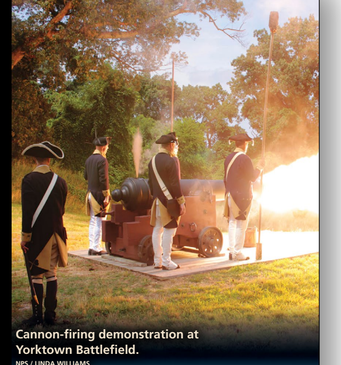
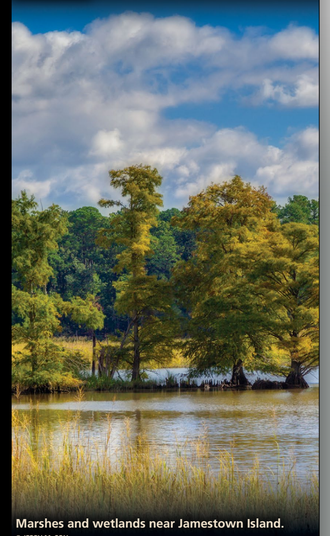
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Colonial National Historical Park
Virginia



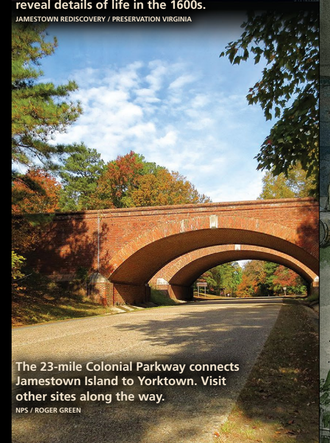
Cannon-firing demonstration at Yorktown Battlefield.
NPS / LINDA WILLIAMS



Marshes and wetlands near Jamestown Island.
© JERRY McCOY



Excavations at Jamestown Island continue to reveal details of life in the 1600s.
JAMESTOWN REDISCOVERY / PRESERVATION VIRGINIA



The 23-mile Colonial Parkway connects Jamestown Island to Yorktown. Visit other sites along the way.
NPS / ROGER GREEN

Colonial
Jamestown Island / Colonial Parkway / Yorktown Battlefield

1607 Three wooden ships, *Susan Constant, Godspeed,* and *Discovery,* carry 104 Englishmen across the Atlantic Ocean to a tiny island in a river they call the James. Within days Indigenous people confront the invaders. The English build a triangular fort for defense. John Smith becomes their leader.

1608 "First Supply" of skilled tradespeople increases the fort's small population.

1609 Chief Powhatan orders a siege of James Fort. It leads to the "Starving Time" that kills all but 60 colonists by winter's end.

First Anglo-Powhatan War.

1610 John Rolfe introduces tobacco, probably from the Caribbean. He finds a strain that will flourish in Virginia's soil, a "rich, blackish mould."

1614 Pocahontas, daughter of Chief Powhatan, marries Rolfe in Jamestown Church; a seven-year peace results.

1619 First elected legislative assembly in the western hemisphere meets at Jamestown Church; its 3rd Petition recommends bringing unmarried women to the colony.

Twenty to 30 Africans captured from a Portuguese warship are forcibly landed at Point Comfort on Chesapeake Bay.

1622 Chief Opechancanough leads a massacre of over 350 English outside James Fort.

Second Anglo-Powhatan War.

1644 Third Anglo-Powhatan War.

1676 Tobacco prices drop. England's failure to protect trade vessels against attacks at sea, increased taxes, and policies toward Indigenous people create dissent among some colonists.

Nathaniel Bacon leads populist rebellion against colonial governor William Berkeley; burns Jamestown.

1691 Through an Act for Ports, the General Assembly establishes Yorktown, with wharfs and storehouses to support and monitor trade.

1699 Capital moves from Jamestown to Middle Plantation, later called Williamsburg.

1700 The Virginia Colony's population of enslaved African and West Indian people dramatically increases.

1705 General Assembly votes to create a race-based Slave Code that strips all rights from people of color.

1750s Yorktown thrives as a center for trade; population reaches 1,800.

1774 1st Virginia Revolutionary Convention; Thomas Nelson Jr., with "Inhabitants of York," throws tea overboard in Yorktown Harbor to protest British tea tax.

1776 Declaration of Independence. Nelson is one of 56 signers. The American Revolution gains momentum.

1781 In the fifth year of the war, British Gen. Charles, Lord Cornwallis, occupies Yorktown with 8,300 soldiers. Allied French and American armies surround and bombard the town and destroy most it. After proposing terms for his 7,000 surviving troops, Cornwallis surrenders on October 19, 1781. Britain recognizes US independence in January 1783. The war is officially over.

JAMESTOWN

Dreams of finding wealth drew English settlers, backed by the Virginia Company of London, to Jamestown Island in 1607. Here you can visit the ground where they built the original James Fort.

Powhatan, a powerful political and spiritual leader of many Tribes in tidewater Virginia, was wary of the English. He offered them maize, which helped the English sustain themselves. In return the English offered beads and copper.

Virginia Company of London directors ordered the settlers to make glass, pottery, and iron wares and cultivate mulberries for silk-making. Near the site of the original glass shop, you can observe craftspeople making glass wares like those of the 1600s.

Early leaders like Captain John Smith organized a growing colony while exploring the rivers and lands and encountering various Tribes.

Over 200 additional English arrived in a settlement that did not have the means to feed them. An extreme drought in 1609 had left maize in short supply for the Indigenous people who grew it, let alone the English settlers. After a series of negotiations, in which neither side was willing to provide what the other wanted, Powhatan decided to stop supplying maize.

The starvation deaths of many indentured workers (bound to seven- to nine-year terms of labor) created a labor crisis. The company found it hard to recruit people to a life sure to be hard and brief. In 1619 its treasurer Edwin Sandys proposed "the sending of maids" [women] and children to boost the population. It relaxed its most punitive laws and allowed those who had completed their terms of indenture to purchase land.

The company approved the creation of a House of Burgesses, which met in 1619 at Jamestown Church. It was the first representative assembly in English-speaking North America. Although the colonial governor could veto decisions reached by his council and 22 elected burgesses, the colonists began to grow accustomed to having a say in their own destiny. Explore the Memorial Church, built on the site of that monumental event.

Also in 1619, two English privateers landed and sold 20 to 30 captive Angolans at Point Comfort, planting the roots of slavery in the Virginia colony. At the New Town home site of planter-merchant William Pierce, archeologists are uncovering the story of a woman named Angelo or Angela. The only one of the first Africans whose name is known, she lived in the Pierce household in 1625.

Planters like Pierce grew tobacco, a labor-intensive cash crop. As the need for labor grew, the planters turned to a race-based system of lifelong, hereditary enslavement. Many Africans who had lived earlier as free people—through acceptance of Christianity, the free status of one or both parents, or their place of birth—lost their rights. After 1662 children born to enslaved mothers were permanently enslaved, even if their fathers were free men. In 1705 the assembly adopted a Slave Code, stripping all rights from people of color.

Free, enslaved, and indentured people mixed on Jamestown Island and gradually merged into a new but imperfect society.

Colonial National Historical Park was established in 1930 to preserve important sites from the 1600s and 1700s that tell the story of English colonization and the struggle for American independence. Jamestown's legacy includes representative government as well as slavery, a brutal institution that spread throughout the colonies. At Yorktown, Virginia colonists fought in the last major battle of the American Revolutionary War.

The 23-mile Colonial Parkway links the sites and is recognized as an "All-American Road."

YORKTOWN

In 1691 the General Assembly authorized the Act for Ports, creating towns with wharfs, docks, and counting houses. The towns would aid the British colonial government by supporting trade, collecting taxes for the king on goods imported from England, and inspecting and recording outgoing cargo.

One such port was Yorktown. It occupied 50 acres on the Virginia Peninsula's north side. It had a deep, protected harbor navigable by increasingly large trade vessels. Its more than 200 buildings included a custom house, church, taverns, and stately brick homes. Yorktown thrived until the mid-1700s.

Taxes to fill the crown's coffers were the reason for Yorktown's founding—but also why some Yorktown citizens joined the boycotts of English imports that gained momentum after England imposed the Sugar and Stamp acts in the 1760s. War between Great Britain and its American colonies began in spring 1775.

After the Continental Army's defeat of the British at Saratoga in 1777, France signed military and commercial alliances with the United States. The American Revolution became a world war.

The British responded with a new focus on holding the southern colonies where they believed loyalist support to be concentrated. After success in Georgia and South Carolina, Lord Charles Cornwallis eyed North Carolina and Virginia's wealthy plantations and ports. As fall 1781 neared, his army began to look for suitable winter quarters. In August Cornwallis and 8,300 soldiers occupied Yorktown.

General George Washington and his French allies under the Comte de Rochambeau saw the occupation as an opportunity. The new United States lacked its own navy, but France provided a fleet of 26 warships, commanded by the Comte de Grasse, that kept the British navy from rescuing or resupplying Cornwallis. In late August the French disabled six British ships and blockaded the Chesapeake Bay, isolating Cornwallis and his soldiers. Against this backdrop, the combined American and French forces initiated the siege of Yorktown, which left "the Lord … shut up within his fortifications." Later Cornwallis would write, "I never saw this post in a favorable light."

On October 17, 1781, Cornwallis was surrounded, with all escape routes cut off. His forces were exhausted by the bombardment and siege and depleted by smallpox. He sent a letter to Washington. He proposed terms of surrender for the forces under his command but claimed illness on October 19, 1781, the day of surrender, avoiding having to face George Washington and his troops. Impoverished by fighting many enemies at once, the British government agreed to peace talks, leading to the end of the war in early 1783. The United States had won its independence.

Today you can explore Surrender Field, where the British army laid down its arms, and visit some of the colonial-era homes that survived the siege of 1781.



Establishment of Jamestown
1607



July 30, 1619
First legislative assembly in the western hemisphere convenes at Jamestown Church. As the result of the continuing study of thousands of fragments excavated from the fort, the church is now thought to have been built of close-studded timberframe.

NPS / RICHARD SCHLECHT

American Victory at Battle of Yorktown
1781



Sept. 28–Oct. 19, 1781
Allied French and American forces bombard Yorktown by land and by water, ending its occupation by the British commander and his troops. The Revolution officially ended when England signed the Treaty of Paris, which recognized US independence, in 1783.

NPS / RICHARD SCHLECHT

COLONIAL
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

COLONIAL PARKWAY

Colonial National Historical Park includes 8,677 acres on the historic Virginia Peninsula. About 6,000 acres provide habitat for native plants and wildlife. For scenic views along the 23-mile parkway, exit I-64 and head west to Jamestown Island or east to Yorktown. Driving west, you'll pass wide beaches and a rare community of bald cypress and wax myrtle trees along the James River. Heading east, a mixed pine and hardwood forest forms a dense canopy over the Williamsburg to Yorktown segment. Within Yorktown Battlefield, the parkway winds through swamps and open fields where the French and Continental armies camped during the siege in 1781.





Jamestown leader John Smith claimed that Pocahontas, daughter of the Powhatan chief, saved him from execution.
DETAIL FROM PAINTED FRIEZE, CA. 1880, US CAPITOL ROTUNDA—ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL / CONSTANTINO BRUMIDI



Bald eagle
© PHOO CHAN



Parkway underpass with Flemish and English bond brickwork.
© DAN BACHMAN



View of the York River from the parkway.
© ALAN STUDT



Detail from painting by John Trumbull, *Surrender at Yorktown*, 1820, US Capitol Rotunda.
ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL



Jamestown Island is the original site of the first permanent English settlement in North America. Preservation Virginia acquired 22.5 acres of the island in 1893. The National Park Service purchased the remaining 1,500 acres in 1934. In 1994 Preservation Virginia began an archeological project, Jamestown Rediscovery, to find the remains of the original James Fort, about 1607–24, long thought lost to the James River. The discovery of the fort in 1994 and excavations since have revealed thousands of artifacts and greatly increased our understanding of this first chapter in US history.

Park staff, volunteers, and partners work to research, preserve, and interpret the history of Jamestown Island and Yorktown.

We strive to make facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information call or check the park website.

More Information
Colonial National Historical Park
PO Box 210
Yorktown, VA 23690
757-898-2410
www.nps.gov/colo

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Use the official NPS App to guide your visit.

Colonial National Historical Park is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. Learn more at www.nps.gov.

National Park Foundation
Join the park community.
www.nationalparks.org

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COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

includes most of Jamestown Island, Yorktown Battlefield, and Colonial Parkway, which connects them; Green Spring (open only for special programs); and Cape Henry Memorial. Congress authorized the park in 1930. In 1933 the Department of War transferred Yorktown National Cemetery, with over 2,000 Civil War interments, to the park.

Captain John Smith Chesapeake and Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route national historic trails pass through park lands and waterways. In 2006 Congress designated the Captain John Smith Chesapeake trail as the nation's first water-based historic trail. It travels over 3,000 miles from Jamestown throughout the Chesapeake Bay and Susquehanna River to Cooperstown, New York. Its headquarters are at the Historic Jamestown Visitor Center.

YORKTOWN BATTLEFIELD TOURS

Battlefield Tour (Red arrow signs)
- A British Inner Defense Line
- B Grand French Battery
- C Second Allied Siege Line (Yorktown National Cemetery)
- D Redoubts 9 and 10
- E Moore House
- F Surrender Field

Allied Encampment Tour (Yellow arrow signs)
- G American Artillery Park
- H Gen. Washington's HQ
- I French Cemetery
- J French Artillery Park
- K French Encampment Area
- L Untouched Redoubt

"Houses [were] pulled down, others pulled to pieces for fuel" when French and Continental armies bombarded Yorktown to end the British occupation. Nelson House stayed largely intact. Thomas Nelson Jr. (1738–89) served in the Continental Congress and state legislature and signed the Declaration of Independence. He commanded the Virginia militia during the 1781 bombardment.

Most of the original ornamental details also survived the Civil War and a 1920 renovation. The National Park Service acquired and restored Nelson House in the 1980s.



Nelson House
© MICHAEL BELL

To Fort Monroe National Monument, Norfolk, and Cape Henry Memorial

To Fredericksburg

0 1 2 Kilometers
0 1 2 Miles
North

Colonial National Historical Park
Picnic area
Scenic pullout
Campground

The use and possession of metal detectors are strictly prohibited. Federal laws protect all natural and cultural features in the park. Park only in designated areas; do not park on grass or road shoulders.