

Fort Donelson National Battlefield Civil War Trail

Fort Donelson National Battlefield Visitors Center
120 Fort Donelson Road
Dover, TN 37058
(931) 232-5706 x 101
www.nps.gov/fodo/index.htm

General Information:

This should be considered a difficult hike. It is approximately 7.5 miles. The Cost of this Hike is free and the Memories are Priceless. Enjoy!

Requirements:

- It is good to read every sign along the trail, even if there is no question asked.
- Stay on designated paths.
- Stay off of stonework and earth works.
- Remember to practice "Leave No Trace".
- Hiking Boots or sturdy shoes are recommended.
- A hiking stick may be useful for some.
- Restrooms and water fountains are available outside Visitors Center, in the picnic area after tour stop 3 and at National Cemetery and Dover Hotel.

You will enter the Fort Donelson National Battlefield and park in the Visitors Center Parking Lot. I encourage you to take the time to visit the Visitors Center but it is not required for this hike.

Follow the sidewalk away from the Visitors Center towards the park entrance. Proceed with caution across the road towards the Brown Sign (Fort Donelson Visitors Center), proceed to the trail entrance by walking behind the earthworks. You will see a sign that reads Donelson Trail.

Follow the trail behind the earthworks. From the trail you will veer off to the right, behind the earthworks, and continuing to the road. Walk on the side of the road, until you get to the stairs and sidewalk in place for you to walk on. Then walk up to the back of the monument for your next question.

FD 1. Title on sign: Confederate Monument - Tour Stop 1

What were the dates of the battle at Fort Donelson? (N36.48484 W87.86293)

Return to the trail by going around the stone wall and back behind the earth works to the trail. As you continue past the Confederate Monument on the trail, you will continue along until you see a sign in the distance that reads "Authorized Personnel Only". At this time, you will veer to the right towards the road and towards Tour Stop 6.

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- FD 2. Title on sign: Union Camp - Tour Stop 6
Who made up Lauman's Brigade? (N36.48619 W87.86525)
-

Turn around and go back to the left to pick up the trail again. It will continue to follow behind the earthworks along the tree line. You will continue on the hiking trail until you come to a hiking sign and you see a cannon and three signs at Tour Stop 5.

- FD 3. Title on sign: Seizing the Initiative - Tour Stop 5
What was Grant's order to General Charles F. Smith? (N36.48764 W87.86568)
-

Now you will continue back to the trail, which follows the edge of the woods. Proceed to the edge of the woods and pick up the hiking trail at the hiking sign. Follow the trail behind the earth works until you come up to the next brown sign showing you direction and distances – here you will go left to pick up the River Circle Trail. You are leaving an open area and going into a wooded area.

Along this trail you will find several benches for you to stop and rest at.

* Do you know what river you are walking along side? _____

After crossing a foot bridge and winding your way to Tour Stop 4 – you will pick up Donelson Trail. You will go left at the fork and this will lead you to an open area. You will leave the wooded area and see the Cumberland River in front of you and the Lower Battery of cannons to your right. Continue ahead picking up the red gravel trail behind the cannons. Remember to stay off the cannons and sandbags.

Proceed past the stairs and you will see your next sign:

- FD 4. Title on sign: Reconstructed Powder Magazine
How many rounds did the Powder Magazine hold? (N36.49485 W87.85624)
-

Now turn around and proceed up the stairs. At the top of the stairs you will go right to pick up the paved trail. Follow this to the left to the boardwalk area where you will find 3 more signs. Veer to the left for your first sign.

- FD 5. Title on Left sign: Control the Rivers and Railroads
What two rivers were the main arteries that carried the economic lifeblood of Middle Tennessee? (N36.49482 W87.85628)
_____ and _____

- FD 6. Title on Middle sign: Exchanging Iron Valentines
How long did the battle ensue where Flag Officer Foote exclaimed the gunboats were "all cut up"? (N36.49481 W87.85626)
-

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FD 7. Title on Right sign - Foote's Gunboat Flotilla

Who commanded the Union's Western Flotilla? (N36.49481 W87.85623)

After you leave the boardwalk you will cross the road to the sign in the center.

FD 8. Title on sign: Gun Positions

How many 32-pounder cannons were initially mounted here? (N36.49460 W87.85609)

Now you will around the center to the left and proceed down the stairs to a mulched trail to the Upper River Battery. Now you will go down to the three cannon area.

FD 9. Title on Sign: With Admirable Precision

What two types of cannons were used here? (N36.49434 W87.85486)

_____ and _____

Now you will turn around and go left up the hill. Once you reach the road you will carefully cross the road and turn right and head towards Tour Stop 3 Log Hut.

FD 10. Title on Sign: Life at Fort Donelson - Tour Stop 3

Approximately how many log huts were built for the fort's garrison?

(N36.49302 W87.85665) _____

Now you will turn around and carefully cross the road. You will head back towards the river and your Pit Stop. This next stop is a picnic area: a water fountain and nice restrooms are available. After your break you will continue back on the Donelson Trail.

You will go behind the Restroom Facilities to pick up the mulched Donelson Trail. You will head right towards the tree line and opening to the left ahead of you. When you come to a "T" in the trail, follow the trail sign to the Left. This will keep you on the Donelson Trail.

Continue to follow hiking trail signs.

As you reach the top of the hill you will see a sign, at this sign you will follow the spur trail to the left until you reach the Donelson Cemetery. This about 1.3 miles away.

When you come to the end of the bridge you will go left towards the road then go left back on the trail to continue on the trail towards the Donelson Cemetery.

Follow trail through the amphitheater, which is at the top of the hill after the switchbacks.

(This is near the Scout Camp Site area - for scouts you can start the trail from here and end here. Pick up with FD11 and when you get back to the visitors center FD19 start following FD1 until you return to your campsite.)

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Follow hiking signs to cemetery then across a clearing to steps leading up the back of the cemetery wall. You will see an end of trail sign this is the end of the Donelson Trail, continue to the sign, by following the wall, near the entrance/gate to the cemetery.

FD 11. Title on Sign: Hallowed Ground

Initially, how many "known" Union soldiers were reinterred here from the battlefield graves? (N36.48782 W87.84690) _____

You are encouraged to take a rest and explore the cemetery information building.

Exit the cemetery by following the road to its end. To your right there will be a sign near the main cemetery sign.

FD 12. Title on Sign: Freedmen's Camp

a. How many refugees lived here at the freedman's camp? (N36.48609 W87.84725)

b. What percent of Tennessee's people were slaves in 1860? _____

Continue back across the street and continue your trail by following the sidewalk. You are walking alongside Church Street.

When you come to First Christian Church you will veer right following Church Street, continue following the side walk.

Follow Church Street across Hood Street until you reach the stop sign at Donelson Parkway. Turn left staying on the side walk, until you reach Spring Street.

At Spring Street you will follow the marked cross walk at a stoplight, cross the street towards the gazebo. Go down the sidewalk, turning left between the building and the gazebo.

Sign is located past the gazebo.

FD 13. Title on Sign: Dover Under Fire

Who ordered their forces to withdraw? (N36.48813 W87.83929)

Get back on the sidewalk alongside Donelson Parkway, follow it until you reach Pillow Street.

Take Pillow Street to the right until you reach the 2nd stop sign there will be a sign to your right.

Turn around; carefully cross the street to a sign, you will be walking towards the Hotel.

FD 14. Title on Sign: Rice House - Decision to Surrender

Who wrote Grant requesting an armistice and terms of surrender?

(N36.48859 W87.83692) _____

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Floyd feared capture and prosecution in the north, turned surrender over to _____, he then escaped the next morning on a _____ with _____.

Pillow passed command over to _____ then escaped by a _____ boat across the Cumberland River in the _____.

General Nathan Bedford Forrest and _____ escaped through the icy water of _____.

Bushrod Johnson simply _____.

Continue towards Hotel.

To the right of the walk way to the Hotel there will be a sign.

FD 15. Title on Sign: Dover Hotel - Surrender House

During the Civil War this house was used as (N36.48891 W87.8365) _____ and the _____.

After the Civil War Buckner would become _____ and Grant would become the _____.

As you proceed up the walkway towards the hotel you will veer right again towards another sign, the sign is near the river

FD 16. Title on Sign" 13,000 Prisoners

In September 1862 what were most of the prisoners exchanged for? (N36.48909 W87.83637) _____

It is recommended that you stop and visit the Hotel but it is not required.

After visiting or resting, you will follow Petty Street until you reach Spring Street again.

To the right across the Street you will see a sign.

FD 17. Title on Sign: Surrender House

What is the date of the Surrender of Ft. Donelson / Dover? (N36.48777 W87.83696) _____

Cross the street towards the stop sign and the side walk. As you follow this sidewalk you will pass the gazebo again cross towards the Court House.

Continue left until Church Street. Follow Church Street past the First Christian Church again.

Veer Left, as you near the cemetery, go down the hill; continue following Church Street.

If you would like added mileage you may proceed back through the cemetery following Donelson trail in reverse. There will be no questions in between here and where you pick up Donelson Trail Again.

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As you near the end of the sidewalk you will see two parking spots. Continue straight towards the blue bridge/boardwalk.

When you reach the T in the Trail after the Bridge/Boardwalk continue left instead of right. This will take you to the back of the Visitors Center. Proceed to the sign to the left of the front of the Visitors Center.

FD 19. Title on Sign: Fort Donelson

What nickname did Ulysses S. Grant earn? (N36.48261 W87.86281)

Congratulations! You are done!

Thank you for taking this hike. I hope you enjoyed it and learned some Civil War history on your visit.