Exploring Valley Forge

Valley Forge received its name from the iron forge built along Valley Creek in the 1740s. By the time of the Revolution, a sawmill and gristmill had been added, making the place an important supply base for the Americans. The British destroyed the forge and mills in 1777, and only ruins remained at the time of the encampment.

The National Park Service provides various programs, tours, and other interpretive activities to help you understand the significance of the events associated with Valley Forge and the encampment of 1777–78. Park rangers make every effort to accommodate all visitors in these presentations. It is the goal of the National Park Service to make the park accessible to all visitors.

The recommended first stop is the park's visitor center. There an 18-minute film, shown every 30 minutes, provides an introduction to life during the encampment. Displays and artifacts in the exhibit area illustrate what life was like in the camp. A wide range of publications and theme-related items are available in the Encampment Store. Information on restaurants, overnight accommodations, and other attractions in the greater Valley Forge area is also available at the visitor center.

A self-guiding tour route *(see map below)* takes you past extensive remains and replicas of major forts and lines of earthworks, the Artillery Park, Washington's Headquarters, and the Grand Parade, where General von Steuben trained the army. These, plus replicated huts, memorials, monuments, and markers, help to tell the story of the men who, at Valley Forge, helped to write an imperishable chapter in the history of America's struggle for independence.

Many nearby homes and farmhouses became quarters for general officers during the encampment. Political feelings in the area were divided, with most residents wishing to be left free from the conflict. The occupation of Valley Forge ended that wish and brought the war to their doorstep. Some officer quarters still stand, although most of these have been altered over the years. Some are included in the park tour; others that are used for park business are closed to the public.

Other points of interest include trace remains of historic roads, the site of Fatland Ford—the low-water-crossing point used by the British army en route to capturing the patriot capital of Philadelphia—and the site of Sullivan's Bridge, a temporary structure based on a Roman design and built early in the encampment to link Washington's army with important supply and patrol areas in the country to the north. A flood washed out Sullivan's Bridge shortly after the army abandoned camp. A historical marker along the River Trail marks the bridge's location. The marker is accessible only from the north side of the Schuylkill River.

Instead of driving yourself, you may wish to take advantage of the seasonal trolley tours offered at the visitor center. For a fee, the tour provides a more direct and informative way to travel to the most historically significant areas in the park. A cell phone tour is also available. Just look for the cell phone tour icon at various places throughout the park, then dial 484-396-1018. Follow the prompts to learn more about the park's many significant features.

The park has three picnic areas: Varnum's, Wayne's Woods, and Betzwood. No open fires are permitted, but the Betzwood area has grills that may be used for fires. Picnicking is on a first-come, first-served basis; reservations cannot be made. There is no camping in the park. The park has almost 30 miles of trails. The use of skates, skateboards, and in-line skates is prohibited on the bike/foot trails and all park roads. Mountain bikes are restricted to established and approved trails and park roads. Cross-country use through fields and wooded areas is prohibited. Please do not picnic or engage in recreational activities near historic sites and buildings. Drive and park vehicles only in designated areas. Pets must be leashed and attended at all times.

For More Information
Valley Forge National Historical Park
1400 North Outer Line Drive
King of Prussia, PA 19406-1009
www.nps.gov/vafo
610-783-1077
In an emergency dial 911.

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1 Visitor Center

Start your tour here, at the junction of Pa. 23 and North Gulph Road, where an audio-visual program and exhibits introduce you to the story of the 1777–78 encampment. Park staff will gladly help you plan your visit and provide information on seasonal programs, special events, and other park activities. An auto tape tour is available for purchase. Restrooms are wheelchair-accessible.

2 Muhlenberg Brigade

Replicated huts mark the site where Gen. Peter Muhlenberg's Brigade anchored the outer line of defense.

3 National Memorial Arch

This dominant feature of the park was dedicated in 1917 and commemorates the "patience and fidelity" of the soldiers who wintered at Valley Forge in 1777–78.

4 Wayne Statue

This bronze equestrian statue stands in an area where Pennsylvania troops commanded by Gen. Anthony Wayne made their encampment. The statue faces toward the general's home in nearby Chester County.

5 Headquarters

The focal point of camp activities was the Isaac Potts House, Washington's Headquarters. Start your visit at the Valley Forge Station.

6 Redoubt 4 *(walk-in access only–rough ground)*

Redoubts 4 and 3 anchored the right and left flanks of the inner, or second, line of defense. A trench connected the redoubts to form a formidable defense line against any British attack that might overrun the outer line of defense. Since the British never laid siege to the camp, the system of fortifications at Valley Forge was never tested. Vestiges of the trench constructed by the army are still visible along the left side of the Inner Line Drive.

7 Redoubt 3

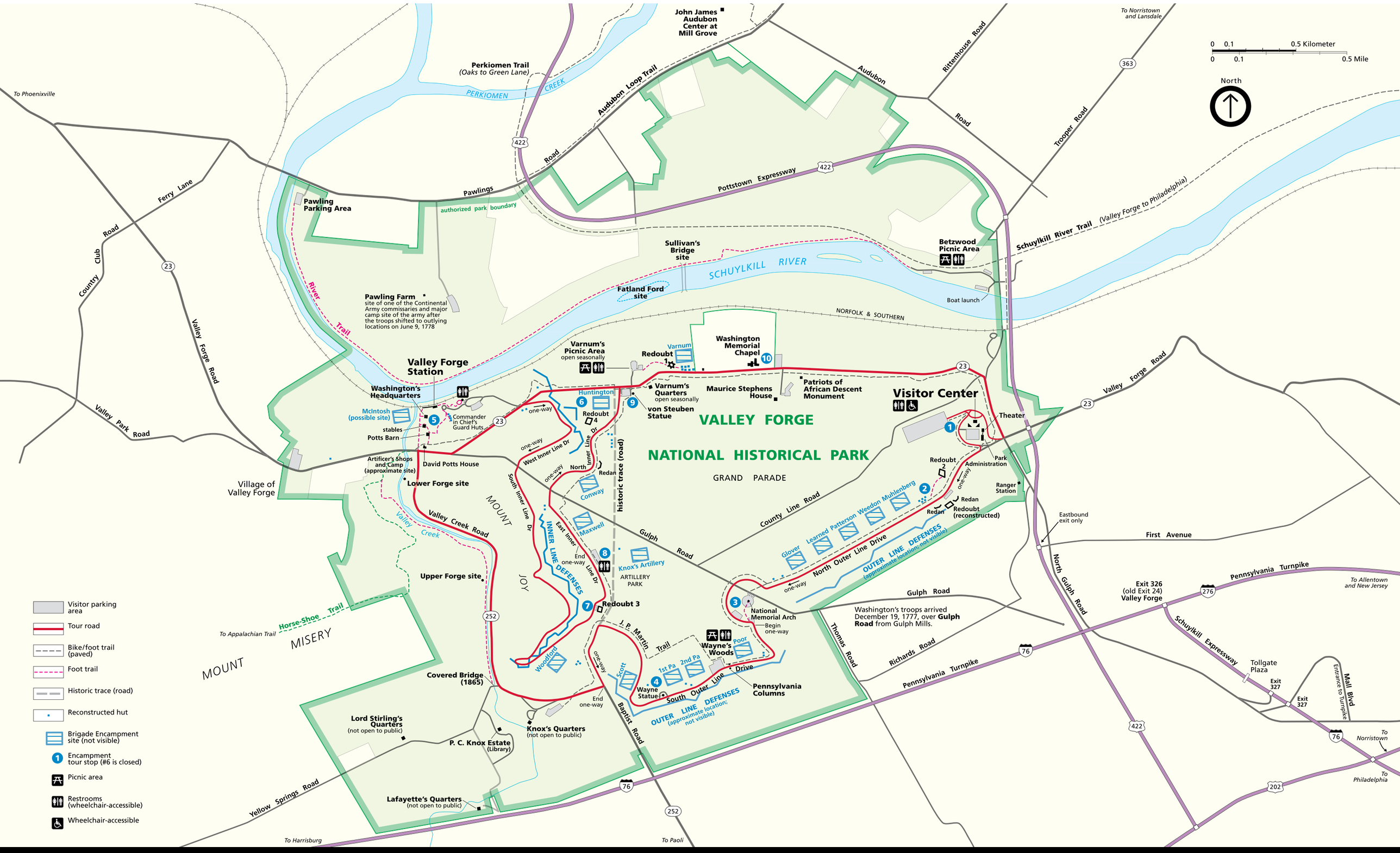
8 Artillery Park

Most of the cannon brought to Valley Forge were massed in the Artillery Park. Here, under the command of Brig. Gen. Henry Knox, artillery was stored and repaired, and gun crews were trained and drilled. In the event of an attack, the cannon could be dispatched from this central location to wherever they were needed.

9 Varnum's Quarters

Gen. James Varnum occupied this early 18th-century farmhouse overlooking the Grand Parade. Nearby stands a statue of General von Steuben, who supervised the training of the Continental Army.

10 Washington Memorial Chapel

Located on private property within the park, the chapel hosts an active congregation. The beautifully appointed interior of this early 20th-century church commemorates George Washington's service to his country.

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