

self guided walking tour of savannah

self guided walking tour of savannah offers an immersive way to explore one of America's most charming and historic cities at your own pace. Renowned for its cobblestone streets, verdant squares, and antebellum architecture, Savannah provides a unique blend of Southern hospitality and rich cultural heritage. This guide will help visitors navigate the city's highlights without the need for a formal tour, making it perfect for travelers seeking flexibility and a personalized experience. From iconic landmarks and hidden gems to local eateries and beautiful parks, the self guided walking tour of Savannah covers everything needed to make the most of your visit. Additionally, practical tips on planning your route, timing, and essential stops ensure a smooth and enjoyable exploration. Whether you are a first-time visitor or returning to discover more, this comprehensive article will serve as your ultimate companion for a memorable Savannah adventure.

- Planning Your Self Guided Walking Tour
- Historic District Highlights
- Must-See Squares and Parks
- Architectural and Cultural Landmarks
- Dining and Refreshment Stops
- Practical Tips for Walking in Savannah

Planning Your Self Guided Walking Tour

Preparation is key to a successful self guided walking tour of Savannah. Before heading out, it is important to plan your route and identify the key sites you wish to visit. Savannah's historic district spans approximately two square miles, making it easily walkable. Starting points can vary depending on personal interests, but popular options include the Visitor Center near Ellis Square or the iconic Forsyth Park. Mapping out your itinerary ensures efficient use of time and allows you to avoid backtracking. Consider the time of day and weather conditions, as Savannah can be warm and humid, especially in summer months. Comfortable footwear and hydration are essential for a pleasant walking experience. Using a physical map or a mapping app optimized for walking can enhance navigation while allowing you to discover off-the-beaten-path locations.

Choosing Your Starting Point

Selecting an ideal starting location can set the tone for the entire tour. The Savannah Visitor Center offers brochures, maps, and helpful advice. Alternatively, starting at the heart of the Historic District, such as Johnson Square or Ellis Square, allows immediate access to many landmarks. From there, you can easily branch out to surrounding squares and streets.

Mapping Your Route

A well-organized route maximizes sightseeing and minimizes walking fatigue. Consider grouping nearby attractions logically, such as visiting the southern squares in one segment and northern squares in another. Allocating time for breaks and meals will make the tour more enjoyable.

Historic District Highlights

The Savannah Historic District is the city's crown jewel, featuring beautifully preserved buildings and public spaces that reflect its colonial and antebellum past. This area is the centerpiece of any self-guided walking tour of Savannah. Strolling these streets reveals a tapestry of history, art, and architecture.

River Street

River Street is a bustling waterfront promenade that offers stunning views of the Savannah River. Once a hub for commerce and shipping, the cobblestone street is now lined with shops, galleries, and eateries. It is an excellent starting or ending point for a walking tour, offering a blend of history and modern vibrancy.

City Market

Located just north of River Street, City Market is a lively open-air plaza filled with boutiques, restaurants, and live entertainment. It has served as a central gathering place since the 1700s and remains a cultural hotspot today.

Historic Squares

Savannah is famous for its 22 historic squares, each with its own character and significance. These green spaces are perfect for resting during a walk while soaking in the city's ambiance.

Must-See Squares and Parks

The squares of Savannah are among its most iconic features. Each square is surrounded by historic buildings and adorned with monuments, fountains, or statues, offering insight into the city's heritage and community life.

Forsyth Park

Forsyth Park is the largest and most famous park in Savannah. Spanning 30 acres, it features walking paths, a picturesque fountain, playgrounds, and gardens. It is an ideal spot for a leisurely break in the middle of a walking tour.

Johnson Square

Johnson Square is Savannah's oldest square, established in 1733. It is surrounded by historic buildings and includes a monument honoring General Nathanael Greene, a Revolutionary War hero.

Madison Square

Madison Square is known for its striking architecture and the Troup Monument, commemorating prominent Georgia politicians. The square's shaded benches provide a tranquil spot for reflection.

List of Notable Squares to Visit

- Chippewa Square – famous for the bench scene in the film "Forrest Gump"
- Wright Square – home to the tomb of Tomochichi, Native American leader
- Monterey Square – features the Mercer-Williams House, a historic mansion
- Pulaski Square – named after Revolutionary War hero Casimir Pulaski
- Washington Square – one of the original squares established in 1733

Architectural and Cultural Landmarks

Savannah's rich history is reflected in its diverse architecture and cultural sites. A self guided walking tour of Savannah should include these landmarks to gain a deeper understanding of the city's evolution and charm.

Cathedral of St. John the Baptist

This stunning Gothic Revival cathedral is one of Savannah's most photographed landmarks. Its intricate stained-glass windows and ornate interiors are accessible during visiting hours, providing a glimpse into Savannah's religious heritage.

Mercer-Williams House

Famous for its architectural beauty and the events detailed in the book "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil," this mansion is a highlight on Monterey Square. While tours are available, viewing the exterior is rewarding on a self guided route.

Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace

The birthplace of the founder of the Girl Scouts of the USA, this historic home offers insights into early 20th-century life in Savannah and the origins of an iconic organization.

Olde Pink House

One of Savannah's oldest buildings, the Olde Pink House is notable for its colonial architecture and Southern cuisine. Its exterior and nearby surroundings provide a glimpse into 18th-century Savannah.

Dining and Refreshment Stops

No walking tour is complete without sampling local cuisine and refreshments. Savannah boasts a vibrant food scene, featuring traditional Southern fare, fresh seafood, and modern culinary innovations.

Popular Eateries Along the Route

Several restaurants and cafes are conveniently located near popular walking areas, allowing for comfortable breaks and authentic dining experiences.

Recommended Local Dishes

- Shrimp and Grits – a Southern classic featuring local shrimp
- Lowcountry Boil – a flavorful mix of seafood, sausage, and vegetables
- Fried Green Tomatoes – a staple appetizer in Savannah's cuisine
- Gullah Geechee inspired dishes – reflecting African American coastal culture
- Sweet tea and pecan pie – iconic Southern refreshments and desserts

Refreshing Spots and Cafes

For lighter fare and beverages, Savannah offers numerous coffee shops, bakeries, and juice bars. These spots provide excellent rest points during your walking tour.

Practical Tips for Walking in Savannah

Maximizing enjoyment on a self guided walking tour of Savannah requires attention to practical details. Being prepared enhances comfort, safety, and overall experience.

Best Times to Walk

Early mornings and late afternoons are ideal for walking to avoid the midday heat. Weekdays tend to be less crowded, offering a more peaceful exploration.

What to Wear and Bring

Comfortable, supportive shoes are essential due to uneven cobblestones and brick sidewalks. Lightweight clothing, sunscreen, a hat, and plenty of water help mitigate the effects of the Southern climate.

Safety and Navigation

Savannah is generally safe for tourists, but staying aware of surroundings and securing belongings is advisable. Utilizing a map or GPS and having a charged phone ensures smooth navigation. Additionally, keeping an eye on opening hours for certain attractions prevents disappointment.

Accessibility Considerations

While much of Savannah's historic district is walkable, some areas feature uneven terrain or steps. Those with mobility concerns may want to plan routes accordingly and consider accessible transportation options for longer distances.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the must-see landmarks on a self-guided walking tour of Savannah?

Must-see landmarks include Forsyth Park, River Street, the Savannah Historic District, Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, and the Bonaventure Cemetery.

How long does a typical self-guided walking tour of Savannah take?

A typical self-guided walking tour of Savannah lasts between 2 to 4 hours, depending on how many stops you make and your walking pace.

Are there mobile apps available for a self-guided walking tour of Savannah?

Yes, there are several mobile apps such as GPSmyCity, Detour, and PocketGuide that offer self-guided walking tours with maps, audio narration, and historical information about Savannah.

What is the best time of day to do a self-guided walking tour in Savannah?

The best time is early morning or late afternoon to avoid the midday heat and crowds, and to enjoy the beautiful lighting for photos.

Is it safe to do a self-guided walking tour in Savannah?

Yes, Savannah's Historic District is generally safe for walking tours. However, it's recommended to stay in well-populated areas, be aware of your surroundings, and avoid walking alone late at night.

Additional Resources

1. Walking Savannah: A Self-Guided Tour Through History and Charm

This book offers an immersive walking tour of Savannah's most iconic neighborhoods, blending historical insights with local anecdotes. It includes detailed maps and suggested routes that highlight the city's stunning architecture and lush squares. Perfect for those who want to explore at their own pace while soaking in Savannah's unique Southern charm.

2. The Savannah Stroll: Exploring the City on Foot

Designed for independent travelers, this guidebook breaks Savannah into manageable walking sections, each filled with cultural landmarks and hidden gems. It features tips on dining, shopping, and photography spots along the way. Readers will appreciate the blend of history, art, and nature that defines Savannah's streets.

3. Historic Savannah Walking Tours: A Self-Guided Journey

This comprehensive guide dives deep into Savannah's rich history, providing detailed narratives for each stop on the walking tour. The book highlights famous squares, historic homes, and significant monuments, making it ideal for history buffs. Supplemented with period photographs, it enriches the walking experience with visual context.

4. Savannah by Foot: Discovering the Heart of Georgia's Old City

With an emphasis on local culture and lesser-known paths, this guide encourages walkers to explore Savannah beyond the typical tourist spots. It includes suggested itineraries ranging from short strolls to full-day adventures. Readers will find useful information on public art, gardens, and waterfront views.

5. Step Into Savannah: A Walking Tour Guide

This easy-to-follow book offers clear directions and practical advice for navigating Savannah's streets independently. It is filled with interesting facts about the city's architecture, notable residents, and historic events. Ideal for first-time visitors who want a structured yet flexible walking experience.

6. *Savannah Squares and Streets: A Self-Guided Walking Tour*

Focusing on the iconic squares that define Savannah's layout, this guide explains the history and significance of each one. It pairs walking routes with stories about the surrounding buildings and parks. This book is perfect for those who wish to understand the city's unique urban planning and green spaces.

7. *The Art of Walking Savannah: A Cultural and Historical Guide*

Blending art history with walking tours, this book explores Savannah's artistic heritage alongside its historic sites. It includes stops at galleries, murals, and public installations, as well as traditional landmarks. Readers gain a multifaceted perspective on the city's creative spirit and historical depth.

8. *Savannah's Hidden Walks: Off-the-Beaten-Path Self-Guided Tours*

For adventurous walkers, this guidebook uncovers lesser-known neighborhoods and secret spots away from the crowds. It offers detailed directions and background stories for each lesser-explored area. Ideal for visitors seeking a unique and intimate Savannah experience.

9. *A Walker's Guide to Savannah's Coastal Trails*

This book extends the walking tour experience to Savannah's beautiful coastal areas, including riverfront paths and marshland trails. It combines natural beauty with historical landmarks related to Savannah's maritime past. Perfect for those who want to blend urban exploration with outdoor scenery.

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