ARABIA MOUNTAIN PATH

SELF-GUIDED PATH TOUR

Explore a land 400 million years in the making. The Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area (AMNHA) is an open landscape of breathtaking beauty, peace, and wonder just east of Atlanta along I-20. Dominated by two massive granite outcrops, it offers visitors natural wonders, compelling history and heart-pumping activity.

The PATH Foundation trail within the AMNHA is designed to link cultural, scenic, natural and historic sites. More than 30 miles of dedicated, paved trails are open to bikers and hikers. We've highlighted some of our favorite sites here. This interactive PDF can either be printed or viewed on a digital device. Links, when clicked, will lead to additional information.

There are several opportunities with the Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve to hike trails on foot and bike racks are located at the entrances to several of these trails. Remember to always be prepared for your ride, take plenty of water, a cell phone and sunscreen. The terrain is hilly and some bikers should be aware that some climbs are particularly strenuous.

1. Historic District of Lithonia
2. Railroad Cut
3. Vaughters' Farm
4. Arabia Mountain & Quarry Remains
5. Quarry Office Ruins
6. Farming Terraces
7. Horace King Commemorative Covered Bridge
8. Evans Mill Ruins
9. Historic District of Klondike
10. Pole Bridge Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant
11. Flat Rock Community
12. Lyon Farm
13. South River Bridge #1
14. Alexander Barn
15. The Parker House
16. Panola Mountain
17. Serpentine Bridge
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19. Lorraine Trailhead
20. South River Bridge #2
21. Monastery of the Holy Spirit

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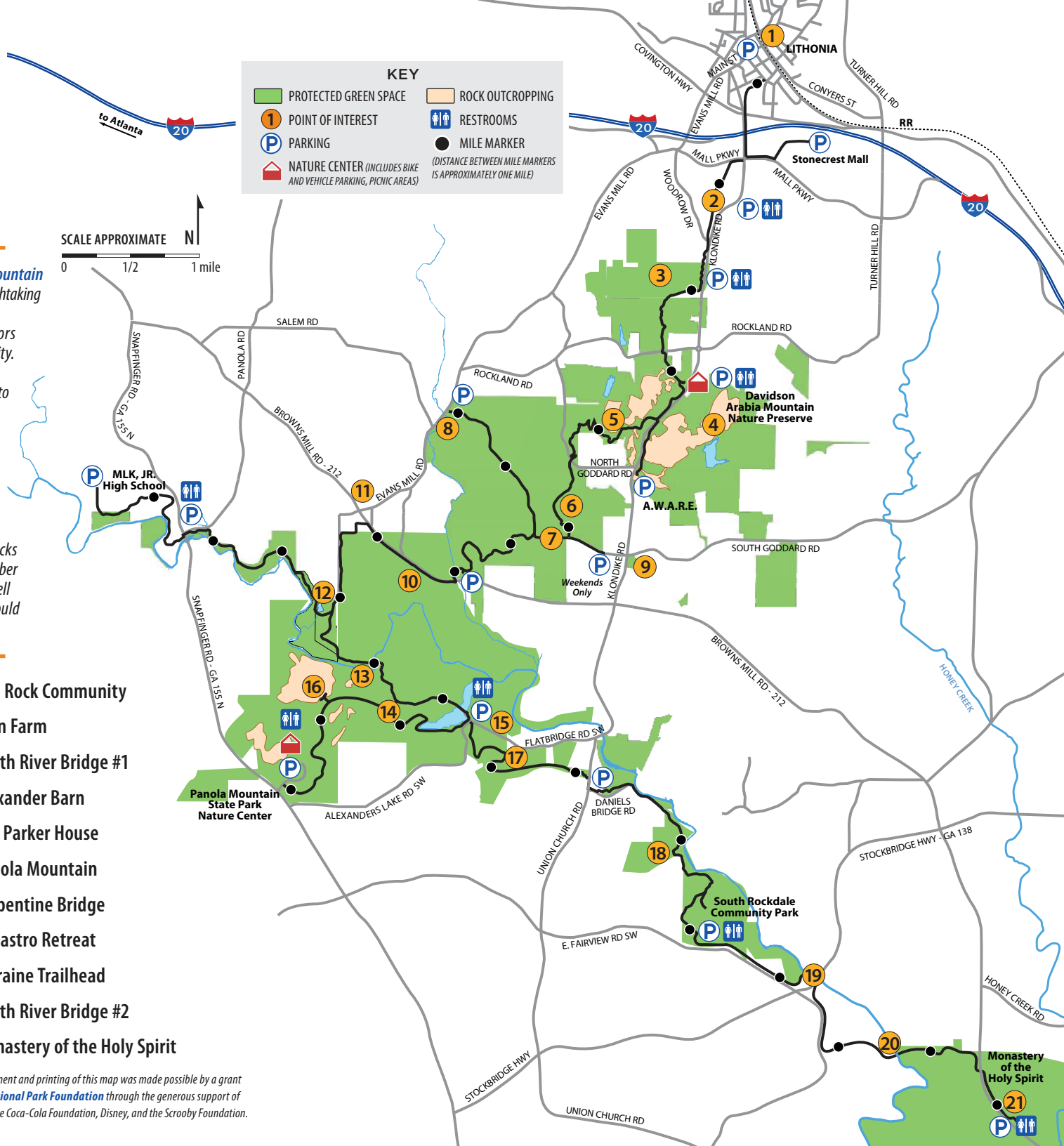

1 NATIONAL HISTORIC DISTRICT OF LITHONIA
Lithonia means "place of stone." From the profusion of granite in homes and along Main Street, you can see why. The city was no more than a crossroads before the Georgia Railroad arrived linking Augusta and Atlanta in 1845. It was incorporated in 1856 and the town boundary extended just a mile from the railroad station. That boundary and many historic town buildings are intact today. Find out more about the history of Lithonia and its structures by taking this **walking tour.**

2 RAILROAD CUT Most of the PATH trail between Lithonia and Arabia Mountain lies in an old railroad bed. The most visible evidence are the embankments north of the intersection of Woodrow and Klondike Roads. This 4-mile RR spur opened in 1889 and was used to transport granite from the quarries at Arabia Mountain. The increased use of trucks to haul stone, development of alternatives to building stone, and the effects of the Great Depression caused several quarries to close and the Arabia Mountain line was abandoned in 1935. The right-of-way was donated by Hanson Aggregates in 2002 to construct the PATH.

3 VAUGHTERS' FARM
This is the last remaining dairy farm landscape in a county that was once renowned for its dairy farming. S.B. Vaughters bought the 144-acre farm for $4,230 and built the house and barn in 1947. He raised cattle for dairy and beef through the 1980s. Mr. Vaughters, who also taught vocational agriculture at Murphy Candler School, built the family home across Klondike Road out of local granite with the help of a seventh grade student. The farm land includes granite outcrops and the headwaters of Stephenson Creek which flows into the South River. Vaughters' Farm is part of Panola Mountain State Park and the farmhouse has been **restored** for the headquarters of the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area.

4 ARABIA MOUNTAIN *Bikes are only allowed on the boardwalk which connects the paved PATH to the South parking lot where they may be locked while hiking the mountain on foot.*

Arabia Mountain is actually a granite **monadnock,** an isolated rock hill that rises abruptly from the surrounding landscape. Monadnocks are formed when softer rock erodes away from a body of more erosion-resistant rock such as the granite/gneiss. Arabia is believed to be about 100-million years older than nearby Stone Mountain.

The granite surface supports a very unique ecosystem. Over time, hollows form in the granite and collect rainwater, creating "vernal pools" which host many federally listed rare, threatened and endangered **plant species** that survive only in these specific conditions. The most striking is **diamorpha,** a succulent that grows in patches. It is brown and brittle most of the year but blooms vibrant red in early spring.

Look around for evidence of the granite quarrying where a large block was broken away from the mountain. Head to the north peak for the most dynamic examples. Want to see more? Check for ranger guided hikes **here.**

5 QUARRY RUINS With imposing stone walls and barred windows, many speculate the building was a jail but it was most likely an office to support granite quarry operations. It's one of several such ruins around the Nature Preserve. Park your bike and explore along the **Mile Rock Trail.**

6 FARMING TERRACES Pause near the wildlife overlook in a long bend in the PATH and peer into the woods uphill, can you imagine it as farmland? You may be able to see the terraces that date to a time when this hilly region was covered in farms. Farmers were encouraged to terrace their fields to decrease soil runoff. Much larger and older oak trees grow in the sloped faces of some terraces where rocks were also placed to stabilize the slopes and reduce erosion. The nearby Forest Trail has a short section that is located on a terrace.

7 HORACE KING COMMEMORATIVE COVERED BRIDGE The covered bridge over Stephenson Creek was built by the PATH Foundation in 2004 but its design was based on the lattice truss construction used by **Horace King.** A slave who bought his freedom in 1846, King was an engineer and architect who built bridges across the South. At one point, King was responsible for every major crossing on the Chattahoochee River. After the Civil War, King continued building and served in the Alabama State House.

8 EVANS MILL RUINS Just off the trail head parking lot are the remnants of a dam and millrace for a mill located just across Pole Bridge Creek. Notice the nearby hiking trail and cascades. This location on the creek took advantage of a drop in elevation. Dammed water was directed along the stone millrace to a wheel on the mill that would turn gears to grind grain, no motors were used. The mill ground wheat and corn. This was a lively industry of the Evans family, who lived across the road. The mill was abandoned in the 1940s.

9 HISTORIC DISTRICT OF KLONDIKE The crossroads community of Klondike, listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2007, is accessed by following the PATH east from the King Bridge to Murphy Candler School at the intersection of Klondike and South Goddard Roads. The district includes several homesteads built prior to the Civil War and several granite commercial buildings. A cotton gin used to stand behind the stone store.

10 POLE BRIDGE CREEK WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT Built in 1973, the plant was upgraded to provide for a major biosolids (sludge) reuse program. The sludge is placed on an adjacent 550-acre hay field, which you can see from the bike path. The hay from this field is primarily used for animal feed including the elephants at Zoo Atlanta. This land application program has saved the county a significant amount of landfill space and many thousands of dollars.

11 FLAT ROCK COMMUNITY Flat Rock is one of the oldest African-American settlements in Georgia. It began as an agricultural community bounded by three small slave-holding farms: the South, Lyon, and Johnson farms. After the Civil War, newly freed slaves stayed in the area forming schools, churches, and civic organizations. By the 1920s, many had begun migrating to northern cities for better economic opportunity. This prompted T.A. Bryant, a local farmer and businessman, to purchase property which was sold and leased under generous terms in order to encourage people to stay in Flat Rock. Today the Bryant house at 3979 Crossvale Road is home to the **Flat Rock Archives** which tells the community's story and is open to the public. President Johnny Waits offers tours which can include the slave cemetery and the Lyon Farm.

12 LYON FARM This family farm is one of the oldest homesteads in the area. The Lyon Family were one of the first white settlers along the South River and descendants lived here until 2007. It is now owned by DeKalb County. The main portion of the farmhouse dates to the 1850s and family history notes that slaves once lived in the basement. Outbuildings such as the barn, workshed and sorghum mill reflect the self-sustaining nature of the farm. The family raised cows, hogs, cotton, muscadines, bees and a fruit orchard. Look across the power line cut for one of the finest views of Panola Mountain.

13 SOUTH RIVER BRIDGE The South River is part of the Upper Ocmulgee watershed and is the third largest river in the Atlanta region. It is fabricated using cor-ten steel, which was developed to form a stable rust-like appearance when exposed to the weather for a few years. At the end of the bridge, stairs lead to the riverbank and a natural sand beach. Look for turtles basking in the sun. Swimming or wading are not encouraged but you can join a river paddle by contacting the **South River Watershed Alliance.**

14 ALEXANDER BARN
This livestock barn serves as a physical reminder that the land along the PATH was a farming landscape until recently. Renowned landscape architect Ed Alexander owned much of the land between the South River and Alexander Lake. He sold portions to create a golf course and expand Panola Mountain State Park.

15 PARKER HOUSE The Parker House is the oldest known house in Rockdale County. Aaron Parker, Jr. a veteran of the War of 1812, purchased three land lots a year after the 1821 Creek cession and moved his family from the Athens area. He built this house as the centerpiece of his plantation. After his death in 1881, the property was divided among 13 children and had various owners through the 20th century.

This type of house, Plantation Plain, was common in rural Georgia. The plan features a two-story core with a rear shed addition. The room to one side of the front porch is typically called a parson's or traveler's room. Access through a door onto the front porch maintained family privacy.

The Southerness Golf Course surrounding the Parker House opened in 1991 but has been reclaimed as part of Panola Mountain State Park—can you see the old cart paths? Now, the links are home to an **archery program, primitive camping, and a birding area.**

16 PANOLA MOUNTAIN **Panola Mountain** is considered one of the finest rock outcrops in the U.S. and is a designated National Natural Landmark. The Georgia Conservancy led the conservation effort and purchased the mountain in 1974. Today the monadnock and its expanded 1,635-acre preserve are a state park. The PATH trail winds around the park but due to the delicate nature of the ecological system, hikers are only allowed on Panola with a guide.

17 SERPENTINE BRIDGE After nearly a mile-long climb from Alexander Lake, you descend into a thickly forested valley, accented by a serpentine bridge high above a trickling creek. This area, previously slated for development, was recently incorporated into the park to serve as a corridor for the trail.

18 DECASTRO RETREAT The DeCastro Homestead was donated to Rockdale County in 1996 to be used as part of the trail system. There is a suspension bridge located ¼ mile below the DeCastro house on the right side of the trail.

19 LORRAINE TRAILHEAD This lovely park and walking trails are nestled along the South River. However, this site was not always a picturesque spot. It was once an auto salvage yard and the grounds were piled with abandoned cars and tires. The lot was purchased for the new trailhead and connection for the PATH trail.

20 SOUTH RIVER BRIDGE #2 Creating a bridge that can span the sandy banks and flash-flood prone waters of the South River is no easy feat. This bridge is the longest and most complex ever attempted by the PATH Foundation. It spans more than 500-feet and can hold 5 tons of weight. The bridge had to be moved in four sections and assembled on site. See a dramatic birds eye view of the bridge **here.**

21 MONASTERY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT The natural beauty of this 2,000+ acre preserve and the artistry of its historic buildings set the stage for a place that speaks to the soul. **The Monastic Heritage Center** near the trailhead includes an exhibit center and a renowned bonsai greenhouse. The gift shop has tasty treats for before or after trail adventures.

The monks' established their self-sustaining community here in 1944. One of their most extraordinary achievements is the construction of the Cloister and Abbey Church. Built by the monks themselves from poured concrete, the building is an engineering and architectural marvel. It has been called "Georgia's Most Remarkable Concrete Building." For more images, visit our slideshow **here.**