

Styled to Sparkle Essential Travel Guide: Nashville

Nashville is often one of those places that people mean to visit, but aren't sure if it's for them. If you like arts, culture, music, good food and history, then Nashville is somewhere you absolutely need to visit! There is something for everyone, for every taste and every interest.

You can see everything I've listed here in three to four days depending on how you budget your time and how many museums you want to go to. I've listed everything from where to stay, where and what to eat, where to shop and what to see.

I find that Nashville is pretty casual – really anything goes as far as what to wear. You don't need to dress like a cowboy to fit in, either! Pack a variety of options – jeans, shorts, tshirts, sneakers, sundresses, etc. for daytime touring around the city and then a few “dressier” items for heading out at night. Now, when I say “dressier”, I mean a collared shirt or a casual dress and nice shoes. You'll see just about everything as far as fashion goes in Nashville, though, so feel free to just be yourself here!

If you have the chance to head out of the city to see the surrounding areas for either a trip to historic Franklin, TN, The Belle Meade Plantation or just to take a drive to see the stunning southern architecture, definitely do it. If you aren't sure if it's worth it, consider when you would have another opportunity to experience these parts of America's history and culture. This just might be a once in a lifetime opportunity!

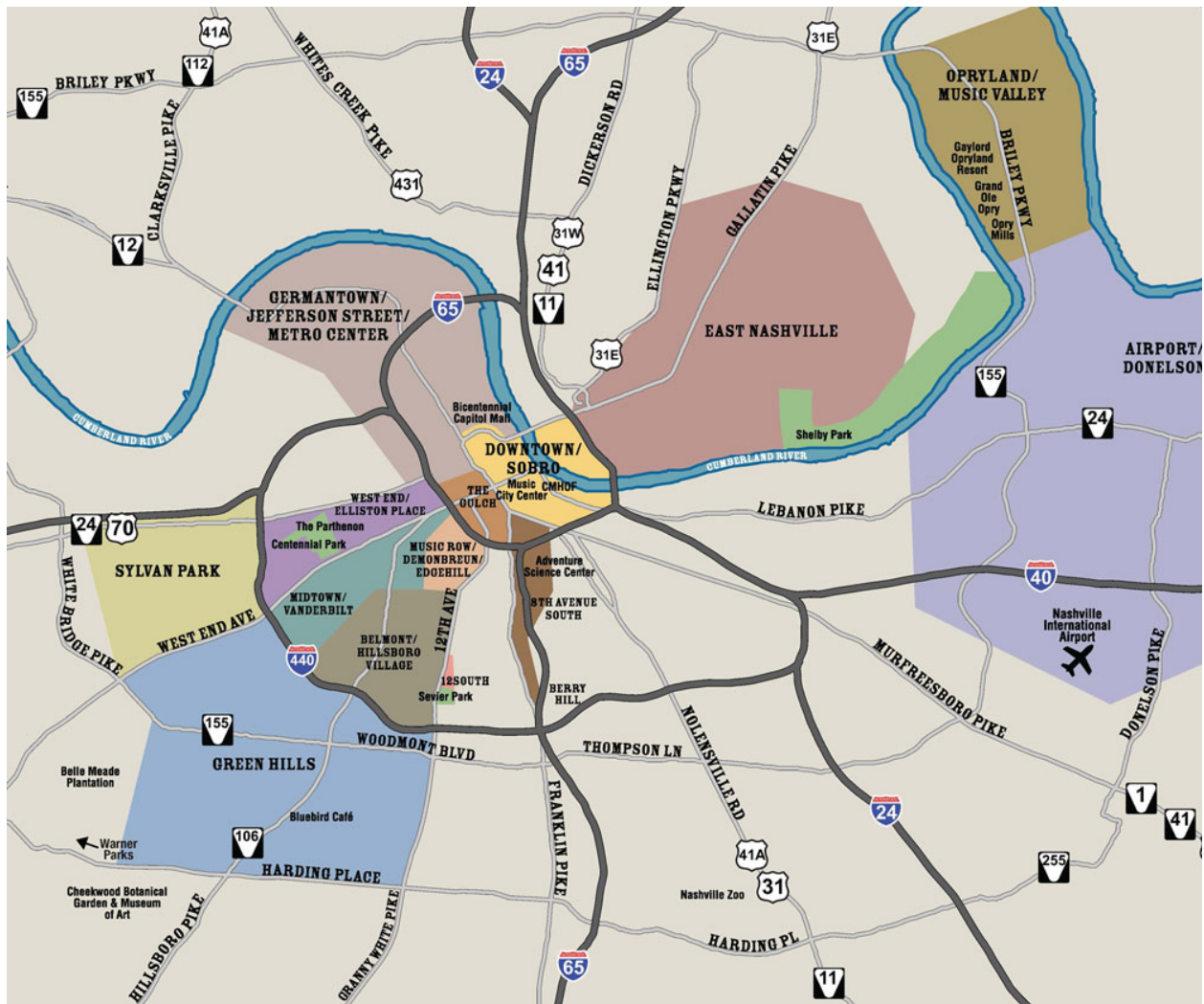
It's no secret that I love Southern hospitality. I found Nashville and Tennessee to be very friendly! Every establishment is full of service staff who can't do enough to give you great service and a great experience. You're often greeted with a 'sir' or 'ma'am' which just adds to the charm. Be sure to ask the locals for any recommendations they may have for your stay! They will want you to experience all their bustling and unique city has to offer!



How to Use This Guide:

Nashville is nicely divided into neighborhoods or districts and I've outlined what to see and do in each of them. Almost everything you need to see is in area in the map shown below. Of course there is always more to see than what I've listed here, but to me, this is the Essential Guide to Nashville!

My Tip: Nashville is a great place to experience food, culture and live music all at once! When planning your trip, make sure to cross reference the list of Where to Eat that I've included in this guide with the areas of the city you want to see when planning out your days! Some places require reservations or advance tickets, so make sure to plan ahead.



Here is my comprehensive guide to Music City!

Logistics: When to Go, Where to Stay & How to Get Around

When to Go

Anytime is a good time to visit Nashville. I love that you can visit for a weekend, an extended long weekend or a week at a time and not run out of things to do. Nashville is in the south, so temperatures will be quite warm from May – September, but don't let that discourage you from visiting in the summer. The topography of the region is so beautiful that each season brings something unique to the landscape. In springtime you'll be able to see all of the trees in bloom and in the summer you can enjoy the heat and great BBQ festivals. In the fall, you'll see beautiful changing foliage in the rolling hills that surround the city and in the winter you may see the briefest skiff of snow.

Where to Stay

So much of what you will want to see in Nashville downtown. Museums, music venues, Bridgestone arena and famous Broadway are all in the heart of downtown (among countless other attractions). It's definitely worth paying a little more to stay downtown where you can be walking distance to most of the places you'll be going to. There are new hotels popping up downtown all the time, too, so check for deals on discount travel websites (you never know what you'll find!). I like to stay close to what I want to see, but far enough from the noise that I can still relax and get rest when I need to. The nice thing about Nashville is that their hotels are located a few blocks from all of the action, which is perfect! You're right in the heart of the city!

How to Get Around

Nashville isn't a huge center, so it isn't expensive to get around using über or Lyft as an airport transfer or as a way to see some of the areas outside of downtown. Note that parking downtown is pretty expensive and is limited, so I would forego a rental car for most of your stay.

Renting a car for a day or two is a great option if you plan on venturing to the surrounding areas of the city, or heading down to the historic town of Franklin, TN. On the way you can drive through some old southern neighborhoods where you can see some incredible architecture and massive historic mansions!

Something interesting that you may see in downtown and its surrounding areas is the [Nashville Pedal Tavern](#) – a covered multi-person bike that you pedal around town to see the sites while consuming alcohol. It sounds fun, but remember – Nashville is not a flat city and you'll have to pedal up those big hills!

Things to See & Do

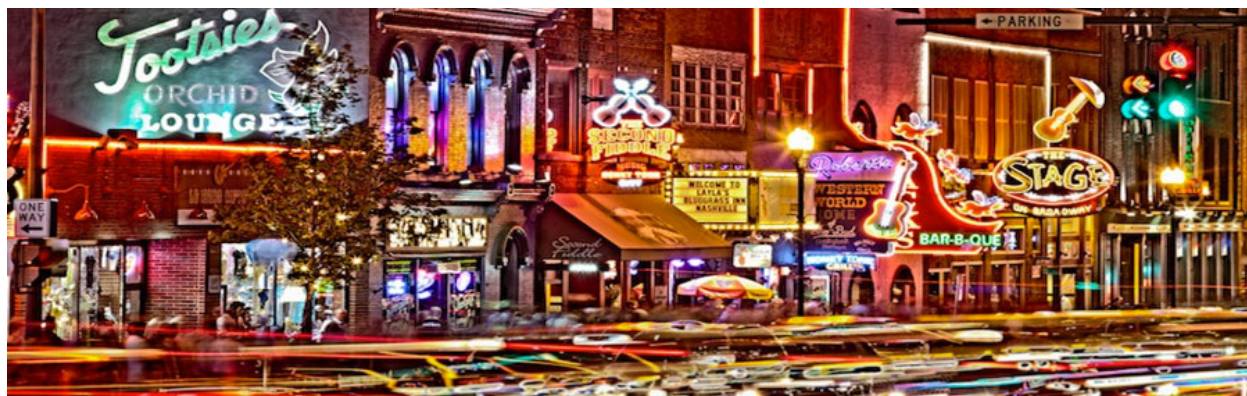
There are so many amazing things to see in Nashville and I of course can't list all of them. Here are my must-dos for your stay in the Music City!

Downtown & SOBRO

This area of Nashville is the perfect place to stay, especially if it's your first trip. Most of what you'll want to see is within walking distance in this area. Downtown is where you will find Broadway, home of Nashville's famous honky tonks, as well as theatres, museums, shops and more!

Broadway

Broadway may be Nashville's most famous street. This street is packed with honky tonks and live music venues. Most bars are multi-level, each level featuring a different live music act from afternoon until the wee hours of the morning. Some of the most well-known are [The Stage](#), [Honky Tonk Central](#) and of course, [Tootsies](#). Stop in and have a listen to some of the amazing musicians trying to make names for themselves – the talent is unreal.



My Tip: Take a walk through each bar, listening for the type of music you enjoy. Try to take in a few different venues each night. Bring small cash bills with you, too, as many of the performers work for tips only and/or they take requests for tips, too!

One of the best things about Broadway is its location – the street is quite short and is packed with more bars than you can count. It's right in the heart of Nashville and steps from your hotel. Bridgestone Arena is also right at the top of Broadway, making these bars the ideal spot for post-game celebrations! You're sure to see large groups of Bachelor and Bachelorette parties here, too. You can also pick up kitschy souvenirs from some of the shops here.

Opry & Ryman Auditorium

This historic concert hall is well worth the stop. It was once the Grand Ole Opry House and has featured acts from Charlie Chaplin to Bob Hope. Since its restoration in the early 1990s, its notable performers and recording acts include Garth Brooks, Ringo Starr, Neil Young and Foo Fighters. The Tennessee Historical Commission has marked the [Ryman Auditorium](#) as the birthplace of Bluegrass music.



Hopefully there's a show going on while you're in town! (be sure to check schedules ahead of time for ticketing). If the Opry isn't on while you're there, you can still tour this historic and iconic building (tours run daily from 9am – 4pm).

In the area around the [Ryman Auditorium](#) you can also find [Puckett's Grocery](#) (stop in for great Southern food!), Chet Atkin's Statue and [Nudie's Honky Tonk](#). It's also right next to Broadway where you can find plenty of live music venues to suit your taste!

Sports & Stadium Concerts

Nashville is home to two professional sports teams: Tennessee Titans (NFL) and Nashville Predators (NHL). Nissan Stadium where the Titans play is just across the river from Broadway. Bridgestone Arena, home of the Predators is right at the top of Broadway making it idea for post-game celebrations! Bridgestone Arena also features a lot of large concerts throughout the year, so be sure to check their events schedule before heading to town! Trust me, you'll want to experience the unique hockey crowd in Nashville! These loyal fans are unlike those in any other hockey city!

Museums & Other Sites to See

The Downtown and SoBro area is where you'll find the majority of the museums that you'll want to see while in Nashville. There are also some unique landmarks and shops here. Some of these include:

- [The Country Music Hall of Fame](#)
- [The Johnny Cash Museum](#)
- The Patsy Cline Museum
- [Ernest Tubb Record Shop](#)
- [The George Jones Museum](#)
- Hard Rock Café
- [The Frist Center for the Visual Arts](#)

This area is also home to the [Nashville Symphony](#), [Music City Center](#), and the [Music City Walk of Fame](#).

Midtown/Vanderbilt & Belmont/Hillsboro Village & Green Hills

These areas of Nashville feature tons of great shops where you're sure to find unique items. The streets are also filled with great eateries, so you won't go hungry in these neighborhoods, either! Some of the best places to eat here are Pancake Pantry, Edgehill Café, and Taco Mamacita (*see list of Places to Eat for reference*). This area is also where you'll find Belmont Mansion and Belle Meade Plantation. These neighborhoods are rich in history and full of fantastic architecture and sites to see!

Belmont Mansion

The [Belmont Mansion](#) is an antebellum home built in 1853 by one of the wealthiest women in America. Take a guided walk through this enormous estate home while you learn about the lady of the house, Adelia Acklen, as well as Nashville's Civil War history. It's sure to be inspirational as well! Located on the Belmont University campus, this historic site is open 7 days a week.

Belle Meade Plantation

The Belle Meade Plantation is home to so much US history! Take a tour of this Greek Revival (antebellum) mansion and its grounds. Learn about the roots of Kentucky Derby winners Seabiscuit and Secretariat and their connection to Belle Meade. Spend some time in the horseshoe pit or sample one of their wines while surrounded by magnolia trees!

Suggested Day by Car: Nashville to Franklin, TN

I suggest renting a car for at least one of your days in Nashville. This will allow you to drive around the city and experience all that the city has to offer. On this suggested drive you'll see historic sites, beautiful landscapes and stunning architecture. Here is what I think is the best route to take!

- Assuming you're staying in downtown Nashville, drive southwest out of downtown through The Gulch and Music Row. This way you'll see these iconic areas of town during your stay. Have breakfast in Edgehill or further along your drive in Midtown/Vanderbilt.
- From Midtown, take West End Avenue all the way through Nashville. This is a great way to see some beautiful homes and really take in the Southern Architecture. You will pass several estate homes on your path.
- Stop in at the Belle Meade Plantation for a tour and a brief wine tasting!
- Continue down West End Avenue for about 14 more miles to Franklin, Tennessee. On your drive, you'll see the rolling hills of Tennessee as well as beautiful blossoms or foliage (depending on the time of year). You will continue to see some amazing southern homes. If you want to add a waypoint, stop in at the [Loveless Café](#) for some biscuits and good Southern food.
- Stop in Franklin and stroll through their historic downtown, popping into shops. If you haven't eaten lunch yet, stop at one of their great restaurants (I recommend Puckett's).
- On your way back up to Nashville (US-431), stop in at the [Bluebird Café](#) for some live music. This legendary stage has given a start to acts such as Faith Hill. Be sure to get tickets ahead of time as same-day lineups outside can run long and entrance isn't guaranteed.

Historic Franklin, Tennessee

Franklin is a small town located a few miles southwest of Nashville. The drive down is beautiful – you'll see gorgeous southern mansions and rolling tree-covered hills.

Take an afternoon and stroll through [Downtown Franklin](#). Here you'll find a restored main street complete with a theatre and drug store! The street is full of eateries and lovely southern shops. It's the perfect place to pick up authentic souvenirs for your trip (and things that are actually useful!). Be sure to check out my favorites: [White's Mercantile](#), [Tin Cottage](#), [Savory Spice](#) and [Seersucker Candy Co.](#)

Be sure to pop into [Puckett's](#) for some good ol' Southern food at its best! BBQ meats, corn bread, watermelon, daily cobblers, mac'n'cheese...you know what I mean!

While in Franklin, stop by [Lotz House](#), the location of the Civil War Battle of Franklin. Take a Thomas Y. Cartwright Battlefield Tour and learn about this historic Civil War Battle. The house also features artifacts and a collection of fine antiques from the era.

Other Things to See & Do

I've already mentioned it, but there are SO MANY things to do in Nashville. Here are a few additional neighborhoods to check out that you might want to include into your trip if you can! Each one is unique and interesting in its own way and features amazing places to eat, shop and see! They also each feature their own set of live music venues.

12South

12South is one of Nashville's hottest neighborhoods. New shops and restaurants are opening all the time! This is where you'll find [Draper James](#) (Reese Witherspoon's shop) among other upscale boutiques.



This neighborhood features great places to eat like my favorite [Edley's Bar-B-Que](#) – be sure to stop in for lunch! Also check out [Embers Ski Lodge](#) for their Lavender Bees Knees cocktail! If it's a nice afternoon, stop in at [Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams](#) for a scoop or get a cupcake from the [Sprinkles Cupcake ATM](#) (*yes, you read that correctly!*).

Marathon Village

Located near downtown Nashville, [Marathon Village](#) is quickly becoming a Nashville hotspot! Here is where you'll find [Antique Archaeology](#) (Mike Wolfe's store from American Pickers) as well as a variety of distilleries and wineries. This is a great place to spend an afternoon sipping local brews, whiskeys, wines, bourbons and cordials!



East Nashville

[East Nashville](#) is often compared to NYC's East Village. Laidback and cool, it's considered a hipster's paradise. It's full of craft breweries, local artisan boutiques and unique eateries. Here is where you'll find some great farm-to-table restaurants and local music venues, specifically in the 5 Points area. If you're a fan of the HGTV show "Masters of Flip", this is an area of Nashville where Dave and Kourtney Wilson remodel many of the homes you see on the show.



Germantown

[Germantown](#) was Nashville's first suburb and was originally settled in the 19th century by German settlers, naturally! It is home to Nashville's Farmers Market and a large portion of Nashville's food scene. Head over here for beer gardens, fantastic restaurants, local shops, and interesting history. This is also where you'll find Fisk University and Tennessee State University, both rich with history of Music City's past.

Opryland & Music Valley

[Opryland-Music Valley](#) is located outside of Downtown Nashville. This is where you'll find the Gaylord Opryland Resort, and the Opry Mills outlet mall.



One of the most famous things to see in Nashville is of course the [Grand Ole Opry](#). Take a tour of the Grand Ole Opry House or see a show! (I suggest getting tickets in advance as shows often sell out).

This is also where you'll find [The General Jackson Showboat](#)! Take a ride on this paddle-wheeled riverboat for a fest of food and great live entertainment! Shows run midday, evenings and for Sunday Brunch.

Where & What to Eat

Nashville is home to some incredible places to eat if you know where to look! From amazing breakfast food, Bar-B-Que, Mexican fare, steak, seafood and more, there's a place to suit every taste.

Many of Nashville's newest restaurants feature locally-sourced ingredients and seasonal menus. If it's Southern fare that you're after, there are plenty of places that feature this cuisine both in its traditional means and with a modern, upscale twist.



Edley's BBQ

[Edley's BBQ](#) is the place to find real Nashville Bar-B-Que complete with cornbread and sweet tea. Be sure to ask them about additional house sauces that you can try with your meats! This is one place that I would go every time I'm in town. They have locations in 12 South, East Nashville and Sylvan Park.

Pancake Pantry

Located in Hillsboro Village, [Pancake Pantry](#) is one of the best breakfast spots in Music City. It first opened in 1961 and has been a local staple ever since. Lineups can be up to 2 hours long, but it's worth it for those silver dollar pancakes!

Edgehill Café

A great brunch spot in Nashville is [Edgehill Café](#), located of course, in Edgehill Village. I am in love with their casual-chic décor and upscale take on southern food. Their large menu features comfort foods as well as fresh choices for the more health-conscious guests.

Taco Mamacita

[Taco Mamacita](#) in Edgehill Village is worth a stop for what they dub “fresh-mex”. Mexican food is always at its finest in the south, so be sure to stop in! They also feature tequila flights – who can resist?!

City House

A Germantown favorite, [City House](#) features delicious pizzas and an incredible list of cocktails. Their bourbon and whiskeys list is quite impressive, too!

Rolf and Daughters

Also located in Germantown, [Rolf and Daughters](#) was voted one of the best new restaurants in Nashville. Seasonal menus, locally sourced ingredients, sustainability-focused – their rustic cuisine is both simple and refined.

Whiskey Kitchen

[Whiskey Kitchen](#) is located in Midtown-Vanderbilt and is great for star spotting if you're there on the right day. This hot-spot features trendy cocktails and pub-inspired food.

Hattie B's Hot Chicken

Located in Midtown, [Hattie B's Hot Chicken](#) is exactly what it sounds like – an amazing chicken spot! Chicken is available in four different heat levels and a long list of southern sides complete each plate. Don't worry – there's peach cobbler and banana pudding for dessert.

Holland House Bar & Refuge

An East Nashville staple, [Holland House](#) features a menu that changes with the season, using only the freshest ingredients in both their dishes and cocktails. It's also steps away from 5 Points (an area in East Nashville) where you can catch some great music after dinner!

The Southern Steak & Oyster

For Southern food with a twist, [The Southern Steak & Oyster](#) is a great spot to check out. It's located downtown and features a shuck-to-order oyster bar, a wood-fired grill and dishes with locally sourced produce and sustainable ingredients.

The Loveless Café

The aforementioned [Loveless Café](#) is off the beaten path, but worth a stop for some good down home food! Daily specials include dishes like Hot Chicken, Shrimp N' Grits and Watermelon Ribs.

Where to Shop

There are so many great shopping areas in Nashville. Each little pocket of the city features unique shops for souvenirs, antiques, art, records and other unique southern items. You'll find incredible boutiques and unique shops in each area that is covered in this guide. The city also has standard shopping centers as well as a large outlet center called [Opry Mills](#), which is actually where you'll find [Madame Tussauds Nashville](#).

What to Buy:

With the variety of shops throughout Nashville, here are some of my recommendations of great souvenirs from your trip.

- **Quality Southern Linens** – These high quality linens can be found at shops around town and in any plantation gift shop.
- **Candy** – There are some incredible candy shops in Tennessee and one of my favorite items to pick up are “Muzzle Loaders” from [Seersucker Candy Co.](#)
- **Spices & Rubs** – Love southern BBQ? Why not take some of these great spices and sauces home with you to re-create these flavorful memories in your own backyard!
- **Quality Souvenir T-shirts & Caps** – I’m not one for souvenir graphic tees, but many of the sites feature shops that have high quality cotton items with artsy printing on them.
- **Records** – It wouldn't be a trip to Music City without picking up your favorite albums, both old and new, on vinyl
- **Guitars** – There are countless music stores throughout the city that sell both vintage and new guitars.
- **Unique Antique Items** – There are quite a few antique shops in the area where you can find interesting items for your home.

