Touring the Battlefield

Self-Guiding Auto Tour

The complete 24-mile auto tour starts at the visitor center and includes the Barlow Knoll Loop, the Historic Downtown Gettysburg Loop, and the Historic Downtown Gettysburg Loop—East Cavalry Battlefield Site. The tour route traces the three-day battle in chronological order. It is flexible; you may start and end stops as you choose. You may include, or skip, certain points and stops, based on your interest. Allow a minimum of three hours to complete the tour.

July 1, 1863

1. McPherson Ridge

The Battle of Gettysburg began about 8 a.m. to the north of the Barlow Knoll Loop. The Confederate infantry launched a surprise attack. Union troops occupied the Barlow Knoll Loop and held their ground.

2. Eternal Light Peace Memorial

During the early morning hours of July 1, 1863, the Confederate army attacked from the north. The Eternal Light Peace Memorial was dedicated on November 18. The Gettysburg attorney who oversaw the creation of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery, Abraham Lincoln, attended the dedication. Markers here indicate the Auto Tour Route.

3. Oak Ridge

One of the Confederates held the upper hand. Lee decided to continue the offensive, pitting his 70,000-man army against McClellan’s Union army of 90,000.

2. Pennsylvania Memorial

In the afternoon of July 2, Lt. Gen. James Longstreet attacked the right flank of the Union army. This structure was also a depot for delivery of supplies and evacuation of the wounded. Abraham Lincoln arrived here on November 18. Gettysburg attorney who oversaw the creation of the Soldiers’ National Cemetery, Abraham Lincoln, attended the dedication. Markers here indicate the Auto Tour Route.

3. Peach Orchard

The Peach Orchard is the setting for the battle. This was the site of the Peach Orchard where the battle began.

4. Little Round Top

July 2, 1863

1. Virginia Memorial

The large open field to the east is where the last battle, known as “Pickett’s Charge,” occurred on July 3.

2. Plum Run

While fighting raged to the south at the Peach Orchard and Little Round Top, retreating Union soldiers crossed Plum Run on their way from the Peach Orchard to Cemetery Ridge.

3. Pennsylvania Memorial

This area began about 8 a.m. to the north of the Barlow Knoll Loop. The Confederate infantry launched a surprise attack. Union troops occupied the Barlow Knoll Loop and held their ground.

4. Plum Run

While fighting raged to the south at the Peach Orchard and Little Round Top, retreating Union soldiers crossed Plum Run on their way from the Peach Orchard to Cemetery Ridge.

5. Spangler’s Spring

The final assault was made against the Union forces defending Little Round Top. Spangler’s Spring was an important part of the recovery efforts after the battle, as a depot for delivery of supplies and evacuation of the wounded.

6. East Cemetery Hill

At dusk, Union forces repulsed a Confederate assault that reached the crest of this hill.

7. Little Round Top

Quick action by Brig. Gen. Gouverneur K. Warren, Meade’s chief engineer, alerted Union forces to the Confederate threat and brought federal reinforcements to his line to defend this position.

8. The Wheatfield

Union forces repulsed a Confederate assault that reached the crest of this hill. By day’s end, both flanks of the Union army had been attacked and both had held, despite losing ground. In a speech of war, Meade, anticipating his promotion, declared his resolve to defend his line, determined that his army would stay and fight.

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