Grenadier Guards

The First Regiment of Guards was founded by Charles II in Bruges in 1656 at what is now the Crossbow Guild. A very special tour of hallowed halls.

Kasteel Gaasbeek

Jewel in the Crown of Belgian Heritage, and in 1815 home to a fabulously wealthy Marquis who indulged in all things Turkish!

Historic Brussels

Where was Wellington, de Lancey, the Prince of Orange, the Belgian King? Where did the army march from? The Grand Place and much more.

Napoleon's Scent

We try three of his extraordinary 'parfums', and for the ladies Josephine's and Marie Antoinette's favourite.

Fitness Guide



Reasonable, but we'll go at your pace



We'll experience plenty of cobbled streets that in our experience are best tackled with firm, durable, grippy shoes with solid soles and great padding.

In the countryside we take some short walks along a variety of paths and dirt tracks which can vary from dust to grit to mud depending on the weather, so sensible walking shoes or walking boots (ideally waterproof) are recommended.

Expect to walk reasonable distances of a few miles each day.

High heels are rarely appropriate even in cities due to the cobbles.





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We're happy to help

To discuss or to reserve your interest please contact us through the website, by email, or call us on UK 01805 43 1066 (or from overseas +44 1805 43 1066)

We look forward to responding to any questions and welcoming you on tour

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