

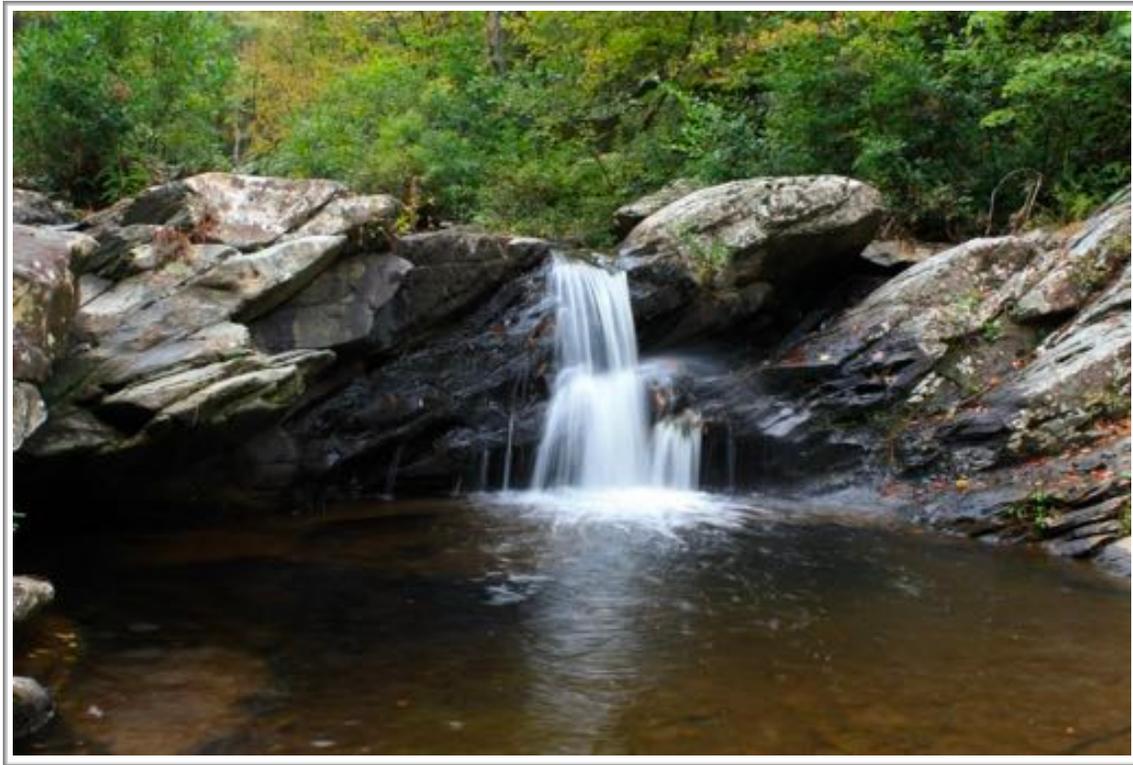
Talladega Scenic Drive

Beauty on the Ridge



5 Days/4 Nights

Gateway City: Atlanta, Georgia



The scenic landscape perched on the crest of the highest mountain in Alabama is the main event on the Talladega Scenic Drive, where, as the song says, it feels like, “on a clear day you can see forever.” Sitting at the top savoring lunch, it’s hard to believe this drive stretching across the backbone of the Appalachian Mountains, is only 29 miles long. In this case, small is beautiful. In fall, the drive blazes with color as Mother Nature puts on her best suit of clothes. In spring, the dogwoods and redbuds bloom exuberantly, contrasting with the blue mountain haze. Like so many other routes with astounding scenery, this Byway also has good heritage. The soil is red, thanks to the presence of iron, which once supported the local economy. As you travel, expect to see plenty of wildlife including white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, squirrels, rabbits, grouse, and even bobcats. Slow down, appreciate the drive and enjoy the serenity (all motorized vehicles are prohibited in the Cheaha Wilderness). Even though AL 281 is a highway, the road is a slow one, with a speed limit of 35 mph. Pull off on the scenic overlooks and marvel at the mountain landscape splaying out at your feet. After the beautiful drive, enjoy Talladega, where motorsports reign and DeSoto Caverns, a stop on the Mound Builders Native American Trail in Alabama.



Touring the Byway

We recommend starting your journey in Atlanta, a good gateway for many Alabama experiences. Visits to the Atlanta History Center and the Georgia Aquarium introduce you to the uniqueness of the region. The building that houses the High Museum is as astounding as the collection inside. And of course, a visit to the CNN headquarters is always in store in Atlanta. A stay at the Georgian Terrace lets you explore Buckhead, the jewel of the city. The next morning, you'll be on your way to Hefflin, which looks like a live action Norman Rockwell painting. Here, the Cleburne County Mountain Center hosts hundreds of nature and recreation programs every year.

From there, it's onto the Byway, lying completely within the Talladega National Forest. The Cheaha Scenic Overlook offers an amazing view of Cheaha (chaha in Muskogee means high place) Mountain. At the top of the mountain, Cheaha State Park offers breathtaking views, spectacular sunsets and beautiful waterfalls. It's the only place to stop for lunch along the drive and the Vista Cliffside Restaurant will not disappoint. After savoring the entire 29 miles of scenic beauty, you're off to Talladega, to explore the International Motorsports Hall of Fame, and if you're up

for adventure, the Richard Petty Driving Experience to round the track yourself. From there, it's on to DeSoto Caverns, where prehistoric Native Americans lived, Native American traders visited frequently, Confederate soldiers mined gunpowder, and moonshiners hid their stills during prohibition. Next up, Birmingham, with unprecedented heritage, great food and the Sloss Furnace that will tell you what happened to all the iron found in the red soil. A six block area of Birmingham where the major civil rights protests and events occurred was named the Birmingham Civil Rights District in 1992. While in the city, you can also visit the Birmingham Museum of Art, with a collection of more than 27,000 works. A stay at the Redmont puts you in Alabama's oldest operating hotel (completely restored of course). At that point you have the option to enjoy the Northern Alabama Wine Trail, drive the Appalachian Highlands Scenic Byway, return to Atlanta, or return home. Whichever you choose, we wish you a safe and pleasant journey.



DAY ONE



Atlanta

You'd almost expect Scarlett to glide down the marble steps of the massive Georgia Capitol and float down a tree-shaded street on her way back to Tara. But wait, this is the new South. The impressive gold capitol dome now presides over a contemporary city, rebuilt, reworked and virtually all brand new. Atlanta has become a beacon for bright young people creating a vibrant culture. Buckhead has world renowned shopping, and the Georgia Aquarium, featuring native Georgia aquatic life, was precisely designed to be world-class. Olympic Park reminds us of the good and bad. At the CNN Center, you can see where Ted Turner changed how the world viewed itself and its news, beating the predictions of skeptics from all over the world.

Atlanta History Center

Spread over 33 acres in [Buckhead](#), the Atlanta History Center lets you explore Georgia's past in comprehensive exhibits, ranging from Native American history to the culture and life of the Antebellum South. In addition to the History Center, the property includes the 1928 Swan House, featuring swan motifs, the Swan Woods Trail, lined with beautiful Georgia native plants and the The Smith Family Farm is a plantation house from the mid-1800s. And you won't want to miss a tour of the Margaret Mitchell House, where the author penned her Pulitzer Prize-winning *Gone with the Wind*. Plan to spend plenty of time. There's also a coffee shop and two restaurants.

130 West Paces Ferry Road, NW, Atlanta, GA, M-Sat 10AM-5:30PM, Sun Noon-5:30PM, Adults \$21.50. Allow at least 2 hours.



Georgia Aquarium

When building one of the largest aquariums in the world, Georgia decided to do something unique. Instead of featuring exotic fish from around the globe, they made a decision to feature 100,000 animals from 700 species of marine life in the state. Housed in 11 million gallons of water, the aquarium runs the gamut in marine life with everything from freshwater animals in the Southern Company River Scout gallery to a 6.3-million-gallon whale shark tank in the Ocean Voyager gallery. To get involved, there are animal encounters, swim and dive experiences, behind the scenes tours, shows, presentations and even sleepovers! There is also a free dolphin show. Some of the experiences fill up quickly, so consider purchasing your tickets in advance.

225 Baker Street NW, Atlanta, GA, 30313, 404-581-4000, M-W 9AM-6PM, Th-Sun 8AM-8PM Adults \$39.95



High Museum of Art

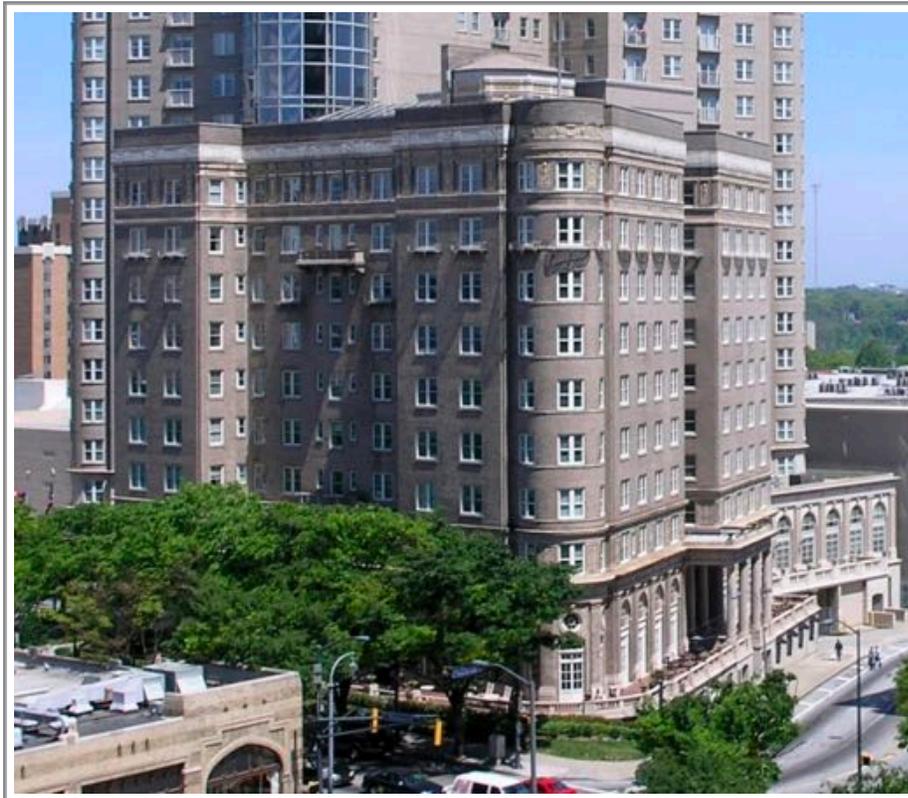
This spectacular building is covered in white porcelain mirrored in the interior, which holds a world class collection including 19th- and 20th-century American art with work by Thomas Sully, Norman Rockwell and Frederic Church; an impressive collection of Italian works dating from the 1300s to the 1900s; and masks, figurative sculptures, ceramics and more from Africa. There is also a highly recommended restaurant, special events, family tours, Friday night jazz, and a wealth of other special programs.

1280 Peach Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30309, 404-733-4400, Tu-Sat 10AM-5PM, Sun Noon-5PM. Adults \$14.50, Allow at least 2 hours

CNN Center

If you've ever watched CNN, chances are you'll enjoy a tour of their headquarters, which gives you an inside look at the day-to-day operations of one of the world's largest news organizations. The entire world scoffed at Ted Turner's pledge, when starting from scratch, to deliver 24/7 worldwide coverage before it ultimately came to pass. The standard behind the scenes tour, which includes spaces where broadcasts are produced, is 50 minutes, including security checks. Upgraded experiences offer access to everything from live newsrooms, souvenir press passes and meet-and-greets with TV anchors.

190 Marietta Street NW, Atlanta, GA 30303, Standard tours run every 20 minutes from 9AM-5PM, Adults \$15



Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Georgian Terrace Hotel, 659 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30308, 404-897-1991

The classic details of this cherished 1911 Atlanta landmark have witnessed romance, glamour and drama. Turreted corners, Palladian windows, decorative terra cotta, crystal chandeliers, and wrap-around terraces have surrounded guests and celebrity icons for generations, including Helen Keller, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tallulah Bankhead, Walt Disney, and Elvis Presley, as well as Presidents Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. The Grand Ballroom has hosted Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, Fleetwood Mac, Patti Smith, and the Ramones. Once scheduled for demolition, the hotel was totally restored to its luxurious original character.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Bones, 3130 Piedmont Road NE, Atlanta, GA 30305, 404-237-2663

Over its more than 40 years in business, Bones has been on a mission to provide the finest service, seafood and steaks. The restaurant has been recognized as the best steakhouse in Atlanta and by some, the best steakhouse in America. Zagat has recently recognized Bones with its highest rating for food and service.

Destination Distinctive Retail

Buckhead

Nothing beats Buckhead as the best retail environment in America. Fewer may know that it's actually a community, a neighborhood with beautiful mansions and great restaurants in addition to the best shopping in the Southeastern United States. Enjoy the tree-lined streets, gracious architecture and fabulous cuisine.

DAY TWO



Heflin

Much of what is currently the City of Heflin was originally owned by the Ross family who arrived in Alabama in the early 1830's. They donated land in town for schools, churches, and a cemetery. In the early days, an average of a hundred wagons a day hauled oil, guano and supplies through town, along with 12 train loads of lumber each week. Many of Heflin's early residents were merchants who opened their businesses along Ross Street and today, many have been handed down through the generations. You'll find unique handmade items at Romiette and Julio's, and antiques at Sarah Matilda's. You can purchase paintings at The Colonial Cottage and eat lunch at the Deli. You get the picture.

Cleburne County Mountain Center

A partnership between Jacksonville State University and Cleburne County, this beautiful visitor center hosts hundreds of nature and recreation programs each year.

6751 Alabama Highway 4, Heflin, AL 36264, 256-463-3938, M-F 8AM-4PM, on weekends for scheduled programs and events.

Talladega National Forest

The Talladega National Forest covers almost 400,000 acres at the southern edge of the Appalachian Mountains. Before being purchased by the US Government in the 1935, the extensively logged area had become some of the most abused and eroded forest in Alabama. 60% of the Oakmulgee Ranger District was over cut. When the forest was laid out, the lines were drawn to exclude as much farmland as possible. Restoration efforts were begun by the Civilian Conservation Corps and by 1939, what was then called the Sky Way Motorway, today's Talladega Scenic Drive, was completed. The Cheaha Wilderness protects the natural wealth on Talladega Mountain, while the Dugger Mountain Wilderness protects other mountain peaks. As you travel you can expect to see coyotes, white-tailed deer, fox, quail, squirrels, turkeys, rabbits, racoons, waterfowl, tortoises, turtles, and woodpeckers.



The Talladega Scenic Drive

It's time to climb to the top of the ridge on the Byway, to savor miles of scenic driving. The view of the Appalachian Mountains is astounding, and from time to time, you'll see small rural hamlets nestled in the trees. There's no need to hurry today since you have accommodations on the other side of the mountain in Talladega. You can spend some time in the Cheaha Wilderness or on the Pinhoti National Recreation Trail and more time in Cheaha State Park. While you are at the top, keep a close eye out for wildlife such as the white-tailed deer, quail, turkey, rabbit, opossum, and even a bald eagle. The ridge line is a particularly outstanding spot to watch migrating hawks in the fall.



Cheaha State Park

This 2,799-acre mountain top retreat located on top of Cheaha Mountain, offers breathtaking views. Named by the Creeks, chaha means "high place," the park is completely surrounded by the Talladega National Forest and connects several hiking trails including the Cheaha Trailhead of the Pinhoti Trail, the Appalachian Trail, the Odum Scout Trail, and the Chinnabee Silent Trail.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Vista Cliffside Restaurant

Enjoy lunch atop the mountain, where the view is like nothing else and the staff is friendly. The food is mostly simple with desserts to die for.

Talladega

Founded in 1834, Talladega sits in the foothills of the southern Appalachian Mountains. The site was originally inhabited by Creek Indians and derived its name from Creek words meaning "border town." During World War II, the city was a center of munitions production and air training. The Talladega Superspeedway hosts annual NASCAR racing events, including the Winston 500. A pilgrimage tour of the city's historic homes is held each April.



Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Somerset Bed and Breakfast, 701 North Street East, Talladega, AL 35160, 256-223-0908

Built in 1905, this colonial plantation style house listed on the National Register of Historic Places was extensively renovated in 1993. Today, it retains the elegance of the original house in four guest rooms, each with a large private bath, a queen bed, fireplace, 10-foot ceilings, antiques, wifi, tv, robes, slippers, and toiletries. Enjoy the full-length veranda.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Boswell's Wings and BBQ, 129 North Court Square, Talladega, AL 35160, 256-268-8826

The best of the Talladega BBQ places.

DAY THREE

International Motorsports Hall of Fame

If you're not in Talladega on a day when the Speedway is running, you can visit the International Motorsports Hall of Fame, dedicated to celebrating those who have contributed the most to auto and boat racing. The majority of inductees have been American drivers, although people of many other countries have also been honored.

3198 Speedway Boulevard, Lincoln, AL 35096, 256-362-5002, Daily 9AM-4PM, Adults \$12

Richard Petty Driving Experience

On non-racing days you can drive a NASCAR on the 2.66-mile oval with 33 degree banked turns. Following a meeting with the crew chief, you'll drive the car for timed racing sessions, with no lead car and no instructor riding with you. Instructions come in from a spotter over the radio. In between every eight minutes of track time, you get a pit stop and instructions on how to drive faster speeds. Pass every car in front of you and enjoy!

3366 Speedway Boulevard, Lincoln, AL 35096 704-886-2400, Three laps start at \$100, 5 minutes on the track \$200 and on up from there.





DeSoto Caverns

Over 2,000 years ago, Native Americans named the largest room of the DeSoto Caverns, Kymulga, meaning healing all. At 120 feet tall and 100 yards long, the Healing Cathedral is the first room you experience on the cavern tour. Maintained at 60 degrees year-round, DeSoto has the largest accumulation of onyx-marble stalagmites and stalactites, complemented with flowstone, draperies, helictites and cave bacon. Rich mineral deposits created the bright tapestry of colors on the cave walls. The property includes waterfalls, streams and ponds, and a laser light, sound and water show is included with every tour. The All Inclusive Gate includes a 1 hour guided cavern tour, underground laser light show, unlimited access to other a dozen other attractions, daily craft artisan demonstrations, daily shows with historic characters, and strolling entertainment.

5181 DeSoto Caverns Parkway, Childersburg, AL, 35044, 256-378-7252, M-Th 10AM-5:30PM, F-Sat 9:30AM-5:30PM, Sun 11AM-5:30PM, Adults All- Inclusive gate \$49.99



Birmingham

Founded by merging three farming towns in 1871, Birmingham was named after England's major industrial city, since most of the original settlers were English. From the beginning, the intent was to become a major industrial power and, indeed, in the years that followed, Birmingham did develop into a major iron and steel industry production and manufacturing center. When most of America's railroad cars were made here between 1880-1920, the city earned the name "The Pittsburgh of the South." As the city began to diversify, Birmingham became a major educational center, home to the University of Alabama School of Medicine and the School of Dentistry as well as three private colleges and three of Alabama's five law schools.



Destination Distinctive Accommodations:

Redmont Hotel, 2101 Fifth Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203, 205-957-6828

Stay in Alabama’s oldest operating hotel that, when built, included private baths, ceiling fans, and chilled water. Over the years, the hotel has hosted a number of celebrities including Hank Williams, George Wallace, and Kareem Abdul-Jabaar. After operating for nearly 100 years, it was massively restored to combine its traditional historic charm, original details, vaulted ceilings, decorative moldings, 10-foot crystal chandeliers and restored marble staircase with contemporary comforts.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Oscar’s at the Museum

The Birmingham Museum of Art’s in-house restaurant features a delicious seasonal lunch menu artfully created with fresh, local ingredients. Just steps from the galleries, the light-filled dining space offers a refreshing atmosphere with a splendid view of the award-winning Red Mountain Garden Club Memorial Garden.

Highlands Bar and Grill, 2011 11th Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35205, 205-939-1400

Even though Chef Stitt’s career started in San Francisco, and then moved on to the south of France, cuisine at the Highlands is made with humble Southern ingredients inspired by his roots in rural Alabama. He was among the first Alabama chefs to champion humane practices and sustainable agriculture and was honored with the James Beard Foundation Award for Best Chef in the Southeast and nominated for the Craig Claiborne Lifetime Achievement Award. Other awards have followed. Enjoy Southern traditions combined with an adventurous culinary spirit to keep things fresh and interesting.

Destination Distinctive Retail

What’s on 2nd, 2823 First Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203, 205-322-2688

Reed Books, 2021 Third Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203, 205-326-4460

A’mano, 281 Rele Street, Birmingham, AL 35223, 205-871-9093

Charm, 2329 Second Avenue North, Birmingham, AL 35203, 205-322-9023

DAY FOUR



Sloss Furnaces National Historic Site

In a location where it all came together, all the ingredients needed to make iron lay could be found within a thirty-mile radius surrounding Birmingham including an abundant seam of iron stretching for 25 miles and deposits of coal, while limestone, dolomite, and clay in the Jones Valley. After the Civil War, Reconstruction brought railroad men, land developers and speculators into the region to capture the rich mineral resources. One of these men, Colonel James Withers Sloss convinced the L&N Railroad to capitalize completion of the South and North rail line through Jones Valley to move the iron to market. With help from the Pratt Coke and Coal Company, he founded the Sloss Furnace Company and two years later blew a second furnace into blast, with two blowing engines and ten boilers. The annual production of 24,000 tons of award-winning iron ultimately made the furnace the largest producer of pig iron in the world. Even though nothing remains of the original furnace, a 1902 building housing eight 1900 steam-driven “blowing-engines” used to provide air for combustion in the furnaces, is still standing.

20 32nd Street, Birmingham, AL 35222, 205-254-2025, Tu-Sat 10AM-4PM, Sun Noon-4PM.

Birmingham Museum of Art

One of the finest regional museums in the United States, the Birmingham Museum of Art houses a diverse collection of more than 27,000 paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, and decorative arts dating from ancient to modern times. A rich panorama of cultures are featured, include Asian, European, American, African, Pre-Columbian, and Native American.

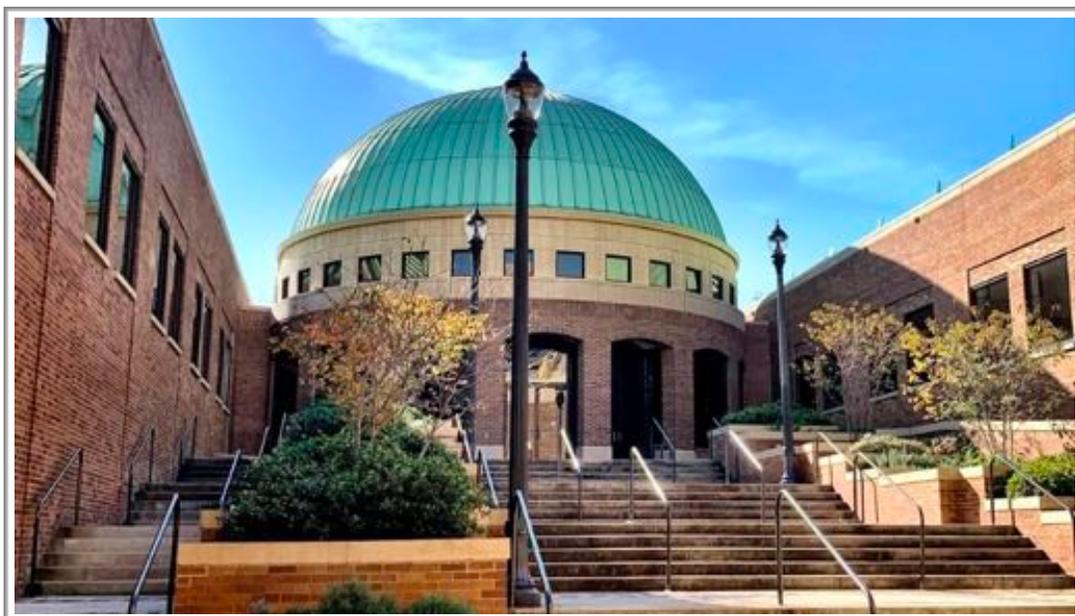
2000 Reverend Abraham Woods Jr Boulevard, Birmingham, AL 35203,
205-254-2565

Tu-Sat 10AM-5PM, Sun Noon-5PM, Free

Birmingham Civil Rights District and Civil Rights Institute

This six-block district commemorates the section of downtown Birmingham where significant events in the civil rights movement occurred, including the 16th Street Baptist Church where four young African American girls were killed, Kelly Ingram Park, the site of many protests, the Fourth Avenue Business District, where many of the city's African American owned business were located, the Carver Theatre, and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, a very impactful museum that illustrates the events, struggles and victories throughout the Civil Rights Movement.

520 16th Street North, Birmingham, AL 35203, 205-328-9696, Th-Sat 10AM-2PM
Adults \$15



DAY FIVE



Northern Alabama Wine Trail

This morning you have the option to head out to explore some of the Northern Alabama Wine Trail with six wineries: Jules Berta Vineyards, Wills Creek Winery, Maraelle Winery, Fruithurst Winery, White Oak Vineyards, High Country Cellars, nestled in the southern Appalachian Mountains where geology, soil and climate come together to produce great wines are each unique.

Appalachian Highlands Scenic Drive

Another option would be to explore the Appalachian Highlands Scenic Byway which passes through some of the most scenic areas in Alabama. Against the backdrop of the Appalachian Mountains, the route meanders through lush greenery, dramatic geologic formations and quaint historic rural communities. It traverses portions of Cleburne, Calhoun, Cherokee and DeKalb Counties, connecting Interstate 20 near Heflin and with Interstate 59 at Fort Payne.