

Boulder Gorge Trails

A New Connection to the Moss Rock Preserve Trail System

The Boulder Gorge portion of the new Orange Loop Trail runs through some of the most scenic terrain of the local area. These features include streamside boulder formations, a small natural bridge, abundant mountain laurel, large hardwoods, big stands of mountain longleaf pine, sandstone glades, remains of a large moonshine still and during wet weather the adjacent stream features beautiful shoals and the highest waterfall in the area. The Top of the World Scenic Overlook offers magnificent views across the gorges of the Moss Rock area from the highest local point which is covered with giant boulders. The easiest way to access the trail is to start at the Moss Rock Preserve Parking/Trailhead beside Simmons Middle School on Patton Chapel Road. The Moss Rock parking is noted by signs on Patton Chapel Road. Turn into the parking lot and proceed to the trailhead at the back of the parking lot behind the buses. From the Simmons Trailhead it is about .9 miles to the head of the gorge and waterfall. From the trailhead follow the White Trail until it meets the Orange Trail to the right. The Orange Trail follows the North Fork of Hurricane Branch up to the head of the gorge. The trail follows a relatively level grade along the stream most of the way. The .1 mile side trail to the Top of the World Scenic Overlook is steep but well worth the effort to get there. A partially steep .6 mile section of the Orange Trail Loop leads to the Natural Bridge, large stands of mountain longleaf pine, sandstone glades and the Rock House Boulders before connecting with a trail along a small powerline which leads downhill and across the stream to the section of the Orange Trail leading from the mouth of Boulder Gorge back to the Simmons Trailhead. To walk the entire Orange Trail Loop as well as side trails and make it back to the Simmons Trailhead involves walking about 2.4 miles. The section of the Powerline Trail adjacent to the Orange Trail offers opportunities to see Castle Rock and a rare remnant sandstone glade known as Moon Rock. An old road across a terminated development loops back to the Orange Trail system near the Top of World Scenic Overlook. A narrow path just to the southwest of the gate on Patton Chapel Road connects the old road and the Orange Trail system. This powerline-old road route is about .6 miles.

The Boulder Gorge Trails can also be accessed from Moss Rock Preserve by following the White Trail along the South Fork of Hurricane Branch downstream toward Simmons School and then taking a left on the Orange Trail. In addition, the Boulder Gorge Trails can be accessed from the Moss Rock Preserve portion of the Powerline Trail by following it north until it reaches a smaller powerline that descends the hill to the right. Follow the smaller powerline down the hill, cross the stream, turn left and you will be on the Orange Trail at the mouth of Boulder Gorge. The Orange Trail and the northern end of the Powerline/Old Road Trail are not located in Moss Rock Preserve, but it is located on other city owned lands. The cooperation of the City of Hoover and the Hoover School System made these new trails possible.

This rustic map is provided by the Friends of Moss Rock Preserve. If you would like to become involved with our work in protecting and improving the Moss Rock area please contact Ken Wills at memoite@aol.com or 823-1641.

