

The Nashville Skyline is impressive, with the 33-story, so-called “Batman Building” towering above the scene. The official name is the AT&T Building and it’s the tallest structure in the state of Tennessee. Photo courtesy Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.

Traveling On: Nashville Offers Much More than Country Music

By Nicole Pensiero

You don’t have to like country music to fall in love with Nashville – but if you do, that’s a bonus. Tennessee’s No. 1 tourist destination (and the state’s largest city) actually has something for everyone: from attractions like its famed Zoo and the Grand Ole Opry, to other music-focused museums and fantastic eateries.

Known worldwide as “Music City,” you’d be hard pressed to not find music to your liking in Nashville: along with traditional country, there’s everything from jazz to classical to blues, found in venues ranging from honky-tonks to classical music halls.

After settling into our chic boutique hotel for our visit, **The Bobby**, we kicked off our sightseeing with a one-hour **Gray Line** bus tour that set the pace for our busy getaway. We quickly learned that there’s simply too much to see and do it all in four days – but we tried!

Here are some suggestions for any visitor to Nashville:

- Take a tour, or see a show at the **Ryman Auditorium**. This historic venue, which hosted the **Grand Ole Opry** from 1943 to 1974 was built in 1892 as a church tabernacle and

today is considered the “Mother Church” of country music. Over time, it morphed into what would become an international phenomenon, with a still-airing radio show dubbed the Grand Ole Opry. The 2,362-seat Opry, which debuted during World War II, introduced such legends as Patsy Cline and Hank Williams to the world. When the Grand Ole Opry moved to its new location (Opryland, 12 miles away) in 1974, the Ryman sat empty for years. But in 1994, a multi-million renovation project brought this National Historic Landmark back to its original splendor. Today it is a popular concert hall and is also open daily for tours.

- The **Country Music Hall of Fame** is worth at least a two-hour visit if you're a fan of country music. It has one of the world's most extensive musical collections and visitors can learn about the early roots of country and its connection to Celtic music to its modern-day incarnations.
- The **Musicians Hall of Fame and Museum** is dedicated to the musicians – sometimes famous and sometimes just famously talented – who played on some of the most popular recordings of all time. There are countless instruments on display, including the Stratocaster that Jimi Hendrix played all many decades ago in Nashville clubs.
- The **Johnny Cash Museum** and the **Patsy Cline Museum** are housed in the same building, just off Broadway (where most of the city's rowdiest honky-tonks are located). The same people who founded the Cash museum with the full support of his family, were able to pay homage to Patsy Cline – who tragically died at age 30 in a 1963 plane crash - after her husband, Charlie Dick died in 2015, leaving behind an extensive collection of Cline's belongings – everything from private letters to stage costumes. It's a poignant tribute to an iconic talent.



Patsy Cline, who died tragically at age 30 in a plane crash, is best remembered for her version of Willie Nelson's song "Crazy." At the Nashville museum that bears her name, there are items from the 1985 hit movie, "Sweet Dreams," which told Cline's life story. Photo by Nicole Pensiero.

On our final night, we took in a show at the famed **Grand**

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The Bobby Hotel in downtown Nashville shows off unique style in its lobby. Guest rooms, meanwhile, have a hip Country & Western décor. Photo by Nicole Pensiero

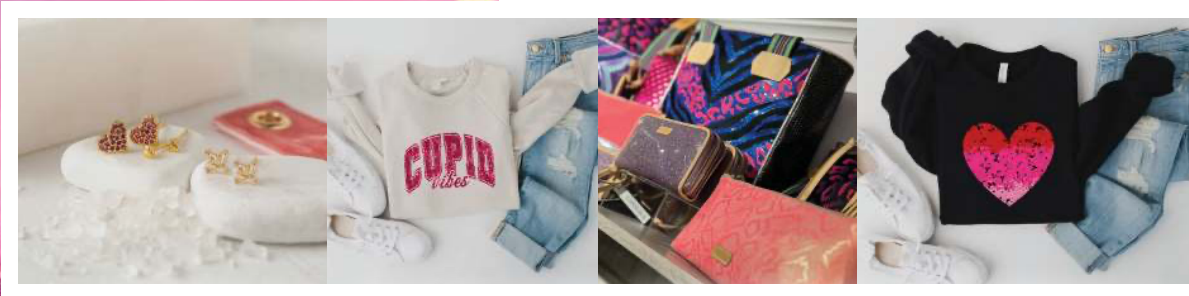
Ole Opry. A 15-minute drive from the center of town, performances are broadcast live and feature a mix of music and comedy. The acoustics are phenomenal and there's not a bad seat in the house.

We had so many fantastic meals during our time in Nashville that it was hard to keep them straight. "Music City" is also an acclaimed "foodie" town, so whether you're craving finger-lickin' barbecue or upscale dining, you'll find it. Some of our favorite spots included the rooftop bar and restaurant, **Denim**. One night we stopped by the fun, casual **Red**

Headed Stranger for appetizers, and the nearby **Audrey** for cocktails. We also enjoyed a great meal at **FOLK**, a pizza-centric but rather elegant place, with plenty of other delicious choices on the menu, too. If you're looking for true down-home cooking, check out **Arnold's Country Kitchen**. Considered Nashville's most iconic "meat and three" eatery, you'll get a generously portioned meal of one meat and three hearty sides. The vibe here is extremely laid-back, and the food, downright delicious. Oh, and if you're a fan of "hot chicken," this is the city where it originated, so there are many places to enjoy the savory dish.

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Nashville is the kind of tourist-friendly city that – like New Orleans and San Francisco –you can visit time and time again and still find something new to love and remember with each visit. We'll be back.

For more information about Nashville, go to www.visitmusiccity.com

Nicole Pensiero is a South Jersey-based writer and a member of the North American Travel Journalists Association.



If you're looking for fun and good music, check out the "Honky Tonk Highway" on lower Broadway, where there's no shortage of clubs .. and no cover charges. *Photo courtesy Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.*

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