

THE SOUTH'S MOST STORIED STREETS

You can feel the past meet the future
on these thriving historic avenues

BY VALERIE FRASER LUESSE | TYPOGRAPHY BY SIMON WALKER

ALABAMA

Dexter Avenue MONTGOMERY

What strikes you the most about Alabama's capital city, especially in light of the Civil Rights Movement, is proximity. While greeting his congregation on the steps of what's now called Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would've had

a clear view of Alabama's statehouse, then a bastion of segregation. The spot where Rosa Parks waited for her bus is here, too, and so much more.

ARKANSAS

Central Avenue HOT SPRINGS

Back in the day, Central Avenue was hopping with

tourists who flocked to its bathhouses to "take the waters," which came from the area's naturally heated thermal springs. Most of the eight remaining bathhouses, now part of Hot Springs National Park, were built in the early 1900s. Some no longer operate as spas, but Quapaw and Buckstaff still do. Come and experience the waters that drew Native Americans here long before Bathhouse Row existed.

FLORIDA

Aviles Street ST. AUGUSTINE

This tucked-away brick lane is believed to be the oldest street in America. Beneath the surface of Aviles are remnants of a roadway dating all the way back to the early 1600s. It calls for strolling, with an occasional peek inside its collection of shops and galleries.

Duval Street KEY WEST

This might be the only strip of pavement in the nation to rival Bourbon Street for its endless party atmosphere. Even so, there's something calmer and gentler about Duval, lined with historic architecture and palm trees and packed to the gills with restaurants, bars, museums, shops, and tourist attractions. All lead to the fabled sunsets at Mallory Square on the Gulf of Mexico.

GEORGIA

Auburn Avenue ATLANTA

The heart of Atlanta's Sweet Auburn neighborhood, this urban thoroughfare east of downtown has been a center of Black culture and commerce since the early 1900s. Among the entrepreneurs here was Atlanta Life Insurance Company founder

Alonzo Herndon, who became Atlanta's first Black millionaire. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was born here, and the historic churches that line Auburn Avenue include Ebenezer Baptist, where Martin Luther King Sr. was pastor. His famous son copastored the church for eight years, from 1960 until his death.

KENTUCKY

St. James and Belgravia Courts

LOUISVILLE

Located on the site of the Southern Exposition of Art, Industry, and Agriculture, held in the late 19th century, this area is an outstanding early example of a planned urban community. St. James and Belgravia Courts are also home to an incredible collection of well-preserved Victorian architecture.

LOUISIANA

Bourbon Street

NEW ORLEANS

One of the South's—and the world's—most famous streets, the Big Easy's bawdy and bodacious boulevard is responsible for countless “did that really happen?” moments. But it's also the cradle of New Orleans jazz and an enduring hotbed of live music and Creole food. One of the oldest streets in

Historic Charm
Vintage storefronts add to the appeal of Fayetteville Street.



OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Fayetteville Street

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

RALEIGH'S MAIN DRAG was one of four primary streets plotted by state senator and surveyor William Christmas when he drew up the town plan in 1792. Then almost 200 years later, Fayetteville Street was closed to car traffic so it could become a pedestrian mall. Since reopening to drivers in 2006, the Fayetteville Street

Historic District, stretching from the North Carolina State Capitol to the Duke Energy Center for the Performing Arts, has been thriving. Locals and visitors flock here for dining and entertainment. Much of Fayetteville Street's historic architecture has been preserved, giving it authentic character as well as plenty to see and do.

RETAIL THERAPY

Broughton
Street

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

FOUNDED IN 1733, Savannah was the first city in Georgia and is called the first planned city in America. As shopping streets go, it doesn't get much better than Broughton in Savannah's historic district (though locals will tell you one of the must-stops here is actually an ice-cream parlor, Leopold's, which originally opened in 1919). Roam The Paris Market and Brocante for finds from around the world, or shop for specialty wares at Spartina 449, along with such other Broughton haunts as 24e Design Co. and Savannah Bee Company.

Shop Like a Local
Browse boutiques
along Broughton
Street in Savannah.



the famed French Quarter, Bourbon is named for a French royal family, not the spirit that fuels so much of its revelry. The street's multimillion-dollar, two-year renovation, stretching from Canal to Dumaine, was completed in 2019.

MISSISSIPPI

Main Street

TUPELO

Elvis' hometown turned its Main Street into a walkable and welcoming thoroughfare, making it easy not only to connect the dots of E's early years (including the hardware store where his mama bought him his first

guitar) but also to enjoy the area's shops and eateries. Tupelo is a testament to what determined locals can do. Innovation, mixed use, and repurposing have given this Mississippi city renewed energy and appeal. Don't miss Reed's department store, operating in Tupelo since 1905.

MISSOURI

Laclede's Landing

ST. LOUIS

Settled in 1764, Laclede's Landing was a riverfront village with a location that helped it quickly grow into a thriving, bustling hub for industry and shipping. It

was also an important warehouse district for St. Louis. Today, the cobblestone streets and historic architecture add to its appeal as a dining and entertainment district.

NORTH CAROLINA

Brightleaf Square

DURHAM

These two parallel rows of warehouses built at the turn of the 20th century have evolved into a very popular shopping and dining district. The warehouses were owned by the American Tobacco Company, which controlled almost all of the world's cigarette business

until it had to face antitrust laws, and these structures were a symbol of Durham's dominant position in that industry. Constructed specifically for loading, unloading, and ventilating tobacco leaves for cigarette production, the warehouses were reimagined as shops and restaurants in 1981 and underwent a more recent renovation in 2004.

SOUTH CAROLINA

East Bay Street

CHARLESTON

The stretch of East Bay that's near the Battery, nicknamed "Rainbow Row," is lined with brightly colored historic

homes. These structures were built for merchants serving the wharves and docks, with stores on the ground floor and owners' residences above. After the Civil War, the area deteriorated and didn't begin its recovery until the 1920s and 1930s, when preservation-minded locals began buying clusters of buildings and either renovating them or selling them to people who would. After Judge Lionel Legge and his wife, Dorothy, painted their section of homes pastel pink, others followed suit, creating one of the city's most photographed neighborhoods.

TENNESSEE

Broadway NASHVILLE

Music City's main artery stretches from First Avenue at the riverfront all the way to 21st Avenue South, but the several blocks of the "Lower Broad" district are honky-tonk central. One of the city's original roadways, it was first known as Broad Street. Country music star Jimmie Rodgers started performing here in the early thirties, and other artists followed suit. Back then, Lower Broad was rough and gritty but lively. Although it fell into a slump

in the seventies, honky-tonk culture eventually brought it back. Today, sprawling new joints, along with such venerable ones as Tootsies Orchid Lounge and Skull's Rainbow Room, lure 'em in for live music, cold brews, and bachelorette parties.

TEXAS

Sixth Street AUSTIN

Waylon and Willie and the boys created a whole new brand of country music, playing now famous venues in Austin. Today,

Sixth Street hosts a trio of distinct entertainment districts. There's the original one that's between Congress Avenue and I-35, sometimes called Dirty Sixth. It's where you'll find Antone's, a blues and R&B venue where B.B. King, Stevie Ray Vaughan, and even Ray Charles once performed. Eclectic West Sixth is between Congress and the MoPac Expressway, drawing both locals and visitors to Star Bar and other watering holes. Laid-back East Sixth—the area east of I-35—is home to a nice collection of cozy neighborhood bars and welcoming outdoor venues.



It's Got Rhythm

Beale is one of those streets you hear and feel, not just see.

BLUESY BOULEVARD

Beale Street MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

THIS BLUES-SOAKED SWATH of river-town pavement dates back to 1841. Long a hub for the Black community, with local grocers, clothing stores, and funeral parlors, Beale got a big boost from one particularly shrewd entrepreneur and developer, Robert Reed Church Sr. In the 1870s, when a yellow fever outbreak devalued Memphis property, he bought as much of it as he could on and around Beale Street. His real estate would eventually be home to Robert R. Church Park (a magnet for blues musicians), a state-of-the-art auditorium, and the region's largest Black-owned bank. Church became the South's first Black millionaire, and Beale Street became a legend.

CUBAN FLAVOR

Calle Ocho

MIAMI, FLORIDA

EVERYTHING THAT YOU PROBABLY associate with Cuban life—the flavorful food, wonderful music, world-famous cigars, and even dominoes—can all be found on this fabled street that runs through Little Havana. Political turmoil and fighting began driving Cuban families

to Miami in the late 1950s, and their diaspora continued for decades. A memorial to Cuban freedom fighters is part of the fabric of Calle Ocho. The 1926 Tower Theater Miami once helped immigrants learn English by showing Spanish-language movies with subtitles in English.

Little Havana

Stroll Calle Ocho, and experience Miami culture.



CEDRIC ANGELES

Swiss Avenue

DALLAS

Located in Old East Dallas, the Swiss Avenue Historic District was the first area of the city to get this designation. It's a treasure trove of mansions in a wide range of architectural styles, from Greek Revival to Craftsman. Developer Robert S. Munger created this stylish neighborhood in 1905.

VIRGINIA

State Street

BRISTOL

Virginia and Tennessee jointly agreed that their state line would run smack down the middle of State Street in Bristol. One side of the road is Bristol, Tennessee; the other is Bristol, Virginia. Both share "Birthplace of Country Music" props, as the city (in both states) was designated by Congress in 1998. The reason? A series of historic recording sessions held there by Ralph Peer from July 25 to August 5 of 1927. Among the 19 acts recorded were Jimmie Rodgers and the original Carter Family, revered as The First Family of Country Music. Peer's sessions not only commercialized the genre but also introduced the world to its first stars. The Birthplace of Country Music Museum, affiliated with the Smithsonian, opened in Bristol in 2014. [SL](#)