

THE BRENNER ASSIGNMENT

SHADOW WAR IN THE ALPS WITH THE ORIGINAL INGLORIOUS BASTARDS

A tour through the Italian Dolomites and the Austrian Alps

Featuring best-selling author and military historian **Patrick K. O'Donnell** and
National WWII Museum Founding President & CEO Emeritus **Gordon H. "Nick" Mueller, PhD**



THE NATIONAL
WWII MUSEUM
TRAVEL

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO | VENICE | MUNICH
BOLZANO | MERANO | INNSBRUCK
September 28 – October 10 2026



Patrick K. O'Donnell

Gordon H. "Nick" Mueller, PhD

The vertical snow-capped peaks, winding alpine trails, and emerald lakes of the Italian Dolomites and Austrian Alps showcase some of the world's most glorious natural beauty. But during World War II, they were also the setting for the virtual suicide missions of the Brenner Assignment. This is the story of one of the most brutal yet untold shadow wars involving American OSS commandos, forerunners to the US Army Special Forces who forged the original "Inglorious Bastards." Behind the lines, the truth was far stranger than fiction.

Uncover a secret world by retracing the footsteps of these operators first brought to life by author, military historian, and special

operations expert Patrick K. O'Donnell. Based on his award-winning and best-selling books *Operatives*, *Spies and Saboteurs*, *The Brenner Assignment*, and *They Dared Return*, this groundbreaking tour relives the behind-the-lines drama of an unknown theater of World War II. O'Donnell and Gordon H. "Nick" Mueller, PhD, Founding President & CEO Emeritus of The National WWII Museum, will guide guests on a remarkable journey through history, highlighting some of the greatest special operations stories of the war—and venturing where no tour has ever gone before.



TOUR INCLUSIONS

- Exclusive itinerary designed by Patrick K. O'Donnell, Nick Mueller, and The National WWII Museum Educational Travel Program
- Daily touring with featured tour historians Patrick K. O'Donnell and Nick Mueller, with custom lecture series
- Special access to sites not offered on other tours
- VIP events with the opportunity to meet people who were eyewitnesses to historic events
- Full-time logistical tour manager
- Expert local guides
- Roundtrip airport transfers (when arriving and departing on scheduled group tour dates)
- Luxury 5-star and deluxe 4-star accommodations throughout the journey
- Private, first-class, air-conditioned motor coach transportation
- Personal listening devices on all included touring
- Included gratuities to guides, drivers, porters, and servers
- 11 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 4 dinners, and 5 receptions
- Beer, house wine, and soft drinks with included lunches and dinners
- Personalized luggage tags and name badge
- Informative custom guidebook including battlefield maps, archival images, artifact spotlights, and digital content to supplement your journey



\$14,799 per person based on double occupancy
\$15,999 single occupancy

\$399 taxes and fees are additional. Flights are not included in the program cost.

MEET THE FEATURED TOUR HISTORIANS

Patrick K. O'Donnell

Patrick K. O'Donnell is a critically acclaimed military historian and one of the world's leading authorities on special operations forces and elite units. He is the best-selling author of 14 books, including *The Brenner Assignment: The Untold Story of the Most Daring Spy Mission of World War II*. O'Donnell's most recent national award-winning books include *The Unvanquished*, *The Indispensables*, and *Washington's Immortals*. He is a director and the official historian for the OSS Society and a visiting professor who lectures on irregular warfare and history. O'Donnell served as a combat historian who fought house-to-house with a US Marine Corps rifle platoon during the Battle of Fallujah. Over the past 33 years, O'Donnell has interviewed thousands of WWII veterans and members of elite and special operations units. He walks the hallowed ground he writes about and has conducted numerous historical tours in the United States and Europe. On the big screen, he has provided historical consulting for the award-winning miniseries *Band of Brothers* and for scores of documentaries produced by the BBC, Fox News, and the History Channel.



Gordon H. "Nick" Mueller, PhD

Nick Mueller is Founding President & CEO Emeritus of The National WWII Museum. Mueller assisted historian Stephen E. Ambrose, PhD, in founding the institution, initially known as The National D-Day Museum, and led the organization as Chairman of the Board from 1998, through its fundraising and construction to the Grand Opening on June 6, 2000, and then as President & CEO for the next 17 years. Before stepping into the museum world, Mueller enjoyed a 33-year career as a professor of European history at the University of New Orleans. During his tenure there, he also served as Dean, Vice Chancellor, and founding President of the Research and Technology Park. He is also founder of UNO's Metropolitan College, Business-Higher Education Council, and the university's International Study Programs. Mueller was awarded the 2018 Pritzker Military Museum & Library Founder's Award for his immense contribution to furthering the public's understanding of the citizen soldier and the military's role in a democracy. Mueller's book about the D-Day invasion, *Everything We Have*, was released in 2019. His book *Preserving the Legacy*, which tells the comprehensive and compelling story of the Museum's founding and first two decades, was published by LSU Press in May 2025.



ITINERARY

DAY 1 | SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

ARRIVE VENICE

Fly into Venice Marco Polo Airport (VCE) / Private transfer to Nolinski Venice Hotel / Welcome reception and dinner with special presentation by Patrick O'Donnell

Accommodations: Nolinski Venice Hotel (R, D)

DAY 2 | SEPTEMBER 29, 2026

THE TACOMA MISSION

In the final months of World War II, the 1945 Tacoma Mission stood as one of the Office of Strategic Services' (OSS) most daring operations in Northern Italy. Their objective was clear but perilous: cripple German supply lines, empower the Italian partisans, and strike at the heart of the Brenner Pass. But when their sabotage ignited a furious German response, the team was forced into a desperate fight for survival—battling through gunfire, plunging into a ravine, and fleeing downriver as SS troops and their war dogs closed in.

Touring: Scenic drive to Cortina d'Ampezzo / Lunch in the Prosecco region at Borgoluce Restaurant and Vineyard / Busche Bridge / Sant'Antonio Memorial and Bar / Memorial to Roderick Stephen Hall in Calalzo di Cadore / Reception at Grand Hotel Savoia, overlooking the Italian Dolomites

Accommodations: Grand Hotel Savoia (B, L, R)

DAY 3 | SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

EXPLORE CORTINA

Nestled in the heart of the Dolomites, Cortina d'Ampezzo dazzles as one of Italy's most glamorous mountain destinations and a playground for skiers, hikers, and travelers seeking alpine luxury. Once chosen to host the 1944 Winter Olympics—an honor interrupted by the turmoil of war—Cortina holds a fascinating blend of beauty and history. It also serves as a dramatic backdrop in Roderick Stephen Hall's daring solo trek through the Dolomites, where he encounters partisan fighters and narrowly escapes the clutches of the SS.

Choice of morning touring:

Deep Dive on Roderick Stephen Hall with Patrick K. O'Donnell: Sappada / San Pietro di Cadore / Partisan Memorial at the San Margherita Church / Lago di Misurina, the "Pearl of the Cadore" / Lunch on own

OR

WWI Fort Tre Sassi / Pocol Military Memorial and Ossuary / Lunch on own in Cortina

Choice of afternoon touring: Cinque Torri Hike OR Cooking Class

Accommodations: Grand Hotel Savoia (B, R)



Venice



Cortina d'Ampezzo



Lake Misurina

DAY 4 | OCTOBER 1, 2026

OPERATION MERCURY / EAGLE

Love affairs, double agents, and a race against time. Deep behind enemy lines in Northern Italy, an elite band of special operators parachutes into the chaos and engages the SS in a fight to the death, later facing the 504th Heavy Tank Battalion. Their ultimate mission: to cut off the German supply routes feeding the Brenner Pass and bring the war in the Alps to a dramatic close.

Touring: Selva di Cadore / Mareson & Countess Isabel de Obligado's Villa / Caprile / Digonera Gorge / Chiesa San Bartolomeo / Walking tour of Caprile / Group lunch at Hotel alla Posta / Giau Pass / Hotel Argentina / Church at Campo di Sotti / Dinner on own in Cortina

Accommodations: *Grand Hotel Savoia (B, L)*

DAY 5 | OCTOBER 2, 2026

EXPLORE BOLZANO

After the Italian Armistice of 1943, Bolzano came under German occupation, becoming a key strategic and logistical base in Northern Italy. The city soon became the target of repeated Allied bombing raids, aimed at its railways, factories, and military installations. Despite these targeted strikes, civilian areas suffered extensive damage, and by the end of the war, over 60 percent of Bolzano had been destroyed.

Touring: Transfer to Bolzano / Group lunch at Park Laurin Hotel with special presentations from EURAC professors Josef Prackwieser and Alexandra Budabin on Bolzano and Merano during World War II with perspectives on the local memory of the war / Tasting and tour at a local winery / Evening on own in Bolzano

Accommodations: *Hotel Falkensteiner (B, L)*

DAY 6 | OCTOBER 3, 2026

HALL IN BOLZANO AND THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE

Between 1944 and 1945, more than 11,000 people—including Italian partisans, Jewish prisoners, and OSS agent Roderick Stephen Hall—were imprisoned in the Bolzano Transit Camp. It was one of four Nazi concentration camps established in Italy following the Armistice of September 8, 1943.

Touring: Bolzano Concentration Camp and Memorial / Victory Memorial / Lunch on own in city-center Bolzano / Corpo D'Armata / Villa Pollaco / Mussolini-style architecture buildings / Evening lecture by Siegfried de Rachewiltz to introduce the history of South Tyrol and Merano / Dinner on own

Accommodations: *Hotel Falkensteiner (B, Lecture)*



Colle Santa Lucia, Dolomites



Alto Adige region



Victory Monument on the Victory Square in Bolzano

DAY 7 | OCTOBER 4, 2026

MERANO / DORF TYROL

Where Italian and Austrian-German cultures meet, Merano tells a story shaped by centuries of change. Spared from bombing as a hospital town during World War II, the city nonetheless witnessed tragedy with the deportation of its Jewish community in 1943. Explore Merano's strategic and cultural legacy—from its Roman foundations to its role in the modern era.

Choice of morning touring: Merano Botanical Gardens **OR** Schloss Tyrol **OR** Explore Merano at your leisure / Lunch on own in Merano / Schloss Brunnenburg with guided tour by Dr. Siegfried de Rachewiltz / Wine tasting at Schloss Brunnenburg with Nicky de Rachewiltz / Group dinner that evening

Accommodations: *Hotel Falkensteiner (B, D)*



Tyrol Castle in Burggrafenamt near Merano

DAY 8 | OCTOBER 5, 2026

THE BRENNER PASS

The Brenner Pass served as the vital supply route for the German Wehrmacht, carrying troops, munitions, and equipment to Axis forces fighting in Italy during the final phase of World War II. Its strategic importance made it a primary target for OSS sabotage missions and a key gateway to intelligence on Hitler's "Last Redoubt"—the rumored final stronghold of the Third Reich.

Touring: Transfer to Innsbruck via the Brenner Pass / Included lunch / Swarovski Crystal Worlds Museum / Reception at the Claudiana, the former government building of the federal state of Tyrol / Lecture by Patrick K. O'Donnell / Dinner on own in Innsbruck

Accommodations: *Hotel Penz (B, L, R, Lecture)*



Italian Alps

DAY 9 | OCTOBER 6, 2026

THEY DARED RETURN

The majestic Sulztal Glacier, with its towering peaks and deep snowfields, served as the dramatic setting where OSS operatives parachuted under cover of night. Battling waist-deep snow and freezing winds, they found refuge amid the glacier's rugged terrain before beginning their mission deep in enemy territory.

Touring: Transfer to the Ambergerhutte / Group lunch / Dinner at the Spechbacher Hof / Group conversation with Patrick K. O'Donnell and Gordon H. "Nick" Mueller, PhD

Accommodations:

*Hotel Penz
(B, L, D, Lecture / Q&A)*



Sulztal Glacier

DAY 10 | OCTOBER 7, 2026

OPERATION GREENUP

Two Jewish refugees enlisted with the OSS and parachuted deep behind German lines, joining forces with a defected Wehrmacht lieutenant to gather critical intelligence from their safe house in the village of Oberperfuss and transmitted radio reports from the Brenner Pass, providing the Allies with vital information on German troop and supply movements. Known as Operation Greenup, their mission delivered significant strategic gains and is credited with saving thousands of American and Austrian lives—both military and civilian.

Touring: Site of the Messerschmidt Factory at Kematen / Cemetery at Seefeld / Reith Exhibit with presentation by Matthias Gries / Oberperfuss walking tour (Franz Weber house and grave, Winjberg's Attic Hideout, Gasthuas Krone) / Group lunch at Hotel Krone / Lachhof bei Hall / Dinner on own in Innsbruck

Accommodations: *Hotel Penz (B, L)*

DAY 11 | OCTOBER 8, 2026

THE END IN INNSBRUCK

Innsbruck was a crucial transportation hub and supply center for German forces operating in Italy during World War II. Its strategic importance made it a frequent target of Allied bombing raids, which ultimately destroyed around 60 percent of the city. Innsbruck was also home to Reichenau, a sub-camp of Dachau, and the city was liberated on May 3, 1945, through the combined efforts of the through the combined efforts of the Special Ops team, the Austrian resistance in Oberperfuss, and the advancing American troops.

Touring: Walking tour of Innsbruck / Liberation Monument / Pogrom Monument / Gestapo HQ at Herrengasse 1 / Option to visit Tyrolean Art Museum **OR** Schloss Ambras **OR** Innsbruck Cable Car / Lunch on own in Innsbruck / Group dinner at Hotel Sailer / Panel discussion with featured tour historians and local special guests

Accommodations: *Hotel Penz (B, D, Panel Discussion)*

DAY 12 | OCTOBER 9, 2026

MUNICH

Munich, the birthplace of the Nazi regime, played a central role in the formation of the National Socialist Party, with many of its key meetings and sites located in the city. It became a symbolic heart of the Third Reich and the location of Dachau, the first Nazi concentration camp. By the end of the war, Munich was heavily bombed, suffering thousands of civilian casualties and the destruction of much of its historic Old Town.

Touring: Transfer to Munich / Lunch on own in Munich Old Town / Optional walking tour with local guide on the rise of the Third Reich in Munich / Farewell reception at Charles Hotel

Accommodations: *Charles Hotel (B, R)*



Oberperfuss, Austria



Innsbruck



Munich

DAY 13 | OCTOBER 10, 2026

DEPARTURES

Private transfer from Charles Hotel to Munich International Airport for independent flights home.

Optional two night pre-tour extension program: Tesori di Venezia (Treasures of Venice) September 26–28, 2026

\$2,398 per person based on double occupancy | \$2,999 single occupancy

DAY 1

Arrive Venice / Check in to hotel / Welcome reception
/ Evening at leisure

Accommodations: Nolinski Venice Hotel (R)

DAY 2

Best of Venice walking tour including St. Mark's Square
(Piazza San Marco), St. Mark's Basilica, and Doge's Palace
/ Lunch including Venice Secret Foods tour / Evening at leisure

Accommodations: Nolinski Venice Hotel (B, L)

DAY 3

Venice islands full-day tour to Murano, known for its
glassmaking, glass museum, and several historic churches
/ Burano, an island of fishermen, lacemakers, and colorfully
painted houses / Mazzorbo, a small rural island connected to
Burano by a footbridge / Join the main tour guests this evening
at the welcome reception and dinner (B)



Venice



St. Mark's Square



Murano

ACCOMODATIONS

NOLINSKI VENEZIA

VENICE | 1 NIGHT

Nolinski Venezia emanates extraordinary luxury, with windows and terraces that open onto the heart of Venice. Take a majestic journey through this historic five-floor property. Each of the 43 rooms and suites is unique, offering a timeless experience that showcases exceptional artisanal skill and centuries-long expertise.

GRAND HOTEL SAVOIA

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO | 3 NIGHTS

Grand Hotel Savoia, Cortina d'Ampezzo was constructed in 1912 and sits at the cultural heart of this remarkable mountain town. Now a Radisson Collection Hotel, the hotel stands tall and proud of its rich heritage at the base of the dramatic Dolomites mountain range. Soak in the beauty of this alpine setting as you enjoy warm hospitality and impeccable service. Boasting a long and distinguished history, the hotel has welcomed a great number of notable personalities as its guests, including world leaders and stars of the silver screen. Charlton Heston, Sophia Loren, Winston Churchill, Tolstoy, Umberto di Savoia, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and many other prominent celebrities have stayed here.

HOTEL FALKENSTEINER

BOLZANO | 2 NIGHTS

Lush shades of green, symbolizing the nature around Bolzano, high-quality materials and a modern, comfortable interior design make this 114-room property an inviting place of well-being. Enjoy the crossover of glamour and tradition when you fall into your cozy bed after a long day of exploring. Amenities include king-size bed, walk-in shower, and coffeemaker.

HOTEL PENZ

INNSBRUCK | 4 NIGHTS

Nestled in the timeless yet modern building complex of the Rathaus Galerie Innsbruck, The PENZ Hotel complements the sophisticated design standards of international architecture. The PENZ is centrally located only steps to the medieval "Alt Stadt" (Old Town) of Innsbruck. Amenities include LCD TV with international satellite channels, highest-quality cotton damask bed linens (suitable for allergy sufferers), Nespresso coffeemaker, free Wi-Fi in the room, individually controlled air conditioning/heating, and hairdryer.

CHARLES HOTEL

MUNICH | 1 NIGHT

A contemporary oasis at the heart of Munich set within the verdant Lenbachgärten quarter and close to the historic Königsplatz, the effortlessly elegant Charles Hotel in Munich is where contemporary style meets traditional Bavarian hospitality. Spacious rooms include heated bathroom floors, luxurious forte organics toiletries, bathrobes and slippers, smart TV, free high-speed Wi-Fi, and coffeemaker.



For tour questions or for more information, the Travel Sales Team is available Monday – Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. Central.

Call: 1-877-813-3329 x 257 | Email: travel@nationalww2museum.org

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