

Content Description

Using state-of-the-art Passthrough XR headsets and immersive historical storytelling, visitors embark on an extraordinary journey back to 1776 to discover the people, ideas, and defining moments behind the Franco-American Alliance and the fight for American Independence.



Introduction



Selected artworks introduce the events, figures, and alliances that led to American independence and victory at Yorktown.

Immersive Linear Theatre



An immersive 360 experience begins as Auguste Couder's monumental Yorktown painting comes to life and La Fayette emerges from the canvas to guide visitors through the story of American independence—from Franklin's diplomacy and Louis XVI's alliance to the victory at Yorktown.

General Interactive Description

visitors encounter a series of mixed-reality experiences where paintings, objects, and spaces become gateways into the past.

Each interaction reveals a different dimension of the Franco-American alliance: diplomacy, culture, military strategy, friendship, and the ideals that connected two nations.

Technology becomes a bridge between memory and experience — allowing visitors not only to learn history, but to feel connected to the people who shaped it.

The welcoming of Louis XVI et de Marie-Antoinette

A 'talking' dual portrait of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette welcomes visitors to the interactive section of the experience. Louis acknowledges the American cause; Marie Antoinette echoes the theme of shared liberty.

Le Marquis de La Fayette by Le Paon

The Hero of Two Worlds

The 1783 oil painting by Jean-Baptiste Le Paon depicts the Marquis de Lafayette (1757–1834) presents Lafayette at the conclusion of the American War of Independence, representing the young French officer whose personal conviction helped unite two nations.

Lafayette invites visitors to join his voyage and begin their own journey into this shared history.

The Siege of Yorktown

When Memory Comes to Life

Auguste Couder's painting *The Siege of Yorktown* preserves one of the defining moments of the Franco-American alliance.

Through mixed reality, the painting becomes a gateway into history, allowing visitors to explore the people, decisions, and sacrifices behind the victory.

The experience reveals how French and American cooperation — through diplomacy, armies, and naval power — transformed the hope of independence into reality.

The painting comes to life and becomes an interactive gateway into the scene. Through four immersive stories, activated by glowing orbs triggered by the visitors, they are invited to explore the events and characters that shaped this decisive moment in history.

Tactical Map of Yorktown

On the Battlefield

A dynamic 3D animated map brings the Battle of Yorktown to life through several interactive modes. Visitors can follow an overview narration of the siege, immerse themselves in a 360° VR reconstruction of the battlefield, and discover a series of short animated sequences illustrating key moments, including the French use of heated cannonballs (“boulets rouges”).

By selecting interactive points, visitors uncover the strategic decisions and coordinated actions that led to the decisive victory securing American independence. Two additional maps displayed on the surrounding walls provide geographical context and help visitors understand the locations and movements at the heart of the campaign.

Madame de Brillon’s live quarter

The Pulse of Enlightenment

In 18th-century France, salons were not only places of music and conversation — they were spaces where ideas circulated and the spirit of the Enlightenment flourished.

A close friend of Benjamin Franklin during his years in France, Madame de Brillon represented the cultural world that welcomed American ideals and helped build sympathy for the American cause.

Visitors discover how art, philosophy, and personal relationships helped transform ideas into diplomacy — and diplomacy into alliance.

They take up a virtual conductor’s baton and bring a live orchestral performance of *La Marche des Insurgents*.

The Lafayette Pistol

Visitors hold a 3D replica of the flintlock pistol gifted by Lafayette to Washington. Washington then appears in a short video, reflecting on the depth of their friendship and what the gift symbolized from Valley Forge to final victory at Yorktown.

The Marquis de Castries and the French Frigate

Naval Administration and Construction, Maritime Superiority

Charles Eugène Gabriel de La Croix, Marquis de Castries (1727–1801), served as the Secretary of State for the Navy from 1780 to 1787. This portrait, held in the Versailles collections, commemorates his essential reforms.

Le marquis de Castries reorganized naval hierarchies and accelerated ship production, ensuring the French fleet could maintain a global presence against the Royal Navy during the American War. *

French frigates of the late 18th century were technological marvels, prized for their speed, maneuverability, and advanced naval engineering.

Visitors discover this maritime world by constructing a French frigate and understanding the naval power that helped secure victory.

The Portal at Sea

360° Naval strategy

Visitors step into a crow's nest high atop the mast of a French frigate racing to Chesapeake Bay.

They experience a visceral sense of height and motion as they scan the horizon for the British Navy.

Franklin's Q&A

The Scientist as Diplomat

Benjamin Franklin arrived in France in 1776 and remained until 1785.

As the first American Minister to France, he secured the vital Treaty of Alliance in 1778. Cultivating an image of "republican simplicity," Franklin famously eschewed ornate court dress for plain brown suits and a marten fur cap.

This calculated wardrobe fascinated the French aristocracy, branding him as a virtuous philosopher of the New World. Visitors will be able to interact with him.

The King's Chocolate

A Private Moment at Versailles

Beyond the ceremonies of court life, Versailles was also a place of private moments and human stories.

This experience offers visitors a more personal encounter with Louis XVI, a young king with a passion for science, craftsmanship, geography, and discovery.

Through a simple royal ritual, visitors glimpse the man behind the crown — the same king who, together with Vergennes and his ministers, would make the historic decision to support American independence and forever change the course of history.

The Marquis de La Fayette conclusive Address

Carry the Torch

At the end of the experience, Lafayette returns with a final message inviting visitors to reflect on the legacy of liberty and the responsibility of carrying it forward:

'May the light we inherit be the light we pass on.