
NORTH
ALABAMA™
TRAVEL MAGAZINE


“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all.”
• Helen Keller, North Alabama Native
Photograph by Scott Baker

Welcome to North Alabama



We are excited you have chosen North Alabama for a getaway and hope that you will take every opportunity to explore a world of travel within a short drive of where you are to see what makes the region so unique.

From towering mountains to sparkling lakes, North Alabama was once a hidden secret. Today, visitors travel from all over to trek along the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains for some of the country's most breathtaking views, picturesque trails and fascinating natural wonders. A variety of attractions, many free festivals and an assortment of shopping venues and restaurants keep residents and visitors entertained throughout the year, and thanks to the flowing waters of the Tennessee River, North Alabama boasts some of the most beautiful waterfalls.

North Alabama offers a compelling story from celebrated leaders such as Helen Keller and Dr. Wernher Von Braun to natural ecosystems such as the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge and Bankhead National Forest. Plenty of indoor fun also can be found throughout the region. World-renown museums, such as the U.S. Space and Rocket Center and Cooks Museum of Natural Science, wineries and microbreweries featuring Alabama-made wine and craft beer, the shopping mecca of Unclaimed Baggage Center and world-famous recording studios where artists like Aretha Franklin, The Rolling Stones, Cher, Bob Segar, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Chris Stapleton, Alicia Keys and many others recorded are just a few places that provide visitors a unique destination experience that can only be enjoyed in North Alabama.

I hope you will take advantage of what all is available to experience in the North Alabama region during your stay. To plot your North Alabama journey, visit www.northalabama.org for a variety of itineraries and trails. On behalf of North Alabama, I hope you enjoy your stay and wish you safe journeys back home.

Sincerely,

Tami Reist
President & CEO
Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association

@VisitNorthAL

Contributors



COLETTE BOEHM
WRITER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

Colette Boehm is a freelance writer, photographer and project manager and a native of Alabama. Drawing from her successful career of more than 30 years in destination marketing and tourism project development, she now specializes in freelance project management and in providing compelling and effective travel-related content and photography. She works with a variety of clients, including publications, destinations and marketing firms.



SCOTT BAKER
PHOTOJOURNALIST

Scott Baker is an internationally published photojournalist based in Alexander City, Alabama. He is a contributing photographer to *The New York Times* and his work has been published in *The London Sunday Times Magazine*, *Drift Magazine* and other regional publications. You can follow his work on Instagram: @scottbakerphotos.



ADAM VADEN
PHOTOGRAPHER AND VIDEOGRAPHER

Adam Vaden is the Owner and Operator of Thrive Media LLC. Born and raised in Huntsville, Alabama, Adam spent his early years capturing video and taking photos. In trying to figure out what he wanted to do for a career, content creation was the path his heart was pulling him. The first four years of his career he worked as a videographer, photographer, food stylist, and graphic designer for Little Rosie's, Rosie's, Steak-Out, Shaggy's, Walton's Southern Table, and Ted's Bar-B-Q. In 2021, he decided to go full-time as a freelance videographer and hasn't turned back. Adam says he's living his dream and it has allowed him to meet wonderful clients, work with great people, and expand his creative capabilities. Find Adam at thrivemediahuntsville.com.



BRENT BOYD
PUBLISHER AND PHOTOGRAPHER

Brent Boyd founded CityVision, Inc. in 2004 in Birmingham, Alabama to fill a niche he discovered while traveling extensively in the U. S. for a previous employer. Creating The Visitor's TV Channel exclusively for hotels led to opportunities in publishing travel guides for the Greater Birmingham Convention & Visitors Bureau. In 2009, Brent discovered another unfilled niche and began publishing EXCURSIONS Hotel Guestbooks—advertising-supported, hardcover magazines placed in hotel rooms. Currently, Brent publishes travel guides, two editions of EXCURSIONS, one for Birmingham, Alabama and one that encompasses Huntsville, Decatur and Madison, Alabama, and now, the North Alabama Travel Magazine. His love of photography and for story-telling is rooted in working on publications in high school. Brent is a graduate of the University of Alabama at Birmingham and resides on Lewis Smith Lake in Cullman County. Learn more at www.cityvision.tv

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TAMI REIST

PRESIDENT AND CEO OF ALABAMA MOUNTAIN LAKES TOURIST ASSOCIATION

Tami is the President/CEO of the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association. Her duties include planning, implementing, directing and evaluating all promotional programs as well as overall development of the tourism and travel industry within the 16 northernmost counties in Alabama. The region currently generates more than $4.3 billion in travel expenditures on an annual basis.

During her more than three decade long career in tourism, she has served on a number of travel-related and civic organizations including governor appointee to the Scenic Byways Committee, Alabama Tourism Chair for the Appalachian Regional Commission, Southeast Tourism Society Legislative Council, Alabama Travel Council, Alabama Association of Destination Marketing Organizations and numerous other local and state committees. Tami is also an instructor at the Southeast Tourism Society's Marketing College and has been a contributing presenter to the tourism and travel field of study at Mississippi State University. Among her many recognitions are the ATHENA Leadership Award from the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce, the Southeast Tourism Society Dorothy Hardman Spirit Award and *This is Alabama* and *Birmingham magazine's Women Who Shape the State* honoree.



ANGIE PIERCE

VICE PRESIDENT

Angie has been in the destination marketing industry for the past 25 years. She is the Vice President of Operations for the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association where she is heavily involved with the organization's marketing, website development and management, program development and financial operations. She was awarded the Tourism Employee of the Year in 2010 by the Alabama Tourism Department and recognized by the Southeastern Outdoor Press Association with the prestigious President's Award. She is a graduate of Athens State University where she received a B.S. degree in business and the Southeast Tourism Society Marketing College where she received her TMP (Travel Marketing Professional) certification. She resides in Athens, Ala. with her husband Larry.



KAREN BEASLEY

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Karen is the Director of Marketing and Communications for the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association where she helps guide the organization's marketing and communications activities and operations to position the North Alabama region as a must-experience destination for leisure travel. Beasley has over 27 years of marketing experience, most recently working as a freelance public relations consultant for tourism organizations and festivals in north Alabama and Tennessee. She holds a B.S. degree in marketing and an MBA from the University of North Alabama. A lifelong Roll Tide fan, she resides in Decatur, Ala. but spends some of her time and too much money in another area of the state known as "the Plains." She has two children, Keller, who is completing an online degree through the University of North Alabama, and Logan, a freshman at Auburn University.



MELEA HAMES

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER

A 1995 Auburn University graduate, Melea has been a Social Media Manager in the tourism industry for more than a decade at Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association. At AMLA, Melea is responsible for creating content on Visit North Alabama's social media platforms, writing blog posts on the website, coordinating the North Alabama Ambassador Program, and speaking at various events and meetings about social media. Melea is also the host of Unexpected Adventures in North Alabama, AMLA's new podcast, produced by Relic Agency. The podcast won a 2022 Muse Award - Silver in the Audio/Podcast category and a w3 Gold Award.

UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST SERIES

We're excited to announce that we have created a podcast series all about north Alabama! The Unexpected Adventures in North Alabama podcast series focuses on all the amazing places in north Alabama that you might not even know about.

We talk about our favorite places to be outdoors, fascinating museums, road trips, and so much more. So subscribe to our podcast on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Amazon Music, CastBox, Deezer, iHeart Radio, Listen Notes, Podcast Addict, Podchaser, or Radio Public and stay tuned to all of our unexpected adventures!

Throughout this publication, you'll see recommended podcasts in the sidebars. There are so many more to enjoy. Tune in at NorthAlabama.org/podcast.

Just look for this symbol!



Your Award-Winning Host, Melea Hames

NORTH ALABAMA™
TRAVEL MAGAZINE

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ON THE COVER
Enjoying breathtaking views from Weathington Park in Section, Ala.
Photograph by Scott Baker

THIS PAGE
Mural located in Valley Head, Ala.
Photograph by Adam Vaden



You are here.

It's time to relax. Kick off your shoes and dip your toes into the pristine waters of North Alabama. Explore, hike, swim, fish, shop, eat, sip, share, laugh and smile... you've earned it. Enjoy.



Lake Guntersville State Park

Photograph by Scott Baker



OUTSTA
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IMAX Theater at the U. S. Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville.
Photograph by Adam Vaden

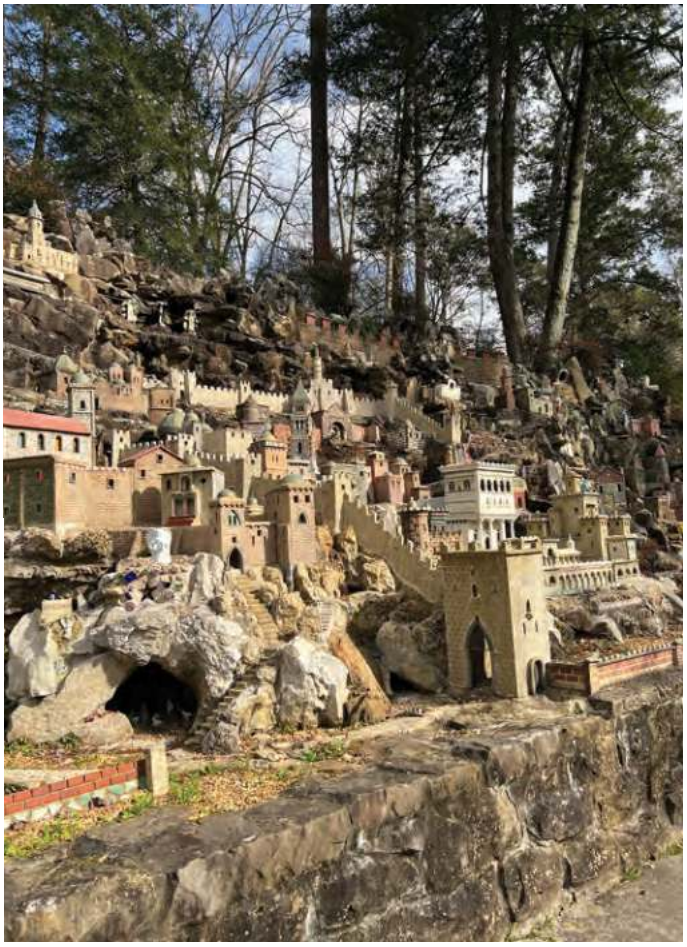
Outstanding Attractions

Alabama Music Hall of Fame *(617 Highway 72 W., Tuscumbia, AL 35674)* The Hall of Fame is dedicated to the preservation and celebration of Alabama's musicians and the state's great musical heritage. Alabama is home to many great singers, songwriters, producers and musicians. Among them are Hank Williams, Lionel Richie, The Temptations, Jamey Johnson, Riley Green, Jason Isbell and MANY more. The museum displays an amazing collection of memorabilia from dozens of iconic musicians and tells the stories behind the music.



Scott Baker





Ave Maria Grotto *(1600 St. Bernard Drive SE, Cullman, AL 35055)* Known throughout the world as "Jerusalem in Miniature," this is a beautifully landscaped, four-acre park that is home to 125 miniature reproductions of some of the most famous historic buildings and shrines of the world. Made of stone and concrete, the pieces were made by Brother Joseph Zoettl, a Benedictine monk of St. Bernard Abbey.

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 31

"U.S. SPACE & ROCKET CENTER"

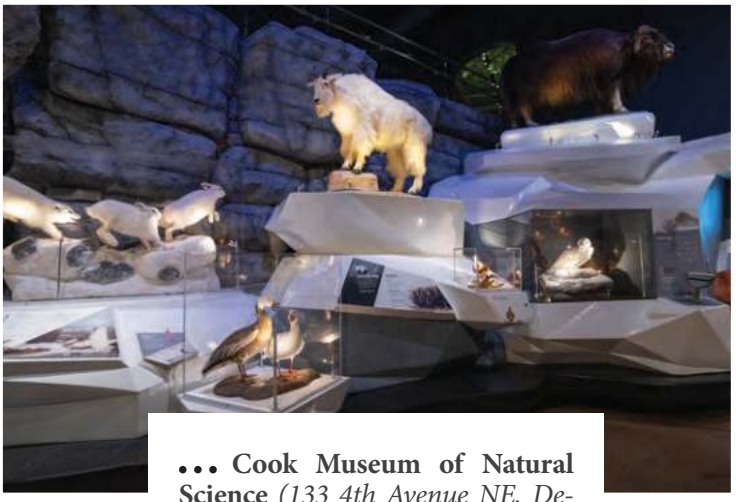
Senior Director of Public and Media Relations Patricia Ammons joins Melea to chat about all the space center has to offer, from rocket ships to "Cocktails and Cosmos."



Scott Baker

Cathedral Caverns *(637 Cave Road, Woodville, AL 35776)* The centerpiece of Cathedral Caverns state park, the cavern's opening measures 126 feet wide and 25 feet high. It features a large stalagmite forest and a frozen waterfall. Some of the formations here are among the largest stalagmites in the world. Human habitation can be traced back 8,000 years in the cave. Cave tours are scheduled throughout the day. • • •





• • • Cook Museum of Natural Science *(133 4th Avenue NE, Decatur, AL 35601)* At this state-of-the-art natural science museum visitors enjoy a hands-on, immersive experience where kids can explore, interact with and learn about nature. Interactive exhibits include a digital seashell generator, kinetic sand table and a real meteorite! There are live animal exhibits, too, with inhabitants such as fresh and saltwater fish and turtles, alligators, eastern hellbenders and more.

Dismals Canyon *(901 Highway 8, Phil Campbell, AL 35581)* This National Natural Landmark sits on 85 acres in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. Visitors can hike the sunken forest of the canyon floor and explore a labyrinth of caverns, grottos, boulders and waterfalls. After dark the canyon lights up with tiny bioluminescent Dismalites. These "glowworms" require a select habitat to survive and are found only a few places on Earth.







Early Works Family of Museums *(404 Madison Street, Huntsville, AL 35801)* This is three family friendly historic attractions in one. Early Works Children's Museum is designed for children as a hands-on, interactive history museum. At the Historic Huntsville Depot, visitors can climb aboard a train and blow the whistle. The 90-minute tour of Alabama Constitution Hall Park allows visitors to step back in time to the time of the constitutional convention of 1819.

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 21

"DISCOVER THE WORLD AROUND YOU AT THE COOK MUSEUM"

Joy Harris, marketing coordinator at the museum, shares the many discoveries that you can make as you walk through the biomes of your favorite living creatures.



Helen Keller Birthplace *(300 North Commons W., Tuscumbia, AL 35674)* Known as Ivey Green, this is where the miraculous story of a totally blind and deaf Helen Keller breaking out of her isolation, while at the well with her teacher, Anne Sullivan. Built in 1820, this site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and contains many of the original furnishings and other items from the life of Helen Keller, America's "First Lady of Courage." •••


Courtesy of Huntsville Botanical Garden

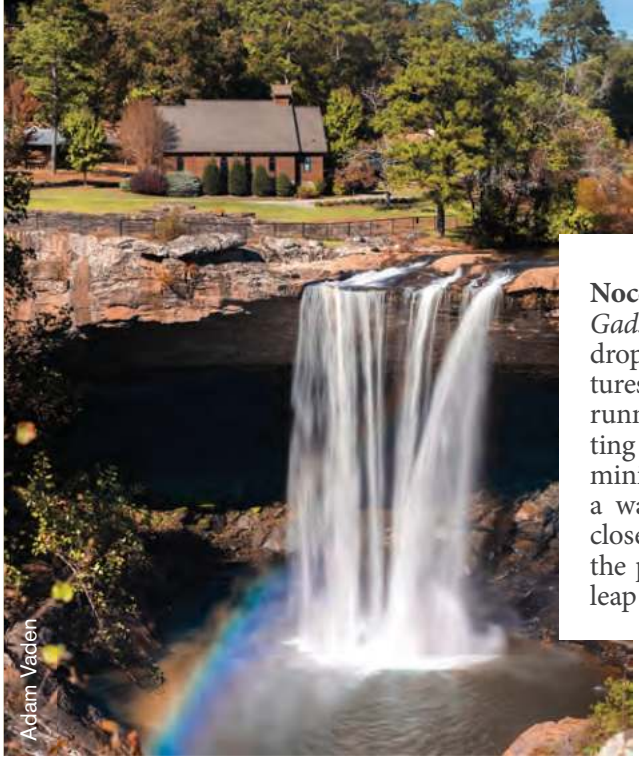
• • • **Huntsville Botanical Garden** *(4747 Bob Wallace Ave SW, Huntsville, AL 35805)* Open year-round, Huntsville Botanical Garden has 118 acres to explore—from grassy meadows to woodland paths, aquatic habitats to stunning floral collections. Stroll the nature trails while admiring collections of Alabama's native plants, play in the children's garden after encountering the fluttering butterflies in the butterfly house and find serenity in the cool shade of the trees, surrounded by the sounds of nature. Activities are held throughout the year including butterfly releases, family campouts, educational programs and an immersive holiday experience with over 200 light displays and millions of lights.


Adam Vaden

Jesse Owens Museum *(7019 County Road 203, Danville, AL 35619)* The museum and park honor the life and legacy of Jesse Owens, track and field great who captured four Gold Medals in 1936 Berlin Olympics. There are interactive kiosks, memorabilia display and a documentary narrated by Owens himself. The park also includes a replica of his birthplace and the 1936 Olympic torch and a long jump pit where visitors can test their skills.


Scott Baker

Little River Canyon National Preserve & Center *(4322 Little River Trail, Fort Payne, AL 35967)* This National Park site includes one of deepest gorges east of the Mississippi and is filled with spectacular scenery, breathtaking waterfalls and a diverse collection of rare plants and animals. The canyon begins at Little River Falls with a 45-foot waterfall. Recreational opportunities in the preserve include hiking, swimming, fishing, climbing and world-class whitewater paddling. The Center serves as a visitor information center and offers educational and a video overview of Little River Canyon.


Adam Vaden

Noccalula Falls Park *(1500 Noccalula Road, Gadsden, AL 35904)* The falls make a 90-foot drop into the Black Creek gorge. Other features include 15 miles of hiking, biking, and running trails, a campground, train ride, petting zoo, botanical garden, pioneer village, mini-golf course, a children's playground and a war memorial. (Note some activities are closed in January and February.) A statue on the precipice of the falls commemorates the leap of Native American Princess Noccalula.

Unclaimed Baggage Center *(509 W. Willow Street, Scottsboro, AL 35768)* Here, shoppers can find lost treasures from around the world! And with up to 7,000 items arriving daily, there's always something new to find. Clothes, shoes and purses to laptops, cellphones and jewelry are common finds, but there are plenty of unexpected items on hand, too. There's even a museum of unusual things that have turned up in the baggage over the years.




Adam Vaden

U. S. Space & Rocket Center *(1 Tranquility Drive, Huntsville, AL 35805)* The world-famous center, a Smithsonian Affiliate, includes the Visitor Center for NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and has one of the largest collections of rockets and space memorabilia on display anywhere in the world. There are interactive simulators, blockbuster traveling exhibitions and the only Saturn V Rocket in the world! Visitors can also experience breathtaking shows at the National Geographic Theater and the Intuitive Planetarium. The Space and Rocket Center is also home to the world-renowned Space Camp and Aviation Challenge Camp. ●



The Squirt Factory at Point Mallard Waterpark in Decatur

WATER PARKS OF NORTH ALABAMA

Whether visitors prefer a thrill ride or a lazy river, North Alabama has a water park that will float their boat! As spring slides into summer, there are planet of ways beat the heat and enjoy a day with friends and family at one of these fun-filled attractions. Filled with wet-and-wonderful water features, calm and shady recreation areas and cool and tasty treats, there is a spot for everyone to enjoy. Most water parks open Memorial Day weekend for the summer season, but be sure to check for earlier weekend options and special events throughout the year.

Point Mallard Water Park – Opened in 1970, Point Mallard is home to America's first wave pool! This classic water park features, in addition to its wave pool, the pro bowl slide, a towering sky pond with speed slides, three flume tube slides and an Olympic pool. There is also a sandy beach area for relaxing and a fun kid's zone featuring the squirt factory and duck pond and a scenic lagoon. Of course, concessions and a gift shop are open on-site, too.

This Decatur landmark offers even more options for outdoor adventure, too. The entire Point Mallard family fun park encompasses more than 700 acres among the pines and includes a 25-acre campground, 18-hole golf course, hiking and biking trails and bike rentals.

Red Bay Fun Park – The water park at Red Bay Fun Park is a great place to cool off on warm, playful days. Water features include two adult water slides and a larger swimming pool with smaller slides for young patrons. There is also an interactive splash pad. The park also has a pavilion for large gatherings, skate park, playground, soccer fields, and the quarter-mile-long Keeton Walking Trail.



Red Bay Fun Park


Sand Mountain Park & Ampitheater

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 20

"A DAY AT THE WATER PARK IN NORTH ALABAMA"

Listen as Melea and guest Haley Rutland share what you can expect as you spend a day at one of the many water parks found in North Alabama.

Sand Mountain Park & Amphitheater – One of the newest outdoor attractions in the region is the waterpark at Sand Mountain Park in Albertville. This amazing park features two 25-foot waterslides and a splash pad with 48 spray elements, a 600-foot lazy river with waterfall feature and a vortex pool. In addition, there is a three-lane lap pool, interactive stream feature, and a pool combining sports and leisure, with a volleyball net and basketball hoop. For more relaxation, shade features and sun-bathing chairs are popular, as are the poolside concessions.

The Sand Mountain Park & Amphitheater complex is a 130-acre park with live entertainment venue, RV park, dog park and elite-level athletic facilities.

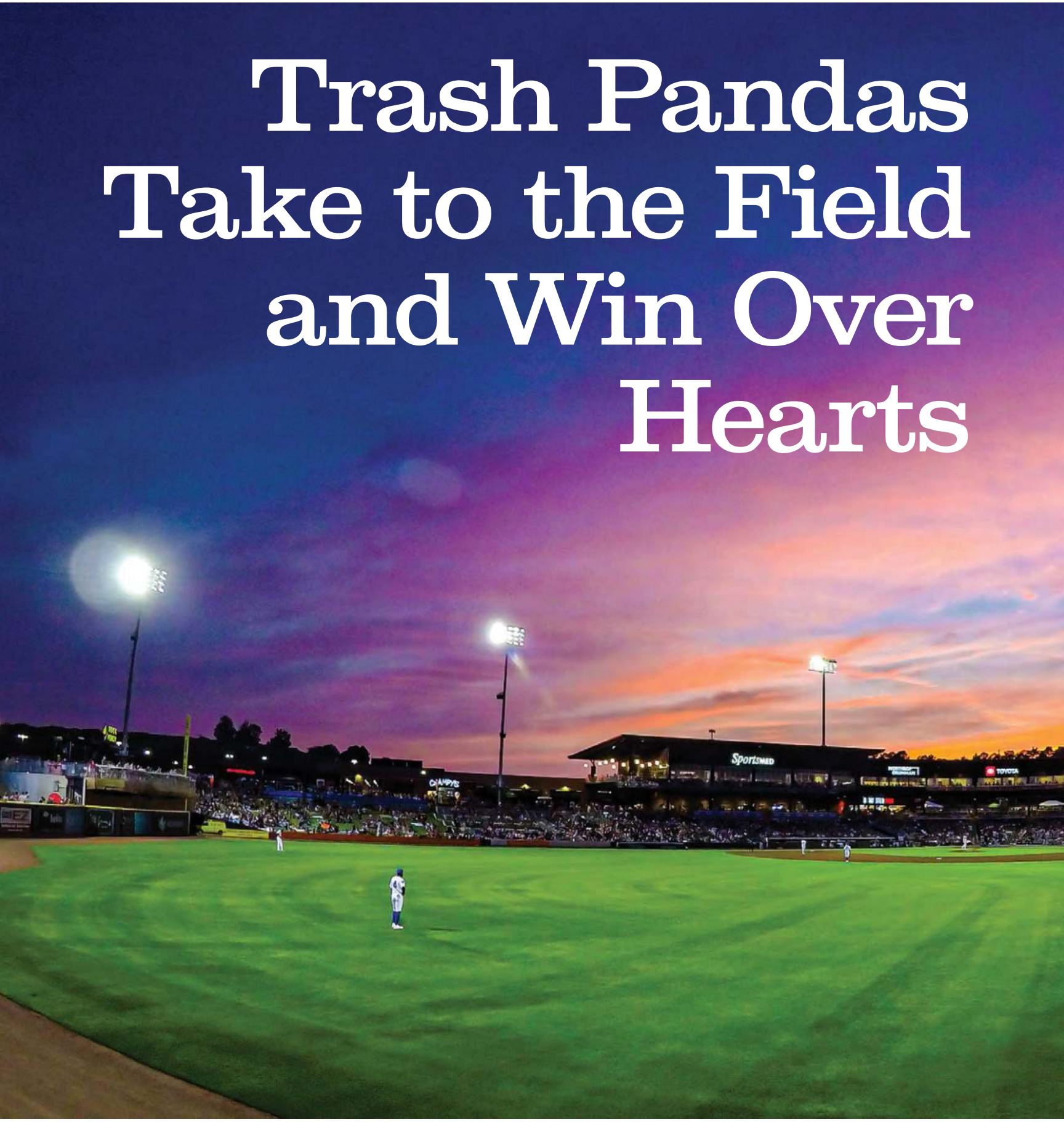

Spring Valley Beach Water Park

Spring Valley Beach Water Park – Located in Blountsville, Spring Valley Beach is less than an hour's drive from many of the region's largest cities and has one of the largest swimming pools in the Southeast. The park has six water slides including the new "360 Rush," popular for looking to pump up the adrenaline. There is also a kids' water playground and more than 20 pavilion areas. This unique, family-owned park allows visitors to bring their own picnic basket or grill to the park and provides free suntan lotion and offers free parking.

WildWater – This new water park in Cullman has made a real splash in the region. The 12-acre park features a 22,000 square-foot wave pool, and 18 water slides, including 10 thrill slides. There is a kids' area with eight slides and a lazy drift river. Many enjoy a meal or snack from one of the outstanding food and beverage vendors in the park. Reservations are available for private cabana rentals. ●


WildWater Park

Trash Pandas Take to the Field and Win Over Hearts



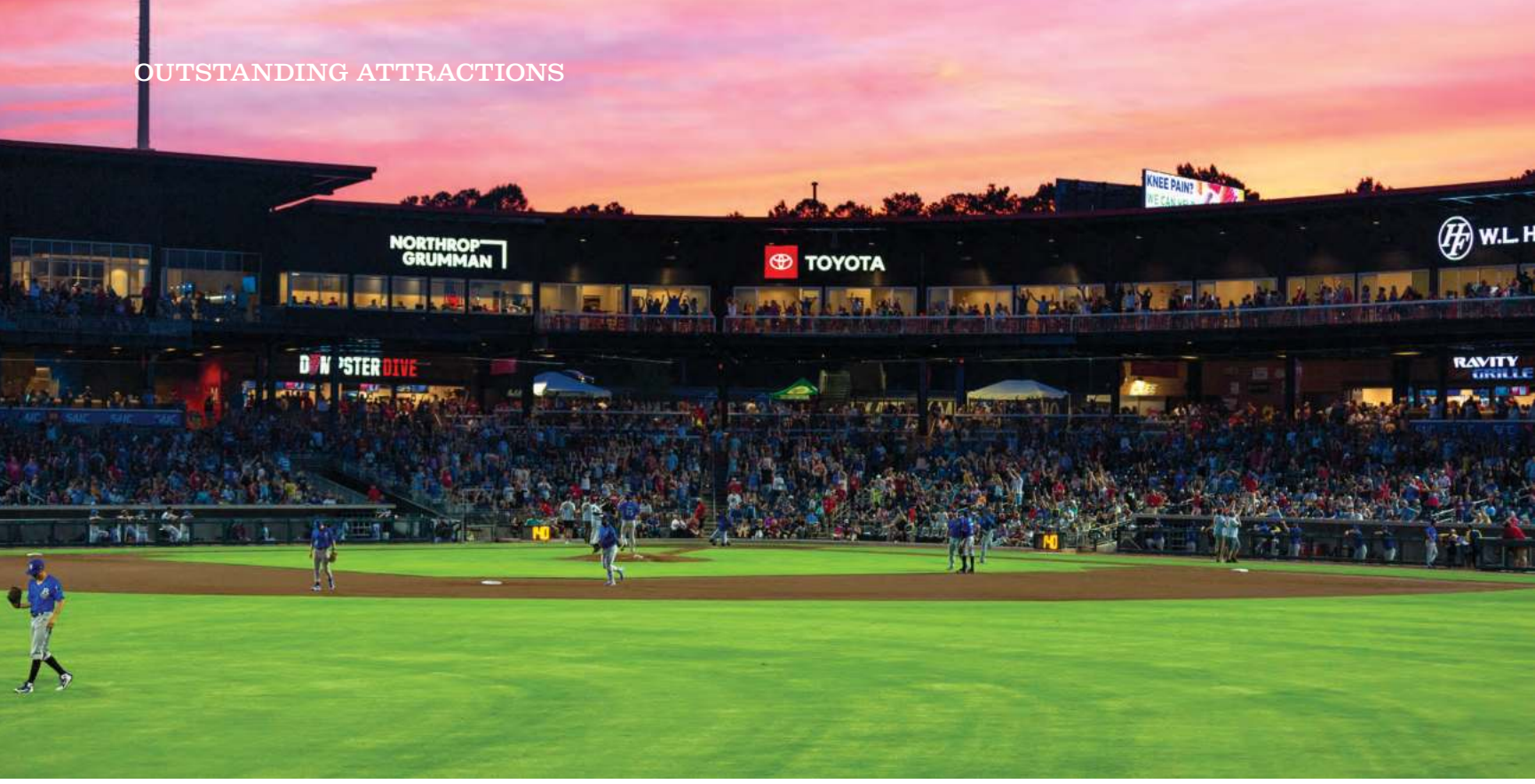


"Our community is known for engineering, and no creature in our galaxy is as smart, creative, determined and ingenious a problem solver — dedicated to the challenge at hand — as our local raccoons!"

Looking for a family fun evening in the Rocket City? Taking in some Trash Panda baseball has become a favorite pastime for both locals and visitors. The Rocket City Trash Pandas are the proud Double-A affiliate of the major league Los Angeles Angels. Home games are played April through August at Toyota Field in Madison, Alabama and have become a favorite pastime in a region that has welcomed this team with open arms.

The team was set to come to North Alabama for the 2020 season and the local community was thrilled. An early team statement noted the league is committed to first-class fun and affordable family entertainment and that fun began well before the first ball was pitched. When the call for team name and mascot suggestions was put out, the huge response caused lots of excitement among both baseball fans and those who recognize the excitement and entertainment minor league baseball brings.

The official name, the Rocket City Trash Pandas was chosen through open suggestions and a social media vote and immediately got national attention. The name gives a nod to Huntsville's nickname as the "Rocket City," due its history in the aerospace industry. But it is the Trash Panda concept that got the most attention.







The Trash Pandas entry on the ballot read, in part, "Our community is known for engineering, and no creature in our galaxy is as smart, creative, determined and ingenious a problem solver — dedicated to the challenge at hand — as our local raccoons!" The name won in a landslide vote, beating out Thunder-Sharks, Moon Possums, Space Chimps and Comet Jockeys. The name and logo became incredibly popular throughout the country and the team's retail merchandise was suddenly in high demand.

Unfortunately, the first season of play was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, throwing a curve ball into the Trash Panda's entry into the community. The team, however, managed to stay very relevant during the unprecedented season, hosting more than 175 separate community events throughout 2020. These included promotions and family activities including a 5K and 10K run, the area's largest fireworks show, movie nights, Christmas light show, even a wine and beer festival.

The team was recognized for its efforts by local officials and tourism leaders for "igniting change and making a positive impact on the tourism industry in North Alabama through their initiative, creativity and spirit," according to a state-

ment by the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, which bestowed the "It Only Takes a Spark Award" to the team. "Bringing a new attraction to a community," the statement continued, "and trying to establish a fan base and identity are challenging tasks in the best of years. Imagine trying to bring a new baseball team to a community for its inaugural season and having to cancel the season before it has its first game."

After the 2020 season cancellation, the Trash Pandas took the field for the first time in 2021 with renewed fan enthusiasm. In June of 2022, they won the first half North Division title to clinch a postseason berth in the Southern League playoffs. The Trash Pandas Foundation also made its official debut in 2022 and helped raise more than $150,000 for the Rocket City community.

While its entry into North Alabama was not what the team expected, the camaraderie and connections made during its first year built an obvious bond with the community that continues to grow each year. And the community is proud to share its team spirit, inviting all to come out to the ball field and enjoy the sport and the fun of Rocket City Trash Pandas baseball. The Trash Panda's schedule and ticket information can be found at *milb.com/rocket-city*. ●





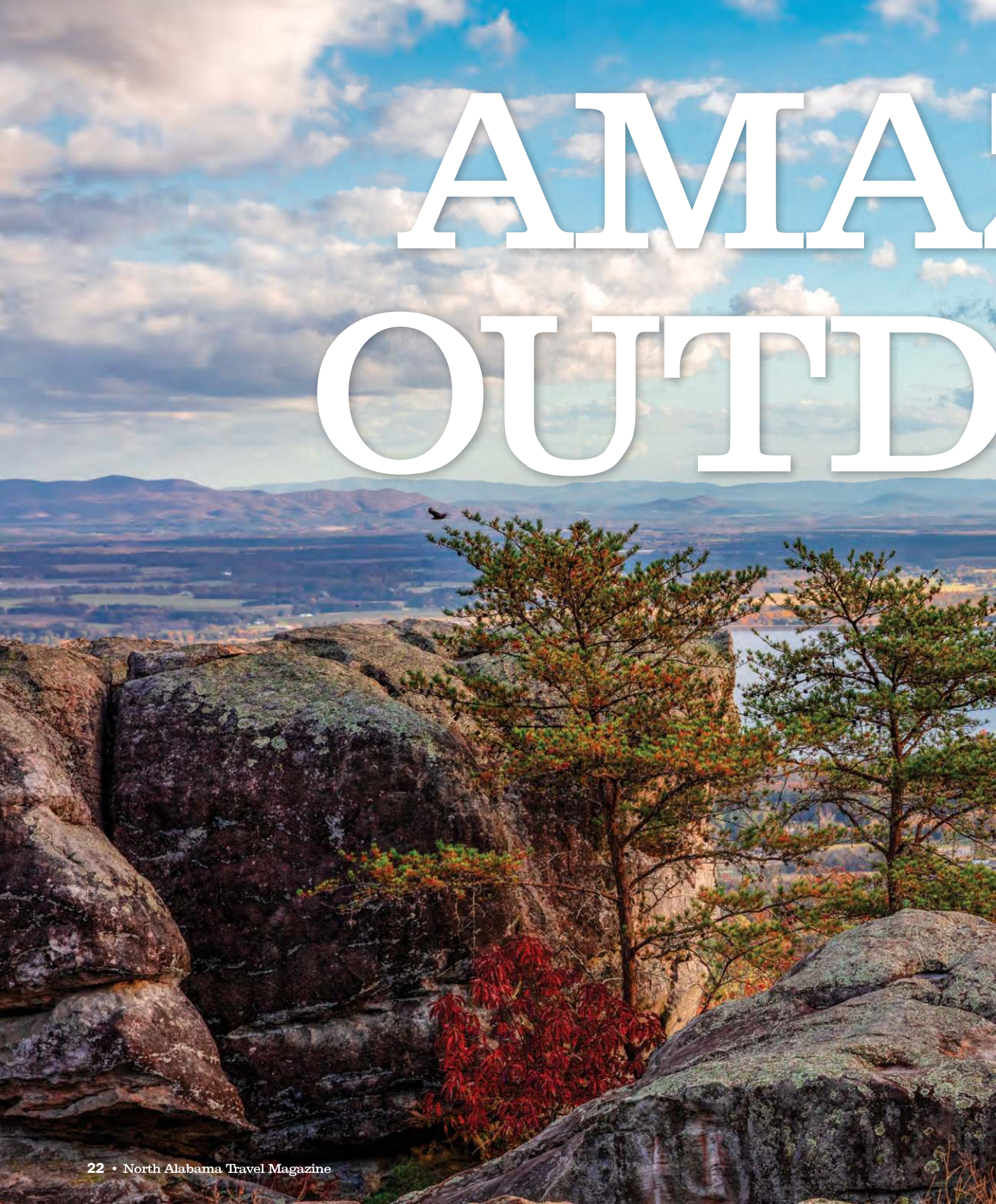
LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 22

"TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME"

Step into the batter's box in this episode of Unexpected Adventures of North Alabama because we're off to Toyota Field, home of the Rocket City Trash Pandas. Trash Panda experts Ricky Fernandez and Josh Caray join Melea to talk about the history of the team, game day traditions and why the Trash Pandas are so special.





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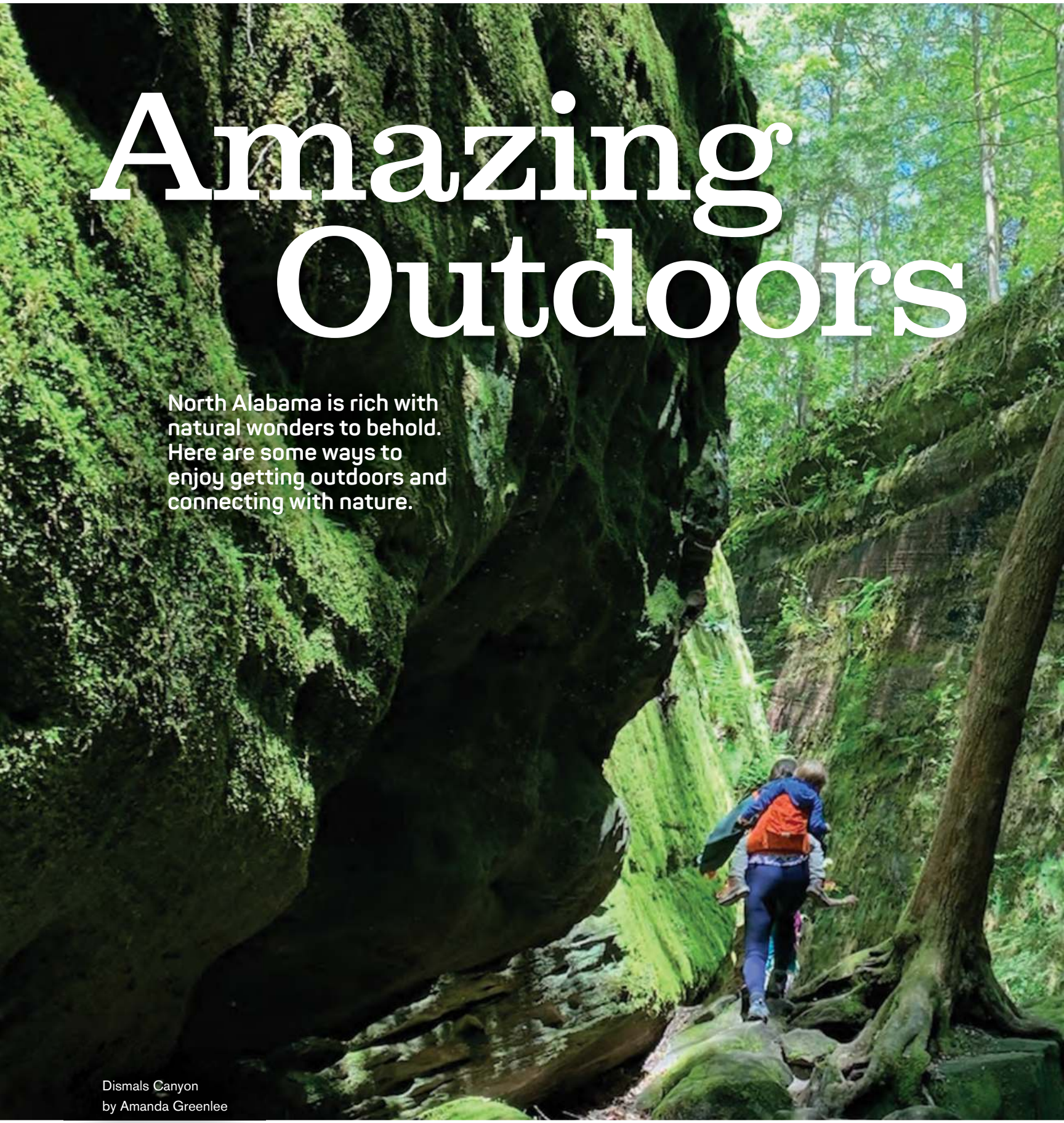
ZING OORS



Cherokee Rock Village
by Scott Baker

Amazing Outdoors

North Alabama is rich with natural wonders to behold. Here are some ways to enjoy getting outdoors and connecting with nature.



Dismals Canyon
by Amanda Greenlee





Noccalula Falls
by Juergen Beck

PARKS, TRAILS & NATURAL WONDERS

The outdoor attractions of North Alabama are an amazing collection of sights and experiences offering variety and adventure. Whether for an adrenaline rush, a dose of serenity or a glimpse of awe-inspiring scenery, the list of options here is long and impressive. Here are few of the top suggestions for adventure in North Alabama.

ONE-OF-A-KIND ATTRACTIONS

Natural Bridge Park in Winston County features the longest natural bridge east of the Rockies. This 148-foot sandstone bridge towers 60 feet above winding pathways. The formation dates back two million years and the Creek tribe of Native Americans once sought shelter here. The park also has a two-mile walking trail, waterfall and picnic area.

Dismals Canyon, a National Natural Landmark, is a sandstone canyon winding through primeval forests, waterfalls and rare flora and fauna. The stars of this 85-acre private nature preserve are the bioluminescent Dismalites that light up the canyon after twilight. These glowworms, as they are sometimes called, are found only in a select few places on Earth.

The **Waterfalls of North Alabama** dot the map with extraordinary sights. There are numerous waterfalls across the region, and many are close enough together to make an exceptional day trip. For all, a long weekend is perfect. These stunning falls are surrounded by natural areas for hiking, beautiful spots for photographing and, in some cases, wineries for relaxing. • • •

SCAN THE CODE TO DOWNLOAD THE NORTH ALABAMA WATERFALL TRAIL EXCLUSIVE PASSPORT.

Our waterfalls are close enough to each other that you can visit several in a day and experience them all in a long weekend. Check out our Mobile Passport for locations.

- View information and locations of breathtaking waterfalls in North Alabama
- Instantly delivered via text and email
- Mobile exclusive
- Tag your posts with our hashtag #VisitNorthAL and be entered to win a prize



Little River Falls at Little River Canyon
by Brad Wiegmann



Cherokee Rock Village
by Scott Baker

... RAPPELLING & ROCK CLIMBING

The northeast area of the region is known as the foothills of the Appalachians and its rocky terrain is the perfect landscape for adventure. **Little River Canyon National Preserve** in Fort Payne offers some of the most difficult and exciting climbing routes in the South. The sandstone cliffs are accessible from roadside pullouts along the Rim Parkway. There are challenging rock-climbing opportunities, as well. While most routes in the canyon favor advanced climbers, **True Adventure Sports** is a local go-to resource for lessons and guided trips, so even beginners can have fun

Cherokee Rock Village is a premier rock climbing destination in the region. Massive boulder fields offer climbing experiences for all levels of adventurers. Located along Lookout Mountain, the site includes broad, gently rising boulders and vertical rock walls. There are also 14 miles of hiking, mountain biking and equestrian trails in this unique mountaintop park. From its highest point, visitors can enjoy a 100-mile view of three states.

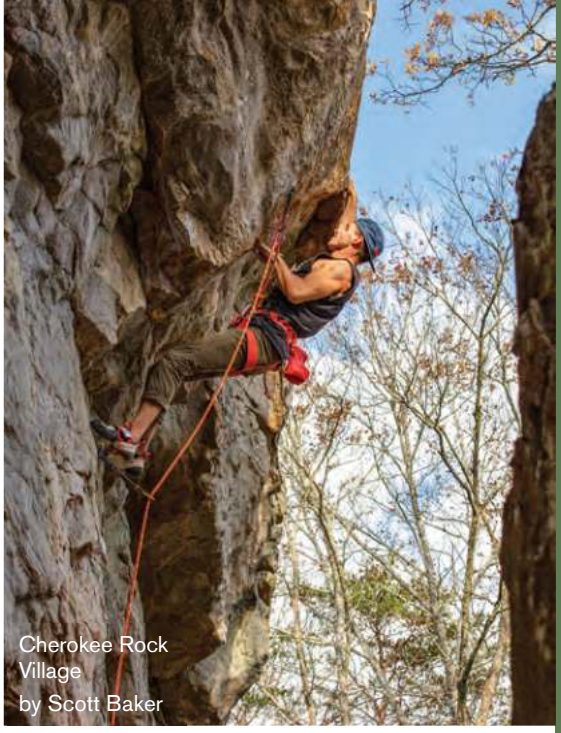
PADDLING

From the Flint River near Lake Guntersville to the kayak trails of Limestone County and Lower Bear Creek (near Pickwick Lake), paddling is popular all across North Alabama. From towering bluffs to stands of forest lands, the scenery is second to none. And from Class I streams to challenging drops amid rapids, there is a section of stream, river or lake for everyone.

Little River Canyon is one of the most popular paddling destinations in the state. With depths in excess of 600 feet, it is one of the deepest canyons east of the Mississippi River. Paddling offers amazing views of cliffs, bluffs and pristine waters. Winter and spring kayaking options include stretches of relatively gentle paddling in the miles of river above Little River Falls, to Class IV, V and VI rapids from the falls and below.

HIKING & BIKING

The options range from the short but challenging trail at **Hurricane Creek Park** in Cullman to the 90+ miles of **Bankhead National Forest**'s recreational trails for hiking, bicycle and horseback riding. The terrain is varied and the scenery beautiful all across the region. Alabama's State Parks are known for their trail systems, and each has much to offer. **Monte Sano State Park** may be best known for its trails and trail views, with more than 25 miles of hiking options. Only six miles from downtown Huntsville, it is a favorite spot for both hikers and mountain bikers. **Lake Guntersville State Park** boasts 36 miles of hiking, biking, and horse trails. • • •

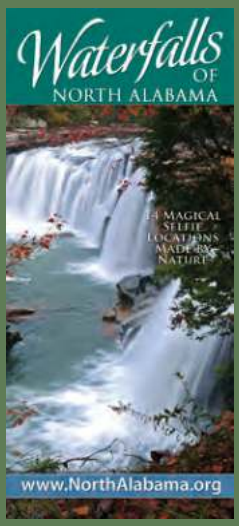


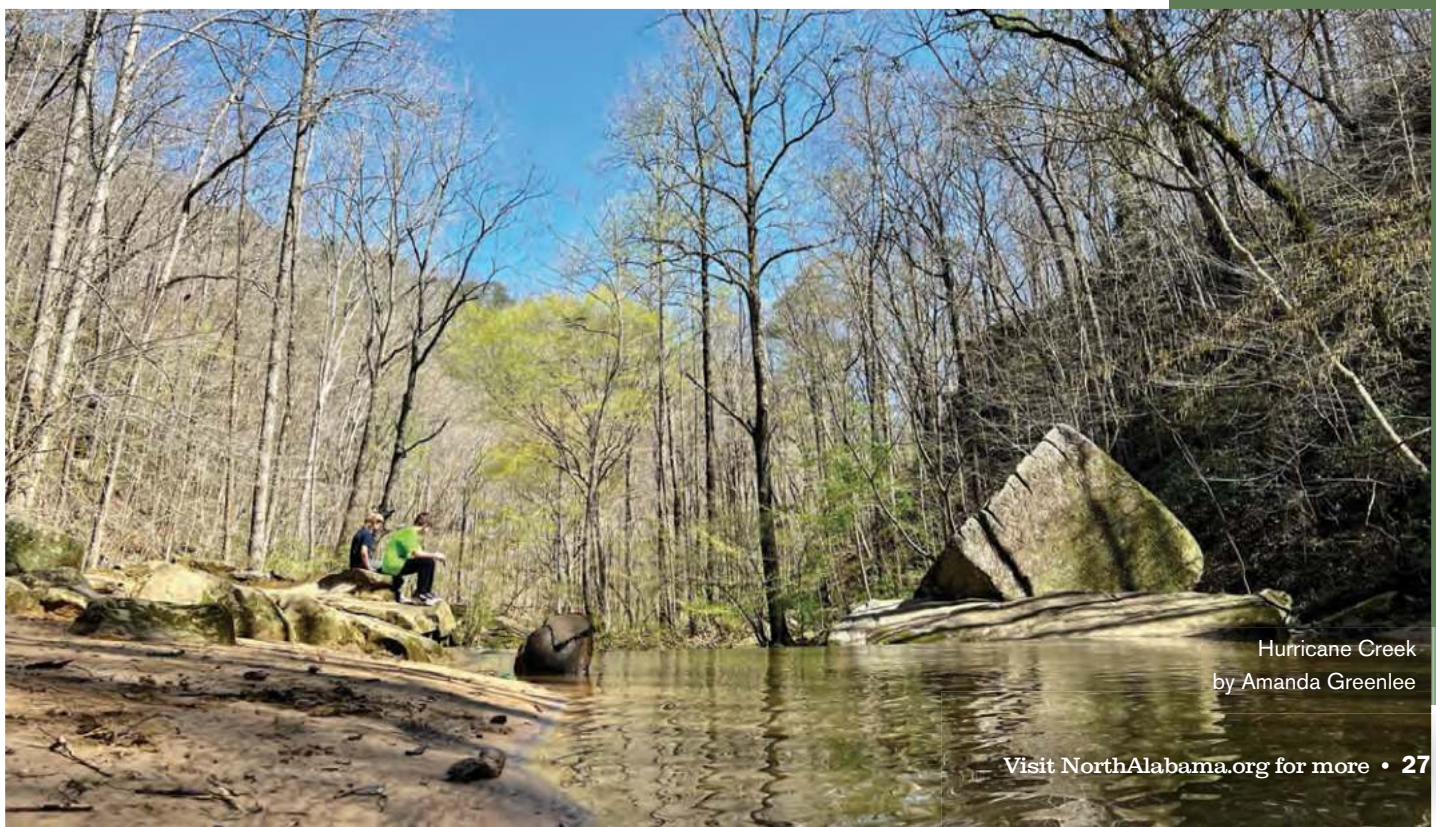
Cherokee Rock Village
by Scott Baker



Natural Bridge
by Lisa Bevis

SCAN THE CODE TO WATCH A VIDEO, LEARN MORE ABOUT AREA WATERFALLS AND TO DOWNLOAD THE WATERFALL TRAIL GUIDE.





Hurricane Creek
by Amanda Greenlee



DeKalb County
Horseback Adventures
by John Dersham

••• Popular options beyond the parks include the fifteen miles of hiking, biking and running trails that are part of the appeal at **Noccalula Falls Park & Campground** in Gadsden. Among these are trails that lead down to and behind the falls. **Cane Creek Canyon Nature Preserve**, located just outside of Tuscumbia, offers more than 15 miles of trails including approximately 350 feet of elevation change from the ridge to the creek below. At **Muscle Shoals Reservation**, the 17 miles of trails include primitive and paved paths, some designated as multi-use for hikers and bicyclists and some that wind through densely wooded areas and along the southern shore of Pickwick Lake.



Cathedral Caverns
by Juergen Beck

The **Walls of Jericho**, in Jackson County near the headwaters of the Paint Rock River, includes 25,000 acres with mountains, forests, springs, caves and bluffs. There are two hiking trails, the Bear Den Point Trail is 4.7 miles and the Walls of Jericho trail is six miles round trip and is considered a difficult hike.

The more than nine thousand acres preserved by the **Land Trust of North Alabama** include 70 miles of free public trails and lots of natural areas to explore. Each of the Land Trust nature preserves is popular for hiking, biking, horseback riding and more. These North Alabama gems include Bethel Spring, Blevins Gap, Cane Creek Canyon, Chapman Mountain, Green Mountain, Harvest Square, Monte Sano, Rainbow Mountain and Wade Mountain Nature Preserves. ●



Walls of Jericho
by David Parham

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 2

"NORTH ALABAMA WATERFALLS TRAIL"

Come on a ride through 14 of North Alabama's waterfalls. Joined by Robert Posey, a North Alabama Ambassador, learn about his adventures visiting these natural beauties. With so many waterfalls there are options for everyone: long hikes, short hikes or no hike at all.

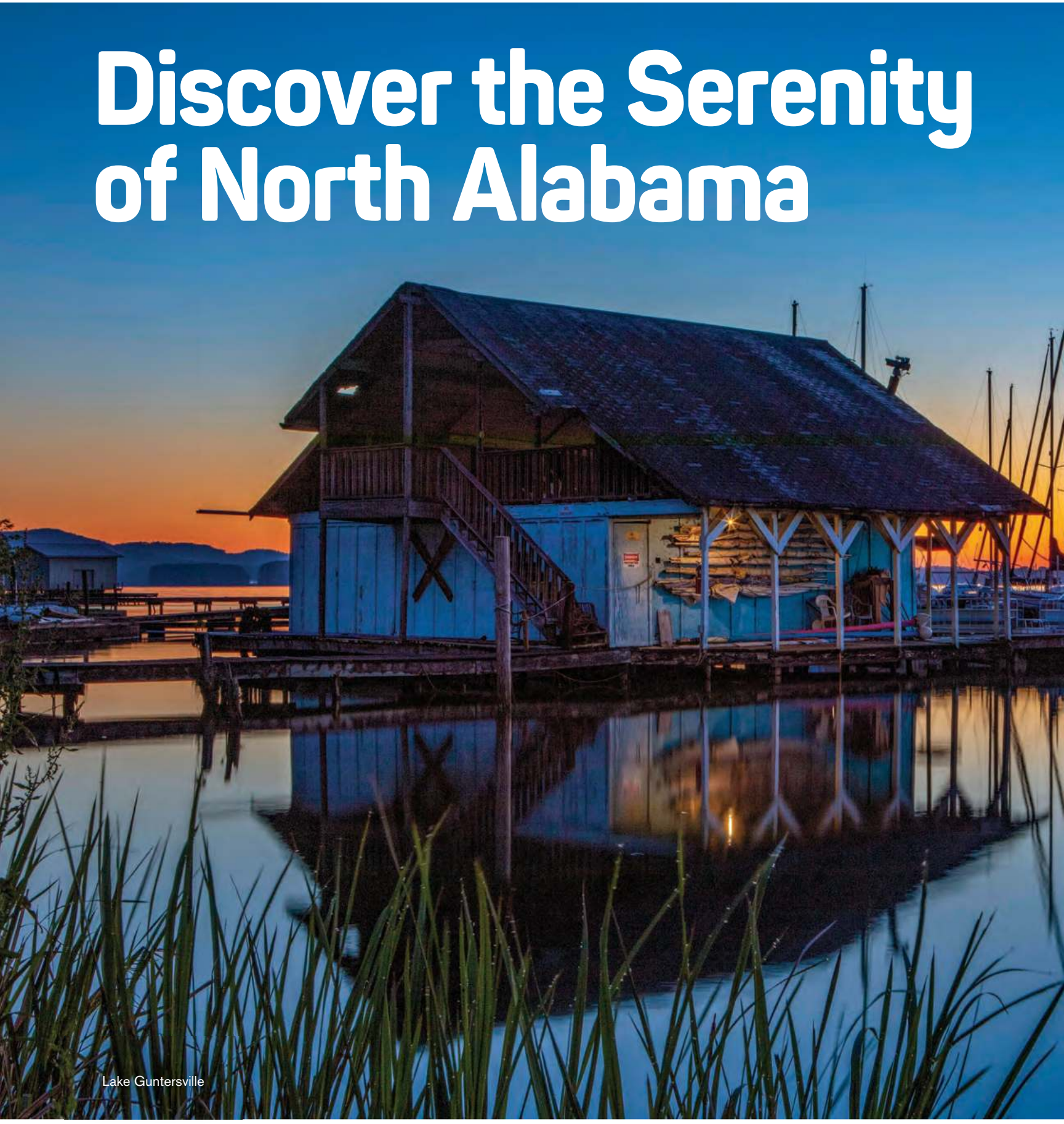


Rainbow Mountain
by Brent Boyd



Walls of Jericho
by David Parham

Discover the Serenity of North Alabama



Lake Guntersville



"I grew up a stone's throw away from north Alabama; however, I hadn't taken the time to explore there until recently."

Text and photographs by Scott Baker

The beauty in north Alabama runs deep – literally. From the depths of Cathedral Caverns to the mountaintop vistas at Lake Guntersville State Park, the landscape diversity and natural beauty are world-class. As if that weren't enough to enjoy, nationally renowned artisans, award-winning local wineries and mouth-watering local eateries satisfy every appetite for a multi-day adventure.

I grew up a stone's throw away from north Alabama; however, I hadn't taken the time to explore there until recently. But now that I've been, I keep going back as often as I can and never seem to see the same thing twice.

One of my recent adventures began in DeSoto State Park, near Fort Payne, Alabama. The gorgeous mountain scenery and a walk in the woods were just what I needed to stretch my legs and breathe the fresh clean mountain air. After a short hike to soak up the bliss, I relived the childhood joy of casting stones in a small lake while a couple of kayakers paddled by in the still waters. The thought of unsent emails, texts and other work began to melt away as I listened to the rhythmic slap of the paddles on the water and the "thunk" of rocks splashing down. • • •

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 5

"HIKING THE BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST"

Strap on your hiking boots and pack some trail mix, because today Melea talks with David Parham, founder of the Huntsville Adventurer. In this episode, get insider info on the best views and trails in the North Alabama region — then continue your planning journey at huntsville-adventurer.com to plot out all the jaw-dropping natural wonders in the area.

••• With peace of mind restored, I ventured a short drive to Little River Canyon National Preserve. Here erosion is a work of art, and I could see how Little River has taken its time – some say millions of years – to craft a 600-foot limestone cavern into Lookout Mountain.

The cavern is visible from numerous viewpoints along the Canyon Rim Drive, and the lookout points along the rim are undeniably beautiful. However, as I ventured below the rim, I could see the cascading Little River Falls and the small reflecting pools formed at the top. These pools stirred my own reflections amid the lush green forest and blue skies, and it was life imitating art as my energy lifted and my spirit eased.

Refreshed and enthusiastic, I was off to my next destination – Cathedral Caverns State Park, located off the beaten path near Woodville, Alabama. Because of its rural location, this park is one of those places that require effort and commitment to visit. After passing verdant farms, grazing cows and an occasional tractor on the road, I arrived. The cavern is well-kept and offers guided tours several times daily. The 90-minute tour was the perfect amount of time to admire the dramatically lit stalactites and stalagmites. Although the journey to the destination was relaxing on its own, the tucked-away cavern was a happily discovered gem. •••



Cathedral Caverns State Park
Cathedral Caverns offers 90-minute guided tours several times daily.

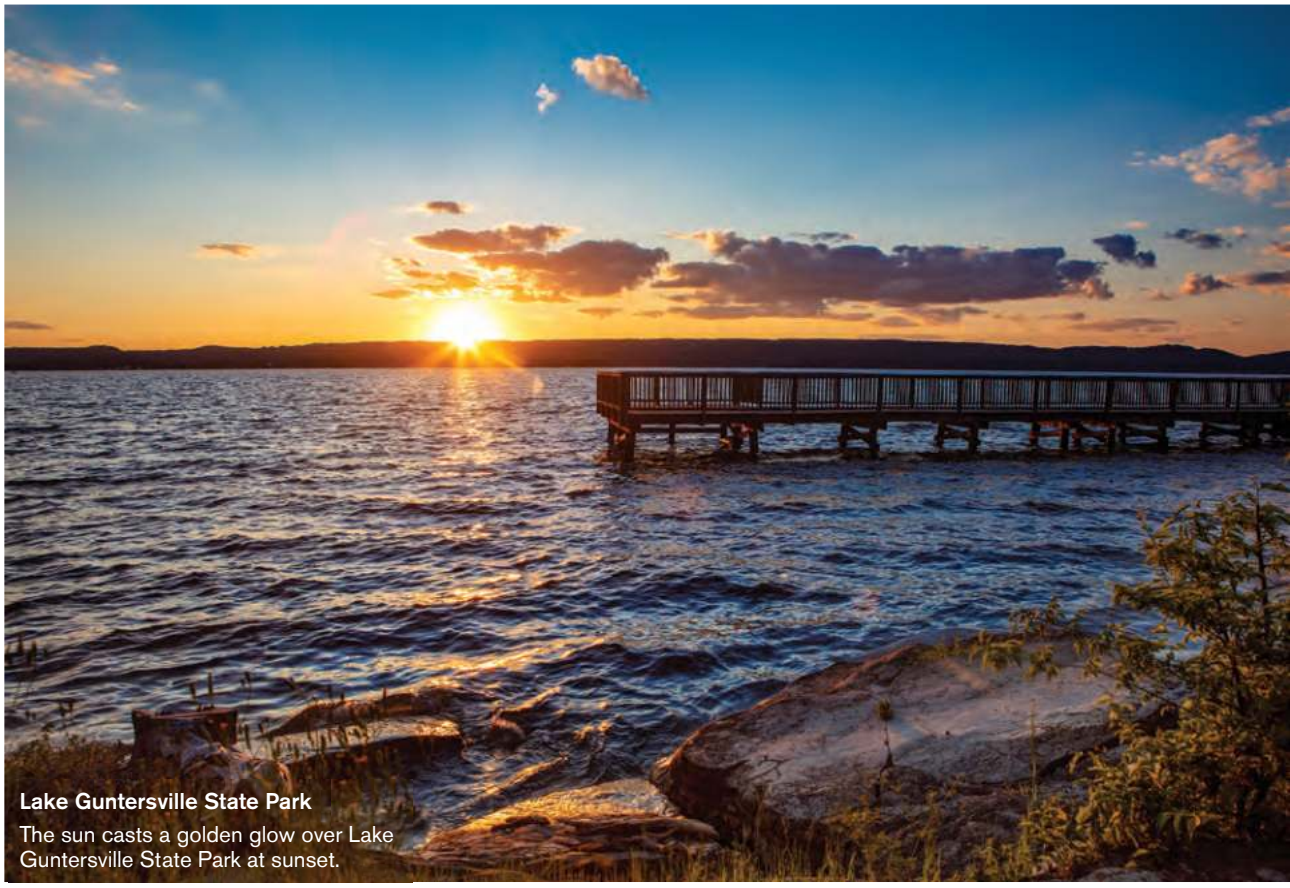


North Alabama's fall colors on display.



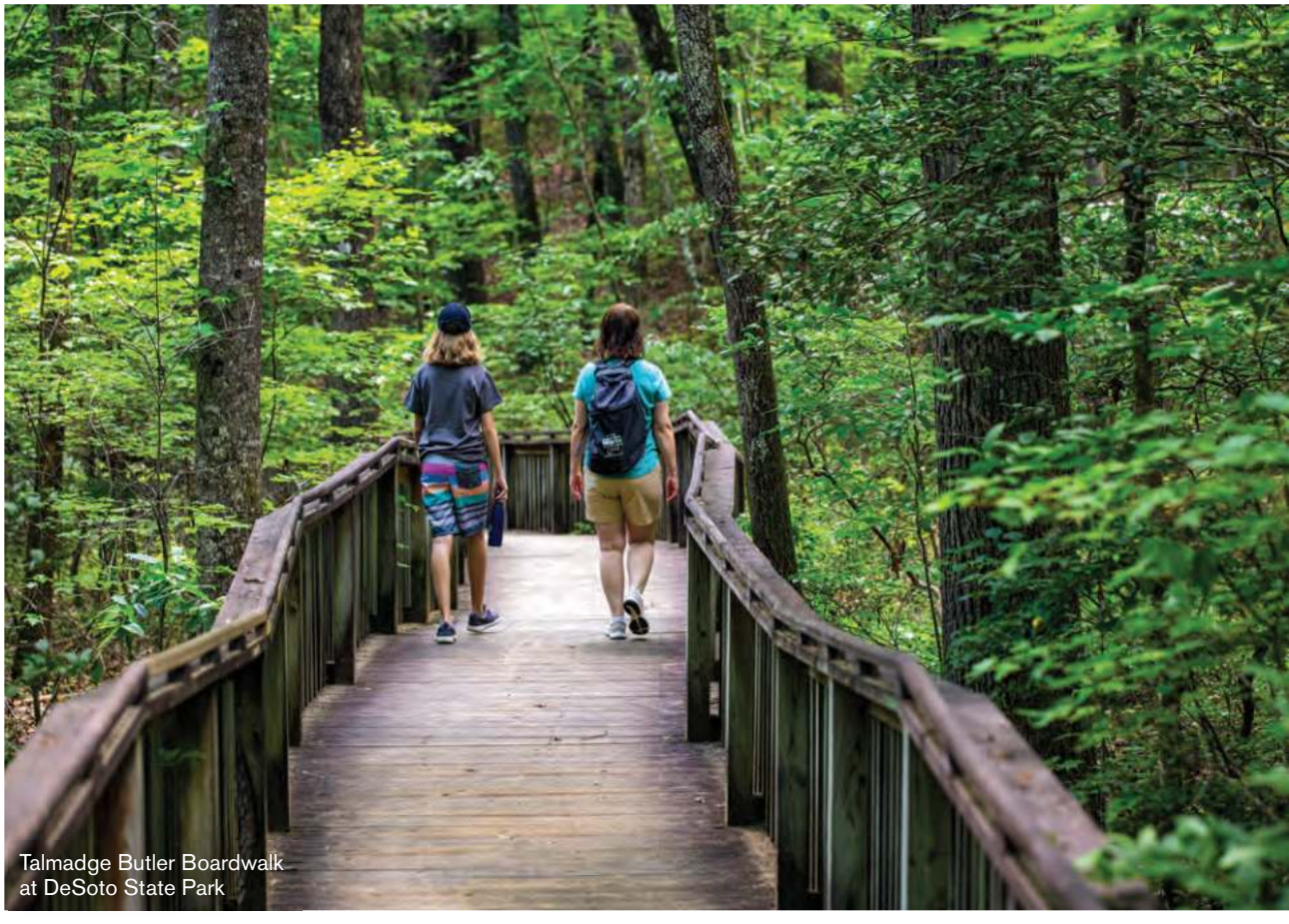
Orbix Hot Glass
Renowned glass artist Cal Breed demonstrates the art of glass blowing at Orbix Hot Glass. His work has been exhibited in numerous museums and featured in Oprah's *O Magazine, Food and Wine* and many other national publications.





Lake Guntersville State Park
The sun casts a golden glow over Lake Guntersville State Park at sunset.





Talmadge Butler Boardwalk at DeSoto State Park



Little River Canyon National Preserve
Little River Falls is the highlight of the Little River Canyon Rim Parkway.





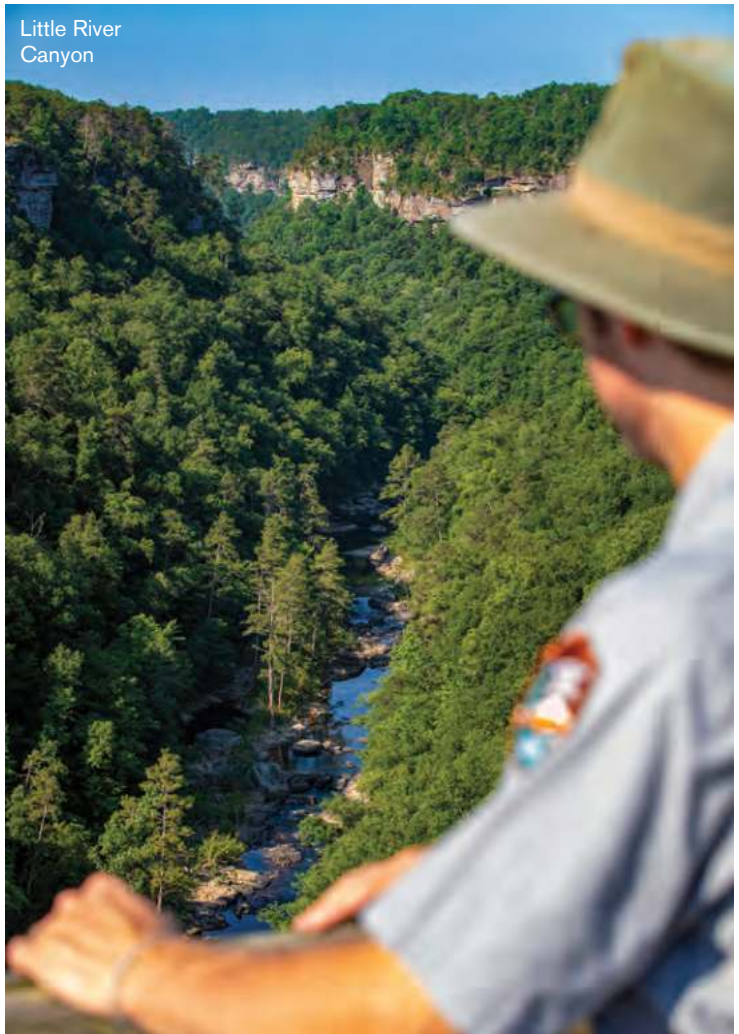
Jules J Berta Vineyard
The Jules J Berta Vineyard produces many varieties of wine served up under the grape vine canopy.



Wildflower Café
Patrons drive from far and near to the eclectic and artsy Wildflower Café in Mentone, Alabama, for a slice of their signature dish – tomato pie.

••• Lake Guntersville State Park was the final destination of my three-night odyssey through north Alabama. I overnighted in the park lodge with a lovely patio overlooking the lake. As tempting as it was to sit back and enjoy the view, I didn't linger; I had to explore. Although the zipline called my attention, I chose a more sublime experience. I rode past the 18-hole golf course on the way to the lake below. My goal was to arrive at the water's edge before sunset; however, there were too many pleasant distractions along the way, including a family of deer enjoying their early evening dinner on the roadside. After meandering through the campground and boat launch area, I arrived at a remote spot on the lake just in time to catch a beautiful sunset. In this exquisite moment, my quest for serenity was complete.

Three state parks and a national preserve in four days is a lot to see. I could have easily stayed four days in a single location. There's so much to enjoy for the entire family in such a small region. With easy access from two major interstates, well-maintained lodges and plenty of campgrounds, plus an abundance of diverse natural beauty, it's as worthy as any global destination I've visited. I'm thankful I had time and space to enjoy it for myself. ●



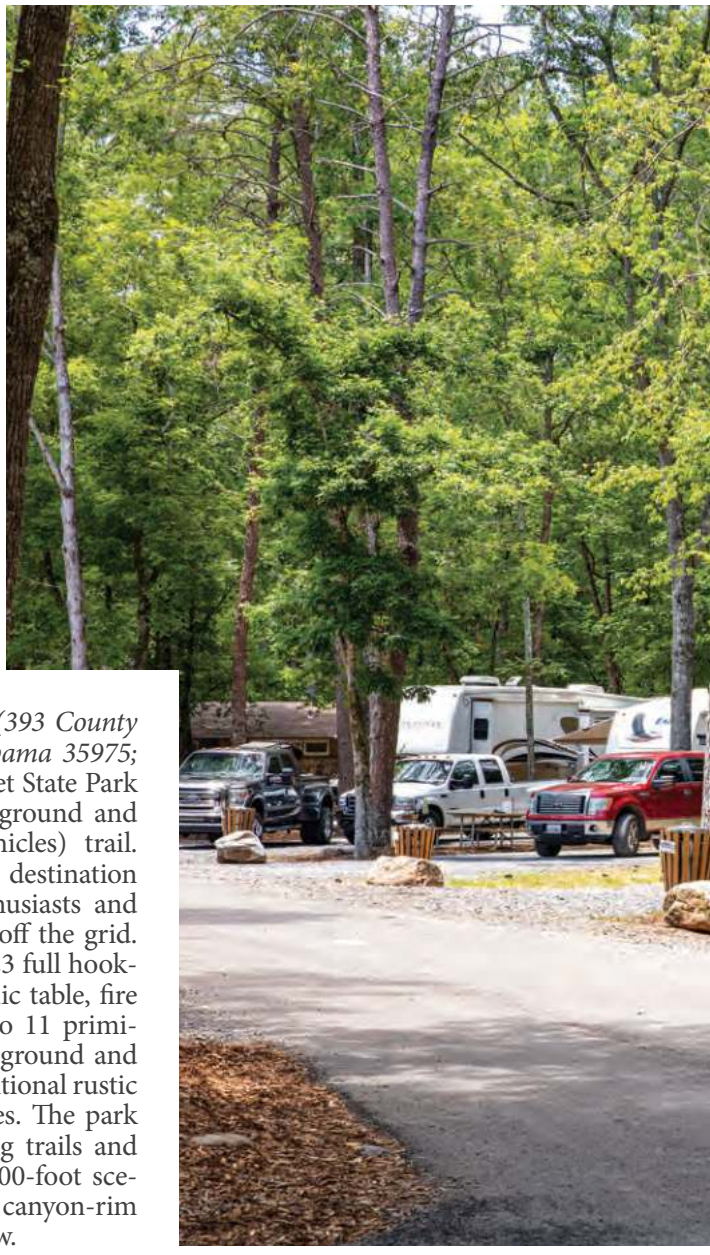
Little River Canyon



Screaming Eagle Ziplines at Lake Guntersville State Park

OUTSTANDING STATE PARKS OFFER BEAUTY, DIVERSITY AND ADVENTURE

North Alabama has mountain tops and caves, waterfalls and lakes and much more at its seven amazing state parks.

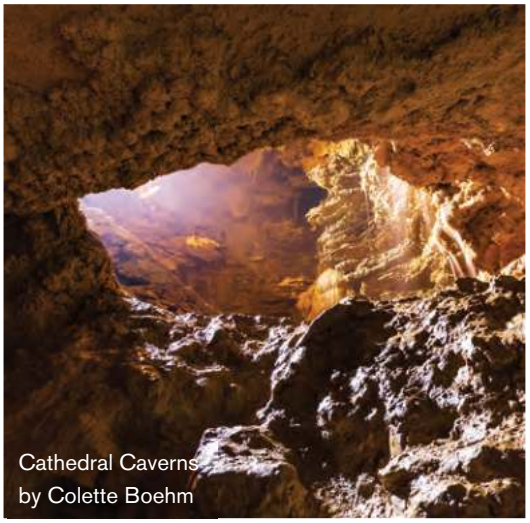


Alabama's state parks system is arguably one of the best in the country. The diversity and beauty of the state's natural resources offer the perfect environment and Alabama's northernmost region is home to an incredible assortment of those scenic and recreational assets. The park system offers access to that assortment through an amazing collection of state parks.

There is a world of adventure awaiting visitors here. Whether you prefer chasing waterfalls or stalking bass, exploring caverns or climbing peaks, mountain biking or paddle boating, North Alabama's state parks have a spot for you. Take a look at this diverse list of state parks, each calling adventurers to get out and enjoy!

Buck's Pocket State Park *(393 County Road 174 Grove Oak, Alabama 35975; 256-659-6288)* Buck's Pocket State Park features a renovated campground and new ORV (Off-Road Vehicles) trail. This is a family-friendly destination for campers, off-road enthusiasts and vacationers looking to get off the grid. The campground features 23 full hook-up RV campsites with picnic table, fire pit and grill. There are also 11 primitive campsites in the campground and plans are underway for additional rustic and back country campsites. The park also has 15 miles of hiking trails and stunning vistas from a 1,000-foot scenic overlook which offers canyon-rim views of the state park below.

Cathedral Caverns State Park *(637 Cave Road, Woodville, Alabama 35776; 256-728-8193)* The stalagmite forest and frozen waterfall are the classic views at Cathedral Caverns. The cave, which maintains a 60-degree temperature all year long, has a huge opening that measures 126 feet wide and 25 feet high. Human habitation can be traced back 8,000 years in the cave. It is home to one of the largest stalagmites in the world measuring 45 feet tall and 243 feet in circumference. Outside the cave the park offers gemstone mining, an activity for any age, but especially popular with younger visitors. Beyond that, the park encompasses 493 acres with hiking trails and improved campsites along with primitive tent camping areas. • • •



Cathedral Caverns
by Colette Boehm



Buck's Pocket State Park
by Scott Baker

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 9

"TOP TRAVEL TIPS TO NORTH ALABAMA'S SEVEN STATE PARKS"

Haley Rutland, "Digital Queen" of Marshall County Tourism and Sports joins Melea to discuss Alabama's State Parks, three of which are in Marshall County.



DeSoto State Park
by Scott Baker

••• **DeSoto State Park** *(1299 Blalock Drive NE, Fort Payne, Alabama 35967; 256-845-0051)* DeSoto State Park is situated atop picturesque Lookout Mountain in scenic Northeast Alabama and is known for its many rushing waterfalls and fragrant wildflowers. The park provides an array of lodging options, including a motel, log cabins, rustic cabins and mountain chalets. Along with 94 full hook-up campsites, there are primitive camping sites as well as two back-country campsites with shelters. Other amenities include a full-service restaurant, pavilions, picnic area with playground, swimming pool, a nature center, Civilian Conservation Corps Museum and more than 25 miles of hiking and mountain biking trails.

Joe Wheeler State Park *(4401 McLean Drive, Rogersville, Alabama 35652; 256-247-5461)* The centerpiece of this 2,500-acre park is 69,700-acre Wheeler Lake, which offers easy access to the Tennessee River and is popular with sailors, cruisers and anglers. Each fall the park hosts the Fall Rendezvous of boaters traveling the Great Loop, welcoming as many as 250 vessels. There is a plethora of amenities at this park, including a three-story lodge of redwood and stone with 75 hotel rooms and a restaurant. There is also a marina, boat launch, boat rentals, day-use pavilions and picnic areas and an 18-hole championship golf course! The approximately 10 miles of trail include areas for hikers, bikers and birders. In addition to the lodge, there are full hook-up and primitive camping sites, lakeside cabins and rustic cottages.

Lake Guntersville State Park *(1155 Lodge Drive, Guntersville, Alabama 35976; 256-571-5440)* This is a 6,000-acre park located along the shore of Lake Guntersville. A lodge, chalets, motel and convention center are situated on a 500-foot bluff overlooking the lake. Lake activities are popular here and include swimming, fishing and boat rentals. But the fun goes well beyond the water, with 36 miles of hiking, biking and equestrian trails, an 18-hole golf course and The Screaming Eagle Aerial Adventures zipline course. This is also home to the Eagle Awareness Program, which offers eagle viewing field trips, seminars and special programs each January and February. The park's campground includes 295 improved campsites and a primitive camping area. There are also traditional 15 lakeside cabins and new camper cabins for RVers. • • •



Lake Guntersville State Park
by Scott Baker



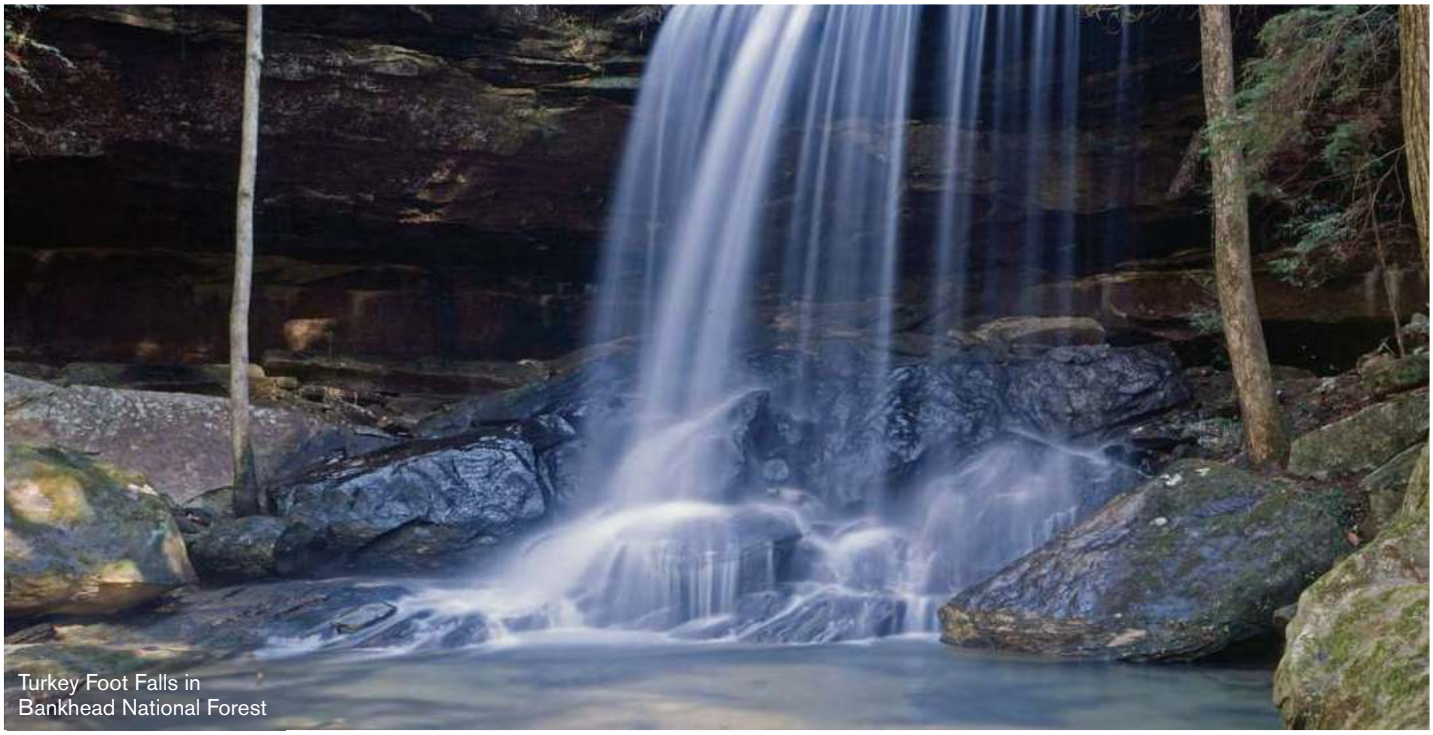
Joe Wheeler State Park
by Scott Baker


Monte Sano State Park

• • • **Monte Sano State Park** *(5105 Nolen Avenue, Huntsville, Alabama 35801; 256-534-3757)* Just minutes from the hustle and bustle of Huntsville, Alabama, this state park is a respite atop Monte Sano Mountain. The 2,140-acre park has vistas, mountaintop trails, family picnic areas and an 18-hole disc golf course. It is a popular spot for mountain bikers and hikers, with 22 miles of trails, varying in both scenery and difficulty. The park offers 14 renovated (but rustic) cabins perched on the mountainside. They are a testament to the park's history, which is revealed at the Civilian Conservation Corps Museum on site. There are also 89 improved campsites and a primitive camping area for overnight guests. This is also home to the Wernher von Braun Planetarium and the North Alabama Japanese Garden.

Rickwood Caverns State Park *(370 Rickwood Park Road, Warrior, Alabama 35180; 205-647-9692)* Rickwood's claim to fame is its miracle mile of underground caverns! The 260-million-year-old limestone formations, blind cave fish and underground pool are just a few of the natural wonders found in the cavern. The park features an Olympic-size swimming pool, snack bar, picnic area and hiking trails. Campers can choose from 13 full hook-up sites and five primitive tent sites. The caverns themselves were water-formed during the Mississippian period more than 260 million years ago and still contain active "living formations," as mineral-laden water droplets build colorful structures and flowstones.


Rickwood Caverns State Park


Turkey Foot Falls in
Bankhead National Forest

In addition to this impressive list of state parks, there are numerous other parks and protected areas to explore across North Alabama. These include nationally recognized highlights such as:



Dismals Canyon National Natural Landmark (*901 Highway 8, Phil Campbell, Alabama 35581; 205-993-4559)*, a sandstone canyon winding through waterfalls and primeval forests with rare and unusual flora and fauna.

Little River Canyon National Preserve *(4322 Little River Trail, Suite 100, Fort Payne, Alabama 35967; 256-845-9605)*, one of the deepest gorges in the east, spectacular scenery and breathtaking waterfalls.

Bankhead National Forest *(1070 Alabama 33, Double Springs, AL 35553; 205-489-5111)*, covers 180,000 acres and is home to bluffs, canyons, waterfalls, springs and Alabama's National Wild and Scenic River, the Sipsey Fork.

Natural Bridge of Alabama *(Natural Bridge, Alabama 35577; 205-486-5330)*, the longest natural bridge east of the Rockies, this 148-foot sandstone bridge towers 60 feet above winding pathways.

Russell Cave National Monument *(3729 County Road 98, Bridgeport, AL 35740; 256 495-2672)*, one of the most complete records of human occupation in the Southeast US. ●


Dismals Canyon
by Shannon Williams


Dismals Canyon

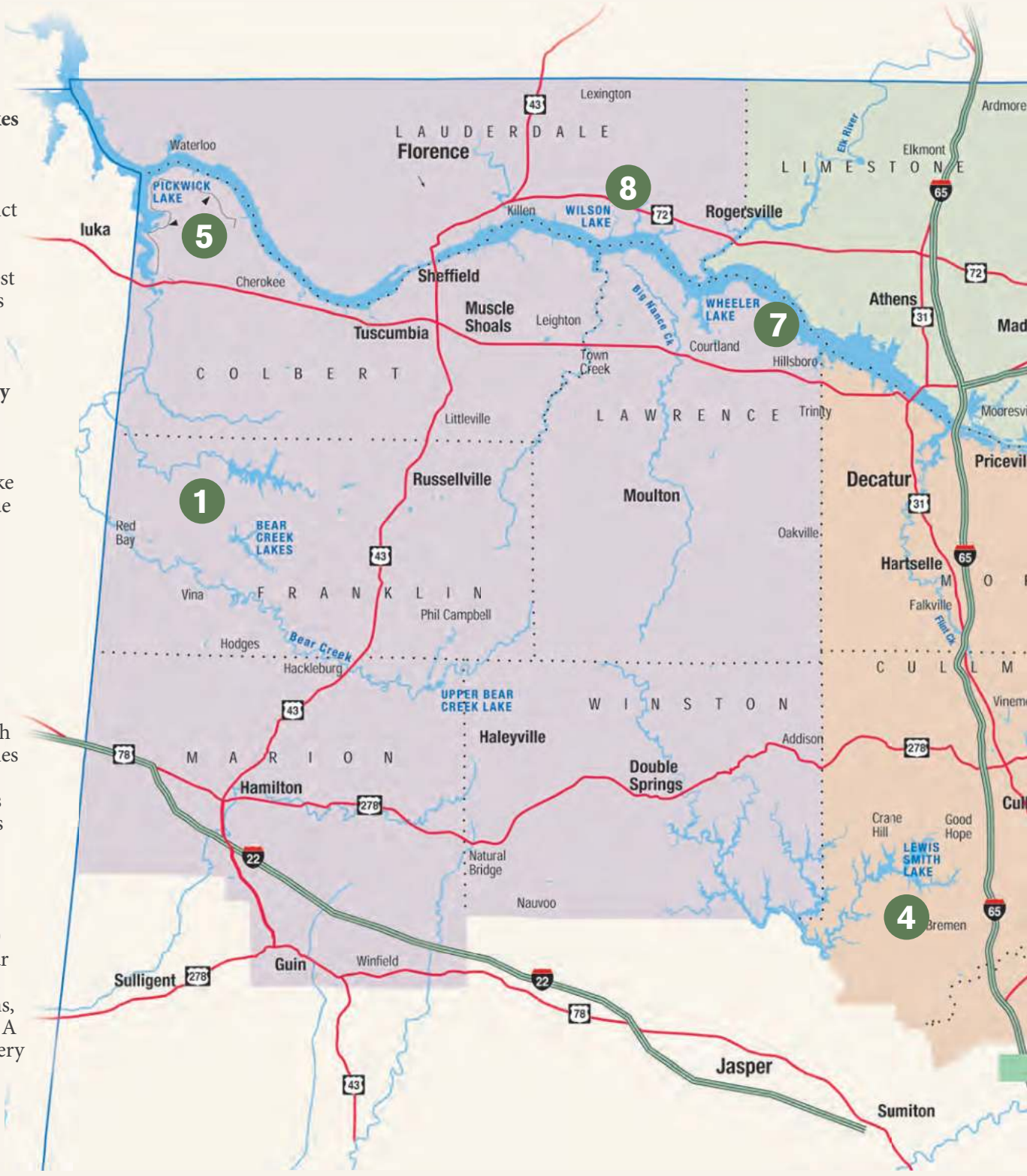
North Alab

1 Bear Creek Lakes – (8,000 acres total) Composed of four lakes, each with its own distinct personality that have been rated some of the cleanest recreational waters in the South.

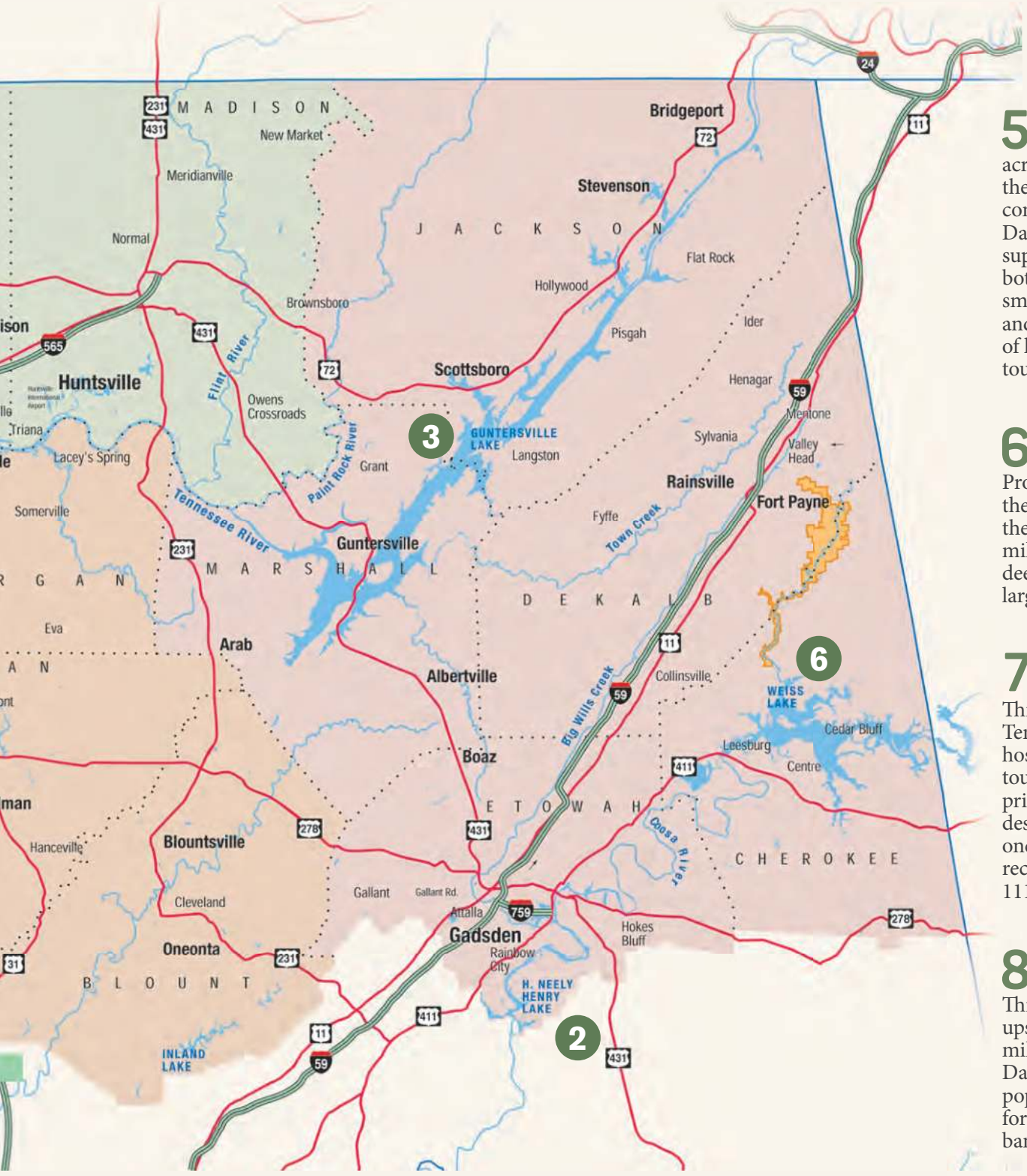
2 H. Neely Henry Lake – (11,200 acres) The first of Alabama Power's dams built, this lake boasts rippling blue waters, 339 miles of shoreline, and incredible fishing.

3 Lake Guntersville – (69,000 acres) Alabama's largest impoundment with more than 900 miles of shoreline that's known for both its bass fishing and its lakeside resorts.

4 Lewis Smith Lake – (21,000 acres) A deep, clear lake near Cullman with feeder streams, bays, and sloughs. A rainbow trout fishery is located on the Sipsey Fork.



ama Lakes



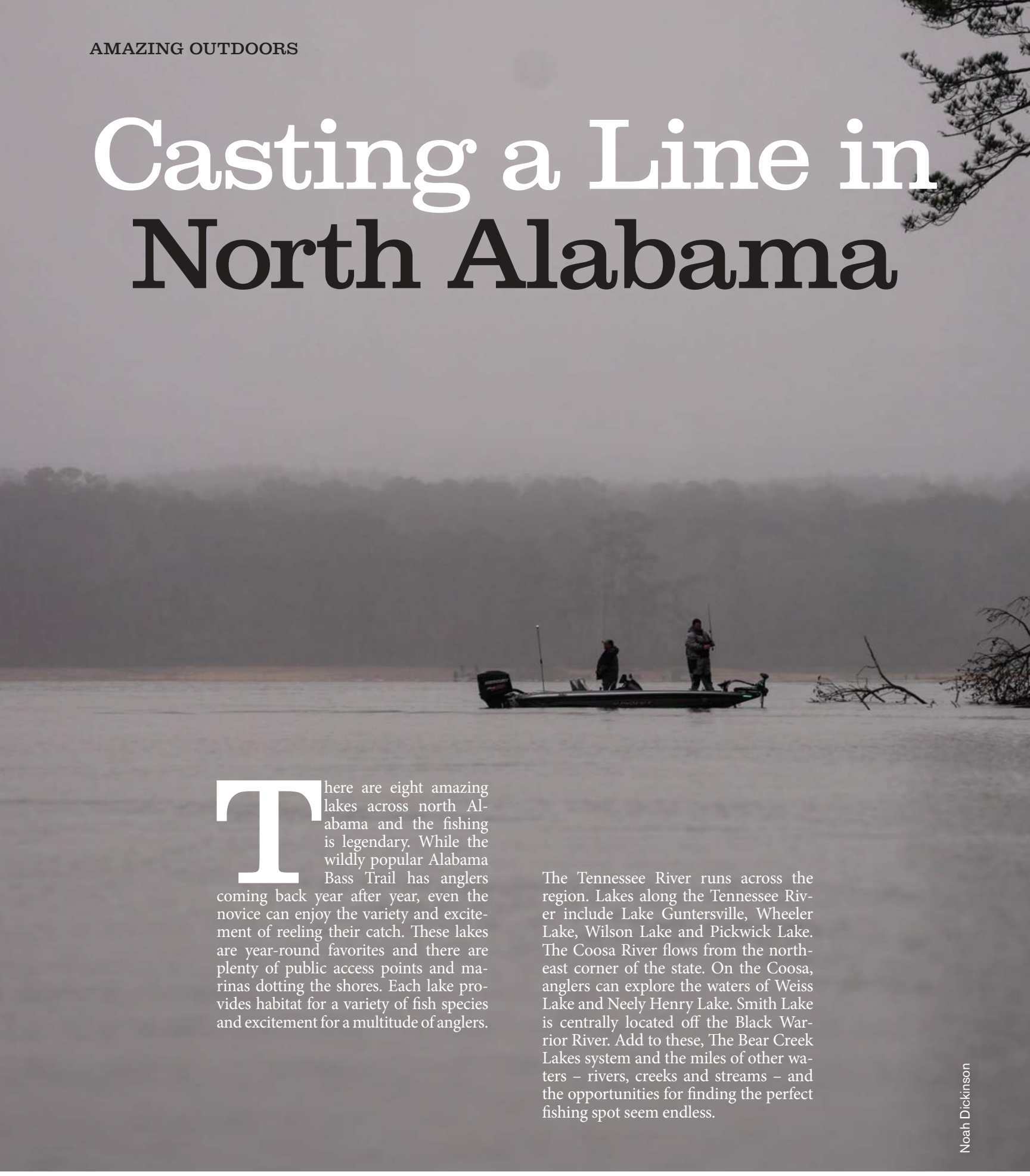
5 Pickwick Lake – (43,100 acres) Because of the strong currents coming from Wilson Dam, the lake is a superb habitat for both largemouth and smallmouth bass and hosts a number of large fishing tournaments.

6 Weiss Lake – (30,200 acres) Proudly known as the crappie capital of the world with 447 miles of shoreline, deep channels, and large coves.

7 Wheeler Lake – (67,000 acres) This reservoir on the Tennessee River hosts many fishing tournaments, is a prime fishing destination, and once held the world record blue catfish at 111 lbs.

8 Wilson Lake – (15,500 acres) This lake stretches upstream for 15 miles to Wheeler Dam and is a popular destination for both boat and bank anglers. ●

Casting a Line in North Alabama



There are eight amazing lakes across north Alabama and the fishing is legendary. While the wildly popular Alabama Bass Trail has anglers coming back year after year, even the novice can enjoy the variety and excitement of reeling their catch. These lakes are year-round favorites and there are plenty of public access points and marinas dotting the shores. Each lake provides habitat for a variety of fish species and excitement for a multitude of anglers.

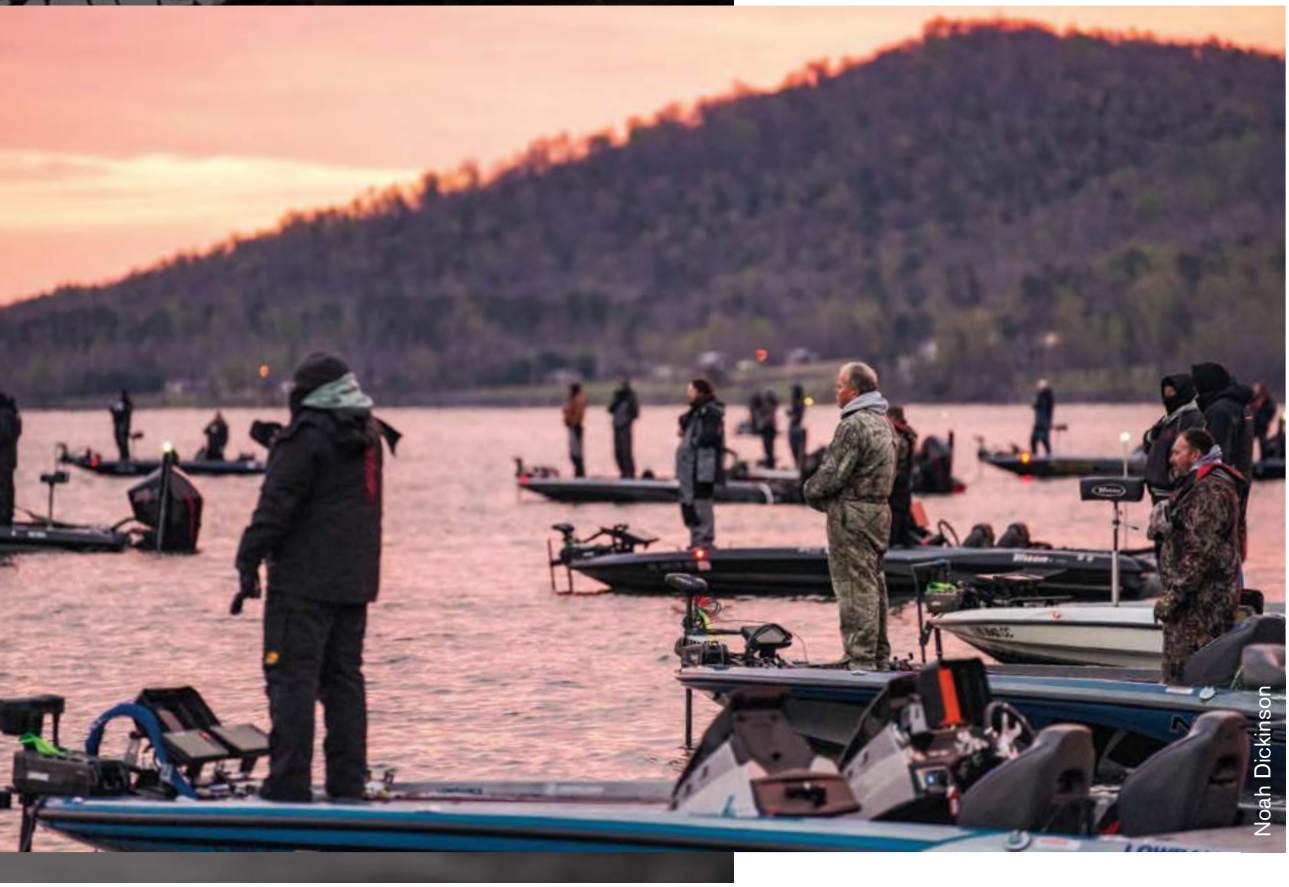
The Tennessee River runs across the region. Lakes along the Tennessee River include Lake Guntersville, Wheeler Lake, Wilson Lake and Pickwick Lake. The Coosa River flows from the northeast corner of the state. On the Coosa, anglers can explore the waters of Weiss Lake and Neely Henry Lake. Smith Lake is centrally located off the Black Warrior River. Add to these, The Bear Creek Lakes system and the miles of other waters – rivers, creeks and streams – and the opportunities for finding the perfect fishing spot seem endless.

Noah Dickinson



Whether novice or pro, people from all over the country come to north Alabama just to fish here. Lake Guntersville, known for its bass fishing, has been recognized as one of the top 10 bass fishing lakes in the nation. But its nearly 70,000 acres, making it the largest lake in the region, are home to a variety of other species, too. The same can be said for Weiss Lake, to the east, known for its world-class crappie fishing but also popular for bass and other catches.

Those looking for a fight can choose to challenge the smallmouth bass of Pickwick Lake, which runs from Florence to the Tennessee line. Nearby, Wilson Lake stretches 15 miles to Wheeler Dam, covering 15,500 acres. Largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and catfish are the prime targets here. Down river, Wheeler Lake is the perfect example of how diverse these waters can be. It features wide-open reservoirs, creek channels and rock bluffs. The river flows through the beautiful Joe Wheeler State Park, offering park visitors an easy opportunity to get out and enjoy a North Alabama fishing adventure. • • •



Noah Dickinson

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

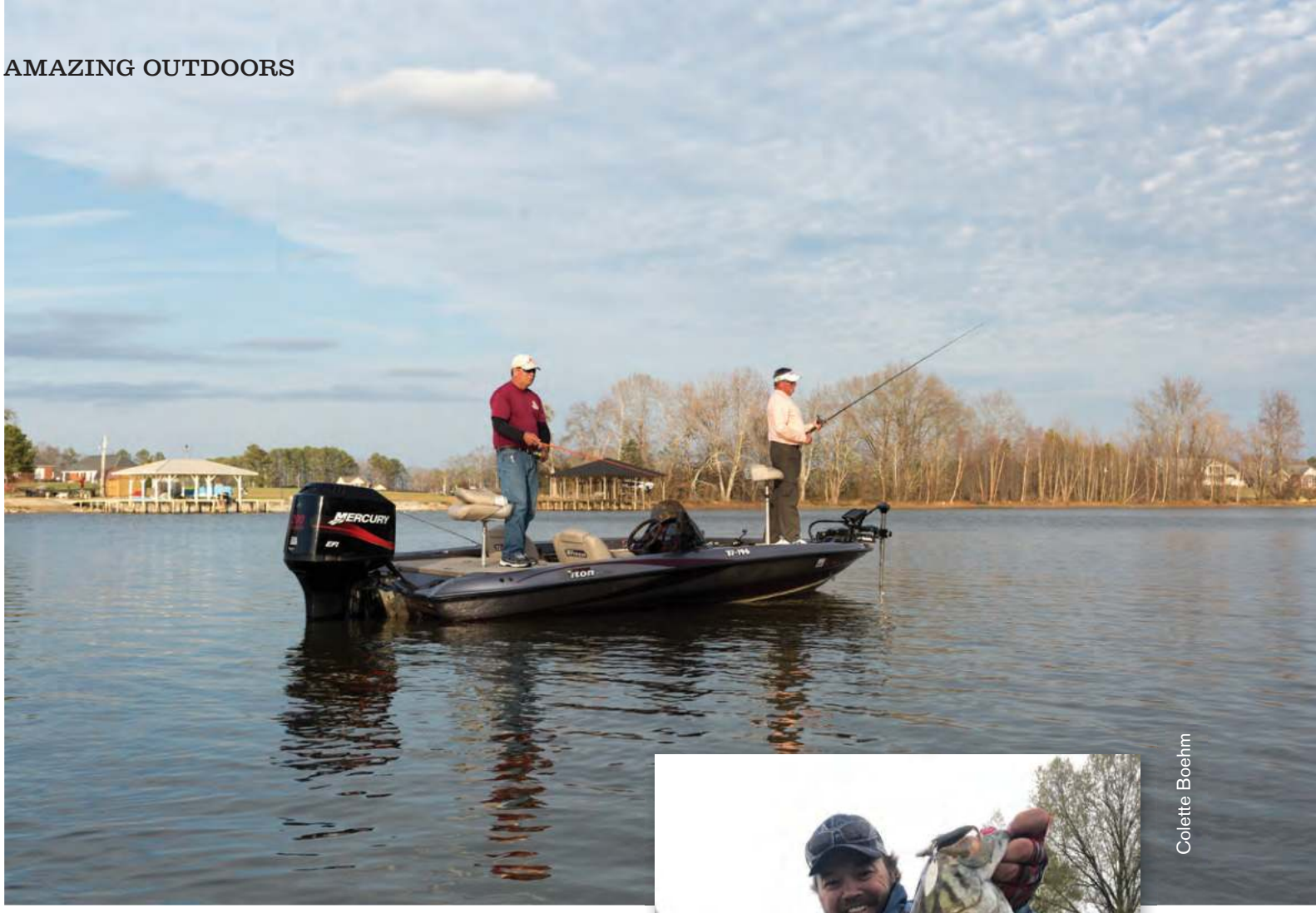
EPISODE 11

"FISHING THE EIGHT LAKES"

Expand your knowledge of fishing in the eight lakes of North Alabama. Our very own fishing guides, Jimmy and Lee, walk you through the best places to fish, how to help your kids get started and what to expect on a fishing tour with them. Their passion for what they do is contagious. You'll be eager to join their next fishing adventure.

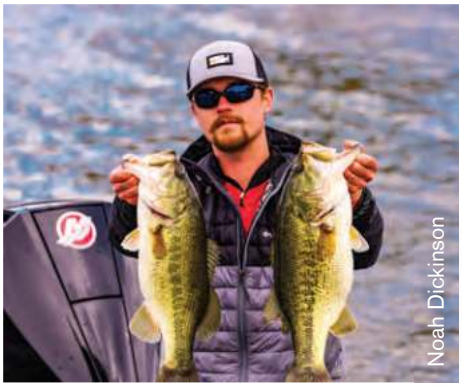


SCAN THE CODE TO LISTEN TO THE ALABAMA BASS TRAIL PODCAST.



Colette Boehm




Noah Dickinson

••• The Bear Creek Lakes are known for great crappie and bass fishing and also as the "Cleanest Recreational Waters in Alabama." With several access points, boat ramps and docks the system of four lakes and the surrounding recreational areas are popular with both local and visiting anglers.

AND THESE ARE JUST THE BEGINNING OF THE LIST OF OPTIONS.

The easy access from state parks and other public lands, as well as from private marinas, resorts and campgrounds, makes family fishing excursions a natural. And the unmatched variety of fishing opportunities in this region makes it a natural for serious anglers looking for a challenge. There are plenty of outfitters and guides to meet the needs of either traveler, any time of year, making an amazing day of fishing a reality for everyone.

Among anglers, the Alabama Bass Trail (ABT) is well-known for its annual Tournament Series. The ABT Tournament Series is open to all amateurs while the ABT 100 Series challenges pro anglers. The trail features 13 premier bass-fishing lakes and stretches from the mountains of North Alabama south to the Mobile Delta. The North Division is one of two and includes tournaments on five of the region's eight lakes. Two-angler teams in each tournament compete for the $10,000 payout in hopes of making their way to the championship, with its grand prize of $50,000.

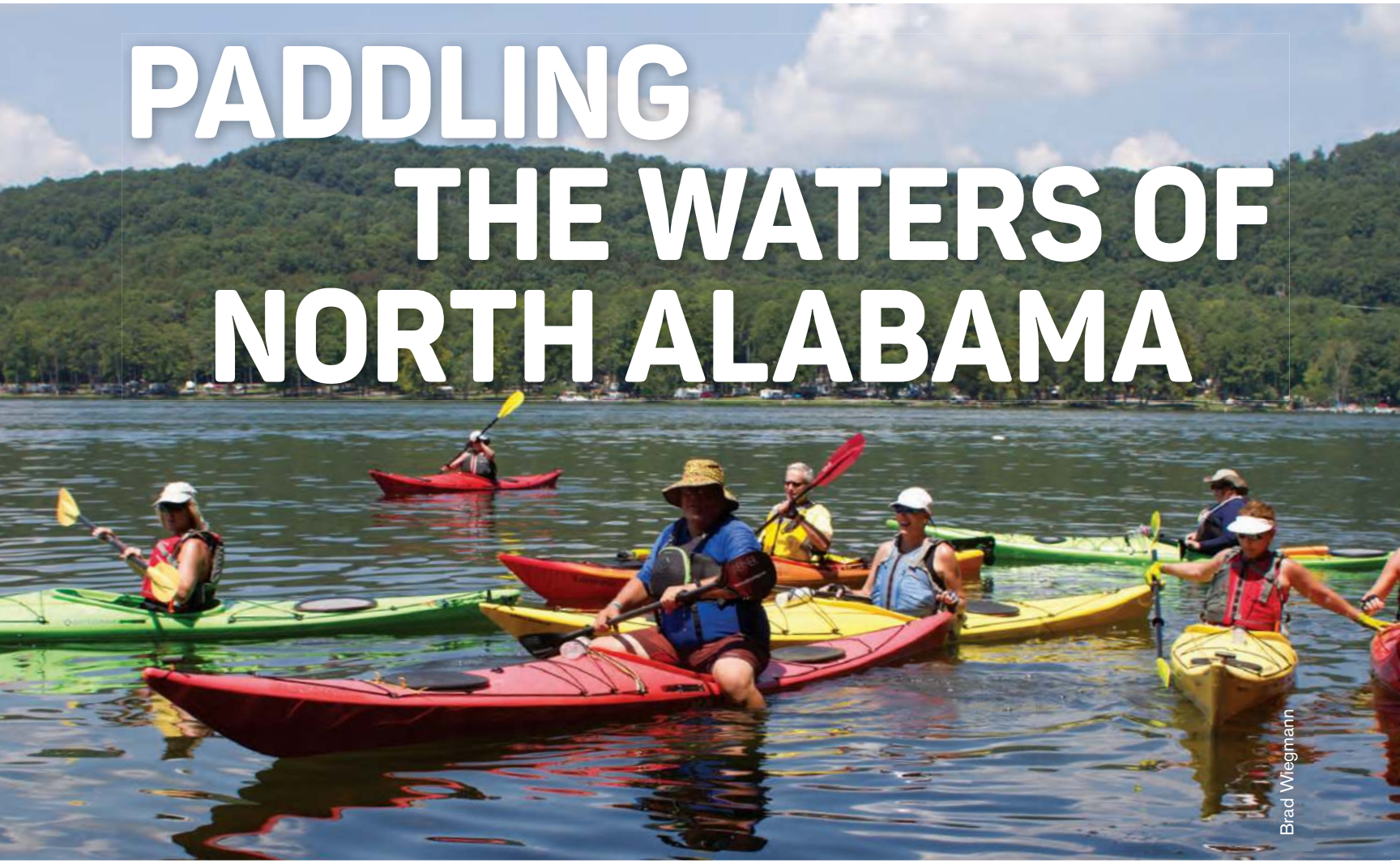
So, whether fishing is an obsession, a favorite pastime or new opportunity to spend quality time with the family, the lakes and waterways of North Alabama offer just the spot. ●


Noah Dickinson


Colette Boehm

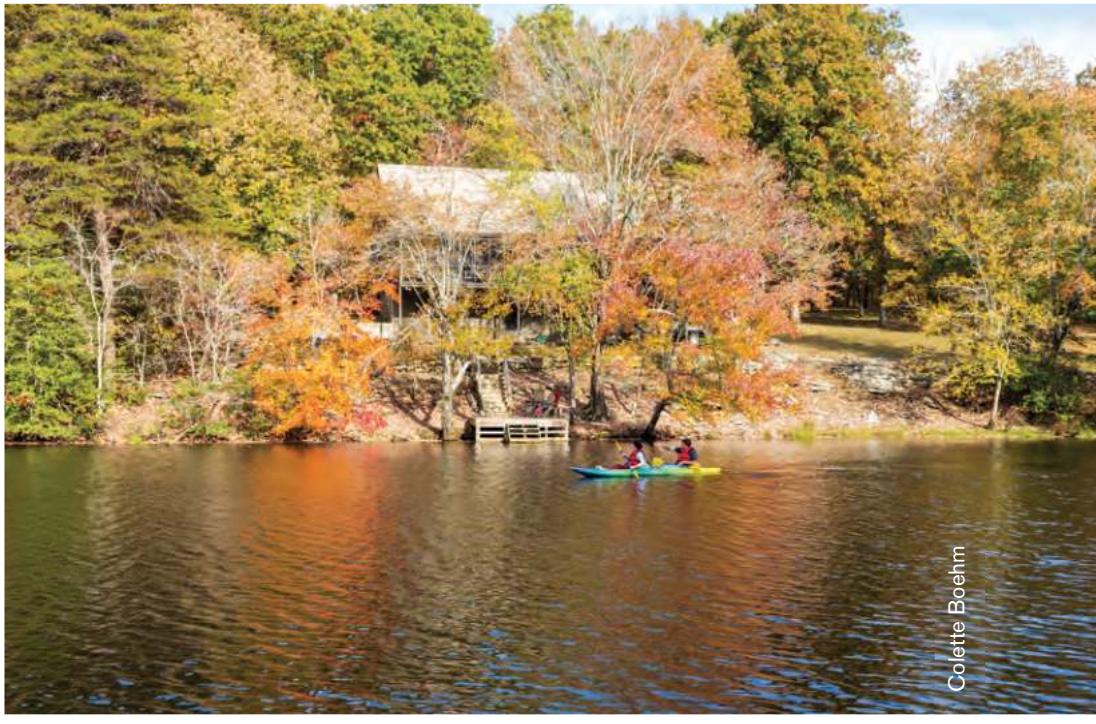

Colette Boehm

PADDLING THE WATERS OF NORTH ALABAMA


Brad Wiegmann

In an area known for its mountains, rivers and lakes, North Alabama is a beautiful region with a boat load of opportunities for outdoor recreation. Access to on-the-water activities is abundant and paddling is among the most popular, with a growing number of enthusiasts exploring the variety of waterways in the region.

The mighty Tennessee River runs the width of the state, and numerous creeks, streams, rivers, and lakes extend from it. The banks range from level highlands to narrow strips of gentle rolling lowlands to rugged, steep mountainsides. There are numerous outfitters offering a variety of services and even some guided trips. From renting canoes at a municipal park to having kayaks delivered for a day-long outing to help with planning a multi-day adventure, there are support services and experienced outdoor outfitters to make any paddle a successful one.


Colette Boehm

A North Alabama paddlers' guide lists these as the top spots for day paddles in the region:

SINGLE DAY PADDLES

- **The Locust Fork River** is a 158-mile tributary of the Black Warrior River that's nationally known for its premiere whitewater. The entire river offers many scenes, from its technical rapids to its calm, smooth waters, and there are several 10-mile stretches in Blount County perfect for a one-day adventure. Experienced paddlers seeking whitewater adventures like to put in at Kings Bend Scenic Overlook Park.

- **Bear Creek** and the **Cherokee Kayak Trail** has something for paddlers of all skill levels. It is fed by Upper Bear Creek Dam and offers reliable whitewater in the summer months. The most popular paddle, from Mill Creek to Rock Quarry Branch, has a class II slide with wave action at the top and bottom. From Rock Quarry to Military Bridge is more than nine miles of relaxing, scenic float with intermittent shoals. The Lower Bear Creek Canoe Trail is the lower portion of Bear Creek at Red Bay down to Pickwick Lake. This 35-mile stretch offers a serene trip, except in flood stage, and is suited for the beginner.

- **Cypress Creek's** mild current makes it the ideal paddle destination for those looking for a relaxing half-day of floating and fishing. While Cypress Creek is conveniently located, its scenic bluffs and abundant wildlife offer a respite that seem to be world away. And paddlers love it.

- **Terrapin Creek** is another popular waterway with mild flows and easy accessibility. Putting in at Stewart's Bridge is perfect for a relaxing float or family trip. More experienced, and adventuresome, paddlers will enjoy other sections, that include Class III rapids and can be easily turned into a multi-day trip.

- **Big Wills Creek** flows from Fort Payne to Gadsden and is full of a variety of paddling options. A popular put-in is Stephens Gap Road, where the winding creek is full of shoals and some small rapids that add adventure for beginner paddlers. For those looking for a short one-mile relaxing float, Big Wills Campground in Attala is a popular summertime spot for tubing and wildlife watching.

- **The Elk River** is part of the **Limestone County Canoe and Kayak Trail** and a tributary of the Tennessee River. There are five easily accessible put-ins along its nearly 22-mile run, allowing for a variety of distance options for paddlers. The river is known for its breathtaking scenery, with tall limestone formations, dense forests, sweeping meadows, and an abundance of wildlife.

- **The Paint Rock River** is known for both its rare mussels that can't be found anywhere else in the world as well as its proximity to the remarkable Walls of Jericho. This Tennessee River tributary is varied in its level of difficulty. For those looking for a peaceful day on the water admiring one of the most biologically diverse regions in the state, paddling the stretch in Paint Rock is the ideal day trip.

For multi-day paddles, the Flint River in Madison County, a trip down the Tennessee River from Huntsville to Guntersville or a Sipsey River adventure through the Bankhead National Forest are among the most popular. And it's said the 18-mile trip through the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is guaranteed to provide paddlers access to 100 species of fish, almost 300 species of birds and even alligators.

For those who'd like to use North Alabama as the starting point for an epic Alabama waterway adventure, the **Alabama Scenic River Trail** offers great adventure. A variety of experiences and opportunities for exploration abound along the more than 5,300 miles of accessible waterways. This is the longest and among the most diverse river trails in America, stretching from mountain streams and multi-class whitewater to river delta and the salty Gulf of Mexico waters. More information is available for planning a long-distance paddle, searching out outfitters or joining organized paddle events at *alabamascenicrivertrail.com*. ●





North Alabama's Diversity of Birding Sites and Species is Unmatched

Text and photographs by Colette Boehm

The landscapes and natural resources of North Alabama make it paradise for an amazing variety of both native and migratory birds. Topography ranges from tupelo swamps to vast fields of wildflowers and towering forests to broad, open waters. These varied habitats are home to a diverse mix of birds, varying with the seasons.

North Alabama Birding Trail offers spectacular year-round and seasonal birding

Spring brings neotropical migrants on their journey northward. In summer, breeding woodland species including Pileated and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Great-crested Flycatchers and Kentucky and Swainson's warblers are abundant. Throughout the fall, migrant waterfowl, Sandhill Cranes and a variety of raptors return to spend the winter. With winter, the majesty of Bald Eagles is on display in a variety of nesting areas and gulls and waterfowl are abundant.

The North Alabama Birding Trail is a collection of 51 sites throughout the region. They are as varied as the region itself and offer opportunities for everyone. From accessible overlooks to the untamed wilderness and from quiet winter nesting areas to dramatic spring migrations, this trail offers a window for viewing the vast diversity that makes birding so outstanding in North Alabama.

Two of the trail's most prolific sites are also the locations of popular annual birding events.



Red-headed Woodpecker



Bald Eagle

Lake Guntersville State Park This is a 6,000-acre park located along the shore of Lake Guntersville and the banks of the Tennessee River in Northeast Alabama. It is known as one of the premier birding spots in the region. Thanks to conservation efforts, Alabama's nesting bald eagle population is increasing, and Guntersville has become a focal point of eagle awareness in the state. In January and February each year, Lake Guntersville State Park hosts its annual Eagle Awareness Weekends, giving wildlife enthusiasts a chance to learn more about the magnificent creatures in their natural habitat.


Sandhill Cranes

Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is known as a premier wintering area for migratory birds. The varied habitats among its 35,000 acres include wetlands, pine and hardwood uplands, tributaries, swamps, impoundments and agricultural fields. The refuge's public access point to these diverse sites provides for an amazing variety of birdlife and makes the refuge fertile grounds for enjoying the great activity of bird watching. At the Visitor Center site, a heated wildlife observation building, complete with spotting scopes, as well as a photo blind, make viewing ducks, geese, raptors, and an occasional bald eagle easily accessible for all, from the comfort of a heated building. Home to the annual Festival of the Cranes, the refuge is a stopover for thousands of Sandhill Cranes each January as well a host of other wintering water fowl.

Many say winter is the best time for birding at the park. It's when dense populations of waterfowl as well as Bald Eagles can be found. In the park's woodlands a variety of warblers, vireos, tanagers, and grosbeaks can be found during their migration. Shore birds and wading birds can be seen year-round on the mudflats and islands in Guntersville Lake.

Other top birding spots in the region, particularly spectacular in spring and fall, include:

DeSoto State Park, which sits atop scenic Lookout Mountain, is known for its many rushing waterfalls and fragrant wildflowers. It is spectacular in spring and fall and is said to offer an unequaled display of woodland bird species found in the southeastern United States.

Buck's Pocket State Park, South Sauty Creek, and Morgan's Cove provide a number of habitats worthy of exploration. The waters of South Sauty Creek are attractive to numerous migratory waterfowl and just downstream Bald Eagles are known to nest on the forested slopes above the creek. The park's wooded pocket canyon is complete with singing Red-eyed Vireos, Wood Thrushes, and Scarlet Tanagers. The park is also host to some interesting surprises during migration.


Eastern Bluebird

Monte Sano State Park, along with spectacular views from ridge of the Cumberland Plateau, offers ample birding opportunities. Indigo Buntings, Great Crested Flycatchers, and Red-eyed Vireos can be seen along the trails. The Overlook is an excellent site for the fall flight of southbound raptors.

Bankhead National Forest is a continuous expanse of forested habitat designated by the American Bird Conservancy as an Important Bird Area. It comprises 180,000 acres of public land including deep canyons, open fields and mature pine and hardwood forests. There are several premier birding sites in the forest including the Central Fire Tower and the Sipsey Wilderness Trailhead. ●



FESTIVAL OF THE CRANES

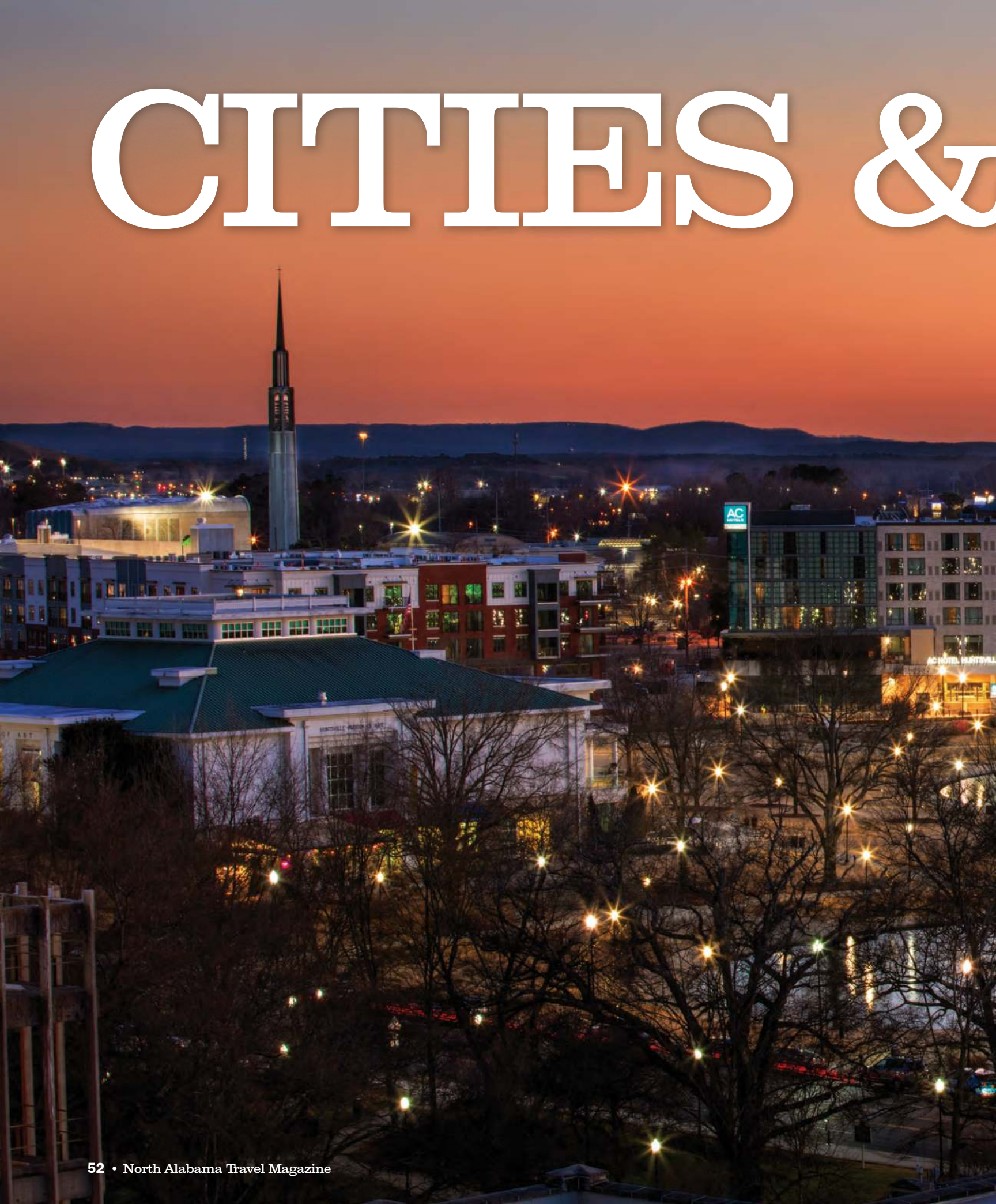
Each year, thousands of Sandhill Cranes make an appearance in the fields around the Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and Observation Building. Some endangered Whooping Cranes fly in, as well, along with ducks, geese and Bald Eagles. The free two-day event includes workshops, birding walks, presentations, children's activities and more at a variety of local venues. Observation areas near the refuge visitor center offer excellent viewing opportunities and walks guided by expert naturalists bring even more opportunities for viewing and learning. Festival activities extend throughout downtown Decatur at venues including theaters, art centers, museums and more. Photo opportunities featuring Hope, the mascot of the International Crane Foundation, are always popular with young festival participants.

EAGLE AWARENESS WEEKENDS

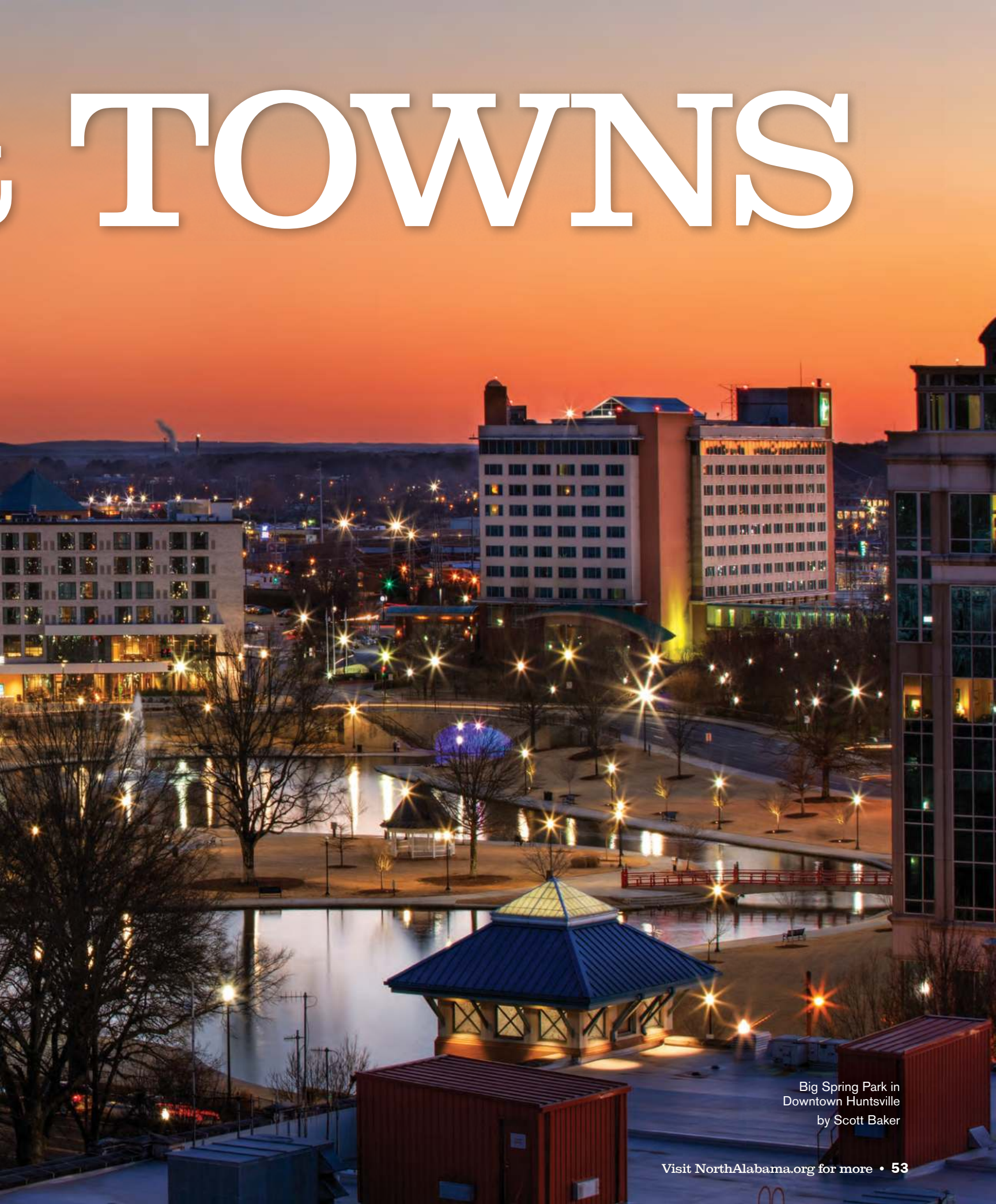
Eagle Awareness Weekends are held each winter at Lake Guntersville State Park. Programs offer participants a variety of opportunities to learn about the natural history of these majestic eagles, and other birds of prey in the area. The program features guided field trips to view local nesting areas, where adults are preparing for young ones to join the flock. Other weekend activities include live bird demonstrations and presentations from birding and wildlife experts from throughout the region.



CITIES &



TOWNS



Big Spring Park in
Downtown Huntsville
by Scott Baker



Downtown
Huntsville

Brent Boyd

ECLECTIC DOWNTOWNS AND WORLD CLASS ATTRACTIONS

The diversity North Alabama is known for is no more evident than in its cities and towns. While this region is home to a wealth of outdoor recreational opportunities, from beautiful waterfalls to abundant lakes to distinctive state parks, its downtowns show its true character. That character is diverse and welcoming, offering both "big city" venues and small-town charm.

The North Alabama region is bounded by state lines on three sides and begins just an hour south of Nashville, at the Tennessee line, and stretches down past Cullman into Blount County. Interstate 65 runs through the heart of North Alabama but its state highways and scenic roads lead to downtown adventures in every direction.

Huntsville is known as the Rocket City and there are plenty ways to have a blast there. Of course, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center has long been a favorite attraction. The Smithsonian Affiliate is the Visitor Center for NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center and has one of the largest collections of rockets and space memorabilia on display anywhere in the world. Now the 8,000-seat Orion Amphitheater, opened in May of 2022, has already created a buzz as an exceptional regional entertainment venue.

Attractions like these complement a vibrant downtown with ever-expanding activities. Huntsville has an outstanding food scene and four Arts & Entertainment Districts which allow patrons to experience multiple establishments and outdoor activities. The city's center is spotted with historic neighborhoods and the largest collection of antebellum homes in the state. There are art galleries and the world-class Huntsville Museum of Art. EarlyWorks, an interactive children's museum, stands alongside the Huntsville Historic Depot & Museum and the Constitution Hall Park & Museum.

While not as large, there are other cities to explore in the region, as well. Here are just a few highlights. • • •

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 18

"MORE THAN JUST A DAY IN DECATUR"

Danielle Gibson, President of Decatur Morgan Co. Tourism, joins Melea in talking about the perfect day in Decatur. Discover all there is to do, see and eat in this beautiful destination. Your day in Decatur might turn into a lot longer than expected!



EarlyWorks Children's Museum

Adam Vaden



Huntsville celebrated the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment with this mural entitled "This Girl Can" by Nashville-based artist Kimberly Radford


Located in downtown Florence, "fruit" mural measures 173' by 8' and was painted by Atlanta-based artist Angela Faustina.


Cullman Oktoberfest by Cullman Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism



Located in Old Decatur, Shadowlawn was built around 1874

••• Decatur's downtown is known as a favorite shopping location for those who love to browse specialty shops. In addition to downtown retail spots, a walk through the Old Decatur Historic District showcases the many Victorian and earlier 20th century craftsman and bungalow homes. For the younger set, the Cook Museum of Natural Science is a state-of-the-art natural science museum filled with hands-on, immersive experiences where kids can explore, interact with and learn about nature.

Florence sits at the heart of North Alabama's Shoals region. It is the region's center for walkable shopping, dining and nightlife. Just across the river, explore American music history in Sheffield and Muscle Shoals, home to FAME Studios and Muscle Shoals Sound Studios, where legends including Aretha Franklin, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan and many more recorded groundbreaking hits. Nearby in Tuscumbia, the Alabama Music Hall of Fame showcases the huge part music has played in the history of the Shoals. Live music is still a big part of life here and can be found nearly every night of the week in area venues.

Many add inspiration to their Tuscumbia visit with a tour of Helen Keller's birthplace, Ivey Green, which is filled with original furnishings and mementos. Playwright William Gibson's epic drama, "The Miracle Worker" is performed on the grounds of Ivy Green each summer.

From the aisles of merchandise at Scottsboro's Unclaimed Baggage Center to the Mentone Arts Center of quiet Mentone, North Alabama has an amazing collection of cities, towns and attractions, each with a unique story to tell.

The town of Cullman celebrates its German beginnings with the family-friendly Cullman Oktoberfest, one of North Alabama's largest annual events. The three-day festival takes place at Depot Park and features a biergarten, an arts and crafts displays, live German music, a bratwurst eating contest and more. Ave Maria Grotto is located here, as well. This unique and widely known attraction is located on a four-acre park on the grounds of St. Bernard Abbey. It features more than 125 miniature reproductions of famous edifices and scenes from around the world.



Cook Museum of Natural Science

Fort Payne adds to North Alabama's list of unique attractions. With production surging in the twentieth century, textile town claimed the title of the "Sock Capital of the World." As a nod to its manufacturing heritage, the mountaintop town still hosts the Boom Days Heritage Celebration each year. This is also the home of the Country Music Group of the Century, Alabama. The band's fan club and museum call this home, too. The Alabama Museum houses the group's many awards and achievements and a unique collection of items from the members' time as youngsters here.

Following the curated experiences of North Alabama's Mural Trail and Train Depots Trail is another great way to experience the sites in some of the region's eclectic cities and towns. There are more than 140 murals across the 16 counties of the region. The Train Depot Trail directs visitors to depots, museums, small-scale train rides and more. Information on both trails can be found at *northalabama.org*. ●


Cook Museum of Natural Science


Sheffield


Helen Keller's birthplace, Ivey Green in Tuscumbia

Adam Vaden

HOMETOWN GOODNESS

Text and Photos by Scott Baker



Bustling downtown Athens

I don't know what it is about a small town, but anytime I make a stop and wander around the shops and sites and say "hey" to the locals, I always feel enriched. Notably, the downtown area is still the heartbeat of these special places, and this is where I can take in a sense of history while warming to the slower pace, the southern hospitality, the unique treasures – and the kind of cooking that couldn't be beat by the best restaurants in the world.

It's never too hard to find your way around, but if you ever did get lost, you can almost imagine your GPS producing a southern accent saying, "It's up on the left just past that big church, but if you get to City Hall, you've gone too far."

On a recent adventure to north Alabama, I decided to take the road less traveled, and country roads, preferably two-lane, were my path to the center of some pretty special towns. With no particular goal in mind, it's astonishing how much I enjoyed each and every visit. And with no particular order in mind, here are 10 nuggets I discovered.



Mooresville
Brick Church
circa 1839



Tomato Pie
at Mentone's
Wildflower Café



Southern Accents in Cullman

• • •



History on display in downtown Athens



A timely spot in downtown Florence

1 Some of the best donuts in the world are located at Duchess Bakery in Cullman. But you better arrive by noon or they may be gone. Even if all the donuts are sold out, the chocolate pie is such a close second that you'll be wondering if you can muster an excuse to go back for seconds.

2 For music fans who go back a ways, Maxwell Records in downtown Huntsville is your go-to destination for one of the best selections of vinyl records you'll find anywhere.

3 The Yarn Boutique in Decatur sells more types and colors than I ever knew existed; however, the store is as much a community for knitting enthusiasts to share their skills and love of the craft. True to small town charm, I imagine a few can spin quite a yarn while they pass the time.

4 I never knew I liked tomato pie until I tasted it at the Wildflower Café in Mentone. It's so good, people drive from all over the region to get a slice…or even a whole pie.

5 Southern Accents in Cullman has more old doorknobs than I've ever seen. And mantles, claw-foot bathtubs, doors, sconces, and windows too. No wonder it's one of the Southeast's largest architectural antique stores.

6 Oneonta has some of the best "public art" murals I've encountered, including the near-famous welcome wall poking fun at the town's pronunciation. They even have an entire "Artwalk" alley.

7 The Main Street Café in Madison has one of the best Reuben sandwiches I've ever tasted. The only thing that makes it better is when you save room for the homemade peanut butter pie!

8 Browsing antique shops can bring back the nostalgic charm of a town and its people – and provide you some enchanting treasures to take with you.

9 Listening to the conversations over breakfast and coffee at the local diner reveals as much or more than the antique store about the spirit of a town. Technically, it's not considered eavesdropping if they're speaking loudly and you overhear. And, trust me, it's almost impossible not to laugh at their jokes.

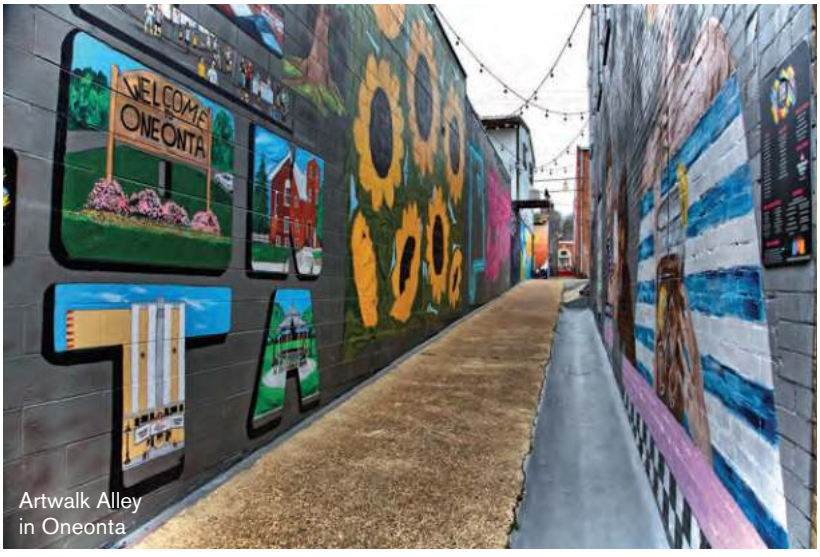
10 One caution, though: I could easily gain 10 more pounds if I take this trip again! ●



Main Street Cafe located in Historic Madison



Maxwell Records in Huntsville



Artwalk Alley in Oneonta

Huntsville's Got It Going On

Text and photographs by Scott Baker

Have you heard about Huntsville? Been to Huntsville lately? You gotta check out Huntsville. They've got it going on. Huntsville this. Huntsville that. I'd heard it but hadn't seen it for myself. Curiosity finally got the best of me, and I had to find out what all the fuss is about.

I rolled into the new boutique, 106 Jefferson Hotel, in downtown on a recent weekday afternoon to uncover what's making Huntsville the latest "it" city. I was greeted with a warm smile by the front desk agent who, without solicitation, proceeded to proudly inform me of a multitude of wonderful things within a short walk from the hotel. After settling into my room, I followed his suggestions. Strolling around the revitalized downtown district, I was delighted to discover a vinyl records music store only a few doors down from a fine-tailored menswear store. Yet that was only the beginning of the diverse offerings that are available. There were coffee shops, fine-dining restaurants, and countless clubs, bars, and music venues ready to enjoy. •••



The new ORION Amphitheater opened in May 2022.



Yellowhammer Brewery at Campus 805



Apollo moon landing capsule at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center



Josh Weichman



Toyota Field, home of the Rocket City Trash Pandas, AA-affiliate of the Los Angeles Angels



Bars and restaurants line the square around the Madison County Courthouse in downtown Huntsville



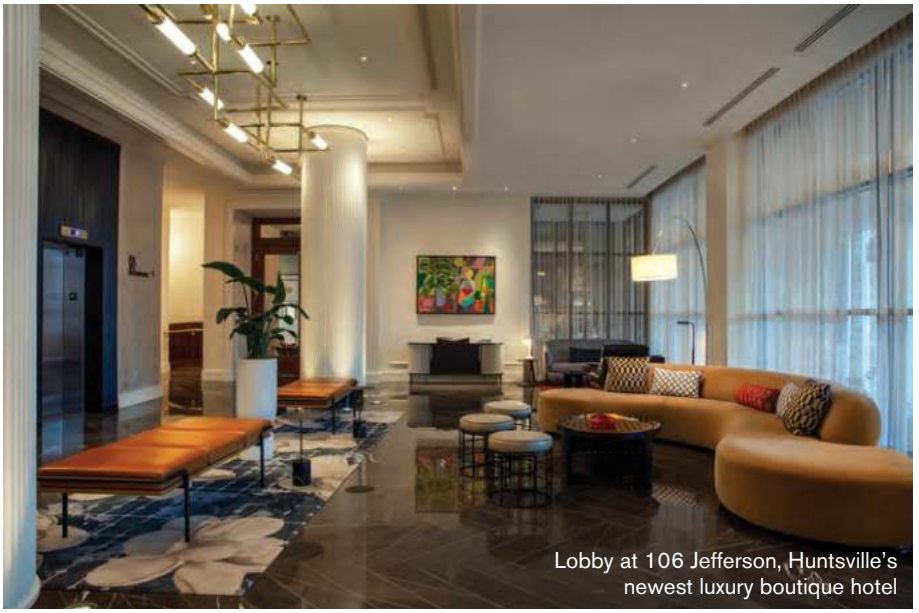
Huntsville, The Rocket City, mural welcomes visitors in downtown

••• Huntsville, known as "The Rocket City", has been home to space exploration and related aerospace industries for decades. In fact, the largest space museum in the world, the U.S Space and Rocket Center, welcomes more than a million visitors each year to Huntsville. Much more than a museum, it's a world-class attraction that's equally appealing to the young and the young at heart.

Speaking of young at heart, the wide array of outdoor activities combined with a multitude of entertainment options are bound to keep anyone feeling young in Huntsville. Hike in Monte Sano State Park and kayak the Tennessee River in the morning, catch a Rocket City Trash Panda's AA-pro baseball game in the afternoon, and share your favorite stories at one of the area's many watering holes afterwards. One of the most popular

spots, Campus No. 805, is a re-purposed elementary school that was converted into an entertainment venue. It's open all day but is especially bustling at night, and locals and tourists can satisfy any appetite, thanks to a variety of restaurants, coffee shop and a couple of well-respected microbreweries – Yellowhammer Brewing and Straight to Ale.

Tapping into north Alabama's deep music roots, Huntsville is cultivating a music scene that honors the area's rich music recording history while blazing a new trail into the future. Already home to the Von Braun Center, the Mars Music Hall and a plethora of small music venues, the ORION Amphitheater opened in May 2022. The 8,000-seat, state-of-the-art music venue is the latest commitment by Huntsville to pay homage to north Alabama's music legacy and introduce the area to some of the world's greatest performers. In addition to outstanding musical performances, the theatre grounds will become a cultural destination featuring acres of green space for picnicking, hiking trails, a food truck court and year-round community events.



Lobby at 106 Jefferson, Huntsville's newest luxury boutique hotel

In three days, I barely scratched the surface of exploring Huntsville. Exhilarating outdoor activities, mind-stretching museums and attractions, beautiful historic downtown, lively entertainment options and music everywhere… it's easy to understand why everybody's spreading the word. Seriously. You gotta check out Huntsville. They've got it going on! ●



Burritt on the Mountain Museum and event space sits high above Huntsville



CELEBRAT
HISTORY, A
& CULTUR



TING ART E

Orbix Hot Glass
by Scott Baker



Carnegie Visual Arts Center
by Brad Wiegmann

Celebrating Arts & Culture in North Alabama

There are so many ways to celebrate and share in the arts and culture of North Alabama! And there is so much out there to experience! From museums to murals and more, visitors can choose to make a road trip filled with unique sights and places or spend an entire day immersed in the masterpieces of a fine art gallery. Whatever the artistic thirst, it can be quenched here.

Regional heritage, artistic imagination and nostalgia are depicted in the more than 140 murals of the **North Alabama Mural Trail**. From Merchants Alley in Athens to Graffiti Alley in Florence, from "Angels" in Oneonta to "Straight to Ale" in Huntsville and from Little Richard to the Pink Panther, the variety is remarkable. Check out the Mobile Passport on *northalmuraltrail.org* to get specifics on the trail.



Mary G. Hardin Center for Cultural Arts

Another great way to explore the culture of this region is to visit its historic churches. The **North Alabama Hallelujah Trail** features 32 churches that are at least 100 years old, stand on their original sites and still hold services. And all are accessible to the public. There is a trail map online at *northalabama.org*.

Across the region, these venues, galleries, studios and museums display an amazing array of cultural opportunities.

Brown's Pottery & Sons *(166 Boyett Drive, Hamilton, Alabama 35570)* Here, ninth- and 10th-generation folk potters create unique pieces using classic processes. In 1992, Jerry Brown was awarded the National Heritage Fellowship and currently has five pieces of pottery on exhibit in the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C. In 2003, the Jerry Brown Arts Festival was created in his hometown of Hamilton, a juried arts festival which has been recognized as a Top 20 event in the Southeastern U.S. Handcrafted wares available for purchase.

Carnegie Visual Arts Center *(207 Church Street NE, Decatur, Alabama 35601)* The historic Carnegie was built in 1904 as a library and now serves as the area's first art museum and education center. The main level houses changing exhibits throughout the year. The Daikin America Education Center, located on the lower level, offers the opportunity for people of all ages to learn about and create art.

Evelyn Burrow Museum of Wallace State College *(801 Main Street, Hanceville, Alabama 35077)* displays fine and decorative arts from the Victorian Era to modern times. It is considered to have of the finest collections of porcelain, pottery, and bronze in the United States.

High Cotton Arts *(103 W. Washington Street, Athens, Alabama 35611)* is the result of the Athens Arts League's mission to support artists, provide art education, and bring cultural events to the region. This non-profit art incubator offers retail opportunities, classes, exhibits and a small music venue to the public, as well as studio rental for artists. • • •

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 36

"THE ART LADY"

Prepare to be inspired and awed as Melea sits down with the incredibly talented Sonya Clemons, also known as The Art Lady! This captivating artist has been making waves in the local scene of North Alabama with her incredible artwork that is as unique as it is stunning. Join us as we delve into the mind of The Art Lady and uncover what drives her creative passions and where you can catch a glimpse of her masterpieces in person. With every stroke of her brush, Sonya reminds us that art is not just a skill but a powerful form of expression that can capture the essence of life itself.


Orbix Hot Glass
by Scott Baker





Crossroads of The
Shoals in Leighton, Ala.
by Juergen Beck


Worthy
Vessels
Pottery

••• **Huntsville Museum of Art** *(300 Church Street South, Huntsville, Alabama 35801)* is one of the state's "Top 10" destinations and is gaining a reputation throughout the South for bringing high-caliber touring exhibitions to the region. The nationally accredited Museum fills its fourteen galleries with a variety of exhibitions throughout the year, including displays from its extensive permanent collection.

Mary G. Hardin Center for Cultural Arts *(501 Broad Street, Gadsden, Alabama 35901)* The Gadsden Cultural Arts Foundation was founded in May 1984, in order to provide, maintain and operate a cultural arts facility for the citizens of the City of Gadsden, Etowah County and their surrounding communities. It was chartered in response to citizen initiatives, as an independent, non-profit organization. The Cultural Arts Foundation is a positive reflection of the best interests of the city.

Mentone Arts Center at the Chuck Sennett Center for the Arts *(5951 Alabama Highway 117, Mentone, AL 35984)* art gallery and gift shop is filled with beautiful locally made art. The mission of the center is to provide education about the rich history of the arts in the Lookout Mountain Region and the Mentone community and to promote, propagate and protect the community's artistic roots for current and future generations.

Orbix Hot Glass *(3869 County Road 275, Fort Payne, Alabama 35967)* offers classes for creating your own ornament or paperweight, sculpting your own flower and blowing your own tumbler.




High Cotton Art in downtown Athens


The Evelyn Burrow Museum




The Old Railroad Bridge connects Florence and Sheffield by John Dersham

Visitors can also tour the facility and purchase lovely items from their gallery.

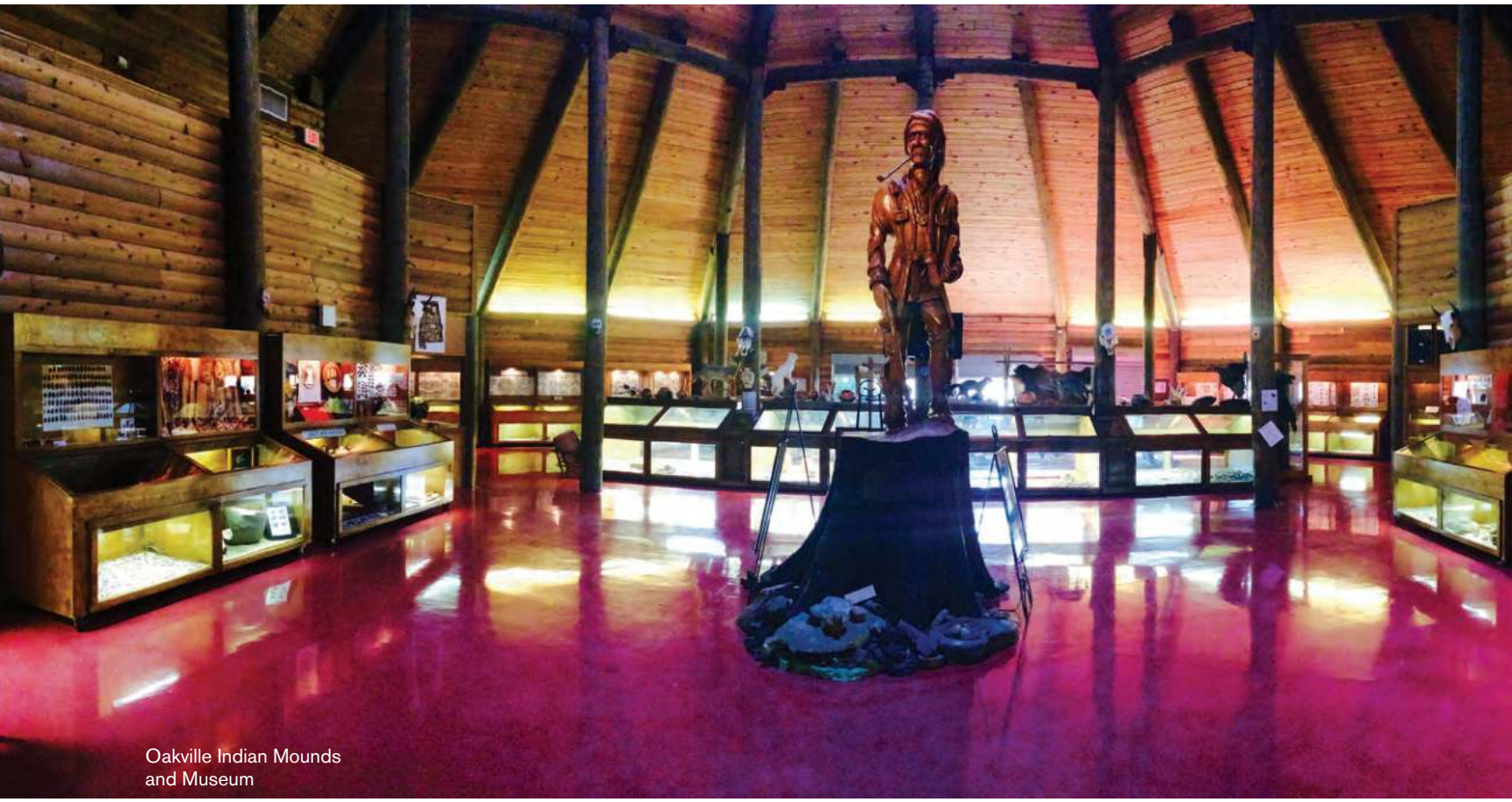
Roxy Theatre *(208 N. Jackson Avenue, Russellville, Alabama 35653)* The Historic Roxy Theatre has been a beloved fixture of downtown Russellville since 1949. Just 16 miles south of Muscle Shoals, the theatre serves as a venue for concerts, talent shows, recitals and movies.

Worthy Vessels Pottery *(211 County Road 494, Lexington, Alabama 35648)* One-of-a-kind pieces are created in the Worthy Vessels studio. Visitors can see the artist at work, explore the grounds of the 200-year-old cabin and stick their feet in Kitty Branch. Call 256-229-7687 to guarantee the potter is available. ●

SCAN THE CODE TO DOWNLOAD THE NORTH ALABAMA MURAL TRAIL GUIDE TO MAP OUT YOUR TOUR OF NORTH ALABAMA'S MURALS.



MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC PLACES



Oakville Indian Mounds and Museum

North Alabama's rich history is celebrated all across the region. Visitors are invited to step back in time at preserved historic places and to marvel at the exhibits and displays in a diverse collection of museums and galleries.

HERE ARE SOME OF THE SPECIAL PLACES THAT COMMEMORATE THE LIVES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF ALABAMIANS

Helen Keller Birthplace - Ivey Green *(300 North Commons W., Tuscumbia, Alabama 35674)* This home and grounds are a shrine to the "miracle" that occurred as a blind and deaf seven-year-old at the home's well. The site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the home, built in 1820, contains many of the original furnishings and items pertaining to the life of Helen Keller, America's "First Lady of Courage."

Jesse Owens Museum & Park *(7019 County Road 203, Danville, Alabama 35619)* A tribute to the life and legacy of this track and field great, who captured four Gold Medals in 1936 Berlin Olympics shattering Hitler's Aryan supremacy theory. Owen's athletic and humanitarian achievements are depicted through interactive kiosks, displays, and a documentary narrated by Owen. The park includes replicas of a sharecropper's home and a 1936 Olympic Torch Replica.





Old State Bank in Decatur
by Brent Boyd

Alabama Music Hall of Fame *(617 Highway 72 W., Tuscumbia, Alabama 35674)* This outstanding museum is dedicated to the preservation and celebration of Alabama's musicians and the state's great musical heritage. The list of Alabamians who have played a role in the music industry – from renowned producers to super star performing artists – is surprisingly long and impressive. Stories of the artists' lives and careers are told and an amazing collection of memorabilia, from Elvis's original music contract to the group Alabama's tour bus, is on display.

But this is only the beginning! The story of how the state began is told at **Alabama Constitution Hall Historic Park & Museum** *(404 Madison Street, Huntsville, Alabama 35801)* in Huntsville. Visitors can tour the cabinet shop that became the place where delegates signed Alabama's Constitution. Life in the 1800s comes alive in woodworking, printing and blacksmith shops and demonstrations. The complex is also home to **EarlyWorks**, the South's largest hands-on-history museum.

From even earlier times, the **Oakville Indian Mounds and Museum** *(1219 County Road 187, Danville, Alabama 35619)* feature the largest 2,000-year-old Woodland Indian Mound in Alabama. The 122-acre park also has an early settler cemetery, a Cherokee Council House and more. •••

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 26

"DISCOVERING THE BIRTHPLACE OF HELEN KELLER"

Close your eyes and transport yourself back in time in this episode of Unexpected Adventures in North Alabama. Melea talks with Sue Pilkilton, executive director at the Birthplace of Helen Keller Museum. Sue shares stories from Helen's life and talks about how visitors can learn more about her legacy for themselves.



Adam Vaden


Historic Houston Jail
by Brad Wiegmann


Alabama Constitution Hall Historic Park & Museum
by Brent Boyd

••• Significant 19th century sites tell stories of a variety of aspects of Alabama's diverse history. **Houston Historic Jail** *(4786 County Road 63, Houston, Alabama 35572)*, circa 1868, is the oldest structure of its kind in the state and the second oldest in the country. The **LaGrange College Site Park** *(1491 LaGrange College Road, Leighton, Alabama 35676)* was listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks & Heritage in 1976. The site includes a pioneer village with several historic markers and buildings, a picnic pavilion, a memorial monument. **Burritt on the Mountain** *(3101 Burritt Drive, Huntsville, Alabama 35801)*, atop Monte Sano Mountain, sits on a magnificent 167-acre site overlooking the city. The site is home to Dr. William Henry Burritt and the historic park includes six authentic 19th century homes typical of life in the Cumberland Plateau, along with a blacksmith shop and assorted outbuildings. Interpreters in authentic period dress are on hand to answer questions, give tours, and demonstrate life as it was on a farm during the 1800s.

Old State Bank *(925 Bank Street, Decatur, Alabama 35601)* As Alabama's oldest standing bank building, the Old State Bank preserves an important part of local and state history. Both yesterday and today, it is a symbol of ambition and the will to prosper. The building is important not only for its rich history associated with its diverse use, but also for its contribution to the architectural history and landscape of Alabama. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is open for tours.

Service men and women are honored at the **Alabama Veterans Museum** *(114 West Pryor Street, Athens, Alabama 35611)*, which contains an impressive display of artifacts from the





The View at Burritt on the Mountain
by Brent Boyd



Easley Covered Bridge in Blount County
by Scott Baker

Revolutionary War until present day. Visitors can walk among the actual uniforms, medals, photos and weapons; hear stories and experiences about the nation's wars from men and women who were actually there. **Pond Spring** *(12280 Highway 20, Hillsboro, Alabama 35643)*, was home to Joseph Wheeler, former Major General of the Confederate Army of Tennessee. He later served as a long-time U.S. Congressman and became a national symbol for reunification and reconciliation following the Civil War.

The innovative **Cook Museum of Natural Science** *(133 4th Avenue NE, Decatur, Alabama 35601)* is a state-of-the-art natural science museum that provides a hands-on, immersive experiences where kids can explore, interact with, and learn about nature. And it all started with one man's insect collection in the 1960s!

The list goes on and on! The **North Alabama Hallelujah Trail** features 32 churches that are at least 100 years old, stand on their original sites and still hold services. And all are accessible to the public. There are **Historic Railroad Depots** to explore in Decatur, Tuscumbia, Bridgeport, Fort Payne and Huntsville (among others). There are picturesque **covered bridges** throughout the region, seven in all. Blount County has the most in North Alabama, which has earned the county the title, "Covered Bridge Capital," and they celebrate with the Covered Bridge Festival each year.

The state's rich history, legendary residents and diverse culture are proudly on display across the North Alabama region. From city museums to national landmarks, they each invite visitors to come in and explore what has made this amazing destination what it is today. ●

NORTH ALABAMA HALLELUJAH TRAIL SCAN THE CODE TO DOWNLOAD YOUR COPY OF THIS TRAIL GUIDE TO MAP OUT YOUR TOUR OF HISTORIC CHURCHES IN NORTH ALABAMA.





MUSIC OF ALAB

F NORTH BAMA



Alabama Music Hall of Fame

Photograph by Scott Baker

North Alabama's Rich Music Heritage

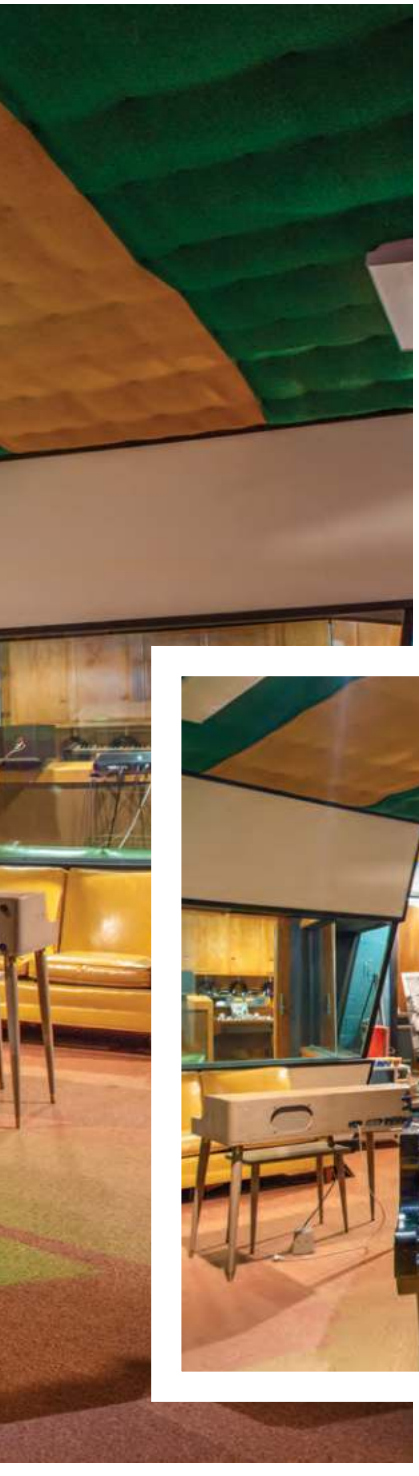
Text and photographs by Scott Baker



Muscle Shoals Sound Studio

"If these walls could talk, the stories they would tell!" I am sure I'm not the only one who has said that very phrase when walking into the world-famous Muscle Shoals Sound Studio and FAME Recording Studios. During a recent tour, I marveled at the hits that were produced in these humble studios! Aretha Franklin's "Respect", The Rolling Stones' "Brown Sugar", Wilson Pickett's "Mustang Sally." Plus, recordings by Clarence Carter, Paul Simon, Cher, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Rod Stewart … and that's just a few of the artists who sought to capture the magic that was created in north Alabama.

It's impossible to exclude Muscle Shoals, Alabama, when discussing the history of rock n' roll music. In many ways, this north Alabama town defined and shaped some of the most iconic sounds of the '60s and '70s. The rhythm section and studio band The Swampers, immortalized in the Lynyrd Skynyrd classic hit "Sweet Home Alabama," recorded more than 500 songs including 75 gold and platinum hits. Books and movies have been produced about the phenomenon that is the Muscle Shoals Sound. The music created there is the soundtrack of life for millions of baby boomers. •••





The toilet where Keith Richards wrote the hit 'Wild Horses"

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES PODCAST:

EPISODE 42

"THE STORY OF FAME RECORDING STUDIOS WITH RODNEY HALL"

Did you know that a little town in Alabama called Muscle Shoals played a significant role in the development of music in the United States? In this episode, Rodney Hall, co-owner and president of Fame Recording Studios, tells the fascinating story of how his father, Rick Hall, started the studio in the early 1960s and created a unique sound that became famous worldwide. Rodney shares other exciting stories including the recording of the hit song "Patches" by Clarence Carter and working with famous musicians like Steven Tyler, Alicia Keys, and Gregg Allman and talks about the close-knit music community in Muscle Shoals and how the environment and people in the area make all the difference to the music that is recorded there.



This humble building is home to The Swampers, who recorded more than 75 Gold and Platinum hits in the '60s and '70s

• • • It was hard to believe that I could peer behind the veiled curtain to see the microphone where Aretha Franklin sang "Respect" or take note of Duane Allman's original amp or even see the toilet where Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones wrote "Wild Horses." Walking into the office of Rick Hall, the founder of FAME Studios, is like stepping back five decades to a set up that is exactly as it was at his passing. If it sounds like I'm gushing, it's because I am. Getting to touch, see and be present in the space where so much music history was created is an experience not to be missed.

Another experience where the walls actually do talk is the Alabama Music Hall of Fame, located nearby in Tuscumbia. Dioramas and an audio guided tour present the stories of artists who grew up in Alabama or called it home. Impressive in its number of artifacts and displays, hours seemed to pass before I got to the actual tour bus of the band, Alabama. Yes, the band's tour bus is parked inside and open for touring; as I under-

It's impossible to exclude Muscle Shoals, Alabama, when discussing the history of rock n' roll music.



FAME Recording Studio with Duane Allman's original amp that he brought to his audition



Rick Hall's office as it was the day of his passing



The Alabama Music Hall of Fame was built around Alabama's tour bus

stand it, the museum was built around the bus. The Alabama Music Hall of Fame also features a recording studio where you can perform and take a recording home. More than just a museum, the interactive displays and studio appeal to everyone, young and the young at heart.

Any trip to north Alabama is incomplete without soaking up the sounds of the '60s and '70s at the FAME Recording Studios and the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio – plus creating your own soundtrack at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame. They're all within a short distance of each other. ●



I can just imagine Aretha Franklin singing "Respect" into this microphone



One of many exhibits at the Alabama Music Hall of Fame

THE ORION AMPHITHEATER

Photography by Josh Weichman

The Orion Amphitheater marks a bold new chapter in North Alabama's unparalleled musical history.







Even before the 8,000-seat Orion Amphitheater opened in May of 2022 it had created a buzz. This exceptional entertainment venue aims to be the premier music destination in the region. The advent of this Greek-style amphitheater in Huntsville was considered the beginning of a new era for entertainment in North Alabama. The venue offers a state-of-the-art sound system and a bowl-like structure that maximizes the view and sound quality for every seat in the house.

The venue opened with great fanfare, bringing a weekend of celebration and musical performances, including world-renowned talent, much it from home-grown performers. Dubbed The First Waltz, the opening weekend of concerts was filled with Alabama-rooted stars like Jason Isbell, Brittany Howard, Emmylou Harris, Waxahatchee, St. Paul and the Broken Bones and Drive-By Truckers. Both the venue and the concerts gained rave reviews but many saw the weekend as the opening act for a venue that will play a staring role in the future of Huntsville. •••

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 34

"THE TOSHA HILL BAND: MUSCLE SHOALS' RISING STAR"

For Tosha Hill, music is a spiritual experience. Getting her start singing in local churches, Tosha is a singer/songwriter and an Alabama native. In this episode, she details her musical journey, from finding her sound to where she plans to go next.



... Orion came with a $40 million price tag and is located in Huntsville's MidCity district. The amphitheater's main structure is off-white in color, and a classic coliseum-style design. Ben Lovett, a member of the Grammy-winning Mumford and Sons band, spearheaded the project and his team worked closely with city officials to develop the city-owned world-class facility.

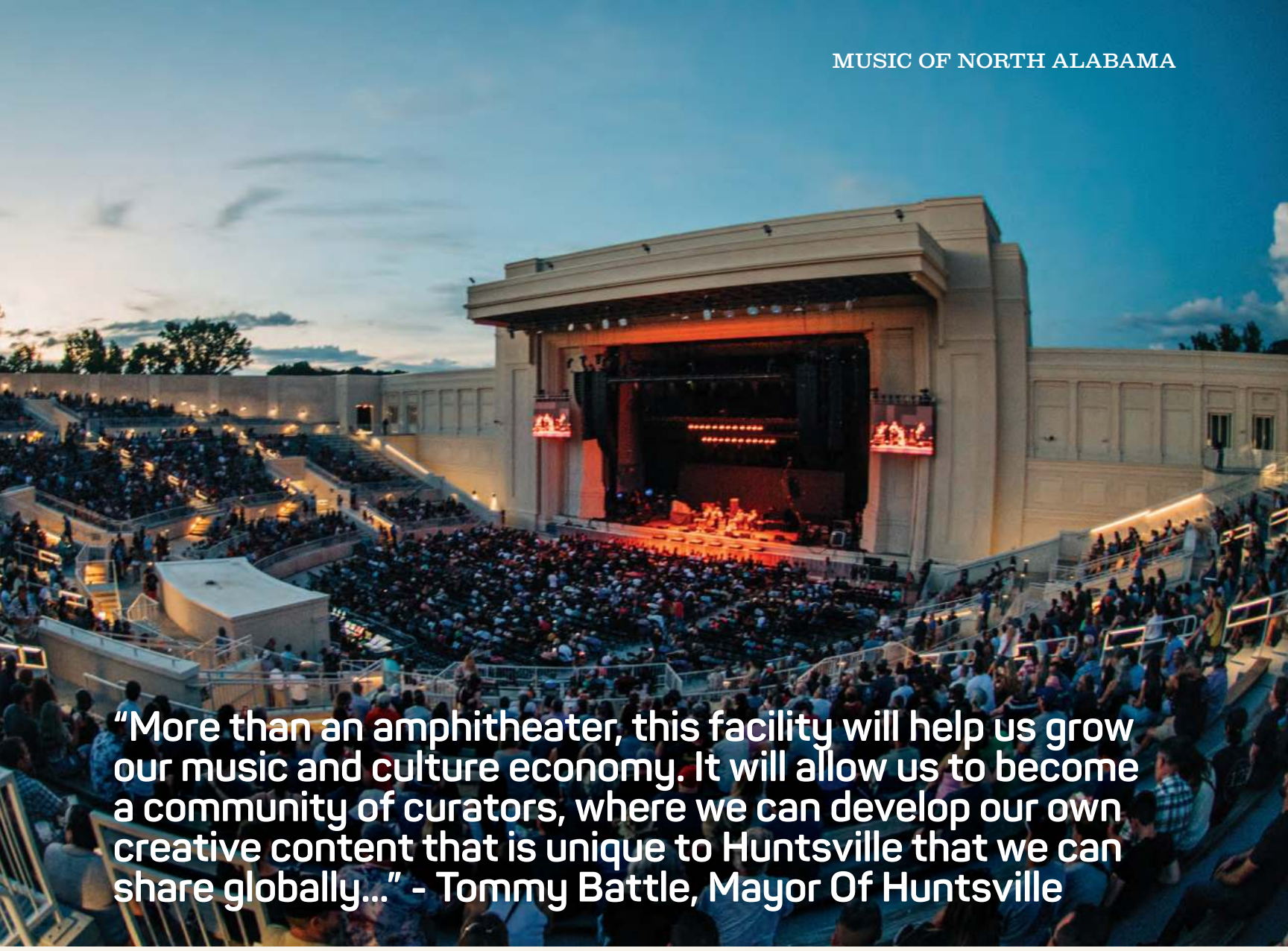
With its proximity to the iconic Shoals region of Alabama, Huntsville enjoys its status as part of the one of the most prolific and storied locations in music history. From its first month the theater lived up to that reputation with a musical line-up including something for everyone, from rock to country with headliners like the Dave Matthews Band, Kenny Chesney, Josh Groban and Neil DeGrasse Tyson. Chris Stapleton, Dave Matthews Band, Black Keys and Jack White were also some of the first events scheduled.

Beyond music, developers and city leasers envisioned the venue as a central element of Huntsville's community. The venue's mission goes beyond music, to provide cultural experiences throughout the year. The slate includes farmer's markets, art displays and educational events as well as other large-scale happenings. One of the first events to find a home at the Orion was one focused on astrophysics, only fitting for the Rocket City venue.

Outside the amphitheater is Apollo Park. The public park is still evolving, but is open year-round for people to exercise and enjoy the outdoors. The park is only closed during specific ticketed events and otherwise, the entire campus offers space for leisure, activity and nature exploration for the Huntsville community and beyond. Locals and visitors can enjoy spending time together at the waterside, exploring the open spaces, taking up climbing or tasting the fare at one of the ever-changing area food trucks.

Back inside the venue, the Orion further distinguishes itself as a venue with a few specifics that have gained early recognition and are sure to garner support from visitors. First, there are no bad seats! Every spot in the venue provides unobstructed views of the stage. Beverages are served from specially curated bars, with names like Hop House, with a craft beer line-up, Carbon, a seltzer bar, The Distillery, for vodka and gin lovers, and more. The ven-





"More than an amphitheater, this facility will help us grow our music and culture economy. It will allow us to become a community of curators, where we can develop our own creative content that is unique to Huntsville that we can share globally..." - Tommy Battle, Mayor Of Huntsville



ue is also embracing sustainability through their partnership with TURN to use reusable cups. Drinks from any of the venue's bars are served in cups that can be dropped into marked receptacles. From there, they are washed and sanitized and can be reused up to 100 times. The goal is to prevent half a million single-use plastic cups from ending up in landfills each year.

From the music to the design to the emphasis on building community – both for Huntsville and for music lovers – this new venue is a proud addition to Huntsville's list of outstanding attractions. And it promises to bring a variety of world-class events to that build on North Alabama's musical legacy. ●


UNIQUE
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RETAIL



The Cupboard (*504 Bank Street NE. Decatur, Alabama 35601*) is a gourmet kitchen shop specializing in local and regionally made items. They also offer cooking demonstrations presented by local chefs. The cupboard carries pottery, cookware, kitchen knives, unusual spices, local art and other gift items.

Photograph by Brent Boyd

Unique Retail Brings Unexpected Finds for Shoppers

There is much to delight anyone looking for retail therapy in North Alabama. The bustling cities are filled with the quality and variety of shops and services one might expect. The streets of classic downtowns are lined with small family businesses serving their neighbors.

There are some unexpected offerings on the retail landscape, too. Of course, in a region filled with such amazing diversity – from its mountains to its canyons, its bustling cities to its vast protected wilderness, its serene waters to its tumbling waterfalls – it should be no surprise that shopping offers some unexpected variety, also.

To the delight of shoppers looking for a unique experience, North Alabama certainly delivers. Some of these retail gems are well-known while others have quietly grown into specialty shops with sought-after wares, finds and creations.

Unclaimed Baggage *(509 West Willow Street, Scottsboro, Alabama 35768)* has been touted as the nation's only retailer of lost luggage and is, arguably, North Alabama's most famous retail store. Here, the treasures found in lost luggage, along with the luggage itself, is up for grabs. The sprawling 40,000 square-foot store in Scottsboro is guaranteed to delight any avid shopper. The center collects "orphaned" bags and gives them new life by selling, donating, and recycling their contents. It's been featured on national television and many make an annual (or more frequent) pilgrimage to check out the latest arrivals and unusual items. After more than 50 years in business, Unclaimed Baggage has become a special place for those who love unique retail opportunities.





Brad Wiegmann


Brad Wiegmann

Southern Accents Architectural Antiques

The rare and unique finds at **Southern Accents Architectural Antiques** *(308 2nd Avenue SE, Cullman, Alabama 35055)* are much more curated, either selected, refurbished or designed and created by second generation owner Garlan Gudger, Jr. As a boy, he says he loved following his father around junkyards, antique shops and salvage stores. After earning a business degree, he returned to the business and now, with his wife, is the proprietor of what has grown into a combination of showroom, warehouse and custom woodworking shop.

What began as a "garage collection" has become a thriving business, offering in-demand building supplies. The collection of architectural salvage, antique building supplies and vintage home accents have garnered the attention of collectors and custom builders from throughout the country. Garlan enjoys working with other specialists to use a combination of artistic ability and years of hands-on experience of the salvage industry to rescue and restore the antique pieces he collects.

Brand new creations are on display and in great demand at **Orbix Hot Glass** *(3869 County Road 275, Fort Payne, Alabama 35967)*. Since 2002, Cal Breed has been hand-crafting glassware. With great attention to form, balance and color he has distinguished his work through its outstanding craftsmanship and beauty. His studio designs are said to "marry understated elegance with superb craftsmanship making the functional object a unique handmade piece of treasure."

Orbix sits on 26 acres bordering Little River Canyon National Preserve, just a few miles from where Cal and Christy met and the local landscape inspires much of the Orbix collection. In addition to shopping at the gallery, visitors can also tour the facility. Cal also offers classes for creating ornaments or paperweights, sculpting flowers and blowing tumblers. • • •

LISTEN TO THE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCAST:

EPISODE 25

"100 THINGS TO DO IN NORTH ALABAMA BEFORE YOU DIE"

Are you in need of things to add to your bucket list? On this episode of Unexpected Adventures in North Alabama Melea is joined by Connie Pearson, author of *100 Things to Do in North Alabama Before You Die.* Melea and Connie go through some of the things you need to see if you are visiting the area. From sporting events to shopping and dining, North Alabama is sure to have something for everyone.

••• Of course, there are many one-of-a-kind small businesses throughout the region. And many have a surprising variety of offerings. Here is just a sampling:

- **Worthy Vessels Pottery** *(211 County Road 494, Lexington, Alabama 35648)* offer shoppers a chance to not only purchase one-of-a-kind pieces, but also see the artists at work. Both of these studios have artistic pieces inspired by North Alabama's diverse natural surroundings and rich heritage.

- Along with the goodies at **Morgan Price Candy Company** *(1735 6th Avenue, SE, Decatur, Alabama 35601)* comes a dose of nostalgia. What began as candy making for friends, using old family recipes, has grown to a retail shop filled with specialty gifts. The candy is always made by hand in small batches and the shop is filled with seasonal treats and scores of baskets, ribbons and novelty containers.

- **Tennessee Valley Pecan Company** *(806 Bank Street, Decatur, Alabama 35601)* is another hometown business specializing in tasty local treats. They sell pecans for baking and snacking, in packages large and small, as well as pecan gift packages for holidays, social events, and special occasions.

- The shelves at **Werner's Trading Company** *(1115 4th Street SW, Cullman, Alabama 35055)* offer a unique combination of items, across a wide range of interests. Opened in 1951, Werner's has always been known as the place to go for unique items, hobby supplies, and gifts. They have selections of everything from grilling supplies and outdoor gear, to women's clothing and athletic shoes, and from beekeeping supplies and a bike shop to North Alabama craft beer and wine.


Worthy Vessels Pottery



Tennessee Valley Pecan Company


Morgan Price Candy Co.

Brad Wiegmann



Brad Wiegmann


Werner's Trading Company

- For a step back in time and place, the **Dusty Things Antique Mall** *(430 Broad Street, Gadsden, Alabama 35901)* in historic downtown Gadsden is the place to go. In its more than 6,000 square feet of space, the mall has an amazingly wide variety of items of interest to the discerning collector. Dealers have a varied range of items including antiques, art, books, clocks, dolls, furniture and much, much more.

- **Red Land Cotton** *(1000 County Road 213, Moulton, Alabama 35650)* Situated at the foot of Bankhead National Forest is a third generation owned farm with deep roots in the rich, red soil of North Alabama. Red Land Cotton uses cotton from the Yeager family farm in Moulton to make luxury sheets, blankets and towels. Red Land Cotton has been growing cotton for more than 40 years, but now it is selling more than 70 products, ranging from heirloom quality sheets, bedding, quilts, bath towels and washcloths, shirts and lounge wear, all made from its home grown cotton.

- **U. G. White General Mercantile** *(101 N. Jefferson Street, Athens, Alabama 35611)* has been located on the square in historic downtown Athens since 1917. Its long history of bringing consumers specialty products in a unique atmosphere has made it a local favorite for everything from pocket knives to penny candies and back packs to bird feeders.

- Located in the "Crossroads of the Shoals," **Dawson Distillery** *(1022 LaGrange College Lane, Leighton, Alabama 35646)* became the first legal moonshine operation in Northwest Alabama after prohibition. Today, visitors can take a tour of the distillery and have a taste of the best handcrafted moonshine in the region as well as purchase some to take home.

These are only a few of the opportunities for retail adventure in North Alabama. The variety is wide and the options are many, so more than one retail therapy session may be in order! ●


Dusty Things Antique Mall by Juergen Beck



Red Land Cotton by Hector M. Sanchez





Brad Wiegmann


U. G. White General Mercantile




Juergen Beck

Dawson Distillery

FOOD &



DRINK



Arrowhead Bar & Grill
by Brent Boyd



Adam Vaden

A Plate Full of Goodness

The diversity of North Alabama is never more evident than in its food scene. From award-winning restaurants to unexpected favorites, there is a palate-pleasing array of options.

The diversity of North Alabama is never more evident than in its food scene. From award-winning restaurants to unexpected favorites, there is a palate-pleasing array of options.

The fine dining experience in Huntsville is amazing and features innovative chefs creating seasonal menus with local ingredients. At Cotton Row, for example, the ever-changing menu has a Southern flare. Purveyor creates a dining experience with dishes and cocktails not found anywhere else in the region.

Just over an hour away, in lovely small-town Mentone, is the **Wildflower Café**, known for both its shabby chic ambiance and its outstanding food. Here, fresh, delicious offerings range from the lauded Tomato Pie to soups, salads and vegan fare. Across the region at the **Rattlesnake Saloon** the swinging doors lead to a cave in what is referred to as "a watering hole under a rock." The chow time menu consists of burgers and sandwiches, usually accompanied by local live music.

For those on a getaway to Smith Lake, **Arrowhead Bar and Grill** located in Arrowhead RV Resort offers lunch and dinner specials in addition to a full menu and a Sunday brunch while enjoying views of the lake. Along with serving good food, the resort has many activities lined up on weekends including Trade Days and other festivals, live music and karaoke.

From an elegant spot with a view overlooking the Tennessee River, to a downtown rooftop favorite. From the best of Southern cuisine to creative menus with international flare. From Saturday tailgate favorites to Sunday morning brunch delicacies. The restaurants of North Alabama are bringing the flavor, flair and variety to quench any hunger. • • •



Rattlesnake Saloon
by Scott Baker



Adam Vaden



Whitt's Barbecue

LISTEN TO THESE UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES IN NORTH ALABAMA PODCASTS:

EPISODE 38

"ALABAMA CRAVINGS: EXPLORING THE BEST RESTAURANTS AND RECIPES WITH FOOD NETWORK STAR MARTIE DUNCAN"

Join us as we chat with the delightful Martie Duncan, former Food Network Star contestant and author of *Alabama Cravings: The Most Requested Alabama Restaurant Recipes Past & Present*. Martie takes us on a journey through the delectable flavors of North Alabama and shares her insider tips on the best places to eat.

EPISODE 29

"A STOP FOR SWEET TREATS"

Go out on the town with Melea today and stop into Tess' Place, ice cream shop and soda bar. Get the scoop on the best items on the menu from owner Dede, her son Bennett and shop worker Kinsley.

SCAN THE CODE TO DOWNLOAD THE BBQ TRAIL GUIDE TO DISCOVER OUR AMAZING BARBECUE.





Johnny's Bar-B-Q



Big Bob Gibson Bar-B-Q

Adam Vaden

• • • This is the South, so of course there is barbeque. And this is Alabama so of course it is delicious! Anyone on a quest for the best can take to the North Alabama Barbecue Trail to find their favorite. The trail marks the spot for favorites like ribs, brisket, pulled pork and white sauce. There are large, well-known favorites such as **Big Bob Gibson Bar-B-Q** in Decatur, founded in 1925. There are also local favorites like Boaz's **Dale's BBQ**, voted best barbecue on Sand Mountain, and family-owned **Johnny's Bar-B-Q**, a Cullman favorite.

SCAN THE CODE TO DOWNLOAD THE CRAFT BEER TRAIL GUIDE TO DISCOVER OUR AMAZING BREWERIES.



As if Alabama barbeque wasn't enough, pairing it with freshly brewed Alabama beer makes the meal even better. Several micro-breweries dot the map here, from Florence to Decatur to Gadsden, and offer dozens of beers unique to North Alabama. On the North Alabama Craft Beer Trail visitors can get a stamp at each stop to earn some awesome discounts at select breweries and goodies from the folks at Visit North Alabama. Like many of the beers' names, the breweries themselves reflect their home state surroundings. Huntsville's **Yellowhammer Brewing** gives a nod to the state bird and **Back Forty Beer Company**, based in Gadsden pays tribute to state's agricultural heritage.



Back Forty Brewing Company



Yellowhammer Brewing

by Adam Vaden


Wills Creek Winery
by Adam Vaden

Speaking of agricultural heritage, what better way to continue the celebration of food and drink than with the North Alabama Wine Trail and the Agriculture Adventures Trail? A surprising variety of wines can be found throughout the region at the six featured wineries. These very accessible wines are made from native muscadines as well as other grapes, locally grown and carefully sourced. Each vineyard has tastings and is eager to share their knowledge and their stories about winemaking in North Alabama.


Jules J. Berta Vineyards
by Juergen Beck

SCAN THE CODE TO DOWNLOAD THE WINE TRAIL GUIDE TO DISCOVER OUR AMAZING WINERIES.



SCAN THE CODE TO DOWNLOAD THE AGRICULTURE ADVENTURES TRAIL GUIDE TO DISCOVER OUR AMAZING ALABAMA-GROWN GOODS.

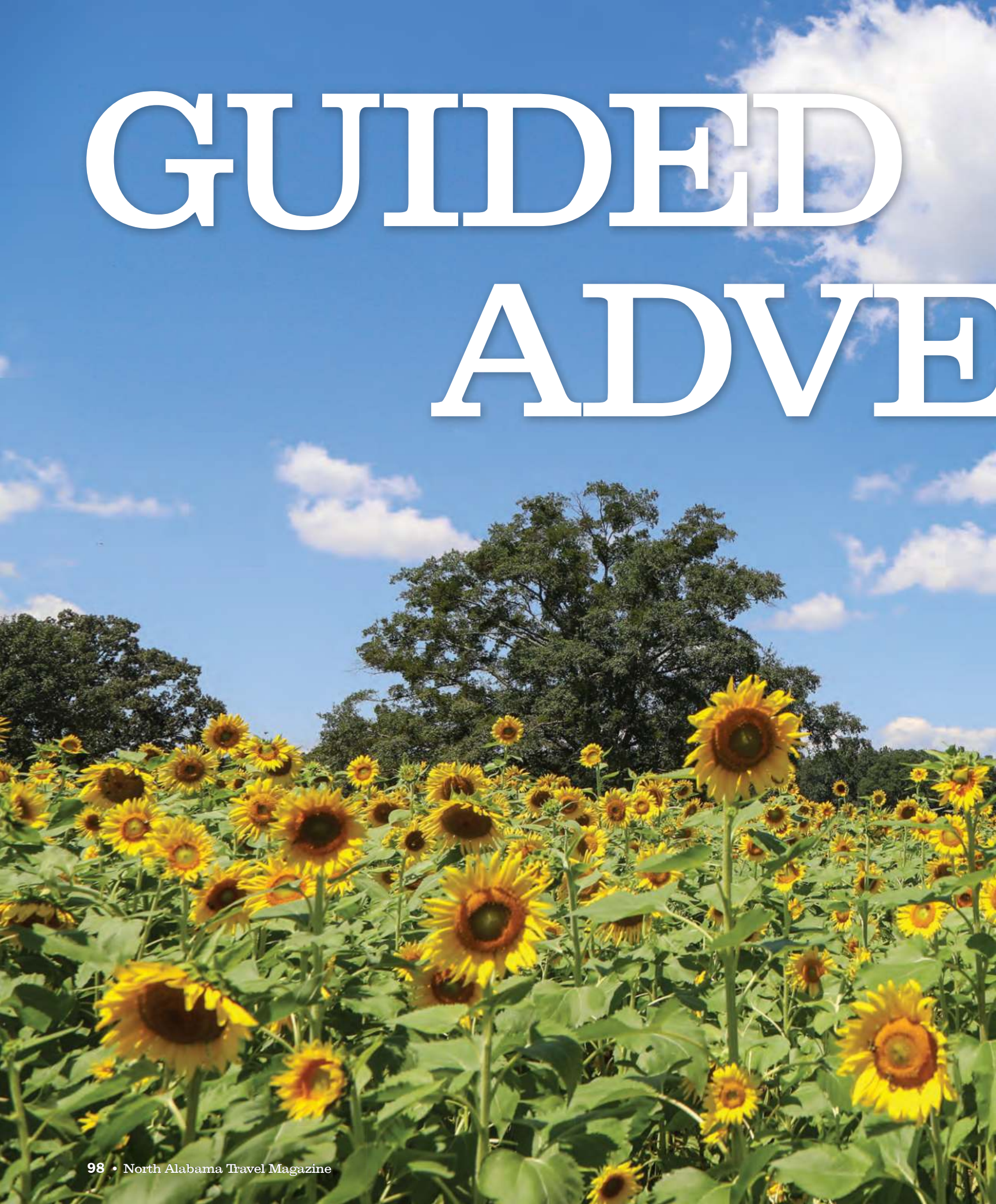



Juergen Beck


Adam Vaden

Growing grapes and making wine is only the beginning of the bounty that is finding its way to tables from throughout the region. The Agricultural Adventures Trail is filled with opportunities to explore the rich and diverse world of farmers, growers and makers in North Alabama. From u-pick farms and pumpkin patches to large scale farm tours and popular farmers markets, there are so many ways to learn about the land, the crops and the people behind many uniquely-Alabama crops, foods and products. ●

GUIDED ADVE





ENTURES



GUIDED ADVENTURES

Your next great adventure is only a click away. Plot your North Alabama journey today to experience the blue waters, soaring mountains, rich cultural history, and amazing attractions that millions of travelers enjoy every year. From family fun to romance and relaxation, there's never been a better time to explore North Alabama.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO SELECT ONE OF THESE GUIDES TO HELP WITH YOUR NORTH ALABAMA ADVENTURE:



MURAL TRAIL

Regional heritage, artistic imagination and nostalgia are depicted in the more than 140 murals of the North Alabama Mural Trail. From Merchants Alley in Athens to Graffiti Alley in Florence, from "Angels" in Oneonta to "Straight to Ale" in Huntsville and from Little Richard to the Pink Panther, the variety is remarkable.

Read about the artist and stories behind the murals and be sure to keep your cameras ready as every mural boasts a completely unique design and creative vision. Be sure to tag #NorthALMurals in your selfies and pictures! Plus, if you check-in at 25 sites, we'll will send you a prize for participating! Now get out there and explore the amazing art our region has to offer!



AGRICULTURE ADVENTURES TRAIL

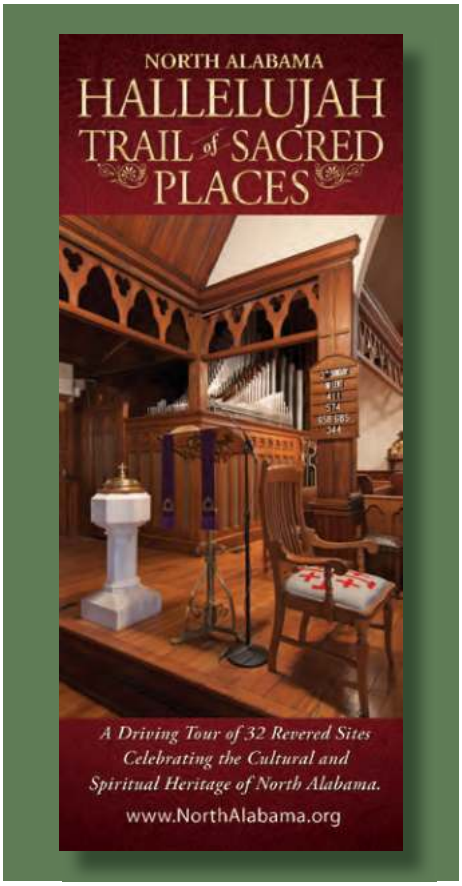
Agriculture is so important to our North Alabama region, and we want to celebrate our rich agricultural heritage that has sustained and will sustain us for generations. The Agriculture Adventures Trail is a new trail that highlights the businesses, farms, or organizations that has an agriculturally related product for sale or is an educational, entertainment, historical, cultural, or recreational activity conducted on a farm that allows or invites members of the general public to observe, participate in, or enjoy that activity. You'll find all kinds of cool things to do on the Agriculture Adventures Trail: hands-on farms, orchards, farmer's markets, made-on-the-farm products, farms with animals, U-pick farms, vineyards & wineries, farm-to-table dining, corn mazes, pumpkin patches, living history farms, farm festivals, and so much more!

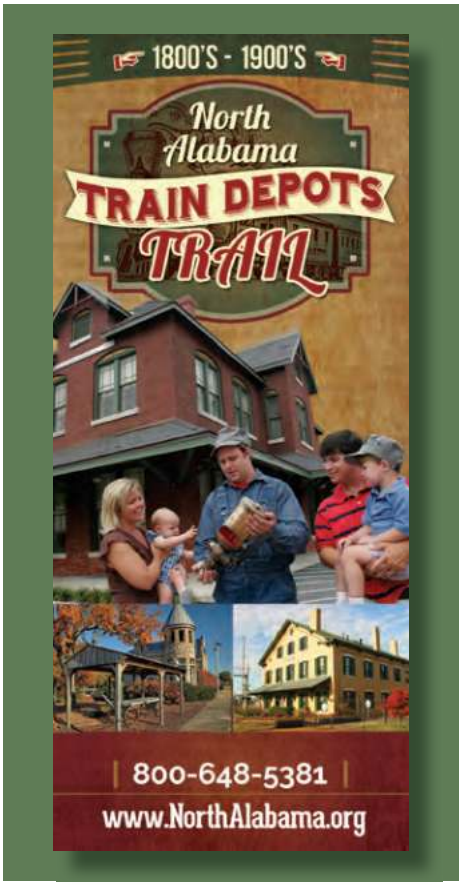


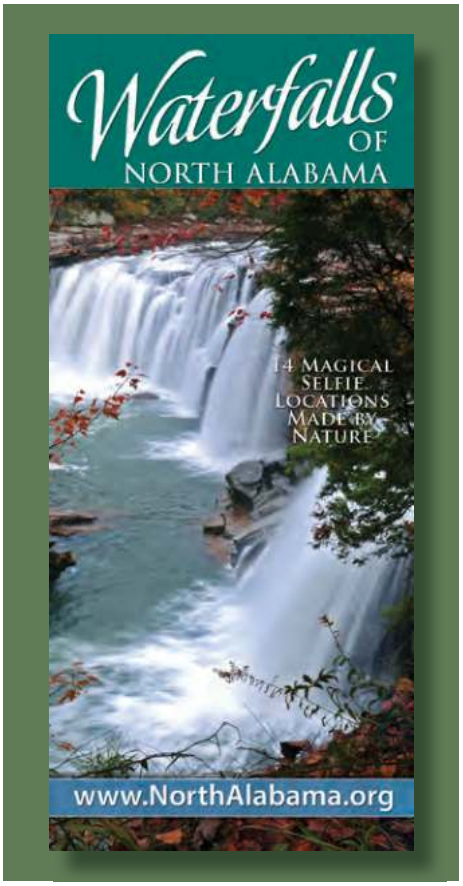
MOTORCYCLE RIDES

Calling all thrill seekers! The North Alabama Motorcycle Trail has the best scenic rides that wind and twist through the region, taking you to places like Lookout Mountain in northeast Alabama, or the hilly terrain through Bankhead National Forest. You'll also travel through places that let you observe history, like the nostalgic covered bridges in Blount County – the Covered Bridge Capital! You'll see picturesque overlooks, beautiful scenery, and lots of things to see and do along the way. • • •









HALLELUJAH TRAIL OF SACRED PLACES

The North Alabama Hallelujah Trail features 32 churches that are at least 100 years old, stand on their original sites, still hold services, and are accessible to the public.



TRAIN DEPOTS TRAIL

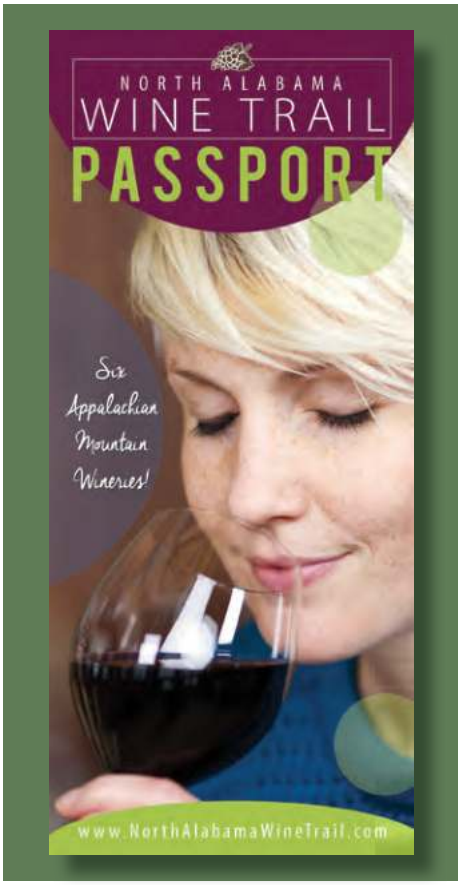
Since the first railroad west of the Allegheny Mountains was built in 1833 in North Alabama, the Iron Horse was the primary form of mass transit across the Southland, especially in the rural, rolling hills of North Alabama. This heritage trail will help guide you down the steel rails to the significant deports, museums, festivals, eateries, and small-scale train rides available today.

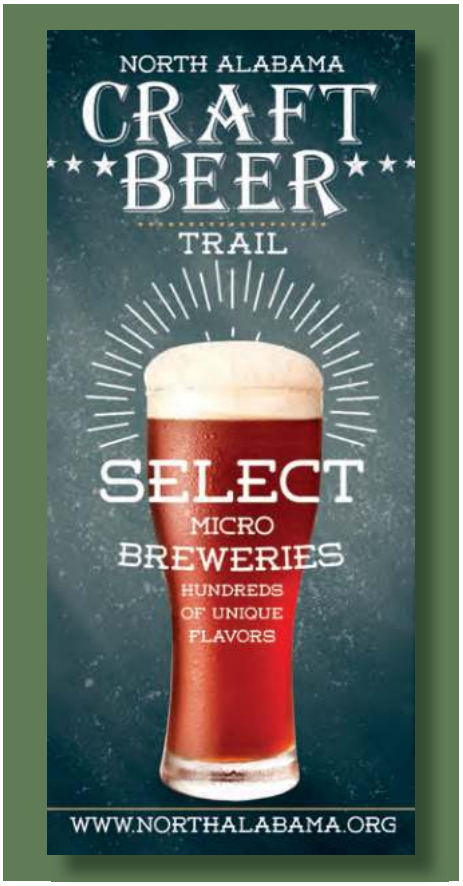
Visit the Cullman County Depot, where German immigrants entered the lobby of the Pueblo-style structure with Moorish influences for the first time in 1913. Tour the Bridgeport Depot and see Native American and Civil War artifacts along with railroad memorabilia. And walk in the footsteps of the "Miracle Worker" Annie Sullivan who arrived at the Tuscumbia Depot on March 3, 1887 to teach a young Helen Keller. Make plans today to get on board the North Alabama Train Depot Trail and ride the rails into history.

WATERFALLS TRAIL

Thanks to the flowing waters of the Tennessee River, North Alabama boasts the most beautiful waterfalls on either side of the Appalachians. These stunning falls are surrounded by nature to hike, spots to photograph, and, in some cases, wineries to relax, and are close enough to each other that you can visit several in a day and experience them all in a long weekend.









WINE TRAIL

When you think Alabama, chances are wine isn't the first thing to come to mind. But get this: North Alabama is home to a wide variety of wineries. Are you ready to experience a new wine country? Every vineyard on the Trail hosts wine tastings and has bottles available for purchase. Whether you're packing a picnic and spending the day with that special someone, kicking back with good friends and even better wine, or developing your palate to impress your friends back home with new wine knowledge, there's a world of adventure around every vine in North Alabama.



CRAFT BEER TRAIL

Several micro-breweries snug in the foothills of the Appalachians from Florence to Gadsden offer dozens of unique flavors custom to the region. The self-guided tour spotlights fresh, locally brewed beer and is another opportunity to give visitors a unique destination experience that can only be enjoyed in North Alabama.



BARBECUE TRAIL

Savor the flavor of the South! Whether you're looking for chopped, pulled or sliced barbecue, a slab of amazing ribs, or even a hefty baked potato overstuffed with cubes of savory meat, one way to find our pit masters' locations is to follow the savory aroma drifting over the Appalachian foothills of North Alabama, or the easiest way is to simply get our North Alabama Barbecue Trail brochure to discover your next big food destination. ●



FESTIVA
SPECIAL



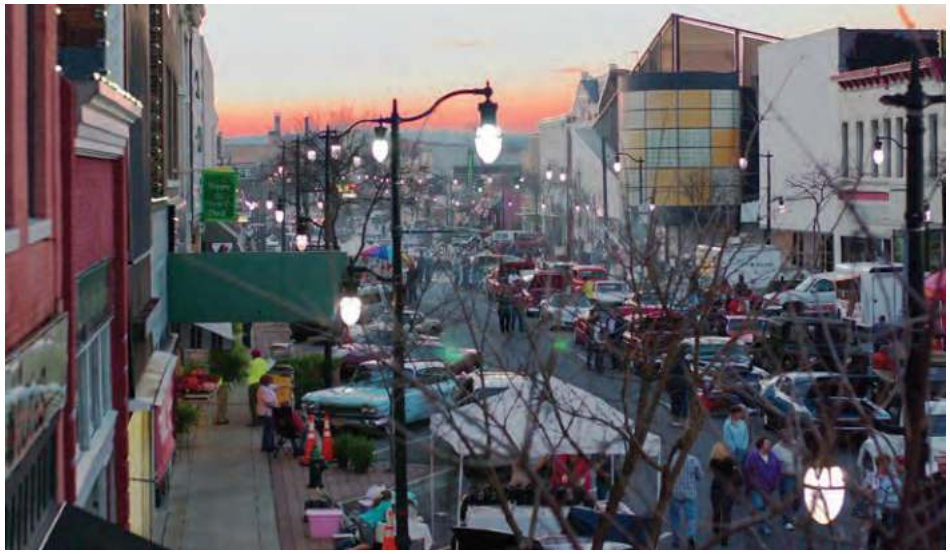
ALS AND EVENTS



Third Fridays in Downtown Decatur goes from April through October.

Photograph by Juergen Beck

North Alabama Festivals and Special Events





ONGOING EVENTS

FIRST FRIDAYS - DOWNTOWN GADSDEN

On the First Friday of the month from April through October, Broad Street in downtown Gadsden is closed to traffic. The parking spaces are filled with classic cars, a few motorcycles, food vendors and more. Stores stay open late into the evening and downtown rocks with live entertainment, special events, sales, food and artists from all over.

April to October
Free admission
downtowngadsden.com

THIRD FRIDAYS - DOWNTOWN DECATUR

Downtown Decatur 3rd Friday invites locals and visitors to explore the downtown area through an evening of family-friendly entertainment. During the monthly street party, antique cars fill the streets, local musicians and bands fill the air with live music and children are treated to a variety of activities. Each month offers a different theme.

April to October
Free admission
facebook.com/3rdfridaydowntown

CRUISE & CROON

Presented by the All-American Cruisers, Cruise and Croon welcomes locals and visitors to downtown Oneonta for an evening of classic cars and music. Merchants extend their business hours so eventgoers can shop and mingle, and a DJ fills the air with plenty of good tunes as everyone enjoys an evening of free family fun. Visit All American Cruisers on Facebook for more information.

First Saturday of each month from April to October
Free admission
Visit All American Cruisers on Facebook

THE ORION AMPHITHEATER

Visit theorionhuntsville.com for a schedule of events.



LOONEY'S TAVERN ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURAL CENTER

Visit sipseyentertainment.com/concerts-%40-looneys for a schedule of events.

JANUARY

EAGLE AWARENESS

America's national symbol, the bald eagle, is celebrated in January and February when Lake Guntersville State Park hosts the annual Eagle Awareness Weekends, giving wildlife enthusiasts a chance to learn more about the magnificent creatures in their natural habitat. Featuring live bird demonstrations, programs provided by notable speakers, guided safaris for viewing eagles and other creatures in their natural habitat, the popular weekend event attracts people of all ages from all over the United States who come here to spend a winter getaway in one of Alabama's most popular state parks immersed in nature-based learning.

Held on weekends in January and February
Admission charged
www.alapark.com/EagleAwarenessWeekends



FESTIVAL OF THE CRANES

Over 14,000 Sandhill Cranes along with several pairs of Whooping Cranes spend the winter each year at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Decatur, Ala. In celebration of the winter migration of these long-legged and long-necked birds, Wheeler Wildlife Refuge Association hosts a three-day event offering a variety of indoor and outdoor activities appealing to people of all ages at the Refuge and in various venues within downtown Decatur.

Typically held second weekend in January
Some activities charge admission
friendsofwheelernwr.org

MARCH

JERRY BROWN ARTS FESTIVAL

Juried artists from across the Southeast make their way to North Alabama one weekend in March for the town of Hamilton's highly acclaimed art festival, the Jerry Brown Arts Festival. The event offers two days of quality folk art exhibition and while it is known for its emphasis on Southern folk art, there are various mediums available at each year's festival for purchase to include pottery, multiple forms of glass art, mixed media, jewelry making, wood art/carving, metal art, sculptures, gourd art, quilting, fabric art, paintings, basket weaving, wire art and photography. A free kids' art station is also provided where children can create their own works of art.

First Weekend in March
Free Admission
www.jbaf.org

APRIL

ART ON THE LAKE

Artists and crafters from across the southeastern United States make their way to Guntersville to display their works of art and unique creations for two days in April. Held alongside beautiful Lake Guntersville, Art on the Lake features over 80 fine artists and craftsmen and along with arts and crafts, festivalgoers are treated to food vendors, outdoor games and rides and a bake shop.

Typically third weekend in April
Admission charged
artonthelake-guntersville.com



BLOOMIN' FESTIVAL

Arts and crafts are on display for two days in April when the St. Bernard Abbey and Prep School hosts its annual Bloomin' Festival. The outdoor event features the works of over 100 talented artists and craftsmen from across the southeast, music and festival food and draws thousands of visitors in search of fresh air, unique arts and crafts, demonstrations and family-friendly entertainment in a picturesque setting. Festivalgoers can expect to find cypress outdoor furniture, artisan pet treats, chainsaw carvings, hand-carved Bethlehem olivewood, etched glassware, driftwood art, acrylic artwork and so much more.

Typically fourth weekend in April
Donation suggested
bloominfestival.com/

PANOPLY

A celebration of art and music, Panoply Arts Festival offers three days of live music, shopping for original works of art, demonstrations, hands-on activities along with two nights of fireworks. During the event, over 30 local and regional musical acts in a variety of genres take to two stages, and as music fills the air, festivalgoers can shop, participate in hands-on activities and watch demonstrations by regional artists.

Last weekend in April
Admission charged
artshuntsville.org

• • •



... MAY

STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

Parents in search of family-friendly activities will want to put the Strawberry Festival in downtown Moulton on their schedule of things to do. Entertainment includes free activities for children, a petting zoo, a classic car/truck/motorcycle show, tractor show, horse and buggy rides and arts and crafts vendors. A variety of contests are lined up and include the Miss Strawberry Pageant, mud volleyball tournament, cornhole tournament, a two-mile championship trail run and one mile kids' championship run. Mouthwatering strawberries from local farmers are available to purchase.

First weekend in May
Free admission
strawberryfestivalmoulton.com



ALABAMA STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

Alabama's longest-running strawberry festival, the Alabama Strawberry Festival in downtown Cullman promises plenty of strawberries, arts and crafts vendors, food vendors, a kid's area with games and inflatables (fee charged), live music and other exciting events throughout the day. Many local farmers will be on hand selling their produce, and most importantly, fresh, locally grown strawberries. Be sure to stop by the Festhalle Farmers Market early to purchase a basket of berries to take home.

First Saturday in May
Free admission
cullmanstrawberryfest.com

DISTILLERY RAID ON THE MOUNTAIN

Recall LaGrange's Distillery Raid on the Mountain offers a day of living history events, Civil War displays and demonstrations, arts and crafts, musical entertainment and more. The reenactment of a law enforcement raid on a moonshine still takes place at the LaGrange College Site Park located in Leighton.

Typically first Saturday in May
Admission is free; donations accepted

BELLE MONT CELTIC FEST

Belle Mont's sweeping lawn is the setting for performances of the music of Scotland and Ireland by acclaimed Celtic musicians the second weekend in May. Arts and crafts, life skills demonstrations, food vendors, children's activities, Celtic merchandise and more round out this celebration of Celtic culture. Friday's museum day is free; Saturday's outdoor concert and festival requires a ticket.

Second weekend in May
Admission charged
https://bellemontcelticfest.godaddysites.com/

ARLEY DAY

Arley Day Festival brings colossal fun to the small North Alabama town with a day filled with free, family-friendly activities. The one-day event is a celebration of the town of Arley complete with a parade, car show, arts and crafts vendors, games and more.

Typically third Saturday in May
Free admission
facebook.com/ArleyWomensClub/

MAYFEST

Mayfest transforms downtown Guin into a venue for free family fun, attracting thousands of visitors to the wholesome North Alabama community. For two days, festival-goers are treated to live music, games, a dog show, 5K race, barbecue cook-off, car show and plenty of good food.

Typically third Friday and Saturday in May
Free admission

LIMESTONE SHERIFF'S RODEO

Considered the largest outdoor rodeo east of the Mississippi, the Limestone Sheriff's Rodeo, held in Athens, serves up plenty of rodeo action as cowboys and cowgirls compete for prize money during two days of fierce rodeo competition. In addition to two days of rodeo competition, there are a handful of family-friendly events in the week leading up to the rodeo weekend.

Third weekend in May
Admission charged
limestonesheriffrodeo.com

ALABAMA JUBILEE

More than 50 big beautiful hot-air balloons fill the sky above Decatur, during the annual Alabama Jubilee Hot-Air Balloon Classic. The must-see event of North Alabama is set for Memorial Day weekend at Point Mallard Park and features hot air balloons, live music, a balloon glow, antique cars and tractors, motorcycles, arts and crafts, fireworks and other family fun with activities on the ground and in the air.

Last weekend in May
Free admission
alabamajubilee.net

COALFEST

The North Alabama community of Brilliant pays tribute to its roots in the coal mining industry with a free festival filling the downtown area with two days of family fun. Held throughout Main Street in downtown Brilliant, Coal Fest offers live music, games, a look into the coal mining days, activities for children, arts and crafts and more.

Typically last weekend in May
Free admission

JUNE

911 FESTIVAL

Over fifty years ago, the first 911 emergency call was made in the United States and the call was placed in the North Alabama town of Haleyville. In celebration, the town hosts a two-day festival offering activities for kids, street vendors, a parade, live music, antique tractor show and more.
First Friday & Saturday in June
Free admission
haleyvillechamber.org

MIRACLE WORKER PLAY

Playwright William Gibson's epic drama, The Miracle Worker, is performed on the grounds of Ivy Green, the birthplace of Helen Keller, showcasing to the world the miracle that took place in the late 1800s.
Fridays & Saturdays in June and July
Admission charged
www.themiracleworker.info

JUNE FLING

The town of Oneonta invites visitors to make their way to the downtown area for June Fling, a one-day celebration of fun, arts and crafts, classic cars, a kids fun zone, live music, great food and more.
Second Saturday in June
Free admission
oneontabusinessassociation.com/fling.html

BARBARIAN CHALLENGE

Gadsden's Barbarian Challenge course is for thrill-seeking athletes who are not afraid of getting muddy, wet and pushed to the limit. The course is approximately six miles long and includes natural and challenging human-made obstacles and tough terrain, taking participants into the Black Creek Gorge and up close and personal with Noccalula Falls. It is considered one of the south's most scenic obstacle course race.
Third Saturday in June
Admission charged
barbarianchallenge.com

HYDROFEST

Alabama is known for fast cars and a NASCAR superspeedway, but the southern state is also developing a name for fast boats on a liquid track with the annual Guntersville Lake HydroFest. Held in Guntersville, the two-day event offers three classes of racing: H1 Unlimited, Grand Prix America and Pro-lite series. The state-of-the-art hydroplanes race on a 2 ½-mile oval course and maintain speeds of 130 mph to upwards of 200 mph on the straightaways.
Typically last weekend in June
Admission charged
guntersvillelakehydrofest.com/

JULY

SPIRIT OF AMERICA

The Spirit of America Festival celebrates America's heritage and birthday every Fourth of July. Held in Decatur, the event offers family games, live music, food and craft vendors and fireworks.
July 4
Free admission
facebook.com/spiritofamericafestival

AUGUST

PINEY CHAPEL AMERICAN FARM DAYS

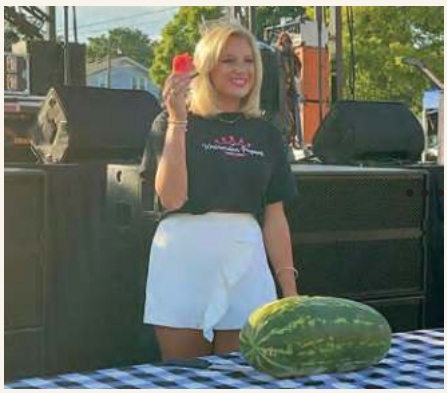
One of North Alabama's largest antique engine and tractor shows, Piney Chapel American Farm Heritage Days combines antique farm equipment and old-fashioned concessions with live music and family-friendly fun and games taking visitors back to the "good ol' days." The annual event is in celebration of rural American farming heritage.
Typically the first weekend in August
Admission charged

WORLD'S LONGEST YARD SALE

Each year, bargain hunters, yard sale connoisseurs, treasure seekers and those who just like to haggle make their way through northeastern Alabama for the biggest yard sale shopping spree in the world - the World's Longest Yard Sale. The once-a-year, 690-mile shopping trip is also known as the 127 Yard Sale and along with shopping, treasure hunting and bargaining, there is plenty of sightseeing to do along the North Alabama stretch that begins in Gadsden, Alabama and travels along the Lookout Mountain Parkway through DeKalb County and into Chattanooga, Tenn.
First weekend in August
Free admission
127yardsale.com/

LEXINGTON TRUCK AND TRACTOR PULL

Sanctioned by the Mid-South Pullers Association, the Lexington Truck and Tractor Pull offers two nights of high-octane and dirt throwin' action. There are seven sanctioned classes each night with the stock gas trucks pulling on Friday night and stock diesel trucks pulling Saturday night after the sanctioned classes are complete.
Typically second Friday & Saturday in August
Admission charged



WATERMELON FESTIVAL

With a combination of summer's favorite fruit and an incredible music line-up, plenty of sweet juicy fun is on tap at the Watermelon Festival. Held in downtown Russellville, the annual event offers arts and crafts, a variety of watermelon contests, car and truck show, food vendors, children's activities, games and musical entertainment, along with free samples of watermelon.
Third weekend in August
Free admission
franklincountychamber.org

... SEPTEMBER

ART SUNDAY
Held in King Caldwell Park in Scottsboro, Art Sunday features nationally recognized artists and emerging, local creators from across northern Alabama and southern Tennessee. Festival goers have the opportunity to shop the work of 70-plus artists and makers, and along with arts and crafts, the event offers musical entertainment, children's activities, photography contests and food and beverage vendors.
First Sunday in September
Admission charged
scottsboro3artsclub.com

OKA KAPASSA
A celebration of the culture and traditions of American Indians who once lived in north Alabama, the Oka Kapassa: Return to Coldwater Festival is a free family event featuring Native American heritage, entertainment and education through hands-on activities and demonstrations. Activities take place in and around Spring Park in downtown Tuscumbia.
Second weekend in September
Free admission

DEPOT DAYS
The Depot Days Festival is a tribute to the railroad industry and its contribution to Hartselle and the North Alabama region. Activities, consisting of an art show, craft vendors, children's games, a tractor and engine show, a car, truck and motorcycle show and live music, take place around the historic depot and downtown area.
Third Saturday in September
Free admission
HartselleDepotDays.com

TRAIL OF TEARS
The Trail of Tears Commemorative Motorcycle Ride travels from Bridgeport in the northeastern part of Alabama to the northwestern town of Waterloo, and along with the celebratory ride, there is a kick-off rally and a three-day Indian Festival for the public to take part in. The ride is to honor Native American Indians that once traveled through the region.
Third Saturday in September
Admission is free
al-tn-trailoftears.net/rideschedule.php

EVA FRONTIER DAYS
A greased pig, frogs and a parade take centerstage when the town of Eva comes together for its annual Frontier Days festival. The event features a greased pig chase, a frog jumping contest, a parade, antique tractors and more, providing family-friendly entertainment for all ages.
Last Saturday in September
Free admission
evafrontierdays.com



RED BAY FOUNDERS FEST
Situated under the shade trees of Bay Tree Park, the Red Bay Founder's Fest is a one-day tribute to the town's heritage and offers contests, arts and crafts, sidewalk sales, live music, arts and crafts and an antique car-truck-motorcycle-tractor show. The Red Bay Museum will be open for tours and another crowd favorite are the giveaways to be presented. Prizes will be awarded to the largest family, longest distance traveled to the event, and youngest and oldest attendees.
Typically fourth Saturday in September
Free admission
facebook.com/RedBayAlabama



MULE DAY
Mule Day, a two-day event centered on mules and their role in rural farming, is held annually in downtown Winfield. The family-friendly event offers a car show, tractor show, 5K run, live music and a parade as the town celebrates its agricultural heritage.
Last full weekend in September
Free admission
winfieldcity.org/en/chamber-of-commerce/mule-day



SIZZLE AND SMOKE
Mosaic Mentoring of North Alabama is excited to offer Alabama's only triple steak cookoff, a Steak Cookoff Association (SCA)-sanctioned event. Sizzle and Smoke is a two-day competition promising exciting grilling action and good times where anyone can take their skills to the grill and enter the competition as long as they are members of the SCA. There are also food trucks and a steak sandwich sale for the public along with raffle prizes and a silent auction. Saturday's lineup includes a car show and food truck extravaganza.
Last full weekend in September
Free admission
www.facebook.com/mosaicsizzleandsmoke

OKTOBERFEST
The town of Cullman celebrates its German beginnings with a family-friendly festival offering all things German. Cullman Oktoberfest, one of North Alabama's largest and most anticipated events, takes place at Depot Park in downtown Cullman, and during the three-day festival, the entire Cullman community rolls out the welcome mat and invites everyone to enjoy a multitude of fun activities, including a biergarten, an arts and crafts show, live German music, kids' activities, a bratwurst eating contest and more.
Typically late September/early October
Free admission
cullmanoktoberfestival.com



OCTOBER

MCGEE FARM

Each year, McGee Farm in Florence welcomes thousands of visitors to its pumpkin patch and to celebrate the arrival of fall. The public is invited to a fun-filled pumpkin picking experience along with additional on-the-farm fun activities including playing in hay, barnyard bounce and feeding chickens. Visitors have a choice of picking their orange treasure straight off the vine from the pumpkin patch or from a pile that have been prepicked (fee charged).

Month of October
Free admission
mcgeefarm.com

BELUE PLACE PUMPKIN PATCH

In celebration of the arrival of the fall season, the Belue Place Pumpkin Patch in Lexington opens its gates for families to experience a bit of farm life and find their perfect orange treasure to take home. Other activities include a petting zoo, hay loft jump, cow train rides, tire mountain, horse tire swings, corn crib play area, hay tunnels to wander through, pumpkin painting and storytelling.

Saturdays and Sundays in October
Admission charged
thebelueplace.com

OLD TIME FIDDLERS CONVENTION

Thousands of visitors and musicians make their way to Athens each year for the "Granddaddy of Midsouth Fiddlers Conventions," the Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention. Along with the crowning of a new Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddle champion, the three-day event offers concerts, food vendors and arts and crafts on a theme of authentic workmanship while celebrating traditional old-time music.

First full weekend in October
Admission charged
tvotfc.org

HARVEST FESTIVAL

During Harvest Festival, an assortment of arts and crafts vendors for shoppers to find that one-of-a-kind item are set up as gospel, country and bluegrass music fills the air. Additional activities to enjoy include a classic car, truck and jeep show, a cornhole tournament, pumpkin contest and food trucks to please everyone's appetite.

First full weekend in October
Free admission

SCOTTSBORO BBQ FESTIVAL

The aroma of slow-cooked barbeque fills the air when the annual Scottsboro BBQ Festival sets up around the picturesque downtown square of Scottsboro. The one-day event welcomes award-winning pit masters and local barbeque gurus who battle it out to see who has the best chicken, ribs, pulled pork and dessert while raising funds for a local charity. Along with the barbeque competition, a variety of activities are offered to keep everyone entertained throughout the day.

Second Saturday in October
Admission is free
scottsborobbqcookoff.com/

COVERED BRIDGE FESTIVAL

With three covered bridges still in existence, Blount County carries the title of Covered Bridge Capital of Alabama, and as a tribute to its roots, a one-day festival is held every year in downtown Oneonta. The Covered Bridge Festival offers plenty of family fun including a quilt show, arts and crafts, a rib cook-off, car show, live music, great food, self-guided covered bridge tours and more.

Second Saturday in October
Free admission
facebook.com/CoveredBridgeFest

ALABAMA GOURD FESTIVAL

An impressive display of unique creations, all handmade from gourds, are on display during the annual Alabama Gourd Show. Held in Hartselle, the event is a two-day celebration centered on the beauty and versatility of gourds and features masterfully created works of art from hundreds of artisans, crafters and growers.

Third Friday and Saturday in October
Free admission
alabamagourdsociety.org/

RIVER CLAY FINE ARTS FESTIVAL

River Clay Fine Arts Festival welcomes approximately 70 local and national artists who bring their works of art and unique creations to Decatur for a celebration of the visual arts. In addition to the artist market, festivalgoers are treated to chalk art, student art exhibits, live music and more. Children of all ages are invited to take part in the children's art area through fun activities to express their creativity.

Typically third weekend in October
Admission charged
riverclay.org

ATHENS STORYTELLING FESTIVAL

Some of the nation's most highly acclaimed storytellers make their way to Athens each year for the city's annual celebration of storytelling, tall tales and readings. Stories are told under the big tent on the campus of Athens State University, five blocks from downtown Athens.

Last weekend in October
Admission charged
athensstorytellingfestival.com

BUTTAHATCHEE FALL FESTIVAL

Held in downtown Hamilton, the Buttahatchee River Fall Festival is a family-friendly event offering a day of arts and crafts, music, tractor and car show, kids' area and more.

Last Saturday in October
Free admission
brff.org

... NOVEMBER

CHRISTMAS IN CULLMAN

The city of Cullman offers a different twist on the holiday season and invites local and visitors to join in paying homage to the city's German heritage during the months of November and December. Christmas in Cullman features several events and attractions including the tallest Weihnachtspyramide on display, Christkindlmarkt, German food and popular holiday traditions such as the downtown Christmas parade and ceremonial lighting of a massive tree at the conclusion and more.

Early November through December
Free admission
christmasincullman.com

CHRISTMAS IN THE COUNTRY

The weekend before Thanksgiving, LaGrange College Site Park is filled with the sights and sounds of an old-fashioned Christmas attracting locals and visitors of all ages to the historic park for the annual Christmas in the Country. The two-day event transforms the historic village into sites of Christmas past with traditional decorations, entertainment and free family fun. Guests come to purchase homemade baked goods for their Thanksgiving table, enjoy hayrides to the old LaGrange Cemetery, make family pictures for their Christmas cards, purchase craft items and talk with Santa. Guests can relive Christmases of the past while touring the park's authentic log buildings, all decorated for Christmas.

Friday & Saturday before Thanksgiving
Free admission
lagrangehistoricsite.com

CULLMAN CHRISTKINDLMARKT

Cullman Christkindlmarkt is an authentic German Christmas traditional holiday celebration where approximately 50 local vendors will be selling handmade ornaments, unique gifts and other wonderful goodies. Other must-see attractions are the largest German pyramid in the United States standing at 30 feet tall and the 42-foot Christmas tree and light display located at the entrance of Depot Park.

Every weekend from Black Friday to Christmas Eve
Free
christmasincullman.com/christkindlmarkt

CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK

The City of Arab and Arab Parks and Recreation kick off the holiday season the day after Thanksgiving when Arab City Park is transformed into Christmas in the Park, a festive and over-the-top display of merriment and holiday splendor where more than two million lights illuminate the night sky and decorations galore line the sidewalks.

Nightly end of November through December
Free admission
arabcity.org/events-festivals/

WONDERLAND UNDER WARRIOR

Held at Rickwood Caverns State Park, Wonderland Under Warrior welcomes guests for a unique experience that celebrate the sights and sounds of Christmas and the natural beauty of the cavern. Visitors come to see over 100,000 twinkling lights and to walk the lighted path among the stalactite, stalagmites and other unique geological formations. The whimsical journey underground transforms the already magnificent cave into a special holiday experience.

Select dates in November and December
Admission charged
alapark.com/parks/rickwood-caverns-state-park/wonderland-under-warrior

DECEMBER

CHRISTMAS ON THE SQUARE

Everyone is invited to join in on the spirit of the holiday season with Christmas on the Square, a magical stroll among a beautiful display of live Christmas trees trimmed in festive decorations on the historic old courthouse square in downtown Moulton.

Nightly in December
Free admission

12 NIGHTS OF SANTA

Step into a holiday wonderland at Early-Works Museum in downtown Huntsville. During 12 Nights of Santa, children have a chance to meet Santa and his elves. Additional activities adding to the whimsical fun include nightly snowfalls, making holiday crafts, mingling with costumed characters, decorating a fresh-made gingerbread cookie and shopping in Santa's gift shop.

Select dates in December
Admission charged
earlyworks.com

CHRISTMAS IN DOWNTOWN ONEONTA

The heart of Oneonta gets into the holiday spirit with a host of activities for everyone to enjoy. Festivities take place throughout the month of December and include a live nativity, horse drawn carriage rides, holiday lights, visits with Santa, parades and lots of Christmas cheer.

Select dates in December
Free admission
oneontabusinessassociation.com/christmas.html

HISTORIC DECATUR CHRISTMAS TOUR

The Historic Decatur Christmas Tour is a self-guided tour featuring around a dozen tour sites including homes, churches and historic places in the Albany and Old Decatur Historic Districts. Along with seeing some of Decatur's most historic and architecturally significant dwellings beautifully decorated with luminaries, fruit, greenery and thousands of lights, the festive event offers shopping, refreshments and live holiday music.

Second Saturday in December
Admission charged
decaturchristmastour.com

SIPPIN' CIDER FESTIVAL

Everyone is invited to sip on winter's favorite drink and shop in downtown Athens in celebration of the holiday season. During the Sippin' Cider Festival, guests can tackle their Christmas shopping and browse for unique holiday decorations while sipping on cider served by participating merchants. Cider enthusiasts can vote for their favorite, and the cider receiving the most votes wins the coveted Cider Cup and bragging rights for the year. ●

Second Saturday in December
Free admission
athensmainstreet.org/sippin-cider


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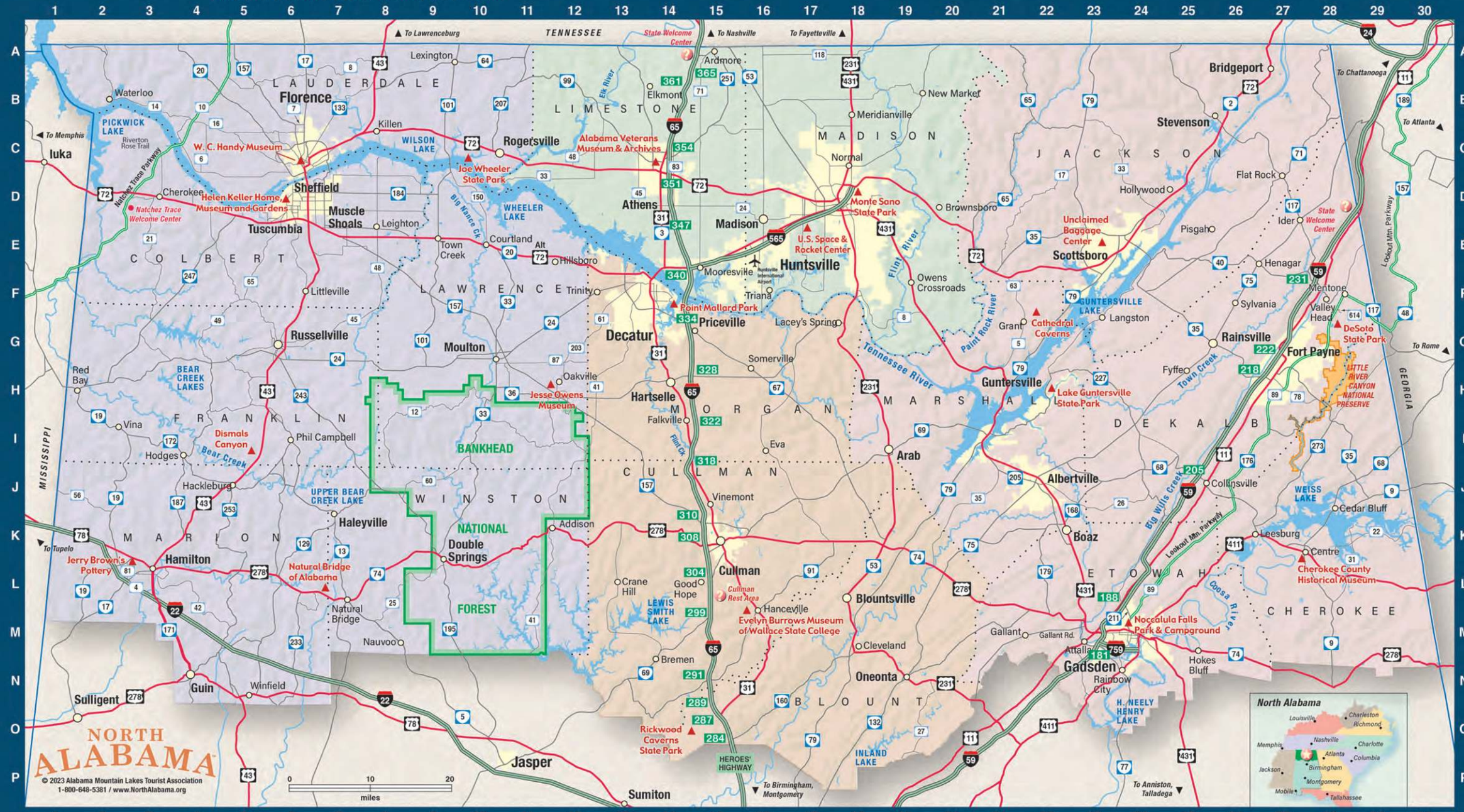
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