

The Southern Civil Rights Story

Tennessee - Arkansas - Mississippi - Alabama - Georgia



Day 1 - Nashville, Tennessee

The Civil Rights Trail stretches across 14 U.S. states, encompasses more than 100 locations and highlights the USA's civil rights story. Our story starts at Woolworth on 5th, a restaurant that pays homage to the Nashville sit-ins - nonviolent protests against segregated public places in the city in 1960. One of the sit-ins targeted the lunch counter in the F.W. Woolworth store, where the restaurant operates today in a meticulously restored building. Learn more about the era by sitting at a symbolic lunch counter to read the sit-in protesters' Ten Rules of Conduct and other historical accounts in the Civil Rights Room at the Nashville Public Library. Visit the Davidson County Courthouse, where a peaceful march ended with then-Mayor Ben West conceding that segregation was immoral, the first step toward the city's desegregation of public facilities. Next to the courthouse are the Witness Walls, concrete murals featuring events, including Freedom Rides, marches and sit-ins, that spurred desegregation in Nashville. *Accommodation: Nashville, Tennessee*

Day 2 – Nashville, Tennessee, to Henning, Tennessee, and Memphis, Tennessee

Depart Nashville, drive for an hour and stop in Henning to visit the Alex Haley Museum and Interpretive Center. The museum – the childhood home of the “Roots” author – is dedicated to African-American history and contains a life-size replica of a slave ship. Continue an hour more to reach downtown Memphis, set on the Mississippi River. Go to the Burkle Estate, now known as the Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum, once part of the Underground Railroad network, which helped people escape slavery. Exhibits include displays of slave auction advertisements, information about slave trade history and artifacts highlighting racial profiling of the time. The main feature is the dark cellar, where men and women hid for hours or days until riverboats were available to take them to safety and freedom in northern states. *Accommodation: Memphis, Tennessee*



National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, Tennessee

Day 3 – Memphis, Tennessee

To explore the civil rights history of Memphis, start at the National Civil Rights Museum, constructed around the Lorraine Motel. Learn about key milestones in civil rights history, including Rosa Parks’ refusal to give up her seat on a segregated bus, Jim Crow segregation laws, the murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till and marches in Selma, Alabama. Appropriately, the final exhibit is Room 306 of the Lorraine Motel, re-created from 1968, when civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated there on April 4 on the balcony outside his room. It’s impossible to visit Memphis and not include Beale Street, at one time the

heart and soul of the city’s African-American culture, and now the entertainment hub for live music and great dining. The Stax Museum of American Soul Music is a celebration of everything from church gospel music to uplifting anthems that were the backbone of marches, giving hope to those fighting for civil rights. Stax Recording Studios was among the first to employ African-American artists, including Otis Redding and Isaac Hayes, giving a voice to blues and gospel music and becoming famous for launching their careers. Other must-see places on a tour of civil rights history in Memphis include the historic Beale Street Baptist Church, built by and for freed slaves in the late 1800s and a key meeting place for civil rights leaders through the ages. At The Four Way, order some hearty soul food – perhaps country fried steak, a catfish sandwich and turnip greens followed by sweet potato pie. Beginning in the 1940s, the restaurant was a meeting spot for civil rights activists as well as famous musicians such as B.B. King and Aretha Franklin due to its location near Stax Recording Studios. *Accommodation: Memphis, Tennessee*



Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, Arkansas

Day 4 – Memphis, Tennessee, to Little Rock, Arkansas

After arriving in Little Rock, visit one of the most recognizable civil rights memorials in the USA, the Little Rock Central High School Historic Site. In early September 1957, nine African-American students arrived to enroll in the all-white high school, but the state governor ordered the national guard to block their entry. The U.S. president intervened, and the students were escorted into the school on Sept. 25 amidst hundreds of protesters.

Opposite the State Capitol, view the Little Rock Nine Memorial, which honors their bravery. Daisy Bates, who was president of the Arkansas NAACP, opened her Little Rock home as a meeting place for students and activists; now a National Historic Landmark, private tours are available by reservation. Another important landmark is the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, home to the Mosaic Templars of America. Incorporated by two former slaves in 1883, the MTA provided illness, death and burial insurance in African-American communities. The original Grand Temple burned down in 2005. Self-guided tours are available of the new cultural center, which was built in 2008. *Accommodation: Little Rock, Arkansas*



Day 5 - Little Rock, Arkansas, to Money, Mississippi, Sumner, Mississippi, and Jackson, Mississippi

Drive southeast to Money, Mississippi, where all that remains of Bryant's Grocery & Meat Market is the ruin of the storefront. This is where Emmett Till, a black 14-year-old from Chicago, Illinois, who was visiting relatives, came to purchase candy in 1955 and was accused of whistling at Carolyn Bryant, the 21-year-old white shopkeeper. Emmett was abducted by Bryant's husband and half-brother, and his beaten body was found in the Tallahatchie River. Emmett's mother insisted on an open coffin funeral to highlight the savagery of the attack. The ensuing public outcry is credited with igniting the American Civil Rights Movement. Go to Sumner to see the Tallahatchie Courthouse, where the murder trial took place; both men were acquitted. Drive about two hours south to reach Jackson.

Accommodation: Jackson, Mississippi

Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, Jackson



Day 6 – Jackson, Mississippi

Discover a wealth of civil rights history in Jackson. Start at the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, opened in 2017, which details civil rights struggles in Mississippi. See archive film of protests and demonstrations as well as artifacts such as the rifle used to murder Medgar Evers at his home in 1963. The NAACP field secretary's house has been restored and is now the Medgar Evers Home Museum. North of Jackson, visit Tougaloo College. The historically black college was a hub of support for the civil rights movement, leading to the boycott of many Jackson businesses, protests against segregation and peaceful sit-ins. The Greyhound bus station on Lamar Street, which has since been restored, was the catalyst for the Freedom Rides throughout the South after the arrests in 1961 of 27 riders who challenged racial segregation.

Accommodation: Jackson, Mississippi



Blount Cultural Park, Selma, Alabama

Day 7 - Jackson, Mississippi, to Selma, Alabama, and Montgomery, Alabama

Drive three hours east to reach Selma, the starting point of three 1965 right-to-vote marches. On March 7, about 600 marchers were met with violence from local law enforcement and vigilante gangs. News broadcasts countrywide of “Bloody Sunday,” coupled with the death of an activist after a march two days later, led to thousands of supporters converging on Selma. President Lyndon B. Johnson pledged support to the marchers on national TV and expedited the Voting Rights Act. On March 21, troops protected 8,000 marchers as they set out along U.S. Route 80, arriving three days later in Montgomery, where they were greeted by over 50,000 supporters. The path of their journey became a National Historic Trail in 1966. Montgomery had been thrust into the public conscience in 1955 by one African-American woman’s refusal to give up her seat on a segregated bus, and visitors can see a 1955 city bus at the Rosa Parks Museum. Montgomery stayed at the forefront of the civil rights movement. It’s home to the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, where Martin Luther King Jr. preached and organized the Montgomery Bus Boycott. A mural in the church’s basement depicts King’s life, beginning with his crusade for racial equality in Montgomery and ending in his untimely death in 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. *Accommodation: Montgomery, Alabama*

Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama



Day 8 - Montgomery, Alabama, to Tuskegee, Alabama, and Atlanta, Georgia

From Montgomery, travel 40 minutes east to Tuskegee, home of the Tuskegee Airmen, the country's first African-American military aviators, who fought in World II. Visit the Butler Chapel AME Zion Church, a 1950s meeting place for people fighting for voting equality in Alabama, and arrange for a tour of the museum in the church's basement. The Tuskegee History Center traces the region's civil rights crusade and multicultural roots. After a two-hour drive northeast, arrive in Atlanta, the birthplace of Martin Luther King Jr. Visit the new Center for Civil and Human Rights to begin your discovery of Atlanta's civil rights history, including the Martin Luther King Jr. Collections as well as exhibits about current human rights issues. *Accommodation: Atlanta, Georgia*

Day 9 - Atlanta, Georgia

Explore the wealth of civil rights history in Atlanta, starting at The King Center, which includes an exhibition hall and the home where Martin Luther King Jr. was born, and Fire Station No. 6, which was one of the first firehouses in the South to be desegregated. Listen

to some of King's sermons and speeches at Ebenezer Baptist Church, and then enjoy quiet contemplation at the nearby World Peace Rose Garden and reflecting pool, home to the "Behold" monument. Visit the Eternal Flame and the crypts of King and his wife, Coretta, and explore the International Civil Rights Hall of Fame, where you can tread in the footprints of civil rights leaders and pioneers. Spend time in the Sweet Auburn District at the APEX Museum, which traces the African-American experience through videos, photographs and artifacts. *Accommodation: Atlanta, Georgia*



Atlanta, Georgia

Day 10 - Atlanta, Georgia, to Anniston, Alabama, and Birmingham, Alabama

Departing Atlanta, follow the westward route of members of the Congress of Racial Equality who boarded a Greyhound bus in 1961 to challenge segregated seating as part of the Freedom Rides movement. In Anniston, Alabama, an angry mob attacked the bus and slashed its tires, forcing it to stop outside of town. The bus was set on fire, and the fleeing riders were beaten. The site is marked with the Freedom Riders National Monument. Drive about an hour west to the next stop, Birmingham, a city at the heart of the civil rights movement, most famously Project C, better known as the Birmingham Campaign. Peaceful lunch counter sit-ins, boycotts and marches were met with such violence that they're widely accepted as key turning points in the civil rights movement. Today, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute tells the story of the city's role in the struggle for equality. Across the street, in Kelly Ingram Park, fire hoses and dogs were turned on peaceful protesters; it's now a site honoring leaders of the civil rights movement with statues and monuments. The nearby

Civil Rights National Monument was established in 2017 to commemorate this important time in U.S. history. Further explore the city, set in the beautiful Appalachian foothills, where outdoor recreation and dining and entertainment options abound. *Accommodation: Birmingham, Alabama*



Day 11 – Birmingham, Alabama, to Scottsboro, Alabama, and Nashville, Tennessee

The next stop, Scottsboro, is a two-hour drive north. This is where nine black teenagers were falsely accused of the sexual assault of two white girls aboard a Southern Railroad freight train from Chattanooga to Memphis, Tennessee, in 1931. The ensuing trials, convictions, retrials, verdicts, appeals and blatant injustice accorded the boys was the basis for much legal reform for the right to a fair trial. Visit the Scottsboro Boys Museum & Cultural Center in the 133-year-old former Joyce Chapel United Methodist Church – it contains documents and other artifacts that support the trial as the beginning of the civil rights movement. Your journey ends today where it began nearly two weeks ago; make the three-hour drive back to Nashville. *Accommodation: Nashville, Tennessee*