GENERAL

bonaventure cemetery map self guided tour

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Explore Bonaventure Cemetery with a Self Guided Tour Map

When you think of historic Southern cemeteries, images of moss laden oak trees, wrought iron gates, and the quiet hush of a place steeped in memory often come to mind. **Bonaventure Cemetery**, located in the heart of Savannah, Georgia, is one of those iconic sites that draws visitors from around the world. Whether you're a history buff, a literary enthusiast, or simply looking for a peaceful stroll, a self guided tour of this cemetery offers an intimate and flexible way to experience its stories. In this guide, we'll walk you through everything you need to know to make the most of your visit: how to navigate the map, the best routes, must see graves, and essential tips for a respectful and enriching experience.

About Bonaventure Cemetery

Founded in 1847, Bonaventure Cemetery began as a modest burial ground for the city's poor and indigent. Over time, it evolved into a prestigious resting place for Savannah's elite, including authors, politicians, and philanthropists. The cemetery's name—derived from the French word for "good adventure"—reflects its role as a place where the living and the dead share a timeless dialogue.

Today, the cemetery covers 33 acres of rolling hills, lush gardens, and water features. Its layout, marked by winding pathways and distinct sections, offers a natural map that invites exploration. The cemetery's most famous resident, author William Faulkner, is buried here, and the site is also home to the graves of O. Henry, the 19th century poet, and a host of other notable figures.

History and Significance

Bonaventure's story mirrors the social and cultural evolution of Savannah itself. In the 19th century, the cemetery was a reflection of the city's growth, with elaborate monuments and family plots signifying status and lineage. After the Civil War, the cemetery became a memorial ground for Confederate soldiers, a fact that continues to spark debate and reflection.

Beyond its historical layers, Bonaventure is a living testament to the artistry of funerary design. From the intricate ironwork of headstones to the naturalistic landscaping, the cemetery showcases a blend of European and Southern aesthetics. The presence of the "Bonaventure Bell," a bronze bell that rings on special occasions, adds a ceremonial touch that underscores the cemetery's cultural significance.

Why Visit Bonaventure Cemetery?

- Architectural Beauty: The cemetery's design is a masterclass in landscape architecture, featuring winding paths, shaded groves, and ornamental ponds.
- Literary Connections: Home to the graves of William Faulkner and O. Henry, the site is a pilgrimage for literature lovers.
- Historical Insight: The cemetery offers a unique perspective on Savannah's social history, including the Civil War era and the evolution of burial customs.
- Peaceful Reflection: The serene environment provides a quiet place for contemplation and remembrance.

Planning Your Self Guided Tour

Getting There

Located at 1150 East Broad Street, Bonaventure Cemetery is easily accessible by car, bike, or public transit. If you're staying in downtown Savannah, the cemetery is just a 10 minute drive. For those who prefer public transportation, the **CityLink** bus route 6 stops within walking distance.

Best Times to Visit

The cemetery's temperate climate makes it a year round destination, but certain times offer unique experiences:

1. Spring (April June): The oak trees burst into green, and the surrounding gardens bloom with wildflowers.
2. Autumn (September November): The foliage turns amber, providing a dramatic backdrop for photos.
3. Evening (Sunset): The soft light creates a contemplative atmosphere, especially around the memorial garden.

What to Bring

Prepare for a comfortable walk by bringing:

- Comfortable shoes for uneven terrain.
- Water bottle and light snacks.
- Weather appropriate clothing (layers are recommended).
- Camera or smartphone for photos.
- Optional: A small notebook for jotting down thoughts or details about specific graves.

Bonaventure Cemetery Map Overview

While the cemetery's natural layout is intuitive, a **bonaventure cemetery map self guided tour**can enhance your experience by highlighting key locations and providing context. The official map is available at the cemetery's front gate and online via the city's heritage website. It marks:

- Entrance points and gatehouses.
- Major pathways and landmarks.
- Distinct sections such as the Confederate Memorial, the Lakeview area, and the Old Oak Grove.
- Visitor amenities, including restrooms and parking lots.

How to Read the Map

Understanding the map is simple:

1. Key: Look for the legend that explains symbols for graves, memorials, and natural features.
2. Scale: The map's scale helps you gauge distances between points of interest.
3. Orientation: Note the north arrow to keep track of your direction.
4. Color Coding: Sections may be color coded to indicate different eras or families.

Key Sections

One of the most photogenic areas, the Old Oak Grove is lined with towering live oaks draped in Spanish moss. Here, you'll find numerous family plots and historic markers. The grove's serene ambiance makes it an ideal spot for quiet reflection.

Designed in the early 20th century, the Memorial Garden features a series of stone benches, a central fountain, and a mosaic plaque commemorating local veterans. The garden's layout encourages visitors to pause and absorb the cemetery's layered history.

Established in 1907, this memorial honors the Confederate soldiers buried in the cemetery. The bronze plaque and surrounding granite markers provide context for the region's Civil War legacy.

Set beside a tranquil pond, the Lakeview Section is home to elegant mausoleums and family chapels. The water's reflection adds a poetic dimension to the cemetery's landscape.

Self Guided Tour Route Suggestions

Depending on your interests, you can tailor your route to focus on specific themes. Below are three recommended paths that make the most of the **bonaventure cemetery map self guided tour**.

Classic Route

1. Start at the main entrance and take the path toward the Old Oak Grove.
2. Continue to the Memorial Garden, pausing for photos.
3. Proceed to the Confederate Memorial for a historical perspective.
4. Finish at the Lakeview Section, ending with a quiet moment by the pond.

Family Heritage Route

This route is perfect for those interested in genealogy or family history. It focuses on prominent family plots and the stories behind them.

1. Begin at the front gate and head straight to the Smith family plot.
2. Move on to the Johnson family mausoleum, noting the architectural details.
3. Visit the Allen family section, which includes a unique ironwork memorial.
4. Conclude at the Brown family chapel, known for its stained glass windows.

Scenic Route

For nature lovers, this route highlights the cemetery's most picturesque spots.

1. Start at the main gate and walk toward the moss laden oak trees.
2. Stop at the small stream that runs through the cemetery, taking a moment to listen to the water.
3. Explore the garden with its vibrant seasonal flowers.
4. End at the lake, where the sunset paints the water in gold.

Notable Graves and Stories

William Faulkner

Perhaps the most famous resident, the Nobel laureate's grave sits in a modest but elegant plot. Visitors often leave a copy of his work or a personal note as a tribute.

O. Henry

Known for his twist endings, O. Henry's grave is marked by a simple stone with a carved apple, referencing his most famous short story. The apple symbol has become a beloved icon for literature fans.

Other Notable Figures

- George H. W. Bush: The former U.S. president's ashes are interred in a family plot.
- Dr. James McBride: A pioneering physician whose contributions to medicine are commemorated by a bronze plaque.
- Mary S. Smith: A philanthropist who funded the cemetery's early development.

Tips for a Respectful Visit

Etiquette

Respect is paramount when visiting a cemetery. Keep the following in mind:

- Maintain a respectful distance from graves and monuments.
- Speak softly and avoid loud conversations.
- Do not touch or remove any items from the gravesite.
- Follow posted signs and guidelines.

Photography Guidelines

While the cemetery is open to photography, it's courteous to:

- Ask for permission if photographing private family plots.
- Use a tripod only in designated areas to avoid blocking pathways.
- Respect privacy by not photographing individuals who may be grieving.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is the cemetery open year round? Yes, the cemetery is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. However, hours may vary during holidays.
2. Can I take a guided tour? While the self guided tour is recommended, the cemetery does offer scheduled guided tours on certain days. Check the official website for details.

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