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Ottawa, Ontario
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www.warmuseum.ca

The Canadian War Museum

Educate. Preserve. Remember. This is the mandate of the Canadian War Museum (CWM), Canada's national museum of military history. Meeting this mandate — by educating present and future generations on Canada's military heritage, preserving historical artifacts, and encouraging Canadians to reflect on past sacrifices — will help to ensure that the memory and meaning of Canada's military past will never be forgotten.

Located on the southern bank of the Ottawa River, the CWM is one of Canada's most significant museums. A stunning architectural design, innovative exhibitions, diverse public programmes and leading-edge scholarly content make it one of the world's most respected museological venues for the study and understanding of armed conflict.

The theme of the Museum's architectural design, "regeneration", evokes not only the impact of war on the land, but also nature's ability to regenerate and to accommodate the physical devastation wrought by human conflict. A low-lying building that merges into the surrounding landscape, the CWM features a gently sloping roof covered with vegetation and copper sheathing, as well as a rooftop Memorial Garden. As it reaches towards the Peace Tower, the Museum sweeps up to a height of 24.5 metres (80 feet), framing Parliament Hill.



H. Foster, CMCC

At 11:00 a.m., each November 11, the sun will shine through the window of the Museum's Memorial Hall and illuminate the only artifact in that space: the headstone of Canada's Unknown Soldier.



H. Foster, CMCC

View of the Canadian War Museum from Victoria Island.



Canada



The Canadian War Museum traces its origins back to 1880, when it consisted primarily of a collection of militia artifacts. In 1967, it moved to an old archives building on Sussex Drive in Ottawa, with most of its collections stored in a converted streetcar barn in west-central Ottawa. In May 2001, the federal government announced its support for the construction of a new Canadian War Museum on the prime LeBreton Flats site in downtown Ottawa. Its opening in May 2005 not only marked the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe, but also the 125th anniversary of the Canadian War Museum itself.

Permanent Exhibition — The Canadian Experience Galleries

The Canadian War Museum's Permanent Exhibition is divided into four chronological galleries, from earliest times to the most recent military operations. A fifth gallery, the Royal Canadian Legion Hall of Honour, chronicles the history and importance of remembrance in the Canadian military experience. Each gallery highlights defining moments in Canada's military history, and the ways in which past events have shaped the nation. More importantly, the exhibitions use the human experience of war — told mainly through the personal stories, artifacts and recollections of ordinary Canadians — to engage visitors in a personal dialogue about their country, its past, and its prospects.

Visitors can explore each gallery of the Permanent Exhibition separately from a central hub, or experience them sequentially in a walk through time which transports them across the country and around the world, from the South African veldt to the mountains of Afghanistan. As visitors journey across the centuries and around the globe, they will meet the men and women who — in war, in peace and on the homefront — have contributed to the development of Canada's social and political fabric. The story of conflict is a story as old as time, and the Canadian War Museum is dedicated to bringing this story to life as it familiarizes visitors with the human side of war. It is a story told primarily through the histories of individuals, rather than through objects and artifacts.

The following provides a brief description of the Permanent Exhibition storyline, detailing the primary chronological galleries and exhibition highlights.

Gallery 1. Battleground

Wars on Our Soil from Earliest Times to 1885

This gallery explores warfare from pre-contact Canada to the Battle of Batoche in 1885. It examines the sophisticated military organizations and equipment of early First Peoples, and the conflicts that resulted as European powers began to establish themselves throughout North America. This gallery pays particular attention to the military history of New France and to the roles played by British forces and local militias after 1763 in the expansion of Canada and its defence against internal and external threats. A major highlight of this gallery is an in-depth study of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham at Quebec City in 1759.



History Collection, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax,
P179/59.60.3/-14, 501

Gallery 2. For Crown and Country

The South African and First World Wars, 1885–1931

In this gallery, the focus shifts to Canada's military involvement overseas. From colonial participation in conflicts such as the South African War in 1899–1902, to the heroic achievements of Canadians during the First World War, this gallery documents Canada's coming-of-age on the world stage. During the First World War, the country's land forces were among the most effective fielded by any world power. However, all conflicts exact a price, and although Canada emerged from this one both victorious and autonomous, it also emerged a deeply divided nation.



H. Foster, CMCC

Vimy Ridge, Gallery 2.

Gallery 3. Forged in Fire

The Second World War, 1931–1945

This gallery mainly explores Canada's fight against dictatorships overseas during the Second World War, the gallery introduces visitors to the oppressive dictatorships of the 1930s, and the mounting pressure for a strong response from the rest of the world. As part of a powerful international force, Canada contributed one of the largest fighting forces in the world, on land, at sea and in the air, while also providing significant industrial and logistical support. This period helped define the current Canadian nation-state and established Canada's leading economic and political role in the postwar world.

M.L. Deruaz, CMCC



The Air War, Gallery 3.

Gallery 4. A Violent Peace

The Cold War, Peacekeeping, and Recent Conflicts, 1945 to the Present

For most of the postwar period, Canadian forces participated in a Cold War against the Soviet Union and its allies. This era also saw Canada take a leading role in international peacekeeping: an activity in which Canada has developed particular expertise, and from which Canadians derive great pride. In addition, this gallery examines the increasing demands placed on a shrinking Canadian military during the post-Cold War period, and includes Canada's most recent military operations and activities.



M.L. Deruaz, CMC

The Cold War Homefront, Gallery 4.

The Royal Canadian Legion Hall of Honour

Honouring and remembrance are important components of Canada's military history, connecting past, present and future. In the centrally located Royal Canadian Legion Hall of Honour, artifacts, works of art, and other traditional display media will be complemented by interactive screens that permit further research on the exhibit and the history of remembrance, as well as techniques enabling visitors to leave behind their own reflections on honouring, remembrance and the legacy of war.



H. Foster, CMCC

The Royal Canadian Legion Hall of Honour.

The LeBreton Gallery

The Canadian War Museum has one of the world's best collections of military vehicles and artillery, as well as important collections of uniforms, medals and other artifacts. With an enhanced capacity for "open storage", the Canadian War Museum makes large items such as vehicles and artillery pieces more accessible to visitors.

H. Foster, CMC



View of the CF-101 Voodoo Interceptor in the LeBreton Gallery.

Other Exhibition and Gallery Spaces

In addition to the Permanent Exhibition, the Canadian War Museum features a number of other important spaces.

Special Exhibitions in the Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae Gallery

Special exhibitions play an increasingly important role at the Canadian War Museum. Designed to expand the Museum's audience, maintain public interest and go beyond themes covered in the Permanent Exhibition, a wide range of exciting temporary exhibitions explore various aspects of human conflict. Visit our Web site at www.warmuseum.ca for listings of current and upcoming Special Exhibitions.



CMC

Visitor Amenities

In addition to providing an educational and entertaining visitor experience, the Canadian War Museum offers all the amenities of a modern museum. In addition to a theatre, a boutique, four ateliers, a riverfront cafeteria, and numerous places for rest and reflection, the Museum also features 310 indoor parking spaces, a spacious group entrance, landscaped grounds, outdoor exhibition areas, and much more.



CWM

The Riverfront Terrace.

Research, Preservation and Conservation

As Canada's most important repository of military history, the Canadian War Museum has a responsibility to preserve this important legacy, while also making it accessible to scholars and others with an interest in exploring military themes and events. Some of the most important features of the Canadian War Museum are thus its research and archival facilities, and its state-of-the-art conservation labs.



Bill Kent, CWM

Restoration shop near the LeBreton Gallery.

Conservation and Storage

In order to ensure the ongoing preservation of priceless collections and works of art, the Canadian War Museum features modern conservation laboratories and storage facilities, enabling the preservation, repair and storage of everything from vehicles and artillery pieces to uniforms and paintings.

For further information please contact:

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