

# VA250 Newport News Itinerary – Presentation Script

## Opening / Context

The VA250 commemoration honors the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution by celebrating the people, places, and ideas that shaped our nation’s founding.

Although Newport News was not the site of major Revolutionary War battles, it played a strategic and supportive role during the revolution as part of Warwick County, which later evolved into today’s Newport News.

This itinerary highlights how Newport News connects to the larger revolutionary story through its geography, local militia activity, and enduring colonial landmarks.

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## Start Where History Still Stands: Historic Endview

Built just before the Revolution, Historic Endview is one of Newport News’s oldest surviving homes. The current standing house was completed in **1769** by William Harwood.

During the Revolutionary era, Thomas Nelson and his troops reportedly used Historic Endview as a stopping point **en route to Yorktown**.

A visit to Historic Endview offers the chance to explore the region’s history spanning thousands of years—from indigenous cultures and colonial settlement through the Civil War and into the 20th century. While the site primarily interprets the 19th century today, it remains a powerful place to reflect on the uncertainty and tension that existed during the Revolutionary period.

This house stood throughout the revolution. Virginians held a wide range of opinions about the unfolding conflict, but we do not know how the Harwood family—or the enslaved people who lived here—felt or whether they took sides. What we can imagine, however, is the uncertainty that everyone experienced as the war unfolded.

**Location:** 362 Yorktown Road, Newport News, VA 23603

**Hours:** Thu–Sat, 10 AM–4 PM (call to confirm; hours may change)

**Admission:** \$8 adults, \$7 seniors, \$6 children (7–18), under 7 free, \$20 family rates

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## Waterway Connection: The James River Corridor

Next, we head to the James River—one of the most important waterways in colonial Virginia.

The James River served as a lifeline for the Virginia Peninsula, supporting the movement of troops, supplies, and communication. Newport News's waterfront helps us understand what made this area so strategically important.

If we were standing here in 1781, the river would likely have been busy with flatboats and ferries transporting everything from muskets and ammunition to food supplies like cornmeal.

**Location:** Riverview Farm Park, 111 City Farm Road, Newport News, VA 23602

**Hours:** Sunrise to sunset

**More details:** Free parking, walking trails, playground, picnic areas, and a short 5–10-minute hike to the James River (wheelchair accessible)

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## Local Resistance: Skirmish at Waters Creek / Capture of the Patriot

One of Newport News's most direct Revolutionary connections is the Skirmish at Waters Creek.

On January 4, 1781, local Patriot militia defeated a British raiding party near Waters Creek—one of the few documented Revolutionary War engagements in Newport News.

Not long after, in April 1781, the *Patriot*, a Virginia Navy armed schooner, was captured by the Royal Navy off the James River.

Then, on December 30, 1781, a Hessian and British force under Capt. Johann Ewald—operating under the overall command of Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold landed near what is now Riverview Farm Park as part of a broader raid along the James River. They skirmished with local Warwick County militia, and Arnold is said to have briefly come ashore following the engagement.

Although these events were small compared to battles like Yorktown, they represent the kind of local resistance and community defense that shaped the revolution. The war was made up of countless smaller confrontations like this across the colonies, demonstrating that resistance could be seen and felt everywhere, no matter the side you were on.

**Location:** Museum Drive, 0.3 miles west of Boundary Road (near Noland Trailhead Parking)

**More details:** Park at the Noland Trailhead, view the James River, hike the Noland Trail, and continue to The Mariners' Museum (100 Museum Drive), where admission is only \$1

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## End The Day Traveling Back in Time: Virginia War Museum

To wrap up the day, the Virginia War Museum provides important context for understanding how American defense evolved from the Revolutionary period forward.

While the museum spans multiple centuries, it offers an excellent foundation for understanding the early years of conflict beginning in 1775. Exhibits include uniforms, weapons, and artifacts that highlight Virginia's role in forming citizen militias and shaping early American identity.

It was not until the fall of 1775—with events like the Battle of Hampton, the skirmish at Kemp's Landing, Lord Dunmore's Proclamation, and the Battle of Great Bridge—that many Virginians began making clear choices about the Revolution. Before that, many residents remained neutral or uncertain about the growing conflict in the northern colonies.

For those who did choose a side—Patriot or Loyalist—one thing was clear: they were fighting for what they believed in.

**Location:** 9285 Warwick Boulevard, Newport News, VA 23607

**Hours:** Wed–Sun, 9 AM–4 PM

**Admission:** \$8 adults, \$7 seniors, \$6 children (7–18), under 7 free, \$20 family rates

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## Revolutionary Reflections

Newport News's revolutionary story is one of support, strategy, and spirit—not defined by large battles, but by crucial connections.

The region's rivers, farms, and communities all contributed to Virginia's path toward independence. Our local story reminds us that revolutions are built by people with diverse viewpoints, opinions, and beliefs—just like the people of Newport News today.

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