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Beale Street Memphis

Making the Most of Memphis

Discover some of the best that this soulful city has to offer in five simple steps

By Parm Parmar

When you land in Memphis, you might initially perceive it as a quiet city. But beneath the surface lies a vibrant undercurrent where soul, history and culture converge. Blues was born in Memphis, legendary BBQ simmered and rock 'n' roll first wailed.

The electric nightlife and music on Beale Street beckon, while the Historic Clayborn Temple, headquarters for the Sanitation Workers' Strike of 1968 and Martin Luther King Jr.'s last campaign, stands as a poignant reminder of the city's pivotal role in the American Civil Rights Movement.

Visit this soulful city in just five unforgettable steps:

► Discover the True Home of the Blues

In 1952, Memphis-based music producer Sam Phillips established Sun Records, an independent label that initially focused on recording Black artists such as B.B. King, Howlin' Wolf and Ike Turner. The label's path took a significant turn with the arrival of Elvis Presley's first recording. Soon, a diverse group of musical stars joined the label, including Johnny Cash, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison and Carl Perkins. Their recordings were born from a simple, single-room studio, preserved to this day for visitors



Sun Studio exterior



Central Station Hotel - Eight & Sand Bar

► **Sleep in an Old Train Station**

The Central Station Hotel in Memphis's South Main district, is a converted 1914 train station—originally Grand Central Station. Today, a small section serves as an Amtrak stop on New Orleans and Chicago routes. Design lovers will enjoy the hotel's retro lobby, a blend of historic charm and modern amenities, complete with a DJ spinning vinyl in the evenings. With its unique record wall and vibrant music scene, Eight & Sand is where to gather in the evenings with a cocktail in hand.



Central Station BBQ Beef Brisket

► **Eat Memphis' Soulful Food**

Visitors can expect delicious BBQ at Central Station, with melt-in-your-mouth brisket, ribs and beans. But Memphis offers more than just barbecue. Discover talented chefs creating innovative cuisine at spots like By the Brewery and Hustle & Dough, where you can enjoy biscuit sandwiches and fantastic breakfast avocado toasts. For a taste of haute cuisine, try the beautifully curated dishes at Amelia Gene's and the mouth-watering modern Italian at Catherine & Mary's.

To experience a bit of Memphis history, visit the Beauty Shop, a 50s-style diner formerly frequented by Priscilla Presley to savour Southern favourites like shrimp & grits and more unique items like the Ronzo's Reuben, the restaurant's take on a classic NYC-style sandwich. No visit to Memphis is complete without a trip to the Arcade, Elvis' favourite breakfast spot. Who knew Memphis was such a foodie paradise?

► **Reflect at the Civil Rights Museum**

The National Civil Rights Museum is more than just a museum; it's where history comes alive. Within the Lorraine Motel, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, visitors can experience 400 years of Black history through powerful exhibits and artifacts. Stepping into the preserved Room 306 is a profoundly moving experience. The museum also features a replica bus from the Rosa Parks era, showcasing the courage that helped shape the nation. This isn't just a place to see history; it's a place to connect with it, to be inspired by its lessons, and to carry its legacy forward.



Civil Rights Museum with Rosa Parks

► **Experience the Glamour of Graceland**

Whether an Elvis fan or simply curious, visiting Graceland is a must. This iconic mansion, built to Elvis Presley's exact specifications, offers a fascinating glimpse into the King's life and reflects his unique personality and musical legacy. The tour includes the living room, his parents' bedroom, the Jungle Room and more. The famous Jungle Room, with its Polynesian accents, showcases Elvis' eclectic style. Don't miss the new Elvis Presley's Memphis exhibit and entertainment complex. You will also see where Elvis is laid to rest and his family's burial plots.



Graceland Living Room



Graceland