

The World Turned Upside Down: The Yorktown Campaign,

A BGES Revolutionary War Field University Program

with Dr. John R. Maass

October 23-26, 2025; from Williamsburg, VA

The decisive importance of the Yorktown campaign has been recognized over the past 244 years by historians, public figures, and soldiers alike. This recognition stems from the British surrender to the Continental and French forces under George Washington at the small Virginia port town on October 19, 1781. In his bicentennial remarks, President Ronald W. Reagan observed, “This [surrender] field, this ceremony, and this day hold a special meaning for people the world over,” calling it “an extraordinary moment in history.” Similarly, Continental Congressman Elias Boudinot wrote just days after the victory that it was “a day which here ever after [will] be famous in the annals of American history.”

To be sure, the victorious Yorktown campaign was the pivotal engagement of the war, ultimately securing American independence. The operations, which lasted from March to October and extended from Rhode Island to the West Indies and from the Blue Ridge to the Atlantic Ocean, culminated in the Franco-American triumph at Yorktown. This final blow ended British efforts to turn the War for Independence in their favor and marked the ultimate turning point for the Allies.

The campaign’s immediate outcome was the loss of Britain’s second largest field force in America—a staggering blow that convinced King George III and his ministers to pursue an end to the war. Deprived of the ability to conduct large-scale offensive operations in the American colonies, the British were left with no path to victory. Although the final treaty ending the war was not signed until two years later, the success at Yorktown sealed American independence and extinguished any remaining hope of British success.

This program begins by exploring the British invasion of Virginia in March 1781 and Lafayette’s aggressive pursuit of Lord Cornwallis, including the battles of Spencer’s Ordinary and Green Spring. It concludes with an extensive tour of the Yorktown battlefield, offering a comprehensive understanding of this pivotal moment in history.

Itinerary

Thursday, October 23, 2025

Meet John at our headquarters hotel at 6 p.m. for a one-hour orientation program and an overview of the sights and events that your tour will cover. Here, your program materials will be handed out (or the next morning if you are late arrival).

Friday, October 24, 2025

Departing the hotel at 8 a.m., today we will explore Cornwallis's invasion of central Virginia, focusing on the bold cavalry raid on Charlottesville led by Lt. Col. Banastre Tarleton on June 3-4, 1781. We will follow his route, beginning in western Hanover County at Ground Squirrel Bridge, and stopping at the site of Cuckoo Tavern, where Tarleton's dragoons were spotted by militia captain Jack Jouett.

Next, we will visit Louisa Court House and Boswell's Tavern, both significant sites where Tarleton's column paused to refresh.

In Charlottesville, we will visit Tarleton's Headquarters, a little-known gem "hidden in plain sight."

The day ends with another rarely visited spot east of the city: Mechunk's Creek Bridge, where Lafayette posted his troops on June 13 to block Tarleton's troops from attacking Charlottesville again.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Saturday, October 25, 2025

Departing the hotel at 8 a.m., our focus today will be on the small army of the Marquis de Lafayette and its operations between Williamsburg and Richmond during the summer preceding the Siege of Yorktown.

Moving out from Richmond along the old Williamsburg Road, we will stop at Bottom's Bridge, where an advanced element of Lafayette's army faced off against the redcoats marching toward Williamsburg. The pursuit will take us to historic New Kent Court House, Byrd Tavern, and Old Hickory Church.

The highlight of the day will be touring the battlefields of Spencer's Ordinary and Green Spring, both near Jamestown, where fighting occurred between Lafayette's Continentals and Cornwallis's army in late June and early July. On our return to Richmond, we will stop at Malvern Hill, where Lafayette withdrew his troops following these two engagements.

Lunch is included, but dinner is on your own.

Sunday, October 26, 2025

Today's focus will be the Siege of Yorktown. Departing the hotel at 8 a.m., we will begin with a tour of the British lines surrounding the little village, where we will start our overview. From there, we will visit the French Battery and Fusilier Redoubt to the west before examining the allied positions, including the French and Continental First Parallel and the French Grand Battery.

Additional sites on the itinerary include the Second Allied Line, Redoubts 9 and 10, the Moore House, and finally, we will see Surrender Field.

We will return to the hotel by 5 p.m. Lunch is included.

About the Faculty

John R. Maass is from Rockbridge County, Virginia. He holds a B.A. in history from Washington and Lee University, an M.A. in U.S. history from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and a Ph.D. in Early American history from the Ohio State University.

His most recent publication is [*From Trenton to Yorktown: Turning Points of the Revolutionary War*](#). He is also the author of [*George Washington's Virginia*](#) and [*The Road to Yorktown*](#).

Dr. Maass is a historian at the National Museum of the U.S. Army at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. He previously served in the 80th Division of the U.S. Army Reserves.

Hotel Information

This program will be headquartered at Fairfield Inn Williamsburg, 1402 Richmond Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185; 757-645-3600. The BGES special hotel rate is \$139 plus tax, with a rate cut-off date of Sept. 22, 2025. When you call the hotel, be sure to tell them that you are booking your room with the group “Blue and Gray Education” to get the special rate. The hotel does not have an airport shuttle.

Transportation

The servicing airport is Richmond International Airport (RIC), 45 miles from the hotel.

Recommended Reading

You will receive maps and materials that will meet your onsite requirements. The following books are suggested to enhance your readiness for the program.

Davis, Burke, *The Campaign That Won America, The Story of Yorktown*. New York, NY: The Dial Press, 1970. ASIN: B000GRLBWS.

Grainger, John D., *Battle of Yorktown, 1781: A Reassessment*. Martlesham, Suffolk England: Boydell Press, 2005. ISBN: 978-1843831372.

Johnston, Henry P., *The Yorktown Campaign and the Surrender of Cornwallis, 1781*. New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1881 (reprinted 1958 & 1975). ASIN: B000BAWIFE.

Maass, John R., *From Trenton to Yorktown: Turning Points of the Revolutionary War*. New York, NY: Osprey Publishing, 2025 (expected release Feb. 12, 2025). ISBN: 978-1472863751.

Maass, John R., *George Washington's Virginia*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2017.
ISBN: 978-1467119788.

Maass, John R., *The Road to Yorktown*. Mount Pleasant, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2015.
ISBN: 978-1626193918.

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Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Registration includes 3 lunches, all paid admissions, maps, the academic program, support of a historian and a tour director, and transportation by passenger bus or van. We will also provide snacks and bottled water.

_____ Current BGES member \$825

_____ Non-BGES member \$875

_____ I am not a member but would like to join so that I can get the member's rate; or I am a member who is past-due to renew. Please accept my membership donation of \$ _____ (must be \$75 or more, which is tax-deductible; see blueandgrayeducation.org for levels).

_____ I am sending a deposit of \$150 per person and/or memberships. Total enclosed is \$ _____. I will pay the balance due before the event.

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Charge my (circle one) MC VISA AMEXP Discover \$ _____

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Mail to BGES Seminars, P.O. Box 1176, Chatham, VA 24531; or fax credit card registrations to 434-432-0596. You may also register online at www.blueandgrayeducation.org.