



AUNZ REPORT

AUGUST 2026

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ABOUT TSUSA

Global Partner Programming

Visitation to the USA. July 2026 i-94 arrival data (released August)

Australia:

- Australia recorded **78,351 arrivals to the USA in July**, down 6% year on year.
- Australia **ranked thirteenth among long-haul international markets in June**, compared with approximately 12th place during much of the year to date.

Ports of Entry – Australia to the USA:

- California Arrivals were down 8% in July
- Texas continues to record the strongest percentage growth among the major gateways, with arrivals increasing **19% in July** and **14% year to date**

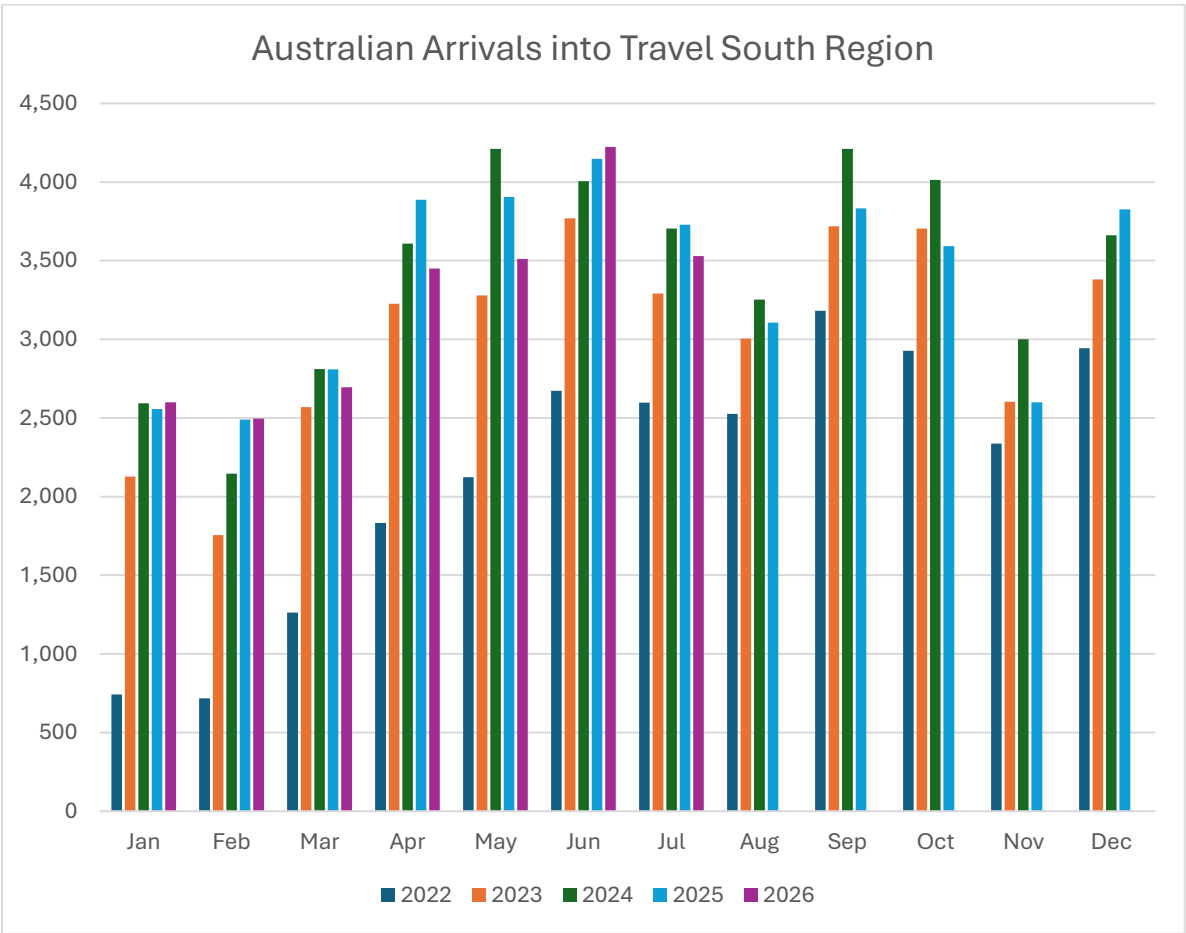
Port of entry	July arrivals	July 2026 vs 2025 difference	YTD Arrivals (Jan – July)	YTD, YOY difference
California	34,246	-8%	239,981	-7%
Hawaii	7,743	-25%	61,502	-14%
New York	10,058	16%	41,316	-18%
Texas	8,390	19%	62,986	13%
Florida	1,672	-37%	16,980	-11%
All other ports	16,242	-9%	93,638	-6%





First intended address – Travel South

- A total of 3,530 Australians listed a Travel South state as their first intended address in June, down 2% year on year.
- While July saw a slight decrease in arrivals, the destination increased its share of Australians choosing it as their first intended address, rising from 4% to 5% in July.



New Zealand:

- The USA recorded 20,274 arrivals from New Zealand in July, down 11% year on year. .





Global Travel Demand from Australia.
June 2026 data was released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showing where returning residents spent most time abroad.

Just over 917k Australians returned from an overseas trip in June, an increase of 1% YOY.

The top 10 countries as follows:

Rank	Country	June Visits	Percentage growth YOY
1	Indonesia	156,190	4.64%
2	New Zealand	81,060	0.12%
3	Japan	61,650	9.06%
4	UK	56,930	-12.59%
6	China(b)	55,410	11.06%
6	USA	52,030	-4.07%
7	Thailand	42,240	-4.28%
8	Vietnam	37,500	17.78%
9	Fiji	36,930	6.00%
10	Italy	32,420	-7.3%





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Travel Managers Program
- The Hills District Training
- International Showcase logistics
- Visit USA New Zealand Planning
- September Newsletter – Trade & PR Database
- Media, Talent and Podcast Networking & Meetings
- GMM Journalist Discussions & Target Lists
- Proactive Pitch: 'New Orleans and South Carolina take America's top two foodie city spots for 2026'





		July	August	Sept	Q3 TOTAL		
9 partners AL/KY/LA /MS/MO/ NC/SC/TN /ROTS	Australia						
	Trade						
	Trade Meetings/Trainings	22	10				
	Number of Agents Trained	30	18				
	Travel Trade Newsletter Recipient	N/A	N/A				
	Trade Newsletter Open Rate	N/A	N/A				
	Media						
	Media Meetings	2	7				
	Total articles published	2	5				
	Impressions	8,475,371	9,325,331				
	PR Newsletter Recipient	N/A	N/A				
	PR Newsletter Open Rate	N/A	N/A				
	Social						
	Facebook						
	Facebook Page						
	Followers	9,114	9,082				
	Page Likes	9,114	9,082				
	Social Posts						
	Reach	336	264				
	Views	136	178				
	Likes	3	11				
	Comments	0	0				
	Shares	0	0				
	Instagram						





	Reach	11	22				
	Views	82	383				
	Followers	28	2				
	Likes	4	11				
	Comments	0	0				
	Shares	0	0				





II. COMMUNICATIONS & PR

PR Coverage

Earned Media [Coverage Book](#)



Home > Travel

Hello Dollywood: The Weekly visits Dolly Parton's theme park

If you love country music and rollercoasters, there's only one place you need to travel to.

 Tara Wells



Source: Dollywood

 PRINT

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At a glance..

- The Weekly enjoys the fun and fanfare of Dollywood, the theme park devoted to Dolly Parton.
- While there, travel writer Tara Wells meets Dolly's relatives and explores the surroundings of the Great Smoky Mountains.

Standing on the front porch of [Dolly Parton](#)'s Tennessee mountain home is not quite as peaceful as a baby's sigh. The rumble of a triple-loop roller coaster is a telltale sign that, while the log cabin looks identical to Dolly's compact childhood home, it is not the same.





This is Dollywood, a theme park devoted to the queen of country music in Pigeon Forge, four hours' drive east of Nashville. Alongside thrill rides, the park celebrates the musician's early days in the Great Smoky Mountains.

The Parton family's two-room cabin has newspaper-lined walls, a modest table set for 13 (Dolly is the fourth of 11 children) and not nearly enough beds to go around. Avie Lee, Dolly's mother, decorated the replica with original family treasures when the park opened 40 years ago.



NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE - MAY 19: Dolly Parton attends the opening of Country Music Hall of Fame® and Museum's new exhibit 'Dolly Parton: Journey of a Seeker' at Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum on May 19, 2025 in Nashville, Tennessee. (Photo by Jason Kempin/Getty Images)

From Dolly's humble beginnings, she developed a personal style she describes as costing **"a lot of money to look this cheap"** (her big wigs, bejewelled boots and sparkly outfits are on display in Dollywood). The look was inspired by a woman she saw around Sevierville, the small town closest to their mountain cabin.

Sevierville's historic centre pays homage to its most famous former resident. A statue of young Dolly playing guitar sits outside the county courthouse. The Pines, site of Dolly's first paid gig as a 10-year-old, is now an entertainment venue where nostalgic diners play duckpin bowling (a smaller version of ten-pin) and board games.



E19182 Dolly Parton sculpture is pictured in downtown Sevierville, Tennessee





Back to the fifties

Dollywood, 10km to the south, celebrates Appalachia with hearty southern-style food including fried chicken with okra. The 1950s Sevierville of Dolly's childhood is revived for current-day visitors. The Pines makes a reappearance, this time as a theatre hosting live shows. There's a white-washed timber chapel boasting a century-old piano, and a recreation of the one-room school where Dolly and her siblings learnt their three Rs.

Dollywood is divided into 11 themed areas and can be explored on one- and two-day passes. The nearby Dollywood's DreamMore Resort & Spa offers easy transfers to the theme park.



Pigeon Forge and Sevierville Tennessee Drone Aerial.

Meet the Partons

With Dolly's 10 siblings, it's hard to visit the area without bumping into a Parton relative. Niece Heidi Parton has been performing at Dollywood since she was four, and like her father before her, now headlines her own show. Allow time to enjoy this and other live music throughout the day.

Continuing a family tradition of making moonshine (illegal during Prohibition days), another niece, Danielle Parton, is behind [Shine Girl](#) at Sevierville.





The Nashville connection

The day after her high school graduation, Dolly was on the bus to Nashville. Music City's iconic venues have all been touched by her sparkle: countless performances at the Grand Ole Opry (the first aged 13), recording hits like "Coat of Many Colours" at the historic RCA Studio B (now open for tours) and leaving an indelible mark on the Country Music Hall of Fame. Despite the glitz, Dolly keeps returning to the Great Smoky Mountains, both through her songwriting plus an annual visit to Dollywood.



Don't miss

Dinner shows are a uniquely American experience. Pigeon Forge offers many, but Dolly Parton's **Stampede** sets the bar. More than 30 horses and riders perform rodeo stunts and trick riding accompanied by Dolly's distinctive vocals.

The writer travelled with support from Travel South USA.

This feature was originally published in the March 2026 issue of The Australian Women's Weekly. [Subscribe so you never miss an issue.](#)





Traveller DESTINATION GUIDES INSPIRATION REVIEWS & ADVICE TRAVEL NEWS

Inspiration North America

After devastation, It took 20 years for this train to get back on track

 **Katrina Lobleby**
August 20, 2026 – 5:00am

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As Amtrak’s Mardi Gras service slithers through the Gulf Coast’s marshlands, a home perched on the longest of legs shimmers into view. “That’s the tallest house I’ve ever seen,” says a passenger, pointing through the train’s business-class picture windows.

It’s a triffid sprouting from a swamp, a familiar shape hyperextended, yet the surreal sight serves as a reminder – as if one were needed – that these lowlands stood no chance against Hurricane Katrina’s tsunami-like storm surge. In the aftermath, new residential building regulations came into force (with elevation requirements depending on proximity to the coastline).



Amtrak’s “Mardi Gras” service honours hard-partying New Orleans and Mobile, the two cities it connects. MATT DONNELLY/AMTRAK





Hurricane Katrina, the 21st anniversary of which falls on August 29, also wreaked havoc on the coastline's rail infrastructure – but that's not why Amtrak's passenger service took 20 years to return. Freight trains were back on the line mere months later. But it took decades of legal and financial mediation between Amtrak, the freight carriers that own the tracks and the Surface Transportation Board – a federal agency regulating freight railroads – before the passenger service got the all-clear.

In August 2025, the route relaunched. Historically part of Amtrak's cross-country Sunset Limited Service, it has been rebranded as the Mardi Gras service to honour its hard-partying New Orleans/Mobile bookends. Immediately, it exceeded expectations, clocking 100,000 passengers in April, well ahead of projections.

You can board the service in New Orleans and reach Mobile, a port city on Alabama's Gulf Coast, less than four hours later. But I want to see how this coastal playground – sprawled just west of the Alabama-Florida coastline and nicknamed "the Redneck Riviera" – has recovered from Katrina. After chugging over bridges and bayous, past sunset-tinted grasses and startled birds, we pull into the Mississippi coast's biggest hub of Gulfport (with heavy leaning on the horn) as darkness falls.

Our base for a few days is the 16-room Hotel Vela that's attached to Siren Social Club, a Michelin-recommended restaurant with a bar serving tiki-inspired cocktails. First up is a day of lazing on Ship Island, one of a chain of barrier islands. At Gulfport Yacht Harbour, I encounter Captain Louis Skrmetta whose entrepreneurial Croatian grandfather pivoted from shrimp and oyster fishing to running pleasure cruises across the shallow Mississippi Sound to Ship Island a century ago.



The route relaunched in August 2025.





The Mississippi coastline sprawls west of Alabama and Florida.

A fishing resort operated from the island's 19th-century fort and, as it was the 1920s Prohibition era, that inaugural vessel included slot machines for trips to the Isle of Caprice located beyond the 12-mile (19 kilometre) limit for gambling and drinking. The isle eroded away in 1932, but the owner's descendant, Susan Hunt, still pays taxes on the sunken island in case it ever reappears (we bump into Hunt while lunching at Mary Mahoney's Old French House in Biloxi).

Skrmetta must have stories and then some; I ask about his most challenging times. Without missing a beat, he nominates 2010's Deepwater Horizon oil spill. "The problem wasn't the oil itself but the dispersants – horrible stuff," he says. "You couldn't breathe in the areas where that stuff was placed. It killed hundreds of dolphins, and seabirds of course."

It outweighed Katrina, says Skrmetta, when his fleet scooted inland and was roped together. "When the storm surge hit, our boats lifted up like an elevator and kept going and going," he recalls. "All our lines snapped except for one heavy safety line. I'm thinking, 'We're going to lose our boats'. There were yachts breaking loose all around us."





On board the ferry to Ship Island.

Then he asked Captain “Buck” (William Buckley, who’s about to skipper us to Ship Island) to snag a drifting jet-ski with a boat hook. “He climbs down on it with the wind blowing, debris flying through the air, roof shingles – you can imagine, 100-knot winds going – and he yells up to me, ‘It’s got a key in the cup-holder!’ So the crew reset lines in that wind ... and we saved the boats with that jet-ski. It was one of those miracle things.”

He’s not the only one saved by a hurricane miracle. In the vibrant artistic community of Bay St Louis, I meet Nikki Moon, former proprietor of Bay Town Inn – a historic villa that Katrina washed away. The 12-metre surge pushed Moon and her Scottish terrier, along with a hurricane hunter and a handyman, into an oak that they clung to for several hours. That tree later became a sculpture – The Angel Tree – now installed between the rebuilt inn and the castaway-chic oceanfront bar Blind Tiger. “When folks talk about New Orleans and what they went through [with Katrina], they were the man-made storm and we were the God-made storm,” says Moon. On a sunny afternoon, as I laze outside the bar within view of Moon’s tree, while slurping a soft-serve margarita and peeling boiled crawfish, it’s impossible to imagine what unfolded here.





You get more of an idea at Ground Zero Hurricane Museum in neighbouring Waveland, which sounds like a cheesy water park but was Katrina's "ground zero" epicentre. The museum occupies the former elementary school – the city's only public building left standing after the storm. Most poignant is a water line painted high on the walls marking the building's inundation level. Around town, Katrina's ghost lingers in stubbornly vacant plots of land.

In Biloxi – the "Vegas of the South" – it's extraordinary to think that the surge pushed a casino barge atop the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art's Gallery of African American Art. The complex, which today includes Frank Gehry-designed shimmering sculptural pods, was taking shape in 2005 but had to start over. It honours George E. Ohr, the "Mad Potter of Biloxi", but also lays bare another side of the South's history. Its interpretive centre covers the Biloxi wade-ins – a years-long protest that finally led, in 1967, to African Americans gaining access to Biloxi's beaches.



Frank Gehry's Ohr-O'Keefe Museum of Art in Biloxi, Mississippi. GETTY IMAGES





Stories of the state's black musical history are shared at Bay St Louis' 100 Men Hall.

Another part of the state's black history is 100 Men Hall in the Depot District near Bay St Louis' railway station. The simple 1922-built hall, plastered with a mural that includes Etta James, was part of the Chitlin' Circuit – an ensemble of venues where black musicians could safely perform. Volunteer Doug Page is a vintage-record store owner and blues lover who held his wedding here. Katrina, he says, ripped off the hall's roof, but it survived the threat of demolition and is now the Mississippi Blues Trail's southernmost landmark.

"When I got involved it was already jumpin' with regular events," says Page, as he reels off the programming – Swamp(gr)Ass Get Down, Booker Fest (honouring local piano prodigy James Booker) and the summer's 11am blues brunches. I can't help but check Amtrak's schedule. Yes, you could zip from New Orleans for a toe-tappin' brunch and keep the party going on the fun train later that night.





Mardi Gras madness

The city of Mobile would like you to know it first celebrated Mardi Gras in 1703 – 15 years before that limelight-hogger New Orleans. If you're visiting outside of Mardi Gras (which falls 47 days before Easter), learn about the season's extravaganzas at Biloxi's Coastal Mississippi Mardi Gras Museum or Mobile Carnival Museum. At New Orleans' Mardi Gras

World, see how the fantastical parade floats are made. Before the tour begins, try king cake – normally only available during the carnival season. A plastic baby – signifying the Christ child – is smuggled into each cake and, if you're the one to find it, according to our guide, "you're crowned royalty for the day". See coastalmardigras.com, mobilecarnivalmuseum.com, mardigrasworld.com

THE DETAILS

RIDE

Amtrak's twice-daily, round-trip Mardi Gras service connects New Orleans, Louisiana with Mobile, Alabama. The three-hour, 43-minute service stops at four cities in coastal Mississippi – Bay St Louis (pronounced Lewis), Gulfport, Biloxi and Pascagoula. One-way tickets between New Orleans and Mobile cost from \$US19 (coach). Business class from \$US59. See amtrak.com

PLAY

Ship Island Excursions offers island round-trips from March to October, \$US48 adult (add an ice-filled drinks cooler for \$US12). The island is part of the National Park's Gulf Islands National Seashore. Day-trippers can swim, birdwatch and tour Fort Massachusetts, a fortification built from a million bricks and completed in 1866 just after the Civil War. See msshipisland.com, nps.gov

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STAY

Rooms at Hotel Vela, Gulfport from \$US169 a night; rooms at Pascagoula's 16-room Hotel Whiskey from \$US100 a night. See thehotelvela.com, hotelwhiskey.com

FLY

Qantas (qantas.com) flies from Sydney and Melbourne to Dallas Fort Worth, Texas; oneworld partner American Airlines connects to New Orleans and Mobile.

The writer was a guest of Travel South USA. See travelsouthusa.com





RAIL | UNITED STATES

Back on track

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Fans are once again riding a service derailed for decades by one of America's worst natural disasters. By Katrina Lobley

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biggest hub of Gulfport (with howling leaping on the horn) in darkness falls.

Our base for a few days is the 18-room Hotel Volo that's attached to Siren Social Club, a Michelin-recommended restaurant with a bar serving fish-inspired cocktails. First up is a day of living on Ship Island, one of a chain of barrier islands. At Gulfport Yacht Harbor, I encounter Captain Louis Bernotta, whose entrepreneurial Coastline Grandfather pivoted from shrimp and oyster fishing to running pleasure cruises across the shallow Mississippi Sound to Ship Island a century ago.

A fishing vessel operated from the island's 19th-century fort and, as it was the 1930s Florida law, that inaugural vessel included slot machines for trips to the Isle of

Cypre located beyond the 15-mile 68th Avenue limit for gambling and drinking. The tale ended early in 1992, but the owner's descendant, James Hunt, still pays taxes on the random island license, even though the law has long been dead while landing at Miss. Museum's Old French House in Biloxi.

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Then he asked Captain "Doc" William Buckley, who's about to depart us to Ship





From far left:
Amtrak's Mardi Gras
service runs between
New Orleans and
Mobile, Alabama;
Bay St Louis' 100
Men Hall, a
landmark of the
Mississippi Blues
Trail; and a Gulf
Coast beach scene.

Island) to snag a drifting jet-ski with a boat hook. "He climbs down on it with the wind blowing, debris flying through the air, roof shingles - you can imagine, 100-knot winds going - and he yells up to me, 'It's got a key in the cup-holder!'. So the crew reset lines in that wind ... and we saved the boats with that jet-ski. It was one of those miracle things."

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The writer was a guest of Travel South USA. See travelsouthusa.com





Inspiration North America

This museum offers a ringside seat on the life of boxing’s greatest



Katrina Lobley

August 28, 2026 – 3:19pm

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Sport and alcohol are a potent mix – and both attract visitors to Louisville, Kentucky’s largest city. It’s home to the Kentucky Derby, the country’s longest-running sporting event. Also known as the “Most Exciting Two Minutes in Sport”, the race has run every year since 1875 – including during World War II and the COVID pandemic.

Louisville is also nicknamed Bourbon City as it pumps out a third of the US’s output (one downtown block is called Whiskey Row and distilleries host more bourbon tours than you can poke a swizzle stick at). The city’s souvenir badges say things like “Talk derby to me”, “Be the mint to my julep” and “Call me old-fashioned”.



A museum visitor tests their skills.





A huge bronze-coloured cylinder incorporated into the Muhammad Ali Centre's architecture might resemble a cocktail shaker but of course it is not (the city's most famous son, born here in 1942 and buried here in 2016, converted to Islam and was a teetotaler). The structural element was inspired by Ali's lighting of the torch at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

From certain angles, you might also spy a winged roofline – an homage to Ali's poetic taunt to opponents that he could “float like a butterfly, sting like a bee”. Artfully placed tiles on the facade depict Ali in various boxing stances.

The centre, overlooking a stretch of the Ohio River separating Kentucky from Indiana, opened in 2005. Celebrating the outspoken boxer and activist, once called the “Louisville Lip”, before simply becoming “The Greatest”, it showcases not only Ali's sporting achievements but his humanitarian ones. It also includes a prayer and reflection room – an acknowledgment of his faith.

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This might sound serious, but there's also lots of fun to be had. At a re-creation of Ali's Deer Lake, Pennsylvania training camp, for example, you can shuck your shoes and step into a ring to take boxing lessons from one of Ali's nine children.



Ringside at the Muhammad Ali Centre.





From a TV screen, Laila (who followed in her father's dancer-like footsteps and remained undefeated until her 2007 retirement) advises: "Check out his trademark shuffle he used to avoid and confuse opponents." Then put her lessons into effect by "shadow-boxing" Ali himself.

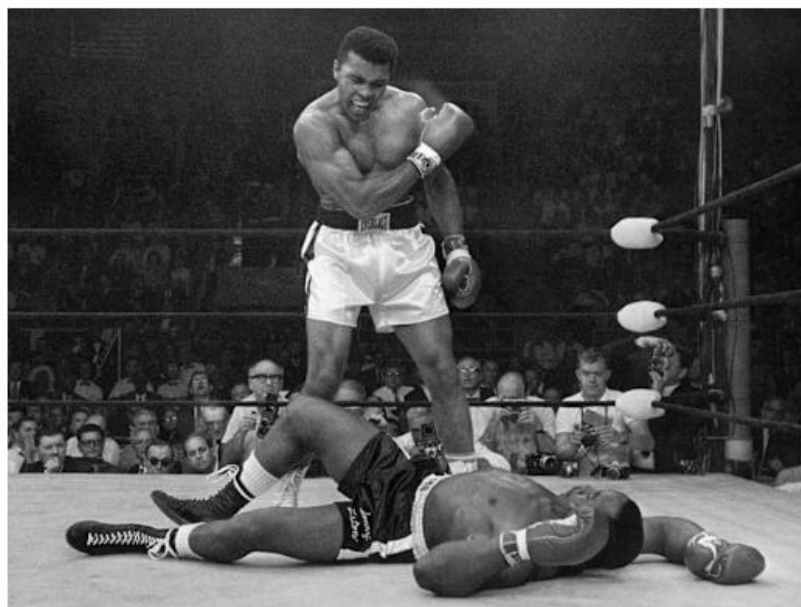
Ali's tumultuous, multifaceted life (which included 30 years of living with Parkinson's disease) was so large that it's an almost impossible task to cover it all. Of course, the centre spotlights his Louisville childhood, with a timeline revealing how 12-year-old Cassius Clay first became interested in boxing. When he reported the theft of his bicycle, he met a policeman who ran a boxing program. Cassius took to the sport right away. His journey from devout, churchgoing Christian to his embrace of Islam, leading to a name change at 22, is also explored in-depth.

Ali became a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War. His refusal to be drafted led to professional repercussions that lifted only as the public mood swung against the US involvement in the conflict.

Visitors with more than a passing interest in boxing can take a seat "ringside" to watch Ali's historic matches, including the Rumble in the Jungle in 1974 against George Foreman in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo).

Artefacts also point to Ali's ventures outside the ring, including a cologne, a comic book in which he joins forces with Superman, his 1975 biography, *The Greatest*, edited by Toni Morrison (then working at Random House) and his Grammy Award-nominated spoken-word record.





Ali knocks down Sonny Liston in the first round of their second bout on May 25, 1965. AP

The larger-than-life, three-time heavyweight world champion has been gone a decade now – yet his legacy includes lessons for us all. He was literally a life-saver (in 1981, he talked down a suicidal man from an LA high-rise), famously generous and supremely self-confident. As a keep cup in the gift shop says: “Be Great. Do Great Things.”

THE DETAILS

VISIT

The Muhammad Ali Centre, on Museum Row in downtown Louisville, is open Wednesday to Sunday, 10am-5pm. Entry costs \$US20 (\$28) adult/\$US10 children. See alicenter.org

FLY

The fastest way to reach Louisville’s Muhammad Ali International Airport from Australia is by flying Qantas to Dallas Fort Worth and connecting via American Airlines to Louisville. Australian passport holders require an ESTA (\$US40.27) to visit the United States. See qantas.com, esta.cbp.dhs.gov

STAY

Omni Louisville Hotel is near downtown Louisville’s main attractions. See omnihotels.com

The writer was a guest of Travel South USA.

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Travel tips

Partner loves sport, but you don’t? Five great destinations you can both enjoy





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Dolly Parton's tourism legacy remembered as Dollywood, Tennessee mourn

Dollywood and Tennessee tourism authorities have paid tribute to global musical and cultural icon Dolly Parton following her passing on Tuesday.



Dolly Parton passed away, aged 80.

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Parton wrote countless hits, but her legacy extends far beyond music. Alongside her philanthropy, she also made a lasting mark on tourism, most notably through her renowned Dollywood theme park.

Dollywood, in Pigeon Forge, is one of Tennessee's major tourism attractions, combining rides, entertainment, food and Appalachian culture. Its influence reaches beyond the gates, helping draw visitors to the Smoky Mountains and supporting the region's tourism economy.

Dollywood said Parton's wish was for the park to remain a place of "joy, hope and togetherness", with families celebrating through laughter, music and shared experiences.



A Dollywood in Pigeon Forge.





“The greatest privilege of my life has been helping Dolly bring her dreams to life at Dollywood,” Dollywood Parks & Resorts President Eugene Naughton said.

“Dolly’s heart was as vast as the mountains she cherished, and her compassion knew no bounds. She inspired generations to dream boldly and love deeply.

“While we grieve her loss, we are honored and committed to carry her light forward. Her legacy will continue to shine in every melody sung, every smile shared and every dream kindled within these gates.”

A tourism ambassador



Dolly Parton Statue, Sevierville, Tennessee.

Tennessee Department of Tourist Development
Commissioner Mark Ezell said Parton’s contribution to the state’s visitor economy was significant.

“She was also an extraordinary friend and ambassador for Tennessee. A constant presence and champion for our state across generations,” he said.

“She invited the world into our music, our mountains and our culture and made everyone feel welcome.”

Ezell also highlighted Parton’s enduring connection with Tennessee, describing her as an icon who used her platform to promote the state.

“Today, Tennessee’s tourism and hospitality industry joins all Tennesseans and millions around the world in mourning this tremendous loss. We are heartbroken by her passing and forever grateful for all she gave Tennessee and the world,” he remarked.





Dolly Parton on stage at the opening of a new travel stop in July.

Just last month, TDTD celebrated the opening of Dolly's Tennessean Travel Stop in Cornersville, congratulating Parton on the new travel hub that combines dining, a dog park, a general store, fuel stations and a lounge for travellers on the move. Dolly herself was in attendance at the launch event.

Dollywood said people wanting to honour Parton could consider donating to Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, the literacy organisation she founded.





Inspiration USA

I visited Dollywood on a holiday. Like Dolly herself, it's totally unique

Ash Jurberg
August 27, 2026 – 3:23pm

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“Will you actually wear it?” my wife asks.

I am standing in a theme park gift shop holding a bright red T-shirt with Dolly Parton’s face on the front. “Probably not,” I say, and pick a dark green one that says “Dollywood” instead. Normally, I would sprint past the merch. Today I have stopped. I want something to take home.



The rides and attractions of Dollywood, Tennessee. ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

When my Texas-raised wife suggested a trip to Knoxville, Tennessee, to visit relatives, I looked up what else was nearby and saw a theme park in the Smoky Mountains owned by Dolly Parton. I love rollercoasters. Dollywood has 11. I could take or leave Dolly Parton.

Wild Eagle is known as a “wing coaster”. Riders sit either side of the track, feet dangling. It has four inversions and drops you 40 metres at 100km/h. I ride it three times. I expected to like it. I did not expect to leave a Dolly Parton fan.

That was two years ago. On Wednesday, the country music legend [died in Nashville, aged 80](#). I had one chance to meet her, and turned it down.





Dollywood opened in 1986 in Pigeon Forge, a 100-kilometre drive from Knoxville, in the foothills of the Smokies. A replica of the two-room cabin in nearby Locust Ridge where Parton grew up with her parents and 11 siblings stands inside the entrance. It had no electricity or running water. Her brother, Bobby, built the replica himself. It is smaller than our motel room.



Dolly Parton make an appearance at the theme park in 2024. AP PHOTO/AMY HARRIS

It is a week before Christmas, and Dollywood feels unlike any theme park I've been to.

We watch a Christmas show in which Parton's nieces, nephews and cousins perform on stage. The crowd is older than any theme-park crowd I've seen, and they sing along to every number. The couple beside me say they've been coming for more than 30 years, first with their kids, now with their grandkids.

At night, 6 million lights are switched on across the park. We take a steam train ride, a relaxing 20-minute loop through the mountains, hot chocolate in hand, the lights running up the slopes on both sides of the track.

I came here thinking of Dolly as someone my wife loved. Seeing her whole story built into the place, the cabin, the family on stage, the songs, I left understanding why.

After two days in nearby Sevierville, home to a Dolly Parton statue, we point the car west, towards Nashville, the city in which the singer-songwriter made her name. We go to the Country Music Hall of Fame and read every plaque, and it stops being only about Parton. It's also about Hank Williams, Johnny Cash and Patsy Cline, names I also ignored growing up in Australia. I came for Parton but left wanting to hear all of them.





Dolly Parton memorabilia on sale at the theme park gift shop. AP PHOTO/CAMDEN HALL

We buy tickets to the Grand Ole Opry, the most famous stage in country music, where shows have been run for a century. Parton is not playing, but her face is the first thing you see in the Opry Plaza, in a mural several metres high. On my last day, I find a bookshop and buy *Songteller: A Life in Lyrics*, Parton's 2020 memoir about many of the songs she wrote. I read most of it on the long flight home.

A few months later, Dollywood invites me back for an exhibit opening and media lunch. Parton will be there. I seriously consider flying back. In the end I say no. At the time, I thought it was ridiculous to spend \$2000 to fly to Tennessee for lunch, even with Dolly Parton at the table. Looking back, I wish I'd gone. Some things are priceless. Or \$2000.

When my wife hears that Parton has died, she lights the Dolly Parton candle we brought home from the theme park and puts a record on the turntable. *I Will Always Love You* plays, the song we walked down the aisle to, chosen by my wife and agreed to by a nervous groom who didn't really like it at the time, who's wearing a Dolly Parton T-shirt as he writes this.

RELATED ARTICLE



Vale

Dolly Parton recorded more than 1000 songs – we've picked her top 10





Media Meetings & Engagements

Media Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Interest/Status	Follow-up/Next step
The Sunday Life & Harper's BAZAAR – Editor and Freelancer, Jane Rocca	Met with Jane to discuss potential opportunities across The Sunday Life and Harper's BAZAAR. She expressed strong interest in the South's rich culture, particularly stories centred around food, lifestyle and local people. The discussion highlighted opportunities for longer-form features and people-led storytelling.	Continue discussions and provide relevant story ideas and destination updates for future opportunities.
QANTAS Travel Insider – Content Manager, Jessica Manson & Helen Pavendranathan	Met with the QANTAS Travel Insider team to discuss potential partnership opportunities for Travel South. The team shared audience insights, noting U.S. travel bookings have increased by 10% over the past six months, reinforcing the market's strong appetite for U.S. travel and making QANTAS a valuable partner for reaching high-intent travellers.	Soph to continue conversations with the QANTAS team about GMM and IPW opportunities
78 Amped – Podcast & Online – Founders, Max and Sam	Met with founders Max and Sam following their interview with Robin Barnes during the mission. We discussed opportunities to showcase the South's music heritage, emerging creative scenes and major cultural events through podcast interviews and editorial content. Their audience alignment presents strong opportunities for music-focused storytelling.	Soph to discuss with Travel South team on next call
NZ Herald – Travel Editor, Anna Sarjeant	Met with Anna to discuss editorial priorities and travel trends within the New Zealand market. She highlighted strong reader interest in culturally immersive experiences, food and drink, local communities and destinations with a strong sense of place. We also discussed GMM and IPW, with Anna expressing interest in attending. NZ Herald has previously participated in these events and she is currently exploring opportunities internally.	Follow up in October with GMM information
OFF MENU – Talent Agency, Lauren Mikkor	Met with talent agent Lauren Mikkor, who represents country music artist Morgan Evans. With Morgan recently announced as a judge on Australian Idol, there may be timely opportunities to collaborate around media activity and social content. As an Australian who has spent much of the past decade living between Nashville and Australia, Morgan has a strong and authentic connection to the South.	Soph to discuss with Travel South team on next call





III. TRAVEL TRADE

Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings).

Contacts	Interest/Status	Follow-up /Next step
Janine Hocking Founder Secret South Travel	Update on Janines new business 'Secret South Travel' dedicated exclusively to creating custom drive itineraries in the south for Travellers from Australia, New Zealand and the UK.	Ongoing
Erin Beckford Personal Travel Manager Travel Managers	Support and training for Nelson bay Travel Expo.	N/A
Kate Rix Marketing Coordinator Travel Managers	Discussions and approval on Travel South marketing campaign.	Ongoing
Leearne Groves Marketing Executive Travel Managers	Briefing a discussion on Travel South marketing campaign	Ongoing
Antonella Damiano Personal Travel Manager Travel Managers	Info and training for client doing a southern road trip including 5 nights in Memphis and	N/A
Una Jordan Consultant Travel Central	Update on Travel South product with training and links for client queries.	N/A
Adam Schwab CEO Founder Luxury Escapes	Update and flight confirmation. Meeting set for October to brainstorm key note speech so travel South members get the most out of Adams attendance at International Showcase conference day.	Ongoing
Andrew Gay Founder/MD Travel USA	Update and support with Southern USA Itineraries for promotion with Brand USA Campaign.	N/A





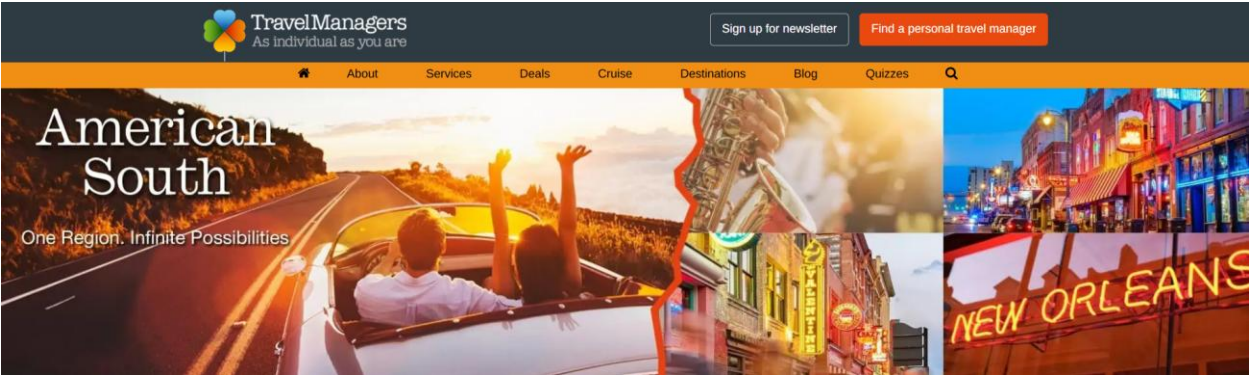
The Hills Cluster Training	Travel South training with 16 agents from the Hills district	N/A
Sophia Cogan Training and Development Manager Luxury Escapes	Meeting and scheduled training with Luxury Escapes reservations team for early October	N/A





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Travel South USA: A Soulful Journey of Taste & Sound

Embark on a soulful journey through the heart of the American South, where every bite tells a story and every note stirs the spirit. From the smoky richness of slow-cooked BBQ to the electrifying rhythms of blues, jazz, and country, discover a region where flavour and music are deeply intertwined. This is more than a destination, it's an experience that lingers long after the last song fades.

Take your adventure beyond the plate and stage with tours and one-of-a-kind experiences. Explore iconic landmarks, join live music crawls, cruise along scenic waterways, and dive into the stories behind the South's most celebrated flavours and sounds. With exclusive deals and tailored experiences, you can experience the region like a true insider.

In 2027, the South will mark 50 years since the passing of Elvis Presley, the King of Rock 'n' Roll. From the legendary Graceland in Memphis to the very streets that shaped his sound, this milestone offers a unique opportunity to celebrate his enduring legacy. Special events, tribute performances, and exclusive tours will bring fans closer than ever to the music that changed the world.

Whether you're chasing Elvis memories or simply searching for authentic experiences, the South welcomes you with open arms. Come for the music, stay for the food, and leave with stories that last a lifetime.

If you want to experience the South of USA, ask your [Personal Travel Manager](#) or see below for more.

Sponsored by:



Trivia time y'all

Think you know your blues from your bluegrass? Put your knowledge to the test with our South USA Music Trivia! From the birth of jazz in New Orleans to the roots of country in Nashville, discover the legends, sounds, and stories that shaped the soundtrack of the South.

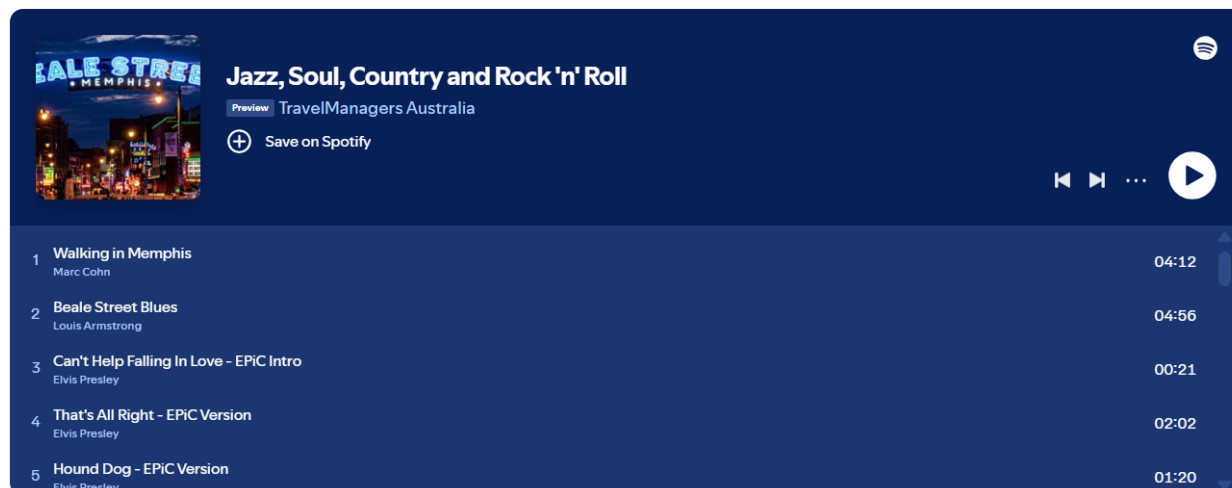




How well do you know the Sounds of the South? Test your knowledge on country music, the legends of Nashville and all things blues, soul and Jazz!

Tunes of the South USA

Take a soulful stroll down Beale Street, where blues was born, rock'n'roll found its swagger and hip shaking hits of the King – Elvis Presley or tap along with Johnny Cash or the rich sound of B.B. King. Turn up the sound to the heartland of the music of the South USA.





Heartland of the South: Music and Food for the Soul



Road trip through the Heartland of the South USA

Built on legendary music, warm hospitality and unforgettable food, pack your appetite and get ready to taste and listen to flavours and music of the South in our ultimate road trip.

[More](#)



Smoke, Spice and Soul: Food of the South

Let's take a foodies journey through the South of USA on a road trip where stop tells a new story. From the smoky barbecue pits of Kansas City and Memphis to the fiery kick of Nashville's famous hot chicken, each destination serves up its own signature flavour, steeped in tradition and local pride.

[More](#)



Six Legendary Stops on America's Great Music Trail

A road trip through the southern United States is a journey into the beating heart of America's musical heritage. From the foothills of Tennessee to the Mississippi Delta, each new destination adds another note to a soundtrack that covers everything from gospel, soul and bluegrass to jazz, R&B and rock 'n' roll.

[More](#)

Follow the music and find the flavour



Southern Sounds & Elvis Tour

7 nights from \$3,269*pp twin share. Save \$250* per person. Plus, guided sightseeing, admission to Graceland and tour of Elvis Presley's mansion, private transport, and more.

[More](#)



Music Cities of America Tour

9 nights from \$4,129*pp twin share. Save up to \$500* per couple, 4-day car rental, sightseeing tours, admission to Country Music Hall of Fame and Graceland, plus more.

[More](#)



Music Cities: Nashville & Memphis Tour

6 nights from \$5,049*pp twin share. Complimentary pre- or post-night accommodation. Plus, breakfast daily, guided tours, Sun Studios visit, tour of Graceland, and more.

[More](#)





A Road Trip Through South USA's Food & Music Heartland

 comments

From the smoky BBQ pits of Kansas City to the soulful flavours of Memphis and the legendary hot chicken of Nashville, this journey is a feast for the senses. Follow the roads that shaped American food culture, discovering iconic dishes, hidden gems and local traditions along the way. More than just a road trip, this is a journey through the stories, flavours and communities that make the South unforgettable.

Built on legendary music, warm hospitality and unforgettable food, pack your appetite and get ready to taste and listen to flavours and music of the South in our ultimate road trip.





Kansas City, Missouri – Jazz, BBQ & Midwest charm

Start your journey in the heart of the Midwest, where bold flavours and deep musical roots set the tone. Explore the elegant Country Club Plaza, dive into history at the WWI Museum, and indulge in Kansas City's world-famous barbecue.

Don't miss:

- 18th & Vine Jazz District
- Legendary BBQ Joints
- Union Station and the city's iconic fountains
- Visit the world's first Museum of BBQ
- A Kansas City Chiefs game (seasonal)
- Springfield: Birthplace of Route 66

Along the way: St Louis, Hannibal and St Charles, plus a stop at Walt Disney's hometown museum.

Stay: St Louis makes the perfect halfway overnight stop.

Must eat: Burnt ends, ribs and brisket. Between St Louis and Kentucky, try fried chicken and biscuits and gravy.

Vibe: bold smoky flavours with easygoing Midwest charm.

Drive time to Nashville: Approx 8.5 hours (892km) via St Louis.





Nashville, Tennessee – Country Music Capital

Head south to Nashville, where music fills the air and energy is contagious. From honky-tonks to historic landmarks, this is a city that lives and breathes country music.

Don't miss:

- Rusty's TV & Movie Car Museum
- Natchez Trace State Park
- Country Music Hall of Fame
- Lower Broadway's Honky-Tonks
- Grand Ol Opry
- Jack Daniels Distillery

Along the way: Patsy Cline Memorial, Eiffel Tower Park, Crystal Shrine Grotto.

Must eat: Nashville hot chicken, pulled pork sandwiches and ribs.

Vibe: Energetic, musical, toe-tapping fun.

Drive time to Memphis: Approx 3 hours.





Memphis, Tennessee – Blues, Soul & Rock ‘n’ Roll

Continue to Memphis, where music history and soulful flavours collide. Home to blues, rock ‘n’ roll and Elvis Presley, this city is rich in culture and character.

Don’t miss:

- Graceland
- Sun Studio
- Beale Street
- Stax Museum
- Memphis Rock ‘n’ Roll Museum
- National Civil Rights Museum

Along the way to Huntsville: Stop in Jackson, Tennessee for classic Southern comfort food.

Must eat: Dry-rubbed BBQ ribs and banana pudding.

Vibe: Soulful, historic and raw in the best way.

Drive time to Huntsville: Approx 3.5 hours.





Huntsville Alabama – Space and Southern Charm

Travel through Alabama, where innovation meets tradition. Huntsville offers a surprising blend of science, creativity and classic Southern hospitality.

Don't miss:

- US space & Rocket Centre
- Big Spring Park
- Lowe Mill Arts & Entertainment

Along the way to New Orleans: Birmingham, Lake Guntersville, Jesse Owens Museum and Ave Maria Grotto.

Must eat: Hickory-smoked pork with Alabama White Sauce and Gulf Shrimp and Oysters.

Vibe: Smart, relaxed and unexpectedly cool.

Drive time to New Orleans: Approx 6.5 hours.





New Orleans, Louisiana – Jazz, Creole & Mardi Gras

End your journey in vibrant New Orleans, where every street hums with music and every meal is a celebration. A melting pot of cultures, this city delivers unforgettable flavours and experiences.

Don't miss:

- French Quarter & Bourbon Street
- Live Jazz performances
- Beignets & Creole cuisine
- Mississippi River Steamboat Cruie
- Having a morning beignet at café Du Monde in the French Quarter
- Visit St Louis Cathedral
- Discover the darker side of the city's voodoo, vampire or cemetery tour
- Visit a drive through cocktail and order your Daiquiris
- Mardi Gras

Must eat: Gumbo, jambalaya, crawfish and a classic po' boy.

Vibe: Lively, indulgent and unlike anywhere you have been before.

Why this route works?

This drive captures the **heartbeat of the South** – from smoky BBQ pits and neon-lit honky-tonks to gospel roots and jazz-filled streets. It's cultural, emotional, and packed with storytelling moments at every stop.

Whether you came for the music, the food, or the open road, the American South has a way of staying with you long after the journey ends. It's in the rhythm of a blues guitar drifting through a warm evening, the smoky scent of barbecue in the air, and the stories shared by locals who bring each destination to life. From vibrant cities to quiet backroads, every mile reveals something unexpected.

[Your personal travel manager](#) can help you to create a tailored itinerary that encapsulates its culture, history and community through unique food experiences, boutique stays and hidden-gem stops.





Smoke, Spice and Soul: Food of the South

 comments

By road, the most direct route through the United States' southern states from Kansas City, Missouri to New Orleans, Louisiana is a little more than 1300 kilometres. Travelling mostly on interstate highways and allowing minimal rest stops, you could cover the distance quite comfortably in a couple of days.

However, that would mean missing the opportunity to experience the real South: its incredible warmth and diversity and, perhaps most importantly, its mouthwatering cuisine. Take the slower route and you'll get so much more than a road trip – you'll have a VIP pass to the flavours and traditions that make this destination one of North America's most fascinating, friendly and fun places to explore.





Kansas City, Missouri – Heartland Comfort and BBQ Beginnings

Start your journey in Kansas City, Missouri, which is renowned as one of America's great barbecue capitals. We're talking mouthwatering, tender cuts of meat, lovingly basted with the city's signature thick, sweet, tomato-based sauce and then smoked for hours over hickory wood until it's crispy and caramelised on the outside, succulent and juicy on the inside.

Hungry yet? Not to worry – you can work up an appetite exploring the city's historic highlights, from the Spanish-inspired outdoor streetscapes of Country Club Plaza to the fascinating and often moving exhibits at the National WWI Museum and Memorial. It costs a little extra to climb the museum's 66-metre Liberty Tower, but the views from the top make it well worth the effort.

Ready to feast? Head for one of the city's most iconic BBQ joints, such as Joe's Kansas City Bar-B-Que or Arthur Bryant's Barbeque. The names may be modest, but the food is anything but – smoked brisket sandwiches that are best enjoyed with generous sides of coleslaw and onion rings.



Memphis, Tennessee – Smoke, Soul & Blues-inspired Flavour

From Kansas City, you'll want to head east as far as St Louis, where you cross paths with the iconic Route 66. Treat yourself to a quick stop to sample the city's famous St Louis-cut ribs, and then turn south until you roll into Memphis, Tennessee, where the food scene is all about pork barbecue, especially ribs and pulled pork.

Unlike Kansas City's sweeter, sauce-heavy style, Memphis barbecue is typically dry-rubbed with spices before being smoked low and slow over hickory wood. Head down to Beale Street for a feast of ribs or pulled pork sandwiches topped with coleslaw. Add a smoked sausage on the side, and you'll be all set to soak up the atmosphere at one of Beale Street's other main drawcard: its live blues clubs.





Mississippi Delta – Bold, spicy and modern Southern

Continuing south, you'll enter the Mississippi Delta: a region where food, music and history are all infused with African, Indigenous, French and Spanish influences. The abundance of fresh seafood and fertile farmland has resulted in a culinary style that is hearty, richly flavoured, and deeply rooted in local ingredients.

If southern cuisine has you thinking of comfort foods like fried chicken, cornbread and black-eyed peas, you'll find plenty to enjoy as you follow the river through smaller cities like Tunica, Cleveland and Yazoo. Farm-raised catfish is a firm local favourite that you'll find on menus everywhere, usually coated in seasoned cornmeal and fried until golden, then served with hush puppies, coleslaw and hand-cut fries.

Be sure to try the Delta version of a tamale. Smaller and softer than their Mexican counterparts, these pockets of spicy ground meat are wrapped in a cornmeal dough, then enclosed in corn husks to be gently simmered in a chilli-infused broth – delicious!



Alabama – Southern & coastal influence

You could continue due south to New Orleans, but no Southern foodie road trip would be complete without a side quest to the city of Birmingham: culinary capital of Alabama. From elegant fine-dining restaurants to vibrant food halls, you could eat your way through the aptly nicknamed 'Dining Table of the South,' sampling homestyle favourites like grilled chicken slathered in Alabama's famous white barbecue sauce.

You'll then have the perfect excuse to check out the Gulf Coast culinary scene, where fresh seafood reigns supreme. You can feast on sauteed crab claws dripping with garlic butter, shucked oysters straight from the ocean, and crispy battered shrimp po'boys slathered in a tangy, remoulade sauce.





New Orleans, Louisiana – Creole, Cajun & culinary theatre

You may have reached the endpoint of your culinary journey, but New Orleans is, for many foodies, the main course. Food is central to this vibrant city's identity, so you can expect it to infuse every moment of your visit.

Start your day with beignets (doughnuts) and café au lait at the Café du Monde, which has been fuelling visitors and locals alike since 1862. Lunch should be a hefty muffuletta sandwich, and dinner can be built around local Creole and Cajun specialities like gumbo, blackened catfish and turtle soup. If you have a sweet tooth, you're sure to love bread pudding with bourbon sauce and Bananas Foster.

New Orleans is also famous for its frozen daiquiris, which you can sample in a variety of creative flavours while soaking up the atmosphere of the French Quarter. Louisiana's unique liquor legislation means it is even possible to enjoy these tasty cocktails on the go (as long as you're not drinking and driving), thanks to drive-through daiquiri stands that are a local institution.



Did someone say spice?

Born on Avery Island, Louisiana in 1868, Tabasco is more than just a hot sauce, it's a piece of culinary history. Created by Edmund McIlhenny using just three simple ingredients: tabasco peppers and salt and vinegar. The recipe has remained virtually unchanged for over 150 years.

Still family-owned and produced in its original home, each bottle carries a legacy of craftsmanship, with peppers aged in oak barrels for up to three years. Today, Tabasco is a global pantry staple, adding its signature tang and heat to dishes all over the world.

If you want the full Tabasco experience, visit the Tabasco Factory and Museum on Avery Island – where it all began.



Have we whet your appetite yet?

From the smoky BBQ pits of Kansas City to the spice-filled kitchens of New Orleans, a food-inspired Southern road trip is not to be missed if you love experiencing a destination through its cuisine.

[Your personal travel manager](#) can help you to create a tailored itinerary that encapsulates its culture, history and community through unique food experiences, boutique stays and hidden-gem stops.





Six Legendary Stops on America's Great Music Trail

🗨️ comments

A road trip through the southern United States is a journey into the beating heart of America's musical heritage. From the foothills of Tennessee to the Mississippi Delta, each new destination adds another note to a soundtrack that covers everything from gospel, soul and bluegrass to jazz, R&B and rock 'n' roll.

Filled with unforgettable performances, legendary recording studios and iconic live venues, it's all about experiencing the places, people and moments that forever changed the sound of popular music.





St Louis, Missouri

Start your journey in the city of St Louis, which introduced us to some of the twentieth century's most iconic musical greats, including Scott Joplin, Miles Davis, Tina Turner and Chuck Berry. You'll find their names honoured with stars along the city's Walk of Fame, along with other homegrown heroes like Charles Lindbergh and Tennessee Williams.

Musical must-dos in St Louis:

- Explore the Delmar Loop, with its record stores and performance venues, bars and restaurants.
- Grab a burger at Blueberry Hill, the restaurant and music venue immortalised by Fats Domino.
- Experience a blues night at one of the city's legendary live music spots, such as Broadway Oyster Bay or Beale on Broadway.

Visit the Scott Joplin House State Historic Landmark, former home of the 'Father of Ragtime'.



Owensboro, Kentucky

During the 1940s, a new genre of acoustic music emerged from the Appalachian region of Kentucky and Tennessee: a blend of Irish and Scottish folk music and local influences. Owensboro is considered the Bluegrass Music Capital of the World, and it's renowned as a city that is friendly, scenic and utterly obsessed with celebrating its musical heritage.

Musical must-dos in Owensboro:

- Visit the Bluegrass Music Hall of Fame & Museum, where you'll learn the story of bluegrass through interactive exhibits, rare recordings and impromptu performances.
- Take a side trip to the nearby town of Rosine to take in a live jam session in the birthplace of bluegrass pioneer, Bill Monroe.

Time your visit to coincide with the annual ROMP Festival, which takes place every summer and features some of the world's best bluegrass and American roots musicians.





Nashville, Tennessee

This vibrant city, lovingly nicknamed "Music City," is a must-visit on any music lover's southern road trip itinerary. With hundreds of live music venues dotted throughout the city, you'll be treated to a musical feast that starts early and continues well into the night. Country music may be Nashville's bread and butter, but you'll also find plenty of rock, bluegrass, gospel and singer-songwriter performances to add extra variety to the city's soundtrack.

Musical must-dos in Nashville:

- See a show at the city's most iconic live music venue, the Grand Ole Opry. Even if you're not a die-hard country music fan, the atmosphere and history will ensure that it's an unforgettable experience.
- Visit the Ryman Auditorium, also known as the "Mother Church of Country Music", and the original home of the Grand Ole Opry. Take a backstage tour, book tickets to a concert or just stand on the famous stage where greats like Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash performed.
- Drop into one of the honky-tonk clubs that line Lower Broadway, the epicentre of Nashville's modern-day live music scene.





Dollywood, Tennessee

Heading deeper into Tennessee, you'll find yourself on the home turf of the undisputed queen of country music. Dolly Parton grew up in the Great Smoky Mountains of eastern Tennessee, a beautiful region of dense forests, steep peaks where the locals are just a little obsessed with their brand of country music.

Dolly's love of Tennessee and its cultural heritage is reflected in this unique theme park, where alongside the usual thrill rides and performances, you can learn about traditional elements of Appalachian art and culture, from blacksmithing and glass-blowing to weaving and woodcarving.

Musical must-dos in Pigeon Forge:

- Follow the story of Dolly's life and musical career through the interactive Dolly Parton Experience.
- Join Dolly on a multimedia, multisensory film adventure through the Great Smoky Mountains.

Check out live performances from a variety of talented country music performers, including Dolly's niece, family and friends.





Memphis, Tennessee

There are few cities that compare to Memphis when it comes to their influence on popular music. Considered the birthplace of rock'n'roll, more than a quarter of the songs inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame were either recorded in Memphis or have a close connection to the city.

Musical must-dos in Memphis:

- Make a detour enroute to Memphis to visit Muscle Shoals, where artists like Aretha Franklin, The Rolling Stones, Lynyrd Skynyrd and Cher recorded some of their biggest hits at FAME Studio and Muscle Shoals Sound Studio.
- Pay a visit to the legendary Sun Studio, which launched the careers of rock luminaries like Roy Orbison, Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash.

Explore Graceland, the former home of Elvis Presley. From his famous car collection to the peaceful Meditation Garden where Elvis and members of his family are buried, the estate is a pilgrimage site for more than half a million visitors each year.



New Orleans

Avoid the interstates and take legendary Highway 61, also known as the 'Blues Highway', heading south along the Mississippi River to New Orleans. Often described as the birthplace of jazz, this city offers everything you need to immerse yourself in living, breathing musical culture. Don't be surprised to find yourself swept into an impromptu brass band parade or spontaneous street performance at any time of day or night.

Musical must-dos in New Orleans:

- Wander the famed French Quarter, where brass bands and buskers provide a vibrant soundtrack to the colour and excitement of Bourbon Street.
- Explore the live music venues of Frenchmen Street, a stone's throw from the French Quarter. It's packed with intimate clubs that feature every genre of music, from traditional jazz and blues to contemporary and funk.
- Combine classic New Orleans scenery with live jazz music by taking an evening cruise aboard a historic Mississippi paddle-wheeler.

Ready to hit play?

You don't have to be a musician to appreciate the American South's extraordinary musical heritage (although it helps!). Whether you're standing in the studio where Elvis recorded his first hit, listening to bluegrass while driving quiet Kentucky back roads, or soaking up the sounds of jazz in a New Orleans concert hall, every mile will deliver another unforgettable memory.

Ask your [personal travel manager](#) for help designing a road trip itinerary that hits all the right notes.





Mississippi Delta Explorer River Cruise

7 nights from \$9,595*pp twin share.
Exclusive up to \$100* per person saving. Plus,
all meals, beverages, shore excursions, Wi-Fi,
and more.

More



South USA Music Tours

Discover the vibrant music scene of the South
USA with locally guided tours including the
Country Music Hall of Fame, Graceland, and
more.

More

Flight Centre Brochure

Deep South USA

Essential Experiences

The Alamo - San Antonio
Visit The Alamo, a historic 18th-century Spanish mission that became the site of the famous 1836 Battle of the Alamo during the Texas Revolution. It now symbolizes courage and sacrifice in the fight for Texas independence.

French Quarter - New Orleans
Explore the French Quarter with its trademark wrought-iron balconies overlooking the narrow cobblestone streets. Stand atop one of the infamous New Orleans levees and gain the perspective of how these unique feats of architecture guard the city.

Embrace Austin's Football Energy
Austin is home to the University of Texas and from August to January, Saturdays in Austin are reserved for the University of Texas Longhorns football team. Join in the excitement and team spirit - UT Longhorns fans take football seriously.

Southern Cuisine - New Orleans
Savour the beauty and romance of New Orleans on board an authentic Mississippi Riverboat. Immerse yourself in Creole culture with a dinner cruise and enjoy the rhythms of a Dixieland jazz band.

Space Center - Houston
Touch a moon rock, see astronauts training, and experience a simulated blast-off at the Space Center Houston.

Musical Landmarks in Memphis
In the Home of Blues, Soul and Rock 'n' Roll, live music rocks seven nights a week and legendary music landmarks Rock 'n' Soul Museum, Blues Hall of Fame, Stax Museum of American Soul Music, Sun Studio and Graceland welcome all.

Deep South USA

Essential Experiences

Graceland - Memphis
Formerly the home of Elvis Presley, Graceland is a mansion in Memphis. Pay tribute to the man who changed the face of American music and dive into the history of Elvis and the story of his life through unique audio, video and photos.

Visit Wynwood - Miami
The art district of Wynwood is a must-visit for a dose of colour and excitement. Stop in at some of Miami's best galleries and popular restaurants. Rest and refresh with a beer from the Wynwood Brewing Company, one of the original craft breweries in Miami, and discover the urban graffiti that brings the Wynwood Walls to life.

Grand Ole Opry - Nashville
Fans of country music can't miss Nashville, the capital of the genre and home to America's longest-running radio show, the Grand Ole Opry. Experience multiple artists performing on the iconic Grand Ole Opry stage - this is the show that made country music famous.

Art Deco - Miami
Ocean Drive is the most famous of Miami's Art Deco districts, and it is the place to see and be seen, with vibrant nightclubs that draw plenty of notable names from around the world.

A Journey through country music - Nashville
Visit Nashville's church for music lovers, with exhibits on country music, at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. See Elvis' solid gold Cadillac limousine and Jim Reeves' tuxedo jacket.

Everglades National Park, Florida
The Everglades is an expansive area of land in south Florida which consists of 1.5 million acres of wetland and provides important habitat for numerous rare and endangered species. Explore one of the world's most beautiful natural assets.

Terms and Conditions apply - see page 105 for details. Information on this page is general in nature and is provided as a guide only.

USA

Terms and Conditions apply - see page 105 for details. Information on this page is general in nature and is provided as a guide only.

58-59/108

FLIGHT CENTRE
Your centre for travel.





The Hills District - Breakfast Cluster Training

You're invited to our

DESTINATION COFFEE CLUSTER

Join us for coffee and breakfast to hear destination updates from Universal Destinations & Experiences, Los Angeles, Travel South, Louisiana and New Orleans.

Where: Hudson George, 56/16 Victoria Ave,
Castle Hill NSW 2154

When: 27th August, 2026 | 9:30AM-10:30AM

Please RSVP and supply dietary requirements by
17th August to Sasha@gate7.com.au

First in, best dressed – we'll do our best to
accommodate everyone!

PRIZES TO BE WON!











Viva Holidays Newsletter 19/8



**VISIT THE
USA**

**FEEL THE RHYTHM OF
NEW ORLEANS**

**9 DAY JAZZY JAMBALAYA
ADVENTURE SELF-DRIVE**

NEW ORLEANS - BATON ROUGE - NATCHEZ
- VICKSBURG - NATCHITOCHEs - LAFAYETTE -
NEW ORLEANS

FROM **\$2,255*** PER PERSON
TWIN SHARE

VIEW DETAILS







**AMERICA THE BOUNDLESS
DISCOVER ROUTE 66**

**CENTENNIAL HISTORIC
ROUTE 66**

📍 CHICAGO - LOS ANGELES
14 NIGHTS ACCOMMODATION ACROSS 11 CITIES

14 NIGHTS FROM **\$6,329*** PER PERSON TWIN SHARE

VIEW DETAILS

Viva Holidays – Missouri and Route 66

16 DAY HISTORIC ROUTE 66

AMERICA THE BOUNDLESS ROUTE 66





USA

On Sale Until: 20 Sep 2026
For Travel Between: 1 Sep 2026 - 31 Oct 2026

Set out on one of the world's most iconic road trips and discover the timeless appeal of Historic Route 66. Travel from Chicago to Los Angeles, exploring charming small towns, famous landmarks, natural wonders and classic roadside attractions that capture the spirit of America's open road.

ROUTE: Chicago – St. Louis – Springfield – Tulsa – Oklahoma City – Amarillo – Albuquerque – Holbrook – Grand Canyon/Williams – Las Vegas – Los Angeles

Highlights:

- Get a bird's eye view of the Gateway Arch in St. Louis
- See the replica of the long-lost Route 66 "End of the Trail" sign at the Santa Monica Pier
- Explore one of the best remnants of native Arizona grassland in Petrified Forest
- Get closer to the stars at Grauman's Chinese Theater, a Hollywood landmark
- Commemorative certificate of having driven Historic Route 66

Day 3: Chicago – St. Louis

Say farewell to Chicago, and the journey of Historic Route 66 commences. The legendary old road passes through a variety of pure Americana landscapes and takes in some of the country's biggest, oldest and most peculiar sites along the way. Begin the journey by following the traditional East-West direction of Route 66 from Chicago to St. Louis, Missouri, traveling through cornfields and flat prairies. When we arrive in St. Louis, one of the largest cities along Route 66, you can follow in the footsteps of legendary explorers, including Lewis and Clark, at the Gateway Arch, the gate to the West and the nation's tallest monument within a National Park.

Day 4: St. Louis – Springfield

Continue through the Ozark Highlands of Southern Missouri, recognized as the birthplace of Route 66. En route, stop at the Meramec Caverns, a natural limestone cave whose formations and colors are as unique as they are beautiful. Adding to the pleasure of exploring the caves is learning that Jesse James used them as a hideout and took advantage of the underground river to escape through the "Back Door."

Escorted Touring



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15 DAY HISTORIC ROUTE 66 - CURIOS, PIT STOPS AND DINERS

📍 CHICAGO – SPRINGFIELD – ST. LOUIS – SPRINGFIELD – TULSA
– OKLAHOMA CITY – AMARILLO – TUCUMCARI – ALBUQUERQUE
– HOLBROOK – FLAGSTAFF – LAS VEGAS – LOS ANGELES

INCLUDES:

- 14 nights across 12 cities in hand-picked accommodation
- Digital documentation and access to App with maps, driving instructions and suggested stops

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Visit Pontiac's Route 66 Hall of Fame and Museum
- Visit the National Museum of Transportation in St. Louis
- Cross the mighty Mississippi River on the New Chain of Rocks Bridge
- Tour the Old Town and Downtown areas of Albuquerque along the stretch of Old Route 66
- Stop to view Meteor Crater just outside of Winslow

14 nights from **\$2,159*** per person twin share

VALID FOR TRAVEL: 1 Sep - 14 Dec 26





📍 Glassblowing in Grapevine, Texas



📍 Grapevine Tower, Texas



📍 Springfield, Missouri

16 DAY EAST ROUTE 66

📍 CHICAGO - ST. LOUIS - SPRINGFIELD - TULSA - OKLAHOMA CITY - SULPHUR - GRAPEVINE

INCLUDES:

- 15 nights across 7 cities in hand-picked accommodation
- Digital documentation and access to App with maps, driving instructions and suggested stops

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Journey along iconic Route 66 through classic Americana towns and landmarks
- Just minutes from Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, Grapevine serves as the ultimate international gateway to start or end your historic Route 66 road trip
- Experience one of Texas' most welcoming and walkable historic districts - Downtown Grapevine
- Discover artisan galleries, boutique shopping and small-town Texas charm
- Discover Springfield, Missouri, the official birthplace of Route 66, packed with timeless roadside Americana

15 nights from **\$2,689*** per person twin share

VALID FOR TRAVEL: 1 Dec 26 - 31 Mar 27. Add on an extra \$109* per person for travel 1 Sep - 30 Nov 26

16 DAY HISTORIC ROUTE 66

📍 CHICAGO - ST. LOUIS - SPRINGFIELD - TULSA - OKLAHOMA CITY - AMARILLO - ALBUQUERQUE - HOLBROOK - GRAND CANYON/WILLIAMS - LAS VEGAS - LOS ANGELES

INCLUDES:

- 15 nights across 10 cities in hand-picked accommodation
- Digital documentation and access to App with maps, driving instructions and suggested stops

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Explore Arizona's iconic Route 66 towns, including Holbrook, Flagstaff, Williams and Kingman
- Discover the colourful Painted Desert and Petrified Forest National Park, home to one of the world's largest concentrations of petrified wood
- Spend a full day exploring the awe-inspiring Grand Canyon National Park, one of the world's greatest natural wonders

15 nights from **\$3,049*** per person twin share

VALID FOR TRAVEL: 1 Sep - 31 Oct 26



📍 Seligman, Arizona



📍 Flagstaff, Arizona



📍 Winslow, Arizona

21 DAY COAST TO COAST ADVENTURE

📍 WASHINGTON, DC - GETTYSBURG - NIAGARA FALLS - TORONTO - DETROIT - CHICAGO - ST. LOUIS - SPRINGFIELD - TULSA - OKLAHOMA CITY - AMARILLO - TUCUMCARI - ALBUQUERQUE - HOLBROOK - FLAGSTAFF - LAS VEGAS - SANTA MONICA

INCLUDES:

- 20 nights across 15 cities in hand-picked accommodation
- Digital documentation and access to App with maps, driving instructions and suggested stops

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Visit iconic cities including Chicago, St. Louis, Albuquerque, Las Vegas and Los Angeles
- Follow Historic Route 66 through classic small towns, open plains and the heart of the American Southwest
- Discover Native American heritage, frontier history and the cultural traditions of the Southwest
- Explore legendary roadside attractions, vintage diners and quirky Americana along the Mother Road

20 nights from **\$4,535*** per person twin share

VALID FOR TRAVEL: 1 Sep - 31 Oct 26



📍 Gemini Giant, Illinois



📍 Lucille's Roadhouse, Oklahoma



📍 Santa Monica Pier, California





15 DAY CENTENNIAL HISTORIC ROUTE 66
ESCORTED TOUR

📍 CHICAGO – ST. LOUIS – SPRINGFIELD – OKLAHOMA CITY –
AMARILLO – ALBURQUERQUE – HOLBROOK – PAGE – WILLIAMS
– LAS VEGAS – LOS ANGELES

INCLUDES:

- 14 nights across 11 cities in hand-picked accommodation
- Services of an ATI tour director
- Transport by air-conditioned motorcoach

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Explore St. Louis, home to the iconic Gateway Arch
- Journey through Missouri's scenic Ozark Highlands, the birthplace of Route 66
- Discover the natural beauty of Meramec Caverns, one of Missouri's most famous Route 66 attractions
- Experience classic Americana and legendary Route 66 towns stretching from Illinois to California

14 nights
from

\$6,329*

per person
twin share

VALID FOR TRAVEL: 29 Jul, 9 Sep 27



📍 St. Louis, Missouri



📍 Waynesville, Missouri



📍 Route 66 Museum, Missouri





SOCIAL CONTENT UPDATE

Instagram and Facebook Posts by Gate 7



Travel South USA (AU, NZ)

24 August at 10:28 · 🌐

Mark the calendar! September is one of the loudest months of the year in Tennessee, with big events happening across three very different corners of the state 🎸 ... See more

TEENHOUSES

The loudest month of the year

Bristol · Nashville · Pigeon Forge





Always popular in

The most visited park in America

Great Smoky Mountains National Park had more than 12 million visitors this year. Mark it on the calendar then, and you need a parking tip. If you're staying for more than 15 minutes, our visitors advise.



Three hours west

Sun Studio, Beale Street, and the National Civil Rights Museum, which opened its new Legacy Building this year. Knoxville to Memphis is 200km and entirely toll free.

Plan your trip at travelsouthusa.au



A twelve metre pumpkin tree

Delwood's 12 metre Pumpkin Tree is 22 October, with thousands of carved pumpkins lit after dark. USA Today named it America's best fall event.



+2

165 shows in five nights

America's greatest musical theatre destination, Nashville, has 165 shows in five nights. Perfect 11 September night spent in town with a country, a country bar and the river.



📣 Boost this post to get more reach for Travel South USA.

Boost

👍

💬

➦

TravelSouth
All Y'all Are Welcome USA





Travel South USA (AU, NZ)

26 August at 10:20 · 🌐

...

The Mother Road turns 100 this year, and Missouri's stretch of it might just be the most unforgettable 480km of history in the South. 🇺🇸🌟... See more

MISSOURI ROAD TRIP

The Mother Road turns 100

St Louis to Joplin



The centenary runs all year

Festival of Nations in St Louis, 29 and 30 August, then, 30 countries. Then the Route 66 Centennial Celebration at Route 66 State Park on 7 November.

Plan your trip at travelsouthusa.au

Where the road got its name

Springfield is the birthplace of Route 66. Automobile in Park Central Square marks the spot where the route was proposed in 1926.

North the desert

America's first wine region is not in California

In 1859, Missouri became the first federally recognised wine region in the United States. In 1980, eleven states of seven California wineries, German settlers planted the valley from the 1850s.

+3

An underground detour

Missouri's famous cave system, including the 1,000-year-old, world-famous, 130 miles (210 km) long, and 100 miles (160 km) deep, with around 7,000 chambers, is the only (Missouri) cave system with around 7,000 chambers.

📣 Boost this post to get more reach for Travel South USA.

Boost

👍

💬

➦

TravelSouth
All Y'all Are Welcome USA



Gate 7 Private AU/NZ Travel Trade Community – 752 Members



Gate 7 Private AU/NZ Travel Trade Community



Penny Brand

Admin Group expert Top contributor

August 27 at 1:57 PM

 **Dolly Parton: a tourism legend in every sense**

Few people have put a destination on the map quite like Dolly Parton. Beyond the music, sequins and unmistakable personality, Dolly's impact on tourism in Tennessee has been extraordinary, with **Dollywood and the Great Smoky Mountains becoming bucket-list experiences for visitors from around the world.**

Her legacy is a brilliant reminder of how music, storytelling, culture and a strong sense of place can inspire people to travel.

For clients who love **music, Americana and authentic Southern experiences**, Dolly's Tennessee absolutely deserves a spot on the itinerary. ❤️

Have a read of this lovely piece from Karryon celebrating Dolly's incredible contribution to tourism.

👍 Dolly Parton's tourism legacy remembered – Karryon

[#TravelSouthUSA](#) [#Tennessee](#) [#Dollywood](#) [#DollyParton](#)
[#GreatSmokyMountains](#) [#SouthernUSA](#)

<https://karryon.com.au/industry-news/dolly-partons-tourism-legacy-remember/>



KARRYON.COM.AU

Dolly Parton's big tourism legacy remembered as Dollywood, Tennessee mourn

[View insights](#)

97 post reach >







Gate 7 Private AU/NZ Travel Trade Community



Penny Brand

Admin

Group expert

Top contributor

· August 18 at 8:29 AM ·

Do you have culture lovers looking for a journey with real meaning?

Send them to **Alabama**, where some of the most powerful chapters of America’s Civil Rights story unfolded.

From Birmingham to Montgomery and Selma, your clients can walk in the footsteps of history, cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge, visit landmark churches and museums, and hear the stories of those who changed a nation.

It’s powerful. It’s moving. And it’s the kind of travel experience they’ll be talking about long after they return home.

Add the **Alabama Civil Rights Trail** to their next Southern road trip.

[#SweetHomeAlabama](#) [#CivilRightsTrail](#) [#TravelSouthUSA](#)

<https://www.visittheusa.com/destinations/alabama/>



VISITTHEUSA.COM

Alabama | Nature, Music & History in the South

View insights

79 post reach >





Market Update

Market Update

The following announcements were made in August:

This month's trade intelligence points to a notable trend: the USA is currently receiving limited share of voice across Australian and New Zealand travel trade media, despite continued evidence of opportunity, demand and product development within the market. This is not necessarily a negative thing.

Across the breadth of media monitored; including airlift, destination activity, product development, consumer trends, trade activity and industry news, USA-related stories were comparatively limited. Where the USA did appear, however, the coverage was encouraging. Reporting pointed to continued strength in experiential and premium travel, growth in Australian SME business travel, increased visitation to Las Vegas ahead of the launch of Qantas' direct service, and continued investment in new product.

The contrast is particularly evident when compared with competitive destinations. Markets including Japan, New Zealand, Fiji, Tahiti, Britain, Chile, Samoa, Malaysia and the Philippines are maintaining a visible presence through a combination of new air services, increased capacity, trade roadshows, specialist training, famil opportunities, incentive programs, new product and paid trade advertising.

The airline intelligence can provide an early indication of where demand is strengthening, with increased frequencies, new routes and larger aircraft often signaling growing confidence and visitation potential. By monitoring these movements, we can identify destinations that may warrant consideration for in-market representation and trade engagement, ensuring activity is strategically aligned with emerging opportunities rather than reacting to established demand.

There are several clear examples this month. Japan continues to build momentum through increased direct air capacity, the return of Korean Air to Melbourne, ANA expanding Perth services to daily operations and significant ongoing trade engagement. New Zealand is benefiting from increased seasonal connectivity, while destinations including the Maldives, the Philippines, China and Indonesia are also seeing expanded access or targeted airline-led activity.

The competitive landscape also demonstrates that consistent trade visibility is being actively created rather than occurring organically. Japan, Tahiti, Fiji, Britain, Chile, Samoa and the Northern Territory all featured through deliberate trade-facing activity, from roadshows and specialist programmes to famil incentives, event activity and agent engagement.





Visitation to the USA.

Visitation to the USA. July 2026 i-94 arrival data (released August)

Australia:

- Australia recorded **78,351 arrivals to the USA in July**, down 6% year on year.
- Australia **ranked thirteenth among long-haul international markets in June**, compared with approximately 12th place during much of the year to date.

Global Travel Demand from Australia.

June 2026 data was released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showing where returning residents spent most time abroad.

Just over 917k Australians returned from an overseas trip in June, an increase of 1% YOY.

The top 10 countries as follows:

Rank	Country	June Visits	Percentage growth YOY
1	Indonesia	156,190	4.64%
2	New Zealand	81,060	0.12%
3	Japan	61,650	9.06%
4	UK	56,930	-12.59%
6	China(b)	55,410	11.06%
6	USA	52,030	-4.07%
7	Thailand	42,240	-4.28%
8	Vietnam	37,500	17.78%
9	Fiji	36,930	6.00%
10	Italy	32,420	-7.3%





First intended address – Travel South

- A total of 3,530 Australians listed a Travel South state as their first intended address in June, down 2% year on year.
- While July saw a slight decrease in arrivals, the destination increased its share of Australians choosing it as their first intended address, rising from 4% to 5% in July.

Tour Operators & Travel Agencies

- **Inside Virtuoso Travel Week: Does the event live up to the hype?** “We say we’re in the travel business, but really, we’re in the human connection business. We just happen to express it through travel”. This turned out to be the frame for everything that followed for the week. [Source](#)
- **TravelManagers 2026 conference.** TravelManagers isn’t celebrating a softer start to its April-March financial year, but after record years and surpassing \$500 million in 2025, it’s keeping the 4% downturn in perspective. *Karryon’s* reports on its new 40% growth target and how it aims to get there. [Source](#)
- **MTA – Mobile Travel Agents** has introduced Platinum Reserve, a new reward and recognition tier for its top achievers within the national network of independent travel advisors. [Source](#)
- **US Stands out for FC Corporate arm.** Flight Centre Travel Group’s (FCTG) corporate division has delivered record total transaction value (TTV) and revenue for the 2026 financial year, with its US business crossing the US\$2 billion (AU\$2.8 billion) TTV mark for the first time. [Source](#)
- **Helloworld posts growth in FY26.** TTV for the year ended 30 June grew 4.2 per cent to \$4.0 billion, up from \$3.8 billion in FY25. Revenue and other income rose 8.3 per cent to \$208.9 million, with the revenue margin improving to 5.1 per cent from 4.9 per cent the prior year. [Source](#)
- **Helloworld assessing WJL stake.** Helloworld has revealed that its stake in Webjet Group Limited stands at 20.29%, adding in its latest financial results that options are being assessed and the online travel business’ performance is being monitored. [Source](#)
- **BRAND USA BOSS FRED DIXON STEPS DOWN, RETURNS TO NYC TOURISM** [Source](#)
- **The future of travel is human: Helloworld lines up 14 stores in 18 months.** Fourteen stores opened, announced or committed in 18 months is a fairly emphatic answer to anyone writing off the bricks-and-mortar travel agency. [Source](#)

Traveler Insights





- **Intrepid reports a softer US inbound market – but says the USA still has strong experiential appeal** Intrepid Travel President North America Leigh Barnes told Travel Weekly that the company's US inbound business is seeing fewer Australians, Canadians, Brits and Germans travelling to the US, contrasting with strong US domestic and outbound travel. More than 90% of Intrepid's US trips visit a national park. [Source](#)
- **Las Vegas visitation climbs 4.2% before direct flight commences.** Australian visitation to Las Vegas rose 4.2 per cent year-on-year in 2025, making Australia the destination's single largest international source market without a direct air link. Qantas direct flights launch 29 December 2026 [Source](#)
- **Aussie SMEs boost US business travel** US business travel from Australia for small- and medium-sized enterprises grew nine per cent in the first half of 2026 compared to last year, showing Aussie SMEs are still travelling despite tariffs and conflict. [Source](#)

Air Lift

- **Qantas Group has reported an underlying profit before tax of \$2.06 billion for FY26.** Down \$330 million on the previous year, as the airline absorbed a \$420 million net hit from the conflict in the Middle East and a \$610 million jump in its fuel bill. [Source](#)
- **Virgin Australia has posted a 21.9 per cent increase in underlying net profit to \$404 million for FY26.** With strong demand, fleet renewal and its transformation program helping offset rising costs. [Source](#)
- **Qantas has announced that it will retire its 'much loved' A380s from 2028.** This announcement came as part of its annual results. [Source](#)

Media

- **Traveller undergoes major editorial and multi-platform overhaul: Nine has appointed** Justine Cullen as Editorial and Strategy Director of Traveller, signalling a significant evolution of the masthead following the departure of long-time Travel Editor Anthony Dennis. Cullen will oversee editorial and content strategy as Traveller expands beyond its traditional print and digital offering across social, video, audio and events. The brand currently reaches a combined audience of 1.9 million across digital, print and social. [Source.](#)
- **Magazine brands continue to reach more than 14.5 million Australians:** New Roy Morgan readership data released in August shows 62.2% of Australians aged 14+ engage with magazine brands across print and digital. Importantly, print remains a significant part of the ecosystem, reaching almost 10.9 million Australians. Better Homes & Gardens and Woman's Day each reach more than 2.1 million people cross-platform, while The Australian Women's Weekly and New Idea each exceed 1.6 million. [Source.](#)





- **News Australia highlights AI's growing role in travel discovery:** News Australia says AI assistants are increasingly becoming the starting point for destination inspiration, itinerary planning, accommodation selection and travel recommendations. The shift has implications for PR, with authoritative editorial coverage and third-party validation becoming increasingly important to how brands and destinations surface in AI-generated recommendations. [Source](#).
- **News remains Australia's most popular podcast genre:** The July Australian Podcast Ranker, released in August, shows News was Australia's most-listened-to podcast category with 4.5 million monthly listeners, followed by Society & Culture with 3.8 million and Sports with 3.5 million. Mamamia Out Loud remained Australia's most-listened-to podcast with 950,673 monthly listeners, followed by Hamish & Andy with 878,712. More broadly, 55% of Australians now consume podcasts each month. [Source](#).
- **Social media and convenience are increasingly shaping how Australians encounter news:** New research released by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has found that most Australians' news consumption is driven by habit, convenience and time constraints, rather than actively seeking out multiple perspectives. Younger and time-poor audiences are particularly likely to favour digital sources or encounter news incidentally through social media, where algorithms can influence what they see. Only two of the seven audience groups identified by ACMA regularly consult multiple news sources, seek different perspectives and verify information. [Source](#).

Actions

- Melbourne Sales Calls
- Travel Managers Campaign
- International Showcase Planning
- New Zealand Visit USA Shows Planning
- September - Trade & PR Newsletter
- GMM Media Meetings & Planning

