

W3R[®] -US Auto Tour through New Jersey

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Historical Overview

In 1781 August the U.S. Continental regiments marched south along the Hudson River and set up bread baking ovens in New Jersey within view of British posts on Staten Island. This was done to trick the British into thinking the French Army was there preparing to attack New York City. After building the ovens most of the Continental Army marched south to Trenton. Meanwhile the 5,500 men of the French Expeditionary Force (FEF) marched across the north and west sides of New Jersey to Liberty Corners, then south to Trenton. Here both armies crossed into Pennsylvania and continued on together to Yorktown.

The Continental forces returned north immediately after the victory. The French came north nine months later, following the same path they took south.

Consider the economic benefit to New Jersey from housing and feeding 5,500 French troops and 2,000 Continentals for five days going south and another five days going north, then follow their footsteps west and south to Pennsylvania.

For more details on the 1781 history and march route click the History link in w3r-archive.org and choose the link to this state. The link to Historical Maps leads to ten NPS maps with a shaded path where the roads taken in 1781 are overlaid on a modern roadmap.

Auto Tour through New Jersey

The French Army marched a western route through New Jersey, while the Continental Army marched to the east. The French reached Trenton several days before the Continentals. After that the two armies followed the same route south until Maryland, with the French arriving at a campsite several days after the Continentals had left it

AUTO ROUTE TO FOLLOW THE FRENCH ARMY:

1. From Suffern NY continue on Rt 202 west to Raritan. Then take Rt 206 south from Raritan to Trenton.

AUTO ROUTE TO FOLLOW THE CONTINENTAL ARMY:

1. From Palisades NY continue 12 miles more on Rt 9 and get onto I-95 going west (away from NY). Take this 40 miles south to the exit for Rt 18 west. Take Rt 18 0.5 miles to the exit for Rt 1 south. Take Rt 1 almost straight for 40 miles to Trenton.
2. In and after Trenton the two armies followed the same route. Rt 206 merges with Business Rt 1. Follow Business Rt 1 past the state capitol as it becomes Warren St, crosses the Lower Free Bridge, and becomes Rt 32 in Pennsylvania.
3. The route north re-traced essentially the same path in reverse.

Pearls along the Necklace -- Nearby Revolutionary-Era Sites

MONMOUTH: In the summer of 1778 the Continental Army caught up with and harassed the rear guard of the British army here as the British army was relocating from Philadelphia to New York City so as to avoid being besieged in Philadelphia by the French fleet (with an army convoy) led by Admiral-General d'Estaing.

MORRISTOWN: The Continental Army spent the winters of 1776-77 and 1779-80 here, sending out battle groups regularly to reduce the effectiveness of British foraging parties in New Jersey. Visit Morristown National Historical Park

PRINCETON: General George Washington led the Continental Army in a rout of British reinforcements here on January 3, 1777, after extracting his troops during the night from an enveloping force at Trenton. This victory made up for the near-capture on the previous evening. Visit Princeton Battlefield State Park.

TRENTON: A daring and dangerous crossing of the Delaware River on December 25, 1776, allowed General Washington's army to surprise and capture several Germanic regiments (Hessians) on the morning of December 26. This victory offset the disaster several weeks previously when the British army had chased the American army across New Jersey. Visit the Old Barracks Museum.

WASHINGTON CROSSING: This is the site where on December Washington's troops landed after being ferried across the river to make a surprise attack on the Hessian garrison in Trenton NJ. Visit Washington Crossing State Park.