

# compiègne armistice site

recommended poem to  
read here:  
"aftermath" by  
siegfried sassoon

## overview

The armistice between the Allies and Germany ended the First World War. It went into effect at 11 a.m. on 11 November 1918, and marked a complete defeat for Germany, although not technically a surrender.

The Germans were responding to the policies proposed by American president Woodrow Wilson in his 14 Points of January 1918. Although the armistice ended the actual fighting, it took six months of negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference to conclude the Versailles peace treaty.

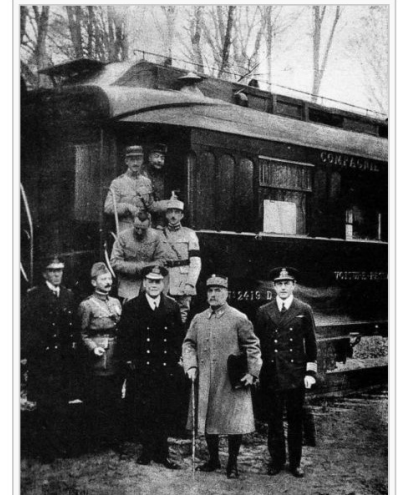
The armistice was signed in a carriage of Marhsall Foch's private train. In November 1927, it was ceremonially returned to the forest in the exact spot where the Armistice was signed. Marshal Foch, General Weygand and many others watched it being placed in a specially constructed building: the Clairiere de l'Armistice.

There it remained, a monument to the defeat of the Kaiser's Germany, until 22 June 1940, when Hitler, Göring and Ribbentrop swept into the Clairiere and, in that same carriage, demanded and received the surrender armistice from France:

"Through my glasses I saw the Führer...read the inscription on the great granite block in the center of the clearing: Here on the eleventh of November 1918 succumbed the criminal pride of the German empire...vanquished by the free peoples which it tried to enslave." I look for the expression on Hitler's face...It is afire with scorn, anger, hate, revenge, triumph...Suddenly, as though his face were not giving quite complete expression to his feelings, he throws his whole body into harmony with his mood. He swiftly snaps his hands on his hips, arches his shoulders, plants his feet wide apart. It is a magnificent gesture of defiance, of burning contempt...." – William Shirer

During the Occupation of France, the Clairiere de l'Armistice was destroyed and the carriage taken to Berlin, where it was exhibited in the Lustgarten before being destroyed later in the war.

After the war, the Compiègne site was restored and a replacement carriage, correct in every detail, was re-dedicated: an identical (and original) Compagnie des Wagon-Lits carriage, built in 1913 in the same batch as the original and present in 1918.



The allied representatives at the signing of the armistice. [Ferdinand Foch](#), second from right, seen outside his railway carriage in the forest of Compiègne.