



Veterans Affairs
Canada

Anciens Combattants
Canada



Vimy

Vimy Ridge National
Historic Site of Canada

Canada

Vimy Ridge

The Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada is a tribute to all Canadians who risked or gave their lives for freedom and peace in the First World War.

“To the valour of their countrymen in the Great War and in memory of their sixty thousand dead this monument is raised by the people of Canada.”

-Inscription on monument

The Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada stands on Hill 145, the highest point of the 14-kilometre long Vimy Ridge. In the First World War, the Ridge was a highly significant part of the German defence system. Although French troops, in fierce and bloody battles in 1914 and 1915, had pushed the German line eastwards, they failed to take the Ridge, which became strongly fortified. Superb planning and training ensured that the Canadian Corps would achieve its goal.

At daybreak on April 9, 1917, all four divisions of the Canadian Corps (aided by the British 5th Division and a considerable number of artillery units), fighting together for the first time, stormed the Ridge. Preceded by a perfectly-timed artillery barrage, the Canadians advanced and, by mid-afternoon, had taken all their objectives except Hill 145 which was captured the following day. Then on April 12, the 4th Canadian Division, with the British 24th Division on their left flank, took the Pimple at the northern end of the Ridge.





The hard-fought victory was swift, but did not come without cost. Out of 10,602 casualties, 3,598 Canadians gave their lives.

The victory at Vimy was a significant landmark for Allied fortunes in the First World War and back home in Canada, it united Canadians and brought honour and pride to the young nation.

The Monument

Designed by Canadian sculptor and architect Walter Seymour Allward, the monument took eleven years to build. It rests on a bed of 11,000 tonnes of concrete, reinforced with hundreds of tonnes of steel. The towering pylons and sculptured figures contain almost 6,000 tonnes of limestone brought to the site from an abandoned Roman quarry on the Adriatic Sea (in present day Croatia). The figures were carved where they now stand from huge blocks of this stone. A cloaked figure stands at the front, or east side, of the

monument overlooking the Douai Plain. It was carved from a single, 30-tonne block and is the largest piece in the monument. This sorrowing figure of a woman represents Canada—a young nation mourning her dead. Below is a tomb, draped in laurel branches and bearing a helmet and sword.

On each side of the front walls at the base of the steps are the Defenders: two groupings of figures known as the Breaking of the Sword and Sympathy for the Helpless. Above each grouping is a cannon, silent now and draped in laurel and olive branches.

Carved on the walls of the monument are the names of 11,285 Canadian soldiers who were killed in France and whose final resting place was then unknown. Standing on the monument's wide stone terrace overlooking the broad fields and rolling hills of Northern France, one can see other places where Canadians fought and died. More than 7,000 are buried in 30 war cemeteries within a 20-kilometre radius of the Vimy Memorial. Altogether, more than 66,000 Canadian service personnel died in the First World War.

The twin white pylons, one bearing the maple leaves of Canada, the other the fleurs-de-lys of France, symbolize the sacrifices of both countries. At the top are figures representing Peace and Justice; below them on the back of the pylons are the figures representing Truth and Knowledge. Around these figures are shields of Canada, Britain and France. At the base of the pylons is a young dying soldier, the Spirit of Sacrifice, and the Torch Bearer. On each side of the staircase are the male and female Mourner figures.

The Restoration

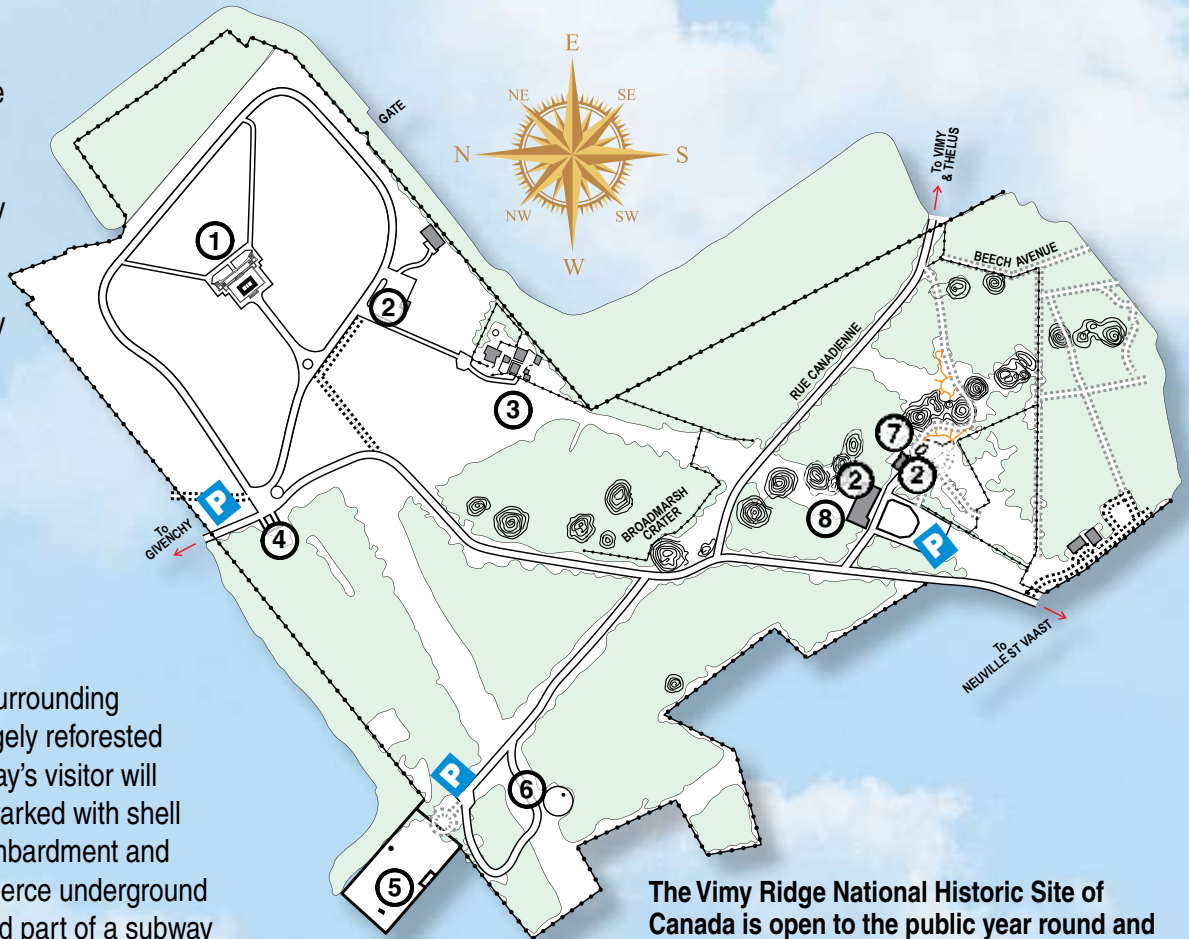
As an important cultural resource located on a significant historic site, the restoration of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial raised serious conservation issues and presented unique technical challenges. The history of the monument's construction and the vision of its creator guided the restoration team in carrying out the work with particular care and craftsmanship.

Construction and restoration of the Canadian National Vimy Memorial took place over a two-year period and was completed in 2007. The work included dismantling and rebuilding stone structures in the monument's platform and vertical walls, replacing and re-engraving damaged stone, repointing the two massive pylons, cleaning the twenty statues that adorn the monument, and improving the drainage and lighting systems.



Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada

1. The Monument
 2. Public washrooms
 3. Administrative office
 4. Moroccan Division Monument
 5. Canadian Cemetery No. 2
 6. Givenchy Road Canadian Cemetery
 7. Subway/Restored Trenches
 8. Visitors Centre
- P** Parking lots



The Site

The 107-hectare site surrounding the monument was largely reforested to prevent erosion. Today's visitor will find the ground pock-marked with shell holes from artillery bombardment and mine craters from the fierce underground war. Some trenches and part of a subway have been conserved and the visitor can picture the magnitude of the task that faced the Canadian Corps on that distant dawn when history was made.



The Vimy Ridge National Historic Site of Canada is open to the public year round and is free of charge.

Visitor Centre opening hours:

10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. - April to October

9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. - November to March

Guided tours: May to November

Information / Reservations:

(from Canada) **011 333 2276 7086**

(in France) **03 22 76 70 86**

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This publication is available upon request in other formats.

Web site: www.vac-acc.gc.ca

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