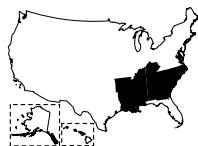


The South



More than any other part of the country, the South has an identity all its own – a musical way of speaking, a complicated political history and a pride in a shared culture that cuts across state lines. As a result, visiting the South feels more ‘different’ than visiting other parts of the country (and not just because you can’t understand the accents!). While powerhouse cities such as Atlanta and Charlotte are in perpetual states of reinvention, some of the more historic cities – places like New Orleans and Savannah – are virtual shrines to their 19th-century former selves.

Nurtured by deep roots yet shaped by hardship, Southerners are often creative types – from William Faulkner all the way to Uncle Jimmy who likes to tell big-fish stories outside the Texaco station. The history of American music is the history of Southern music: jazz, the blues, bluegrass, country and rock and roll were all born in the South. Cooking is a creative art here as well: smoky barbecue, plump Gulf oysters, fluffy buttermilk biscuits, fried green tomatoes. Get ready to eat, eat, eat. Then loosen your belt and eat some more.

The South is truly a wonderful place to travel. It’s the kind of place where you’re likely to discover new things, merely because the people are so friendly. It’s no wonder that Coca-Cola, bourbon and sweet tea – all things you can offer a guest while ‘visiting’ (chatting) on the porch – were invented in the South. People ‘round here like an excuse to talk. Stay long enough and you’ll no doubt be invited for dinner.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Donning a mask and joining the chaos of Mardi Gras in **New Orleans** (p481)
- Grasping the soul, rhythm, history and perseverance of the **Delta blues** (p466) in the museums and juke joints of Clarksdale, MS
- Exploring the caverns, mountains, rivers and forests of Arkansas’ **Ozark Mountains** (p497), where folk music reigns
- Stompin’ your boots at **Tootsie’s Orchid Lounge** (p431) on Nashville’s honky-tonk-lined Lower Broadway
- Hiking, camping and jaw-dropping in the magnificent **Great Smoky Mountains National Park** (p402)
- Driving windswept Hwy 12 down the length of North Carolina’s **Outer Banks** (p391) and taking the ferry to funky little Ocracoke Island
- Touring the grand antebellum homes and cotton plantations of **Charleston** (p404)



THE SOUTH

