

Shiloh National Military Park

Approximately 110 miles east of Memphis and twelve south of Savannah, Tennessee, via US-64 and Hwy-22, SHILOH NATIONAL MILITARY PARK (daily 8am-5pm; \$2; tel 901/689-5275) commemorates one of the most crucial battles of the Civil War. After victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, General Grant's confident Union forces were all but defeated by a surprise early-morning Confederate attack on April 6, 1862. A stubborn rump of resistance held on until around 5pm, and the Confederates elected to finish the task off the next morning rather than launching a twilight assault. However, Grant's decimated regiments were bolstered by the overnight arrival of new troops, and instead it was their dawn initiative that forced the tired and demoralized Confederates to retreat. Shiloh was the first encounter on a scale that became common as the war continued, putting an abrupt end to the romantic innocence of many a raw volunteer soldier. Over 20,000 men in all were killed. Even the war-toughened General Sherman spoke of "piles of dead soldiers' mangled bodies & without heads and legs & the scenes on this field would have cured anyone of war." The visitor center displays artifacts recovered from the battlefield and shows a twenty-minute film. A self-guided ten-mile driving tour takes in the National Cemetery , whose moss-covered walls contain thousands of unidentified graves.