



The South

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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ 21c Museum Hotel (p383)
- ➔ Nashville Downtown Hostel (p372)
- ➔ Lodge on Little St Simons (p407)
- ➔ Shack Up Inn (p417)
- ➔ Mansion on Forsyth Park (p403)

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Proof (p384)
- ➔ Prince's Hot Chicken (p373)
- ➔ Boucherie (p441)
- ➔ Octopus Bar (p397)
- ➔ Restaurant August (p440)

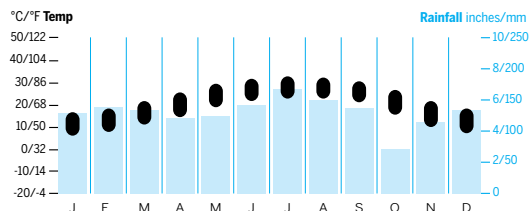
Why Go?

More than any other part of the country, the South has an identity all its own – a lyrical dialect, a complicated political history and a pride in a shared culture that cuts across state lines. Nurtured by deep roots yet shaped by hardship, the South has a rich legacy in politics and culture. Icons and leaders like Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks, and Bill Clinton, novelists like William Faulkner, Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor are all Southern-born. So is barbecue, bourbon and Coca-Cola, and the blues. Which, of course, gave birth to rock and roll, soul and American popular music as a whole. The cities of the South are some of the country's most fascinating, from antebellum beauties like New Orleans and Savannah to New South powerhouses like Atlanta and Nashville.

But it's the legendary Southern hospitality that makes travel in the region such a pleasure. People round here love to talk. Stay long enough and you'll no doubt be invited for dinner.

When to Go

New Orleans



Nov–Feb Winter is generally mild here, and Christmas is a capital-E Event.

Apr–Jun Springs are lush and warm, abloom with fragrant jasmine, gardenia and tuberose.

Jul–Sep Summer is steamy, often unpleasantly so, and locals hit the beaches.

Understanding Southern Culture

Southerners have long been the butt of their fellow countrymen's jokes. They're slow-moving, hard-drinking, funny-talking and spend all their time fixing their pickup trucks and marrying their cousins. Or so the line goes. Well, while Southerners do tend to be relatively friendly and laid-back, the drawling country bumpkin is more the exception than the norm. Today's Southerner is just as likely to be a Mumbai-born motel owner in rural Arkansas, a fast-talking Atlanta investment banker with a glitzy high-rise condo, or a 20-something gay hipster in trendy Midtown Memphis.

Southerners do love sports, especially football, college basketball and NASCAR, while fine arts thrive in historic cities like Charleston and Savannah, and college towns like Chapel Hill, Knoxville and Athens are famed for their indie-music scenes. Religion is hugely important here – the so-called Bible belt runs smack through the South, with about half of all Southerners identifying as Evangelical Christians.

THE SOUTH FOR MUSIC LOVERS

The history of American music is the history of Southern music: the blues, bluegrass, jazz, gospel, country and rock 'n' roll were all born here. Music hot spots include: Nashville, the birthplace of country music and home to more boot-stompin' honky-tonks than anywhere in the world; Memphis, where bluesmen still groove in the clubs of Beale St; and New Orleans, where you can hear world-class jazz, blues and zydeco every night of the week. Asheville, NC, is an emerging center of Appalachian revival music, while Kentucky claims bluegrass as its own.

Must-Eat Southern Foods

- **Barbecue** (region-wide, especially in North Carolina and Tennessee)
- **Fried chicken** (region-wide)
- **Cornbread** (region-wide)
- **Shrimp and grits** (South Carolina and Georgia coasts)
- **Boudin** (Cajun pork and rice sausage; Southern Louisiana)
- **Gumbo/jambalaya/étouffée** (rice and seafood or meat stew or a mixture; Southern Louisiana)
- **Po'boy** (sandwich, traditionally with fried seafood or meat; Southern Louisiana)
- **Hot tamales** (cornmeal stuffed with spiced beef or pork; Mississippi Delta)
- **Collards** (a leafy green, often cooked with ham; region-wide)
- **Pecan pie, coconut cake, red velvet cake, sweet-potato pie** (region-wide)
- **Bourbon** (Kentucky)

DID YOU KNOW?

The South is America's fastest-growing region, with 14.3% of the country's population.

Fast Facts

- **Nickname** Dixie
- **Biggest cities** Atlanta, Charlotte, Memphis
- **Time zones** Eastern, Central

Scenic Drives

- **Blue Ridge Parkway**
North Carolina to Virginia
(www.blueridgeparkway.org)
- **Natchez Trace**
Tennessee to Mississippi
(www.nps.gov/natr)
- **Hwy 12** North Carolina's Outer Banks
- **Kentucky Bourbon Trail**
(p387) Sniff, taste and enjoy the locals' favorite liquor
- **Blues Highway** (p417)
Take the mythic Hwy 61 from Memphis to the Crossroads

Resources

- **Visit South** (www.visitsouth.com) Sights and activities across the region
- **South Carolina** (www.discoverouthcarolina.com) This state's official tourism site; better than most
- **North Carolina** (www.visitnc.com) Roadtrips, Asheville and the coast
- **Tennessee** (www.tnvacation.com) Events, activities and sights
- **Louisiana** (www.louisianatravel.com) Info on the Cajun countryside