

Colonial

National Historical Park
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



VISITING YORKTOWN BATTLEFIELD

See the battlefield by following the driving tours, as shown on the park map. The **BATTLEFIELD TOUR** is a seven-mile drive covering the battlefield, the Moore House and Surrender Field. As you leave the Visitor Center parking lot, follow the signs with red arrows. Allow at least 45 minutes for this tour. If you wish, you may rent a tape cassette and recorder (\$2.00) for the Battlefield Tour in the Visitor Center bookstore.

Beginning at Surrender Field, the **ALLIED ENCAMPMENT TOUR** is a nine-mile drive through the American and French encampment areas. Follow the signs with yellow arrows, and allow at least 30 minutes for the tour.

Portions of the tour roads are major thoroughfares. Please watch for slow-moving traffic, busy intersections, stop signs, joggers and cyclists.

The earthworks at Yorktown Battlefield are important historic resources that help us understand both the American Revolution and the Civil War. They are subject to erosion, however, and can be easily damaged by continued use. To help preserve them (and for your safety), please do not climb or walk on them. Remain only on authorized trails.

BATTLEFIELD TOUR

Yorktown was the last major battle of the American Revolution, a turning point that led to the independence of the United States and significantly changed the course of world history. In August 1781, General Charles Lord Cornwallis began fortifying Yorktown and Gloucester Point (across the York River) as a British naval base. At the end of August, to Cornwallis' surprise, a French fleet commanded by Admiral DeGrasse suddenly blockaded the mouth of Chesapeake Bay, cutting Cornwallis off from reinforcement or escape by sea. At the same time, General George Washington began moving his Allied American and French forces from New York to Virginia, planning to attack Cornwallis by land. At the end of September, Washington's army of approximately 17,600 men surrounded Cornwallis' 8,300-man force and laid siege to Yorktown.

To learn the story of the battle, follow the park map to each of the lettered areas below. Begin by driving out of the parking lot toward the stop sign at the first intersection.

A

BRITISH INNER DEFENSE LINE
The earthworks on the left as you drive from the parking lot mark the location of the British inner defense line. (The present works actually date to the Civil War.)

With the arrival of Washington's army, Cornwallis withdrew his troops from most of his outer defenses, to consolidate his position behind this inner line. The line extended about 1.5 miles around Yorktown, which is located to your right. The "hornwork," on the left as you approach the first intersection, extended outward from the main line to guard the road to Hampton.

At the intersection of Highway 238, come to a stop. Then proceed with caution to your left, until you reach Highway 704. Proceed south on 704 for approximately .5 mile. Turn left at the "B" arrow, into the Grand French Battery.

B

GRAND FRENCH BATTERY
On the night of October 6, Washington was ready to begin his attack, and the Allied troops, under cover of darkness, began to dig the first siege line. The men completed the line from this point eastward to the York River in one night. On October 9, the Allied artillery opened fire on the British, and the siege began. The Grand French Battery was the largest gun emplacement on the first siege line. Today, the reconstructed battery contains both original and reproduction artillery pieces.

All of the earthworks you will see in the first and second siege lines have been reconstructed by the National Park Service. Earthworks were essential during a siege, providing cover for the troops and for the artillery pieces that made attack or defense possible.

Leaving the Grand French Battery, turn right onto Highway 704. Proceed .2 mile to stop "C," the second siege line.

C

SECOND ALLIED SIEGE LINE

By October 11, Allied artillery fire had severely damaged Cornwallis' defenses, and Allied troops moved forward to dig this second, more threatening line within point blank range of Yorktown. The line could not be completed, however, until the Allies captured two small, detached British fortifications, called Redoubts 9 and 10, which guarded the east end of the British line and blocked the way to the river. ("Redoubt" is a French word meaning a small, earthen fort.)

Exit the parking lot, turn right, and travel on Highway 704 to its junction with Highway 238. After coming to a stop, turn right on 238 and proceed .6 mile, until you see the marker for Redoubts 9 and 10. Turn left and park in the parking lot near the redoubts.

D

REDOUBTS 9 AND 10

On October 14, Washington ordered an attack against the two

British redoubts. That night, 400 French troops attacked Redoubt 9, while 400 American troops attacked Redoubt 10. In fierce, hand-to-hand fighting, the Allies captured both positions, thus allowing the completion of the second siege line. Between the two redoubts, the Americans built the largest of their artillery batteries on the second line. Today, it contains a display of reproduction cannons and mortars. On the morning of October 17, with no hope of escape or reinforcement, and with the destruction of his army almost certain, Cornwallis proposed terms of surrender.

Leave the parking lot and return to the intersection of Highway 238. After stopping, continue across 238 on the tour road. When you reach the "T" intersection next to Wormley Pond, turn left and continue to the Moore House. Please be alert to the two-way traffic on this road.

E

THE MOORE HOUSE

On the afternoon of October 18, officers from both sides met at the home of Augustine and Lucy Moore to negotiate the final terms of the surrender of Cornwallis' army. The completed Articles of Capitulation, which Washington and Cornwallis signed the next day, required the British to surrender with less than full honors. The troops were to march out of Yorktown "with shouldered arms, colors cased, and drums beating a British or German march."

Leave the Moore House and backtrack on the same road to Wormley Pond. Continue across the dam, until you reach the intersection of Highway 704. After stopping, cross the highway and continue to Surrender Field.

F

SURRENDER FIELD

On October 19, 1781, the British and German troops under Cornwallis' command marched onto this field and laid down their arms. Cornwallis did not attend the ceremony, but instead sent his second-in-command, General Charles O'Hara, to surrender the army. Within a few days, the troops were marched to prisoner of war camps, while Cornwallis sailed for New York and then to England on parole. The loss of Cornwallis' army--approximately one third of Britain's forces in the United States--was a staggering blow to the British war effort. Eventually, it led to the negotiations that ended the war almost two years later, with the signing of the Treaty of Paris. Today, at the pavilion overlooking Surrender Field you can listen to a stirring account of the formal surrender ceremony.

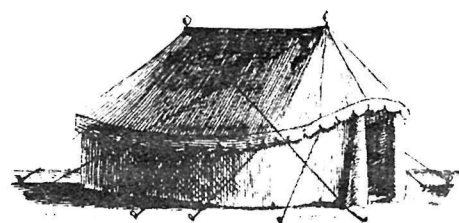
From Surrender Field, you may return to Yorktown along Surrender Road by continuing to follow the red arrow signs as you leave the parking lot. Or, if you prefer, you may take the Allied Encampment Tour by following the yellow arrow signs, which also begin at the parking lot.

ENCAMPMENT TOUR

In 1781 this scenic area was the site of important "behind the lines" activity which contributed to the Allied victory. As you travel the route you will visit the American encampment and artillery park (AREA G). At the western end of the American encampment is General Washington's headquarters (STOP H). As Allied commander, Washington had positioned his headquarters between the American and French camps. As you leave his headquarters, you will be entering the French encampment area. Here you will find a cemetery containing (according to tradition) the remains of approximately 50 unknown French soldiers (STOP I), the location of the French

artillery park (STOP J) and soldiers' camp (AREA K).

After the siege, the camp areas were dismantled. General Washington and most of the American troops, expecting the war to continue, returned to New York. Washington kept the American army intact for two



more years, until the coming of peace in 1783. The French forces remained in the area during the winter, living in and about Williamsburg and Yorktown. In the spring of 1782, General Rochambeau and his troops departed for New England.

As you leave the encampment area, the tour road will take you to some of the British outer defenses. These detached redoubts had been abandoned by Cornwallis on September 29, 1781, one day after the arrival of the American and French armies. One of the redoubts you will see is reconstructed, while the other (called the "Untouched Redoubt") is original (STOP L).