



Moss Rock Preserve Trail Guide



Moss Rock Preserve (MRP) is a 349-acre, public nature preserve owned by the City of Hoover. The park is unique in that it preserves and emphasizes many natural features that have been lost to development or ‘improvement’ in other areas. Moss Rock currently contains about 12 miles of hiking trails, including old roads and utility rights-of-way. Five miles of those trails are relatively new and were built by local volunteers. Trails (with the exception of the power line trail) are color-coded red, white, blue or orange. The white trail primarily provides easy, streamside walking but its northeastern end traverses some fairly intense topography, providing a fun, aerobic hike. That section of the white trail is referred to by some as the “cardio trail”. The blue trail leads to hidden valleys and boulders, the red trail passes by cliffs and wetlands and the orange trail leads to the impressive boulder gorge and Top of the World lookout. All trails interconnect to form loops. Before you enter the park, please read the **Moss Rock Preserve Rules** that are posted at trailheads. These rules should serve as a reminder to “TAKE ONLY PICTURES AND LEAVE ONLY FOOTPRINTS”. Also, take time to learn about MRP’s special features, located on the trail map and described below.

Landforms, Natural Plant Communities, Wildlife and Historic Resources

Moss Rock Preserve lies in a highland valley made up of the south facing slope of Shades Mountain and the north facing slope of the much lower Pine Mountain. Scenic Hurricane Branch and its headwaters run west to east over shoals and waterfalls in the bottom of the valley, throughout the length of MRP. Also unique to Moss Rock are boulder formations normally associated with Lookout and Sand Mountains to the north.

Moss Rock Preserve contains an amazing variety of natural plant communities within a compact area. Drier sites contain the now rare longleaf pine forest and the more moist sites contain mixed hardwood forests. Mixed, pine/hardwood forests dominate transitional habitats between drier and moister areas. A few wetlands in the form of hardwood swamps are also present.

The most unique natural communities in Moss Rock are sandstone glades. Sandstone glades are composed of scattered trees, grasses and wildflowers growing on large pavement-like rock outcrops. Many of the small, stunted trees are natural bonsai and may be hundreds of years old. The glades contain several rare plant species, including Nuttall’s rayless goldenrod. All of these plants can be killed by soil compaction, usually caused by excessive foot-traffic. Therefore, the locations of the glades have not been listed on the initial trail map. Special trails will be routed to allow observation but minimize impact. In the meantime, it is best to visit the glades with a trained naturalist. If you do visit the glades, please be conscious to step only on rocks and avoid stepping on the islands of plants. **These plants literally grow between a rock and a hard place so please don’t disturb them!**

The various plant communities are inhabited by a great variety of wildlife including gray fox, Barred owls, the harmless gray rat snake, various frogs, sunfish, crayfish and numerous butterflies. Moss Rock Preserve historic resources include a Native American cliff shelter in the Boulder Field as well as the remains of an old moonshine still.

Your Help is Needed!

You can help to protect Moss Rock Preserve while making it more accessible by joining the efforts of the Friends of Moss Rock Preserve. We work with the City of Hoover to maintain MRP, as well as protect it from future development. Periodically, we offer group tours by reservation. This rustic trail map and guide you now hold is our latest project, done in partnership with the City. Improved maps and guides will follow. In addition, we hold monthly work and clean up days in partnership with other volunteer groups such as the Southeastern Climbers Coalition; Boy Scouts of America; and Hands on Birmingham.

For More Information Contact:

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