

W3R®-US Auto Tour through Rhode Island

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We thank the Rhode Island Department of Transportation for recommending the auto route on the following pages, following or paralleling the historic 1781 land route of the French army.

In July 1780 a 5,000-man French army commanded by General Rochambeau landed in Newport RI to assist the Continental Army under General Washington in freeing the American colonies from British control. In June of 1781 the French army moved north to Providence and then west through Connecticut to join forces with the Continental Army on the Hudson River (near Dobbs Ferry) north of British-controlled New York City.

Moving several thousand men nearly 700 miles is a complicated task that requires considerable experience, planning, and organization. After six years of war the Americans were familiar with the terrain and with the local sources of food and hay for the livestock, but the French were not. Nearly 2,000 horses and oxen accompanied the French army to carry the officers, pull the wagons, and provide meat. Mounted patrols checked and mapped the route and made arrangements to purchase provisions. The French quartermasters paid farmers and merchants with silver coins, which were much preferred to Continental dollars.

The French army traveled in four divisions spaced a day apart and stayed in campsites that had been used by the Continental army throughout the war. To avoid the summer heat the soldiers marched out of camp at 4 AM and completed their daily 14-mile march before noon. Soldiers slept in eight-man tents, and company-grade officers slept in two-man tents, while regimental and general officers lodged in nearby taverns, such as Waterman's Tavern in Coventry RI.

In 2006 Many auto trail markers with the W3R® logo were installed by the Rhode Island Department of Transportation.



Auto Tour through Rhode Island

Disclaimer: Auto touring involves many safety hazards that are beyond the knowledge and control of the authors and publishers of these guides. Thus the use of the information here is at your own risk. Plan carefully, be alert for problems, and enjoy the scenery, the fresh air, and the history.

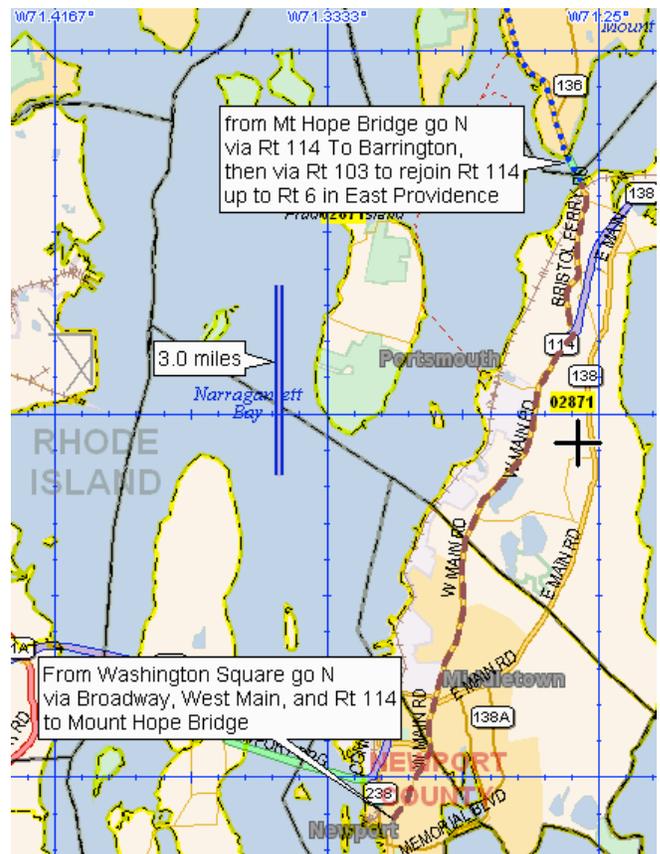
The MAIN W3R[®] tourism route in Rhode Island starts by following the land route from Newport to the march assembly area in Providence. This route was taken by the French baggage wagons and some of the French troops.

1. Go north from Old State House in Newport RI to the Mount Hope Bridge

- Start at the Colony House (Old State House) at Bull St. and Broadway) in Newport.
- Take Broadway north 1.2 miles until it merges with Route 114.
- Follow this 12 miles over the Mount Hope Bridge.

2. Go north from the Mount Hope Bridge to East Providence

- Continue on Route 114 through Warren and Barrington to East Providence. After about 12 miles Route 114 ends at Route 6.
- Take a left onto Route 6 and follow it 1.3 miles and merge with I-195 west to go over the bridge.
- Shortly thereafter take the exit to Route 44 north and after 0.4 miles go left on College St. After two blocks this becomes Westminster St. and passes the Post Office.



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For restaurants and tourism attraction near Newport see <http://www.eatinri.com/rihouse/newport.htm>

CONTINUING WEST we follow the route of the two divisions of the French army and their baggage trains as they marched from Providence to Connecticut.

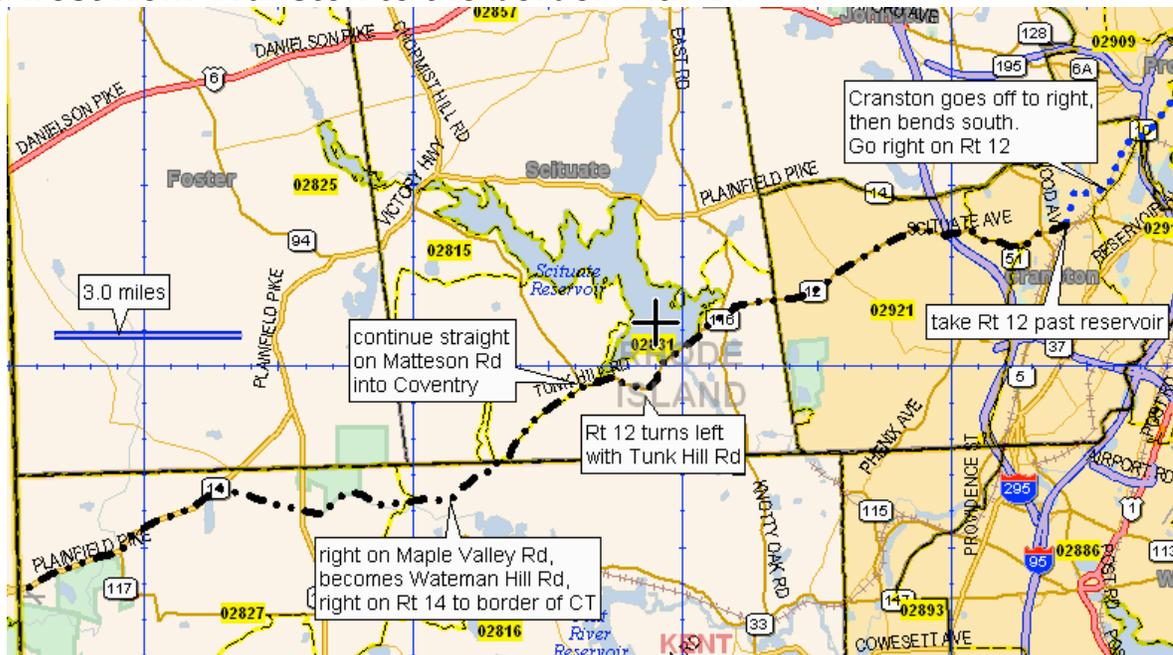
3. Go west through Providence and south to Cranston (4x larger scale)



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- Take Westminister St. SW 0.4 miles, turn right onto Empire St., after three blocks turn left onto Broadway and follow this 1.4 miles where it ends at Westminister St.
- Continue two blocks and bear left on Route 14 (Plainfield St). After 3.8 miles it passes under I-295. After 4.3 miles more the present-day road curves right, but the old road went straight and downhill. It is submerged under the present reservoir.

4. Go west from Cranston to the border with CT



- Continue on Route 14 across the causeway and around the end of the reservoir for 4.0 miles, where it turns left.
- After 0.7 miles turn left on Route 12 and go 2.3 miles to Old Plainfield Pike (just before the Pottersville Fire Station). Turn right on this road, which is the continuation of the old road after it comes out of the reservoir. This road passes several homes that were here in 1781, including (at 1.7 miles) one of several taverns owned by Mr. Waterman. This is the tavern where General Rochambeau spent the night during his several trips to meet with General Washington in Wethersfield CT.
- Continuing on 2.6 miles Old Plainfield Pike crosses Route 102 and becomes Route 14.
- After 5.7 miles you cross into CT and the road splits. Take the left branch, which is Route 14A.

===== ALTERNATE (non-auto) ROUTE =====

This roughly follows the route taken from Newport to Providence in June 1781 by transports carrying many of the French troops.

- Start at Perroti Park in Newport (Washington St. and Long Warf St.) and take the fast passenger ferry (no cars allowed). Perhaps someone can drive your car to Providence to pick you up.
- The ferry docks at the Point St. Landing in Providence --on the west side of the river, south-side of the U.S. Route 1 bridge.
- Go west on U.S. Route 1 one block, go right on Eddy St. 0.6 miles and left on Post Office St. to the Post Office.

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Contemporary Commemorations

In 2006 -- to celebrate the 225th anniversary of this march -- many youth, historical re-enactors, and other individuals re-traced the steps of these allied troops along portions of the 680-mile route from Newport to Yorktown. The 225th anniversary start-of-the-march activities in Rhode Island were coordinated by the Rhode Island Rochambeau Commemoration Commission and peaked on the weekend of June 16-18, 2006 in Providence RI, with an historical symposium at Brown University, ceremonies at the State House, and participation by the Rhode Island Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Society of Colonial Wars, the Alliance Française, the Boy Scouts of America, and the Girl Scouts of America.

A small band of Boy Scouts, joined by several re-enactors, made hikes on five successive weekends to traverse the entire 55 miles of the W3R[®] trail in Rhode Island. Four re-enactors traveled the entire route as "America's March to Yorktown" on the same itinerary and schedule as in 1781, giving talks and attending ceremonies in all nine states along the route. A replica of General Rochambeau's ceremonial baton, made by a Rhode Island artisan, was passed from one state's representative to the next at each state border along the way to symbolize the interstate cooperation that was vital to achieving independence.

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Pearls along the Necklace -- Nearby Revolutionary-Era Sites

FORT ADAMS STATE PARK near Newport has the **CONTINENTAL SLOOP PROVIDENCE**, a reproduction of the 10-gun, 110-foot-tall topsail sloop. This was the first ship commissioned by the Continental Navy and the first command of John Paul Jones.

HUNTER HOUSE was the Revolutionary War headquarters of French Admiral de Ternay (until his death in Newport). This is located near the Goat Island Causeway in Newport. It was built in 1748 and has famous Townsend-Goddard furniture, silver and portraits of the period.

The **ARTILLERY COMPANY OF NEWPORT** (part of the Rhode Island Militia) was chartered in 1741 and is the nation's oldest military organization in continuous service under its original charter. Their **MILITARY MUSEUM** contains a fine collection of historic weaponry.

The **WANTON-LYMAN-HAZARD HOUSE** is near Washington Square, where the Newport Stamp Act Riot of 1765 occurred. This home, built in 1675, is the oldest restored house in Newport and has housed colonial governors, Tories, and patriots.

The **WHITE HORSE TAVERN** in Newport was built in 1673. It is the oldest operating tavern in The United States.