

Saluda Passage of the Palmetto Trail

Driving Directions: From the Saluda Library turn Right on Greenville St. (The road name changes to Mt. Page Road when it enters Henderson County.) You will enter SC and travel through the Greenville Watershed. Please watch for bicyclists! At the end of the road turn right onto Old Hwy 25. As you reenter NC, Turn left on Gap Creek Rd at the Talisman Camp. Follow brown P signs. Bear right at fork on to Anders Rd. Parking area is on the left. Walk .4 miles back to Old Hwy 25. Trailhead is across Old Hwy 25. The total mileage from the library is 8.5 miles.

You can do an in and out hike from this trailhead.

OR

If you choose to do a car shuttle, leave one car here. Continue back to Old Hwy 25, turn left. Go 3.3 miles and turn right on to South Lake Summit Road. Turn left after bridge. Continue straight at fork on to Bell Mountain Rd. Go 2 miles to pull off for the trailhead which is on the right. There is room for about 3 cars. The hike would be approximately 4.5 miles if you choose this option.

Hiking Information: This section of the Palmetto Trail borders the Poinsett Watershed used by the City of Greenville. It roughly follows the NC/SC line. In 1993, the Greenville Water System conveyed an easement on the property to The Nature Conservancy, forever protecting the wilderness from development. The trail passes through one of the most significant wilderness areas in South Carolina. The Kingdom of the Happy Land was located in this area.

The trail is well maintained and easy to follow. Follow the Yellow Blazes. There is some climbing, though not excessive. About 1.5 miles in there is an informational sign about the Kingdom of the Happy Land.

Educational Information: The following information about the Kingdom of the Happy is from the following link. Please use the link for the entire article:

<https://mountainx.com/news/community-news/0207happyland-php/>

The Kingdom of the Happy Land was a place where freed slaves made a community governed by a king and a queen. It was a socialistic society where crops and earnings were distributed equally. It first began after the Civil War ended in 1865. Freed slaves from Mississippi set out in search of a new home. As they came through Georgia and into South Carolina their numbers increased. They crossed the state line into North Carolina near the present-day Tuxedo. They made a deal with Serepta Davis, the widow of Col. John Davis, who ran a plantation called Oakland. The plantation's slaves were gone and widow Davis offered their cabins to the travelers on a condition they help with the land. An ex-slave, Robert Montgomery, became the king and another former slave, Louella was queen. They ruled the kingdom and eventually bought some 200 acres of land from the Davis family.

Life in the kingdom was not lavish. Residents build rustic cabins, cleared land cultivating corn, potatoes and small grains. They built corncribs for storing their harvest. They also raised chickens, hogs and cattle. They wove, dyed and sewed their own clothing. Most of the kingdom's income came from the 19th-century service industry. Residents helped transport loads of market goods up the old "State Road" that connected the South Carolina areas around Charleston to the WNC mountains. The combination of their self sufficiency and the service industry is what keep the place afloat. As word about the kingdom spread, its population swelled was estimated to as much as 400.

When the railroad came to the area in 1878 there was very little work. Eventually there weren't enough people with cash to meet the taxes on the land. Some residents moved to nearby Hendersonville,

Flat Rock, Spartanburg and Greenville. By 1900 few, if any, residents remained.

In 1910, Ed Bell's grandfather, Joe Bell, bought what had been the Kingdom of the Happy Land. Some decades later, Ed's uncle Frank dismantled most of the stone chimneys from the residents' cabins for use in other structures. Today, only one remains.

Theda Perdue, a professor of history of UNC-Chapel Hill, stated, "I think it's important to understand the ways in which African-American people tried to carve out a place for themselves in the Reconstruction period. It took an enormous amount of imagination and courage to do that, and it's something people need to know and understand."