



# Foundation Document Overview

## Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail

North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia



### Contact Information

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## Purpose



*The OVERMOUNTAIN VICTORY NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL commemorates, preserves, and interprets, through public and private partnerships, the spirit of patriot militia and the routes through Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina to and from the Battle at Kings Mountain in 1780, the first major victory of the Southern Campaign of the American Revolution.*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The Overmountain Men's arduous trek demonstrated remarkable dedication, frontier skills, and an ability to live off the land by navigating the formidable landscape.
- The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail leverages collaborative efforts of numerous agencies, organizations, and individuals partnering to protect, interpret, and provide access to a broad range of cultural and natural resources and sites. These public and private partnerships are essential to developing recreation, heritage tourism, economic benefits, and quality of life along the trail.
- The experience of the Overmountain trek and relationships formed proved to be a training ground for emerging leaders, many of whom rose to political and military prominence in the new nation. The legacy of these men endures in the many places named after them across the southeastern United States that commemorate their contributions.
- The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail reflects the struggles among friends, neighbors, and families who chose either the patriot cause for independence or loyalty to the King, thus intensifying civil conflict in the backcountry during the Revolutionary War.
- The contributions of the Overmountain Men to the Battle of Kings Mountain caused a major blow to the British army by removing its western arm and diminishing loyalist recruiting efforts.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Partnerships and Collaborations**
- **Historic Trail Trace**
- **Commemorative Motor Route**
- **Museum Collections and Archives**
- **Archeological Resources**
- **Certified/Certifiable Historic Sites Along the Trail**
- **High Quality and Broad Range of Visitor Experiences and Opportunities**



Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Sites of Historical Significance Not Located Within Trail Corridor**
- **Connections With Other Trail Systems**

## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park— they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from — and should reflect — park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- Responding to a threat by British Major Patrick Ferguson to invade their overmountain homeland, more than 2,000 determined patriot militiamen mustered and searched for Ferguson's army for two weeks during the fall of 1780. These resolute soldiers pursued and trapped Ferguson atop Kings Mountain in South Carolina, killing Ferguson and killing or capturing his entire force and bringing about a patriot victory that proved to be a pivotal change of course in the American Revolution.
- As the British recruited and trained loyalist militias in the southern colonies, the revolution pitted American against American, in effect, a colonial civil war.
- On the trail and in their daily lives, the backcountry and Overmountain Men demonstrated uniquely American attitudes, organizational approaches, and fighting styles derived from their experiences on the Appalachian frontier.
- The participants in the Overmountain Campaign included many forceful, colorful personalities whose characters were shaped by the distinctive overmountain and backcountry culture of Scots-Irish, German, free and enslaved persons of African descent, American Indians in the region, and others who sought the challenges, freedoms, and opportunities of the colonial frontier.
- In making their epic journey across the imposing natural barrier of the Appalachian Mountains, the overmountain people (both as militia and as frontier settlers) encountered a vast natural world of great beauty, but also rough, wild terrain, unpredictable weather, dense forests, untamed rivers, and abundant wildlife.

# Description

The American Revolution had been in progress for five years when England found itself stalemated in the northern colonies and turned its military strategy toward conquest of the South. British General Charles Cornwallis was convinced that southern Whigs would flock to the loyalist side if British strength were shown. He ordered British Colonel Patrick Ferguson into the Carolinas to recruit followers to the King's cause. In the summer of 1780 Ferguson and his regiment of American loyalists began to hunt and harass "rebels" who continued to resist British authority.

During that summer Ferguson engaged in small actions with patriot militias up and down the Carolina upcountry. These "Overmountain Men" hailed from valleys west of the Alleghenies around the headwaters of the Watauga, Holston, and Nolichucky Rivers in the present states of North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. These hardy people had established remote settlements a few years earlier, independent of Royal domination of the eastern colonies.

The National Park Service administers the Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail in cooperation with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the States of Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina; local governments; and historical societies and citizen groups.

The trail was established to commemorate the routes used by patriot militias to travel from mustering points near Abingdon, Virginia, and Surry County, North Carolina, to Kings Mountain, South Carolina, to engage and defeat loyalist troops under the command of Major Patrick Ferguson in a battle Thomas Jefferson deemed a turning point in the Southern Campaign of the American Revolutionary War.

The Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail is a partnership entity, the real estate of which is owned by a variety of partners. The National Park Service does not own any property in the name

of the trail along the route; however, parts of the trail intersect with the Blue Ridge Parkway and traverse Cowpens National Battlefield near Gaffney, South Carolina, and the final segment of the trail enters and ends within Kings Mountain National Military Park near Blacksburg, South Carolina. Extending 270 miles through Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, and South Carolina, Overmountain Victory National Historic Trail traces the route marched by patriot militia during the pivotal Kings Mountain campaign of 1780. Visitors can follow the campaign along either a 330-mile commemorative motor route or multiple public walkways from the mustering grounds at Abingdon, Virginia, to Kings Mountain National Military Park.

