

**National Park
Service**

**U.S. Department
of the Interior**

**Cowpens
National
Battlefield**

**4001 Chesnee
hwy.**

Gaffney, SC

29341

**[www.nps.gov/
cowp](http://www.nps.gov/cowp)**

**Notes for
school
programs:**

- Please call the park at (864) 461-2828 to schedule your trip.
- There is no fee for the park or programs.
- Please have 2 dates in mind when you call in case the first choice is not available.
- Schedule 2 hours for your visit.
- If you wish to eat lunch at the park, you will need to book the Picnic Shelter separately and allow extra time.

Cowpens National Battlefield

Educational Field Trip

The Battle of Cowpens

The Battle of Cowpens on January 17, 1781 was a major turning point in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution. Brigadier General Daniel Morgan defeated Lieutenant Colonel Banastre Tarleton on this date although the odds were not in his favor.

Morgan knew Tarleton's troops outnumbered his, so he made an unusual battle plan. Morgan arranged his troops in 3 lines of battle. The front line was the sharpshooters, militiamen from the Carolinas and Georgia who were known for their marksmanship. These men were ordered to aim for the epaulets—meaning their goal was to take out as many British officers as possible. Once they had fired 2 or 3 shots, they were to retreat.

The next line was the militia who were known for being afraid to face the British bayonets. Again, Morgan used them to his advantage. He told them to fire



**Battle of Cowpens by
Charles McBarron**

twice and then retreat back to the 3rd line—the Continentals. Morgan knew the British would see the retreat and sense that they had won.

The third line, who the British

would face in surprise, would be the well-trained Continentals. They were ready to fire and then charge with bayonets as soon as the militia ran by. Morgan hoped the British would be out of rank by this time as they would be “charging to victory.” Just in case, Morgan also had the Patriot dragoons in reserve at the back of the battlefield.

While plans did not go exactly as Morgan had hoped (there was a misunderstood order of retreat in the middle of the battle which he was able to quickly correct and use to his advantage), but overall—his plan was successful. The Patriots won the battle killing 110 British, wounding 229, and capturing 600. It was, in the words of Morgan himself, “a devil of a whipping.”

Importance in the American Revolution

The British moved the fight in the Revolutionary War to the South when they began to fail in the North beginning with the defeat at Saratoga. The British believed they would be more successful in the South because of Loyalist support.

At first it seemed the British were correct when Charleston fell in May 1780. But the tide began to turn with the Patriot win at Kings Mountain in October 1780 was followed by another costly British defeat at Cowpens.

With the severe losses at Cowpens followed in May by the Siege at Ninety Six, Cornwallis began to retreat northward only to surrender at Yorktown ten months later in October 1781.

Visitor Center



The U.S. Monument was erected in 1932 to commemorate the battle.

“Just hold up your heads, boys, three fires, and you are free, and then when you return to your homes, how the old folks will bless you, and the girls kiss you, for your gallant conduct!”
- Daniel Morgan to the militia on the eve of the battle

Students participating in a musket drill.



The Visitor Center is open daily from 9am—5pm. Restrooms are available.

Museum—Contains a reproduction 3-pounder cannon, other weapons of the Revolutionary War, and other exhibits.

Video Presentation—“Cowpens: A Battle Remembered” - depicts the events of the battle in a short movie format. (18 minutes)

Fiber-Optic Map—Illustrates the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution and the battle tactics of Morgan at Cowpens. (13 minutes)

****Please note**—The museum/auditorium has a capacity of 70 people, the map only 30. Therefore, your group may be split between the movie/museum and map. You will also be sharing the area with other visitors.

Sales Outlet (Operated by Eastern National)—Offers books, snacks, postcards, and theme-related souvenirs. If your students plan to purchase anything, please remind them that tax is not included in the sticker price. Teachers receive a 15% discount on all items in the bookstore.

Battlefield Trail & Other Park Areas

The Battlefield Trail is a partially paved 1.2 mile loop that includes wayside exhibits, the 1856 Washington Light Infantry Monument, and the historic Green River Road that was the centerline of the battle.

A ranger can be scheduled to lead you on a tour of the battlefield. This tour will last

approximately one hour. The park cannot accommodate more than 70 students on one tour.

Auto Loop Road—(open 9am—4:30 pm daily) - The 3.8 mile, one-way road travels the perimeter of the battlefield and includes wayside exhibits, parking areas with short trails to the Green River Road, the circa 1828 Robert Scruggs House, and access

to the Picnic Area.

Picnic Area—Located 1.5 miles down the Auto Loop Road, past the Visitor Center, the area provides picnic tables, grills, and restroom facilities. A covered picnic shelter may be reserved at no cost by school groups that visit the park. There is a 2-mile Nature Trail located at the Picnic Area.

Lesson Plans

Battlefield Readers' Theater—Ask about our new Battlefield Readers' Theater available as a part of your ranger tour. Let your students take on roles of actual participants in the conflict as you move along the battle field. Click on the title link for the script.

Pre-Visit Suggested Lesson—The Teacher Ranger Teachers this summer created a reader's theater for your students to read before your visit. Click here for a [middle/high school version](#), and here for an [elementary version](#).

Post-Visit Suggested Lesson—Here is a web quest to help your students show what they have

learned after your visit OR you can use this activity if you can't make it to the park. Click on the link above to access it. There's also a [post-visit assessment](#).

Plus, there are many more lessons available on the [Cowpens National Battlefield website](#).