



NORTHERN VIRGINIA: CROSSROADS OF CONFLICT

Silent Sentinels: The Forts of Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis

(1 - Day Itinerary)



Occupied early in the War by Union troops, Northern Virginia witnessed the construction of many forts to protect the Federal capital, Washington, D.C. At the same time, to prevent greater advances by their Northern foes, Confederate engineers also built works to protect their growing forces in Northern Virginia. From overlooks on the Potomac, both above and below the U.S. capital, to works protecting the strategic rail junction at Manassas, the Confederates prepared for war. These two lines of fortifications caused civilians to be caught between opponents at war. This itinerary takes you on a tour of both Northern and Southern fortifications in Northern Virginia and the civilian locations surrounded by them.

Sites

Silent Sentinels: The Forts of Abe Lincoln and Jeff Davis travels a circuitous route that can be begun at any location. This itinerary offers one sample route.

Note: All sites along Virginia Civil War Trails are motor coach accessible. Some sites are museums with admission charges, and are noted with a (\$) symbol. However, all Virginia Civil War Trails markers are accessible without paying admission charges.



Begin your tour of Northern Virginia in **Alexandria**, the first city to be occupied by Union forces in the Civil War. Alexandria was also where the first Union officer was killed on May 24, 1861. Many buildings of the Civil War period remain in this quaint historic seaport. Head west from Old Town to **Fort Ward Museum and Historic Site**. As one of the 68 major forts that ringed the Washington, D.C., this is an excellent place to obtain orientation for a tour of Civil War Defenses of Washington area. Fort Ward has been preserved and partially restored. A Museum offers changing exhibits on various Civil War topics.

Next, head to **Arlington National Cemetery**. Robert E. Lee left his home here, Arlington House, and his long career in the Federal army to take command of Virginia forces in April 1861. Union soldiers occupied his estate a month later. In 1864, burials of Union soldiers began on the grounds. A small section is devoted to the remains of Confederate soldiers while no other section is dedicated to the United States Colored Troops and the residents of the Freedman's Village.

The next stop is **Freedman's Village**, an historic location in what is now Arlington National Cemetery. The government selected this site to house and educate refugee slaves.



Tour other Union forts such as **Fort C.F. Smith**, a well-preserved Union fortification built in 1863 to extend the Arlington defenses to the Potomac River and **Fort Ethan Allen**, built in 1861 to command approaches to the Chain Bridge over the Potomac into Washington. Visit **Fort Marcy** to end your tour of Union forts. The fort boasted 17 guns and three mortars.

Continue on to **Falls Church**, where material highlights the first Union occupation of this once-small farm town, affected civilians at **Cherry Hill Farmhouse**, and the balloon ascensions at **Taylor's Tavern** by the famed Thaddeus Lowe. From there, travel to Vienna, site of the **Freeman Store/Museum**.

Interpretation here tells the story of the role of this site, used by Union and Confederate troops. Nearby is a **Civil War Fort**, a six-point, star-shaped earthen fortification with a 130-yard perimeter built by Union forces to defend the Vienna railhead. Both Confederate and Union troops occupied the area during the war.

Take a break for lunch on your way to Leesburg.

Interpretation for the **Town of Leesburg** is at the visitor center, which offers a chronology of Leesburg-area events including stories about the Antietam

campaign and the adventures of Mosby's Rangers and their pursuers.

From there, travel to Manassas and the **Manassas Museum** (\$), where you can explore the history of the town and the Northern Virginia Piedmont.

From Manassas, continue on to **Leesylvania State Park (Freestone Point)** (\$ - parking), where well-interpreted remains of a Confederate artillery battery are located. The battery was in action Sept. 25, 1861, when it exchanged shots with Union vessels in the river.

The last stop is the **Fairfax Museum and Visitor Center**. Exhibits here outline the rich history of the city with some emphasis on the Civil War. Nearby Chantilly battlefield is highlighted. ★

Sites Visited

- ★ Alexandria
- ★ Fort Ward
- ★ Arlington National Cemetery
- ★ Freedman's Village
- ★ Fort C.F. Smith
- ★ Fort Ethan Allen
- ★ Fort Marcy
- ★ Falls Church
- ★ Taylor's Tavern
- ★ Civil War Star Fort
- ★ Vienna
- ★ Leesburg
- ★ Manassas Museum
- ★ Freestone Point
- ★ Fairfax Museum



For more information: