

Selma to Montgomery

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Selma to Montgomery
National Historic Trail

Winning the Vote



“You can’t keep anyone in the U.S. from voting without hurting the rights of all other citizens. Democracy’s built on this.”

SCLC staff member C.T. Vivian, February 16, 1965

On November 12, 1996, the U.S. Congress established the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail through an amendment to the National Trails System Act (PL 104-333). Beginning at Brown Chapel AME Church in Selma, Alabama, the trail follows the route of the March 1965 Selma to Montgomery voting rights march, traveling through Lowndes County along Highway 80, and ending at

Montgomery march, rather than being an isolated event, was integral to the African-American quest for civil rights and the evolution of American democracy.

Currently, there are no permanent facilities available as the trail is under development. However, visitation to the trail is encouraged. Information may be found at

the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery. The legislation creating the trail directs the National Park Service to provide such historical context as would help visitors

either the Selma-Dallas County Friends of the Trail Office located in Selma or the Headquarters of the Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site located in

Trail History



Bloody Sunday



On the road to Montgomery



Marchers arrive at the Alabama State Capitol

On three separate occasions, in March of 1965, protesters attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to highlight the discriminatory practices that prevented African Americans from voting in the Deep South. Race and color were no longer obvious criteria for disenfranchisement as they had been with the “grandfather clause” and the “White Democratic Primary.” However, discrimination by race was still rampant since literacy tests, interpretation tests, and voucher requirements allowed arbitrary decisions by registration officials. Thus, for 90 years various means had been used to deny full citizenship to African Americans, and the denial of voting rights had become a national issue. As federal judicial proceedings failed to produce charges in the registration process, African-American leaders, including the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), united in a direct action campaign aimed at the heart of the Black Belt--Selma, Alabama.

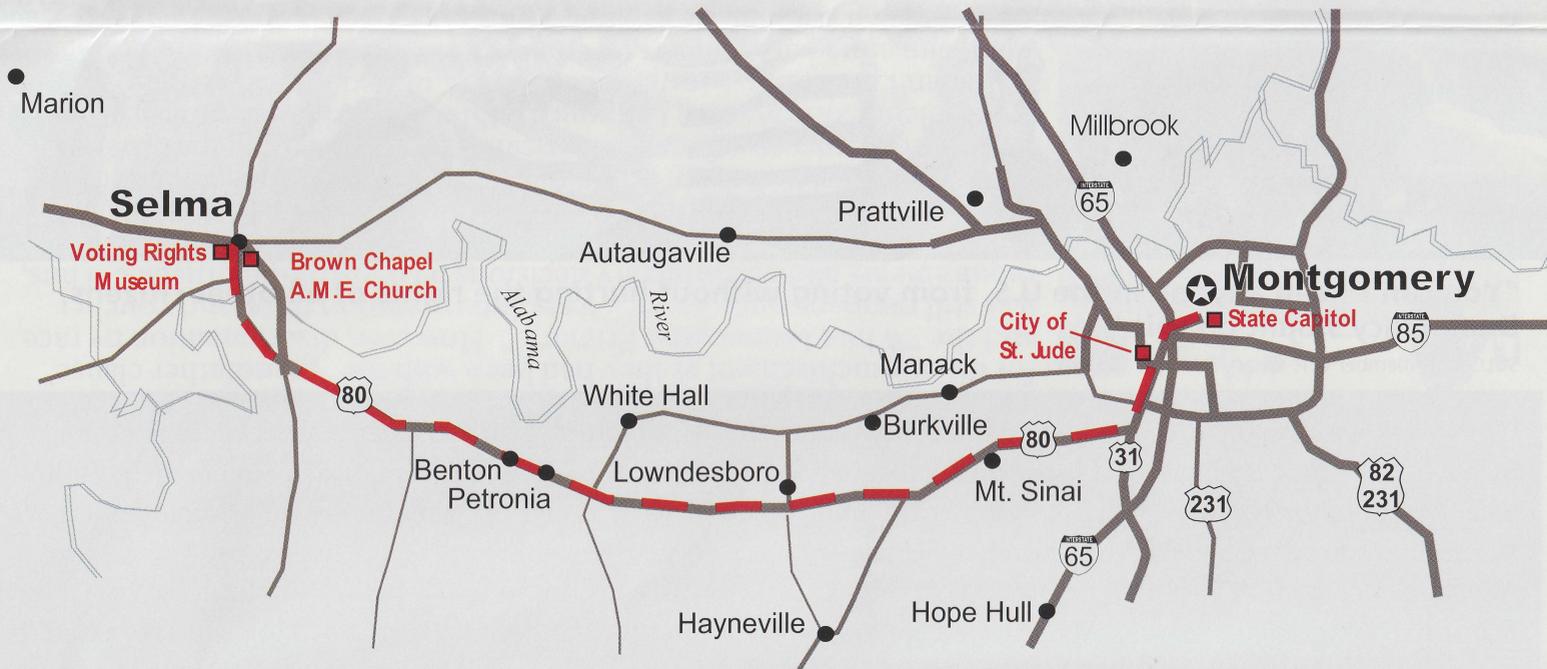
After a series of protests in Selma and the death of Jimmie Lee Jackson in nearby Perry County, African-American leaders came up with the idea of marching from Selma to the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery to formally protest continued voting discrimination. On Sunday, March 7, 1965, the first march set out from Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church towards Montgomery, but when the marchers reached the Edmund Pettus Bridge; they were brutally attacked by law enforcement officers. While the second march to Montgomery was peacefully turned around on March 9th, a third attempt beginning on March 21st successfully reached its destination after a five-day trek under the watchful eye federalized national guardsmen. The attack on March 7th, now known as “Bloody Sunday,” and the continued resolve of civil rights workers in Selma were seen by millions of people through media coverage. This coverage created a ground swell of support for the march. These actions strengthened the nation’s determination to enact stronger voting rights legislation that protected all citizens. The most significant outcome of the Selma protests was the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

About the Trail

The trail is 54 miles long with both pedestrian and automotive pathways. Much of the area along the trail still appears as it did in 1965. Some of the buildings and wildlife have withstood the test of time and are available for your enjoyment. We encourage keen observation of the historical buildings, such as churches, businesses, houses, and wildlife. Future interpretive centers will be placed strategically along the trail.

For Your Safety. You are in an area where natural conditions can be hazardous. Wear shoes to protect your feet. Also be wary of snakes, poison ivy, and fire ants (characterized by sandy mounds) which have a painful sting. During hot weather, drink plenty of water. Additionally, remain alert and observe posted traffic regulations.

Visiting the Trail





Map not to scale

 **March Route/Historic Trail**



Landmarks

From Montgomery and Mobile:

Take I-65 North. Merge onto U.S.-80 West. Take the U.S.-80 West exit 167 towards Selma. Turn left off of U.S.-80 onto Alabama Avenue.

From Birmingham:

Take I-65 South. Merge onto U.S.-80 West. Take the U.S.-80 West exit 167 towards Selma. Turn left off of U.S.-80 onto Alabama Avenue.

More Information

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