

THE LIFE OF A SOLDIER FROM ANCIENT ROME TO THE PRESENT DAY

12th October 2017 – 28th January 2018

From 12 October 2017 to 28 January 2018, the Musée de l'Armée is presenting a pioneering new exhibition tackling an original subject. Visitors are invited to see life through the eyes of a soldier as they come into direct contact with the ordinary and extraordinary objects soldiers use in their everyday activities during a campaign, from Antiquity to the 21st century.

When we think of soldiers on active duty, we tend to focus on combat, the most dramatic aspect of their lives. However, despite its intensity, combat only represents a minute part of soldiers' daily routine, and their time is mostly spent training, moving, setting up and fitting out their positions, and communicating, as well as keeping their spirits up and staving off boredom. Today's soldier, just like his predecessors across the centuries, has to find a way to eat, get his shoes on, differentiate himself from the enemy and protect himself from their attacks while loaded down with weapons and ammunition. It has also always been important to soldiers to feel a sense of belonging to the group of men and women exercising the same profession – this is the role played by discipline, uniforms, rewards, sacred rituals and shared beliefs – without forgetting everything that links them to their families, memories and convictions.

The exhibition begins with a spectacular chronological gallery that presents over 20 figures of soldiers 'from Ancient Rome to the present day', dressed, equipped and accompanied by the animals and vehicles they use for transporting themselves and their equipment. These significant and recognisable characters represent milestones in a history marked with changes and with constants, the most important being the combatant himself, body and mind.

They are followed by a series of themed displays tracing the different moments of a soldier's day, and showing the objects soldiers have used in different eras and civilisations to feed themselves, find shelter, rest, keep in contact with their companions, treat health problems and cope with difficult conditions. Clothes, tents, mess tins, food rations, medicines and various tools are all here, varying according to locations and climates, ranging from urban contexts and deserts to tropical countries and mountainous landscapes. All the equipment is designed to help them accomplish their mission, survive and be relatively comfortable in the field. Some of them illustrate the logistical support provided to regular troops and the very different forms of organisation that face each other in what is now called asymmetric warfare. This sheds new light on the conditions governing contemporary conflicts covered by the media.

The Life of a Soldier also delves into the universal condition of combatants, using objects from their daily life and their material culture to reveal the nature of their commitment, the tensions and trauma they are exposed to as they risk injury and death. The exhibition visit includes an exploration of the soldier's relationship to the institutions that, with more or less solicitude depending on time and place, treat their wounds, both physical and psychological, take care of their remains, pay tribute to them and keep the memory of their sacrifice alive. The exhibition ends with a presentation of the Institution Nationale des Invalides' activities and the role played by the main courtyard at the Hôtel des Invalides, where ceremonies paying tribute to soldiers killed overseas are held.



The visual used for the exhibition's poster is taken from a series of photographs by Édouard Elias, who covered the Sangaris operation in the Central African Republic. It shows the 2nd Foreign Infantry Regiment's base in abandoned administrative offices, Bambari, 19 August 2014. © Paris – Musée de l'Armée / Édouard Elias

Over 300 items, mostly from the Musée de l'Armée and including some recent acquisitions, are presented during the visit. The contemporary dimension of warfare is highlighted by in-depth photographic series, produced during on-the-ground operations and at rehabilitation centres. In addition, a range of multimedia installations replace the 'missing' objects, helping visitors better understand the form and function of the exhibited pieces and how they are used, as well as showing the place of humans in a group and in time and space. The themes covered in this way include DIY, the reuse and adaptation of objects by their users, military fashion and its influence on civilian fashion, the art of camouflage, and mass logistics.

DID YOU KNOW?

The weight of a soldier's kit: has not changed much since Antiquity. Though it is very technical nowadays, it still weighs 35 kg and contains 2 days of supplies and personal belongings. Unsurprisingly, the terracotta figurines favoured by Roman soldiers have now been replaced with smartphones!

A hospital at the Hôtel des Invalides: created over three and a half centuries ago by Louis XIV for 'those who voluntarily put their lives at risk and shed their blood for the defence and support of our country', the Institution Nationale des Invalides has remained faithful to its initial mission, and today is a top medical establishment, specialising in treating the war wounded and major disabilities. It now serves as a public hospital, comprising a pensioners' centre, medical and surgical centre, and prosthesis research and study centre.

THE EXHIBITION IN FIGURES

337 works, objects and documents, including 83 loans

24 models displayed in a large chronological gallery, from the Roman legionary to the soldier of the future

21 multimedia installations

12 panels designed for young visitors

Partners

The exhibition is organized in partnership with the Établissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense (ECPAD) and with the support of CIC, a key partner to the Musée de l'Armée. It has also benefited from the exceptional participation of the Institution Nationale des Invalides, the Cellule d'aide aux blessés de l'Armée de Terre and the Service du commissariat des armées.



Curators

Laurent Charbonneau, assistant curator at the contemporary department, Musée de l'Armée

Jordan Gaspin, senior documentary research fellow at the contemporary department, Musée de l'Armée

Christophe Larribère, historian, head of *Vox Historiae*

Olivier Renaudeau, chief heritage curator, head of the antiquity department, Musée de l'Armée

Publication

Catalogue co-published with Éditions Gallimard.

Young visitors

▪ Family visits

12 special panels combined with a games booklet for young visitors provide an informative and fun way of finding out all about the exhibition's objects, artworks and archives. The youngest visitors are invited to meet the challenge of using a visual detail to find a specific object or artwork. The winners are rewarded with a small gift.

▪ Fun exhibition visits

A fun guided tour to find out all about the life of a soldier during a military campaign as well as military uniforms, equipment and weaponry from Antiquity to the present day. Various challenges await the participants. The guided tour is suitable for families and school groups.

For children over 8 only. The tour lasts from 1.5 to 2 hrs – reservation: jeunes@musee-armee.fr

Around the exhibition

Full programme on musee-armee.fr

▪ *Soldiers' Confidences and Complaints* concert cycle

13th October – 28th January

While composers have gathered soldiers' confidences and understood their emotions, transforming them into music with many famous compositions, poets and writers have also served as their interpreters. With the participation of Denis Podalydès and Didier Sandre from the Comédie-Française.

Information and reservations: saisonmusicale.musee-armee.fr – +33(0)1 44 42 54 66

▪ *Forward March!* conference cycle

18th October – 21th November

Free entry subject to seat availability – registration: histoire@musee-armee.fr

- **Far from Home film cycle**

20–24th November

Offering a programme of six fiction films (by directors including Clint Eastwood and Sam Mendes) and a documentary, this cycle will show how the everyday life of soldiers has been depicted on the big screen, with all the training, waiting, boredom, frustration, tension and fear it entails.

Free entry subject to seat availability – online registration: musee-armee.fr

Practical information

Opening hours: exhibition is open every day, except 25th December and 1st January, 10am to 6pm (until 31st October) and 10am to 5pm (from 1st November)

Prices: €12 full price; €8.50 reduced price; free to under-18s.

Guided tours: adults (benedicte@cultural.fr – +33(0) 825 05 44 05); families, school groups and students (jeunes@musee-armee.fr)

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