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GEOGRAPHIC

THE UK'S #1 TRAVEL MAGAZINE

TRAVELLER

UK EDITION // OCTOBER 2021 // £4.95

NATIONALGEOGRAPHIC.CO.UK/TRAVEL

the new Deep South

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PORTO

FLORENCE

MACAU

WIN!

A LUXURY STAY ON
SCOTLAND'S ISLE OF ISLAY

Seychelles

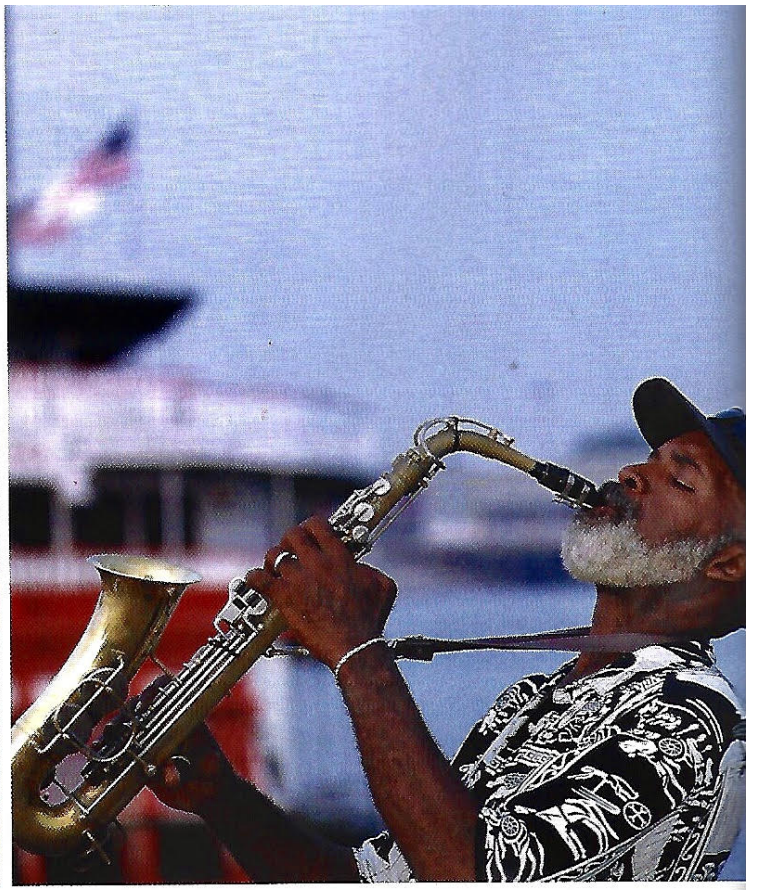
How a new generation is transforming adventure travel in the Indian Ocean paradise

Northern Ireland

Going off-grid among the standing stones & dark skies of the Sperrin Mountains



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THE NEW

Deep South

WORDS DAVID FARLEY, ZOEY GOTO,
ELLEN HIMMELFARB, EMMA JOHN & JOE SILLS

Home to dazzling landscapes, unforgettable food and legendary music cities, the Deep South occupies a special place in the popular imagination. But in reality, it's a region in flux — ever-evolving, innovating and reckoning with its past to serve up the best of Southern hospitality. We journey through Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina — a region bounded by diverse geography but full of surprises



The W C Handy Home & Museum pays homage to the Father of the Blues
RIGHT: A statue in Montgomery, Alabama celebrates the life of America's first country music superstar, Hank Williams

INSIDE GUIDE TO

Muscle Shoals

ALABAMA

Alabama's music capital birthed the heady combo of Southern soul and R&B, churning out the sounds of the Sixties — including hits by Aretha Franklin, Willie Nelson and the Rolling Stones. Now it's returning to the spotlight, attracting a new generation of music enthusiasts

Muscle Shoals easily measures up to its music city heavyweight neighbours — Memphis, Nashville and New Orleans — in the cool stakes. But don't be fooled by its sleepy, two-horse-town appearance: the rootsy city became an unlikely creative epicentre during the Sixties, and a byword for rocking recording studios and hit albums — until its star began to wane. That's set to change once more as Muscle Shoals (and the wider Shoals area, including Florence, Tuscumbia and Sheffield) reclaims its place on the musical map of America, with the opening of a new musical hotel and tours showcasing why this one-time 'hit recording capital of the world' has a lot to shout about.

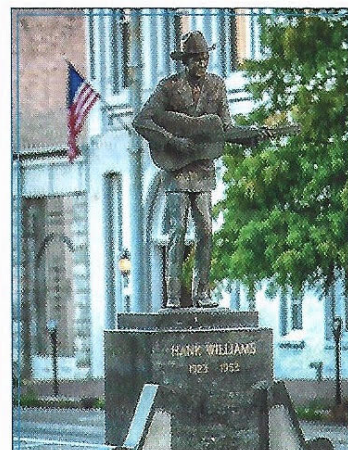
First stop should be the **W CHANDY HOME & MUSEUM**, where you'll find a micro-gallery paying homage to the Father of the Blues, plus a rustic replica of his log cabin childhood home. From here, it's a short drive over the snaking Tennessee River (known locally as 'the river that sings') to **FAME STUDIOS**. This unassuming spot is the birthplace of the Muscle Shoals sound — that heady combination of Southern soul and R&B. Knowledgeable guides walk you through the padded booths where Aretha Franklin recorded her finest work to a clandestine speakeasy bar where Willie Nelson may or may not have partied (this was once a dry county). In case you were in any doubt about its contribution to music history, the plucky studio's hit records have sold a staggering 350 million copies worldwide. wchandyhome.com

A few blocks away, **MUSCLE SHOALS SOUND STUDIO** has also thrown open its doors to curious visitors. From the outside, it still looks like the coffin showroom it once was, but inside is pure rock 'n' roll: stand on the exact spot where The Rolling Stones found their groove, and don't miss the toilet cubicle where Keith Richards is said to have hastily penned *Wild Horses*. Nearby, the **ALABAMA MUSIC HALL OF FAME** also offers a whistle-stop tour of the musical greats from this area. muscleshoalssoundstudio.org alamhof.org

As dusk falls, follow the melody to **SWAMPERS BAR & GRILLE**, where live acts perform most nights, or catch some rock music under an actual rock at the **RATTLESNAKE SALOON**, a quirky watering hole nestled beneath an awe-inspiring stone bluff. Its duke burger with bacon and jalapeños hits all the right notes. rattlesnakesaloon.net

Melomaniacs should then head to the newly opened **GUNRUNNER**, a hip boutique hotel with 10 themed suites. The best room in the house is the Sam Phillips suite, a tribute to the Shoals native and legendary Sun Studio producer who discovered Elvis Presley. There must be something in the water around here. gunrunnerhotel.com

HOW TO DO IT: Don't miss the annual Shoals Fest on 2-3 October, a musical extravaganza with a lineup including Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit. shoalsfest.net FAME Studios and Muscle Shoals Sound Studio are both open for daily tours on Monday to Saturday. alabama.travel



THREE MORE

Musical landmarks

The roots of modern music are laid bare at these melodic monuments from Georgia to Mississippi

THE GRAVE OF HANK WILLIAMS

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

America's first country music superstar produced 11 number-one hits before dying of heart failure aged 29. His grave is one of the state's most visited sites, and the nearby Hank William Museum houses artefacts from his life. thehankwilliamsmuseum.net

ELVIS PRESLEY'S BIRTHPLACE TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI

The King of Rock 'n' Roll spent his early years in a small, wooden house, which you can tour as part of the Elvis Presley Birthplace museum. It also features his childhood church, where he first heard the gospel ballads that fuelled his lifelong love of music. elvispresleybirthplace.com

TRAP MUSIC MUSEUM ATLANTA, GEORGIA

This avant-garde monument to trap music aims to plunge visitors into the cultural conditions that inspired modern artists like 2 Chainz and Cardi B, with installations including a fake drugs kitchen. trapmusicmuseum.us