



South Carolina's Chattooga River

# 40 things every southerner ought to do!

We've put together the ultimate list. Here are our picks from across the region.

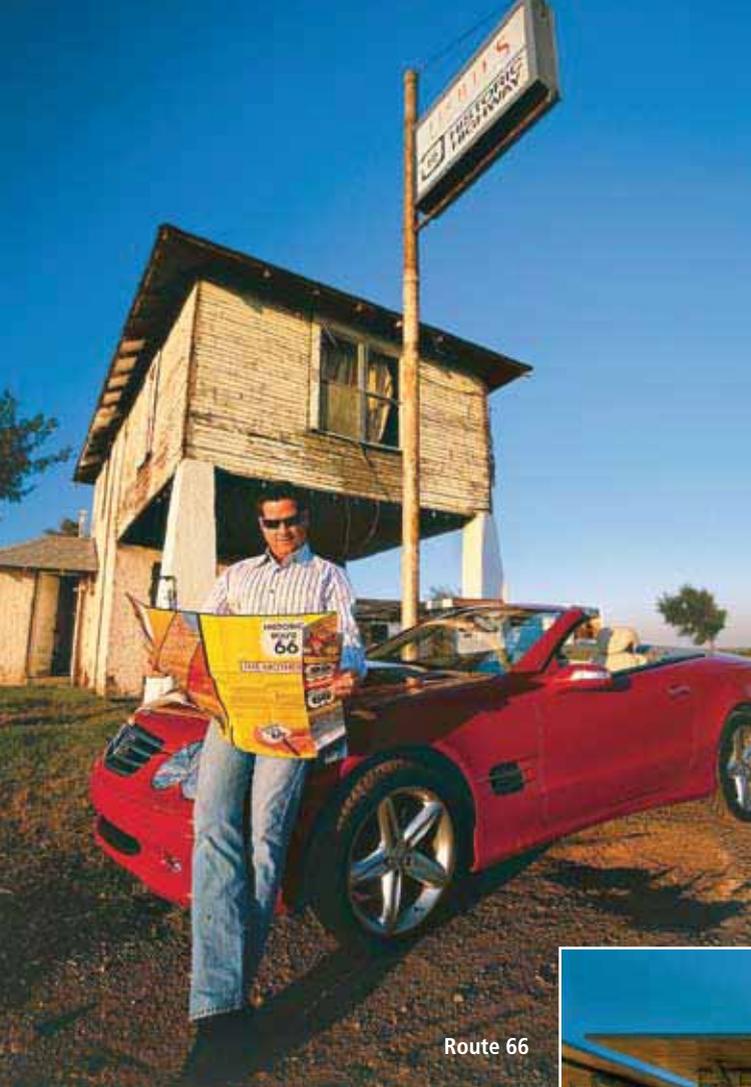
In honor of the 40th anniversary of *Southern Living*, our editors got together to ponder what makes a person Southern today. It is not, we decided, simply being born and raised here. Specific experiences and certain traits mark a genuine Southerner. We started talking, arguing, laughing, jotting them down—and ended up with this list. From where to chow down to the books you need to read, this list represents our thoughts and choices.

Now, we admit we may have left out a few of y'all's favorites, so we invite you to visit [southernliving.com/](http://southernliving.com/) features and register your personal picks.

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PHOTOGRAPHS: RALPH ANDERSON, JOSEPH DE SCOSE, ART MERIPOL, JOHN O'HAGAN, CHARLES WALTON IV



Route 66

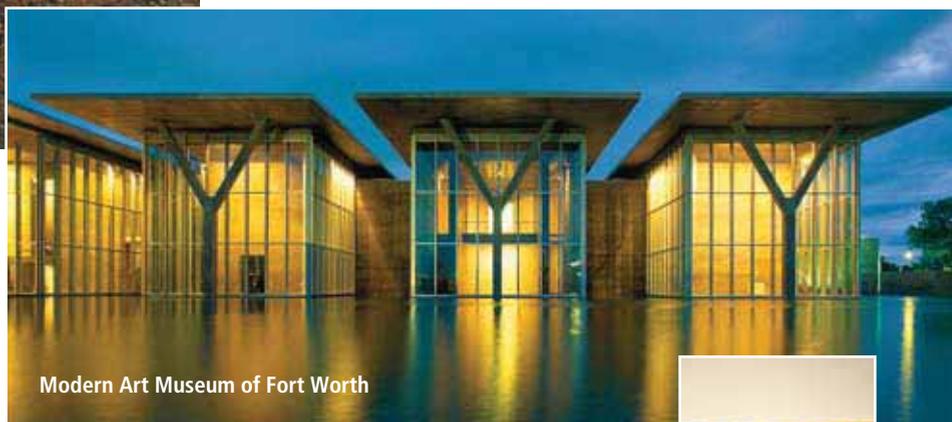
**1 Take the Plunge** Summer temperatures steer Southerners toward rivers. Texans play in the currents of the Guadalupe. Hardcore adventurers tackle the Class V+ rapids of the Gauley in West Virginia. The more sedate are content to tube the gentle flow of Florida's Ichetucknee. To experience the South's best water adventure, though, you need to **raft South Carolina's Chattooga River.**

**2 Road Thrills** Glorious stretches of open road await in the South. You can drive well-traveled miles on the Blue Ridge Parkway and Skyline Drive. Or take a tropical trek down U.S. 1 to Key West. For an undiscovered jaunt through the peaks of Tennessee and North Carolina, hit the Cherokee Skyway. But for sheer nostalgia, remember the song and get some kicks. **Follow Route 66**, where it rolls across the open miles of Oklahoma.

**3 Step Lively** We Southerners are dancin' fools. In Myrtle Beach, South Carolinians have perfected that funky move called the shag. Down in Miami, salsa steps heat up the nights. Texas, however, claims the best moves of all. **Scoot a boot, and master the two-step at Gruene Hall** in the Hill Country.



Savannah



Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth

**4 Get Some Culture** Southerners may be known for good times, but we're also a cultured lot. Everyone knows the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum complex, in Washington, D.C. Atlanta's High Museum of Art, praised internationally for its collection, has recently expanded. Still, to see fabulous art and a spectacular facility, head for the **Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth.** It may be the biggest surprise in Cowtown.



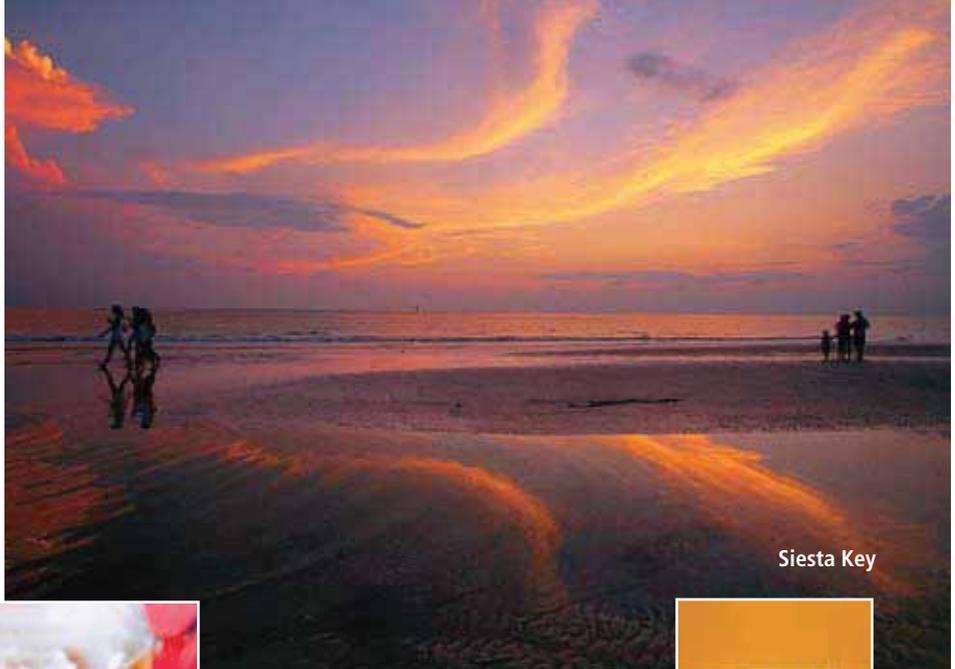
**5 Party Hearty** Nobody parties better than Southerners. Just look at our roll of festivals. The mother of them all is New Orleans's Mardi Gras. At Memphis in May International Festival, the barbecue comes with a plentiful side order of live music. Next March 17, though, **make a date for Savannah's St. Patrick's Day Parade.** You don't have to be Irish to fall in love with this celebration.



# 6

## Life's a Beach

The region boasts some of the most magnificent stretches of sand and sea that the nation has to offer. Some folks are partial to the solitude of remote Ocracoke, North Carolina, while others prefer to drive their car right on the sand at Florida's Daytona Beach. Extroverts who like action as much as the Atlantic swear by the boardwalk experience of Ocean City, Maryland. Still, it's hard to top **Siesta Key** in Florida, home to the whitest sand and prettiest sunsets on the planet.



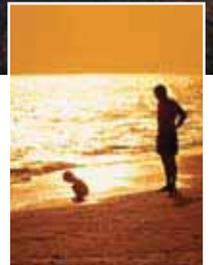
Siesta Key



# 7

## Just Veggies, Please

When it comes to understanding Southern food, you need to **appreciate the vegetable plate**. While mac and cheese usually anchors the dish, it pairs in the South with special regional offerings, such as crisp fried okra, black-eyed peas, and cornbread. Yes, seconds are always allowed. (To check out our favorite veggie recipes, visit [southernliving.com/features](http://southernliving.com/features).)



# 8

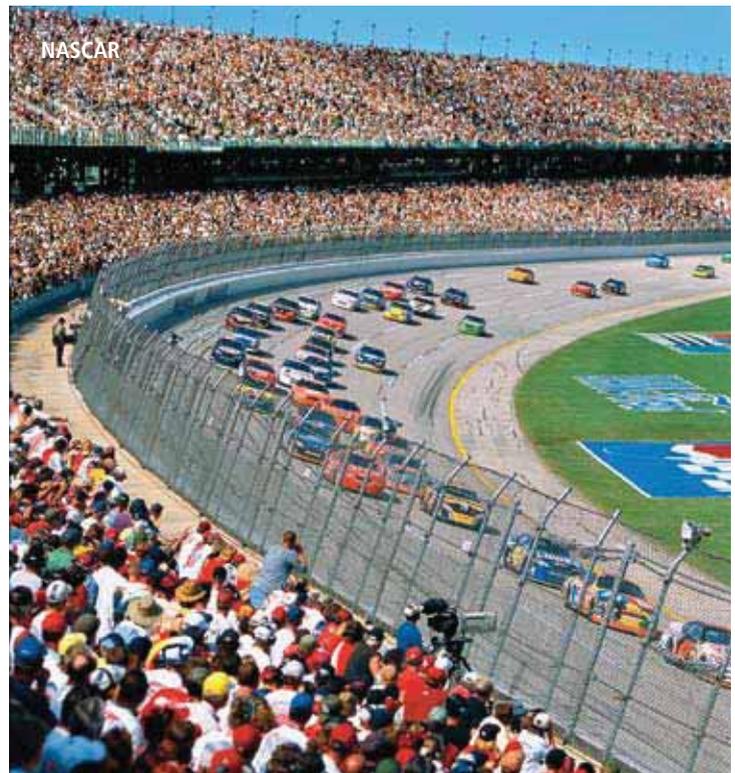
## Drink to This

We all know that icy concoctions are the toast of the South. Atlanta gave us Coke (pronounced Co-Cola); Waco, Texas, taught us how to "Be a Pepper"; and on beaches or piers in the summertime, Mountain Dew flows like suntan lotion. Still, as they pointed out in *Steel Magnolias*, the "house wine of the South" is **sweet tea**. Extra lemon, please.

# 9

## Get Revved Up

We Southerners are wild for spectator sports—and why not? We host the grandest golf tournament of them all: The Masters at Augusta National. You can snag foul balls at some glorious settings, such as Baltimore's Oriole Park at Camden Yards or Atlanta's Turner Field. But the hottest new obsession is one wild ride. Gentlemen, start your engines, and **attend a NASCAR race** at Alabama's Talladega Superspeedway.





North Carolina's Outer Banks

## 10 Take a Chance—Or Not

You know you've said it: "Hey, y'all, watch this." Face it: We Southerners will try anything once. Attempt any of these, and you'll earn a story to tell for a lifetime. Hang glide off Tennessee's Lookout Mountain. Hike toward the sky at Mount Mitchell in North Carolina, or ride Disney's stomach-turning Rock 'n' Roller Coaster, where an Aerosmith theme thrills you. If all this sounds too daunting, then live vicariously and **fly a kite** on North Carolina's Outer Banks, where Wilbur and Orville took their first flight.

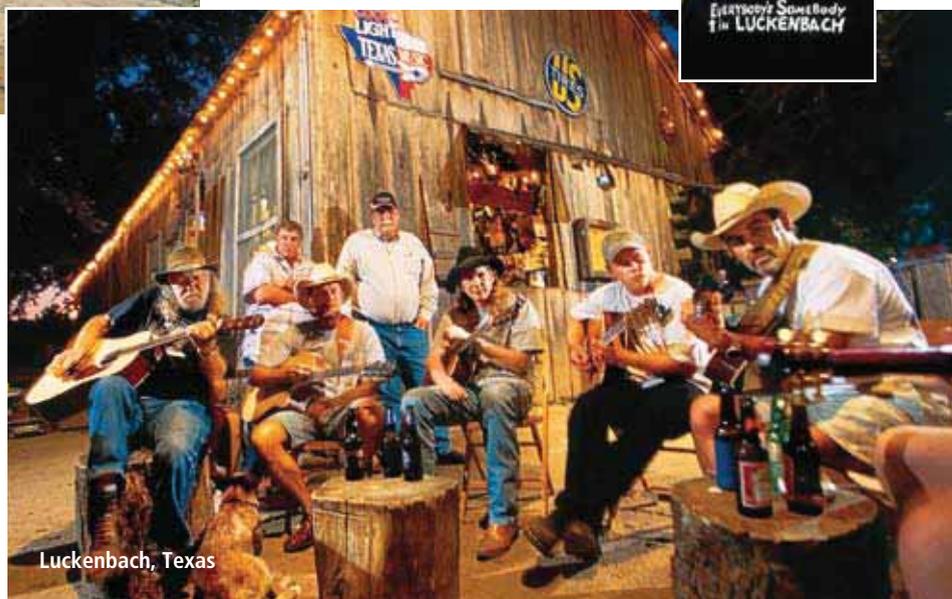
## 11 Look and Listen

America's greatest music started in the South. You can hear echoes of Jerry Lee, Johnny C., and The King at Memphis's Sun Studio. And country music wouldn't be country music if it weren't for Nashville's Grand Ole Opry. But for laid-back good times, **get to Luckenbach, Texas**, where Waylon, Willie, and the boys changed the face of popular music. (For more on the region's music, see "Soul of the South" on page 59.)



## 12 Find a Classic

Crafts in the South have risen to the status of art. Handblown pieces from West Virginia's Blenko Glass Company deserve an honored spot in any home. Pottery, handcrafted by the artists in Seagrove and surrounding North Carolina communities, earns distinction as well. For the must-have, though, **buy a sweetgrass basket**. It's a glorious souvenir and symbol of the Lowcountry—and our South.



Luckenbach, Texas

## 13 Behave Yourself

Once you've mastered your Southern vocabulary (see number 26: "Talk the Talk"), it's time to address your Southern manners. Show everybody your mama raised you right. **Remember the golden phrases and rules:** yes, ma'am; no, ma'am; thank you, ma'am; and please. Always keep a casserole at the ready—friends could pop over (or pass away) at any time. Pull over when you see a funeral procession. And, hats off in the house—and always when we salute Old Glory.

## 14 Go to the Show

Plenty of award-winning movies have explored the stories of the South. *Giant* revolved around oil and ranch life in Texas, while *To Kill a Mockingbird* examined the conflicted heart of the small-town South. *Steel Magnolias* and *Forrest Gump* both offer more contemporary Southern settings. For scope, plot, and tear-jerking drama, though, you've gotta **see *Gone with the Wind***. Yes, it's old school, but viewing it on the screen of one of our region's grand old movie theaters will positively give you the vapors.



Daylilies

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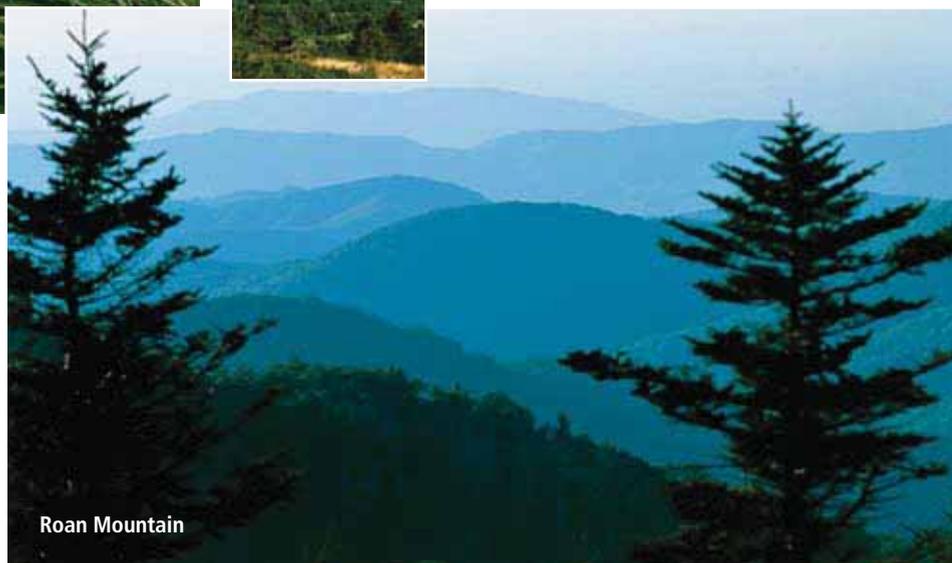
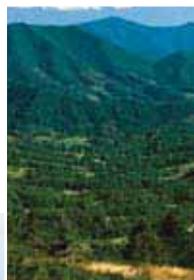
### Bright and Beautiful

Most Southern gardeners brighten their yards with camellias in winter and with brilliant azaleas and flowering dogwoods in the spring. Each summer they tend hydrangeas and crepe myrtles. But for profuse color that can last from midspring until first frost, **plant daylilies**. No Southern garden is complete without them. Plus, they're our favorite pass-along plant.

16

### Take a Long Look

We all like to ooh and aah over our region's many magnificent sights. Our staffers recommend the West Texas views from atop El Capitan in the Guadalupe Mountains or the scenes visible from West Virginia's Spruce Knob. The Smokies have great vistas, but what you'll **see from Roan Mountain**, astride Tennessee and North Carolina, will top them all—especially if you visit in June when the rhododendrons are in bloom.



Roan Mountain

17

### Toast With This

You may have sipped a Louisiana Hurricane, a Texas-size margarita, or a Kentucky mint julep—all flavored with a sense of place. The newest craze, though, is to **drink a Mojito**—think mint, moonlight, and Miami. Go ahead and sip. We won't tell mama.



18

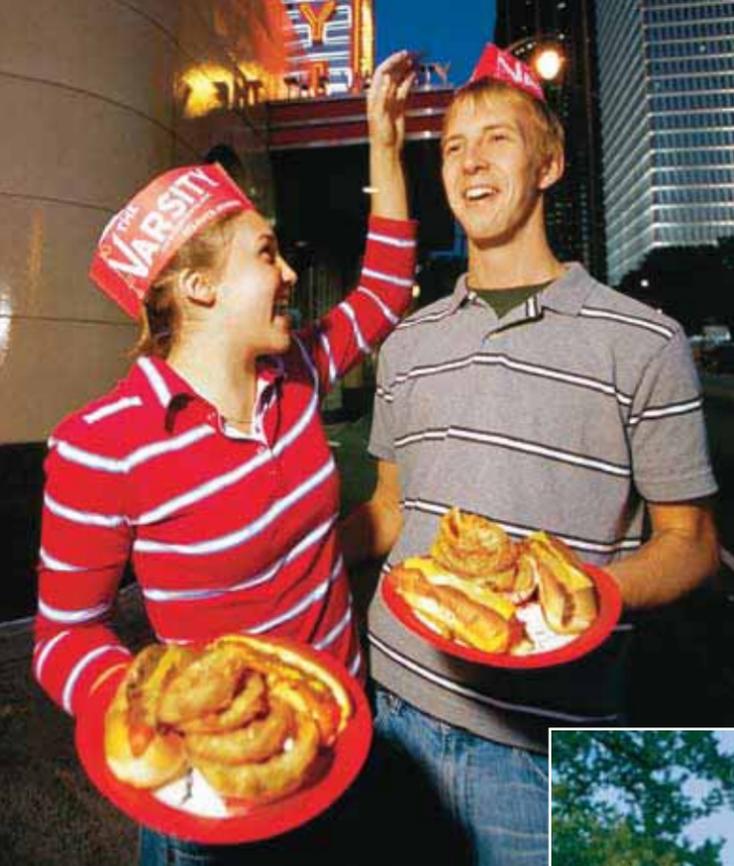
### Turn Some Pages

Any required reading list for Southerners will be long enough to give you serious eye-ache. Still, there are icons. *The Sound and the Fury* (William Faulkner) and *Look Homeward, Angel* (Thomas Wolfe) have both achieved lofty status. Our Southwestern staffers nominate *Lonesome Dove* (Larry McMurtry). Other books, such as *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (Maya Angelou) and *The Prince of Tides* (Pat Conroy), depict more contemporary Southern characters. But the quirkiest modern-day must-read has to be ***Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil* (John Berendt)**. Controversial, yes, but it has captured imaginations around the world.

19

### Walk Through History

There's no denying the past—however dark—has made us what we are today. Its lessons are both poignant and sobering. Manassas National Battlefield, where two armies of brothers first clashed, and Appomattox Court House, where the cruel conflict finally ended, bookend the horrific story of Civil War. Every year motorcyclists gather in Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Oklahoma to follow and commemorate the Cherokee's tragic Trail of Tears. Everyone, though, should **tour the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute**. Its films, pictures, and artifacts eloquently convey the struggle for equality.



**20 Order Up** To get to the best Southern dives, you may have to crunch through a gravel parking lot or duck through a screen door, but inside waits something sinfully good, such as the chili-cheese fries at Eskimo Joe's in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Or the tastiest tamales outside Mexico at Fat Mama's in Natchez, Mississippi. Or any of the frozen custard treats at Ted Drewes in St. Louis. Still, top honors go to **the "naked dog" (plain hot dog) and crispy onion rings at The Varsity in Atlanta.**

**21 The South's Ultimate Home** The region has long been known for great music and food, but here's a trivia tip: It's also the birthplace of American architecture. No one had more of a hand in defining our country's style of design than Virginia's Thomas Jefferson, and there's simply no better way to understand Southern architectural style than to **tour Monticello**, Jefferson's mountaintop plantation.



Monticello

**22 Travel in Style** Southerners have become a jet-settin' crowd. Whether it's a plane, train, or automobile, we love anything that keeps us moving. In San Antonio, we tour the vibrant River Walk by boat, taking in the sights at a lazy float. In historic New Orleans, we make our way through town on old-style streetcars. Riders board the Tweetsie Railroad's steam train to chug through the mountains of North Carolina. Everyone, though, needs to **book passage on a riverboat** and ride the currents of the mighty Mississippi.



Riverboat on the Mississippi



**24 Saddle Up** Think of horse racing, and the South comes to mind. After all, two legs of The Triple Crown, the Kentucky Derby and Maryland's Preakness, take place on Southern soil. These events thrill, but if you really want to savor the sport of kings at its finest, **spend a day at Keeneland.** Steeped in tradition, this Lexington, Kentucky, track is what horse racing was meant to be.



Keeneland



**25 Everybody Needs 'Em** To be a true Southerner, you should own a few specific items. Whether you inherit it or buy it in famed High Point, North Carolina, you must have at least one to-die-for piece of heirloom furniture. In the kitchen, you need a seasoned cast-iron skillet. And in the backyard or on the front porch, we'd recommend a Pawleys Island Rope Hammock. For the most distinctive regional item, though, get fitted for **cowboy boots from ML Leddy's** in Fort Worth. What? You expect to be taken seriously wearing a pair of pumps or wing tips?



ML Leddy's

**26 Talk the Talk** To live in the South you need to **speak the lingo.** If your vocabulary is rusty, bless your heart. Here's a quick lexicon. Y'all: short for "you all" and infinitely more functional than "you guys." Fixin': getting ready to. Reckon: to think, imagine, or suppose. Dear, hon, sweetie, shug: universal terms of endearment.

**23 Literary Ramblings** Want to take a walk on the literary side? Visit the Florida home and farm that inspired Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings to write *The Yearling*, or smell the flowers in Eudora Welty's family garden in Jackson, Mississippi. You can invite yourself into William Faulkner's Rowan Oak in Oxford, or sit on the porch of Alex Haley's boyhood home in Henning, Tennessee. But for the ultimate literary experience, **attend a performance of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*** at the courthouse in Monroeville, Alabama.

**27 Sis-boom-bah** We Southerners cherish college football and the campus traditions that accompany it. When the University of Texas and the University of Oklahoma go head-to-head during the State Fair of Texas in Dallas, you must fill up on Fletcher's Corny Dogs in order to root either team to victory. Tiger fans eagerly line up to roll Toomer's Corner and scream "War Eagle" every time Auburn posts a win. The ultimate tradition, though, takes place at Ole Miss in Oxford. Thousands of fans gather to **picnic in the Grove** and feast on gourmet spreads.

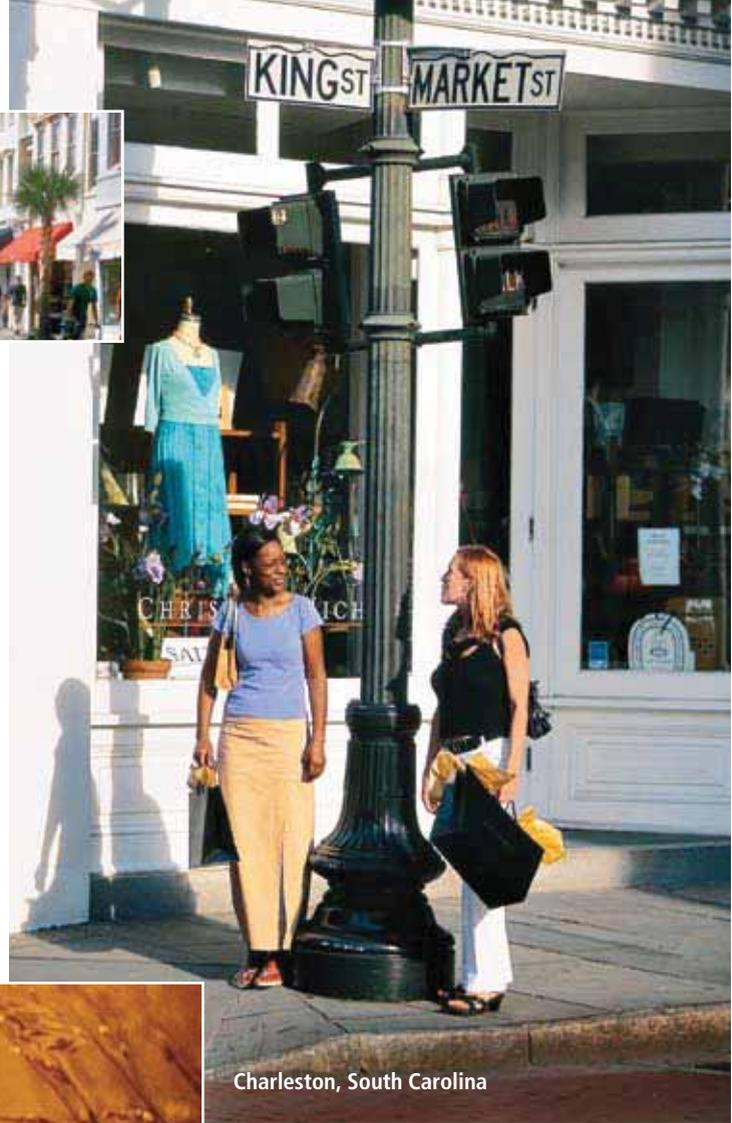


Oxford, Mississippi

28

### Shop Till You Drop

We approach shopping with the intensity of a contact sport. We pull on sensible shoes and flex those credit cards. We scour Magazine Street in the Big Easy to look for silver, antiques, and chandeliers. In the Lone Star State, we amble through Fredericksburg's cute boutiques in search of gift items and all things Texas. For ritzy finds and everything Florida pink and green, we stroll quaint Fifth Avenue in Naples. For the best overall experience, **shop Charleston, South Carolina's King Street.** It's a buyer's mecca in a grand setting.

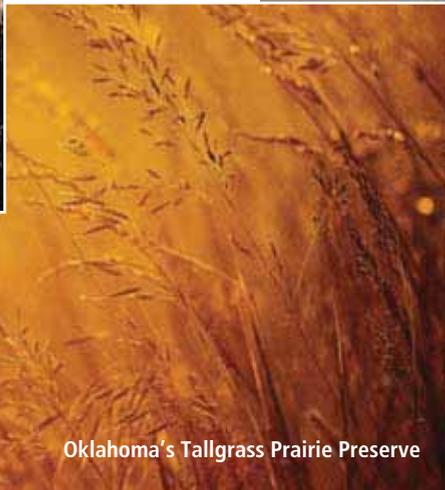


Charleston, South Carolina

29

### Check Out the Wildlife

Certain animals thrive in our neck of the woods. An entire town of prairie dogs lives in Mackenzie Park in Lubbock, Texas, and Key deer can be found pretty easily around their namesake refuge in the Florida Keys. You'll have to work harder, though, to spy the wild horses at Maryland and Virginia's Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge. The vote for most awe-inspiring, however, goes to the **bison at Oklahoma's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve.** They inject a remarkable sense of life into this serene, haunting landscape.



Oklahoma's Tallgrass Prairie Preserve

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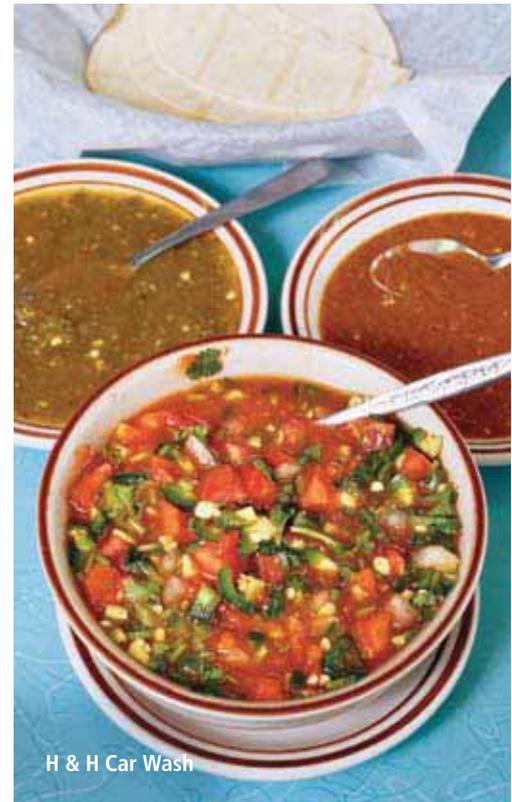
### Slick City Views

Great Southern views aren't restricted to the mountains. For a breathtaking vision of Washington, D.C., ride to the top of the Washington Monument. Grand views and unique architecture distinguish the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. If you prefer a ground-level perspective, head for Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park. The showstopper, though, can be seen from the 27th floor of Baltimore's World Trade Center, from which you can take in all of the **picturesque Inner Harbor.**

31

### Hot—Or Really Hot?

We count five Southern food groups, not just four, because we think Tex-Mex deserves the recognition. To sample it in Oklahoma City, order the grilled fajitas at Ted's Café Escondido. The fresh salsa at Jalisco Mexican Restaurant keeps 'em coming back in Atlanta. But let's be serious: Only the Lone Star State has mastered the art of Tex-Mex. Follow locals in El Paso to **eat at H & H Car Wash**—not only to get your car cleaned, but also to enjoy the freshly made chiles rellenos and salsa.



H & H Car Wash



32

### Can't Eat Just One

Oh, how we Southerners love to eat. We have too many local favorites to count. Who among us hasn't bought boiled peanuts from a roadside stand in Georgia? No self-respecting Texan would pass up the humongous chicken-fried steak at Lulu's Bakery & Cafe in San Antonio, while Kentuckians opt for the cheesy-good Hot Brown at Louisville's The Brown Hotel. Folks in Baltimore swear by the crab cakes at Faidley's, but **a beignet at Café Du Monde** in the Crescent City wins, hands down—and sticky sweet—as the region's ultimate indulgence.

33

### Get Away—Really Away

Once in your life, you should throw caution to the wind and treat yourself—Trump style. The South features some swanky possibilities. Be a Vanderbilt for the night at the Inn on Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina. Or opt for the luxurious Blackberry Farm near Walland, Tennessee. But for the ultimate getaway, **check into Cibolo Creek Ranch**, near Marfa, Texas. Its stunning desert setting lends a touch of Old West exotic to all the modern—and superlative—amenities you could ever want.



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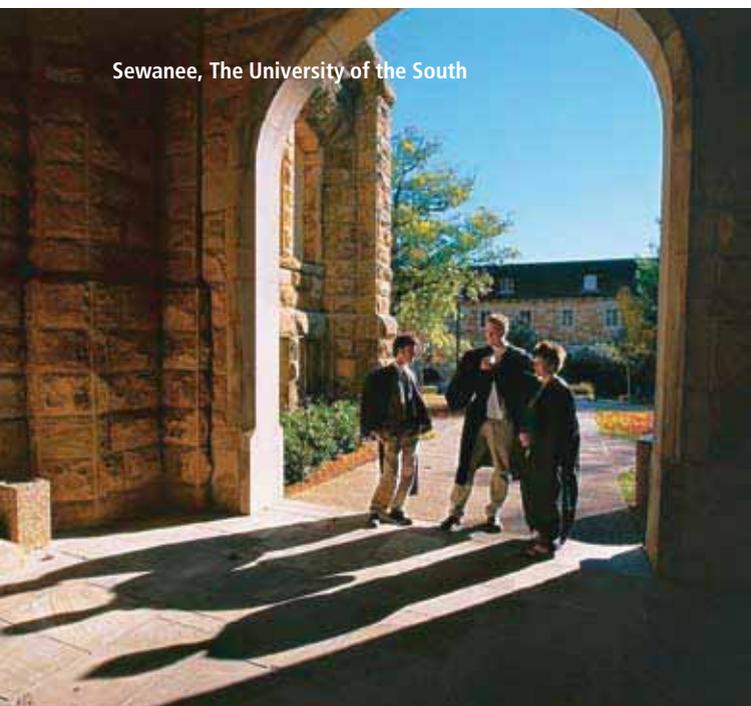
### Chow Down

Now, if you're on the road and crave comfort food, we recommend the family style dining at The Dinner Bell in McComb, Mississippi; The Jarrett House in Dillsboro, North Carolina; or Miss Mary Bobo's Boarding House in Lynchburg, Tennessee. But make a point to **check out Martha's Place** in Montgomery, Alabama, for mac and cheese unequalled anywhere.



Cibolo Creek Ranch

Sewanee, The University of the South



35

### Back to School

We all love to stroll picturesque college campuses. Nestled into the mountains of Lexington, Virginia, Washington and Lee offers unforgettable setting and style. Gothic architecture, glorious gardens, and an exquisite chapel wow visitors to North Carolina's Duke University. Still, we'd suggest you **visit Sewanee, The University of the South** in Tennessee. A lovely campus and a collegial atmosphere, right down to students' wearing Harry Potter-style robes, give it a feel all its own.

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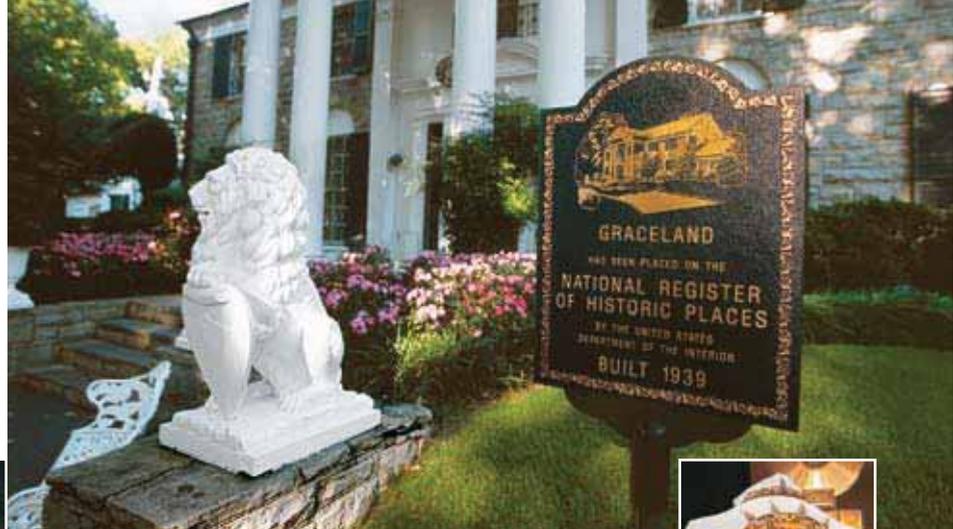
### Hum a Few Bars

There are songs all Southerners should know. When Tennesseans start with "Rocky Top," Texans answer with a chorus of "The Eyes of Texas." Folks from the Peach State favor "Georgia on My Mind," but c'mon, every Southerner should be able to **belt out Hank Williams's "Hey, Good Lookin'."**

37

### See It—And Believe

Some places you just have to see for yourself. For instance, obey the rooftops and see Rock City. Surely, *The X-Files* was inspired by the mysterious Marfa Lights, which blink and dance in way-out-there West Texas. But, even if seventies decor isn't your thing, **visit Graceland** in Memphis for a one-of-a-kind experience.



Camellias

38

### Garden Strolls

The South's public gardens are as diverse as they are breathtaking. To see our regional natives at their best, take in the world-class beauty of Missouri Botanical Garden; admire blue-bonnets at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas; or stroll among native azaleas at Georgia's Callaway Gardens. Truth is, however, all the South's great gardens actually started in South Carolina—specifically, at **Middleton Place**, our country's oldest landscaped gardens, which introduced camellias and so many other plants we have adopted as our own.



39

### Do Some Serious Dining

Our region abounds in upscale, white-tablecloth restaurants where you can drop some serious cash. And, yes, they're worth it. In Atlanta, Joël is acclaimed for its French cuisine with Asian and Mediterranean influences. The Mansion on Turtle Creek Restaurant in Dallas prepares a five-star taste of Texas. But for a major splurge, make your reservation at **The Inn at Little Washington**. Nestled in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley, it's arguably one of the best restaurants in the country, known for American cuisine and a 14,000-bottle wine cellar.

40

### 'Cue—Enough Said

This is strictly for dedicated carnivores. When we say barbecue, we mean meat. To taste the South's best, try Sweatman's BBQ in Holly Hill, South Carolina, for mustard-basted pulled pork; Rendezvous in Memphis, praised for its dry-rubbed ribs; Big Bob Gibson Bar-B-Q in Decatur, Alabama, where the sauce comes white; Lexington Barbecue in Lexington, North Carolina, for the vinegar-and-ketchup topping; and Cooper's Old Time Pit Bar-B-Que, a meat extravaganza in Llano, Texas. All hail, though, to the **ribs at McClard's Bar-B-Q Restaurant**, the Hot Springs, Arkansas, joint made famous by a former President.



McClard's Bar-B-Q