

self guided driving tour of savannah

self guided driving tour of savannah offers an exceptional way to explore one of Georgia's most charming and historic cities at your own pace. This type of tour allows visitors to discover Savannah's rich heritage, stunning architecture, and vibrant culture without the constraints of a group schedule. A self guided driving tour provides flexibility, enabling travelers to stop at key landmarks, enjoy local dining, and experience hidden gems that might be missed on traditional tours. Savannah's tree-lined streets, historic squares, and scenic waterfront make it an ideal city for a driving exploration. This article will guide you through the best routes, must-see attractions, and practical tips for a successful self guided driving tour of Savannah. Whether interested in history, architecture, or Southern hospitality, this itinerary ensures a comprehensive and memorable visit.

- Planning Your Self Guided Driving Tour of Savannah
- Top Attractions and Landmarks to Visit
- Recommended Driving Routes Through Savannah
- Practical Tips for a Smooth Driving Experience
- Local Dining and Cultural Highlights

Planning Your Self Guided Driving Tour of Savannah

Proper planning is essential for maximizing the experience on a self guided driving tour of Savannah. Understanding the city layout, parking options, and timing will help ensure a smooth journey. Savannah's downtown area is compact but rich with attractions, so mapping out preferred stops ahead of time is beneficial.

Choosing the Best Time to Visit

Visiting Savannah during mild weather seasons such as spring or fall enhances the driving experience. Avoiding peak summer heat and holiday crowds allows for more comfortable exploration and easier parking availability. Early mornings and late afternoons are ideal for a less congested drive through popular areas.

Preparing Your Vehicle and Navigation Tools

Ensuring your vehicle is in good condition and equipped with reliable navigation tools is critical for a self guided driving tour of Savannah. A GPS or smartphone with offline maps is recommended, as some historic districts may have limited cell service. Additionally, familiarize yourself with local traffic laws and parking regulations.

Creating an Itinerary

An effective itinerary balances sightseeing with relaxation. Prioritize must-see landmarks while

allowing flexibility for spontaneous stops. The itinerary should include estimated travel times, parking locations, and meal breaks to optimize the overall experience.

Top Attractions and Landmarks to Visit

Savannah's rich history and unique charm are reflected in its numerous attractions. A self guided driving tour offers the chance to explore these sites at leisure, taking time to appreciate the city's distinctive architecture and scenic beauty.

Historic Squares and Parks

Savannah is famous for its 22 historic squares, each offering a unique atmosphere and historical significance. Driving through these squares allows visitors to admire the surrounding antebellum homes, monuments, and lush greenery.

- **Chippewa Square:** Known for its connection to the film "Forrest Gump" and featuring a monument to General James Oglethorpe.
- **Monterey Square:** Surrounded by beautiful mansions and home to the Mercer-Williams House.
- **Madison Square:** Featuring statues and historic churches, perfect for a scenic stop.

Historic Homes and Museums

Several historic homes and museums provide insights into Savannah's past and culture. These locations are easily accessible by car and often include parking facilities nearby.

- **Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace:** The founder of the Girl Scouts' childhood home with guided tours available.
- **Owens-Thomas House:** An exemplary example of English Regency architecture with a focus on the city's antebellum period.
- **Telfair Museums:** Including the Telfair Academy and Owens-Thomas House, offering art and history exhibits.

Waterfront and River Street

The Savannah River waterfront is a vibrant area featuring shops, restaurants, and historic buildings. Driving along River Street provides scenic views of the river and access to various attractions and entertainment options.

Recommended Driving Routes Through Savannah

Designing efficient and scenic driving routes enhances a self guided driving tour of Savannah by connecting key landmarks and neighborhoods. Below are suggested routes to cover major highlights and hidden gems.

Downtown Historic District Loop

This loop covers the heart of Savannah's historic district, including many of the famous squares and architectural marvels. The route is approximately 4 miles and can be completed in about 1.5 hours with stops.

1. Start at Forsyth Park, a large green space with the iconic Forsyth Fountain.
2. Drive north to Chippewa Square and then east to Monterey Square.
3. Continue to Lafayette Square and Madison Square to explore more historic sites.
4. Loop back via Bull Street to Forsyth Park.

Savannah Riverfront and Southside Drive

This route offers a picturesque drive along the river with opportunities to stop at River Street's shops and eateries. It also covers the southern neighborhoods, featuring diverse cultural and historic sites.

1. Begin at the intersection of Bay Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.
2. Drive west along Bay Street to enjoy river views.
3. Turn south onto Southside Drive to explore residential neighborhoods and parks.
4. Return via Victory Drive for a scenic route lined with oak trees.

Historic District to Bonaventure Cemetery Drive

Extending beyond the downtown area, this route leads to Bonaventure Cemetery, renowned for its historic graves and beautiful landscaping. This drive combines history with natural beauty.

1. Depart from the Historic District heading east on E. Victory Drive.
2. Continue to Bonaventure Cemetery for a leisurely walk or drive through the grounds.
3. Return via Skidaway Road, passing through charming residential areas.

Practical Tips for a Smooth Driving Experience

Adhering to practical advice will enhance the comfort and safety of a self guided driving tour of Savannah. Being prepared helps avoid common challenges such as parking difficulties and traffic congestion.

Parking Options and Regulations

Savannah offers a combination of metered street parking, public garages, and private lots. Familiarity with parking signs and payment methods is important to avoid fines. Early arrival at popular sites increases the chance of finding convenient parking.

- Use public parking garages near major squares and attractions.
- Check for time limits on metered parking areas.
- Consider parking outside the busiest areas and walking or using local transportation for short distances.

Navigating Traffic and One-Way Streets

Savannah's historic district includes many narrow streets and one-way routes. Drivers should be attentive to signage and prepared for occasional slow-moving traffic, especially during weekends and events.

Safety and Comfort Considerations

Maintaining awareness of pedestrians and cyclists is crucial in Savannah's walkable neighborhoods. Carrying water, using sun protection, and taking breaks are advisable during warmer months.

Local Dining and Cultural Highlights

A self guided driving tour of Savannah is incomplete without sampling local cuisine and experiencing cultural venues. Numerous dining options and cultural sites are easily accessible by car throughout the city.

Popular Southern Cuisine Restaurants

Savannah's culinary scene is rich in Southern flavors, offering everything from casual eateries to fine dining. Many restaurants provide convenient parking or are located near public lots.

- **Traditional Southern Fare:** Dishes like shrimp and grits, fried green tomatoes, and lowcountry boils.
- **Seafood Specialties:** Fresh catches from the nearby coast, including oysters and crab.
- **Bakery and Café Options:** For lighter meals and desserts, featuring local favorites such as

pralines and pecan pie.

Cultural Venues and Entertainment

In addition to historic sites, Savannah hosts a variety of theaters, galleries, and music venues. Exploring these cultural spots by car allows visitors to tailor their experience and timing.

- The Savannah Theatre: One of the oldest theaters in the U.S., offering live performances.
- Local art galleries: Featuring regional artists and unique Southern art styles.
- Music venues: Showcasing jazz, blues, and other genres integral to Savannah's cultural fabric.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a self-guided driving tour of Savannah?

A self-guided driving tour of Savannah allows visitors to explore the city at their own pace by following a pre-planned route or map, highlighting key attractions, historical sites, and scenic spots without the need for a live tour guide.

What are the must-see stops on a self-guided driving tour of Savannah?

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

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

A typical self-guided driving tour of Savannah can take anywhere from 2 to 4 hours, depending on how many stops you make and how long you spend exploring each location.

Are there any recommended apps or audio guides for a self-guided driving tour of Savannah?

Yes, apps like GPSmyCity, VoiceMap, and Detour offer audio-guided tours for Savannah, providing historical context and interesting facts as you drive through the city.

Is parking readily available during a self-guided driving tour

of Savannah?

Parking can be limited in the Historic District, but there are public parking garages and street parking options available. It's best to check parking regulations in advance to avoid fines.

Can a self-guided driving tour of Savannah be customized based on personal interests?

Absolutely. Self-guided tours allow you to customize your route and stops based on your interests, such as focusing on historic landmarks, architecture, food spots, or nature areas.

What is the best time of year to take a self-guided driving tour of Savannah?

The best time is during the spring (March to May) or fall (September to November) when the weather is mild and crowds are smaller, making for a more enjoyable driving and sightseeing experience.

Are there any safety tips for a self-guided driving tour in Savannah?

Yes, drive cautiously through narrow historic streets, obey all traffic signs, avoid distracted driving while following audio guides, and park only in designated areas.

How can I prepare for a self-guided driving tour of Savannah?

Prepare by downloading maps or audio guides in advance, planning your route with key stops, checking parking options, ensuring your vehicle is fueled, and carrying water and snacks for comfort.

Additional Resources

1. Exploring Savannah: A Self-Guided Driving Tour

This comprehensive guidebook offers an immersive driving experience through the historic streets and scenic routes of Savannah, Georgia. It includes detailed maps, suggested itineraries, and points of interest ranging from colonial architecture to charming local eateries. Perfect for travelers who want to explore at their own pace while uncovering the city's rich heritage.

2. Savannah by Car: The Ultimate Road Trip Guide

Designed for road trip enthusiasts, this book highlights the best driving routes around Savannah and its surroundings. Readers will find insider tips on hidden gems, photo stops, and cultural landmarks that can be easily accessed by car. The guide also provides historical context and practical advice for navigating the area smoothly.

3. Historic Savannah Driving Tours: Discover the City's Past on Your Own

This title focuses on Savannah's historic districts and landmarks, offering multiple self-guided driving tours with comprehensive commentary. It's ideal for history buffs interested in exploring the

city's colonial roots, Civil War sites, and preserved architecture from the comfort of their vehicle. Each route is carefully curated to maximize both education and enjoyment.

4. *The Savannah Scenic Drive Handbook*

Highlighting the most picturesque drives in and around Savannah, this handbook encourages travelers to experience the city's natural beauty and charming neighborhoods. It includes detailed descriptions of scenic byways, coastal views, and parks, as well as recommendations for stops at local attractions and dining options. It's a go-to resource for those who appreciate a leisurely drive with plenty of photo opportunities.

5. *Savannah's Hidden Treasures: A Self-Guided Car Tour*

This guide uncovers lesser-known spots and off-the-beaten-path destinations in Savannah accessible by car. Readers will discover unique boutiques, quaint cafes, and tranquil gardens that often escape the typical tourist radar. The book offers practical driving directions and insightful narratives that bring these hidden gems to life.

6. *Family-Friendly Driving Tours of Savannah*

Tailored for families traveling with children, this book features easy and fun driving routes that include parks, museums, and interactive attractions in Savannah. It provides tips on kid-friendly stops, picnic areas, and engaging activities to keep young travelers entertained. Parents will appreciate the balance of educational content and recreational options.

7. *Savannah Wine & Dine Driving Tour Guide*

Perfect for food and wine lovers, this guide maps out a culinary road trip through Savannah's best eateries, wineries, and tasting rooms. It combines driving directions with detailed descriptions of local flavors, chef highlights, and wine pairings. The tour is designed to savor Savannah's vibrant gastronomy while enjoying a scenic drive.

8. *Ghosts and Legends: A Haunted Driving Tour of Savannah*

Explore Savannah's spooky side with this self-guided driving tour of haunted sites and ghost stories. The book provides eerie tales, historical background, and safe driving routes to some of the city's most haunted locations. Ideal for thrill-seekers and paranormal enthusiasts interested in the mysterious charm of Savannah after dark.

9. *Savannah Art and Architecture Driving Tour*

This guide showcases Savannah's rich art scene and architectural marvels through a series of driving routes. Visitors can admire historic mansions, public art installations, and galleries while learning about the city's cultural evolution. The book includes detailed maps and descriptions that make exploring Savannah's creative landscape accessible and enjoyable by car.

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