

Lexington and Concord: A journey into the American revolution

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As we celebrate the Fourth of July, which commemorates the day that our country's founders declared independence from Great Britain, it is good to remember how that independence came to be.

Here's a short history review. Just after midnight on April 19, 1775, Paul Revere began his famous ride from Boston to Lexington, 15 miles to the northwest, to sound the alarm to the colonists that the British troops were coming.

At dawn, a ragtag group of 77 American militiamen faced 700 British soldiers on Lexington Battle Green. "The Shot Heard Round the World" began the Revolutionary War and the rest, as they say, is history. The British then continued on to Concord, a few miles west, where the fighting continued.

Astonished at the American response, the British begin retreating towards Boston. For the Americans, their surprise victory bolstered their confidence. The war that began that day raged on for years. Although the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776, it took until 1783 for the colonists to finally win their independence from Britain.

For the roots of our American independence, Lexington and Concord both offer a rich tapestry of opportunities to learn about and experience our country's heritage.

Lexington

The site of that first battle, now Lexington Common, has been designated as a National Historic Landmark, and is honored both for the battles fought there and for the Minutemen who died and are buried there. It is one of the only places in the United States where the U.S. flag is authorized by Congress to fly 24 hours a day.

Visitors can enjoy free tours of the Battle Green daily from Memorial Day through October 30th and on weekends in April and May. The area around the commons is steeped in American history. Visit www.tourlexington.us/attractions for all the details.

Here are a few more highlights:

The Minuteman Statue and Revolutionary Monument commemorate the militia who clashed with the British.

Buckman Tavern, the oldest tavern in Lexington, is where the local militia gathered in the early morning hours, while they awaited the arrival of the British Redcoats. Decorated in the furnishings of the day, the tavern makes it feel like you have stepped back in time.

Nearby, the memorial to the Lexington Minutemen of 1775 honors the men who died on the green in that first battle of the war.

Munroe Tavern (circa 1690) served as a temporary headquarters and field hospital for the British. President Washington also dined at the tavern in 1789, on a visit to the Lexington battlefield. More than 300 years old, this former tavern contains many artifacts from both Washington's visit and the running of the tavern from 1770 to 1827. It's open for tours spring through fall.

The nearby Hancock-Clarke House documents the town's role in the revolution and is also honored in re-enactments.

Concord

To continue your journey into the history of the American Revolution, travel a few miles west of Lexington to Concord, where the first battle continued.

Although the colonists suffered heavy casualties in that first day of fighting, they proved that they could stand up to the powerful British army. By the summer of 1775, the war of independence raged in full force.

Minute Man National Historical Park in Concord offers programs that bring the opening battle of the Revolution to life for visitors of all ages. For example, on the Fourth of July, park rangers and volunteers will mark the occasion with a reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Check out their website for all the information.

<https://www.nps.gov/mima/index.htm>

Both Lexington and Concord are the sites of reenactments during April to commemorate the first battles of the war. Check calendars for specific details.

Where to stay?

The Inn at Hastings Park combines luxury with Revolutionary hospitality. Just a short walk from Lexington Commons, Buckman Tavern and other local heritage sites, the inn is housed in three historic buildings that date back to the 1800s.

The owners took two years to lovingly restore the 22 guest rooms and suites, using the talents of New England designers and artisans in the décor and furnishings. Each room is decorated with a different hand-printed wallpaper.

The inn has received many awards but most notably, was the first in the Boston area to earn the distinction of being accepted into the prestigious Relais & Châteaux, whose members are committed to preserving both local heritage and the environment. The inn uses refillable Molton Brown amenities of shampoo, conditioner and soaps and refillable glass water bottles for the rooms.

Relais & Châteaux describes their properties as “the living expression of a place, its history, environment and culture.” The Inn at Hastings Park definitely fits that description. Info, <http://www.innathastingspark.com/>

The inn’s award-winning restaurant, Artistry on the Green, features ingredients from local New England farms. “We showcase classic regional favorites with an inspired twist,” said owner Trisha Perez Kennealy. “Because of our close relationship with local farmers, we offer the bounty of the New England countryside fresh at our tables every day.”

So celebrate the Fourth of July, our independence and our freedoms, wherever you are, knowing that it all began 242 years ago, just before dawn, on a green northwest of Boston.

Diane Covington-Carter is an award-winning writer who writes frequently for the Napa Valley Register. Her website is www.dianecovingtoncarter.com.