TRAVEL

Bonaventure Cemetery Map Self Guided Tour

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Discover the Enchantment of Bonaventure Cemetery: Your Ultimate Self-Guided Tour

Nestled along the banks of the Wilmington River in Savannah, Georgia, Bonaventure Cemetery is far more than a final resting place. It is an outdoor museum of Victorian art, a serene landscape of moss-draped oaks, and a storyteller's paradise. Walking its winding paths, you will encounter sculpted angels, ornate mausoleums, and the famous haunting statue known as "Little Wendy" or the Bird Girl. To truly absorb the history and beauty without missing the hidden gems, a **Bonaventure Cemetery map self guided tour** is your essential companion. This article will walk you through everything you need to know to plan a memorable and respectful visit, from where to find the best map to which graves you absolutely must see.

Whether you are a history lover, a photography enthusiast, or a fan of the book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, exploring Bonaventure on your own schedule allows for intimate discovery. With the right map in hand, you can transform a simple stroll into a rich narrative journey spanning more than 150 years of Savannah's past.

Why Choose a Self-Guided Tour of Bonaventure Cemetery?

Many visitors to Savannah join guided tours of Bonaventure, and those can be excellent. However, a self-guided tour offers distinct advantages. You control your pace, linger at the graves that speak to you, and avoid the crowds that often gather around popular sites. Using a **Bonaventure Cemetery map self guided tour** gives you the freedom to explore the lesser-known corners—the quiet lanes where azaleas bloom in spring and the sun filters through ancient oaks.

Moreover, a self-guided walk allows for quiet reflection. The cemetery is a place of peace, and moving at your own speed lets you absorb the intricate symbolism carved into headstones: broken columns representing lives cut short, weeping willows representing grief, and clasped hands symbolizing eternal bonds. With a map, you can find these details without relying on a guide's schedule.

What Makes a Good Map for Bonaventure?

Not all maps are created equal. An ideal **self-guided tour Bonaventure cemetery map** should include:

- Clearly marked sections and lot numbers
- Locations of notable graves and monuments
- Walking paths and roadways
- Key landmarks such as the main gate, the Visitors Center (if open), and restroom facilities
- An easy-to-read legend

You can obtain a free printable map from the **official Bonaventure Cemetery website** or purchase a detailed

laminated version at the Savannah Visitor Center or local bookstores. Many smartphone apps also offer GPS-enabled maps that work offline—useful since cell service can be spotty under the dense tree canopy.

Essential Stops on Your Bonaventure Cemetery Self-Guided Tour

Now let's dive into the must-see locations that make your **Bonaventure Cemetery map self guided tour** unforgettable. Each stop tells a story.

The Main Entrance and the Avenue of Oaks

Entering through the main gate off Bonaventure Road, you are greeted by a majestic alley of live oaks draped in Spanish moss. This iconic view sets the tone for the entire experience. Take a moment here to orient yourself with your map. The road splits into several branches; the best route for a self-guided tour begins by turning left toward the older sections, where the most famous art and history reside.

The Grave of the Bird Girl (Little Wendy)

Perhaps the most photographed statue in the cemetery, the **Bird Girl** stood for decades near the grave of the Daniels family. (Note: The original is now safely housed at the Telfair Museum in Savannah, but a replica marks the spot.) This bronze figure of a young girl holding two bowls—meant to attract birds—became an international sensation after appearing on the cover of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. Your map will lead you to Section H, Lot 4. Be prepared for a small crowd, but also take a moment to appreciate the quiet grace of the statue.

Conrad Aiken's Bench

Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Conrad Aiken designed his own memorial: a granite bench carved with the inscription "Give my love to the world." Located in the western part of the cemetery (Section 42), this bench faces the river, offering a perfect spot to sit, write, or simply watch the boats drift by. Your **Bonaventure Cemetery map self guided tour**should highlight this serene location. Many visitors leave pens or small poems tucked into the bench's crevices.

Gracie Watson's Grave

One of the most heartbreaking stories in the cemetery belongs to Gracie Watson, a six-year-old girl who died of pneumonia in 1889. Her life-sized marble statue, carved by John Walz, shows little Gracie sitting on a stump with a doll in her lap, a rose-ornamented hat on her head. The grave is near the main entrance in Section A. The realism of the statue—her curls, her button boots, her innocent expression—never fails to move visitors. Check your map for the exact location; it is often marked with a small sign.

The Jewish Burial Grounds

Within Bonaventure lies a separate Jewish section, purchased in the 1850s by Savannah's first Hebrew congregation. The headstones here often feature Hebrew inscriptions and symbols such as the Star of David or the priestly hands. This area provides a quieter, more contemplative walk, and your map will help you find it adjacent to the main cemetery's eastern boundary.

Silent Angels and Gothic Monuments

Scattered throughout the cemetery are numerous angel statues, each with unique features. Look for the **Weeping Angel** near Section K, her hand covering her face in sorrow. In Section E, you will find the **Guardian Angel**protecting a child's grave. The Gothic Revival mausoleums of the Oglethorpe and Gordon families are also worth a detour; their intricate stonework rival that of European cathedrals.

How to Navigate Bonaventure Using Your Map: A Step-by-Step Route

Bonaventure Cemetery **map self guided tour**, consider this logical route:

1. Start at the Main Gate. Park near the entrance (there is a small parking lot on the left just inside). Take a photo of the map or open your app.
2. Head straight to Section A to see Gracie Watson’s grave. It is less than a two-minute walk from the gate.
3. Walk south toward the river to find the Bird Girl replica (Section H). Along the way, note the mausoleums on your left.
4. Continue to Section 42 (west side) to rest on Conrad Aiken’s bench. This part of the cemetery is quieter and offers river views.
5. Loop back through the Jewish section and the older family plots. Look for the grave of John Walz, the sculptor of Gracie Watson and many other monuments. He is buried in Section E.
6. Finish at the Oglethorpe Mausoleum near the southeast corner. From there, a short path returns you to the main gate.

This route takes approximately 1.5 to 2 hours at a leisurely pace. If you want a deeper exploration, bring water and comfortable shoes—the cemetery covers over 100 acres.

Practical Tips for a Successful Self-Guided Visit

To ensure your **Bonaventure Cemetery map self guided tour** is both enjoyable and respectful, keep these tips in mind:

Best Time to Visit

Early morning (8:00–10:00 AM) or late afternoon (3:00–5:00 PM) offers the best light for photography and fewer visitors. The cemetery is open daily from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Avoid weekends during peak tourist season (March–June) if you prefer solitude.

What to Bring

- A printed map or a fully charged phone with an offline map (the cemetery does not have reliable Wi-Fi)
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Water and snacks (no food stalls inside)
- Insect repellent (especially in warmer months)
- A camera—you will want to capture the light filtering through the moss

Etiquette and Rules

Remember that Bonaventure is an active cemetery with funerals occurring occasionally. Be respectful of visitors and the deceased. Do not climb on monuments, leave trash, or pick flowers. Photography is allowed, but do not use flash near windows or reflective surfaces. Pets are permitted on leashes, but clean up after them.

Downloadable vs. Printed Maps

If you prefer a paper copy, you can print the official PDF from the Bonaventure website or pick one up at the Savannah Historic District Visitor Center (301 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd). For a digital guide, apps like *GPSMyCity* or *Visit Savannah* include geolocated markers for a **Bonaventure Cemetery map self guided tour**. These apps often provide audio narration if you bring earphones.

Exploring Beyond the Map: Hidden Corners and Natural Beauty

Even the best map cannot capture the cemetery’s atmosphere. Follow any side path that catches your eye—you might discover a family plot with intricate wrought-iron fencing, or a statue of a lion guarding a child’s grave. The native flora includes magnolias, camellias, and century-old oaks. In spring, azaleas burst into pink and white. In autumn, the oak leaves turn golden and crunch underfoot. The map is your guide, but allow yourself to get intentionally lost for a few minutes. The peace you find in those quiet glades is the true gift of Bonaventure.

A Note on the “Bonaventure Cemetery Map Self Guided Tour” for History Buffs

For those interested in Savannah’s Civil War history, your map should mark the graves of several Confederate soldiers and officers. Look for the Confederate section near the eastern boundary. The cemetery also holds the grave of **Zachariah McConnell**, a Revolutionary War veteran. If you are tracing genealogy, the lot numbers on the map correspond to burial records available at the Savannah City Hall or online through Find a Grave.

Conclusion: Your Journey Through Savannah’s Enchanted Garden of Stone

Bonaventure Cemetery is a place where art, history, and nature converge in a serene and timeless landscape. With a reliable **Bonaventure Cemetery map self guided tour**in hand, you become the architect of your own journey. Whether you seek the famous Bird Girl, a poet’s quiet bench, or the quiet dignity of century-old monuments, a self-guided walk allows you to connect deeply with each site on your own terms. Take your time, read the epitaphs, and listen to the wind in the oaks. You will leave with more than photographs—you will carry a piece of Savannah’s soul with you.

Plan your visit, download your map, and step into the living story of Bonaventure. The spirits of the past are waiting to share their beauty.

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