

Overview of Alabama

Alabama lies in the Deep South, as its nickname, the 'Heart of Dixie', proclaims. It is rich in all the natural beauty, down-home food and hospitality the South is known and loved for but, unlike much of the South, it also carries the proud legacy of the civil rights struggle. The state was the site of the landmark Montgomery bus boycott and the 'Freedom March' led by Martin Luther King Jr.

Alabama's varying landscape and personality make it a great travel destination for both non-stop activity and laid-back escape. At its southern tip, the sugar-white sand and crystal clear waters of the Gulf Coast beckon; Alabama's beaches, unlike those of neighbouring Florida, are free of amusement parks and large-scale commercialisation. Inland there are the stately antebellum mansions and gardens of Mobile, as well as the rolling farmlands and quiet towns of the southeast.

Further north, the pace of life picks up in sleek Birmingham, with its great jazz, and the Talladega Superspeedway, which can seem like a small city in itself during NASCAR racing events. Alabama's northernmost region is situated at the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, overflowing with stunning views, lakes, waterfalls and caverns. In autumn, when the trees blaze red and gold, it is a paradise for campers, hikers and mountain bikers. Alabama has a strong, sometimes fanatical, sports culture as well: it's home to the country's most heated rivalry in American college football, between the University of Alabama's Crimson Tide and the Auburn University Tigers. During the Iron Bowl, when the two come together in a season-ending clash, the entire state enters into a frenzy of competitive spirit.

Key Facts

Language:

English is the most common language spoken but Spanish is often heard in the south-western states.

Passport/Visa:

It is highly recommended that travellers' passports have at least six months' validity remaining after the intended date of departure from their travel destination. A visa is required for short visits unless travellers qualify for entry under the Visa Waiver Program. The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) enables citizens of certain countries to travel to the US for a stay of up to 90 days without a visa. Visitors under the VWP need to register online three days before travel and have an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). This allows the US government to screen all visitors before travel. Visitors entering the country under the VWP must have a machine-readable passport (MRP) that has a barcode on the photo page. Travellers under the VWP must have passports that include biometrics if they wish to enter the country without a visa, which means that passports must contain unique personal data such as fingerprints or iris details. All passports must contain a digital photo image in order to travel visa-free. All visitors to the USA have a photograph and two fingerprints taken by an inkless scanner on arrival, including those travelling visa-free under the VWP. As part of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI), all travellers travelling between the United States and Canada, Mexico, Bermuda, and the Caribbean region are required to present a passport or other valid travel document to enter or re-enter the United States. If departing from the USA, a valid passport is required by immigration authorities. Immigration officials often apply different rules to those stated by travel agents and official sources.

Currency:

The official currency is the US Dollar (USD), which is divided into 100 cents. Only major banks exchange foreign currency. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted. Banking hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm.

Electricity:

Electrical current is 120 volts, 60Hz. Plugs are mainly the type with two flat pins, though three-pin plugs (two flat parallel pins and a rounded pin) are also widely used. European appliances without dual-voltage capabilities will require an adapter.

Travel to Alabama

Climate for Alabama

The average annual temperature in Alabama is 64F (18C), with the northern counties experiencing cooler temperatures and the southern counties having relatively warmer temperatures, influenced by the Gulf of Mexico. The average summer temperature is 79F (26C) and the average winter temperature is 48F (9C). Although the state doesn't experience the harsh winters of the northern US, the best time to visit Alabama is in summer or autumn, outside of the tornado season and when visitors can witness the fiery colours of the autumn leaves. Snow occasionally falls in the northern regions and frost is periodic.

Health Notes when travelling to United States of America

There are no specific health risks associated with travel within the USA. Medical facilities are excellent, but expensive. Only emergencies are treated without prior payment and treatment can be refused without evidence of insurance or proof of funds. Good medical insurance is essential. Visitors must be fully vaccinated with the primary series of an accepted COVID-19 vaccine to travel to the United States by plane if they are non-U.S. citizens.

Safety Notes when travelling to United States of America

Travel within the United States is generally trouble-free, though travellers should be aware that the US shares with the rest of the world, an increased threat from terrorist incidents. Security has been heightened, particularly at airports. Restrictions on hand luggage apply and travellers are advised to check on the latest situation with airlines in advance. Travellers should also be alert to the dangers of car and street crime in cities and should use common sense and take basic precautions. Hurricanes are common between June and November, putting the southern USA, including the Gulf Coast and the eastern US at risk. There is a risk of wildfires in many dry areas in the US, particularly on the West Coast from March to November.

Customs in United States of America

Laws vary from state to state, including speed limit, fines and punishment. The age at which alcohol may be legally bought and consumed is 21 years.

Duty Free in United States of America

Travellers to the United States who are returning residents of the country do not have to pay duty on articles purchased abroad to the value of \$800 provided their stay was longer than 48 hours and their duty-free allowance was not used in the 30-day period prior. For passengers arriving from Samoa, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands, a duty-free allowance of \$1,600 is allowed. The following items are included in this: 50 cigarettes and 10 cigars and 150 millilitres (5 fl. oz.) of alcoholic beverages or 150 millilitres (5 fl. oz.) of perfume containing alcohol. Restrictions may apply to goods from Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Burma (Myanmar), Angola, Liberia and Sudan. It is prohibited to import Cuban cigars from any country.

Travellers to the United States who are non-residents do not have to pay duty on the following items: 50 cigars or 200 cigarettes and gifts to the value of \$100 provided their stay in the USA is not less than 72 hours and that the allowance has not been used in the preceding six-month period.

Prohibited items for residents and non-residents include meat or meat products, poultry, narcotics, absinthe, plants, seeds, vegetables, fruits, soil, live insects and other living plants or animal pests. Fish is prohibited unless it carries disease-free certification. Wildlife and animals or their by-products carry restrictions. Dairy products and eggs from specified countries are not allowed. Firearms and ammunition are not allowed without the necessary license and permit.

Doing Business in United States of America

In such a large country, filled with so many diverse groups, business practices may differ according to each state, however rarely to any large degree. The East Coast is traditionally more formal than the West Coast, though in states such as California, dress code and conservative appearance are as common as they would be in New York. Punctuality is important throughout the country and it is considered rude to be late for a meeting. Gift-giving is uncommon as it may be construed as bribery. Appropriate titles (Mr, Mrs, Ms) are used upon introduction and until otherwise stated. Americans favour politeness and greetings of 'Hello' and 'How are you?' are often expressed with sincerity. Business hours may vary in each state, but an 8am start and 5pm finish Monday to Friday is the most common with an hour over lunch.

Status and age are not necessarily indicative of seniority, nor do they carry much weight in themselves. Those doing business in the States should be mindful of this fact; foreigners should never make assumptions about someone's position or rank. Best practice is to be respectful to all parties. That said, the US upholds a hierarchal business structure, in which 'the boss' is the ultimate decision-maker. Senior leaders have the power of the last word, and can go against the grain just as easily as they can follow popular opinion. Foreigners should concentrate on winning over this individual, even if the greater group seems unsupportive. Americans value a direct style of communication. In this fast-paced, consumer culture 'time is money', and small-talk is viewed as unnecessary and wasteful. It's best for foreigners to get to the point quickly, speak about issues in a frank and open manner, and to avoid taking offence if someone questions or challenges them outright.

Communication in United States of America

The international country dialling code for the United States is +1. Mobile networks cover most of the country, especially all urban areas, and WiFi is widely available.

Tipping in United States of America

A 15 percent tip is expected by taxi drivers, bartenders, hairdressers and waiters, but travellers shouldn't tip in fast-food or self-service restaurants. In expensive restaurants or for large parties, the tip should be 20 percent of the bill. It is normal to tip staff such as valets and porters in hotels; this is discretionary, although a minimum of \$5 is expected. Most services are customarily tipped if the service is good.

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Airports in Alabama

Birmingham Airport (BHM)

Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport

www.flybirmingham.com

Location: Birmingham Alabama The airport is conveniently located about five miles (8km) from downtown Birmingham.

Time: GMT -6 (GMT -5 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

Contacts: Tel: +1 205 595 0533

Getting to the city: Several shuttle companies, including Meteors Shuttle and Birmingham Door to Door, operate between the airport and the city, but reservations must be made prior to arrival. Taxi services are available 24 hours a day at ground level outside the baggage claim area.

Car rental: Rental car counters are located at ground level near the section 1B. Vendors include Alamo, Avis, Budget, Dollar, Thrifty, Enterprise, National, and Hertz.

Airport Taxis: Taxi services at Birmingham International are available throughout the day and evening on the ground level outside the baggage claim area. Birmingham is serviced by the following taxi-cab companies: Ambassador Cab Company, American Cab Company, Award Cab Company, Birmingham Metro Cab Company, King Cab LLC, Progress House Taxi Cab, Silver Cab Company and Yellow Cab. Uber, and other app-based taxi services, are also available.

Facilities: Facilities at the airport include restaurants, bars, shops, currency exchange, wireless internet, kidzone play areas and tourist information. ATMs are available throughout the airport. Skycap services are available to assist disabled passengers.

Parking: The airport provides short-term parking at a rate of \$1 per hour and \$24 per day; medium-stay parking at a rate of \$1 per hour and \$12 per day; and long-term parking at a rate of \$1 per hour and \$10 per day.

Mobile Airport (MOB)

Mobile Regional Airport

www.mobairport.com

Location: Mobile Mobile Regional Airport is located about 13 miles (21km) west of central Mobile.

Time: GMT -6 (GMT -5 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

Getting to the city: The Airport Boulevard connects the airport to the city of Mobile, taxis and rental cars are readily available. Several door-to-door shuttle services are also available and these can be pre-booked. Some hotels offer airport pick-ups. Uber, and other app-based taxi services, are also available.

Car rental: Car hire companies include Alamo, Avis, Dollar, Enterprise, Hertz, National and Thrifty. Budget has an office just across the road, connected to the airport by a shuttle.

Airport Taxis: Taxis are available. App-based taxi services, such as Uber, are also available.

Facilities: Airport facilities include ATMs, as well as conference and business facilities. There are several restaurants and bars but shopping options are limited.

Parking: Short-term parking at Mobile Regional Airport costs \$1 per hour up to \$10 per day, and long-term parking has similar charges with a \$8 daily rate. 15 minutes free parking is available in all lots.

Montgomery Airport (MGM)

Montgomery Regional Airport

www.flymgm.com

Location: Montgomery Airport is located seven miles (11km) southwest of Montgomery.

Time: GMT -6 (GMT -5 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

Getting to the city: The cheapest mode of transport from the airport into the city is the Montgomery Area Transit bus. The station is right outside the terminal and services run hourly during the week between 5.55am and 7.55pm, and roughly every 1 hour and 40 minutes on Saturdays between 7.55am and 5.55pm. Many hotels offer airport shuttles and shuttle bus services and taxis are also available at the airport. Uber, and other app-based taxi services, are also available.

Car rental: Car hire companies with desks in the terminal include Avis, Budget, Hertz, Thrifty, National and Alamo.

Airport Taxis: Taxis can be found just outside of the baggage claim area.

Facilities: Facilities in the airport include ATMs, restaurants, a gift shop, a lounge and business centre, and very good facilities for those with disabilities.

Parking: The airport offers short and long-term parking close to the terminal. Short-term parking lots charge \$1 per half hour up to six hours, and \$12 daily; and long-term parking lots charge \$1 per hour, and \$10 daily.

Dothan Airport (DHN)

Dothan Regional Airport

www.flydothan.com

Location: Dothan Airport is situated nine miles (14km) northwest of Dothan.

Time: GMT -6 (GMT -5 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

Getting to the city: There is no public transport to the airport. However, taxis operate within airport hours and there are rental cars available.

Car rental: Car rental companies in Dothan Airport include Avis, Hertz and National.

Airport Taxis: Taxis are available from the airport, but may need to be booked by phone.

Facilities: Airport facilities include a restaurant, shoeshine services, business centre, conference room, and a gift shop.

Parking: There is a parking lot located close to the terminal.

Huntsville Airport (HSV)

Huntsville International Airport

www.flyhuntsville.com

Location: Huntsville Airport is located 14 miles (23km) southwest of downtown Huntsville.

Time: GMT -6 (GMT -5 from mid-March to the first Sunday in November).

Getting to the city: Taxis and airport shuttle buses are parked outside the baggage claim area. Many hotels in Huntsville offer airport shuttle services for their guests. Capital Motor Lines and Spirit Coach provide bus services.

Car rental: Avis, Budget, Dollar/Thrifty, Enterprise, Hertz and National/Alamo are represented at the airport.

Airport Taxis: A number of taxi companies service the airport within operating hours, and are available outside of baggage claim. All taxis are metered, and reservations are not required. Uber, and other app-based taxi services, are also available.

Facilities: Facilities at the airport include an ATM, restaurants and coffee shops, a smoking lounge, gift shops, a travel agency and a lost and found.

Parking: Parking is available at the airport.

Birmingham Alabama

Birmingham is Alabama's largest city, with nearly one million people living in the metropolitan area. Although it is a world-renowned financial and medical centre, its sophistication has not come at the expense of its Southern charm. The foothills of the Appalachian Mountains provide the backdrop for Birmingham's tall buildings, cafes still specialise in country-fried steak and butter beans, and its history as a centre of segregation has been transformed into a future that celebrates African American heritage. As it has retained a true Southern distinctiveness, it has been called the last major Southern city in America.

The city of Birmingham is rich in diverse architecture, with sleek office buildings as well as historic estates and landmark churches. Tree-lined streets, parks, the botanical gardens, the Birmingham Green, and a landscaped promenade running through the city, ensure visitors never feel far from nature. Trendy neighbourhoods have come alive in Birmingham, complete with antique shops, coffeehouses, bars, restaurants and nightclubs. Especially popular areas include the Lakeview District, which was originally a resort area at the turn of the 20th century, and is now full of stylish entertainment options; and the Five Points South District, an eclectic area of restored historic buildings now popular with local university students. The Civil Rights District is one of the most interesting parts of the city for sightseeing.

Getting around in Birmingham Alabama

Walking is enjoyable within certain areas of Birmingham, though getting from district to district on foot can be challenging. However, Birmingham has a large transit system, with Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority providing fixed-route buses and vintage trolleys. Bus service ends around 12am, with more limited services on Sundays. Some trolley routes stop earlier, though others continue to run until midnight. There are several taxi companies offering 24-hour service and this is a reliable way of getting around, but far more expensive than using the bus or trolley. Uber and other app-based taxi services are also available.

Climate in Birmingham Alabama

Birmingham has a humid subtropical climate, with hot summers and mild to chilly winters. The average high temperature at the peak of summer reaches 90F (32C) and winter lows drop down to 34F (1C). May and June are the sunniest months but Birmingham is situated in the centre of the Dixie Alley, an area known for frequent tornadoes, and can experience strong thunderstorms and tornadoes during the months of March to May. June, July, and August are therefore the most popular months for a visit to Birmingham. The autumn months are also very beautiful in the city due to the bright colours, although the weather is generally pleasant in autumn there can be thunderstorms and cold fronts.

Sightseeing in Birmingham Alabama

Birmingham is unique in that it has transformed its role in American civil rights history into a celebration of diversity. This fact is manifested through literally hundreds of festivals marking different movements in music, art, drama, film, food and culture. With a number of interesting neighbourhoods to explore, Birmingham has no shortage of creative spaces, music venues, eclectic stores and enticing eateries.

For tourists, the civil rights history of the city is one of its most fascinating attributes. The Civil Rights District, a six-block section of the city in which major civil rights events took place, is the prime sightseeing section of Birmingham. Here visitors can tour the 16th Street Baptist Church, the site of a bombing that killed four African American girls. The church was rebuilt and today continues to serve the community as an open-door institution. Also worth a visit is the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, which tells the story of African-American life and the struggle for equality through arresting multimedia exhibitions.

The city is watched over by the enormous statue of Vulcan, perched on the Red Mountain, and visiting this landmark is a great way to appreciate views over Birmingham. Other fun excursions out of the city include a trip to Oak Mountain State Park, or a fascinating foray into Russell Cave. Those travelling to Birmingham with kids should definitely pay a visit to the zoo.

Birmingham Alabama Attractions

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

Opening time: Tuesday - Saturday 10am-5pm; Sunday 1pm-5pm. Closed Monday

Admission: \$15 adults, free for children, other concessions available.

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is a homage to the spirit of both well-known and unsung civil rights heroes. Visitors take a self-guided journey through the permanent exhibitions, which chronicle the history of segregation and the civil rights struggle in America. It is a 'living institution', using the lessons of the past to shed new light on human rights issues today. Birmingham's pivotal role in the struggle takes central focus. There is also an art gallery with some items for sale. The museum is moving and despite its serious subject matter is suitable for the whole family; in fact, the educative function of the institution makes it very worthwhile for kids as it brings the history books to life.

Address: 520 16th St N

Telephone: (205) 328 9696

Website: www.bcri.org

Vulcan Park

Opening time: Daily 10am-10pm

Admission: \$6 adult, \$4 children

Located atop Red Mountain, Vulcan Park is home to the world's largest cast-iron statue, and the second-tallest statue in America, behind the Statue of Liberty. The statue of the Roman god, Vulcan, is surrounded by a 10-acre green space offering panoramic views of Birmingham. The park contains a museum and observation balcony, as well as an Observation Tower, open at night, which allows visitors a good opportunity for star-gazing. Vulcan has become the symbol of Birmingham's striving spirit, the giant that represents the big heart of the city, and a visit to the statue is a must for travellers in the area.

Address: 1701 Valley View Drive

Telephone: (205) 933 1409

Website: www.vulcanpark.org

Birmingham Zoo

Opening time: Daily 9am-5pm

Admission: \$17.95 adult, \$12.95 children, other concessions available.

The Birmingham Zoo, Alabama's most popular non-profit attraction, houses approximately 900 wild animals from 230 species in the centre of Birmingham. Animals include elephants, lions, monkeys, bobcats, otters, zebras, tigers, hippos, giraffe and rhinos, among others. There is an interactive aviary, where parrots land on visitors' shoulders; a savannah safari exhibit; and a sea lion show. Picnic areas and a food and gift shop are available. Daily activities include the Red Diamond Express train rides, sea lion training demonstrations, and protective life carousel rides. The whole family will enjoy a trip to the Birmingham Zoo.

Address: 2630 Cahaba Rd

Telephone: (205) 879 0409

Website: www.birminghamzoo.com

Talladega Superspeedway

The South is the home of NASCAR, and about 30 minutes from Birmingham lies the legendary Talladega Superspeedway, one of the most competitive motorsports facilities in the world. More than 80,000 guests can be accommodated in the stands and thousands more in the 212-acre infield. The sheer volume of fans, let alone the record-breaking speed of the racers, makes a visit unforgettable. When no events are scheduled, tours are available daily. Adjacent to the track is the International Motorsports Hall of Fame and Museum, also open daily, which displays racing cars and memorabilia worth vast amounts of money. A self-guided walking tour of the museum takes roughly an hour.

Address: 3366 Speedway Blvd, Lincoln

Telephone: (877) 462 3342

Website: www.talladegasuperspeedway.com

Email Address: tssguestservices@talladegasuperspeedway.com.

Arlington Antebellum Home and Gardens

Opening time: Tuesday-Saturday 10am-4pm, Sunday 1pm-4pm. Closed Monday.

Admission: \$5 adult, \$3 children, other concessions available

A visit to this stately plantation house is a great way to get a taste of real Southern heritage. Situated on six acres in the heart of Old Elyton, the house was built by Judge William S Mudd, one of the founders of Birmingham, in the 1840s. The house is in the Greek Revival architectural style typical of this period, and functions as a 19th-century decorative arts museum, with a collection of furniture, artwork, textiles and silver from the 19th century. The grounds are also beautiful, spread across six acres of leafy pasture, and are a joy to explore. The estate is a popular venue for events like weddings so it is worth checking in advance if it is open to visitors, especially in the summer months.

Address: 331 Cotton Ave SW

Telephone: (205) 780 5656

Email Address: arlingtonantebellumhome@gmail.com

Russell Cave National Monument

Opening time: Daily 8am-4.30pm

Admission: Free

Located in northeastern Alabama, Russell Cave National Monument is one of the longest cave systems in Alabama at about seven miles (11.6km) long. Used as a shelter by prehistoric Native Americans, the cave is about 12,000 years old and contains a natural spring that eventually joins up with the Tennessee River. Russell Cave itself is roughly 210 feet (64m) long, 107 feet (33m) wide, and 26 feet (8m) high. The cave shelter is located conveniently close to the visitor centre and is accessible via an elevated wooden boardwalk. Guided tours of the cave shelter are conducted by National Park Service Interpretative Rangers. The cave shelter includes the areas that were occupied by prehistoric groups and features a diorama depicting the activities of the occupants.

Address: 729 County Road 98, Bridgeport

Telephone: (256) 495 2672

Website: www.nps.gov/ruca/index.htm

Oak Mountain State Park

Opening time: Daily 7am-5pm

Admission: \$5 adults, \$2 children.

Oak Mountain State Park is a great place for outdoor activities on any holiday in Birmingham. The park is equipped with over 50 miles (80km) of trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding, and has plenty of picnic facilities for day trips. Two lakes in the north of the park are good for fishing, and boats and canoes are available for rental. Golf enthusiasts will enjoy the 18-hole golf course, complete with a pro shop and driving range. Teenagers can challenge themselves on the BMX courses, while children will love the petting farm. There are multiple fun activities on offer, so everyone in the family will be easily occupied, even if it is just lounging under a tree with a book and enjoying the beautiful surroundings.

Address: Pelham

Telephone: (205) 383 3825

Website: www.alapark.com/parks/oak-mountain-state-park

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Montgomery

The capital of Alabama, Montgomery has played a pivotal role at many important points in American history. The city hosted the inauguration of Confederate President Jefferson Davis during the Civil War, and was the site of the Montgomery Bus Boycott led by Rosa Parks, and many other civil rights events led by activists like Martin Luther King, Jr.

As the city is so steeped in history, it's no wonder that there are so many historic and cultural attractions in Montgomery. Visitors can learn about the Civil Rights Movement at the Rosa Parks Library and Museum, the Civil Rights Memorial and Center, and Dexter Parsonage Museum; and visit Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church, where the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. preached for nearly a decade. Just an hour out of Montgomery, the town of Selma is home to the National Voting Rights Museum.

Going back further in history, the First White House of the Confederacy was once the home of Jefferson Davis during the Civil War. Old Alabama Town is a fun attraction for children in Montgomery, recreating life in a 19th-century Alabama village. Montgomery has been home to plenty of famous citizens, and there are also museums dedicated to musician Hank Williams and writers F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald.

Montgomery is a lovely city with plenty of green spaces, including Blount Cultural Park, Jasmine Hill Gardens and Outdoor Museum and the scenic Riverfront Amphitheater. Visitors can enjoy a bit of southern hospitality at any number of diners and bars, or take in a Montgomery Biscuits minor league baseball game. For a scenic view of Montgomery, take a ride on the Harriott II riverboat, which cruises on the Alabama River.

Getting around in Montgomery

Montgomery is easy to get around on public transport, but many visitors do opt to hire cars, especially if they are planning to travel widely in the region. The Montgomery Area Transit System offers comprehensive bus services in the city and to outlying areas, and the city centre is serviced by the Lightning Route Trolley.

Climate in Montgomery

Montgomery has a humid subtropical climate, which means mild, short winters and long, hot and humid summer days. The average temperatures in winter, December to February, range between 35F (2C) and 61F (16C). The average temperatures in peak summer, June to August, range between 68F (20C) and 92F (33C), and it can feel even hotter due to high humidity. Rainfall is evenly distributed throughout the year, with rain usually coming in the form of thunderstorms.

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Mobile

This bustling port city in Alabama has a history going back to 1702, when the French established it as a shipping centre. Mobile has a colourful history with a mixture of Spanish, French, British, Creole and African influences, and much of that is reflected in its architecture and culture. Many would be surprised to know that Mobile is the actual birthplace of Mardi Gras, and it still has its own unique party spirit, which makes any holiday in Mobile a lot of fun.

Historic buildings in Mobile are numerous, and include examples of Gothic revival, Greek revival, Beaux-Arts, Spanish Colonial revival, Victorian, Italianate, and Creole. The city is full of stately antebellum manors and grand churches that architecture enthusiasts will enjoy. A variety of museums showcase the city's history in other ways: Mobile has museums dedicated to World War II, Mardi Gras, the Mobile police and fire departments, and the region's ecosystem, among other things. The National African-American Archives and Museum is also located here.

Mobile is a wonderfully verdant city, with diverse plant life that benefits from its mild subtropical climate. It has a number of pretty parks and gardens that prevent it from feeling too urban; some of the most popular are the Bellingrath Gardens, and Langan Park, which also houses the Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile Botanical Gardens, a theatre, and a golf course.

Mobile is also a vibrant city with a buzzing nightlife. Known for its fantastic seafood and barbecue, Mobile has a variety of great restaurants serving either, or sometimes both. There are many popular bars and nightclubs, and the city boasts its own opera and symphony orchestra. Every October, the Ten Sixty Five festival hosts a number of exciting musical acts in downtown Mobile, this laid-back street party is free of charge and offers an abundance of entertainment and moreish food and drink options, catered by local establishments.

Getting around in Mobile

Walking is the best way to get around the city centre of Mobile, but for those travelling further afield renting a car is a popular option. Driving is easy and relatively stress-free in and around Mobile. However, those wanting to use public transport should make use of the Moda, a free electric trolley system that links many tourist attractions, hotels and shopping centres. The Moda runs from Monday to Friday, from 7am to 2pm. Taxis are readily available outside these times. The Wave Transit System is a public service that is useful for getting around the city, too.

Climate in Mobile

Mobile enjoys a mild subtropical climate, which means the summers are hot and humid, while the winters are mild and rainy. The average temperatures in the long summers, between May and September, range between 63F (17C) and 91F (33C). The average temperatures in winter, between December and February, range between 40F (4C) and 64F (18C). Mobile is a very rainy city, with an average of 59 rainy days a year and occasional tropical storms and hurricanes.

Alabama Attractions

Overview

Alabama is a truly well-rounded tourist destination, with a diverse offering for travellers. Historic attractions, including civil rights commemorative sites and museums draw history enthusiasts to the state, while foodies are attracted by the mouth-watering culinary scene in the Southern cooking tradition. Perfect, powder-white beaches promise quality sun-lounging and golfers will be well entertained year-round on Alabama's celebrated golf courses. On top of all this, spectacular natural landscapes make cycling, bird watching, fishing, camping and hiking popular pastimes.

Alabama's best-known cultural attractions are clustered together in destinations such as Birmingham, Mobile, Montgomery, Florence and Tuscaloosa, where a good dose of Southern charm is also available. Visitors can experience the state's natural beauty in protected wilderness areas such as the Talladega National Forest and Little River Canyon National Preserve. Winding through the famous Orange Beach and along the lovely coast of the Gulf State Park, and offering a taste of six of Alabama's ecosystems, a drive along the Hugh S Branyon Backcountry Trail is also highly recommended for nature lovers.

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

Opening time: Tuesday - Saturday 10am-5pm; Sunday 1pm-5pm. Closed Monday

Admission: \$15 adults, free for children, other concessions available.

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute is a homage to the spirit of both well-known and unsung civil rights heroes. Visitors take a self-guided journey through the permanent exhibitions, which chronicle the history of segregation and the civil rights struggle in America. It is a 'living institution', using the lessons of the past to shed new light on human rights issues today. Birmingham's pivotal role in the struggle takes central focus. There is also an art gallery with some items for sale. The museum is moving and despite its serious subject matter is suitable for the whole family; in fact, the educative function of the institution makes it very worthwhile for kids as it brings the history books to life.

Address: 520 16th St N

Telephone: (205) 328 9696

Website: www.bcri.org

Vulcan Park

Opening time: Daily 10am-10pm

Admission: \$6 adult, \$4 children

Located atop Red Mountain, Vulcan Park is home to the world's largest cast-iron statue, and the second-tallest statue in America, behind the Statue of Liberty. The statue of the Roman god, Vulcan, is surrounded by a 10-acre green space offering panoramic views of Birmingham. The park contains a museum and observation balcony, as well as an Observation Tower, open at night, which allows visitors a good opportunity for star-gazing. Vulcan has become the symbol of Birmingham's striving spirit, the giant that represents the big heart of the city, and a visit to the statue is a must for travellers in the area.

Address: 1701 Valley View Drive

Telephone: (205) 933 1409

Website: www.vulcanpark.org

Birmingham Zoo

Opening time: Daily 9am-5pm

Admission: \$17.95 adult, \$12.95 children, other concessions available.

The Birmingham Zoo, Alabama's most popular non-profit attraction, houses approximately 900 wild animals from 230 species in the centre of Birmingham. Animals include elephants, lions, monkeys, bobcats, otters, zebras, tigers, hippos, giraffe and rhinos, among others. There is an interactive aviary, where parrots land on visitors' shoulders; a savannah safari exhibit; and a sea lion show. Picnic areas and a food and gift shop are available. Daily activities include the Red Diamond Express train rides, sea lion training demonstrations, and protective life carousel rides. The whole family will enjoy a trip to the Birmingham Zoo.

Address: 2630 Cahaba Rd

Telephone: (205) 879 0409

Website: www.birminghamzoo.com

Talladega Superspeedway

The South is the home of NASCAR, and about 30 minutes from Birmingham lies the legendary Talladega Superspeedway, one of the most competitive motorsports facilities in the world. More than 80,000 guests can be accommodated in the stands and thousands more in the 212-acre infield. The sheer volume of fans, let alone the record-breaking speed of the racers, makes a visit unforgettable. When no events are scheduled, tours are available daily. Adjacent to the track is the International Motorsports Hall of Fame and Museum, also open daily, which displays racing cars and memorabilia worth vast amounts of money. A self-guided walking tour of the museum takes roughly an hour.

Address: 3366 Speedway Blvd, Lincoln

Telephone: (877) 462 3342

Website: www.talladegasuperspeedway.com

Email Address: tssguestservices@talladegasuperspeedway.com.

Arlington Antebellum Home and Gardens

Opening time: Tuesday-Saturday 10am-4pm, Sunday 1pm-4pm. Closed Monday.

Admission: \$5 adult, \$3 children, other concessions available

A visit to this stately plantation house is a great way to get a taste of real Southern heritage. Situated on six acres in the heart of Old Elyton, the house was built by Judge William S Mudd, one of the founders of Birmingham, in the 1840s. The house is in the Greek Revival architectural style typical of this period, and functions as a 19th-century decorative arts museum, with a collection of furniture, artwork, textiles and silver from the 19th century. The grounds are also beautiful, spread across six acres of leafy pasture, and are a joy to explore. The estate is a popular venue for events like weddings so it is worth checking in advance if it is open to visitors, especially in the summer months.

Address: 331 Cotton Ave SW

Telephone: (205) 780 5656

Email Address: arlingtonantebellumhome@gmail.com

Russell Cave National Monument

Opening time: Daily 8am-4.30pm

Admission: Free

Located in northeastern Alabama, Russell Cave National Monument is one of the longest cave systems in Alabama at about seven miles (11.6km) long. Used as a shelter by prehistoric Native Americans, the cave is about 12,000 years old and contains a natural spring that eventually joins up with the Tennessee River. Russell Cave itself is roughly 210 feet (64m) long, 107 feet (33m) wide, and 26 feet (8m) high. The cave shelter is located conveniently close to the visitor centre and is accessible via an elevated wooden boardwalk. Guided tours of the cave shelter are conducted by National Park Service Interpretative Rangers. The cave shelter includes the areas that were occupied by prehistoric groups and features a diorama depicting the activities of the occupants.

Address: 729 County Road 98, Bridgeport

Telephone: (256) 495 2672

Website: www.nps.gov/ruca/index.htm

Oak Mountain State Park

Opening time: Daily 7am-5pm

Admission: \$5 adults, \$2 children.

Oak Mountain State Park is a great place for outdoor activities on any holiday in Birmingham. The park is equipped with over 50 miles (80km) of trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding, and has plenty of picnic facilities for day trips. Two lakes in the north of the park are good for fishing, and boats and canoes are available for rental. Golf enthusiasts will enjoy the 18-hole golf course, complete with a pro shop and driving range. Teenagers can challenge themselves on the BMX courses, while children will love the petting farm. There are multiple fun activities on offer, so everyone in the family will be easily occupied, even if it is just lounging under a tree with a book and enjoying the beautiful surroundings.

Address: Pelham

Telephone: (205) 383 3825

Website: www.alapark.com/parks/oak-mountain-state-park

Currency

The official currency is the US Dollar (USD), which is divided into 100 cents. Only major banks exchange foreign currency. ATMs are widespread and credit cards are widely accepted. Banking hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm.

Exchange rate for 1 USD - U.S. Dollar

0.00 BMD Bermudan Dollar	0.93 EUR Euro	0.80 GBP U.K. Pound Sterling	152.99 JPY Japanese Yen	1.37 CAD Canadian Dollar	0.91 CHF Swiss Franc
1.52 AUD Australian Dollar	39.40 UAH Ukrainian Hryvnia	443.91 KZT Kazakhstani Tenge	93,075.00 LBP Lebanese Pound	4.86 LYD Libyan Dinar	6.86 BOB Bolivian Boliviano
0.00 NPR Nepalese Rupee	0.00 OMR Omani Rial	0.00 QAR Qatari Rial	1.35 SGD Singapore Dollar	10.82 SEK Swedish Krona	0.00 TTD Trinidad Tobago Dollar
0.00 VEF Venezuelan Bolivar	58.11 DOP Dominican Peso	0.00 HRK Croatian Kuna	16.95 MXN Mexican Peso	610.53 XOF West African CFA Franc	0.00 PGK Papua New Guinean kina
0.00 BSD Bahamian Dollar	0.00 FJD Fiji Dollar	0.00 HNL Honduran Lempira	133.87 DZD Algerian Dinar	0.00 MMK Myanma Kyat	0.00 BWP Botswana Pula
3.72 PEN Peruvian Nuevo Sol	938.44 CLP Chilean Peso	386.84 AMD Armenia Dram	23.29 CZK Czech Koruna	17.63 MDL Moldova Lei	139.89 ISK Icelandic Krona
12,582.40 UZS Uzbekistan Sum	3.72 ILS Israeli New Sheqel	0.71 JOD Jordanian Dinar	0.00 KWD Kuwaiti Dinar	38.15 UYU Uruguayan Peso	0.00 MUR Mauritian Rupee
0.00 NIO Nicaraguan Córdoba	10.88 NOK Norwegian Krone	4.03 PLN Polish Zloty	3.75 SAR Saudi Riyal	0.00 LKR Sri Lanka Rupee	36.79 THB Thai Baht
3.66 AED U.A.E Dirham	5.09 BRL Brazilian Real	4.63 RON Romanian New Leu	7.81 HKD Hong Kong Dollar	610.53 XAF Central African CFA Franc	25,405.70 VND Vietnamese Dong
878.36 ARS Argentine Peso	0.00 XCD East Caribbean Dollar	0.00 GTQ Guatemalan Quetzal	10.06 MAD Moroccan Dirham	0.00 BHD Bahrain Dinar	1.00 PAB Panamanian Balboa
1.70 AZN Azerbaijan Manat	3,920.00 COP Colombian Peso	88.42 KGS Kyrgyzstan Som	362.00 HUF Hungarian Forint	10.89 TJS Tajikistan Ruble	16,073.70 IDR Indonesian Rupiah
47.95 EGP Egyptian Pound	1,358.84 KRW South Korean Won	7,456.52 PYG Paraguayan Guaraní	4.74 MYR Malaysian Ringgit	508.31 CRC Costa Rican Colón	1.67 NZD New Zealand Dollar
277.87 PKR Pakistani Rupee	91.39 RUB Russian Rouble	18.51 ZAR South African Rand	3.13 TND Tunisian Dinar	0.00 BBD Barbadian Dollar	1.82 BGN Bulgarian Lev
32.33 TRY Turkish Lira	57.28 PHP Philippine Peso	32.31 TWD New Taiwan Dollar	1,164.84 NGN Nigerian Naira	0.00 XPF CFP Franc	0.00 GHS Ghanaian Cedi
0.00 JMD Jamaican Dollar	0.00 ANG Neth. Antillean Guilder	0.00 BND Brunei Dollar	108.90 RSD Serbian Dinar	7.24 CNY Chinese Yuan	6.94 DKK Danish Krone
3.49 TMT New Turkmenistan Manat	83.42 INR Indian Rupee				