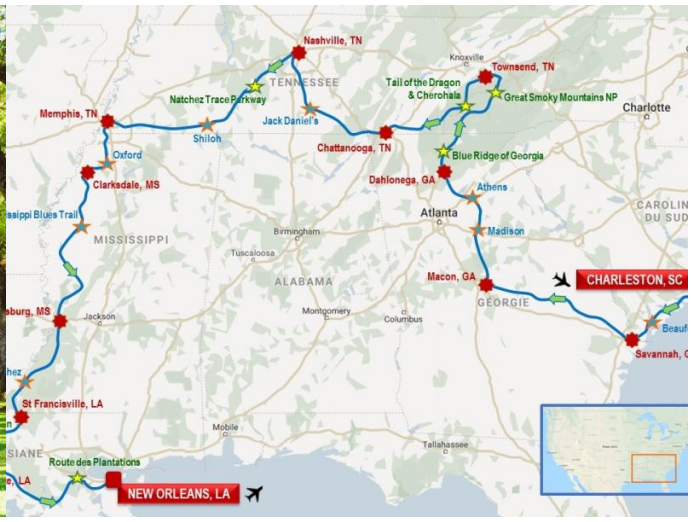
Rhythms and Colors of the Deep South





A **journey** through history... That of the **Old South**, at the source of **jazz**, **blues** and **country**, in the land of King **Elvis Presley** and the mythical **Mississippi**, a river like no other that you will follow down to its **Louisiana** delta, refuge of the **Cajuns** and the **bayous**! **Charleston**, **Savannah**, the small towns of northern **Georgia**, the fabulous **Great Smoky Mountains National Park**, **Nashville**, **Memphis**, **Clarksdale**, the **Blues Delta**, **Lafayette**, the **plantations**, and **New Orleans** the **Creole**... A captivating **journey**!



Day 1

Arrival in Charleston at the end of the day.

Pick up your rental car at the airport and drive to the centre. Charleston is the cradle of the old Southern aristocracy and features beautiful colonial houses, especially in the “French Quarter” and the former fortified city.

Overnight in Charleston.



Day 2

Charleston is one of the highlights of your journey through the Old South. Walk in the shade of live oaks and crepe myrtles for beautiful views over the bay and elegant colonial homes.

Magnolia Plantation is a delight: for its house, but above all for its superb 200-hectare gardens planted with countless varieties of camellias and azaleas.

Walk to Cypress Lake and cross the Long Bridge, one of the plantation’s prettiest bridges, or take a small boat tour through marshes and former rice fields inhabited by alligators.

Boone Hall is a former plantation, renowned for its majestic oak-lined avenue and its “slave quarters”.

If you miss nature, take the ferry to the small private Dewees Island.

Overnight in Charleston.



Day 3

Head to another charming Southern belle: Savannah in Georgia.

The coast has beautiful hidden corners and beaches such as lovely Kiawah Island and Edisto Island.

Further south, Hunting Island is just as beautiful. Its lighthouse can be visited.

The route passes through Beaufort, in the heart of the Sea Islands. It’s postcard-perfect, with streets lined with centuries-old oaks draped in Spanish moss, hiding magnificent antebellum homes. Nearby, Bluffton is another lovely little town.

Arrival in Savannah, between the Atlantic and the Wilmington and Savannah rivers. The atmosphere of its historic district, filled with architectural treasures, is unique. History, gastronomy and culture await!

Overnight in Savannah.



Day 4

The former capital of Georgia and cotton offers sleepy gardens and 22 picturesque squares.

Lined with azaleas and centuries-old oaks draped in Spanish moss, they conceal sumptuous Victorian mansions with wrought-iron balconies.

Among the most famous: the Juliette Gordon Low House, the Green-Meldrim House, and the Mercer-Williams House, all open to visitors.

River Street is the former paved waterfront where cotton and enslaved people were loaded and unloaded. Today it is a lively promenade steeped in history, especially in the evenings and on weekends.

Discover this Southern beauty by carriage, trolley, bicycle, or on a short paddleboat cruise.

Overnight in Savannah.



Day 5

Leave the coast and head inland into Georgia. On the banks of the Oconee River, Dublin is a typically Southern small town with a charming historic district.

The route then takes you to Macon, south of Atlanta. Little known to most travelers (except fans of Otis Redding, who was born here), the city once prospered thanks to the ever-present cotton trade.

We love its downtown with cobbled streets. Macon has preserved splendid listed homes. You'll stay in one of these beautiful houses, converted into a charming inn.

The Ocmulgee National Monument, on the city's outskirts, contains ancient Native American mounds, built more than 17,000 years ago by the Mississippians and later by the Muscogee (Creek) peoples.

Overnight in Macon.



Day 6

Head to Oconee Forest via Otis Redding's Big "O" Ranch (not open to visitors).

Stop in Eatonton, a nice small town on "Georgia's Antebellum Trail", a historic route linking Macon to Athens and showcasing pre–Civil War Georgia. Beautiful homes have survived, miraculously spared from destructive frenzy.

After Lake Oconee and its swamps, detour to lovely Madison, then on to Watkinsville and its covered bridge. Arrival in Athens, a dynamic university city with pretty Victorian-style buildings. It is the hometown of R.E.M. and the B-52's.

Skirt Atlanta to reach Dahlonega, one of Georgia's most charming towns, on the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The town had its golden age during the 19th-century gold rush. Today, tourism and local products (including wines) are thriving.

Overnight in Dahlonega.

Day 7

Head to Blue Ridge, departure point of the Blue Ridge Scenic Railway, a fun tourist train that runs through the region.



Blue Ridge is adorable: it's lovely to stroll among its terraces, galleries and shops. It can be busy on weekends.

East of Dahlonega, Helen is another great little village on the banks of the Chattahoochee River. Its success comes mainly from its… Bavarian architecture! There is even an annual Oktoberfest. Kitschy? Absolutely—part of the show.

As this is wine country, don't miss a winery visit with tasting.

Road lovers: from Helen, drive the Russell-Brasstown Scenic Byway (65 km), a National Scenic Byway winding through the Chattahoochee National Forest with splendid views.

Overnight in Dahlonega.



Day 8

Leave Georgia and enter North Carolina, still in the Blue Ridge Mountains, in the heart of the Appalachians.

Stop in Bryson City, home to the Great Smoky Mountains Railroad, a tourist railway offering two routes — one of them pulled by a historic steam locomotive — along the gorges of the Nantahala River.

Nearby, the town of Cherokee, at the gateway to Great Smoky Mountains National Park, is the ancestral land of the Eastern Band of Cherokees. It's a key geographic stop, and the Oconaluftee Indian Village and the Museum of the Cherokee People are well worth a visit.

Continue to the magnificent Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Newfound Gap Road crosses the park from North Carolina to Tennessee. It's the most visited U.S. national park!

Overnight in Townsend, close to Cades Cove, one of the park's most scenic drives.



Day 9

210,000 hectares of breathtaking wilderness, 16 peaks above 1,800 m, and more than 17,000 plant and animal species…

Great Smoky Mountains National Park takes its name from the bluish mist that seems to protect its treasures.

It shelters one of the most diverse ecosystems on Earth, with inhabitants such as the black bear (around 1,500 individuals), elk, and many other deer species. It's also a paradise for hikers, with over 1,300 km of trails.

Drive the Cades Cove Loop Road, an 18 km loop through a lush valley where you'll still find old barns, mills, and 19th-century churches.

Clingmans Dome, the park's highest point, rises to 2,000 m. A road takes you close to the top, followed by an 800 m walk to the observation platform atop a concrete tower. The 360° view is magnificent (unlike the tower…).

Overnight in Townsend.



Day 10

Leave the Great Smoky Mountains via the beautiful Foothills Parkway, then reach the shores of Chilhowee Lake for two top roads in the southern Appalachians:

The Tail of the Dragon features 318 curves — pure joy!

The Cherohala Skyway, 69 km long, is a National Scenic Byway. Construction began in 1958 and was only completed nearly 40 years later. Both roads cross magnificent scenery.

Arrival in Chattanooga on the Tennessee River, at the edge of Tennessee and Georgia.

Recommended: head up Lookout Mountain (funicular available) for stunning views, Ruby Falls and Rock City Gardens.

Overnight in Chattanooga or in a superb inn on Lookout Mountain (subject to availability).



Day 11

Stop in Winchester on the shores of winding Tims Ford Lake. This part of Tennessee has many ranches and horse farms.

Arrival in Lynchburg, a small town centred around its main employer: the Jack Daniel's distillery.

We recommend the tour (ending with a small tasting). Stroll around the main square lined with a few great little shops.

Drive to Nashville via beautiful neighbourhoods, Belle Meade plantation and Vanderbilt University.

"Music City" is the cradle of country music. Long overlooked, the city is now trendy and lively, not only on Broadway, the main artery.

Overnight in Nashville.



Day 12

Discover Nashville’s main attractions such as the Country Music Hall of Fame, the famous Ryman Auditorium, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, or the “Parthenon” in Centennial Park, a replica of the one in Athens.

In the evening, stroll around Broadway or in the trendy The Gulch district.

Overnight in Nashville.



Day 13

Leave Nashville and drive the Natchez Trace Parkway, the country’s only designated parkway, over 700 km long, linking Nashville to Jackson in Mississippi.

En route, visit Shiloh National Military Park on the Tennessee River.

This important Civil War battle site is very interesting. Beautiful river views (ideal for a picnic).

Head to Memphis, your first encounter with the mythical Mississippi. Nearly 3,800 km long, this majestic river will be your travel companion all the way to New Orleans!

In the evening, stroll along Beale Street, which breathes the blues.

Overnight in Memphis.



Day 14

Memphis is a pilgrimage for any blues and rock ’n’ roll lover — starting with its legend: Elvis Presley.

Visit Graceland, his home, spread over nearly 14 hectares. He is buried there alongside family members. You will see costumes, cars (and other vehicles, even planes) that belonged to him.

A visit to Sun Records studio is a must. This is where the “King” launched his career, as did Roy Orbison and Jerry Lee Lewis. Enthusiasts can also visit the Rock and Soul Museum.

Other museums include the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel, where Martin Luther King was assassinated.

Take the suspended monorail to Mud Island, home to the Mississippi River Museum.

Overnight in Memphis.



Day 15

Head to Oxford, a small university town with a nice centre around its “Square”.

So pleasant that William Faulkner, Nobel Prize winner in 1949, made it his home base (his house can be visited). John Grisham owns a house there.

Arrival in Clarksdale, the Mecca of the blues. Many musicians were born, lived or played here. The Delta Blues Museum, housed in a former station, pays tribute to these greats.

Don’t miss the two guitars at the “Crossroads”, where Robert Johnson is said to have sold his soul to the devil to become the best blues guitarist… Live music at Ground Zero, the Shack Up Inn…

Overnight at the Shack Up Inn, a truly unique place (subject to availability).

Note: possible to add a second night in Clarksdale to better enjoy the blues evenings.



Day 16

The Mississippi Blues Trail is a signposted route of sites and markers linked to the history of Delta blues. It was in Tutwiler that W.C. Handy is said to have “discovered” the blues, on the platform of the small railway station (as shown by the now faded murals).

Drive to Dockery Farms, a former plantation of which only a few remains are left. It is now a memorial site — and one of the birthplaces of the blues, according to B.B. King. In Indianola, you can visit the excellent museum dedicated to him.

The route takes you to Bentonia, to the Blue Front Cafe, one of the last “juke joints” in Mississippi. Opened in 1948, it hosted improvised concerts (long prohibited!) by great bluesmen such as Skip James and Sonny Boy Williamson.

Arrival in Vicksburg, on the banks of the Mississippi River.

Overnight in Vicksburg.



Day 17

Downtown Vicksburg features striking murals, as well as the Old Depot Museum with its model trains and miniature cars. Wander through the maze-like Vicksburg National Military Park, commemorating one of the most important battles of the American Civil War.

The USS Cairo Gunboat and Museum houses one of the seven gunboats that navigated the Mississippi River during the Civil War. It's rarely crowded and truly fascinating!

Head to Natchez. Plan to spend a few hours there: stroll along the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi, admire the beautiful Antebellum mansions, or grab a bite by the river in the small district of Natchez Under-the-Hill.

Continue to the lovely small town of Woodville, before crossing into Louisiana and reaching St. Francisville — a real postcard, with its elegant Victorian homes.

Overnight in St. Francisville (or nearby).



Day 18

Head to Lafayette in Cajun country. This is the land of the famous bayous, typical marshlands.

On the way, get lost in the Bayou Teche or in the vast, very wild Atchafalaya Basin, a haven for crayfish fishing.

Flora and fauna are incomparable: 300 bird species, alligators, beavers, raccoons…

A swampboat ride on Lake Martin to observe birds and alligators is one of our favourite activities, and likely one of the best ways to discover this unique ecosystem.

In Lafayette or nearby, enjoy Creole and Zydeco music and taste the flavours of Cajun cuisine. Overnight in Lafayette.

Note: possibility to add a second night in Lafayette and Cajun country.

Day 19

Leave Lafayette via the Old Spanish Trail. Cypremort Point State Park, the Tabasco factory on Avery Island (open to visitors), or Bayou Teche,



nearly 200 km long with a maze of canals, bridges and pleasure boats moored at the foot of houses… there is plenty to see!

Before reaching New Orleans, the final stop of this wonderful journey, don't miss the famous "Plantation Road" along the meanders of the Mississippi. Admire beautiful mansions with typical architecture and lush gardens.

Feel free to visit one or more plantations, such as Laura Plantation or Oak Alley, San Francisco (among many others). It is a step back into a thankfully bygone era of wealthy plantations and slavery.

Return your rental car at the airport and transfer to your hotel.

Overnight in New Orleans.



Day 20

The Vieux Carré ("French Quarter") is a delicious blend of American homes and colonial French and Spanish architecture.

Explore beyond the French Quarter and Bourbon Street: stroll through the leafy Garden District with its antebellum mansions, taking the streetcar. Or visit the popular Treme neighbourhood, rebuilding after Katrina.

Art and history lovers will enjoy the Ogden Museum of Southern Art, the National World War II Museum, or the beautiful New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA). If Voodoo culture intrigues you, stop at the Voodoo Spiritual Temple for answers: books, remedies, dolls, consultations…

In the evening, enjoy live jazz or blues on lively Frenchmen Street.

Overnight in New Orleans.



Day 21

Transfer to the airport (depending on your flight time, take a last stroll around New Orleans…).

End of this wonderful fly & drive tour in the South.

Return flight to Europe. Arrival the following day.

Extension in New Orleans or itinerary changes: contact us

Accommodation