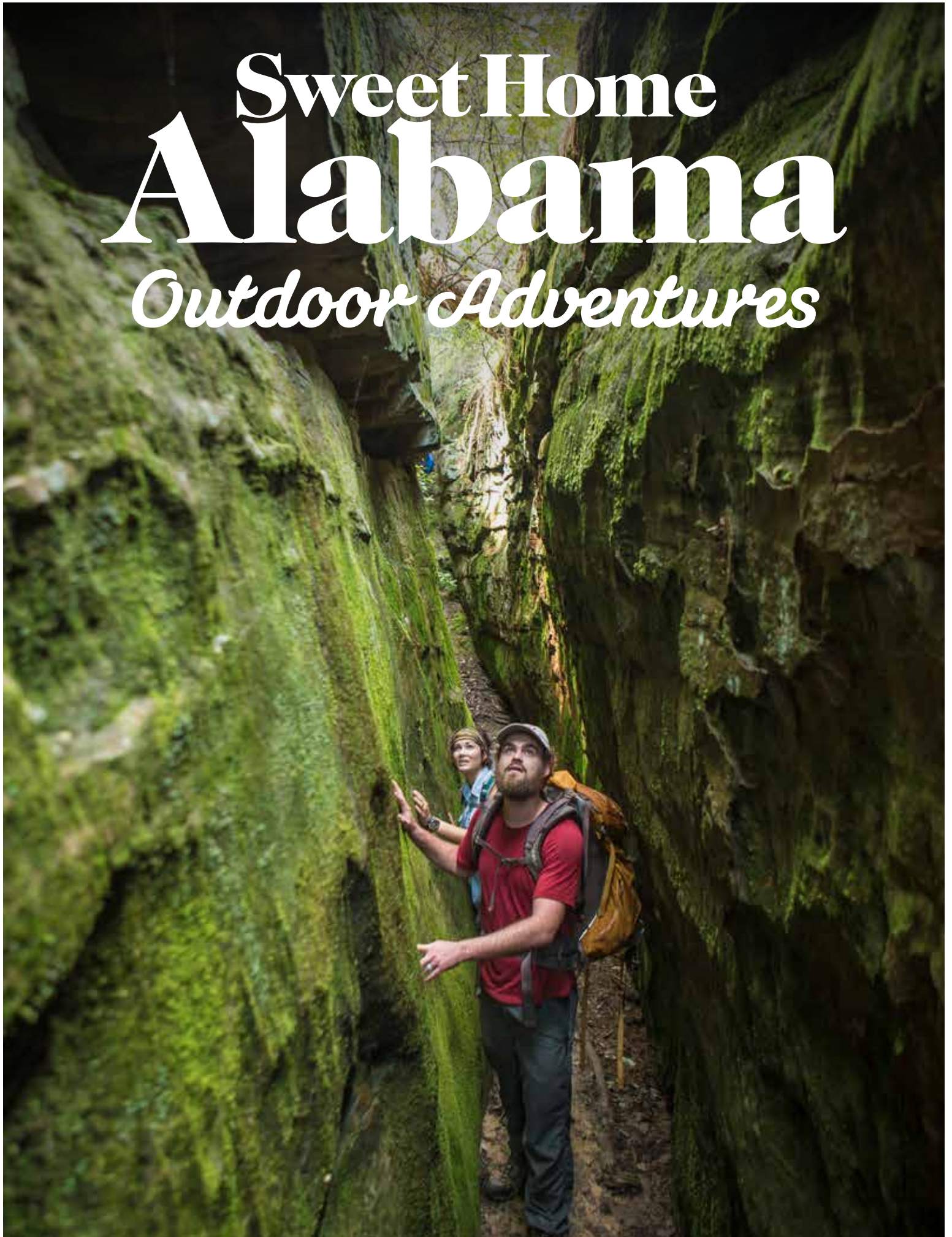


# Sweet Home Alabama

## *Outdoor Adventures*

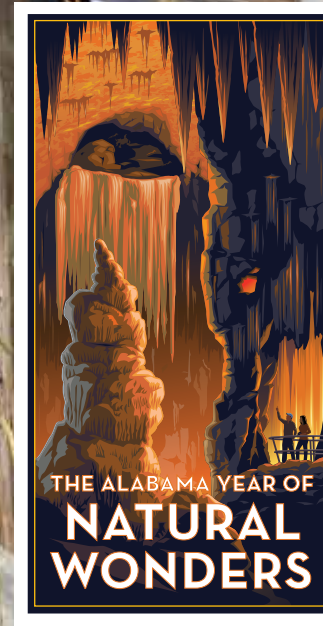




# *The Year of Natural Wonders*

From Alabama's Gulf Coast to its mountainous north, natural wonders abound. Some are well known, and some are hidden gems. Make 2020 the year to check eight of them off your list of places to visit.

*by Kim Nix*





**ALABAMA'S ABUNDANT WATER, VARIED ECOSYSTEMS, DENSE FORESTS AND GEOLOGY COME TOGETHER TO CREATE A LAND THAT IS IMMENSELY BIODIVERSE.**

In fact, the Yellowhammer State contains a greater variety of animals and plants than any other state east of the Mississippi River. Mild weather and regular rainfall result in a longer growing season for plants, which, in turn, supports a more favorable habitat for wildlife. In addition, past geological processes have exposed a mixed terrain of rocks and soil types—layered factors that make it easy for more than 4,500 documented species of flora and fauna to call Alabama home. To celebrate this surprising variety of nature and natural areas, 2020 is the Year of Natural Wonders. Turn this year's vacation into one filled with wild treasures.

## The Yellowhammer State contains a greater variety of animals and plants than any other state east of the Mississippi River.

**1** Sugar-white **Gulf Coast beaches** line the southernmost points of Alabama. The ultra-fine particles of quartz were washed down from the Appalachian Mountains and deposited into the Gulf of Mexico's turquoise waters thousands of years ago. Today, visitors explore 32 miles of sandy strands, including those shared with nesting sea turtles. Volunteers flag the nests every year to help sunseekers avoid crushing the turtles' eggs. From May to October, lucky walkers may witness a "boil," when baby turtles hatch at the same time from an underground nest, emerge from the sand and make their way to the water.

**2** Just north of Mobile Bay spreads the 260,000-acre **Mobile-Tensaw Delta**, the second-largest wetland of this kind in America. Rivers from the north flow into the flatlands and creep into lakes, marshes and bogs. The twists and turns here house cypress swamps and bottomland hardwoods teeming with deer, turtles and alligators. More than 300 species of birds have been documented in the area. While much of the delta is remote and best explored by water, you don't have to venture into its deepest reaches to see its natural beauty. At the Five Rivers Delta Resource Center in Spanish Fort, you can view some of it from the

center's decks, or via exhibits or a nature film. Stop into the Cypress Gift Shop to browse nature-related gifts, unique jewelry and wood crafts made by local artisans.

**3** Alabama's longest free-flowing river, the Cahaba, features an annual spectacle so special it has a festival named after it. On the third Saturday in May, the town of West Blocton celebrates the white, graceful **Cahaba lily** with guided tours during the Cahaba Lily Festival. The flower blooms in May and June and is found in only three Southern states. It requires a specific habitat of swift-moving water and lots of sun, which is exactly what the rocky

shoals of the Cahaba River provide. While the Cahaba River sustains the largest population, notably in large stands and smaller clumps, the lily also can be found in the running shoals of Hatchett Creek and the Tallapoosa River.

**4** At the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains rises Alabama's highest natural point, **Mount Cheaha**, at 2,407 feet above sea level. In the fall, the mountain's mix of oak and hickory trees interspersed with pines puts on a show of fall colors to rival those found in more northern states. Check out the spectacle from the 26-mile Talladega Scenic Drive, taking Highway 281

near Heflin until the road ends at Adams Gap Road and Forest Service Road 600. This route travels over the summit and through the Talladega National Forest, passing rural landscapes dotted with rock outcroppings and rolling hills. Stop at Cheaha State Park for excellent views and to officially note the U.S. Geological Survey's high point marker in front of Bunker Tower, one of several stone buildings built by President Franklin Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). On a clear day, you can see for miles from the top of the observation tower. Down below, poke around the CCC museum to learn about the men who helped establish the state park.

**OPPOSITE:** A FISHERMAN CASTS NEAR CLUMPS OF CAHABA LILIES ON THE CAHABA RIVER; **THIS PAGE, TOP TO BOTTOM:** NATURAL BRIDGE IN NATURAL BRIDGE, DISMALS CANYON IN PHIL CAMPBELL

**5** Northeast Alabama also harbors the **Little River Canyon**, designated a national preserve by public law. Eroded by water over millions of years, the canyon's rock bluffs drop by more than 600 feet in some spots. The Little River, which flows atop Lookout Mountain and through the canyon, provides recreation for hikers, anglers and paddlers. Little River Falls marks the beginning of the canyon and is one of the highlights of the area, particularly following a rainfall. Although not usually associated with mountainous terrain, a bog exists in the canyon and garners interest for endangered green pitcher plants that grow here. This carnivorous plant traps insects in its tube-shaped leaves and digests them with enzymes. If you come across one, consider yourself fortunate, and take only pictures. Learn more about the canyon at the Little River Canyon Center. The building houses exhibits and



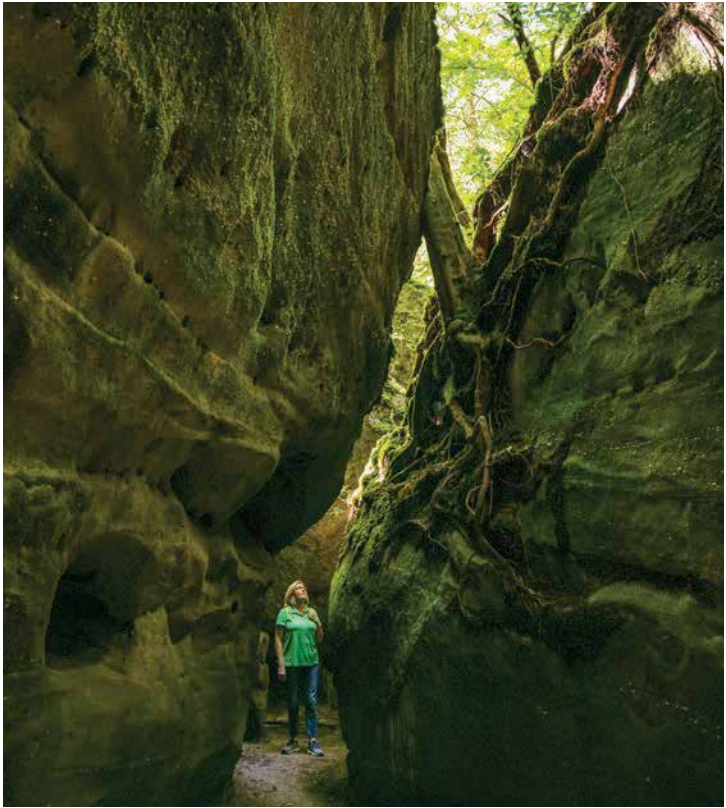
a theater, and national park staff can answer questions and recommend hikes and observation areas.

**6** **Cathedral Caverns** has been open to visitors since 2000, when it was declared a state park after it was purchased from a private owner. Although the above-ground amenities should not be ignored—camping, hiking and gem mining—the real draw here is underground. Step into the caverns' 126-foot-wide entrance, accessible to wheelchairs, and embark on a 90-minute, guided tour of karst topography—sinkholes, underground streams and caves etched into area limestone. The tours, available year-round and multiple times per day, lead to one of the largest stalagmite columns in the world. At 45 feet tall and 243 feet in circumference, it is appropriately named Goliath. Other formations include a "frozen waterfall," a "pipe organ" and "cave bacon." A stop here is particularly welcome on hot days since the caves' temperature hovers around a cool 60 degrees.

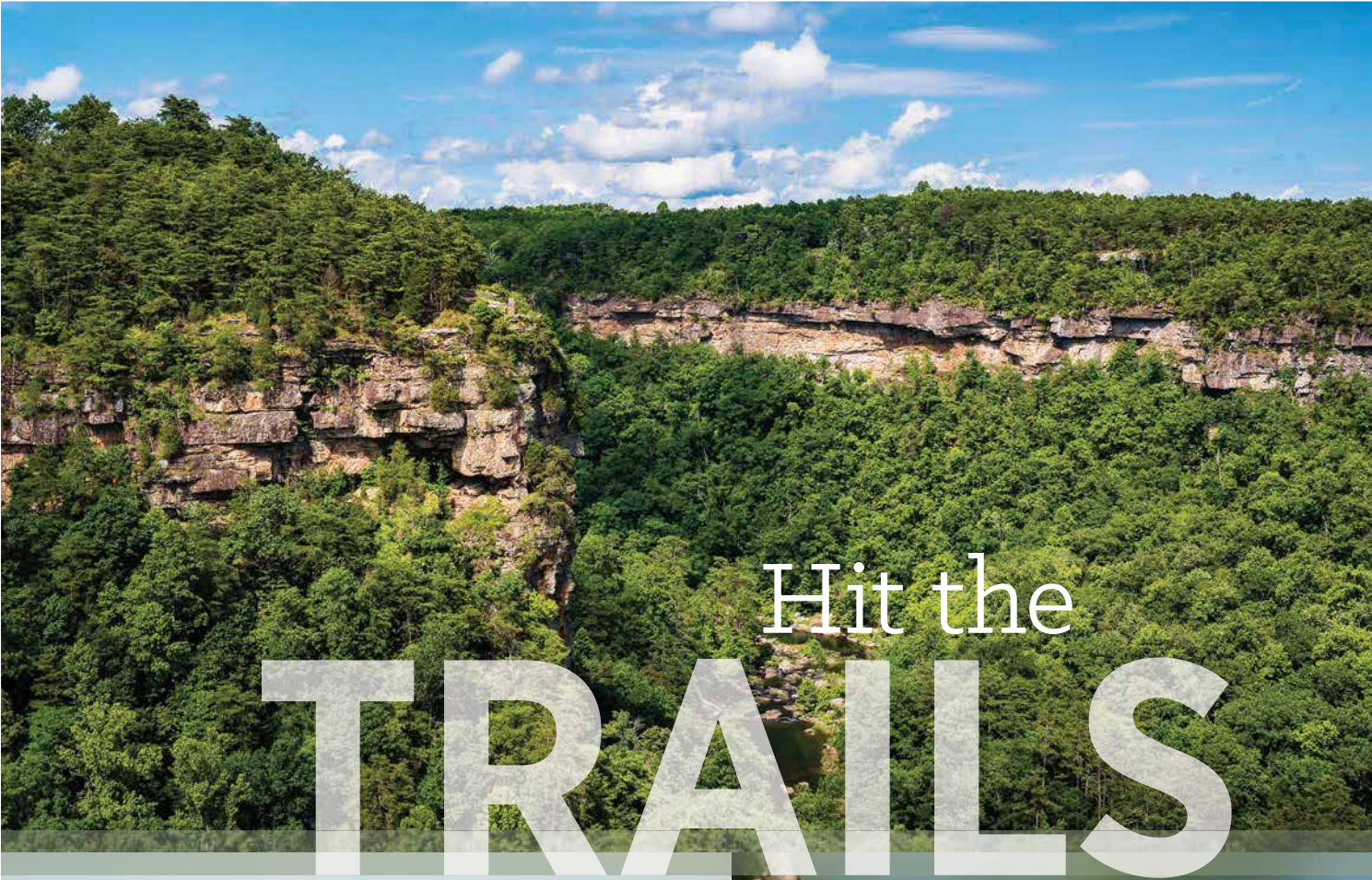
**7** For a natural wonder above ground, visit **Natural Bridge**. The rock arch that also lends its name to the closest town spans 148 feet across and 60 feet high to connect two land masses, resulting in the

longest natural bridge east of the Rocky Mountains. The landmark formed as sandstone washed away and left iron ore behind. Due to safety concerns, visitors cannot walk across the bridge, but you can observe its magnificence from below after paying a small entrance fee. Take a picnic and hike the one-mile loop. While in the area, keep your eyes open for eastern hemlock. The area is one of the few places in Alabama where this graceful, shade-tolerant conifer grows.

**8** About 13 miles south of Russellville lies **Dismals Canyon**, a privately owned, 85-acre sandstone gorge with large rock formations and two waterfalls. Many years of moving water sculpted the topography into rock shelters, natural rock bridges and a 16-inch-wide rock squeeze known as "Fat Man's Misery." Walk the 1.5-mile trail to see and feel the formations while also delving into the lush landscape of tulip poplars, beech trees, hemlocks, mosses and ferns. Visit on nights in May and June when a unique element lights up the canyon. Dismalites, sometimes called glowworms, are fly larvae (*Orfelia fultoni*) that emit a bluish light to attract prey. Special guided night tours reveal these dismalites, the only bioluminescent insect in North America.



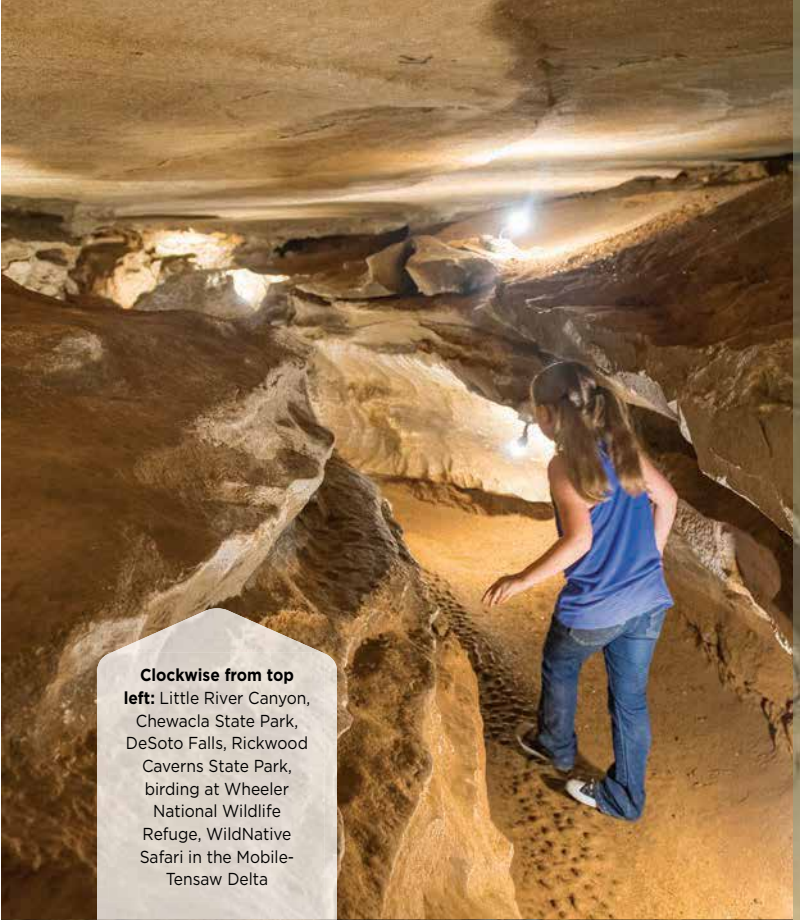
Above and opposite top: Ken Gables Photography; opposite bottom: ATD/Chris Ganger



Clockwise from top left: Shutterstock, ATD/Chris Granger, ATD/Dan Brothers, ATD/Chris Granger, courtesy of Wheeler NWR, ATD/Chris Granger



*Celebrate Alabama's Year of Natural Wonders by following this collection of trails, each composed of hand-selected stops that show off the state's treasures from the southern Appalachians to the Gulf of Mexico.*



**Clockwise from top left:** Little River Canyon, Chewacla State Park, DeSoto Falls, Rickwood Caverns State Park, birding at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, WildNative Safari in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta





Clockwise from top left: ATD/Chris Granger, ATD/Bert Hudabov, ATD/Chris Granger, courtesy of Dept. Conservation and Natural Resources/Mary Knight

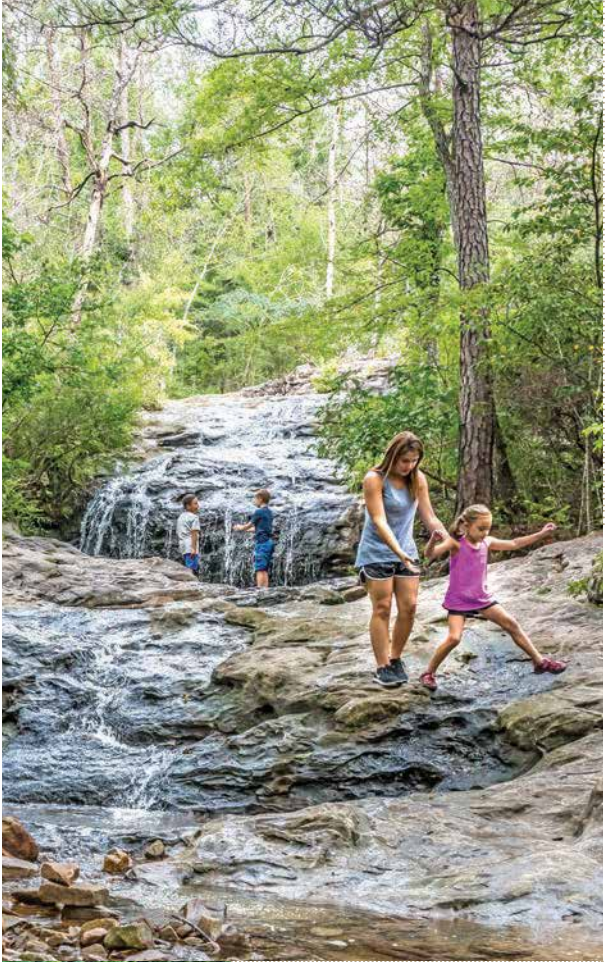
# Stepping Out BY KIM NIX

Alabama's varied terrain of mountains, canyons, valleys and plains provides hiking trails for all ages and abilities. Check out this sample from the plethora of options.

**When hiking variety is what you seek,** consider a trek to Sweet Home Alabama. In the north, you find steeper, more difficult hikes. As you travel south, the landscape slowly levels out as it reaches the coast. So how do you decide which trails to choose? Consider your physical ability and the region you'd like to explore.

Just a few hundred yards from the condominiums, restaurants and shopping centers of Gulf Shores and Orange Beach stretches the **Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail**. On these 15 miles of paved trails and boardwalks, you can disappear into the quiet maritime forests and wetlands. A series of eight interconnecting trails, each compliant with the Americans With Disabilities Act guidelines, winds through the heart of Gulf State Park, which is home to abundant wildlife, including birds, turtles and alligators.

One of the state's newest strolls, the **Magnolia Trail** at Blue Springs State Park near Clio, extends 2.1 miles and features two .3-mile connectors. Meander through pines and hardwoods, including Southern magnolias, catching views of the Choctawhatchee River.



## don't-miss details

**MOSS ROCK PRESERVE**  
Check out the 1.5-mile Waterfall Loop.

**MAGNOLIA TRAIL**  
Dip into one of the spring-fed, 68-degree pools after this moderate hike.

**CANE CREEK CANYON**  
Enjoy lunch or a snack at the tables in Linden Meadows.

**WALLS OF JERICHO**  
Go in spring or after a heavy rain to see the famous "walls" and waterfall.

## GET TO KNOW THE PINHOTI TRAIL

### "Turkey Home"

The 171 miles between Flagg Mountain and the Georgia border (plus 164 more miles in Georgia) quickly has become a favorite of avid backpackers and casual hikers alike. In the Creek language, Pinhoti means "turkey home," hence the turkey foot symbol on the trail markers.

### Appalachian Access

Although not officially designated —yet—many hikers consider the Pinhoti the southernmost access to the Appalachian Trail. The Alabama portion winds through the lush woodlands of the Talladega National Forest and Cheaha Wilderness.

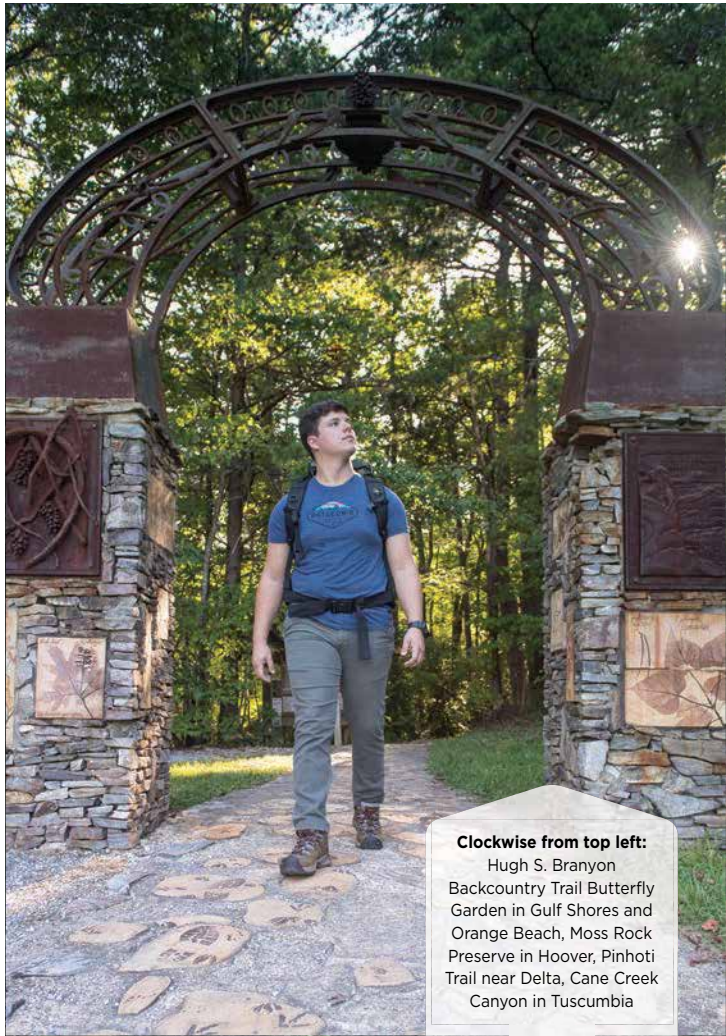
### Overnights or No Nights

Camping shelters dot the route, or you can pitch a tent. If you're not interested in long-distance hiking or backpacking, several shorter loops range from 2 to

6 miles, or you can hike out and back at a distance comfortable to you. Try Sweetwater Lake or RCW Nesting Area.

### Wildlife Watch

In addition to turkeys, you might spot deer, squirrels, birds and snakes.



**Clockwise from top left:**  
Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry Trail Butterfly Garden in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, Moss Rock Preserve in Hoover, Pinhoti Trail near Delta, Cane Creek Canyon in Tusculumbia



Water proves a highlight of **Moss Rock Preserve**, a 349-acre parcel owned by Hoover. This Birmingham-area oasis provides moderate to tough hikes alongside streams punctuated by boulders. It also features a variant of the Little River Canyon Sandstone Glade, a fragile ecosystem where stunted wildflowers, grasses and trees grow out of flat, pavement-like rocks.

In northwest Alabama, conservationists Jim and Faye Lacefield have struck a balance between protecting their private lands and opening them to the public. Their **Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve** is held in a conservation easement and boasts 15 miles of trails available Fridays-Sundays at no charge. The central 7-mile trail follows Cane Creek past rock shelters, waterfalls, scenic overlooks and wildflowers.

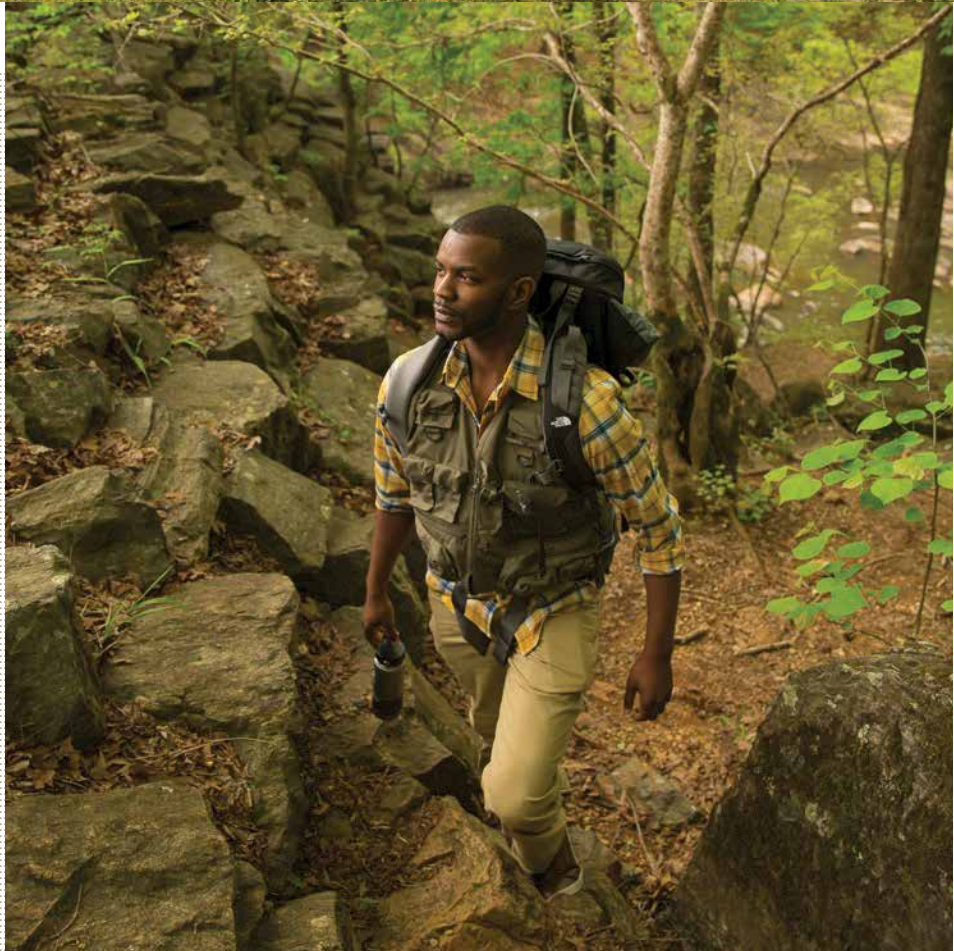
One of Alabama's most popular and pretty hikes doubles as one of its most difficult. The **Walls of Jericho Trail**, located near Tennessee, takes you out and back for a total of 6.6 miles. Along the way, observe exposed limestone, sinkholes and a cave. The first half of the trail descends 1,000 feet; be prepared for the steep incline on the return. Give yourself plenty of time.



## insider tip

**JOSHUA FUNDERBURK**  
PARK MANAGER  
CHEWACLA STATE PARK

“The best time to visit is during the little bit of spring and fall we get, usually around March for spring and then between October and November for fall. It varies from year to year. My favorite hike is the Mountain Laurel Trail that leads to our manmade waterfall. If you catch it just right in spring, you can time your hike when the mountain laurels bloom. They're gorgeous white blossoms with red streaks. I can make it down there in three-tenths of a mile, or you can make it a 5-mile walk just because our trails have so many options and spurs.”



Clockwise from bottom left: ATD/Chris Granger (2), Ken Gables Photography



Clockwise from top left:  
Gulf Shores & Orange Beach's  
Hugh S. Branyon Backcountry  
Trail, Walls of Jericho Trail in  
Estillfork, Chewacla State  
Park in Auburn

# What Lies Beneath

BY AMITY MOORE JOYCE

Opportunities for all levels of subterranean exploration exist in the state that the National Speleological Society calls home.

**With more than 4,200 caves** in Alabama, it is no wonder die-hard spelunkers and casual potholers enjoy ducking underground here. The greatest variety—from commercial caves to hidden ones that require permission—is found in the state's northeast corner. This karst-rich intersection of Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia (TAG) boasts stalactites and stalagmites, unexpected chambers, and an ecosystem that supports blind, pigmentless creatures. Get acquainted with this other world at **Cathedral Caverns** inside the eponymous state park near Grant; **Rickwood Caverns**, also inside a state park; or **DeSoto Caverns** near Birmingham.

Rangers offer guided tours at **Cathedral Caverns**, sharing stories of how Native Americans used the cave 8,000 years ago, how it was privately owned as Bats Cave from 1955 to 1974, and how its unique features—the Big Room, Goliath and Mystery River—make it worthy of its designation as a National Natural Landmark. The paved, twisting walkway

## insider tip

**ISRAEL PARTRIDGE**  
OWNER, TRUE ADVENTURE  
SPORTS, FORT PAYNE

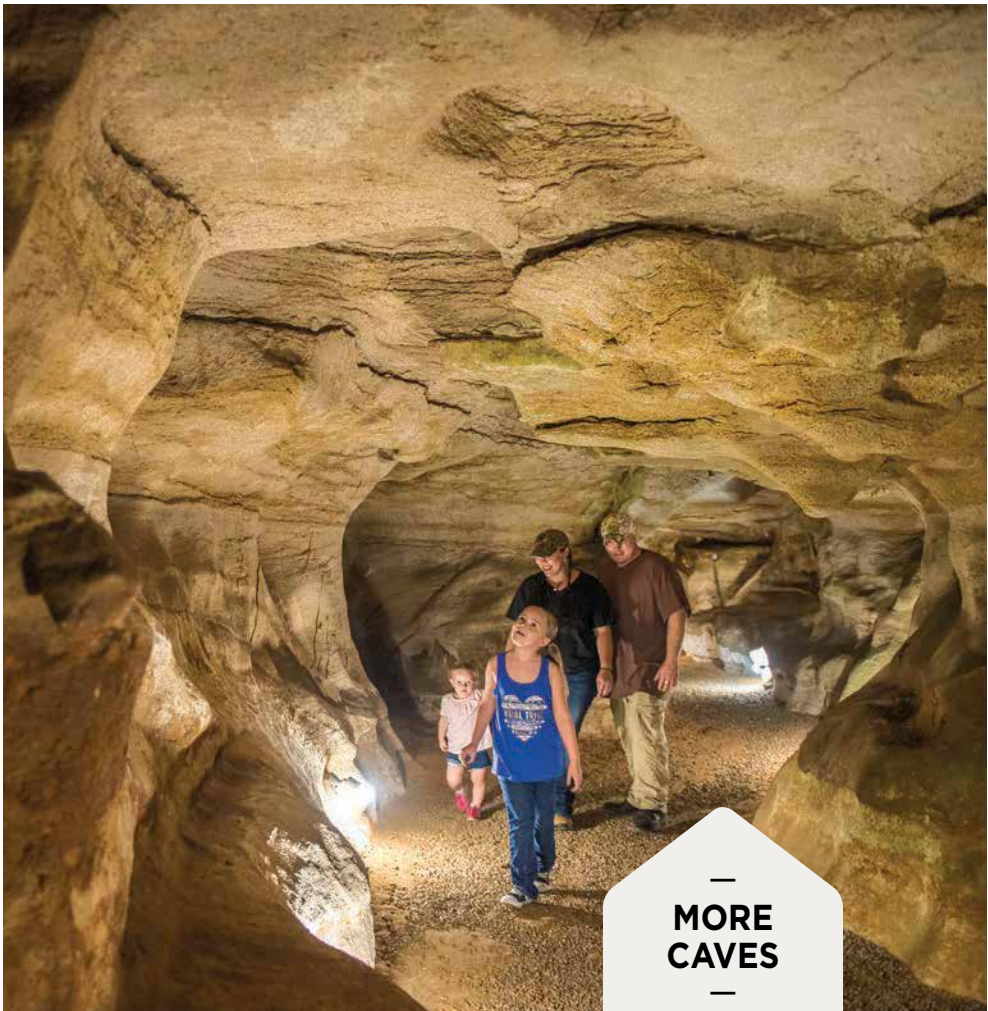
"Show caves have lights and pathways, and you can enter and exit in the same clothes you started in. On wild cave tours, you get a little dirty. These are for people wanting to go past a barrier to see things up close and wildlife in their element. On exploration trips, folks feel like they're pioneers, exploring uncharted territory and new passageways."



**From opposite left:** Goliath stands tall at Cathedral Caverns near Grant, lights illuminate the interesting features of DeSoto Caverns near Birmingham, guided tours lead through narrow tunnels at Rickwood Caverns near Warrior



All images: ATD/Chris Genger



## MORE CAVES

**RUSSELL CAVE:**  
WALK TO THE CAVE ENTRANCE OF THIS NATIONAL MONUMENT NEAR BRIDGEPORT.

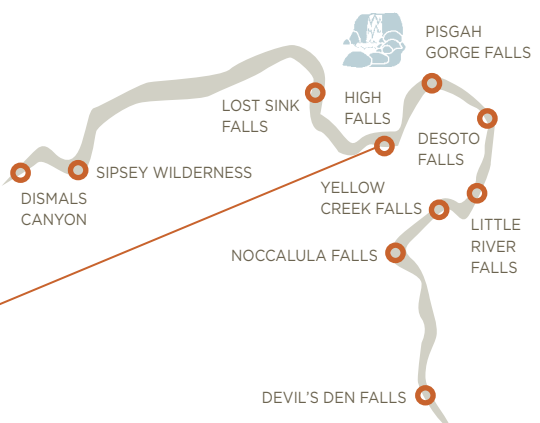
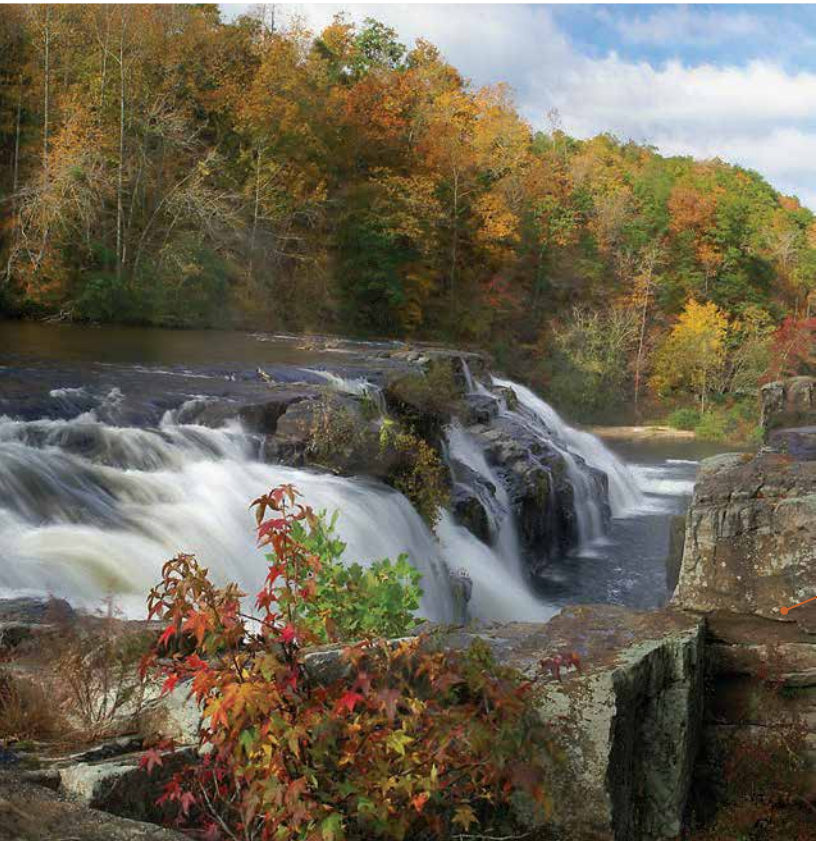
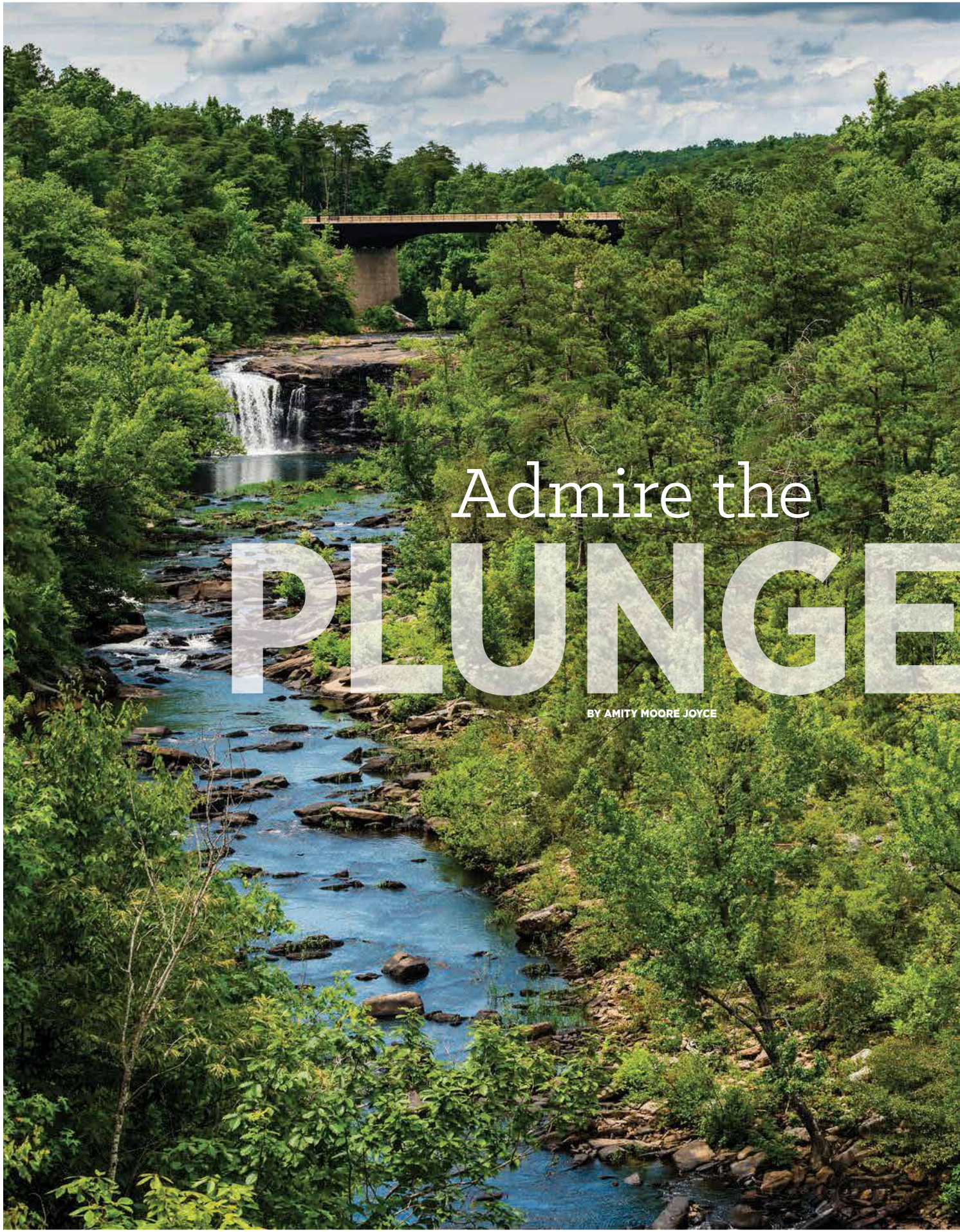
**NEVERSINK CAVE:**  
RAPPEL 100 FEET DOWN INTO THIS JACKSON COUNTY SINKHOLE TO SEE ITS WATERFALLS AND FERN-LINED WALLS UP CLOSE.

**SAUTA CAVE:**  
THIS CAVE OUTSIDE OF SCOTTSBORO PRESENTS AMAZING WILDLIFE-VIEWING WHEN 200,000 TO 400,000 GRAY BATS EMERGE EVERY EVENING DURING JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST.

travels about a mile, passing named formations, plus a stalagmite forest and an improbable stalagmite that is 35 feet tall but only 3 inches in diameter.

Access to **Rickwood Caverns**, now part of the state park near Warrior, requires a guide, which is ideal because so many points of interest lie within this living cave. The curiosities extend beyond the Frozen Castle and the Bridal Column formations to include blind cave fish, bats and salamanders, so having a knowledgeable eye proves valuable. The 1-mile-long tour lasts about an hour and includes an underground lake.

Native American history is on display at **DeSoto Caverns**. Before they were a privately owned attraction, the caverns were used from 1000 BC to AD 1000 as a burial site. The walls document a stay in 1723 by I.W. Wright, an Indian trader who carved his name into the limestone walls. In the 1920s, the cave served as a speakeasy. The bullet holes from that bygone era generate as much interest today as the onyx columns, drapery formations and abundant flowstone.



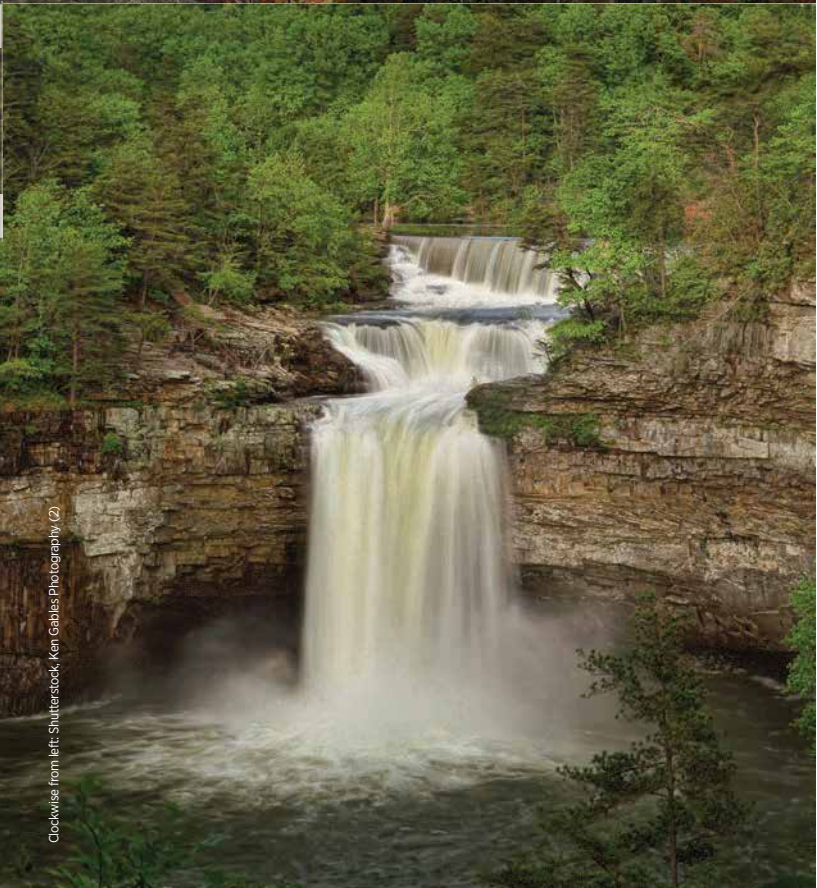
Whether you prefer hiking to the pool of a natural cascade or driving nearly to the rim of one, waterfall-related adventures abound in Alabama.

**View trickles to torrents**—and enjoy unique experiences along the way—among the more than 1,000 spots where fresh water pours over stony ledges. Build your own trail from a few of these favorites that follow, or hit every one for a multiday vacation filled with Mother Nature's liquid art.

Among the state's most popular and easily visible falls, **Noccalula Falls** in Gadsden flows within Noccalula Falls Park. The 90-foot-high waterfall can be reached from the parking lot without paying a fee by walking about 50 yards to the overlook. For a more vigorous and up-close experience, walk the 1.7-mile Black Creek Trail to see the falls from below.

**OF NOTE:** Native American lore tells the story of a maiden, Noccalula, whose chieftain father

**Clockwise from opposite:** Fort Payne's Little River Falls flows even during a dry spell, autumn comes to High Falls near Grove Oak, DeSoto Falls near Fort Payne presents multiple drops when seen from the right angle



Clockwise from left: Shutterstock, Ken Gables Photography (2)

## DETAILS

<b>NOCCALULA FALLS PARK:</b> MINIATURE TRAIN, PETTING ZOO & PIONEER VILLAGE	<b>LITTLE RIVER FALLS:</b> INSIDE LITTLE RIVER CANYON NATIONAL PRESERVE	<b>DESOTO FALLS:</b> CAN BE PAIRED WITH LITTLE RIVER FALLS FOR A DAY TRIP	<b>YELLOW CREEK FALLS:</b> ACCESSED BY CANOE VIA WEISS LAKE OR YELLOW CREEK	<b>LOST SINK FALLS:</b> A DROP INTO A SINKHOLE INSIDE KEEL MOUNTAIN PRESERVE
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**Left to right:** Veils of water pouring from Turkey Foot Falls, jumping in the pool at the base of Devil's Den Falls, going behind the curtain at Noccalula Falls, the gentle slope of Kinlock Falls

North Alabama holds the state's wealth of waterfalls, but if you look after heavy rains, you can find a plunge to admire in most every region.

had promised her to someone she did not love. She loved another, and to avoid the arranged marriage, she jumped from the falls to her death.

Locals love **Little River Falls** in Fort Payne. These accessible, year-round cataracts drop 45 feet and form a nice pool at the bottom perfect for swimming when the flow is slow. Enjoy the view from the top, or follow the boardwalk to another trail to reach the lower river's edge.

**OF NOTE:** Little River Falls marks the start of the Little River Canyon atop Lookout Mountain.

**DeSoto Falls** inside DeSoto State Park also pours from Lookout Mountain. Walk a few hundred yards from the upper parking lot to a railed platform to see the A.A. Miller Dam and upper falls. Stairs lead to a separate view of the lower, or main, waterfall, impressive at 107 feet tall.

**OF NOTE:** DeSoto Falls was named after Spain's Hernando de Soto, who explored what is now present-day Alabama during the 16th century.

## Rainbow Falls, Phantom Falls & Secret Falls

Located at Dismals Canyon, these three waterfalls can be seen while hiking a 1.5-mile trail on the canyon floor.

**OF NOTE:** Evidence of human history from Paleo to Chickasaw and Cherokee tribes abounds here. Marvel at the amazing biological diversity as well.

## Pisgah Gorge Falls

Multiple waterfalls make up these falls that are accessed via a roughly 1.5-mile round-trip hike. Three different overlooks provide excellent views.

**OF NOTE:** Waterfalls are nearly 100 feet tall.

## insider tip

**LANE LEOPARD**  
PHOTOGRAPHER, LANE  
LEOPARD PHOTOGRAPHY

"Try to visit waterfalls from November to April... Each year is a little different depending on our rainfall, but after a good rain event, the waterfalls will be the most visually appealing. I prefer a cloudy day for my waterfall photography as it gives it a more dramatic and moody look."



## OTHERS AROUND THE STATE

### Sipsey Wilderness

Part of Bankhead National Forest, this wild area comprises 25,000 acres and is known as the Land of 1,000 Waterfalls. Check out three of its most popular ones: Turkey Foot Falls, Caney Creek Falls and Kinlock Falls.

### Turkey Foot Falls

flows near the Sipsey River Picnic Grounds. An easy, short hike makes the cascade accessible to all levels of outdoor enthusiasts.

**OF NOTE:** Besides being easy to access, this waterfall carries Native American and pioneer

history. Look for where Native Americans took shelter and ground corn and nuts.

### Caney Creek Falls

gets a lot of foot traffic, in part because many Alabamians say it is one of the state's most beautiful waterfalls and worth the 3-mile round-trip hike. Depending on rainfall, the falls could hold two curtains of water.

**OF NOTE:** The swimming hole at the bottom is a favorite feature.

### Kinlock Falls

, more horizontal than vertical, tumbles gently down its rocky foundation, making it popular for rock sliding and tubing. Access it via an easy, family-friendly .3-mile hike.

**OF NOTE:** If you plan to rock slide, wear appropriate water shoes and durable shorts.

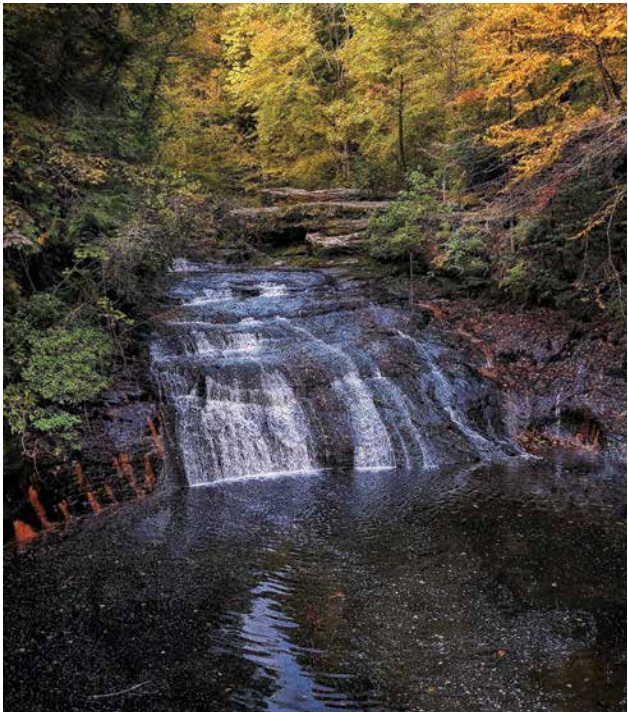
**Beyond the wilderness, more waterfalls plummet. Check out these two that have also gained favor for their swimming holes.**

### Devil's Den Falls

Located inside Cheaha State Park, this picturesque curtain of water curls around a large, deep pool, which makes it a favorite for kids. The access hike, part of the Chinnabee Silent Trail, is about six-tenths of a mile.

### High Falls

Thirty-five feet tall and at times 300 feet wide, this veil inside High Falls Park spills year-round and passes through a natural bridge. Although wading is allowed, swimmers are encouraged to be cautious of the rough waters. Cliff jumping is not advised.



Left to right: Ken Gables Photography (2), ATD/Chris Granger, Lane Leopard

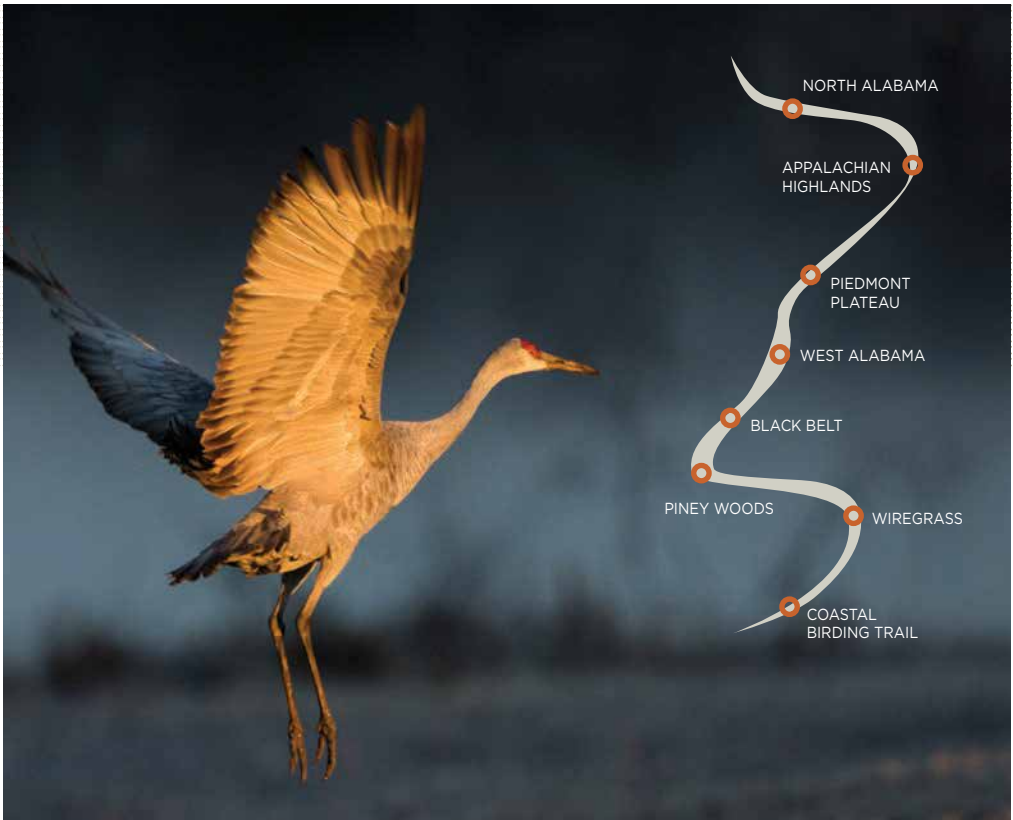
# Find Feathered Friends

BY AMITY MOORE JOYCE

Eight birding trails from the mountains to the coast ensure birders find both plentiful and rare species to check off their lists.

**With 280 public access points,** spying some of the 430-plus bird species that have been documented in Alabama is a cinch. The variety of ecosystems appeals to both resident and migratory birds, and likewise gives you multiple habitats in which to point your binoculars. More than 50 sites, including 180,000 acres within Bankhead National Forest, constitute the **North Alabama Birding Trail**. Watch for Cerulean Warblers, Pileated Woodpeckers, Sandhill Cranes and surprisingly large roosts of Bald Eagles in this region. The state's rural farm areas welcome Northern Parulas and Yellow-throated Warblers as well as tanagers, vireos and cuckoos. Follow the **Black Belt Birding Trail** to see them and hear their songs. Along the Gulf Coast, six driving loops in Baldwin and Mobile counties make up more than 200 miles of the **Coastal Birding Trail**. This is the place to see Brown Pelicans, rails, herons, gulls and egrets.

**CONNECT:** ALABAMABIRDINGTRAILS.COM | BIRMINGHAMAUDUBON.ORG  
AOSBIRDS.ORG |  ALABAMA BIRDING TRAILS



## EVENTS

### Easy Ways to Start Birding

#### FESTIVAL OF THE CRANES

Decatur

[fws.gov/refuge/wheeler/Festival\\_of\\_the\\_Cranes\\_at\\_Wheeler.html](https://fws.gov/refuge/wheeler/Festival_of_the_Cranes_at_Wheeler.html)

#### GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

Birmingham

[gbbc.birdcount.org](https://gbbc.birdcount.org)

#### COASTAL BIRDFEST

Baldwin and Mobile counties

[weeksbay.org/events/alabama-coastal-birdfest](https://weeksbay.org/events/alabama-coastal-birdfest)

Left to right: courtesy of Wheeler NWR, ATD/Chris Granger (2), courtesy of Wheeler NWR



## 5 more “flock” spots

### Appalachian Highlands

Birdwatchers appreciate the forested hills, lush pastures and riparian zones that support the diverse variety of birds found among this trail's 38 sites.

### Piedmont Plateau

With Mount Cheaha, the state's highest point, and Lake Martin, the state's largest lake, birdwatchers find a lot of varied terrain to explore. Even walking a paved path through

Maplesville City Park offers an escape into woodlands filled with birds.

### Piney Woods

Gear up for water in these five counties of southwestern Alabama. Here, you might paddle the Sepulga River Canoe Trail to hear Prothonotary Warblers, observe White Ibis or see what's soaring above Claiborne Lake Dam.

### West Alabama

Among the lakes, forests and rivers of this region also resides the University of Alabama Arboretum, which holds a reputation as the single best location in Tuscaloosa for songbirds. In Bibb County, visit

Living River to see Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Come spring, head to the Red-cockaded Woodpecker colony within the Oakmulgee Division of Talladega National Forest.

### Wiregrass

If you cannot hit all 21 sites in southeastern Alabama, visit these three: Conecuh National Forest harbors hundreds of Bachman's Sparrows in its pine forests; secreted Crenshaw County Public Lake boasts pinewoods, mature fields and a lake that attracts Northern Bobwhites, Brown-headed Nuthatches and Great Blue Herons; and Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge offers arguably the best birding in the state.



#### Left to right:

Sandhill Crane at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge (NWR); Audubon Bird Sanctuary on Coastal Birding Trail; birding on the Yoholo Micco Trail, which is part of the Wiregrass Birding Trail; mallards on the wing at Wheeler NWR



# Dipping In

BY KIM NIX

The Alabama Scenic River Trail presents all kinds of water for all kinds of paddlers. Which one is for you?

**With bountiful water** resources, including 18 river systems that result in thousands of miles of navigable waterways, Alabama boasts ever-expanding organized paddle trails, many linked to the Alabama Scenic River Trail (ASRT). This trail, once a 650-mile historic trade route from Cedar Bluff, Alabama, near the Georgia state line, to Fort Morgan, Alabama, at the Gulf of Mexico, has swelled beyond its core route to more than 5,300 miles of waterways with access, camping and signage. Whether you enjoy canoeing, kayaking, rafting or stand-up paddling—and no matter your skill level—there’s an Alabama river calling to you. Check out which sections of the ASRT you might want to add to your paddling bucket list.

For paddlers seeking an adrenaline rush, the **Little River** in northeast Alabama offers premier whitewater kayaking on Class III-V waters. With sections named Suicide and Avalanche, the waters below Little River Falls are for experienced paddlers only. Above Little River Falls, the water is a little tamer but still not for beginners. Unlike many rivers, paddling here is best in winter and early spring,

**CONNECT:** ALABAMASCENICRIVERTRAIL.COM | ALABAMACANOETRAILS.COM  
ALABAMARIVERS.ORG/RECREATION-ON-ALABAMAS-RIVERS | CAHABARIVERSOCIETY.ORG



## insider tip

**FRED COUCH, JR.**  
FOUNDER,  
OPERATIONS MANAGER  
ALABAMA SCENIC  
RIVER TRAIL

“My paddling tips on these and all waterways are basically two:  
a) Always wear your life jacket and  
b) Share your plans with someone back home.”

“Those two [tips] will forever be your best safety precautions to enjoy the beauty and challenges of our extensive waterways.”

Inset: courtesy of Fred Couch Jr.; all others: ATD/Chris Granger



**Left to right:**  
Off the Beaten Path  
Alabama guided trip  
near Auburn, rafting  
and kayaking in  
Phenix City



Once a 650-mile historic trade route, the Alabama Scenic River Trail has swelled beyond its core route to more than 5,300 miles of waterways. Paddlers cannot help but pick a path and start exploring.

which is the rainy season. Wetsuits are recommended. The best put-in above the falls is near the bridge on Highway 35. For the lower portion, begin by going over Little River Falls—popular with many experienced kayakers—or put in a few hundred yards downstream.

**Sougahatchee Creek** near Auburn offers Class I-II waters suitable for kayaking and canoeing. With its proximity to Auburn University, students often take advantage of this scenic waterway with numerous rapids, which are largely rainfall dependent. It’s not a run you can count on in the drier summer months except within 36 to 48 hours of a thunderstorm. A popular route is to put in off Highway 188 and take out 3 miles downstream at what is known locally as the Steel Bridge.

Famous in pop country songs but also as a liquid boundary between southeast Alabama and Georgia for 160 miles, the **Chattahoochee River** hugs both Phenix City, Alabama, and Columbus, Georgia, at a stretch that has become a whitewater mecca. Removing a series of dams created the longest urban rafting opportunity in the world at 2.5 miles. Whitewater kayaking, rafting, tubing and stand-up paddling all can be done on these Class I-V waters. Believe it or not, you also can river surf on the Chattahoochee.

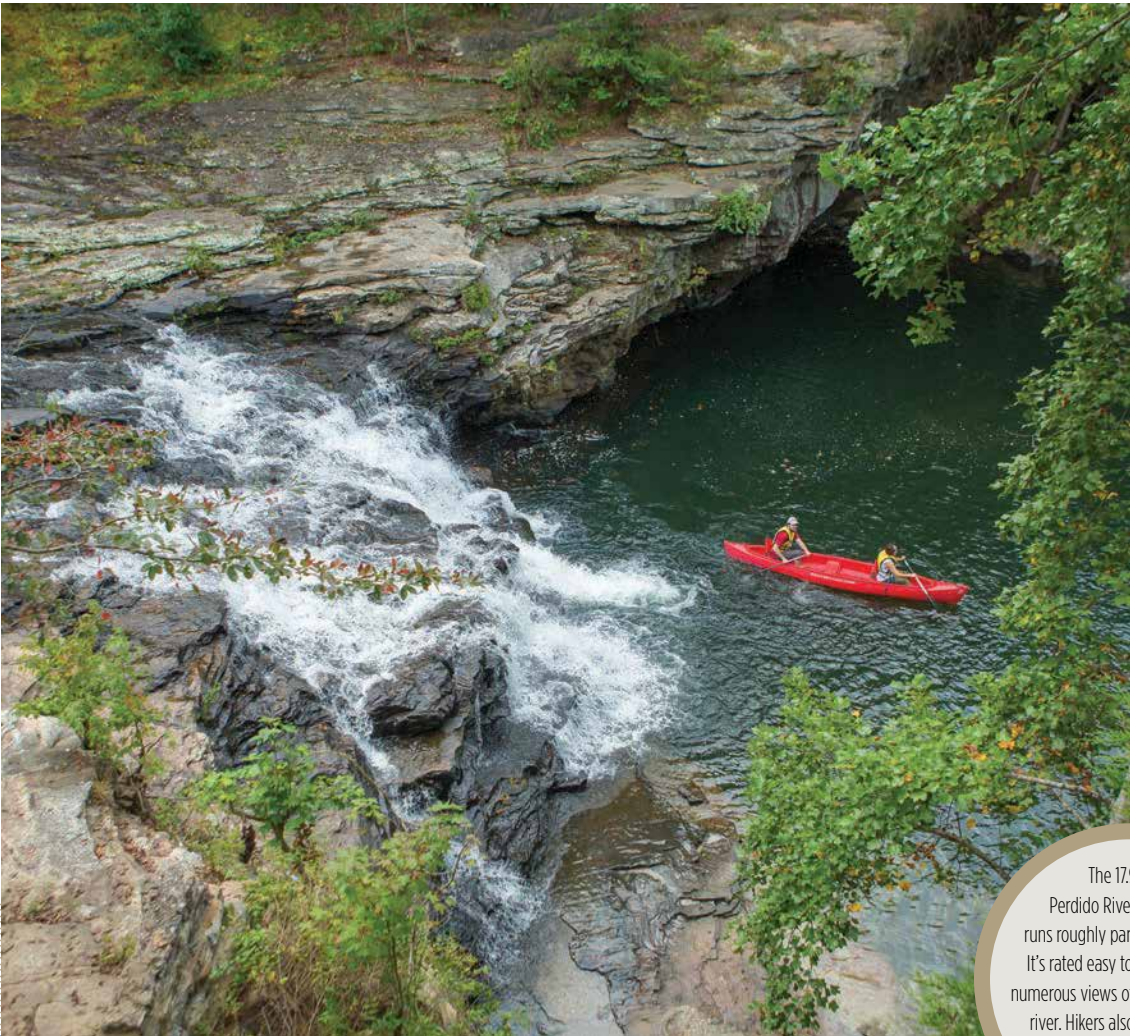
You won't find rapids on the mild waters of the Bartram Canoe Trail, but you will find abundant wildlife, such as diving birds, sunning alligators and stealthy bobcats.

Because of the dam-controlled daily release, the water level and speed of the Chattahoochee River changes. Lower water levels offer a gentler trip, while higher waters promise faster water and larger rapids. Observers can catch all the action from the Phenix City riverwalk, dotted with restaurants and shops.

The 13-mile **Autauga Creek Canoe Trail**, designated a National Recreational Trail, begins at Bridge Creek on County Road 10 near Prattville and ends when it flows into the Alabama River in Montgomery. Several points along the way provide in and out access to this relatively calm waterway that suits beginning paddlers; portions are good for tubing as well. The main launch tucks behind City Hall, then travels down 4 miles of fun, hairpin turns to Canoe Trail Park. Here, most paddlers exit, in part because of the accessible parking, restrooms and picnic tables.

The **Bartram Canoe Trail** gets its name from naturalist William Bartram, who explored Alabama in the mid-1770s. You won't find rapids on these mild waters, but you will find abundant wildlife, such as birds, raccoons and alligators, and bald

**Clockwise from top right:** Paddling near Little River Canyon with True Adventure Sports, camping and canoeing the Perdido River Canoe Trail, an overnight shelter accessible only by kayak on the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, exploring the Gulf Coast with WildNative Tours



The 17.9-mile Perdido River Hiking Trail runs roughly parallel to the river. It's rated easy to moderate with numerous views of and access to the river. Hikers also are allowed to reserve the shelters for overnight visits.



## details

**True Adventure Sports**  
Classes, guided trips and kayak and canoe rentals.  
[trueadventuresports.com](http://trueadventuresports.com)

**Off the Beaten Path Alabama**  
Tube, kayak and canoe rentals, plus guiding and shuttle services.  
[offthebeatenpathalabama1.com](http://offthebeatenpathalabama1.com)

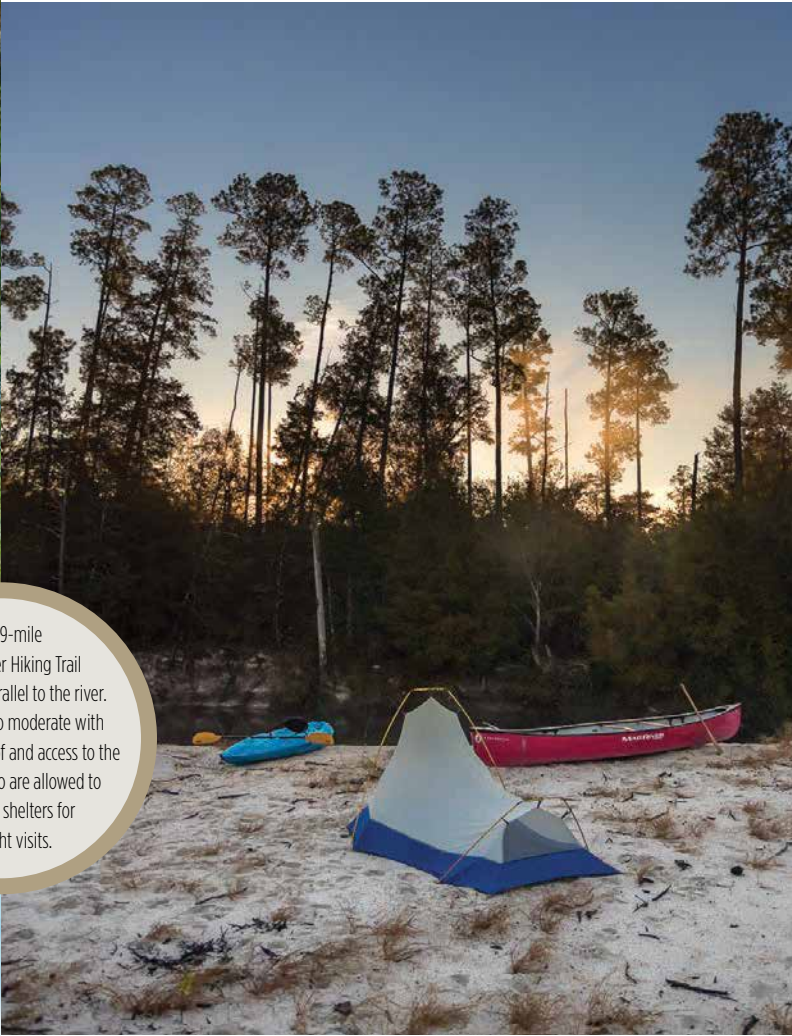
**Adventures Perdido River**  
Tube, kayak and canoe rentals, plus shuttle service.  
[adventuresperdidoriver.com](http://adventuresperdidoriver.com)

**WildNative Tours**  
Guided tours, and canoe and kayak rentals.  
[wildnativetours.com](http://wildnativetours.com)

**Whitewater Express**  
Whitewater kayak and stand-up paddleboard (SUP) lessons; kayak; SUP and tube rentals; and guided rafting trips.  
[whitewaterexpress.com](http://whitewaterexpress.com)



Far right: Billy Pope; all others: ATD/Chris Granger



cypress trees hanging with Spanish moss. The canoe trail, managed by the Alabama State Lands Division, meanders through the Mobile-Tensaw Delta and consists of an upper and a lower system. Combined, the systems cover more than 170 water miles. Paddlers can make day trips or plan multiday trips. Land-based campsites, elevated shelters and floating platforms are available for overnights on the trail. The land-based, first-come, first-served sites are free. Reservations and a fee are required for the covered shelters and floating platforms, which can accommodate up to eight people.

Another canoe-centric route, also managed by the Alabama State Lands Division, the **Perdido River Canoe Trail** runs roughly 19 miles along the border between Alabama and Florida on the east side of Baldwin County. The calm water of the Perdido looks like tea, the result of an organic compound released by decaying plants called tannin. Commonly called "blackwater," the river's surface reflects like a mirror. Access the trail from two launch sites and one boat ramp. Paddlers may pay to stay overnight along the river at one of six reservable camping shelters or at no cost by pitching a tent on one of the sandbars located in front of the shelters.



**Left to Right:** Paddling near Little River Canyon. Coosa River Whitewater Festival. Kayaking the Mobile Delta.

# Get on the water with these outfitters

**All-Inclusive Guided Kayak Excursions**  
**One World Adventure**  
[www.oneworldadventure.org](http://www.oneworldadventure.org)

Experience some of the most breathtaking scenery in Northeast Alabama. Mountains, canyons, waterfalls and wildlife are the backdrop for amazing day-long kayaking adventures. Trips are all-inclusive, with professional guides, equipment, kayaks, paddles and PFDs. All trips are perfect for all ages, and are conveniently located within two hours of Chattanooga, Atlanta, Nashville, Huntsville and Birmingham.

**No worries in the Alabama wilderness**  
**Prattville Paddlesports**  
[www.prattvillepaddlesports.com](http://www.prattvillepaddlesports.com)

From the beautiful white sand beaches of the Alabama Gulf Coast to the majestic canyons and waterfalls of the Southern Appalachian Mountains in North Alabama, Prattville Paddlesports offers all-inclusive outdoor adventure served with Southern Hospitality. Design a custom, all-inclusive trip for your group. Prattville Paddlesports offers one-to-three-day trips, which include gear and are designed for first-timers or advanced paddlers.

**Escape Civilization and Experience Nature by Kayak**  
**Riverside Fly Shop**  
[www.riversideflyshop.com](http://www.riversideflyshop.com)

Riverside Fly Shop offers self-guided river tours atop the crystal-clear waters of the Sipsey River. Rent one of the exceptionally stable NuCanoes for a single or tandem trip or bring your own kayak or paddleboard and launch into the cool waters of the Sipsey Fork of the Warrior River. Not into paddling yourself? Take a guided trip in a drift boat.

**Ecotourism at its best**  
**Terrapin Outdoor Center**  
[www.canoeshop.net](http://www.canoeshop.net)

Take a three-to-five hour guided tour of Terrapin Creek in Northeast Alabama, one of the most ecologically diverse regions of the United States. A float down this stream offers glimpse of a wide range of wildlife and a look at local color.

**Go Batty in Alabama**  
**UnPhiltered Kayaking**  
[www.unphilteredkayaking.com](http://www.unphilteredkayaking.com)

View Hambrick Cave in Alabama with a guide to see 50,000 bats emerge at dusk as they hunt for insects. This real-life nature show brings guests to the mouth of the cave where they sit mere feet away as bats sweep and swoop overhead. Tours available Friday through Sunday nights.

**Dolphin and Wildlife Kayak Experience**  
**Wild Native Tours**  
[www.wildnativetours.com](http://www.wildnativetours.com)

The Dolphins and Wildlife Kayak Experiences immerses you in a coastal wilderness and one of the prettiest classrooms on earth. Watch for and learn about Gulf Shores' Bottlenose Dolphins from the intimate, unobtrusive, and non-threatening vantage point of a kayak. Like all wide animals these dolphins can be elusive, and you don't always see them, but when you do there is nothing like the thrill near these magnificent creatures.

**Whitewater in the American South**  
**Coosa River Adventures**  
[www.coosariveradventures.com](http://www.coosariveradventures.com)

Catch a ride on Alabama's famed Moccasin Gap during a fun down a section of the Coosa River in Alabama. This spot is a favorite for local paddlers, offering a splash of whitewater on the core section of the Alabama Scenic River Trail. Tours available upon request.

**A wild look at wildlife**  
**Sunshine Canoes**  
[www.sunshinecanoerentals.com](http://www.sunshinecanoerentals.com)

Tour one of the largest and most biologically diverse freshwater estuaries in the United State with a local tour guide. One the Mobile-Tensaw Delta in Alabama, you will encounter sweeping views that include tall grasses, large birds and the occasional alligator. You will see historic sites, including an Indian mount and a Civil War battle ground.

**Evening Lake Tour**  
**True Adventure Sports**  
[www.trueadventuresports.com](http://www.trueadventuresports.com)

Come explore the banks of Weiss Lake in a guided twilight canoe or kayak tour. See 200-foot cliffs converge at the pristine Yellow Creek Falls and take a dep into the clean, clear waters of Weiss Lake. No prior experience needed. Boat rental is included.

# OUTDOOR

*Get outside and take advantage of places to play  
on public lands—and public waters.*

So, here's the thing. You don't have to head west to find epic ways to enjoy nature, to prove your mettle in the outdoors, to refresh and commune with Ma Nature. They're all right here in Alabama. The state boasts challenging whitewater to paddle, gnarly rock faces to climb, gamboling trails to hike or bike, and enviable hunting. Not to mention the amazing fishing, abundant caving and breadth of wildlife watching.

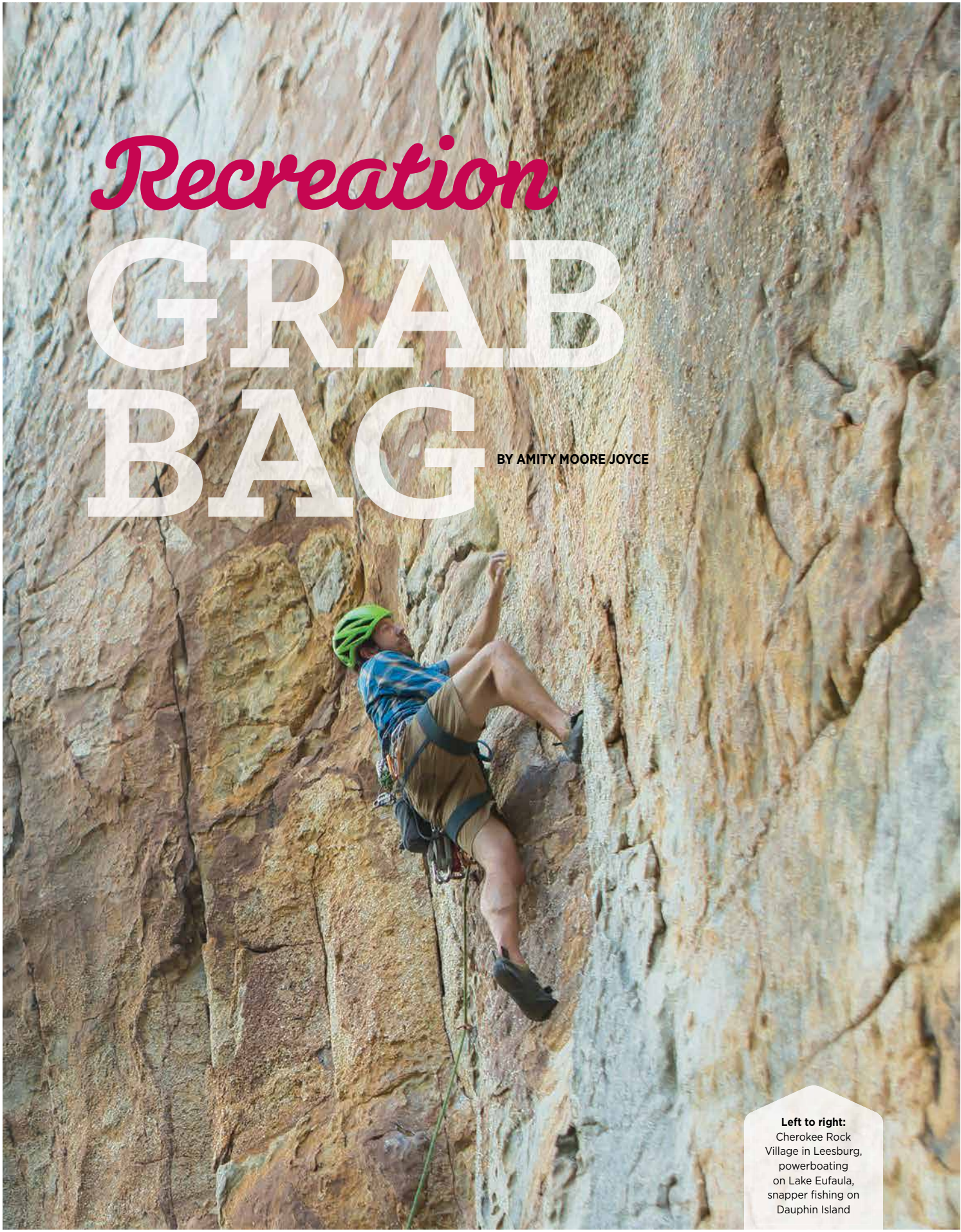
Then there are the lakes and the Gulf of Mexico, each ripe with opportunities for powerboating and scuba diving. Finally, with terrain that spans from mountainous to maritime, the Yellowhammer State's places to camp, such as Gulf State Park's Outpost (below), never feel the same. For a more complete education in Alabama's outdoor offerings, visit [outdooralabama.com](http://outdooralabama.com).



The page and Chris Ganger

*Feel*

*Hear*



# Recreation GRAB BAG

BY AMITY MOORE JOYCE

**Left to right:**  
Cherokee Rock  
Village in Leesburg,  
powerboating  
on Lake Eufaula,  
snapper fishing on  
Dauphin Island

## Variety is the spice of outdoor life and activities in Alabama.

**I**srael Partridge, owner of True Adventure Sports in Fort Payne, knows Alabama’s natural beauty and variety surprises visitors. He calls it the state’s “wow factor.” When it comes to the outdoors, he says, “Alabama is way undersold... I guess it being undersold makes it the best because you can still explore the mountains and caves without crowds.” He adds that Alabama ties with Utah for some of the hardest rock-climbing routes in the country. With so many opportunities to explore, where should outdoorsy people start? It all depends on what you already love or what you’ve always wanted to try. So go ahead, grab your gear and discover the great Southern outdoors.

### Rad Rock Climbing

Like Partridge mentioned, Alabama does not get a lot of climbing love, but it should. All styles of rock climbing are represented here. Trad climbers visit Jamestown for its excellent sandstone lines. It is not developed like Leesburg’s Cherokee Rock Village, aka Sand Rock, which offers more than double the routes. Plus, sport climbs and bouldering are part of its mix. The place with more routes than anywhere, however, is also part of the Triple Crown Bouldering Series: Horse Pens 40 in Steele. Climbers have their choice of more than 290 bouldering problems here. A close second for bouldering lies near Birmingham in Hoover. Among the beautiful trees and hiking trails of Moss Rock Preserve, bouldering fans find nearly 50 different routes.

### Reel Fun

Fishing for smallmouth, large-mouth, striper and tide bass is so good here that 13 lakes form the Alabama Bass Trail. Eufaula proudly touts its lake’s fishery and is the self-proclaimed Big Bass Capital of the World. It even has a 10-foot-tall bass statue named Manny to remind anglers of the area’s excellent fishing and to remember legendary fishing lure designer Tom Mann. Saltwater fishing, too, gets a lot of attention, particularly for red snapper. The season may be

short, but it’s exciting!

The fish can weigh up to 45 pounds, but most caught off Orange Beach—site of a healthy fishery—are about eight pounds. If snagged in the off-season, then the fish must be released.

### Pleasurable Boating

Whether pulling a water skier, anchoring by a swimming hole or just cruising, boating is popular across the state. Join residents from Birmingham and Montgomery who congregate on Lake Martin, particularly near Chimney Rock, where cliff jumping



All images: ATD/Chris Granger

is a favorite activity. Lake Guntersville attracts its share of boaters, too. Here, the vibe is calm and family friendly.

### Wildlife Watching

While recreating, you might encounter native creatures. Often, the most exciting to see are the sunning alligators or the darting swallow-tailed kites, which fly up to 60 mph to snap an insect lunch. Area national wildlife refuges (NWRs) are excellent spots to see animals. Bon Secour NWR is known for migrating songbirds, sea turtles and the endangered beach mouse. Wheeler NWR attracts birds, but it also harbors large populations of feral hogs and deer. Fern Cave NWR houses the largest wintering colony of gray bats in the United States.

### Mountain Biking Mojo

Trails for fat-tire fans cut through many public lands. One of the longest, Cold-water Mountain Bike Trail runs about 35 miles outside Anniston. With gentle rides and a tough black diamond, the area appeals to mountain bikers of every ability. Similarly, riders look to Oak Mountain State Park in Pelham for singletrack (and a bit of doubletrack) that is open to all levels. Recently, The Red Trail gained a few more miles. As mountain biking's popularity grows, many areas are lengthening their offerings. Philip Darden, manager of James Bros Bikes in Opelika, told Alabama News Center, "When it comes to mountain biking, Alabama is a hidden gem."



From top:  
Biking on Cheaha Mountain, accommodations for disabled hunting

### Beneath the Stars

Most state parks offer tent camping; some offer modern sites ideal for RVs. Bathhouses are available, so you don't have to completely rough it. Camping shelters in the Mobile-Tensaw Delta draw paddlers, and cabins prove attractive in Gulf and DeSoto state parks. And if you do want to rough it, backcountry sites dot Oak Mountain State Park.

### Underwater Rapture

Thanks to several artificial reefs, the Gulf Coast teems with fish and plants of interest to divers and snorkelers. *The Whiskey*, the hull of a sunken

Spanish rum runner, invites divers because of its easy beach access and 15- to 25-foot depth. More experienced divers will find *LuLu* and the recently sunk *Fairfield New Venture* more of a challenge.

### A Hunting We Will Go

What do you get when you take more than 1.3 million acres of public hunting land, liberal seasons and large bag limits? Yep, hunting in Alabama. Bird hunters rave about the bobwhite quail and waterfowl. Other hunters come for the white-tailed deer and feral hogs. The state supports several programs including Becoming an Outdoors Woman and seasons for disabled hunters.



## DON'T MISS

### Paddling Pleasure

From North Alabama to the Gulf Coast, dozens of waterways invite you to explore. Kayakers can playboat in the rivers that flow off the Appalachian Range while stand-up paddleboarders find the state's lakes good spots to practice. Canoeists find year-round boating along the coast, where they launch into estuarine marsh, cypress-tupelo swamp and bottomland hardwood ecosystems. Outfitters such as True Adventure Sports often rent equipment while also offering guided trips. Pages 34–37 provide more details about where to dip a paddle.

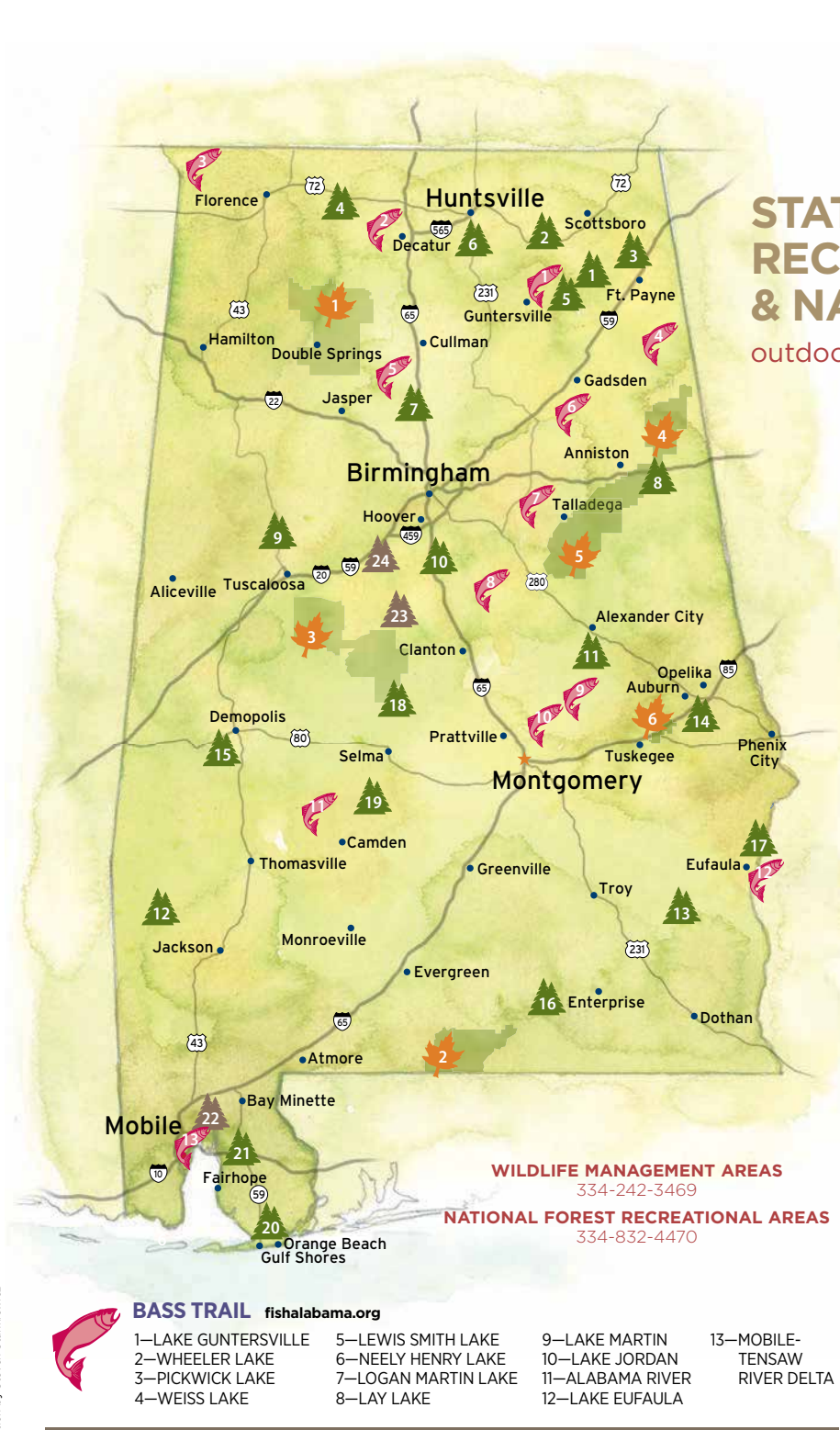
### Hiking Heaven

Morning, noon and night, you can hike and come across something interesting in Alabama. Discover a sunrise that will make the start of a new day a celebration from most any east-facing spot on a beach trail or the top of a peak. Pause to picnic and appreciate the riverside views on trails in the south and central regions. You can find open spaces, where the sun warms you the entire way, or shady paths that meander through forests. Paved or dirt, the hiking trails here are numerous and worth lacing up your boots. See page 22 to learn more about stepping out.

### Underground Excitement

According to the Huntsville-based National Speleological Society, Alabama harbors more than 4,200 known caves. Most are wild and located on private land, thus not available to the public. Nevertheless, several spots are open to viewing this amazing underground wilderness. Turn to page 26 to check out where to go.

Top to bottom: ATD/Chris Granger, courtesy of Billy Pope; illustration by Steven Stanekiewicz



### NATIONAL FORESTS

FOREST	CITY	Map Location	SITES	PHONE
<b>BANKHEAD</b>	Double Springs	1	Brushy Lake, Clear Lake, Corinth & Houston Recreation Areas; Sipsey River National Wild and Scenic River; Sipsey River Picnic Area and Trailhead	205-489-5111
<b>CONECUH</b>	Andalusia	2	Blue Lake & Open Pond Recreation Areas; Conecuh Trail	334-222-2555
<b>TALLADEGA (Oakmulgee)</b>	Brent	3	Payne Lake Recreation Area	205-926-9765
<b>TALLADEGA (Shoal Creek)</b>	Heflin	4	Coleman Lake & Pine Glen Recreation Areas; Pinhoti National Recreation Trail; Sweetwater Lake	256-463-2272
<b>TALLADEGA (Talladega)</b>	Talladega	5	Cheaha Wilderness, Lake Chinnabee, Pinhoti National Recreation Trail	256-362-2909
<b>TUSKEGEE</b>	Tuskegee	6	Bartram National Recreation Trail & Taska Recreation Area	334-727-2652

STATE PARKS

Call **800-ALA-PARK** for more information or to make reservations. You also can find us at our website: **alapark.com** or e-mail: **dcnr.parkspr@dcnr.alabama.gov**. Refer to page 163 for map locations.

		●: AVAILABLE	*: RESORT PARKS																					
		Acres	Primitive Camping	Modern Campsites	Camp Store	Wireless Internet	Family Cabins Cottages (units)	Hotel (units)	Convention/ Meeting Rooms	Group Lodge	Group Pavilions	Refreshments	Dog-friendly Cabins	Restaurant	Gift Shop	Marina	Boating	Swimming	Fishing	Golf Course (holes)	Tennis	Trails	Nature Programs	Play Area
NORTH																								
1	BUCK'S POCKET 393 CR 174, Grove Oak, 35975, 800-252-7275; 2 mi. N of Grove Oak	2000		24													●	●	●			●		
2	CATHEDRAL CAVERNS 637 Cave Rd., Woodville, 35769, 256-728-8193	493	●	12							●	●			●							●	●	●
3	DESOTO 7104 DeSoto Pkwy. NE, Fort Payne, 35967, 256-845-5380; Resort Inn: 1299 Blalock Dr. NE, 800-568-8840/256-845-5380; Campground: 256-845-5075; 8 mi. NE of Fort Payne	3502	●	94	●	●	22	25	●		●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●			●	●	●
4	JOE WHEELER * Park Office: 4403 McLean Dr., Rogersville, 35652, 256-247-5466; Resort Lodge and Convention Center: 4401 McLean Dr., Rogersville, 35652, 800-544-5639/256-247-5461; Camp-ground: 256-247-1184; Elk River Group Lodge: 256-247-5466	2550	●	116	●	●	38	75	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	18	●	●		●
5	LAKE GUNTERSVILLE * Park Office: 1157 Lodge Dr., Guntersville, 35976; Office: 256-571-5444; Campground: 256-571-5455; Lodge: 1155 Lodge Dr., Box 232, Guntersville, 35976, 800-548-4553/256-571-5440; 6 mi. NE of Guntersville, off Hwy. 227	5909	●	364	●	●	35	112	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	18	●	●	●	●
6	MONTESANO 5105 Nolen Ave., Huntsville, 35801, 256-534-3757; Group Lodge: 256-534-3757; located within Huntsville city limits	2140	●	89	●	●	14		●	●		●	●		●							●		●
7	RICKWOOD CAVERNS 370 Rickwood Park Rd., Warrior, 35180, 205-647-9692; 4 mi. off I-65 at Exit 284	380	●	13		●					●	●			●			●				●	●	●
CENTRAL																								
8	CHEAHA Campground: 19644 AL Hwy. 281, Delta, 36258; Park: 256-488-5111; Lodge: AL Hwy. 281, 2141 Bunker Loop, 800-846-2654/256-488-5115; 12 mi. S of I-20 on AL Hwy. 281	2799	●	73	●	●	16	30	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●			●	●	●
9	LAKE LURLEEN 13226 Lake Lurleen Rd., Coker, 35452, 205-339-1558; 12 mi. NW of Tuscaloosa	1625	●	91	●				●		●	●					●	●	●			●	●	●
10	OAK MOUNTAIN 200 Terrace Dr., Pelham, 35124; Park Office: 205-620-2520; Info Center: 205-620-2524; Campground: 205-620-2527; 15 mi. S of Birmingham	9940	●	150	●	●	10		●		●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	18		●	●	●
11	WIND CREEK 4325 AL Hwy. 128, Alexander City, 35010, 256-329-0845; 7 mi. SE of Alexander City	1445		626	●	●	7				●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●			●		●
SOUTH																								
12	BLADON SPRINGS 3921 Bladon Rd., Bladon Springs, 36919, 205-459-3459; 1 mi. N of Bladon Springs	357		10							●													●
13	BLUE SPRINGS 2595 AL Hwy. 10, Clio, 36017, 334-397-4875; 6 mi. E of Clio	103	●	50			3				●	●						●	●					●
14	CHEWACLA 124 Shell Toomer Pkwy., Auburn, 36830, 334-887-5621; 4 mi. S of Auburn, U.S. Hwy. 29 off I-85	696	●	36		●	6				●	●	●				●	●	●			●		●
15	CHICKASAW 26955 U.S. Hwy. 43, Gallion, 36742, 334-295-8230; 4 mi. N of Linden on U.S. Hwy. 43, near Demopolis	520	●	8							●											●		●
16	FRANK JACKSON 100 Jerry Adams Dr., Opp, 36467, 334-493-6988	2050	●	32		●	3				●	●					●	●	●			●		●
17	LAKEPOINT * Park: 104 Lakepoint Dr., Eufaula, 36027-9202, 334-687-6026; Resort Inn: U.S. Hwy. 431N, Eufaula, 36072, 800-544-5253/334-687-8011; 7 mi. N of Eufaula off U.S. Hwy. 431	1220	●	190	●	●	39	101	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●		●
18	PAUL M. GRIST 1546 Grist Rd., Selma, 36701, 334-872-5846; 15 mi. N of Selma	1080	●	11							●	●					●	●	●			●		●
19	ROLAND COOPER 285 Deer Run Dr., Camden, 36726, 334-682-4838; 6 mi. NE of Camden	236	●	47	●		5				●	●	●				●		●			●		●
GULF COAST																								
20	GULF 20115 AL Hwy. 135, Gulf Shores, 36542, Office and Cabin Info: 251-948-7275; Campground Reservations: 251-948-7275; Pier: 21250 E. Beach Blvd., Gulf Shores, 36542, 251-967-FISH	6150	●	496	●	●	31				●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●	18	●	●	●	●
21	MEAHER 5200 Battleship Pkwy. E, Spanish Fort, 36577, 251-626-5529; 2 mi. W of Spanish Fort on U.S. Hwy. 90	1327	●	56			2				●						●		●			●		
HISTORICAL																								
		Historical parks are not operated by the Parks Division—please call individual park.																						
22	BLAKELEY 33707 AL Hwy. 225, Spanish Fort, 36527, 251-626-0798	2000	●								●								●			●	●	
23	BRIERFIELD IRONWORKS 240 Furnace Pkwy., Brierfield, 35035, 205-665-1856	45	●	39	●		2				●	●			●			●				●	●	●
24	TANNEHILL IRONWORKS 12632 Confederate Pkwy., McCalla, 35111, 205-477-5711	1500	●	195	●		6				●	●		●	●				●			●	●	●



Sunset at Cheaha State Park

# Motorcycling in Alabama

When riding through Alabama you are treated to curvy roads, covered bridges, scenic outlooks, lush forests and cascading waterfalls.

Tour unique towns and villages that make up the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in North Alabama, such as Mentone, Fort Payne, Scottsboro, Gadsden and Anniston. As you ride the highways and byways in this area, you will discover several state parks and a magnificent national park site. Cheaha State Park, near Anniston, is the state's highest point. Inside the park, there are scenic roads and an abundance of natural beauty waiting to be discovered. Just a short distance away is Noccalula Falls in Gadsden.

Venturing into Northeast Alabama, you will discover Little River Canyon National Preserve, part of the U.S. National Park system. Ride the scenic roads past mushroom rock along Little River Canyon. Stop along the route to enjoy picturesque outlooks. Other pleasurable sites that await you are Grace's High Falls, Little River Falls and DeSoto State Park.

In the Scottsboro area, travel Jackson County Road 21 to Jackson County Road 33 and experience a portion of road-way nicknamed "Snake Way." It's the curviest and steepest road in Alabama with six true hairpins turns and incredible elevation changes, all within a one-mile section of the roadway. This roadway is so incredibly challenging that only the best of motorcyclist will dare to ride it. You may want to think twice before attempting to maneuver it.

Head to Huntsville to see the world's largest space museum, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center. Then travel to the Florence and Muscle Shoals area to see historic FAME and Muscle

Shoals Sound Studios, where artists such as The Rolling Stones, Aretha Franklin and the Black Keys recorded. Along the way, you will ride across and near the mighty Tennessee River. This portion of your trip will follow the same route as the Trail of Tears annual motorcycle ride, which ends near the Wichahpi Commemorative Stone Wall, a few steps from where the Natchez Trace Parkway routes through Alabama.

Ride through rolling hills, covered bridges, and the wide open cotton fields of Bankhead National Forest as you make your way to Birmingham. In Alabama's Magic City, you'll discover the world's largest collection of motorcycles at the Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum and learn about the history of Southern aviation at the Southern Museum of Flight. Other thrilling motor museums in the area include Talladega Superspeedway's International Motorsports Hall of Fame, the Mustang Museum of America in Odenville, and the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum in Calera.

Highway 31 runs parallel to much of I-65 and is an excellent choice for anyone wanting to take the road less traveled from north to south Alabama. If you travel this route from Birmingham, you could end up at Spanish Fort near Mobile and Gulf Shores. Any motorcyclist would find plenty to enjoy in this part of Alabama, including the infamous FloraBama roadside bar and the resort cities of Gulf Shores/Orange Beach, as well as historic Mobile, offering the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park and a number of other attractions.



## Alabama's Beaches

The unspoiled natural beauty of Alabama's coast combined with fun family activities, soft sand beaches and incredible sunsets makes this region Alabama's number one outdoor destination. Gulf Shores, Orange Beach and Dauphin Island offer sugar-white sand beaches warmed by sunshine and the beautiful Gulf of Mexico waters.

A woman with long dark hair, wearing sunglasses, a green sleeveless top, and white shorts, is leaning against a wooden railing on a boardwalk. A yellow bicycle is parked next to her. The boardwalk extends into the distance towards a bright, sandy beach and the ocean under a clear blue sky. Tall grasses are visible on the right side of the boardwalk.

Sweet Home  
**Alabama**  
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