

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Freedom Riders National Monument
Alabama



Would YOU get on the bus?

In 1961, black and white passengers on two buses were attacked, burned and beaten in Anniston, Alabama for the “crime” of racial integration.



Greyhound Bus burning outside Anniston on May 14, 1961
Photo by Joseph Postiglione

On May 14, 1961 two buses were scheduled to arrive in Anniston, Alabama. Among those on board were the Freedom Riders: 13 people, both black and white. They were there to challenge violations of two US Supreme Court decisions making racial segregation in interstate travel illegal.

The first bus was met at the depot by an angry mob of white protestors. Outside town, the mob broke windows, slashed tires and set the bus on fire...with the Freedom Riders still inside. The second bus was boarded by members of the Ku Klux Klan, and passengers were forcibly segregated during the ride to Birmingham. When they reached their destination, passengers were beaten with fists, pipes and other weapons. Police were nowhere in sight.

Photographs like the one above appeared the next morning in papers across the country. Outrage resulted in hundreds more Freedom Riders traveling south, and a change in national laws.

Visiting the National Monument

Established on January 12, 2017, Freedom Riders National Monument is part of the National Park System. The national monument will continue to take shape in the coming years.

The historic Greyhound Bus Depot is currently closed to the public, but the side of the adjacent building bordering its driveway features a mural and educational panels about the events of May 14, 1961. The site of the bus burning is little more than an empty field next to a busy highway. A marker at the site relates the events of that day. The site is owned by the National Park Service, but there is currently no parking provided at Old Birmingham Highway and Barkwood Drive. For safety, unauthorized parking or pedestrian activity within the right-of-way of Route 202 is not allowed.

An interim visitor center, with park information and the National Parks Passport Stamp, is open Monday - Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. It is located at:

Calhoun County Area Chamber & Visitor Center
1330 Quintard Avenue
Anniston, AL 36201

