

## Operation Barbarossa



Operation Barbarossa was the code name for the German invasion of the Soviet Union during World War II, which began on 22 June 1941. The operation was driven by Adolf Hitler's ideological desire to conquer Soviet territory as outlined in his 1925 manifesto Mein Kampf ("My Struggle").

In the two years leading up to the invasion, the two countries signed political and economic pacts for strategic purposes. Nevertheless, on 18 December 1940, Hitler authorized an invasion of the Soviet Union, with a planned start date of 15 May 1941. The actual invasion began on 22 June 1941. Over the course of the operation, about four million soldiers of the Axis powers invaded the Soviet Union along a 2,900-kilometer (1,800 mi) front, the largest invasion force in the history of warfare. In addition to troops, the Germans employed some 600,000 motor vehicles and between 600,000 and 700,000 horses. It marked the beginning of the rapid escalation of the war, both geographically and in the formation of the Allied coalition.

Operationally, the Germans won resounding victories and occupied some of the most important economic areas of the Soviet Union, mainly in Ukraine, both inflicting and sustaining heavy casualties. Despite their successes, the German offensive stalled on the outskirts of Moscow and was subsequently pushed back by a Soviet counteroffensive. The Red Army repelled the Wehrmacht's strongest blows and forced Germany into a war of attrition for which it was unprepared. The Germans would never again mount a simultaneous offensive along the entire strategic Soviet-Axis front.

On this trip we follow a route of Army Group North as it invaded up through the Baltic States before reaching the outskirts of Leningrad which it then

besieged for nearly 2½ years. During the trip we follow the timeline of Army Group North as well as cover the advances of both Army Group Centre and Army Group South as Barbarossa unfolded.

### Day One:

Guests meet MHT 0900 at the initial hotel in the former Danzig [modern day Gdansk - nearest airport is Gdansk, Poland] and if necessary a room can be arranged for the night before at our hotel. In the morning we conduct an introductory talk to set the scene for the upcoming trip. We cover the inter war years of the Free City of Danzig, the semi autonomous city-state under the protection of the League of Nations, the German Non Aggression Pact with Soviet Union, the illegal build up of the German Armed Forces and the creation and condition of the Red Army in the 1930s. Late morning we walk to Danzig Gestapo Headquarters where we discuss the German invasion of Poland from the West on 1st September 1939 and the Red Army invasion from the East on 17th September 1939 and the subsequent partition of Poland by the two aggressors who were ultimately to become the two protagonists in Operation Barbarossa. After lunch our coach takes us to the Westerplatte region of Danzig to discuss the opening engagements of the German Polish



### What's included:

*Hotel Bed & Breakfast Accommodation*

*All transport from the official overseas start point*

*Accompanied for the trip duration*

*All Museum entrances*

*All Expert Talks and Guidance*

*Low Group Numbers*

*Low Single Room Supplements*

---

*"I just wanted to thank you for the trip, it was a great experience & both Nicky and I enjoyed it very much. Your depth of knowledge on the subject certainly brought the past alive."*

---

### Military History Tours

is all about the 'experience'. Naturally we take care of all local accommodation, transport and entrances but what sets us aside is our on the ground knowledge and contacts, established over many, many years that enable you to really get under the surface of your chosen subject matter.

By guiding guests around these historic locations we feel we are contributing greatly towards 'keeping the spirit alive' of some of the most memorable events in human history.

Let their sacrifice not be in vain.

offensive. Set against this backdrop we discuss the stunning success of the German "Blitzkrieg" campaign to conquer Poland. We then continue on to Stuthoff Concentration Camp. Here we see the cost to the Polish population of the German Occupation - a foretaste of what was in store for those conquered in Barbarossa. We then return to our hotel arriving c1800.

## Day Two:

After breakfast at 0800 we depart for the former German city of Konigsberg, now known as Kaliningrad, once in East Prussia and now part of the Russian Federation. It was from this region that Army Group North launched it's offensive. The main emphasis of the morning's briefing will be on the Wehrmacht and it's preparations for Barbarossa across all 3 Army Groups. It will take 2 hours to get to the border and once across a further hour to get into central Kaliningrad. Once there we will visit a private museum based in a beautiful old Konigsberg apartment building frozen in time to the inter war years which will really



helps guests appreciate what life was like in East Prussia. After lunch we then visit the German Bunker Otto Museum which vividly portrays life through the eyes of the German Military in WW2. At 1700 we make the short journey to our hotel on the outskirts of the city, a former East Prussian hunting lodge.

## Day Three:

After breakfast we set off at 0730 for Kaunas, Lithuania arriving late morning. On the way we discuss the early clashes of Army Group North, the personnel involved and a history timeline of the invasion. We also update the progress of Army Group Centre and Army Group South along the timeline. We also introduce the role of the Einsatzgruppen: the SS detachments and local sympathisers who worked along side them to murder on mass Jews and Red Army Political Commissars. It is thought that over 1 million people were murdered in the wake of the advancing Germans and we visit Kaunas, scene of one of the Einsatzgruppen's worst atrocities and the IX Fort Massacre site.

After visiting the museum we make our way to Riga, the capital city of Latvia. Here we are met by a friend of MHT, a Red Army Veteran who fought at Stalingrad and Kursk. Guests have a unique opportunity, through our interpreter, to ask him questions about his war time experiences such as what it was like to fight as a 17 year old in the Red Army as part of Operation Barbarossa in the Battle of Stalingrad. In the evening we will have a dinner in our guest's honour.



## Day Four:

After breakfast at 0800 we set off, via the old Zeppelin Hangers in Riga Town, for Tartu in Estonia. Here we start to explore the Finnish Campaign and the effect on the region during the period of history we are concerned with. We visit the Museum of Finnish Boys near Tartu which houses a collection of artifacts covering Estonian volunteers who fought in the Finnish Armed Forces in Estonia and Finland in WW2. We also discuss the blocking and holding actions by the Germans against the Russians later in the war as major battles took place in the region. Mid afternoon we leave for Narva on the Estonia Russian border where, after arriving at around 1730 we stay for the night and prepare to cross into Russia the next day.

## Day Five:

At 0800 we leave Narva for the nearby Russian border. Once across the border it will take about 2 1/2 hours to reach St Peterburg but as we will be visiting Barbarossa battle sites on the way we will be arriving at lunchtime. After lunch we go to the limit of the German advance and spend some time at the Victory Square Memorial before we visit the nearby Siege Museum. We then go on to check in to our centrally located hotel at 1730.

## Day Six:

At 0900 we go on a walking tour of central St Petersburg before having a concluding briefing on Operation Barbarossa and update our time line of events for all three Army Groups which will set us up nicely for the 2017 Battle of Stalingrad 75th Anniversary Trip which we can all look forward to. After lunch the group will then go it's own way. Some will be departing to the airport for the late afternoon return flight home while others will be staying on a extra few days in St Petersburg to enjoy this wonderful city.



Our transport for the Barbarossa tour



**This truly is a once and a lifetime trip and as MHT strictly limits its number of guests it is vital you book soon to avoid disappointment.**