



TRIP PLANNING

Travel guide to Mississippi's coolest small towns

Photo: The Gathering at Livingston
Mercantile

Lisa K. Anderson

November 9, 2015

Yazoo City, Yazoo County



Photo: [Visit Mississippi](#)

Home to the Bentonian Blues style and beloved literary figures, Yazoo County is known for the colorful Main Street of the county seat, Yazoo City, and for Bentonian's Blue Front Cafe — the oldest juke joint in Mississippi, dating to 1948. At the [Main Street Hotel](#), visit the No Smoking Smoke House, a popular venue rental that hosts lively First Friday blues and oldies performances.

Willie Morris, the influential editor of *Harper's Magazine* during the '60s and author of *My Dog Skip*, loved the serenity he found in cemeteries, particularly Glenwood Cemetery in Yazoo City. After his death in 1999, he was buried 13 paces from the infamous Witch of Yazoo City, whose story he'd loved to tell. Legend has it that the witch broke through a chain-link fence surrounding her grave and took revenge on the city in 1904, burning it down. Fans and loved ones are known to leave one of Morris' favorite treats, moon pies, at his grave.

Bay Saint Louis, Hancock County

Ten years after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Bay Saint Louis has made a comeback, rebuilding itself as a creative coastal town marked by art walks and festivals, picturesque beaches, boutiques, seafood restaurants, and a famous [Old Town](#). [Mockingbird Café](#), an oasis during the post-storm chaos, pays tribute to the spirit of volunteerism showcased in Bay Saint Louis by citizens and volunteers during the hurricane's aftermath.





Today, Bay Saint Louis (population 10,822) is the fastest-growing city in Mississippi, with local leaders declaring it “back and better than ever.” In spring 2014, the Bay Saint Louis Municipal Harbor and Pier opened, the last post-Katrina FEMA project designated in the city.

Flora and Livingston, Madison County



Photo: [The Gathering at Livingston Mercantile](#)

Flora is a tight-knit, down-to-earth community of about 2,000, and everyone prides themselves on knowing their neighbors. Home to the only [petrified forest](#) in the Eastern United States, here you can tour ancient trees on the nature walk, and visit the Earth Science Museum and gift shop filled with petrified wood, fossils, and minerals. Once a stop on the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley Railroad, the town has also transformed its former train depot into a museum that’s listed on the National Register of Historic Places.





Neighboring Livingston, an unincorporated Madison County community, is home to [Livingston Mercantile](#), where you'll find a brilliant Southern restaurant and bar, The Gathering, that focuses on fresh local food. The Mercantile also has a gourmet grocery store selling produce from nearby farms, along with an upscale convenience store and fuel station. The [Livingston Farmer's Market](#) has become a summertime staple for live entertainment, and the local produce on offer includes everything from lip balm made by [Mississippi Bees](#) to pottery and [cold drip coffee](#).

Port Gibson, Claiborne County

Mississippi's third oldest settlement, Port Gibson (population 1,455) had its historic buildings spared by Ulysses S. Grant during the Civil War because he believed they were "too beautiful to burn." North of Port Gibson lies the Windsor Ruins, a mansion-turned-Civil War hospital and observation station. Windsor Mansion weathered the war, but in 1890 it burned in an accidental fire that left only 23 columns of the original structure standing. The [Grand Gulf Military Park](#), north of Port Gibson, dates to 1962 and preserves both early settlement and Civil War artifacts in the community.

Port Gibson also pays homage to the Civil Rights Movement with a permanent exhibit called [No Easy Journey](#). And a Mississippi Blues Trail Marker commemorates the [Rabbit's Foot Company](#), a traveling African-American vaudeville show launched by entrepreneur Pat Chappelle in the early 1900s; performances continued under different leadership from 1912 until 1959.





Ocean Springs, Jackson County



Photo: [ryanreinike](#)

Another story of post-Katrina revitalization along the Mississippi Gulf Coast lies on the eastern shore of Biloxi Bay in Ocean Springs. Nicknamed “the Gem of the Gulf,” this eclectic coastal community of 17,493 is where to go for great food, art, and music.

Ocean Springs is home to the [Walter Anderson Museum of Art](#), which celebrates the late painter and writer Walter Inglis Anderson. The family legacy continues in the [Shearwater Pottery](#) showroom and workshop, where the next generation of Andersons continues to produce fine clay ceramics.

Water Valley, Yalobusha County

This melting pot of academics, artists, farmers, and musicians was once a railroad hub and agricultural center. Today, Water





Valley is home to a burgeoning arts scene, enticing real estate prices, historic architecture, and the famed [BTC Grocery](#). “A small-town grocery with big-city food,” BTC embraces the local food movement and has gained national attention for its Dixie Belle Café.

Greenwood, Leflore County



Photo: [Visit Mississippi](#)

Popularized by the Delta blues guitarist Robert Johnson, and more recently in the 2010 film adaptation of Kathryn Stockett’s bestselling novel *The Help*, Greenwood was at the heart of protests and voter registration efforts during the Civil Rights struggle of the 1960s. The [Mississippi Blues Trail](#) has eight markers in Greenwood, including one at the grave of Robert Johnson and one at the site of former radio station WGRM, where B.B. King was first broadcast in the 1940s.





(Note: The [B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center](#) in King's hometown of Indianola is a 40-minute drive west).



Greenwood is nicknamed the Cotton Capital of the World, and it houses the second largest cotton exchange in the US. A lion's share of the nation's farm-raised catfish also originates in Leflore County, and the quality of the seafood you'll taste in the restaurants here is incredible. Check out the renowned [Giardina's](#) in the Alluvian Hotel and Spa (where you'll also find the excellent [Viking Cooking School](#)).

Vardaman, Calhoun County

Proclaiming itself the "Sweet Potato Capital of the World," the little town of Vardaman hosts a popular [Sweet Potato Festival](#) each year in early November. The century-old sweet potato farming tradition continues today, with fourth- and fifth-generation growers carrying on the legacy, and each year sweet potato sheds line Calhoun County roads during harvest season. [Sweet Potato Sweets](#), a local bakery, finds inventive ways to bake sweet and savory goods with the region's crop, encouraging visitors to bring an appetite as they sample treats and tour the site.

West Point, Clay County





Photo: [Growthalliance](#)

A neighborly community of 11,217, West Point “preserves, promotes, educates and celebrates” Mississippi blues heritage through the [Howlin’ Wolf Memorial Blues Festival](#), Museum, and Society. Other local attractions include the annual [Prairie Arts Festival](#), which takes place the Saturday before Labor Day; pristine public parks like the Kitty Dill National Memorial Parkway, one of the first Rails-to-Trails projects in the state; the Old Waverly Golf Club and its antebellum-style clubhouse; the Waverly Plantation Mansion; and a handful of high-quality museums displaying regional artifacts.

Philadelphia and Choctaw, Neshoba County

Philadelphia features in multiple chapters of US history. It was once the center of the Choctaw Nation, but with the encroachment of European settlers came the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and the Choctaw Trail of Tears that forcibly relocated members of the Nation to lands west of the Mississippi River. More than a century later, when three





young activists were killed here in June, 1964, during the Civil Rights Movement, national outrage spurred the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965. Later, football player Marcus Dupree got his start at Philadelphia High School, gaining an ethnically diverse group of fans during the late 1970s and early '80s.



These stories set the backdrop for culturally rich traditions in the community today. The 126-year-old [Neshoba County Fair](#), or “Mississippi’s giant house party.” And the [Choctaw Indian Fair](#), dating to 1949, takes place each July to celebrate and share Choctaw culture and heritage — just one of many examples of how the past interacts with the present in Mississippi’s small towns. 🍷



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ROAD TRIP GUIDES

Mississippi road trip destinations: 12 stops you need to make

Photo: [peterme](#)

Brandi Katherine Herrera



September 16, 2015



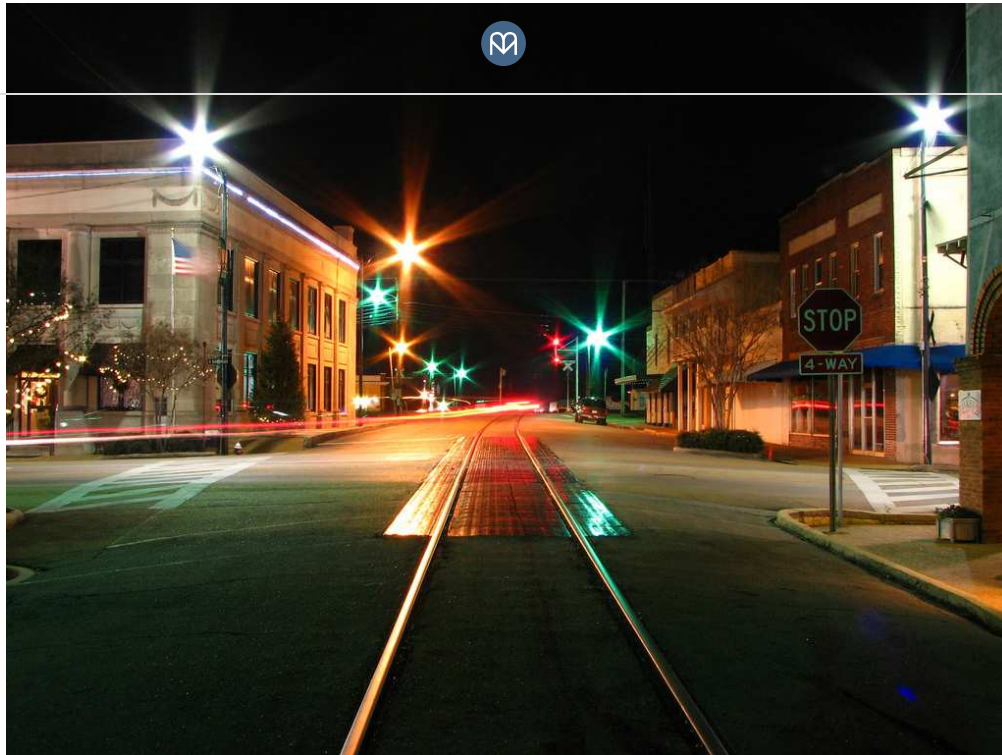


Photo: [Pilot MKN](#)

NO MATTER WHAT PATH YOU TAKE on your journey through the Magnolia State — north via Highway 61 in search of the Blues, south through Hill Country via I-55 en route to Oxford, or further south yet via Highway 49 toward the Gulf — countless back road detours and pit stops beg you to pull off the main roads in search of the authentic Mississippi experience.

Mississippi's beloved Willie Morris once called this landscape “one of those sudden magic places of America.” And as soon as you get right into the heart of it, you'll understand exactly why. It's a place unlike any other in the country — of wide porches and lazy afternoons, black-eyed peas and crawfish boils, kudzu and shotgun shacks, poetry and song and story.





Here's a handful of stops you'll definitely want to make as you amble throughout Mississippi. Y'all, just remember to take your sweet time, and savor every last bite.



1. Devil's Crossroads, Junction U.S. 61 & 49, Clarksdale

Mmmmm, standin' at the crossroad. I believe I'm sinking down.
— Cream, "Crossroads"

Where the Blues Highway (Route 61) intersects US Route 49 may possibly be one of America's most famous crossroads. As legend has it, bluesman Robert Johnson is said to have sold his soul to the devil at this very spot, on this very soil. You'll know you're in the right place by its iconic three-guitar signpost. Pull over, get out of the car, and see if you can't make out just a whisper of the ghost of Johnson's slide guitar. Just be careful, OK? It is right in the middle of two very busy roads.

2. Natchez Trace, Natchez





Photo: [peterme](#)

One of the best things about any road trip? The endless opportunities to get out of the car and back into nature. Detour over to the [Natchez Trace Parkway](#) before you get too close to the next city. The historic travel route stretches 444 miles, through three states, from Natchez, MS, to Nashville, TN. Originally blazed by foraging Native Americans, the Trace was used by early European and American explorers and traders (known as “Kaintucks”) in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Make sure to get out and experience the park up-close for a genuine taste of the “Old Trace.” A prehistoric





mound site, historic structures and numerous hiking trails
abound on the section between Jackson and Natchez.



3. The Witch of Yazoo + Willie Morris' Grave, Yazoo City

Stop off at Yazoo City — birthplace of Willie Morris, deep in the kudzu-covered hills north of Jackson — and you might just come face-to-face with [a local legend](#) lurking in the city's historic Glenwood Cemetery. Surrounded by chain links, "The Witch's Grave" sits nearby Morris', who made the story famous in his book *Good Old Boy*. Go in on your own, if you dare. Or take a guided tour and learn more about local lore that says the witch caused the great fire of 1904. If you happen to stop off at a gas station on the way over, grab a moon pie — it's tradition to leave one on Morris' grave (they're his favorite) before hightailing it out of there.

4. Delta Hot Tamale Trail (statewide)





Photo: [Lucian Venutian](#)

You might have already scarfed down a few tamales at Ground Zero or one of the other Delta Hot Tamale Trail outposts in Clarksdale (Hick's Famous, Ranchero, or Abe's). But if you've got an insatiable appetite for the masa-encased pork or beef delicacy, you've pretty much found yourself in heaven on earth. No matter what you believe about how the tamale originally made its way to the Southern US (some say through migrant Mexican laborers in the early 20th century, others say the connection goes back to the US-Mexican War), these conveniently portable and easily devourable little packets of goodness are here to stay. Start in Clarksdale if





you're already there, or [hop on the Trail](#) as far north as Corinth or Tunica and weave your way south to Doris' in D'Iberville, right on the Gulf.



5. Mississippi Petrified Forest, Flora

On your way south toward Jackson, take a short detour into the deep woods just off Highway 49 in Flora. The prehistoric stone giants you'll find once you arrive are part of an ancient log jam thought to have been deposited by river from halfway across the continent. Already one thousand years old when they first fell, the petrified trees have been preserved by nature for some 36 million years. Take a [self-guided walking tour](#) of the forest, then finish up with a visit to the Earth Science Museum and gift shop — it's chock-full of natural history, maps, and geological oddities.

6. Mississippi State Capitol + Two Sisters Kitchen, Jackson





Photo: [Visit Mississippi](#)

On the National Register of Historic Places since 1969, the Beaux-Arts style state Capitol building has been the home of Mississippi State Legislature since 1903. The third Capitol building since the first was built in 1822 — the second “Old Capitol” was finished in 1839, and is now a museum — offers [free guided tours](#) (weekdays, 9:30am and 11am, 1pm and 2:30pm).

During legislative sessions, visitors can view the Senate and House of Representatives from their galleries. When you're finished, hop on over to [Two Sisters](#) — a Jackson institution in





a historic home near the Capitol. But go early. The kitchen closes at 2pm, and you don't want to leave town without a bite of their award-winning fried chicken, catfish, country fried steak, or sweet tea and homemade dessert.



7. B.B. King Museum & Delta Interpretive Center, Indianola

Located in King's hometown, [the museum](#) is dedicated to telling the story of America's only truly indigenous music through the lens of B.B.'s 60-plus-year career. An extensive collection of personal papers and objects from his life and work are part of the museum's permanent collection in addition to multimedia exhibits and state of the art films. There's even a fully restored cotton gin where King once worked in the 1940s, and a guitar studio where visitors can play instruments just like B.B.'s. Check the center's rotating calendar of special events, workshops, and blues-inspired art shows and concerts before you visit.

8. Ground Zero Blues Club + Shack Up Inn, Clarksdale





Photo: [Austin Britt for Ground Zero Blues Club](#)

Traversing the Devil's Crossroads will really take it out of you. Reward yourself with live blues, a big ol' plate of Delta staples, and a cozy little place to hang your hat for the night. Owner Morgan Freeman's [Ground Zero](#) — located downtown, next door to the Delta Blues Museum — turns out live tunes every Wednesday through Saturday, year round.

Hungry? Find a spot at the counter and order a plate lunch or dinner (I'm talking catfish, slow-cooked pork shoulder, hot tamales, greens, okra, hushpuppies, and black-eyed peas), then head over to Hopson Plantation (just three miles from





the crossroads) and stumble into your own [authentic shotgun shack](#).



Before you get totally comfy: Southern superstition holds that spirits are attracted to the shacks because they can easily pass straight through them. Don't say we didn't warn you.

9. Ohr O'Keefe Museum of Art, Biloxi

Photo: [Ohr-O'Keefe Museum](#)

What would a road trip be without some art? And I don't mean the kind you'll find for sale on the roadside, or at a truck





stop along your route. I mean: real, fine, art. Like the kind you'll find at the [Ohr O'Keefe](#) (also known as the "OOMA") along the Gulf Coast, in Biloxi. Named in part for its permanent collection of master "Mad Potter" George E. Ohr's work, the museum's distinctive architecture was designed by Frank Gehry to "dance" with the surrounding landscape — in particular, the oak trees. Even if you don't take one step inside, the sprawling campus' pods, pavilions, and main building itself are more than worth the side trip.



10. Tennessee Williams Home and Welcome Center, Columbus



Photo: [Visit Mississippi](#)





Going straight to the source can be one of the best ways to learn about someone. Where were they born? What was their childhood home like? What's their parents' story? What were their favorite, most beloved possessions? Stepping into [Tennessee Williams' first childhood home](#) is like stepping right back into the celebrated playwright's past. Born on March 26, 1911, in Columbus, Williams spent his first three years in what is now the fully restored Tennessee Williams Welcome Center — it's on the National Register of Historic Places and a Literary Landmark.

As you amble from room to room on the home's creaky wooden floors, you'll get a real sense of who Williams and his family were and how they lived. His momma Edwina — whom Williams used as a model for many of his characters — was known as one of the “the prettiest girls in Mississippi.” And one of his favorite possessions? A set of teacups his family had made especially for men, so that their perfectly groomed mustaches wouldn't get messed up whilst sipping their English Breakfast.

11. Tupelo Buffalo Park and Zoo, Tupelo

Originally a cattle ranch in the 1970s, more than 260 animals now call this 210-acre buffalo park and zoo home. Guided tours will get you up close and personal with the park's menagerie of buffalo, zebras, giraffes (at 19 feet, “Tall Boy” the giraffe is one of the tallest in the States), and many other animals. There's also a petting zoo, reptile exhibit, and pony rides and horse trail tours if you're into all things equine. If you're traveling with kids, this is the place to [stop for an](#)





[afternoon](#) of animal education, wide open spaces, and wild adventure.



12. William Faulkner's Grave, Oxford

Pay your respects to one of America's literary greats on your drive north through Oxford. William Faulkner, whose stories about the fictionalized Yoknapatawpha County won him the Nobel Prize, rests peacefully in the old section (formerly, "Saint Peter") of the Oxford Memorial Cemetery. Even if you're not an avid Faulknerphile, it's hard to pass up an opportunity to participate in one of the city's more colorful traditions — it's standard to drink a swig of bourbon out of a bottle you bring, then leave the rest on William's modest marker as a gift.

Tip: Maker's Mark will do, but Jack Daniel's was his favorite.



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Mississippi: Soul of the Blues



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TRIP PLANNING

12 incredible places you'll only find in Mississippi

Photo: [Visit Mississippi](#)

Kathleen Mitchell



June 30, 2015





HISTORY, BEAUTY, CULTURE  SOUL — it's all going on in Mississippi. From the authentic juke joints of the Delta to Elvis



Presley's birthplace, Mississippi's musical heritage can be felt throughout this unique state of winding roads and wild pine forests where the Mississippi River loops past historic towns and antebellum homes toward the coast.

Mississippi's musical legacy is matched by an exceptional literary scene — Pulitzer Prize winners William Faulkner and Eudora Welty both lived here, and modern novelists like *The Help* writer Kathryn Stockett maintain Mississippi's status as a cultural incubator. Then there's the festivals. From the Neshoba County Fair to Jackson's hip-as-it-gets monthly block parties, Mississippians know *exactly* how to extend a raucous welcome to visitors.

Here are 12 incredible places you'll only find in the rip-roaring Magnolia State.

1. The Fondren neighborhood

Fondren, in the state's capital of Jackson, prides itself on being the funkier, most forward-thinking neighborhood around. The neighborhood was rough around the edges until two decades ago, when a generation of young artists, entrepreneurs, restaurateurs, and business owners decided to invest in Fondren's revival.

These days, the residential neighborhood is some of the most sought-after real estate in the city. The business district is charming, maintaining largely throwback architecture from





the '30s, '40s, and '50s even as thoroughly modern businesses move in.



The dining scene can compete with any city in the country, with innovative restaurants from James Beard-nominated chefs like Jesse Houston ([Saltine](#)) and Derek Emerson ([Walker's Drive-In](#)), and regional restaurateurs ([Babalu Tacos and Tapas](#), now a staple in several Southern cities, opened its flagship in a renovated Jackson elementary school called Duling Hall; around the corner is the vegan and organic-friendly [Rainbow Co-op](#); and down the way is the unmissable barbecue-and-craft-beer joint [Pig & Pint](#)).

On the first Thursday of each month, Fondren turns into a [giant block party](#). The streets are flooded with visitors strolling around the pop-up booths, exhibits, activities, and live art shows — with everything from samba demonstrations to one-night-only dog parks going on down the block. Art galleries stay open late, restaurants offer specials and sell beverages to the thirsty masses, live music can be found on every corner, and Mississippians socialize well into the night.

2. The Delta





Ground Zero Blues Club, Clarksdale. Photo: [Visit Mississippi](#)

Life moves at a different pace in the Mississippi Delta. With fields of cotton as far as the eye can see and some of the most stunning sunsets in the state, you can't help but breathe a little slower and be a little more introspective here. Bordered by the Mississippi River to the west and the Yazoo River to the east, with 250 miles of Highway 61 (aka the Blues Highway) running through it, the Delta is a place of great fertility — in its land, but also in its food and music.

The Delta is perhaps unmatched in America when it comes to its deep-rooted culinary legacy. From soul food to Delta-style





tamales to good old-fashioned Southern cookin' like Momma makes, the Delta will make you eat foods you never thought you'd try, and like them too. Greens, fried okra, neck bones, fried catfish...all classic Delta dishes.

It's all too easy to get immersed in Delta culture. Start with lunch at [Oxbow Restaurant](#) in Clarksdale, where you can enjoy Southern classics like pimento cheese or upscale fare such as wok-seared ahi tuna tacos. Then spend the afternoon at the [Delta Blues Museum](#) in Clarksdale before dining and grooving into the night at [Ground Zero Blues Club](#) — co-owned by Mississippi native Morgan Freeman.

Eat at the original [Doe's Eat Place](#) in Greenville (also the birthplace of legendary puppeteer Jim Henson), visit the spa at the ritzy [Alluvian](#) hotel in Greenwood, stop by the soon-to-open [GRAMMY Museum](#) in Cleveland...or just wander around until you find a hole-in-the-wall juke joint with a full parking lot — that's perhaps the truest way to experience the Delta.

3. Borroum's drug store and soda fountain

Founded in 1865, [Borroum's](#) is Mississippi's oldest operating drugstore and soda fountain. When Dr. Borroum first opened the establishment, it operated as something of a general store offering everything from coffee to perfume along with prescriptions. A century and a half later, Borroum's still runs a pharmacy, but it also acts as a museum for old medicinal artifacts and sells oddities and t-shirts. But its main draw these days is the classic diner food, hand-pulled soda fountain drinks, and milkshakes.





Borroum's is also one of the best places to experience the culinary delicacy known as the Slugburger, found throughout northeast Mississippi but particularly in Corinth. Slugburgers actually contain no terrestrial gastropod mollusks — their patties are hamburger beef mixed with soy. The recipe gained popularity in times of meat rationing and the name comes from the slang term for a nickel, which is what the burgers cost back in the day. Despite its perhaps confusing name, Corinthians can't get enough of the Slugburger. In fact, the town hosts a [Slugburger Festival](#) each year honoring the unsavorily named sandwich.

Thanks to Borroum's location in the downtown district, it's also a great starting point for a day of exploring the extensive Civil War history of Corinth (aka the Crossroads of the War).

4. Shack Up Inn





Photo: [Shack Up Inn](#)

The [Shack Up Inn](#) is hard to classify. It's not a hotel or motel. It's not a festival scene like Burning Man. It's not a bed and breakfast. It's just an experience like no other.

Gleefully owning the slogan “the Ritz we ain’t,” the Shack Up Inn is unapologetic about itself. The area was originally a working plantation, and remains virtually unchanged in some ways, creating a “living history” in which to immerse yourself. Shack Up features several authentic sharecropper/tenant shacks-turned-guest rooms in the shotgun-house style, restored just enough to appeal to 21st-century tastes (indoor





plumbing, heat and air conditioning, wifi, and refrigerators are all included amenities; wakeup calls and room service are not).



There's a restaurant on the property called Rust, and you can expect to see live music pretty much every weekend. Tom Waits, the North Mississippi Allstars, Elvis Costello, Robert Plant, Morgan Freeman, Robert Plant, and many others have all played at the Inn. To top the experience off, the Shack Up Inn isn't far from the crossroads of Highways 61 and 49, the very spot where legend has it Robert Johnson met the devil and sold his soul for a wicked talent for the blues.

5. Emmett Till historic sites

Mississippi is a state still grappling with its past and the myriad ways in which that past informs its identity and future. Like the Medgar Evers home in Jackson, the historic sites surrounding Emmett Till's tragic death aren't easy to visit. They force us to confront the injustices of the past. However, it is a transformative experience for both native Mississippians and outside visitors to learn about Medgar Evers and Emmett Till and all the others who became symbols in the fight for civil rights.

The [Emmett Till Interpretive Center](#) in Sumner, Mississippi, is a good place to start. The thought provoking facility is across the street from the newly restored Sumner courthouse, where the murder trial for Till was held. [Bryant's Grocery](#) in Money, Mississippi, where Till allegedly flirted with a white woman, is also still standing today, although it's dilapidated. Still, the site is denoted by a historical marker and it part of





the [Freedom Trail](#), which takes guests on a journey across the state to important sites in the state's struggle for civil rights.



6. Natchez

Photo: [Visit Mississippi](#)

[Natchez](#) just might be what most outsiders think of when they imagine Mississippi — from the historic antebellum homes such as Magnolia Hall, Monmouth Plantation, Dunleith, and others (a tour of homes open to the public is collectively known as the Natchez Pilgrimage) to the Natchez National Cemetery, where many Civil War soldiers are buried.





But as with anything in Mississippi, complexity lurks just below the surface. Natchez was founded in 1716, making it the oldest city on the Mississippi River. It has since seen the state evolve many times. Originally the area was occupied by Natchez Indians, who built mounds and worshipped the sun — Emerald Mound, the second-largest indigenous mound in the United States, isn't far from Natchez.

Later, Natchez found itself under French rule, then British, then Spanish. Eventually, Natchez became a city of great wealth through slavery and agriculture. That history renders the many relics from that era (Natchez has more than 1,000 buildings on the National Register) magnificent in design and scope, but difficult and complex in theme.

Other ways to explore Natchez's rich history include the Natchez Visitor Center, the Natchez National Historical Park, Natchez African American History and Culture Museum, and the Natchez Literary and Cinema Celebration.

7. Eudora Welty's house

Miss Eudora Welty is one of Mississippi's most celebrated writers — in a long line of them. The Pulitzer Prize winner lived and wrote in a house on Pinehurst Street in Jackson for 76 years, and today that home is one of the most authentic literary houses in America. From the exterior to the furnishings, to the rugs, art, and (of course) books, the house is kept in almost exactly the state it was when Welty bequeathed it to the state of Mississippi.





The home, tucked in the Belhaven neighborhood, is now a [historic site and a museum](#) honoring Welty's work. Visitors can look out the same window Welty did when she penned works like *A Curtain of Green*, *Delta Wedding*, *The Robber Bridegroom*, and countless essays and short stories. Welty was also an avid gardener, and the museum staff maintains a beautiful garden for visitors to explore.

In addition to being a lifelong reader (obvious from the thousands of books lining nearly every wall in the home), Welty was a big supporter of libraries and building a literary culture for all, so it's wholly appropriate that near the front curb is a Little Free Library, built to look like the Welty House in miniature, where neighbors and visitors can take a book for free or leave one for another.

The Welty House is part of the [Southern Literary Trail](#), which also includes Tennessee Williams' Columbus home and William Faulkner's historic Oxford residence Rowan Oak, along with sites for such authors as Richard Wright, Margaret Walker Alexander, Shelby Foote, and others.

8. B.B. King Museum and Interpretive Center





Photo: [Visit Mississippi](#)

The blues were born in Mississippi — some say the day B.B. King was. Along with his trusty guitar Lucille, the music legend went from the cotton fields of Mississippi to earning 15 Grammy Awards, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, a Kennedy Center Honor, the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Recording Academy, a Polar Music Prize, and too many other accolades to list.

Although he was born in the small town of Berclair, Mississippi, it was Indianola that King called home and where he first started playing the blues for people. Even as he moved





to Memphis, got discovered, and subsequently performed his unique style of the blues all over the world, he kept



Mississippi in his heart. For more than three decades, King and his band would come back to Indianola and perform a concert in the town of 11,000 people, and in 2008, Indianola opened the [B.B. King Museum and Interpretive Center](#) honoring the bluesman and the rich musical history that created him. And if you find yourself so inspired, the museum is just one of hundreds of stops on the statewide Blues Trail.

9. Elvis Presley's Birthplace

From one King to another: [Elvis Presley's birthplace](#) is a can't-miss for music buffs. Of course, Elvis' story is known far and wide, but many forget that the future King of Rock n' Roll was born in Tupelo, Mississippi, on January 8, 1935. Like B.B. King's humble beginnings, the unassuming two-room shotgun house where Elvis lived the first years of his life serves as a reminder that greatness can come from anywhere.

The historic site also includes a museum, a chapel, the church where the Presley family worshipped, a gift shop, a statue of Elvis at 13 (the age he was when he left Mississippi), and a recreation of the family car that took the Presleys from Tupelo to Memphis, where Elvis became the Elvis we know today.

10. The Walter Anderson Museum in Ocean Springs





Photo: [Eli Dark](#)

The Mississippi Gulf Coast is loved for its beautiful climate, views, and wildlife, and no one captured them all quite like artist Walter Anderson. Born in New Orleans to a family who instilled in him a love of culture and art, Anderson was able to attend prestigious schools, travel abroad, and learn about a vast range of subjects — from folklore to natural science to art history to philosophy and more. He eventually returned to Ocean Springs, started a family, and began his official career as an artist.





However, Anderson struggled with mental illness and eventually embarked on a solitary life, splitting his time between his pottery compound in Ocean Springs and the uninhabited Horn Island (one of five barrier islands off the Mississippi Gulf Coast). Anderson would spend long stretches of time alone on Horn Island, enduring bitter weather conditions. He was a prolific artist, painting and drawing the animals, birds, vegetation, and other life on the island.

Ocean Springs opened the [Walter Anderson Museum of Art](#) to honor the artist and his brothers, all of whom captured the spirit of the Gulf Coast in their works. From the art on the walls and display cases to the wood flooring and the water-evoking lighting, the entire museum honors the distinctive setting of the Coast.

Make it the ultimate trip by venturing out to Ship Island (the most easily accessible of the five barrier islands) to experience superb swimming, sunbathing, birding, shelling, hiking, and fishing. Then spend the evening exploring downtown Ocean Springs, which is filled with shopping, dining, and an incredible nightlife scene.

11. Neshoba County Fair

The [Neshoba County Fair](#) calls itself “Mississippi’s Giant House Party,” but that description might actually underplay the huge variety of things you’ll experience at the fair. It was founded in 1889 and has run every summer since, growing exponentially beyond its humble beginnings. Its roots are in agricultural fairs — simple two-day meetings of local farmers to discuss relevant issues — but these days you’ll see





everything from antique car shows and pageants, to parades and political speeches, to exhibits, concerts, and much more during the eight-day event (July 24-31, 2015).



The site is home to over 600 cabins, and families that return year after year often deck theirs out to the nth degree, sometimes pouring as much money in them as you would on a home you live in year-round. Other visitors arrive in RV campers (more than 200 of them) or find nearby lodging.


12. 2 Mississippi Museums

Downtown Jackson, MS. Photo: [Visit Mississippi](#)





The final item on the list isn't quite a reality yet. The [2 Mississippi Museums](#) project is an ambitious undertaking, building two state-of-the-art centers to open in 2017. The Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum will open just in time to celebrate the state's bicentennial. Drawing from the department of archives as well as artifacts and documents that have never before been public, and employing cutting-edge storytelling techniques, these two museums will explore the state's past and present with unparalleled depth.

They will join the other incredible centers of learning and culture in the capital city of Jackson, including the [Mississippi Museum of Art](#), the [Mississippi Children's Museum](#), the [Mississippi Museum of Natural Science](#), an [Agriculture and Forestry Museum](#), and the [International Museum of Muslim Cultures](#). 



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