
FROM THE DESK OF
HENRY R. LEWIS
Chief Executive Officer
VANTAGE DELUXE TRAVEL



"I visited Normandy to honor my father, Cpl. Edward Lewis (left), who took part in the D-Day landings. I invite you to come to Normandy to honor our D-Day heroes and pass their legacy on to future generations."

~ Henry R. Lewis, Founder & CEO,
Vantage Deluxe World Travel

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Dear Traveler,

Let me tell you a story about one American hero and why I took my family on a long-overdue pilgrimage to the D-Day Landing Beaches in Normandy, France.

That hero was my father, Cpl. Edward Lewis, and he was just one of the more than 300,000 young soldiers who landed at the Normandy beaches during the invasion that began on June 6, 1944 — D-Day. But what my family and I learned on that moving Normandy visit in 2013 — the same visit you can take on our ***Normandy & D-Day Landing Beaches*** River Cruise, wasn't about just my dad. It was about the sacrifice that all of those soldiers made 72 years ago and what their heroism means to us today, and to the next generation.

Here, in brief, is my dad's story: Edward Lewis was drafted into the Army in 1943 from his home in Boston's working-class Dorchester neighborhood. After boot camp and initial training, he found himself in England, where he became one of the hundreds of thousands of soldiers training for Operation Overlord — the Normandy invasion. His machine-gun platoon was part of the 1st Battalion, 119th Infantry Regiment. And, although they landed a week after the initial assault, before his war was over, he and his fellow soldiers would fight their way across France, into Belgium and on to Germany and the Nazi surrender.

Within a month of landing, Cpl. Lewis would be awarded the Bronze Star for heroic achievement in France, after his platoon became scattered by heavy enemy shelling. He quickly rallied his disorganized men and led them forward to rejoin their rifle company. He then directed their machine-gun fire, enabling his company to drive back the enemy and take a key position. He was 22 years old.

My dad and his fellow soldiers went on to fight in many more battles, but perhaps none so grim as their part in the Battle of the Bulge, when the 1st Battalion stopped a ferocious German assault in the bitter December cold of Bastogne, Belgium. The battalion would be cited for Battle Honors for fighting off three enemy counterattacks despite being badly decimated, with many officers killed or wounded. My dad would come out of Bastogne with a Purple Heart and a battlefield commission to 2nd Lieutenant. Today, his medals sit on my desk and the official citations of his awards are framed on my office wall.

As proud as I am of my father and his service, I know he was just one of many thousands of heroes who left their homes and families to fight for freedom. Many of you also had fathers, grandfathers, other relatives, and family friends who fought in World War II, whether in Europe or the Pacific, and grew up with the kind of stories that I did. And perhaps like me, you made a vague promise to one day go to Normandy to honor those soldiers and that time of heroism.

It wasn't until after my father died, however, that I realized that I had let too much time slip away, and that if my generation didn't take responsibility for passing along the legacy of our World War II heroes, our memory of the incredible sacrifices they made would fade away. That's why in 2013 my wife Tricia, my children Jackie and Nick, and I went Normandy. Unless you've been there yourself, I don't think I can begin to convey how moving it was to walk on the very beach where my father's regiment came ashore on June 13, 1944, or to see those perfectly straight rows of white headstones above the more than 6,000 dead in the Normandy American Cemetery. And to realize that when my father's regiment landed, Edward Lewis was younger than my own daughter Jackie at the time of our visit to Normandy.

It was also during my visit that I made another promise to myself: I would share this experience with as many other Americans as I could. That's when our Seine river cruise team and I began working to make the Normandy beaches the centerpiece of our new ***Normandy & the D-Day Landing Beaches*** river cruise.

After my physical and spiritual journey, I understood how important it was for all of us to honor and remember our D-Day heroes, and I wanted make sure that every American family would have the same opportunity that mine did. That's why we arranged a full day on the D-Day Landing beaches, with visits to Pointe du Hoc, where Army Rangers scaled the sheer cliffs in a now-legendary assault, to Omaha Beach, where so many died coming ashore; and to the Normandy American Cemetery, where we take part in a solemn wreath-laying ceremony.

You and your family are invited to visit this hallowed ground at a remarkable price, with the full 8-day cruise beginning at **just \$1,799 per person**. Departures are limited, so I urge you to make your reservation today by calling our reservation line at **1-800-322-6677**. You can read about this special voyage on our website at www.vantagetravel.com/sed17. Use **code P1-W160** when you reserve — and tell them Hank sent you.

I know that I'll be forever grateful that I made that pilgrimage with my family to honor my father and the other American heroes of World War II. If you've made that trip yourself, you know what I mean. If not, you owe it to yourself and your family to go, and you owe it to all those thousands of American heroes who gave so much, to ensure that the memory of their sacrifice is not lost to future generations.

Regards,



Henry R. Lewis
President & Chief Executive Officer