

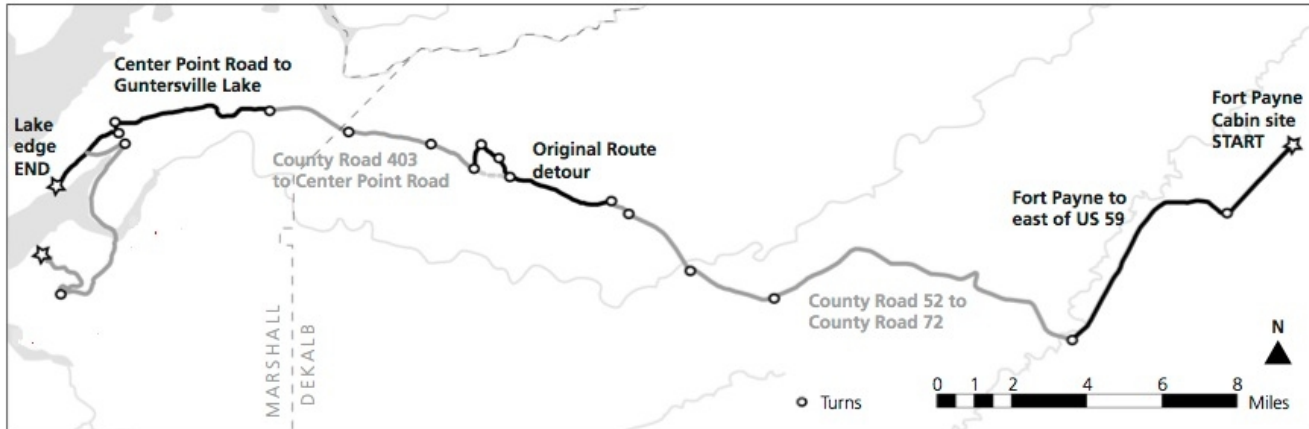
# Trail of Tears

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail  
Trail of Tears Association



## Retracing the Benge Route from Fort Payne to Guntersville Lake, AL



### General guidance for following the route

*Except where noted, all turns are marked with brown **To Original Route** left or right turn arrow signs. **Original Route** signs confirm the route regularly on segments without turns.*

### Beginning the tour

From the Fort Payne Cabin site, head northwest on 4th Street SE toward Gault Avenue. You will see a left turn To Original Route sign, which marks the beginning of the tour. There will also be a right turn Willstown Historic Sites sign. Please see the other side of this flyer for information about visiting the Andrew Ross House and Willstown Mission Cemetery.

### Fort Payne to east of US 59

Make the left onto Gault Avenue (also signed as US 11). You will immediately see an Original Route sign. You are now on the Benge Route of the Trail of Tears, which you can follow with only one brief detour for the next 35 miles.

Continue southwest on Gault Avenue/US 11 for 2 miles. At around 2 miles you will see a right turn To Original Route sign, directing you onto Lebanon Rd/County Road 51 (CR 51).

After making this turn, you will continue on CR 51 for 6 miles, crossing US 59 on an overpass at around 1 1/4 miles, then paralleling US 59 until the next turn. At about 5 3/4 miles there will be a right turn To Original Route sign. Turn onto CR 52.

### County Road 52 to County Road 72

Continue on CR 52 for the next 8 miles. After 3 miles, at the Y junction with CR 458, take care to stay left to remain on CR 52. After 8 miles, begin looking for CR 443 on the right. There won't be advance turn notice at this intersection, but there will be an Original Route sign on CR 443 just past the intersection.

Make a right turn onto CR 443. Continue on CR 443 for 2 miles. Just before it deadends on CR 843, there will be a To Original Route right turn sign. Turn onto CR 843.

Continue straight on CR 843. After 1 mile, you will cross State Route 75 (SR 75) at a large intersection; follow Original Route signs to continue straight.

After that intersection, CR 843 becomes CR 400. After another mile (2 miles total from the CR 443/ CR 843 intersection) you will see a right turn To Original Route sign. Make a right onto CR 43.

After 1/2 mile on CR 43, there will be a To Original Route left turn sign. Make a left onto CR 72.



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#### Original Route detour

After about 2 1/4 miles on CR 72, the road makes a large bend to the right. Here the historic route continues straight across private property, but modern roads detour around to the north. To reconnect to the historic route, stay on CR 72 and follow the To Original Route signs. In 1/2 mile there will be a To Original Route left turn sign directing you onto CR 76. Make this left, and follow CR 76 for another 1/2 mile. A To Original Route left turn sign directs you onto CR 550; after that left, another 1/2 mile takes you to a signed right turn onto CR 403. At this point, you have returned to the historic route of the Trail of Tears, marked by an Original Route Next 11 Miles sign.

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#### County Road 403 to Center Point Road

Continue on CR 403 for 1 mile, until CR 403 deadends into CR 50. Make the signed left turn.

After just under 2 miles, CR 50 will meet SR 227. There will be a To Original Route right turn sign before the intersection; turn right on SR 227.

Shortly afterward you will cross the county line. After around 2 miles on SR 227 there will be a right turn To Original Route sign for Center Point Road/Old Highway 227. Make this turn.

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#### Center Point Road to Lake

After about 3 1/2 miles on Center Point Road/Old Highway

## Guntersville Lake and end of tour

227, there will be a left turn To Original Route sign for South Sauty Road. You will be on Sauty for less than 1/4 mile before there will be a signed right turn onto Meltonsville Road. From this turn, you will continue 2 miles to the end of the tour. After a mile on Meltonsville, take care in crossing SR 62, which is a semidivided highway. Meltonsville and the historic route continue straight on the far side of SR 62.

At the lake's edge, the tour ends, although the historic route continued along this side of the Tennessee River to the crossing at Gunters Landing, until that segment was submerged under the reservoir in 1939.

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## Visiting the Willstown Historic Sites in Fort Payne

The Andrew Ross House and Willstown Mission Cemetery can both be reached from the Fort Payne Cabin site by following the Trail of Tears directional signs north along Gault Avenue/US 11.

More information on opportunities to visit Trail of Tears historic sites in the region can be found at [www.nps.gov/trte](http://www.nps.gov/trte) or [www.nationaltota.org](http://www.nationaltota.org).

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## About the local Trail of Tears historic sites

**Fort Payne Cabin site.** Originally a Cherokee property, the 1825 cabin was seized by the military in 1837 to establish Fort Payne, which later became a major departure point for Cherokees forced to leave their homes in Alabama. In October of 1838 the Benge Detachment—whose route to the Tennessee River is described in this flyer— left from Fort Payne; the fort closed soon after. The cabin remained in use until the 1940s, and the site has recently been the focus of several archeological investigations.

**Willstown Mission Cemetery: 38th Street NE, near Godfrey Avenue NE.** In 1823, a mission school was opened on this site at the request of Cherokee leaders including John and Andrew Ross, and George Lowery. At the time it was adjacent to a council ground and located on the main road into Willstown from Ross's Landing. Nothing remains of the school, which closed prior to the removal, but the cemetery here includes at least 50 graves, some of which are believed to date to the active period of the school.

**Andrew Ross House: 4502 Godfrey Avenue, near 45th Street NE.** The current structure, a private residence, includes portions of the original home built in 1821 by Andrew Ross, Cherokee Supreme Court Justice and brother of Principal Chief John Ross, with his wife Susannah, daughter of George Lowery. As the house is not open to the public, please view it from a distance.

More detailed information on the history and significance of these sites can be found at [www. landmarksdekalbal.org](http://www.landmarksdekalbal.org), under Projects.