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#### ACCOMMODATIONS

Posted by: [Jan Ross](#)

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If you are in the mood for a little country music along with great food, fabulous hotels and truly friendly people, there is no better place for a little getaway than Nashville, Tennessee.

The expansive [Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center](#) was our first stop in Nashville and it is the perfect place to stay, right by the Grand Ole Opry, close to downtown and all the music venues. We have stayed in hotels all over the world, but I have truly never seen a hotel quite like this one. Sprawling over nine acres and covered with waterfalls, foliage, a winding river, and a variety of



View from our room at the Opryland Hotel.

restaurants and shops – all under a soaring glass atrium – you might not want to ever leave once you check in. Try to get a Premium Garden View room with a balcony overlooking the scenery and you can fall asleep to the gentle roar of the many waterfalls. After you check in, take one of the small Delta Riverboats that travel down a scenic river (*inside the hotel, mind you!*) through the 4.5 acre indoor garden as the guide gives you a tour of the hotel. It's a perfect introduction to the place and its truly mind-boggling size. Check on the cruise times, but they run all day on most dates.

You are not going to go hungry in this place, since there are literally dozens of restaurant choices located conveniently nearby, but I recommend going to Jack Daniels for dinner one night. Get the fried chicken; the batter is some of the best I have ever tasted, but be prepared to share because the portion is huge. For lunch, head over to Stax, where you can choose to have pretty much anything you want stacked on your burger, then enjoy it out on the open patio. You never have to worry about the weather here as you are always inside, even though it feels like outside with all the gardens and waterfalls.

You absolutely have to plan to spend a day at the incredible Relache Spa at the resort. I have been to plenty of spas, but this was honestly the best spa experience I have ever

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Entrance to the Relache Spa.

had, mainly because of the superlative customer service. I never indulge in luxuries like the steam room or sauna, but this time I did because they actually took the time to explain the benefits. My husband had his first hot

stone massage and was in absolute heaven while my facial had me glowing for days. We worked out in the well-equipped fitness center and spent time lounging by the large indoor/outdoor pool – both areas are simply sublime.

You can get tickets for the [Grand Ole Opry](#) right in the hotel, and then you can drive, walk or take a shuttle right over to the theater. The Grand Ole Opry has quite a history, as it has grown from a one-room radio station to the current billion-dollar business that draws in millions of tourists every year, but it still has a down-home charm which everyone in the crowd enjoyed. With singers like little Jimmy Dickens, who is well into his 90's and new, young talent performing every night, they manage to please every person in the audience. You can also sign up for a backstage tour, which is really interesting experience.

Plan to spend an afternoon and evening in downtown Nashville at some of the honky tonks on Broadway – you will be amazed at the talent playing and singing in these locations. Most of the great music stars got their start in some of these bars and restaurants, some of which have been located in the downtown area for many years. Just stroll into the bar, listen to the tunes while, and stroll out. Downtown is well-lit, crowded, and very safe. There are big parking lots right in the area where you can park for just about \$12 for the whole day.



General Jackson Showboat.



Perfect place to buy the perfect pair of boots!

Be sure to plan a cruise one evening on the [General Jackson Showboat](#). Another venue affiliated with the Gaylord Opryland Resort, you can buy tickets through the hotel and they'll provide a shuttle right to the riverboat landing. You can choose to just take the cruise and the show, but dinner is not that much more and it was surprisingly delicious – I really recommend you choose the whole

package. The riverboat is an original paddle wheel steamer, and the view of the Nashville skyline all lit up at night is quite amazing. The show, which presented an overview of the history of country music in Tennessee in song and dance, was a very professional and entertaining production.

If you are more interested in the history of country music in the area, visit the [Ryman](#)



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[Auditorium](#) and the [Country Music Hall of Fame](#), both of which are really interesting tours. When you ready for a break from music, you have to visit the [Parthenon](#). A full-scale replica of the original building in Athens, Greece, it was first put up for Nashville's Centennial but was so popular they decided to make it a permanent fixture. It's all absolutely amazing – the 42-foot statue of Athena is especially inspiring. We visited all these locations and others by getting tickets for the [Music City Trolley Hop](#), a 24-hour hop on/hop off trolley that visits all the scenic attractions and comes by about every half hour. It's the perfect way to see the city.



The Nashville Parthenon.



Awesome burger at Demos'.

It's no trouble at all to find gourmet dining in Nashville. We actually had two meals at [Demo's](#), a family dining restaurant that was first established in Murfreesboro, Tennessee in 1989. The original family recipes are still used, the food is excellent, and the prices are very reasonable. I had a burger one evening and found that the bun itself was so fresh and delicious that it was nearly as good as the burger! We also spent one evening at [Amerigo's](#), an

Italian restaurant that was advertised as casual but, with its tablecloths, dedicated staff and delicious food, is anything but. I recommend the sirloin – it was so tender and juicy it almost melted in my mouth.

Probably the most interesting thing we did in Nashville was tour the [Fontanel Mansion](#). There are plenty of mansions, homes and estates to tour in Nashville and the surrounding areas, but this one is very unique. A 27,000-foot log home on over 130 acres of land, the home was formerly owned by Barbara Mandrell and is absolutely incredible.

It's the largest log home in existence and is full of luxurious furnishings and country music memorabilia. After the tour, have lunch at the Café Fontanella, but be sure to share that Stromboli if you order one because they are huge!

Music, great food, incredible sights, Nashville truly has it all! What about you – ever been to Nashville?



Family room at the Fontanel Mansion.

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For twenty years, I worked as a librarian in an elementary school but finally decided to get serious about travel writing and devote all my time to it. Now, I travel the world and write all about it. I can't imagine a more fabulous or fulfilling job. I write a regular travel column for two regional, Central Kentucky magazines and contribute regularly to other magazines and online travel sites, such as The SavvyGal, A Luxury Travel Blog and

The Vacation Gals. I'm an avid reader and stay active with Yoga, Pilates and Zumba classes. My favorite place in the whole world is a beach - any beach. I have been married for 34 years and my husband is my favorite travel companion. I also rely on him for his excellent photography skills. We have two grown children and the best grandson in the world. Slowly but surely, we are visiting all the places we have dreamed about. Hopefully, the next one will be the one you want to read about!

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