

TRAVEL



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GOOD TIMES
Lively
Lower
Broadway,
Nashville

With its music
and wild beauty,
Tennessee state
is a huge hit with
Kim Carr

STOMPING GROUND

ROCK ON
Kim in her
element



Crowds spilled out on roads as the sound of cowboy boots stomping on pavements blended with live country music streaming from every bar...

Welcome to Saturday night in Lower Broadway, Nashville, a unique four-block area bathed in glorious neon where the party people gather for 24/7 drinking, dancing and good times.

Affectionately known as Music City, the Tennessee capital was my first stop on a US road trip, which, as a lifelong music obsessive, is the ultimate pilgrimage.

I'd planned my route to include a bit of everything, stopping off at bars, breweries and boutique hotels, seeking out the best of the

scenery and discovering more about the people who made this state sing.

I had started the day with a trip to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, which is positively bursting with memorabilia about everyone who has impacted the scene (countrymusichalloffame.org).

Tucked inside is the Taylor Swift Education Centre, an encouraging space for young women in particular to – like the Look What You Made Me Do singer – follow their dreams.

What quickly became apparent to me here is that some truly remarkable women have risen up here to call their own shots.

None more so than America's first lady of theatre management, Lula Clay Naff. In 1920

she took the reins at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville – where Johnny and June Cash first met, his TV show aired, and his funeral was held – creating an iconic venue which has hosted modern-day acts including Ed Sheeran and Coldplay.

On a backstage tour I felt the spirits of performers gone by seeping through the pews of the former church before moving on to RCA Studio B where I revelled in the moment as I sat by Elvis's favourite piano in the room he recorded – with the lights turned off – Are You Lonesome Tonight? (ryman.com, countrymusichalloffame.org/experiences/studio-b)

If you want to experience a typical Nashville night out, start with a home-style dinner at

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Cruise news

BY NIGEL THOMPSON

A trio of familiar faces from TV will be starring on a P&O Sail with the Stars voyage in the spring.

Jay Blades of The Repair Shop (pictured), Countryfile presenter Helen Skelton and actor and documentary maker Ross Kemp will be guesting on board



Ventura's May 20 round trip to Western Europe from Southampton to offer fascinating behind the scenes telly insight.

The ship calls at Vigo, Lisbon, Porto and Guernsey with fares from £629 per person for seven nights.

Other celebrity guest Ventura cruises to Western and Northern Europe in September will feature the likes of TV sports quiz presenters Sue Barker and Phil Tufnell, and global adventurer Ben Fogle. pocruses.com

BIG DEAL

Egypt from £771pp:
save £250pp on a 14-night
all-inclusive Red Sea winter
sunshine getaway at the four-star+
beachfront Grand Makadi Hotel
near Hurghada. Jet away from
Manchester on February 10, with
20kg baggage and a late
check-out. redseaholidays.co.uk

Vacation value

BUDGET-FRIENDLY TRAVEL NEWS
BY NIGEL THOMPSON

Book by February 2 to get flights to Europe, North Africa and the Middle East from £15.99 in the easyJet 2023 Pay Day Sale.

The discount seats on routes to more than 130 destinations are all priced under £30 and valid for travel from February 1 to September 30, including

school holidays, from 19 UK airports. Hotspots for £15.99 include Gatwick to Venice, Grenoble and Valencia; Glasgow to Geneva; Manchester to Bordeaux, Basel and Porto; Luton to Turin and Lisbon; and Bristol to Basel and Turin.

For £22.99, services open up to the likes of Dalaman, Palma, Innsbruck, Tenerife, Faro and Fuerteventura.

A spokeswoman said: "Now is a great time to book with easyJet and we look forward to taking even more of our customers away in 2023." easyjet.com

Going green

PLANET FRIENDLY TRAVEL NEWS
BY JANE MEMMLER

The Sandals Foundation run by Sandals Resorts has teamed up with the Netherlands AFC Ajax team to launch a Future Goals initiative to encourage kids on Dutch Caribbean island Curacao to play football sustainably.

The Foundation is working with a local plastic recycling company making colourful goalposts using plastic waste - with nets made from fishing nets lost at sea.

These will be installed in 48 primary schools on the island

Using footballs donated by Adidas, Ajax coaches will mentor "Future Coaches" on Curacao across an eight-week programme. sandalsfoundation.org

■ Hotel Fairmont Maldives Sirru Fen Sushi has been awarded the

Green Global Certificate for its sustainability efforts to be the first carbon-neutral Maldives destination by 2030.

It has just launched a Sustainability Lab which sees machinery turning ocean waste (including nets and plastic) into souvenirs, luggage tags and products for schools such as tables, rulers and clipboards.

It is also running a coral restoration project in which guests will help marine biologists and receive photos and updates of its progress. fairmont.com/maldives

■ Spain's state-owned Paradores hotels are extending a nature-based project to include two new properties in La Mancha, Parador de Almagro and Parador de Manzanares El Real. Guests can learn about cultivating pistachios and olives, visit eco-friendly farms, and sample artisan wines at vineyards. paradores.es

» Holiday cash is king for budget conscious Brits. Out of every £10 spent abroad by UK travellers, £4 is cash, nearly treble the share at home, research by travel money specialist No1 Currency shows. A third of Brits also say using foreign notes and coins is "part of the fun".

BIG DEAL

Florida Gulf Coast from £892pp: depart from Gatwick on February 12 for a four night city break at the four-star Hilton Tampa Downtown hotel near the Riverwalk in central Tampa. Includes 23kg baggage and room-only accommodation. Book by January 31. ba.com/tampa

TRAVEL

“Live like a local and base yourself in the heart of the action



COCKTAIL HOUR
Shine Girl distillery tour



FUN
Thrills and spills at Dollywood's gaff



BEST BY A COUNTRY
MILE
Nashville, Tennessee

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 45

Puckett's where they serve southern staples such as slow-smoked barbecued delights, pickled gherkins and fried green beans to the sounds of live bands. Then move on to The Stage, the ultimate honky tonk with a larger-than-most dance floor and a great cowboy vibe.

To live like a local, base yourself in the heart of the action at BentoLiving (bentochestnuthill.com). The apartments will make you feel right at home with space to spread out in the living room/kitchen area, plus Bosch appliances and a separate bedroom.

Next day I headed to Knoxville, an arty town with a thriving craft beer scene, around a three-hour drive east. A big attraction is the murals by local and visiting artists emblazoned across alleys and stairwells. Check out the Dolly Parton artwork in Strong Alley. Meanwhile, Knoxville Museum of Art houses works by the artists of East Tennessee. (knoxart.org).

If, like me, you enjoy a tipple, this place is bursting with microbreweries and distilleries. At Postmodern Spirits, I sat down for a tasting session where bartenders craft seasonally influenced cocktails, and was so impressed I bought a bottle of their cacao liqueur.

I also learned about 1920s local game-changer Febb Ensminger Burn whose letter to her lawmaker son Harry convinced him to vote in favour of suffrage when one final state was required to ratify the 19th amendment. A formal-looking statue of the pair stands at the corner of Clinch Avenue and Market Street.

The luxurious Tennessean Hotel

TOURIST
HIT 9-5
Dolly Parton art in Knoxville



overlooking the 266ft Sunsphere structure, with its gold-coloured glass sphere built for the 1982 World's Fair, is ideal for downtown and the theatres. It's a few minutes' drive from Knoxville's Urban Wilderness, a spectacular outdoor adventure area where you can hike, bike, climb, paddle, or just wander in the woods - all within the heart of the city.

Moving on to Gatlinburg, one of the most thrilling ways to experience the iconic Smoky Mountains is at Anakeesta, an exciting outdoor adventure park with zip lines, a sky walk, a mountain coaster and the Gatlinburg Space Needle observation tower.

On the Chondola you can ride a four-person chairlift or in an enclosed gondola to soak up views of the surrounding peaks. For a vista stretching all the way to Kentucky, climb Anavista Tower, Gatlinburg's highest point. Stick around until the evening for the Astra Lumina star walk, a celestial pathway of lights, projections and sound. It's really magical.

For a more traditional theme park,

visit Dollywood (dollywood.com), which has 50 rides and thrills, shows, a waterpark, the DreamMore Resort and Spa. It even has an onsite church which hosts Sunday services.

However it was Dolly's hometown of Sevierville that stole my heart thanks to its 1950s charm. Check out the town centre courthouse, boasting a clock tower reminiscent of the one Michael J Fox slid down in Back to the Future. Thankfully lightning didn't strike as I took a selfie with the Dolly tribute statue outside.

While you're here be sure to visit Shine Girl (shinegirl.com), the distillery of Danielle Parton, niece of the legendary country singer, who is also a combat veteran, a pilot, and very good company. Straight-talking about life and love, she pours a mean Red Velvet cocktail - one is simply not enough.

Apple Barn Cider House (applebarnciderhouse.com) is worth visiting to sample hard (alcoholic) and booze-free cider, apple wine, and the taste sensation that is apple butter - a jam-like creation stuffed into its bakery's pastry turnovers.

On the road again the next day, the quiet woodland campus of Maryville College awaited at RT Lodge (rtlodge.com) for a final stylish stopover.

A roaring fire in the lounge and a sleek bar provided a warm welcome - and the mushroom risotto and a mulled cider sorbet I had there was the best meal of the trip.

The staff here make all their own bread, pickles, mayonnaise, pimento cheese, and lots of other hand-crafted ingredients, which all add to that



GET THERE

Delta Air Lines flies from Heathrow to Nashville, Tennessee, from £479 return. delta.com.

BOOK IT

Rooms at Dollywood's DreamMore Resort and Spa, Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, start at around £100 a night room only. dollywood.com/resort

■ Rooms at the Tennessean hotel, Knoxville, Tennessee, start at around £161 a night room only. thetennesseanhotel.com

■ Rooms at RT Lodge, Maryville, Tennessee, start at around £202 a night room only. rtlodge.com

MORE INFO

tnvacation.com

feeling of being well looked after.

I squeezed in a tour of Uncle Nearest Distillery (unclenearest.com), founded in 2017 by best-selling author and entrepreneur Fawn Weaver in memory of Nearest. He was the first African American master distiller and taught Jack Daniel everything he knew. Fawn popped in to say hello, and I got a sneak peak of the gig space and what will be the world's longest bar when it opens this year.

From boot-stomping city streets to charming towns and the wilds of the Smoky Mountains, Tennessee will appeal to all types, especially music fans, history buffs and nature lovers.

The best part for me, however, was hearing the stories of the wise and pioneering women who made such a positive impact on this southern state. Music to my ears.



Enjoy a big weekender

Brits are supersizing their European weekend getaways for 2023 with XL breaks.

Thomas Cook says there's almost a 50% rise in bookings for an "extra-long weekend" of four and five nights.

The most popular destinations are Benidorm on Spain's Costa Blanca, Albufeira on the Algarve coast of Portugal, and Playa Blanca, the high-end marina resort in Lanzarote. More than half of the holidays are in all-inclusive hotels.

Boss Alan French said: "It's great to see people booking themselves a short blast of sunshine."

Prices for four nights in April start from £120 per person with deposits from £25 each. thomascook.com

BIG DEAL

Canary Islands from £369pp: save 21% on a seven night spring sunshine holiday with breakfast at the three-star Hotel Club Siroco in Costa Teguise, Lanzarote. Comes with flights from Leeds Bradford on April 16, departures from other UK airports available. olympicholidays.com



In the market for a new trip

Escorted tours for 2023-24 from northern Europe to South America and southeast Asia to Africa via the Scottish Highlands and the Arctic have been launched by Newmarket Holidays.

The range features savings of up to 15% for bookings made by February 28, and new itineraries include Mayan Mexico combined with a car-free Caribbean island, a safari to the Victoria Falls in southern Africa and a visit to Tuscany, Rome and the Amalfi Coast. Prices start from £654 per person. newmarketholidays.co.uk

Cruise118.com

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Ship	Departure	Nts	Interior (pp)	Oceanview (pp)	Balcony (pp)	Suite (pp)
Enchanted Princess	15-Apr-23	7	FREE upgrade to Balcony	FREE upgrade to Balcony	Was £1,349 Now £829	Was £1,699 Now £1,319
Full Itinerary: Fly UK / Barcelona Gibraltar Marseille Genoa Florence/Pisa (Livorno) Rome (Civitavecchia) / Fly UK						
Includes: Direct return flights with luggage allowance, overseas transfers and a seven-night full-board cruise						
Caribbean Princess	13-May-23	7	FREE upgrade to Balcony	FREE upgrade to Balcony	Was £1,699 Now £1,369	Was £2,199 Now £1,769
Full Itinerary: Fly UK / Miami (one-night hotel stay) Sail from Fort Lauderdale Grand Cayman Roatan Island Belize City Cozumel Fort Lauderdale / Fly UK (overnight)						
Includes: Direct return flights with luggage allowance, select overseas transfers, one-night 4* pre-cruise hotel stay in Fort Lauderdale and a seven-night full-board cruise						
Sky Princess	29-Jul-23	14	Was £1,599 Now £1,439	SOLD OUT	Was £2,099 Now £1,729	Was £2,899 Now £2,199
Full Itinerary: Southampton Cadiz Barcelona Marseille Florence/Pisa (Livorno) Rome (Civitavecchia) Alghero Gibraltar Southampton						
Includes: 14-night full-board cruise						
Enchanted Princess	30-Sep-23	14	Was £1,899 Now £1,679	SOLD OUT	Was £2,699 Now £2,449	Was £3,549 Now £3,319
Full Itinerary: Fly UK / Barcelona Gibraltar Marseille Genoa Florence/Pisa (Livorno) Rome (Civitavecchia) Naples Heraklion Ephesus (Kusadasi) Istanbul Mykonos Athens (Piraeus) / Fly UK						
Includes: Direct return flights with luggage allowance, overseas transfers and a 14-night full-board cruise						
Sky Princess	17-Oct-23	12	Was £1,099 Now £959	SOLD OUT	Was £1,399 Now £1,279	Was £1,949 Now £1,869
Full Itinerary: Southampton Vigo Funchal Tenerife Las Palmas de Gran Canaria Lanzarote Lisbon Southampton						
Includes: Twelve-night full-board cruise						
Enchanted Princess	5-Aug-23	7	Was £1,729 Now £1,449	Was £1,899 Now £1,689	Was £1,999 Now £1,799	Was £2,299 Now £2,129
Full Itinerary: Fly UK / Rome (Civitavecchia) Naples Crete Kusadasi (Ephesus) Istanbul Mykonos Athens (Piraeus) / Fly UK						
Includes: Direct return flights with luggage allowance, overseas transfers and a seven-night full-board cruise						

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