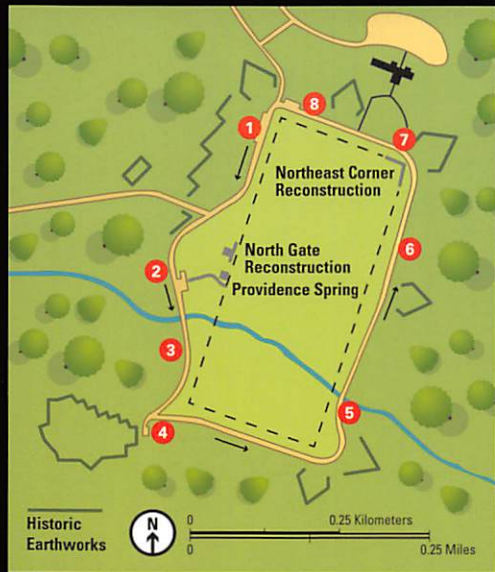


# Andersonville Prison Site Walking Tour

- ▶ 1.1 mile loop, about 30-45 minutes to walk.
- ▶ Paved & uneven surfaces.
- ▶ Watch for wildlife & vehicles.
- ▶ Leashed pets allowed.
- ▶ Do not climb on earthworks, monuments or cannons.
- ▶ Follow the numbered post on tour road.



## 1 The Wisconsin Monument



Camp Sumter Military Prison was a Confederate prison from late February 1864 to early May 1865.

While none of the original stockade walls remain, today, white concrete posts outline the 26 ½ acre prison site, marking both the main stockade wall and deadline.

The raised areas around the prison site are original earthworks, constructed by slaves. These positions were meant to protect Confederate guards, if attacked.

The monuments at this corner were erected between 1901-1934 by state commissions and private groups in memory of fallen comrades.

The Confederate government chose this location for the prison site due to its isolation, available water, surrounding farms and forests, and access to the railroad depot at Andersonville.

One mile to the west of Camp Sumter, the town of Andersonville served as a train depot, storehouse, and temporary headquarters for Confederate officers.

The prison site was originally forested, but was cleared by slaves to create the open stockade prison. The oaks, magnolias, and pine trees you see today were not present to aid the prisoners.

## 2 North Gate Reconstruction

Over 45,000 United States soldiers and civilians entered the stockade as prisoners of war.

Two sets of doors and up to 80 guards ensured prisoners did not escape while men or supplies were delivered into the stockade.

After marching from town, prisoners were divided into detachments, squads, and messes. These groups varied in size based on the number of incoming prisoners. Mandatory roll call occurred daily.

Items of value were confiscated from prisoners, unless the prisoners were able to conceal them from the guards. Watches, jewelry, picture frames, clothes, boots, and money could be seized.

Most of the 4,000 guards came from Georgia or Alabama. Upon viewing the guard force, one prisoner remarked that the Confederacy robbed the "cradle and the grave" to staff the prison.



### Providence Spring

In August 1864 a storm revealed a spring that had been accidentally buried during stockade construction.

The spring was considered "providential" by prisoners, as it appeared at a time of intense heat and thirst.

The monument over the spring was erected in 1901 by survivors who brought their families back to experience the life-saving water.



### 3 South Gate

The South Gate was the only other passage to the stockade interior. Prisoners who died in prison were removed through the South Gate and carried to a temporary shed before being placed in burial trenches. The South Gate was also used to distribute food rations and collect mail.

### 4 Star Fort

The Star Fort is one of the headquarters of General John H. Winder and Captain Henry Wirz. This position was chosen due to its elevation overlooking the stockade, giving it a strategic position for control of the prison. Cannons at this spot were trained on the prison to prevent riots or large-scale escape attempts.



#### The Hospital

To the east of the Star Fort was a makeshift hospital, comprised of sheds and tents surrounded by a fence. Most available medicines were made up of barks, berries and green vegetables in an effort to stem scorbatus, also known as scurvy. As hundreds of sick prisoners lay exposed in the hospital, thousands more applied for admittance but supplies, shelter, and surgeons were insufficient to meet the crisis. Some prisoners chose to remain with friends in the stockade rather than risk dying surrounded by strangers.

### 5 The Sinks

Stockade Branch was the principal water source for the prison. It was estimated to have adequate water for 10,000 prisoners, but proved insufficient for the 33,000 men held here in August.

This creek served as drinking water, bathing water, and the latrine.

Contamination from human waste led to thousands of cases of dysentery and diarrhea, and produced a horrendous stench. One prisoner called the muddy creek bed, "Death's Acre."

### 6 Shelter Corner

This reconstructed corner illustrates prisoner attempts at improvising shelter from what they still possessed upon arrival.

Although a half dozen rough barracks were eventually built, most prisoners were forced to build shelter from scavenged wood, tents, clothing, or burrowed into the hard, Georgia clay.

**Prisoners were prohibited from crossing the "deadline" and approaching the main wall. To do so risked being shot by a guard in a tower. Over 50 guards were on 24-hour surveillance of the stockade interior, in shifts. Bonfires illuminated the stockade perimeter at night to help prevent escapes.**



### 7 Stockade Reconstruction

While no major escape or liberation plans succeeded, prisoners attempted to depart by bribery, tunneling, breaking parole, or fleeing during transportation.

The remote location, hostile white population, and efficient tracking dogs made successful escape rare. Officially, only 328 prisoners managed to escape temporarily and less than 40 prisoners escaped to reach Union lines.

Upon recapture, prisoners were punished by placement in stocks or chain gangs.

A few hundred prisoners choose to "galvanize" and join the Confederate army. Whether for self-preservation or escape, these men risked being branded as traitors.



### 8 Wells

Concrete blocks and fenced trees across the prison site indicate historical wells. Prisoners dug 40 to 80 feet down for water, and some wells served as cover for escape attempts.

When the prison closed in the spring of 1865, the United States government established Andersonville National Cemetery, comprised of the graves of Union prisoners of war and Union soldiers who had died in Georgia during the war.

From 1865 to 1909, Union veterans' groups, such as the Grand Army of the Republic and the Woman's Relief Corp, preserved the landscape. The United States Army administered the site from 1910 to 1970, when it became a National Park in 1971. The National Prisoner of War Museum opened in 1998 to tell the stories of all American prisoners of war. Andersonville continues as an active national cemetery to this day.