

SOUTH MAIN ARTS DISTRICT

This historical Memphis neighborhood is home to a mix of thriving, switched-on businesses, all infused with a strong sense of community and heritage.

Memphis has been through a renaissance in the past few years, attracting an influx of newcomers lured by the reasonable cost of living in south-west Tennessee. Nowhere is this revival more evident than in the city's South Main Arts District, or South Main as it's known locally. Once-abandoned warehouses are being transformed into restaurants and galleries alongside the retro trolley cars that still pass down South Main Street. You'll find a mash-up of old and new, with some of the city's finest historic architecture sitting side by side with streetwear stores, BBQ joints and some of the best music spots in the country.



EAT

THE ARCADE RESTAURANT

A jewel in South Main's crown, Memphis' oldest diner has been serving up American comfort classics since 1919. Its photogenic mid-century interiors, all-pastel hues and vintage signage have been used as a backdrop for movie-makers for decades. Be sure to nab the hot-ticket booth at the back, where the Memphis Flash himself, Elvis Presley, once devoured fried peanut butter and banana sandwiches. @arcaderestaurant



Elvis ate here!

Fresh tastes

SOUTH OF BEALE DOWNTOWN

Memphis' culinary scene has traditionally been dominated with hefty servings of smoky BBQ and tangy hot wings, but new places such as South of Beale are catering to a more health-conscious crowd. Vegetarian and gluten-free customers are warmly embraced here, with a menu that features tuna poke and addictive sweet-and-sour cauliflower bites. @sobsonly



PHOTOGRAPHY: Houston Coffield.

SHOP

ODDS ATELIER

This buzzy store situated in the beating heart of South Main was created by three childhood friends who had a vision of elevating streetwear culture to couture levels. 'We wanted to create a space that was heavy on imagination, community, entertainment, fashion and art,' says co-founder Matthew Roumain. 'Something for the people, by the people.' Forage the rails for rare clothing finds like the Effortles line from basketball star Lester Quiñones and the imminent drop of an Odds Atelier house label. @odds_atelier



DRINK

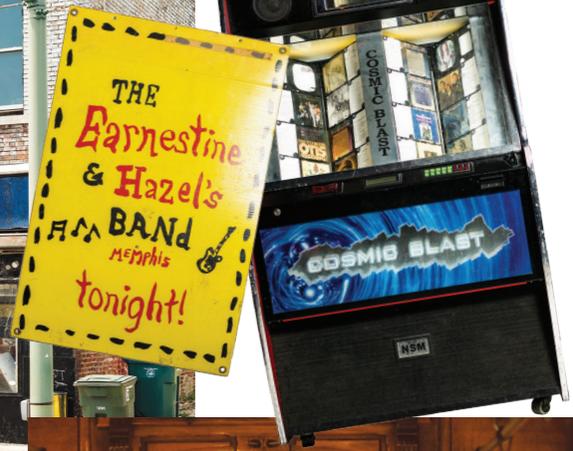
DR BEAN'S COFFEE AND TEA EMPORIUM

The perfect spot for pulling out a laptop and whiling away a morning, this coffee roaster and cafe on South Main Street is where Memphis folks flock for a caffeine hit. Things are kept hyper-local with the roasting of its small-batch coffee happening within the city limits. Plus, the Memphis Soul Prize coffee blend helps fund scholarships for local students. @drbeanscoffee andtea



EARNESTINE AND HAZEL'S

Legend has it that this dive bar is one of the most haunted places in the US. Starting life as either a dry goods store or a pharmacy (the myth varies), its storied past includes a stint as a dubious joint renting rooms by the hour, then a bar frequented by recording artists from nearby Stax Records studio, including the likes of Aretha Franklin and Chuck Berry. Nowadays, the focus is on live music, a well-stocked jukebox and the infamous Soul Burger – a hot mess of meat, cheese, pickles and sauce that's been voted the best burger in Tennessee. @earnestinehazels



DO

TROLLEY NIGHT

Memphis' longest-running street festival, Trolley Night, takes place every month. Galleries open their doors until late, bars and restaurants tempt customers in with deals and the sidewalks spring to life with live music. Grab a drink and pop into any of the 50-plus participating businesses.

UREVBU CONTEMPORARY

This small but mighty gallery showcases artists from Africa and its diaspora. Owner Sheila Urevbu left a corporate career to offer artists a space to explore 'the harmful effects of racism, colorism, pollution or xenophobia'. Using exhibitions to spark cross-cultural dialog, it's the best place to take Memphis' creative pulse. @urevbucontemporary By Zoe Goto



old meets new



PRIMAS BAKERY + BOUTIQUE

This artisan bakery-meets-boutique store combines two female-owned businesses under one roof. Visitors are greeted with a counter heaving with hand-crafted cakes and seasonally inspired ice cream macaron sandwiches, surrounded by vibrant Latin-inspired printed clothing and accessories. @primasbakery andboutique