



Historic Hendersonville & Flat Rock, NC Self-Guided Driving Tour

Henderson County Tourism Development Authority 📍 201 South Main Street 📍 Hendersonville, NC 28792 📞 828.693.9708

The tour begins at the Visitors Center located at 201 South Main Street. The self-guided tour is 23 miles of historic sites and lovely neighborhoods. It will take you approximately two hours to complete.

From the Visitors Center, turn left onto Main Street, proceeding north through the Historic Downtown area. The Historic Courthouse will be to the left at First Avenue and Main Street.

The Historic Henderson County Courthouse was built in 1904 to replace the first courthouse, which was built on the same site in 1842. Today the Courthouse houses Henderson County Government Offices and the Henderson County Heritage Museum. The Henderson County Heritage Museum offers public displays, artifacts, collections, archives, libraries, demonstrations, performances and other similar exhibitions relating to the history, culture, heritage of Henderson County.

The next few blocks of Main Street and the surrounding side streets represent the Historic District of Downtown Hendersonville. The district was one of the first Main Street restoration programs in the United States. Main Street was designed in a park-like setting, with convenient parking, colorful planters, park benches and tree-lined sidewalks. The area provides interesting shopping and a variety of places to dine. The trees and beautiful flowers make this one of the most charming cities in the mountains.

Proceeding on Main Street, turn right onto Fifth Avenue, then right into the Hendersonville City Hall parking area, City Hall is across the street. Constructed in 1928, it replaced the first Town Hall and Opera House, built in 1895. In the entrance of City Hall there are museum exhibits reflecting the city's history. Inside the lobby there are three large statues of the U. S. Presidents from North Carolina. The statues are the models used to cast the bronze statues unveiled on Capital Square in Raleigh, October 19, 1948. The man on horseback is General Andrew Jackson; the men seated are James Knox Polk and Andrew Johnson.

Continue down Fifth Avenue one block, turn right onto Grove Street. Proceed two blocks to the Henderson County Courthouse on the left, with parking on either side of the building. It is open to the public during business hours Monday through Friday. The mural, artwork, historic photographs and Henderson County's own Lady Justice are interesting artifacts.

Returning to Grove Street, turn right and proceed to Fourth Avenue and turn left. At the corner of King and Fourth Avenue, on the left, is the building that housed Hendersonville's first library (now the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development), which opened in 1914. The library was made possible by a gift of land to the city by Captain M. C. Toms, a Confederate veteran. Along with this land gift was a generous gift of \$10,000 from Andrew Carnegie, a handsome sum in those days.

Continue on Fourth Avenue for two blocks, The Federal Building, which now houses other offices, is on the left at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Church Street. It was Hendersonville's first post office, built in 1914.

Turn left onto Church Street, proceed two blocks to Second Avenue; on the right is the Curb Market. It was formed in 1924 by seven farm families who sold their produce on a vacant city-owned lot on Main Street. It remains a successful farmers cooperative market with more than 100 members. All items sold at the Curb Market must be locally grown or handmade in Henderson County.

Proceed down Church St. (US 225 South) approximately 3 miles to the Historic Village of Flat Rock. Flat Rock began over a century and a half ago with large summer estates built in the English manner by the affluent Charlestonians, Europeans and prominent plantation owners of the South's low country.

Flat Rock is named for the large outcropping of rock that covers several acres. In early days, the rock was a gathering place for Indian ceremonies. Highway 225 passes over the center of the flat rock. A small portion can be seen in the parking area of the Flat Rock Playhouse.

Approximately 2.5 miles from downtown on the right side of Hwy. 225 is a historical marker for St. John in the Wilderness Church. Just past this marker, turn right onto Rutledge Drive and right again into the church parking lot. This beautiful English style chapel was built in 1833 as the private chapel of the Baring family. It was deeded to the Western North Carolina Episcopal Diocese in 1836, becoming the first church of that denomination in Western North Carolina. A tour of the church and graveyard will prove to be very interesting. The church is open from 9 am to 4 pm, and brochures about the church are located inside the vestibule. Turn left as you exit the church parking lot, and then right onto Highway 225 South.

Continuing on Hwy. 225, the Flat Rock Playhouse will be on the right; turn right into the parking lot. The Flat Rock Playhouse opened in 1940 in the Old Highland Lake Grist Mill, converted into a theater. Interrupted by World War II, the theater was reorganized in 1948 as the Lake Summit Playhouse in Tuxedo, NC. In 1950, the Vagabond Players returned to Flat Rock to become the Vagabond School of Drama and occupied the present location. In 1962, the NC Legislature designated it as “The State Theater of North Carolina”.

Leaving the Playhouse, turn right onto US 225; at the next intersection is the old Flat Rock Post Office, now the Book Exchange. It was established when this area was part of Buncombe County. Colonel John Davis, who served as Sergeant Major under Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812, was commissioned as the first postmaster on June 29, 1829.

Just a short drive down Highway 225 on the right is the Woodfield Inn (now called the Mansouri Mansion), It was completed in 1853 by Henry T. Farmer, who named it Farmer’s Hotel. The Inn has remained largely as it was originally built, when it was a stagecoach stop on the Old Buncombe Turnpike before the coming of the railroad.

From the Woodfield Inn driveway, turn left onto Highway 225. Just before the Flat Rock Playhouse, turn left onto Little River Road; go 100 yards, and turn left into the parking lot of the Carl Sandburg Home, National Historic Site. Connemara was built in 1838 by C. G. Memminger and named Rock Hill. Memminger served as the first Secretary of the Treasury of the Confederate States of America.

Pulitzer Prize winning author, historian and poet Carl Sandburg lived the last 22 years of his life at Connemara. The farm includes 264 acres of rolling hills, forest, lakes, pastures, goat barn and historic buildings. Guided tours of the home are scheduled daily, while self-guided tours of the trails, grounds and farm are available 9a.m.- 5 p.m. Connemara is closed Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day.

As you leave the parking area of the Sandburg Home, turn left onto Little River Road. This route of approximately 5 miles will take you through a beautiful area of Flat Rock where historic homes, rural areas and summer camps are located. Little River Rd. ends at Kanuga Rd; make a right turn here. Proceed on Kanuga Road to Price Rd., then turn left; travel on Price Rd. to Willow Rd until you arrive at Finley Cove Rd. Turn left onto Finley Cove and travel about one mile to the Timber Creek subdivision. Make a right turn onto Timber Creek Rd. and follow it to the Laurel Park Hwy.. Turn left and travel to the end of Laurel Park Hwy.

Jump Off Rock Park offers a panoramic view of Western North Carolina, spanning from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Great Smoky Mountains. The park received its name from a legend telling of an Indian princess who jumped to her death when she learned that her young chief had been killed in battle. The park is open to the public daily, sunrise to sunset.

When leaving Jump Off Rock Park travel back down Laurel Park Highway, which becomes Fifth Avenue and will bring you back to Main Street and Historic Downtown Hendersonville.