

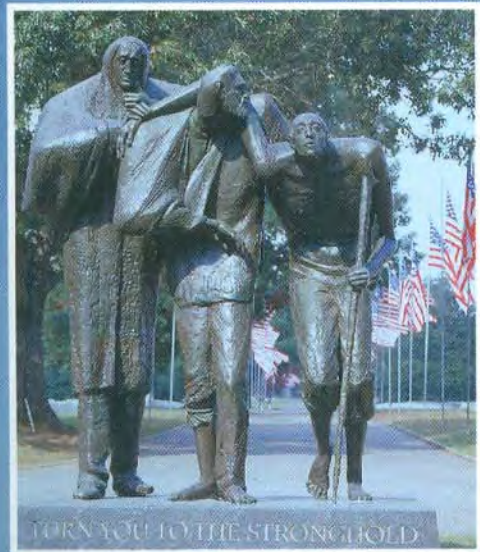
Ren and Helen Davis

52 walks in Georgia's 7 major regions, each within easy reach from one of these hub cities: Rome, Gainesville, Atlanta, Columbus, Macon, Augusta, and Savannah



Georgia Walks

**Discovery Hikes
Through the
Peach State's
Natural and
Human History**



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State's Natural and
Human History**

Ren and Helen Davis



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A Time-Line of Georgia History (keyed to sites listed in the guide)	xiv
Georgia Map with Walks Identified	xvii
Site Legend for Table of Contents	
PH: Prehistoric Georgia	
NG: Native Georgia	
CR: Colonial and Revolutionary Georgia	
AB: Antebellum Georgia	
CW: Civil War Georgia	
VG: Victorian Georgia	
MG: Modern Georgia	
NH: Natural History	
Abbreviations	
NR: National Register of Historic Places	
NL: National Historic Landmark	

NORTHWESTERN MOUNTAINS (HUB CITY: ROME)

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| 1 Cloudland Canyon State Park [NH] | 2 |
| Walk, 6.5 miles, Easy–Strenuous | |
| Rugged river canyon on the western slope of Lookout Mountain. Scenic views, ancient geological formations, and dramatic waterfalls. | |
| 2 Chickamauga Battlefield [CW] | 7 |
| Walk–Run, 11 miles,
Moderate–Strenuous | |
| Pastoral valley between mountain ridges. Site of one of the pivotal battles of the Civil War. | |
| 3 Johns Mountain, Keown Falls, and Pocket Recreation Area [NH] | 19 |
| Walk, 5 miles,
Moderate–Strenuous | |
| Mountain and woodland trails with scenic views of ridges and valleys. Pocket campground was the site of a Civilian Conservation Corps camp (1938–42). | |
| 4 Fort Mountain State Park [PH, NG, NH] | 24 |
| Walk, 2–8.2 miles,
Moderate–Strenuous | |
| An ancient stone wall, dating back over 1500 years, is the centerpiece of this picturesque state park high in the Cohutta Mountains. | |
| 5 New Echota State Historic Site [NG, AB] | 28 |
| Walk, 1.2 miles, Easy | |
| A broad, open plain near the banks of New Town Creek was the site of the historic last capital of the Cherokee Nation. The Cherokees' removal to Oklahoma on the Trail of Tears began here. Reconstructed buildings and woodland trails. | |
| 6 Rome [NG, AB, CW, VG, MG] | 33 |
| Walk–Run, 3.5 miles,
Easy–Moderate | |
| Situated at the confluence of three rivers (the Oostanaula, Etowah, and Coosa) and surrounded by rolling hills, Rome | |

has been the commercial hub of northwestern Georgia for over a century. The downtown business district and surrounding neighborhoods are a treasure of Victorian architecture.

- 7 Berry College Campus** **39**
[NG, AB, CW, VG, MG]
Walk–Run–Bicycle, 6.3 miles,
Easy–Moderate

Located just north of Rome, Berry College occupies a rolling and wooded, 28,000-acre campus nestled in the Appalachian foothills.

- 8 Etowah Mounds** **48**
State Historic Site
[PH, NG]
Walk, 1 mile, Easy

Footpaths lead to earthen mounds built by Native Americans more than a thousand years ago.

- Regional Annual Events** **52**

NORTHEASTERN MOUNTAINS
(HUB CITY: GAINESVILLE)

- 9 Dahlonega** **57**
[NG, AB, CW, VG, MG]
Walk–Run, 2.5 miles, Easy

Located in the foothills of the Appalachians, Dahlonega was the site of the nation's first gold rush. Historic buildings around the town square and the nearby campus of North Georgia College and State University are highlights.

- 10 DeSoto Falls Scenic** **64**
Recreation Area [PH, NH]
Walk, 5.4 miles,
Moderate–Strenuous

U.S. Forest Service area features picturesque waterfalls and a legend of the Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto.

- 11 Appalachian National Scenic**
Trail—Neels Gap to Tesnatee
Gap [PH, NH] **67**
Walk, 6.5 miles (one-way),
Moderate–Strenuous

This stretch of the National Scenic and Historic Trail captures the rugged flavor of the unbroken footpath between Georgia and Maine. (This is a linear hike; a second vehicle or shuttle is recommended.)

- 12 Vogel State Park—**
Bear Hair Trail [PH, NH] **71**
Walk, 4 miles,
Moderate–Strenuous

Scenic trails offer a glimpse at the rugged mountains that inspired native poet Byron Herbert Reece. Vogel is the state's second oldest park and several facilities were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

- 13 Unicoi State Park—**
Anna Ruby Falls [NH] **75**
Walk, 5 miles (one-way),
Moderate–Strenuous

Majestic Anna Ruby Falls springs forth from mountains that were heavily logged a century ago. The Smith Creek Trail winds through highland ridges and cove forests of the Southern Appalachians, connecting the falls area with Unicoi State Park. (This is a linear hike; we recommend a second vehicle or shuttle.)

- 14 Black Rock Mountain**
State Park—Tennessee
Rock Trail [NH] **79**
Walk, 2.2 miles, Moderate

On this meandering loop trail along the ridges of geologically diverse Black Rock Mountain, there is evidence of early 20th-century logging and forest restoration. Watch for the rock fall caused by the last Ice Age.

15 Chattooga River Trail [NH] 82
Walk, 9.1 miles (one-way),
Strenuous

A challenging hike along the banks of the Chattooga National Wild and Scenic River, site for the filming of the movie *Deliverance*. Watch rafters and boaters challenge the whitewater river. (This is a linear hike; we recommend a second vehicle or shuttle.)

16 Gainesville [MG] 86
Walk-Run, 4.5 miles,
Easy-Moderate

Gainesville is the gateway to the North Georgia Mountains. There are notable historic buildings in the downtown area and Victorian homes along Green Street. Nearby is the 19th-century campus of Brenau University.

17 Elachee Nature Science Center [NH] 94
Walk-Run, 4.5 miles,
Easy-Moderate

The Elachee Nature Science Center, south of Gainesville, features several miles of woodland trails.

Regional Annual Events 98

**GREATER ATLANTA
(HUB CITY: ATLANTA)**

18 Red Top Mountain State Park [NH, CW] 102
Walk, 9 miles,
Moderate-Strenuous

This state park on the banks of Allatoona Lake is rich in farming, mining, and Civil War history.

19 Pickett's Mill Battlefield State Historic Site [CW] 106
Walk, 3 miles, Moderate

Walk the wooded hills and creek valleys of what is considered by historians to be the best preserved Civil War battlefield in the nation.

20 The Civil War Battlefields of Atlanta: Kennesaw Mountain, Peachtree Creek, and Atlanta [CW, MG] 114
Walk-Run-Bicycle, 4-16 miles,
Easy-Strenuous

Take a driving/walking tour of three battlefield sites significant in the Atlanta Campaign.

21 McIntosh Reserve [PH, NG, CR, AB, NH] 125
Walk-Run, 7 miles,
Moderate-Strenuous

This site in the hills and flood plains along the northern banks of the Chattahoochee River was a gathering place for Native Americans for many centuries. The land was once owned by Creek Chief William McIntosh, who operated a plantation and ferryboats here. McIntosh was assassinated at the preserve in 1825 for his part in signing the Treaty of Indian Springs. Today, the preserve is a public park.

22 Newnan [AB, CW, VG] 131
Walk-Run-Bicycle, 3.5 miles, Easy

Explore the squares and side streets of a community known as the "City of Homes" for its abundance of well preserved antebellum and Victorian houses.

- 23 Covington and Oxford College [AB, CW, VG] 139**
Walk–Run–Bicycle, 6 miles,
Easy–Moderate

Enjoy the abundant antebellum and Victorian architecture of Covington, and the original campus of Emory College, founded in 1835, in nearby Oxford.

Regional Annual Events 149

**CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY
(HUB CITY: COLUMBUS)**

- 24 Franklin D. Roosevelt State Park—Pine Mountain Trail [NH, MG] 153**
Walk, 3.2–7.8 mile loops,
Moderate–Strenuous

Explore the natural beauty and history of the hills so loved by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Hike sections of the scenic Pine Mountain Trail and see the handiwork of the “Boys of the CCC.”

- 25 Callaway Gardens [NH, MG] 161**
Walk–Run–Bicycle, 9 miles,
Easy–Moderate

Miles of hiking and biking trails criss-cross this internationally renowned woodland preserve that is filled with color throughout the year.

- 26 Columbus [NG, AB, CW, VG, MG] 168**
Walk–Run–Bicycle, 4 miles, Easy
Georgia’s “River City” is filled with historic homes, commercial buildings, and mills perched above the Chattahoochee River.

- 27 Ft. Benning Historic District [MG] 179**
Walk–Run–Bicycle, 3.5 miles, Easy

This historic post, named for a Confederate general, is home to the Army’s Infantry Museum. On the post are a number of historic buildings and military exhibits.

- 28 Providence Canyon State Conservation Park [NH, AB, VG, MG] 186**
Walk, 3 miles,
Moderate–Strenuous

At “Georgia’s Grand Canyon,” foot trails wind through unique and colorful geological formations that are the result of agricultural erosion a century ago.

- 29 Historic Westville [AB] 191**
Walk, 1.5 miles, Easy

At Westville it is always 1850. This historical re-creation of an antebellum town was crafted from authentic homes and buildings brought from around the state.

- 30 Kolomoki Mounds State Historic Park [PH, NG] 198**
Walk, 3.3 miles, Easy–Moderate

Thousand-year-old Indian mounds are the centerpiece for a state park that offers an array of historical and recreational facilities.

- 31 Albany and Chehaw Park [AB, VG, MG] 203**
Walk–Run–Bicycle, 5.5 miles,
Easy–Moderate

The largest city in southwestern Georgia, Albany has prospered and suffered at the hands of the nearby Flint River. Explore the historic downtown area and the woodland trails and reconstructed Creek Indian village at Chehaw Park.

32 Thomasville [VG, MG] 217

Walk-Run-Bicycle, 4 miles, Easy
A 19th-century winter resort, Thomasville is filled with grand Victorian architecture (including the unique Lapham-Patterson House State Historic Site) and urban parks. Georgia's largest live oak tree graces a downtown street corner.

Regional Annual Events 228

**HEART OF GEORGIA
(HUB CITY: MACON)**

33 Macon [AB, CW, VG, MG] 234

**Walk-Run-Bicycle, 3.8 miles,
Easy-Moderate**

Established as a frontier fort prior to the War of 1812, Macon has been the cultural heart of Central Georgia for over a century. Its winding, hilly streets and downtown commercial district are a treasure of antebellum and Victorian architecture.

**34 Ocmulgee
National Monument [PH, NG] 244**

Walk, 3.7 miles, Easy-Moderate

Trails meander beside ancient Indian mounds and past streams flowing into the nearby Ocmulgee River.

35 Milledgeville [AB, CW, VG, MG] 250

Walk-Run-Bicycle, 3 miles, Easy

Georgia's capital from 1803 until 1868, Milledgeville is filled with historic buildings. Among them are the unusual Gothic style capitol building and the grand Greek Revival Governor's Mansion. The library on the Georgia College campus features exhibits on the life of native daughter Flannery O'Connor.

**36 Piedmont National
Wildlife Refuge [AB, VG, MG] 259**

Walk, 5.1 miles, Moderate

The abundant trees and wildlife in the refuge are a tribute to Depression-era programs to reclaim worn-out and abandoned farmlands.

37 Fitzgerald [CW, VG] 264

Walk-Run-Bicycle, 2.5 miles, Easy

Called the "Yank-Reb City," Fitzgerald was founded by Union veterans in the 1890s. The town includes a number of historic homes and buildings, and the unique Blue and Gray Museum.

**38 Little Ocmulgee
State Park [NH, MG] 274**

Walk, 3 miles, Moderate

This popular state park with lake, hiking trails, golf course, and other recreational facilities was originally developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s.

**39 Andersonville National
Historic Site [CW] 278**

**Walk-Run-Bicycle, 3.7 miles,
Moderate**

Few places conjure up a more grim reminder of the horrors of the Civil War than Andersonville, the Confederacy's largest prisoner-of-war camp. Walk through the reconstructed stockade, pause amidst the rows of monuments in the national cemetery, or explore the powerful exhibits in the National Prisoner of War Museum.

40 Americus [AB, CW, VG, MG] 287

Walk–Run–Bicycle, 3 miles, Easy

Once a major business hub in the heart of Georgia’s “Cotton Kingdom,” Americus may be best known today as the world headquarters for Habitat for Humanity. The downtown business district is a treasure of well-preserved Victorian buildings anchored by the elegant Windsor Hotel. Plains, the home of President Jimmy Carter, is just a few miles west of the city.

41 Valdosta and Valdosta State University [AB, VG, MG] 295

Walk–Run–Bicycle, 5.5 miles, Easy

The major commercial center for southern Georgia, Valdosta is rich with Victorian architecture. The walk includes a visit to the Spanish Mission–style campus of Valdosta State University.

CLASSIC GEORGIA
(HUB CITY: AUGUSTA)

42 Augusta [CR, AB, CW, VG, MG] 311

Walk–Run–Bicycle, 3 miles, Easy

Established in the 1730s by General James Oglethorpe as a frontier outpost on the Savannah River, Augusta has grown to be the state’s second-largest city. The city is filled with historic buildings, churches, and houses (including the boyhood home of President Woodrow Wilson). The Riverwalk is a popular gathering place.

43 Augusta Canal [AB, CW] 321Walk–Run–Bicycle,
9 miles (one-way),
Moderate–Strenuous

Dug by immigrant and slave labor during the 1840s, the Augusta Canal was built so that barges could bypass dangerous river shoals as they delivered cotton to Augusta’s mills. Today the canal towpath is a popular linear park for walking and biking. (We recommend a second vehicle or shuttle.)

44 Washington [CR, AB, CW, VG] 330

Walk–Run–Bicycle, 3 miles, Easy

Washington is a place rich in Revolutionary War and Civil War history. Established as Fort Washington in 1780, it was the first community in the nation to bear the future president’s name. Eighty-five years later, Confederate President Jefferson Davis held the last meeting of his cabinet here. The city is filled with historic homes and buildings. The 1779 battle of Kettle Creek took place a few miles outside Washington.

45 Athens and the University of Georgia Campus [AB, CW, VG, MG] 337Walk–Run–Bicycle, 4.5 miles,
Easy–Moderate

Established in the early 19th century on the bluffs above the Oconee River, Athens grew up around the campus of the University of Georgia, the oldest land-grant college in the nation. Explore historic downtown, nearby Prince Street, and the campus of Old College.

46 State Botanical Garden of Georgia [NH] 354
Walk, 5 miles,
Moderate–Strenuous

Trails meander through wooded hills and along the banks of the Middle Oconee River. Enjoy gardens filled with native plants and flowers, an international garden, and a state-of-the-art conservatory.

47 Madison [AB, CW, VG] 359
Walk–Run–Bicycle, 3.3 miles, Easy

Walk the quiet lanes, see majestic pre-Civil War homes, and learn the story of this historic community called “the city that Sherman refused to burn.”

Regional Annual Events 368

**HISTORIC COAST
(HUB CITY: SAVANNAH)**

48 Savannah [NG, CR, AB, CW, VG, MG] 373
Walk–Run, 9 miles, Easy

Georgia’s “first city” was established by General James Oglethorpe in 1733 on the Yamacraw Bluffs above the Savannah River. Historic river front and squares are lined with historic houses and buildings under a canopy of live oaks and Spanish moss. The city is a walker’s delight.

49 Melon Bluff Natural Heritage Preserve [NG, CR, AB, CW, MG, NH] 394
Walk–Run–Bicycle, 8 miles,
Moderate–Strenuous

The preserve features more than 5,000 acres of tidal marshes and coastal forests to explore on foot or by bicycle. Preserve staff offer educational programs and day trips.

50 Brunswick [CR, AB, CW, VG, MG] 402
Walk–Run–Bicycle, 3 miles,
Easy–Moderate

A commercial center along the coast since the Revolutionary War, Brunswick may be best known as the “Shrimp Capital of the World.” Historic homes and buildings line tree-shaded streets.

51 Jekyll Island Club Village [CR, VG, MG, NH] 411
Walk–Run–Bicycle, 2.5 miles, Easy

A century ago, this private enclave for the nation’s wealthiest men was the world’s most exclusive club. Several of their “cottages” remain, and the village centerpiece is the magnificent Jekyll Island Club, now a luxury hotel.

52 Cumberland Island National Seashore and St. Marys [NH, CR, AB, VG, MG] 421
Walk, 5.5–25 miles,
Easy–Strenuous

The late 18th-century community of St. Marys stands across the sound from the magnificent marshes, live oaks, and dunes of Cumberland Island. The island is renowned for its rugged landscape and historic structures.

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Georgia's Many Treasures

From the rugged peaks of the Southern Appalachians and the rolling hills of the Piedmont Plateau, to the broad Chattahoochee River Valley and the ancient Coastal Plain, Georgia offers the traveler a rich and diverse treasure of natural beauty and human history.

Learn about our geologic past revealed in the walls of Cloudland Canyon, on the face of Black Rock Mountain, and in the shifting dunes of Cumberland Island. Marvel at the mysterious legacies of our native ancestors atop Fort Mountain, and at Etowah, Ocmulgee, and Kolomoki Mounds. Share the excitement of pioneers who founded a colony and built a state as you stroll through Savannah, Brunswick, Washington, Augusta, Milledgeville, Dahlonega, Columbus, Macon, Athens, and other historic communities. Experience the tragedies of the Civil War at the battlefields of Chickamauga, Pickett's Mill, and Atlanta, and ponder its enormous human cost when you visit Andersonville. And enjoy scenic beauty at Vogel and Unicoi State Parks, along the rugged Appalachian Trail, by the shores of the mighty Chattooga River,

at Callaway Gardens and Pine Mountain, and along the coast at historic Melon Bluff.

In *Georgia Walks*, a companion to our *Atlanta Walks* guide, we invite readers to experience on foot some of the very best the state has to offer. The fifty-nine walks in the fifty-two chapters cover more than three hundred miles of the state's most beautiful and historic landscapes. Hike to scenic forest summits; pause to read battle-field monuments; stroll through vibrant small towns and historic districts, marveling at the varied architecture; and feel salt breezes spinning through seaside dunes—all at your own pace.

From the original idea to the finished manuscript, this guide was more than a decade in the making. Many people lent us encouragement, shared ideas about their favorite destinations, and generously offered shuttle rides, an occasional meal, or an overnight stay as we crisscrossed the state seeking new places to walk. Even as this guide goes to press, we continue to search for other destinations to explore by foot.

While it would be impossible to recognize the many persons in local historical societies and visitor centers who helped us along the way, we are

truly grateful to Margaret Quinlin, Kathy Landwehr, Vicky Holifield, Loraine Joyner, Melanie McMahon, Amy Brittain (now at the American Cancer Society), and the other creative staff at Peachtree Publishers who encouraged us to keep exploring and writing. A special thank-you goes also to our editor, Marian Gordin, who never ceased finding ways to trim a lengthy manuscript without sacrificing the flavor of each destination and its story.

For more than a dozen years, we have been blessed to have the opportunity to explore Atlanta and Georgia through the eyes of our son, Nelson, watching him grow in understanding and appreciation for the rich heritage of his home state. As with *Atlanta Walks*, this guide is dedicated in part to him.

It is also dedicated to the late Virlyn B. Moore Jr., a native Georgian, lawyer, banker, and historian, past president of the Atlanta Historical Society, master storyteller, and longtime family friend who continued to share his contagious enthusiasm for Georgia's colorful history throughout his ninety years. He, too, was one of Georgia's many treasures.

*Ren and Helen Davis
Atlanta, Georgia
March 2003*



*Oak Hill, in Rome, the
lifelong home of educator
Martha Berry*



*The stone
observation
tower atop
Fort
Mountain*



*Cherokee Chieftain Vann's
Tavern at New Echota*



*European-style dairy
buildings on the Berry
College campus at Rome*

NORTHWESTERN MOUNTAINS

FROM THE AIR, the mountains of northwestern Georgia appear as long fingers stretching southwestward from Tennessee into Alabama. This is the Ridge and Valley region of the Southern Appalachians, an area very different from the mountains in northeastern Georgia. Here, the slopes and summits are sedimentary, not volcanic in origin, composed of countless layers of sand, mud, and organic materials deposited on the floor of ancient seas and marshes for hundreds of millions of years.


Northwestern Georgia's human history is no less fascinating. The wide river valleys between the ridges were village sites and natural trade routes more than 2,000 years ago. Mysterious reminders of lost civilizations exist along with evidence of the Cherokee Nation, including their final capital city at New Echota, abandoned when they were forced west on the infamous Trail of Tears in the 1830s. A decade later the first railroad line was constructed through the region to connect the new city of Atlanta with the settlement of Ross's Landing (Chattanooga). Federal and Confederate armies clashed in these remote mountains during the Civil War.

Northwestern Georgia's natural beauty remained a well-kept secret until the coming of the automobile and construction of reliable roads into the region in the early 20th century. Today, the area is easily reached from interstate highways and a network of state and county roads, making the state parks, scenic areas, small towns, and historic cities popular destinations for day and weekend explorations.




Cloudland Canyon State Park

LOCATION


 The park is about 15 miles northwest of LaFayette on GA 136 and about 40 miles north of Rome via U.S. 27. LaFayette is about 27 miles northwest of I-75 (exit 133) where GA 136 intersects with U.S. 27. **Information:** (706) 657-4050; www.gastateparks.com.

PARKING

2

 There is a large parking area adjacent to the picnic grounds, near the East Rim Trail. A daily parking fee is charged.

BACKGROUND

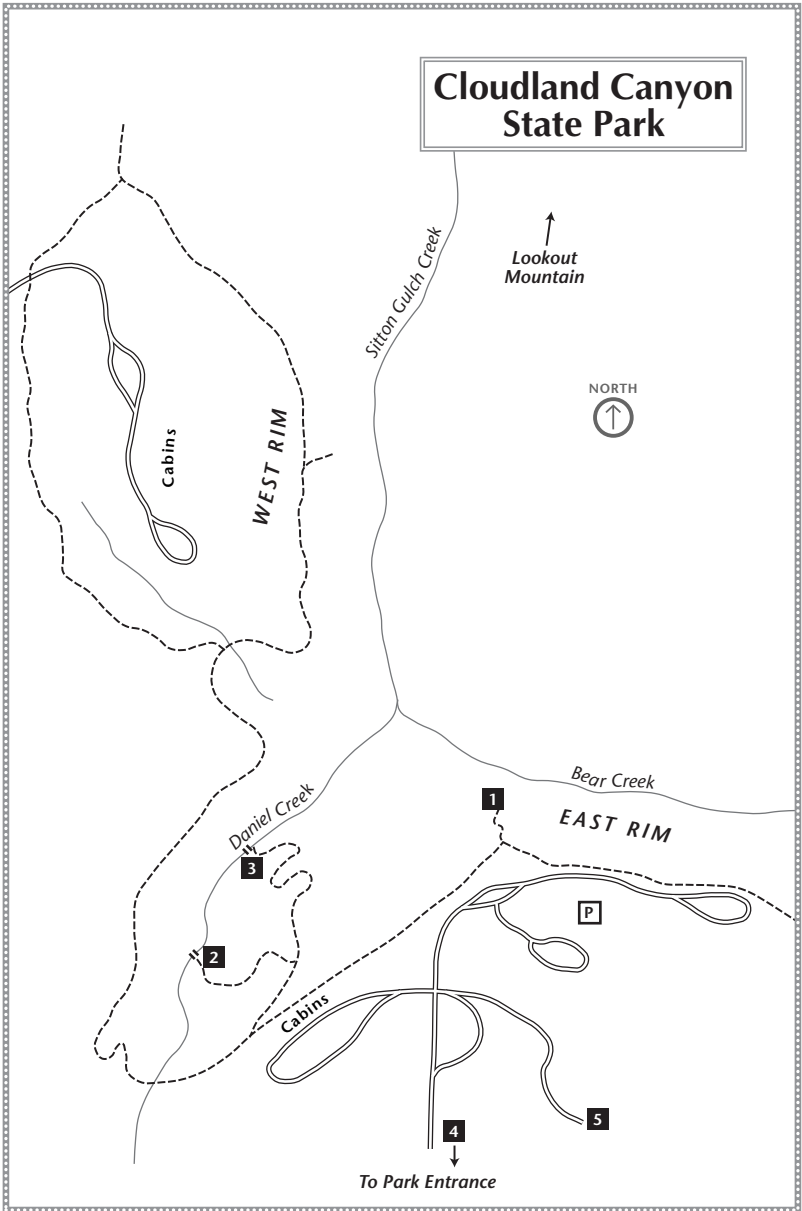
 A two-hour drive from Atlanta, Cloudland Canyon is 1,800 feet above sea level along the

spine of Lookout Mountain. For millennia, the cascading waters of Daniel and Bear Creeks have carved deep gorges as they flow—uncharacteristically—northward through Sitton Gulch. At its extreme, the resulting Y-shaped Cloudland Canyon is more than 1,000 feet deep. Look down the walls and you travel back in time more than 300 million years, to a world before dinosaurs roamed the Earth, when this region was beneath a shallow, primordial sea.

The Cumberland Plateau is marked by almost flat-topped mountains, formed during the Paleozoic era (580–200 million years ago). For more than 70 million years, shifting tides, rising and falling waters, rain, and wind deposited countless layers of sand in an inland ocean. Surrounding lands were marsh forests not unlike those in the present-day Okefenokee Swamp.

The youngest rock is the hard sandstone on the summit, while the oldest is the limestone that makes up the wide base of Lookout Valley. The East and West Rim Trails provide an excellent overview of the canyon's geologic history, with each chapter carefully detailed in the steep descents to the two spectacular waterfalls on Daniel Creek.

Cloudland Canyon State Park



NORTHWESTERN MOUNTAINS



Cloudland Canyon

Over countless centuries, as sediment fell over sediment, each was compressed and, under tremendous pressure, hardened into solid rock. As the Earth alternately warmed and cooled, the waters expanded and contracted many times causing layers to be of varying thicknesses and producing sediments composed of different materials.

4 Beneath these layers, near the bottom of the canyon, are sediments of dark gray-brown shale. Unlike the sea-deposited sand, the thin and easily broken shale is hardened clay from a wide river delta and marsh that existed before warmer climatic conditions enlarged the inland ocean. Much

of the material seen in the cliffs at this level was laid down during the Pennsylvanian period about 280–325 million years ago.

At the bottom of the canyon, visible in only a few places in Lookout Valley, are thick layers of soft, porous limestone created from the remains of sea plants and creatures that lived in an earlier Mississippian period ocean about 325–340 million years ago. The presence of limestone is the geologic indicator that this is cavern country. In the vernacular of spelunkers, or cavers, the area is simply called “TAG” (Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia) and is noted for its many underground chambers.

While human beings have inhabited this area for many centuries, the rugged terrain made travel difficult. Cherokee hunters wandered the hills in search of game but established no permanent villages. After the removal of the Indians in the 1830s, settlers began to move in, most living on remote farms. The village of Trenton, the seat of Dade County, was accessible only through Tennessee and Alabama until completion of GA 136 in the late 1930s. Isolation made the mountain folk so fiercely independent that Dade County left the Union and declared itself the “Free State of Dade” late in 1860, weeks before the rest of Georgia seceded. The county did not “formally” rejoin the Union until *July 4, 1945.*

Cloudland Canyon State Park

In the mid-1930s, the U.S. Forest Service established a Civilian Conservation Corps work camp near the site of the present-day state park, and work crews undertook reforestation projects in the surrounding Chattahoochee National Forest, which had been extensively logged. Acknowledging the magnificent scenery and unique geology of the area, Georgia created Cloudland Canyon State Park in 1938. Today, the park comprises more than 2,100 acres of rugged mountain land, filled with majestic panoramas, cascading waterfalls, and a variety of camping, lodging, picnicking, and recreational facilities. In a human lifetime little will change here, but the canyon's evolution continues.

WALK DISTANCE AND TERRAIN



Hiking at Cloudland Canyon runs to extremes. The .25-mile *East Rim Trail* is easy and affords some of the most spectacular views of the weathered sandstone cliffs and Sitton Gulch. The optional descents to the Upper (.3 miles) and Lower (.5 miles) Falls on Daniel Creek offer fascinating, close-up looks at the eroded gorge and the diverse flora found at different elevations. The Upper Falls is particularly breathtaking as it leaps over a 100-ft. cataract to a large boulder-strewn pool. The steepness of these trails makes this a short but strenuous hike.

The 5.2-mile *West Rim Trail* crosses a wooden bridge and climbs out of the canyon as it follows the rim northward. Several overlooks give an excellent perspective of Daniel and Bear Creek Canyons, Sitton Gulch, and the long valley and spine of Lookout Mountain. On an especially clear day, it is possible to see hanggliders soaring above the western slopes of the mountain. At its midpoint, the trail turns away from the rim and returns through a mixed hardwood forest, thick with oak, pine, hickory, and lush stands of rhododendron and mountain laurel.

In addition to the rim trails, the park also has a strenuous 7-mile backpacking trail that traces a loop through Bear Creek Canyon. Two primitive campsites are located on this trail. Overnight hikers are required to register at park headquarters.

Due to the rugged terrain and the proximity to steep cliffs, caution should be exercised when hiking with children on any of the park trails. The difficult terrain of the *West Rim Trail* may make it unsuitable for small children.

SIGHTS ALONG THE WAY



1. Sitton Gulch Overlook— An observation platform atop the sandstone cliffs provides a spectacular view of the Lookout Valley.

2. Upper Daniel Creek Falls— The falls drop 100 feet over a sheer cliff.

3. Lower Daniel Creek Falls—

Deeper into the depths of the canyon, this cataract carves into the shale and limestone bedrock.

4. Park Headquarters and

Visitor Center—Staff here assist with park information and registration for camping, lodging, and backcountry hiking. *Hours:* 8 A.M.–5 P.M., daily. (706) 657-4050.

5. Park Recreation Area—

Recreation facilities include a swimming pool, tennis courts, and open meadow.

NOTES