

# EXPLORE!

**Deep South and Blues**  
13 days

USA - Trip code **SUS**

## Deep South and Blues

This trip is a bucket-list adventure through six of America's southern states, mixing history, music, culture and food to give a real insight into the southern psyche. Listen to jazz, blues and country music as it oozes out of the very soul of Memphis, Nashville and New Orleans; take a Southern cooking class and look for alligators on a swamp tour; learn about the slave trade and the Civil Rights movement, and be bowled over by the infectious southern charm of the locals.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Nashville** - Visit the Country Music Hall of Fame and historic RCA Studio B
- ★ **New Orleans** - Explore the French Quarter and spot alligators on a swamp tour
- ★ **Memphis** - Discover Graceland, home to Elvis Presley
- ★ **Atlanta** - Uncover the history of the Civil Rights Movement and visit the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site
- ★ **Southern cooking class** - Learn how to cook Southern food and then enjoy eating it afterwards!

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**TRIP PACE:****Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

**GROUP SIZE:****8 - 12**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join trip in Savannah

Join the trip in Savannah and check-in to the hotel.



**Accommodation: Holiday Inn Savannah Historic District** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Walking tour of this historic city

The historic district of Savannah is the largest registered urban National Historic Landmark district in the United States. This means it is officially recognised for its outstanding degree of historical significance. It is a charming city and boasts 21 squares filled with statues and fountains. This morning we will embark on a walking tour of Savannah, where we will see some of the many restored Federal and Regency buildings. We will view the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, the Colonial Park Cemetery (established about 1750), the Oglethorpe Monument and Chippewa Square (where the waiting for the bus scene was filmed in Forrest Gump). The tour will end at the City Market, the commercial and social centre of Savannah since the early 1700s.

The rest of the afternoon has been left free to continue exploring at your own leisure, perhaps choosing to take a river cruise (optional) where you will hear intriguing tales and historic facts about the history of Savannah.

Savannah has long been known as one of America's most haunted cities. There is the possibility of joining a walking tour to discover Savannah's haunted history tonight.



## Accommodation: Holiday Inn Savannah Historic District (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 3 - Wander round Bonaventure Cemetery

Nestled beneath a canopy of live oak and magnolias laced with Spanish moss, Bonaventure is a Southern Gothic sculpture garden consistently named on travel lists as one of the most beautiful cemeteries in the world. Savannahians have been interring their dead on the grounds of this former 18th century plantation since well before the Civil War. We will learn more about its history on a two hour walking tour.

Later on, a short drive brings us to Charleston. Our first stop will be the City Market, one of the nation's oldest public markets and today many vendors sell art, food and jewellery. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore this old city. You may want to visit the Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon, which is considered to be one of the three most historically significant colonial buildings in the US. The declaration of independence was read from its balcony for the citizens of South Carolina. Throughout the years this structure has functioned as a custom house, public market, public meeting place, military prison, post office and barracks.



## Accommodation: Town & Country Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 4 - Charleston tour, Southern cooking class

Today we start our morning with a walking tour where we will learn about the history, culture and architecture of Charleston. The historic district boasts handsome old houses and charming little streets. On the tour, we will see Dock Street Theatre (America's first theatre), Rainbow Row (a series of thirteen colourful historic houses) and the Old Slave Mart.

After lunch we will visit Magnolia Plantation, a historic plantation house just outside of Charleston. The old house was founded in 1676, and is steeped in over 300 years of family history. However, most visitors come for the gardens which are enormous and filled with azaleas, lillies, roses, magnolias and many more species. These are the oldest public gardens in the US, opening their doors to visitors in 1870.

This evening we will participate in a hands-on Southern cooking class so roll up your sleeves and get ready to cook! You will create a meal that you will sit down and enjoy at the end of class.



### Accommodation: Town & Country Inn (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Dinner

## DAY 5 - Visit the Aiken Rhett historic house, head to Atlanta

We continue our exploration of Charleston with a visit to the Aiken-Rhett House, one of the historic homes in downtown Charleston, before heading to Atlanta, the capital of Georgia and one of the most important Confederacy areas during the civil war. On our way there, we will stop in Augusta, hometown of The Godfather of Soul, Mr James Brown. This singerong writer, activist was the creator of funk music and a major figure of 20th century popular music and dance. His career spanned six decades, and influenced the development of several music genres. This evening, we can visit Centennial Olympic Park and see the Fountain of Rings Show.



### Accommodation: Holiday Inn Express (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 6 - Discover the Martin Luther King, Jr National Historic Site

On our way to Nashville, we will visit the Martin Luther King, Jr National Historic Site where we can hear his story, visit the home of his birth and where he played as a child. We will follow in his footsteps and hear his voice in the church where he moved hearts and minds. We will walk through the International World Peace Rose Garden, The King Centre (where we will view the Eternal Flame), and Dr and Mrs King's Tomb and stroll down the International Civil Rights Walk of Fame.

This evening, we can experience all that Nashville, the country music capital of the world, has to offer, perhaps visiting the famous Wildhorse Saloon where we can try some free line dancing lessons (if available). You may also want to drink some Jack Daniels whiskey, which is produced in Tennessee.



### Accommodation: Millenium Maxwell House (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available

## DAY 7 - In Nashville; visit the Country Music Hall of Fame and Historic RCA Studio B

This morning we will visit the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum where we can view memorabilia from stars such as Hank Williams, Loretta Lynn and Garth Brooks. We will also take a guided tour of Historic RCA Studio B, where artists such as Elvis and Dolly Parton recorded over 35,000 songs. Afterwards, we will enjoy a sightseeing tour of the famous landmarks of Nashville including the Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park.

Broadway is lined with honky-tonks and live music venues playing not only country, but all music genres, a great way to enjoy your free evening.



**Accommodation: Millenium Maxwell House** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

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## DAY 8 - Drive to Memphis, optional museum visits

We will depart early for Memphis today. Memphis is famous for being the home of Elvis Presley, the birthplace of the blues and a key location in the Civil Rights struggles. After a short orientation tour, you can choose to visit The National Civil Rights Museum (built around the former Lorraine Motel where Martin Luther King was assassinated in 1968) or the Rock 'n' Soul Museum (optional).

This evening we can enjoy live music along Memphis' famous Beale Street. Legendary forefathers such as Louis Armstrong, Muddy Waters and B.B. King helped to put Beale Street on the musical map.



**Accommodation: Comfort Inn Downtown** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

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## DAY 9 - Discover legendary Graceland, Elvis Presley's home

A trip to Memphis would not be complete without a visit to Graceland, the home of 'the King', Elvis Presley. Elvis died at the estate in 1977 and Graceland is forever styled in '70s decor. Our guided tour focuses on the splendid garden and the opulent mansion. Rooms of note include the Jungle Room which includes an indoor waterfall. It was built as a den and was later converted into a recording studio, where Elvis recorded his last two albums. The Trophy Building displays records, movie posters, memorabilia and awards.

The rest of the afternoon is yours to enjoy. Visit one of the museums you didn't see yesterday or take a trip to Sun Studios, where singers such as Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison and of course Elvis recorded.

This evening, it is possible to see a Broadway show or watch a concert at the Orpheum Theatre.



**Accommodation: Comfort Inn Downtown** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 10 - Visit Clarksdale, the birthplace of the Delta Blues, continue to Vicksburg

Today we travel along Old Highway 61, more commonly referred to as The Blues Highway. Our first stop will be in Clarksdale, Mississippi at the junction of Highways 61 and 49. Legend says that it was at these crossroads that Robert Johnson, the godfather of the blues, sold his soul to the Devil. Johnson's music later went on to influence some of the most highly regarded artists and musicians in modern history, from Bob Dylan to Eric Clapton. Known as the birthplace of Delta Blues, Clarksdale is the premier city for the preservation of the arts and music of the Mississippi Delta as we will see with visits to The Delta Blues Museum and a local juke joint. After a uniquely American experience immersed in blues culture along this famous route, we end our day in the historic riverboat gambling town of Vicksburg along the Mississippi River.



**Accommodation: Waterview Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 11 - Cajun Country swamp tour, continue to New Orleans

Our route today takes us through Cajun Country. We will stop for a swamp tour before we arrive in New Orleans. Experience the tranquility of the swamp from a boat, looking out for alligators and birds such as little blue herons and great white egrets.

Otherwise known as the 'big easy', New Orleans is an eclectic mix of European, Creole and Cajun culture which manifests in every aspect of the architecture, cuisine and musical scene. It has to be one of the most diverse and intoxicating cities in the US, with the scents of delicious food and strains of jazz music around every corner. We will check into our hotel and have the evening free to explore the French Quarter and its many bars, restaurants and live music venues where we can listen to some jazz, perhaps whilst sipping some Southern Comfort, which originated in the city. New Orleans is well known for its food, and the local food specialties are well worth a try, in particular spicy jambalaya, gumbo or the huge po'boys (submarine sandwiches, often filled with shrimp).



**Accommodation: Drury Inn - French Quarter** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 12 - Discover the 'big easy'

Today is a free day to explore New Orleans further, and a great way to start is with beignets and coffee at Cafe du Monde. Optional trips include visiting Mardi Gras World, taking a trolley to the beautiful Garden District with its 19th century mansion houses, or joining a Voodoo cemetery tour. There is plenty to enjoy in the city just by wandering around the streets and listening to the street musicians playing jazz, blues or honky tonk - frankly the highest quality buskers you'll find anywhere! Your Explore Leader will help you organise your day based on your interests, and in the evening Frenchmen Street is the place to go to find the area's best live bands.



**Accommodation: Drury Inn - French Quarter** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 13 - Trip ends in New Orleans

Our trip ends in New Orleans this morning.



Meals Provided: None



## Trip vehicles

The vehicles that we use on our USA trips are either low-roof or high-roof transit vans. Where possible, we aim to get the high-roof ones, allowing that little bit of extra comfort. Although not flashy, these small-group vehicles are perfect for exploring the US as they allow greater flexibility to get to those more off the beaten track places. Your Explore Leader will rotate seating positions regularly within the van.



Trip vehicle

## Why book this trip

There is no more diverse trip in the United States than this trip through the Southern states. It gives a comprehensive mix of history, music and food - we learn more about the Civil War and the South's history of Black Rights struggles. The music is eclectic, from country in Nashville, jazz in New Orleans and blues in Memphis, and the food is equally iconic, as we try gumbo, Southern barbeque, shrimp and good 'down home' soul food.

## What's included?



### Included meals

Dinner: 1



### Transport

Maxiwagon



### Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Driver  
Local Guide(s)



### Accommodation

12 nights standard hotel

## Trip information

### Country information

### USA

#### Climate

There are great variations in the altitude and terrain of the areas visited and this is reflected in the temperatures. Desert areas can be extremely hot in the summer months (49°), though temperatures can drop dramatically at night. The mountains are cooler and wetter especially in the north of the Rockies. At the beginning and end of the season there may still be some snow around in the high passes and it can be cold, whereas in mid-summer the day time temperatures can soar.

#### Time difference to GMT

-9

#### Plugs

2 Pin Flat

#### Religion

Christian

#### Language

English



## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Savannah - River Cruise USD\$25, Ghost Tour USD\$20-\$30

Memphis - Civil Rights Museum - USD\$16, Rock 'n' Soul Museum - USD\$12, Sun Studio - USD\$14

Charleston - Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon USD\$10

New Orleans - Plantation Tour - USD\$65-\$100, Mardi Gras World - USD\$22, Streetcar - USD\$3/day, Voodoo Cemetery Tour - USD\$25

### Clothing

Pack for hot conditions for June, July and August departures. For departures earlier and later in the year, the weather can be cooler, especially at night so make sure you bring some warmer layers including a fleece. Include a long sleeved shirt and warm trousers. Also a lightweight waterproof jacket, swimwear and a sun hat.

### Footwear

Trainers and/or sandals for travelling.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

Bring only the bare essentials - one main bag plus a small daypack for walking and for personal items. Main luggage cannot be accessed during the day. Soft luggage is more practical as it is stored in the trailer during travel. Bring plastic bags to keep things dry. Laundry facilities are available at various points during the trip.

### Equipment

Bring a water bottle (1-2 litre capacity), high factor sunblock and plastic bags to keep things dry. You may need insect repellent especially in June and July. We also recommend that you take another set of photo ID with you to take out in the evening, as most bars in southern America ID everyone regardless of age and you may wish to leave your passport in your accommodation.

### Tipping

#### Explore leader

Tour Leader: At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

#### Local crew

In North America tipping 15%-20% is a recognised part of life across the service industry, including restaurants, activity suppliers, taxis and guides. Local staff will look to you for personal recognition of particular services provided.

Unlike other Explore trips, during our trips in North America our Explore leaders will not operate a tips kitty. However, they will be more than happy to provide guidance throughout the trip on who to tip when and to suggest appropriate amounts.

### Country Information

#### USA

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket

restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£15

**Dinner price**

£21

**Beer price**

£Varies for different towns, average £4.00

**Water price**

£1.1

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

USDollars.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Bring your money in US\$ cash.

**Where To Exchange**

Banks or 'Forex' offices in main towns/cities. Your tour leader will advise you on arrival.

**ATM Availability**

Widely available.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Widely accepted just about everywhere.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Maxiwagon

## Essential Information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click here.

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click here

**Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information.[Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa and Passport Information

USA: (Including those in transit) Citizens of the UK, New Zealand, Australia, and passport holders from several EU countries can enter the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). You must apply online for an ESTA (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation), here <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov> no later than 72 hours prior to travel. Travellers who have not registered before their trip may be refused boarding.

You must have an electronic passport with a digital chip containing biometric information about the passport owner. UK passports which are biometric feature a small gold symbol (camera) at the bottom of the front cover.

If you have visited Libya, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria or Yemen since 01 March 2011 or are dual nationals of these countries, you cannot travel with an ESTA. If you are a citizen of a country not included in the VWP you cannot apply for an ESTA. In both cases, you will instead need to apply for a visa from the nearest US Embassy or Consulate. If you are unable to provide a valid visa before boarding flights to the US, or entering via another method, you may not be permitted to travel.

Please note for your ESTA application you will be required to supply Point of Contact information. Explore's USA contact information will be listed on your final documentation which you will receive approximately 3-4 weeks before departure. If you are leaving for the USA before this, please call the Explore team to get this information. (This is not necessary if only transitting through the USA)

I-94 - This is only required for completion if entering the USA by land through an official border crossing. For anyone entering by air or sea, you will be advised about this form during your journey if applicable. The i94 is a history of entries and exits to the US. You can get this for free online here: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home>. Each i94 accessed is only valid for border crossing for 7 days after printed.

Entry requirements for the USA can change regularly, therefore, please ensure you have the most up to date information before you travel by checking the US embassy website. Visa applications - <http://london.usembassy.gov/niv/apply.html>

Canada (in transit): An electronic travel authorisation (ETA) is required by British citizens transiting via Canada. For more information see the official Canadian government website: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/eta.asp>  
Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## USA

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, we recommend protection against typhoid, tetanus, diphtheria, polio and hepatitis A. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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