

HISTORY LESSON DRIVE FROM HENDERSONVILLE TO FLAT ROCK

Starting Point

Hendersonville Welcome Center

[201 S. Main St.](#)

[Hendersonville, NC 28792](#)

Total Mileage

- 4.7 Miles
- Approximately 20 minutes of driving time + Many stops recommended

Scenic Drive Description

Beginning on Main Street in Hendersonville, this drive will take you through [Downtown Hendersonville](#) and into [Flat Rock](#). The drive itself weaves through neighborhoods, stately, historic homes, and rolling farmland. This drive truly is great at **any time of year**, but best times of year are in the **spring**, when the dogwoods, wildflower and gardens are blooming, or in the **fall**, when the foliage is vibrant, often in late October.

This self-guided drive also serves as a history lesson to some of the historic places in the area, and we recommend stops at any of the linked places on the driving directions below!

Driving Directions

1. Depart from the [Welcome Center](#), turning left out of the parking lot onto S Main Street, continuing north for a few blocks, driving through the Historic [Downtown](#) area. After one block, you will see the Historic Henderson County Courthouse on your left. It was built in 1904, and today houses the [Henderson County Heritage Museum](#) (open to the public Wednesday through Saturday, with local artifacts, culture and a history of the area), as well as local governmental offices.
2. After a few blocks, turn right onto 5th Avenue. On your left, you will see the historic City Hall building. The current building, built in 1928, is home to offices for the City of Hendersonville, but the stately building itself is beautiful and still shows some elements of a bygone era (including some less savory history, like the segregated public facilities of the past). If you are interested, you can stop inside (the entrance is on the back or 6th Avenue side of the building), and see a mold used to create a statue that currently resides in Raleigh, NC at the statehouse. The mold of the statue is large, cast in bronze, and depicts former US Presidents Andrew Jackson, James K Polk, and Andrew Johnson. Each former president lived part of their lives in North Carolina.
3. Continue to the next block and turn right onto Grove Street, where you will see the Grey Mill Apartments, a former textile mill that was converted into housing, and then take another quick right into 4th Avenue. At the next block, you will see the Henderson County Partnership for Economic Development building, which was built in 1914, and originally served as Hendersonville's first public library. The original library was made possible from a land grant from a local man and a gift of \$10,000 from Andrew Carnegie, who was famous in part for his philanthropic work of building libraries in communities across America.
4. After 2 blocks, turn left onto Church Street. At the Church Street / 4th Avenue

intersection, on your left, you will see the Federal Building, which was built in 1914 to serve as the area's Post Office, and was one of the first buildings in the area to have electricity. The building now houses private offices.

5. After you have turned onto Church Street, in 2 blocks you will see the [Henderson County Curb Market](#) on your right. The Curb Market was formed in 1924 by seven local farm families who sold their produce on a vacant city-owned lot on Main Street in a farmers market setting. Today, there are many more vendors inside the building, which is open year-round, and all items sold at there must be locally grown or handmade in Henderson County.
6. Stay on Church Street, which turns into Greenville Highway/NC Route 225, for about 3 miles, and you enter the [Historic Village of Flat Rock](#). Flat Rock began in the early 19th century 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](#).
7. Shortly after you enter the Village limits, you will see a small church and cemetery on your right. This is [Saint John in the Wilderness Church](#), which is one of the oldest churches in the area, and is often open for self-guided tours or they offer regular guided tours. This English-style chapel was built in 1833 as the private chapel of the Baring family, a family from Charleston, SC who spent their summers in Flat Rock. The church was eventually deeded to the Episcopal church, and now offers services year-round. The cemetery features names from a number of prominent Charleston families, and also has a section dedicated to enslaved people who traveled to Flat Rock with the families they served each summer.
8. As you continue south, you will see the [Flat Rock Playhouse](#) on your right. The Playhouse opened in 1940, under a tent near its current location, as a summer theatre, moved to its current home in Flat Rock in 1952, where they eventually built a permanent structure and transitioned to year-round theatre, and was named the State Theatre of North Carolina by the NC General Assembly in 1961. The grounds are open to explore, though it isn't recommended to do so while performances take place, as parking is extremely limited.
9. Passing the playhouse, you will come to the intersection of Greenville Highway & Little River Road, where you will see another historic building on your left. This building, built in 1845, served as the first Flat Rock Post Office. Today, it operates as a Cultural Center and Museum, which is open during the summer months.
10. Turn right at the intersection of Greenville Highway & Little River Road. In less than a mile, you will come to the [Carl Sandburg Home](#), a National Historic Site and National Park, which is worth making a stop for. The 264-acre property served as the home to Pulitzer Prize winning author, historian and poet Carl Sandburg, who lived the last 22 years of his life here and published more than a third of all his works here. The National Park offers hiking trails, tours of the home, an operating goat dairy with goats that can trace their lineage back to the original Sandburg line, and a lot of history. There are 2 parking lots available, with a shuttle from the main parking lot running most days.
11. After leaving the Carl Sandburg Home, turn right out of the parking lot and head back to the heart of Flat Rock. In the town's center you will find "[Little Rainbow Row](#)," which was named in honor of Charleston's Rainbow Row because there were so many Charlestonians that spent their summers in Flat Rock. In Little Rainbow Row, you will find a number of shops and restaurants, and if you ask the right person, you might just learn more about the history of this historic town.
12. Heading North on Greenville Highway will take you back to Downtown Hendersonville.