

Information sheet for the BPFTA Historical Memory event in Brussels and Paris, 5 -9 May 2016

For many, fighting Nazism and fascism during WW2 or otherwise escaping Nazi occupation – Jewish families, agents, resisters..., the escape or evasion routes had three strategic locations: the Basque mountain border of the western Pyrenees between France and Spain, and the cities of Brussels and Paris.

For many years now, the Basque Pyrenees Freedom Trails' Association has paid tribute to all those involved in these escape lines, through commemorative cross-frontier mountain trails, as well as further afield across the Pyrenees, such as the "Schindler of Canfranc" line from Bearn in France to Aragon in Spain and the Walter Benjamin route across the Catalan Pyrenees.

Having concluded 2025 with four successful events: the tribute at the monument to the WW2 mountain guides at Loid in Hernani, with the mayor; the cross-Pyrenees hike from Aldude to Quinto Real in tribute to guide Paquita Bretos, the day coach excursion of mountain border crossings and places where BPFTA have organised events since 2015; and a return to Canfranc, the BPFTA project for 2026 is to visit those other two key locations in the escape lines: Brussels and Paris.

The dates are from 5 - 7 May in Brussels and 7 - 9 May in Paris. During the days we will visit places that were part of the clandestine networks, such as safe houses. The Escape Line tours will be by public transport and/or on foot.

A registration form will be sent on request from basquefreedomtrailsww2@gmail.com with a fee for each participant of €70 to cover costs of the organisers/guides, the cost of public transport (metro, bus, train) during the tours, and third-party insurance. In due course the information sheet and registration form will be published on our webpage <https://www.bpftaww2.com>

Each participant is responsible for their own personal insurance cover, for organising their own accommodation in both cities, and their transport to Brussels, from there to Paris and return home from Paris.

In both Brussels and Paris we will be following the footsteps of US airman George Watt, who evaded capture in 1943 and escaped over the Basque Pyrenees. We will be paying tribute to Andrée de Jongh ("Dédée"), the young Belgian nurse and founder of one of the lines - "Comète" - and who, accompanying the guide from Hernani Florentino Goikoetxea Beobide, guided their "packages" (fugitives) on their clandestine nightly cross-border treks. Also, to her father Frédéric and to the Dumon sisters, Nadine and "Michou". In 2010 Nadine, a survivor of two Nazi concentration camps, spoke to Hernani High School students and to those at Axular Lizeoa in Donostia-San Sebastián. She passed away last year at 102. We will also pay tribute to Irishwoman and Resistance member, Catherine Crean (Luc and Comète Lines), to Pastor Ten Kate (Dutch-Paris Line) and to Prosper Spilliaert (Eva network), amongst many others.

In Paris, to Robert and Germain Ayle (Comète), to Paul Campinchi (Oaktree and Shelburne networks), to Jean Weidner and family (Dutch Paris Line) and to Donald Caskie (Garrow and Pat O'Leary Lines), amongst others.

We are in contact with other Historical Memory entities and local authorities in both cities to undertake joint commemorative events, and consolidate or otherwise establish links between them and Hernani and the Basque Country.

