

# BIRMINGHAM

ATTRACTIONS SHOPPING DINING OUTDOORS NIGHTLIFE

## Plan a Tour

When tour groups get down to Birmingham, they get down to the business of exploring the city's personality. Among the themed tours are trips to sample the city's locally-produced snacks, real Southern dining and the influence of immigrants on the city's cuisine. Other tours explore the diversity of Birmingham's ethnic communities, reflected in the architecture and cultural events throughout the city. Plan a tour to visit the Eternal Word Television Network, founded by Mother Mary Angelica. Take in the historic sites from Birmingham's tumultuous role in America's Civil Rights Movement. Hear interesting tales from the city's rowdy pioneer days. Visit the factory where the popular M-Class Mercedes-Benz is manufactured. And sample the art, outdoors, dining, sports and entertainment that bring tour groups back to Birmingham time and again. *(Sample itineraries include more locations than a full day of touring will accommodate. Let us help you customize your tour from these suggested destinations. Reservations are required and appreciated.)*

## Itineraries

### Grits, Greens and Greeks: The Southern Foods Tour *Spend a day sampling the flavors of Birmingham.*

Wake up the day with breakfast at [Niki's West](#), a Birmingham institution, where they serve up a heaping helping of Southern favorites: country ham, cheese grits, cathead biscuits with sawmill gravy, and eggs any way you like 'em.

Then walk off some of that fine meal at the [Pepper Place Saturday Market](#). This seasonal spread of Southern foods is a delight to wander through. Farmers' stalls are filled with peaches, peppers and tomatoes. Local chefs demonstrate their skills at outdoor kitchens. Live Southern music and the smell of fresh-cut flowers fill the air.



Begun in 1923, [Golden Flake Foods](#) is now among the largest snack food companies in the country. This popular tour takes visitors from the potato bin to the final packaging of a dozen different potato chips, corn curls and fried pork skins (loved in the South with a little hot sauce sprinkled on). And everyone gets to sample along the way.

Time now for lunch at [The Irondale Café](#), the [Original Whistle Stop Café](#) of "Fried Green Tomatoes" fame. People come from all over the world for the restaurant's Hollywood connection and for a good Southern meal of country fried steak, succotash, okra, cornbread, turnip greens, fried green tomatoes, banana pudding or black bottom pie and sweet tea. Then learn about a whole new concept in cookies—the bite-size cookie—at [Bud's Best Cookies](#). Watch as the wire-cut and rotary cookies roll off the lines at a rate of 3,500 a minute.

Time for some grown-up touring at breweries and wineries in the area. The [Alabama Wine Trail](#) includes three locations on the outskirts of Birmingham: [Ozan Vineyards and Winery](#), [Vizzini Farms Winery](#) and [Morgan Creek Vineyards](#). These wineries welcome group tours to sample their bold muscadine and delicate peach wines, all made from local fruit. New breweries in the Birmingham area give groups a delightful assortment of flavors to sample on tours of their facilities. Among the breweries are [Good People Brewing](#), [Avondale Brewing](#) and [Trim Tab Brewing Company](#).

If the group has saved room for supper, try the fresh Gulf oysters and Athenian snapper at [The Fish Market](#). This Birmingham eatery is a good example of the Greek immigrant influence on Birmingham's rocketing dining scene.

For additional information regarding hotels or step-on guide services, call our Tourism Division at 800-458-8085 or 205-458-8000.

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### In Their Footsteps: Birmingham and the Civil Rights Movement *A comprehensive look at Birmingham's most difficult and triumphant times*

Start the morning with a tour of the [Birmingham Civil Rights Institute](#). The institute documents the rise of the Civil Rights Movement and the succession of events it bore around the nation: the 1955 arrest of Rosa Parks on a Montgomery bus; James Meredith's 1962 admission to the University of Mississippi; the violence in 1963 in the streets and churches of Birmingham.



Across the street is Birmingham's most famous civil rights landmark, the [Sixteenth Street Baptist Church](#). The church and the city drew worldwide attention on September 15, 1963, when Denise McNair, 11, Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley and Carole Robertson, all 14, were killed in a Ku Klux Klan bombing there. The tour includes an optional video that addresses the bombing.

Adjacent to the institute and the church is historic [Kelly Ingram Park](#). The park served as a congregating area for demonstrations in the early 1960s, including the ones in which police dogs and fire hoses were turned on marchers by Birmingham police. Sculptures throughout the park depict the events of 1963, and a cell phone

tour narrates the occurrences. At the park entrance is a newly-installed, life-size sculpture that captures the spirited nature of the young girls killed when the bomb detonated.

Birmingham's [Civil Rights District](#) also includes the nearby [Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame and Carver Theatre for the Performing Arts](#). The museum honors jazz greats with ties to the state of Alabama, showcasing the accomplishments of the likes of Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington and Sun Ra. Just down the street is the [Eddie Kendricks Memorial Park](#), honoring Birmingham native and Temptations lead singer Eddie Kendrick. The Kendrick statue captures for eternity the magic moves of his Motown music.

Other suggested places of interest along the Civil Rights Tour are [Miles College](#) and [Bethel Baptist Church](#). Opened in 1908 to provide training for African American teachers and ministers, Miles continues to offer degrees in liberal arts in a small co-educational setting. Civil Rights legend, the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, was pastor of Bethel Baptist Church from 1953 to 1961. The church served as a gathering place for discussions of civil rights among blacks. In the 1950s, while Shuttlesworth was pastor, the church and the parsonage were bombed on separate occasions. Remarkably, no one was injured in the attacks.

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## Come All Ye Faithful: The Birmingham Pilgrimage Tour

*This Bible Belt city is rich in religious sites.*

Probably the best known religious site in Birmingham is [EWTN, the Eternal Word Television Network](#), founded by Mother Mary Angelica in 1981. The world's first Catholic cable network, EWTN broadcasts a great variety of programs to more than 230 million households in 140 countries. Also a vision of Mother Mary Angelica's is [Our Lady of the Angels Monastery Farm](#) in nearby Cullman. Home to the Poor Clare nuns, the monastery includes 35 hand-crafted German stained glass windows and a 250-seat chapel.

Plan to have lunch at the [Ave Maria Grotto](#) built by Brother Joseph Zoetti, a Bavarian hunchback monk, who created this brilliant work over a period of



50 years. The grotto includes some of the world's most famous religious sites in miniature; St. Peter's Basilica and old Bethlehem are among the detailed structures crafted of tile, pipe, shells and even coconuts. "Brother Joseph and the Grotto" is a recently released documentary that tells the story of the tiny monk's life work.

Back in Birmingham, afternoon tours are available of the magnificent [Cathedral of Saint Paul](#), the mother church of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama. Designed by Chicago architect Adolphus Druiding, the Victorian Gothic building first served as a parish church and was elevated to Cathedral status in 1969. Tours include interesting stories of the murder of a parish priest and the tragic death of the cathedral's

contractor.

Second day pilgrimage tours might include a visit to [Caritas of Birmingham](#), a community in Sterrett, just outside Birmingham. In 1988, a 23-year-old Marija Pavlovic of the former Yugoslavia, now Bosnia-Herzegovina, arrived in Birmingham to donate a kidney for her brother's transplant operation at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. No ordinary visitor, Pavlovic was one of six people from the tiny village of Medjugorje who claimed the Virgin Mary began appearing to them in 1981.

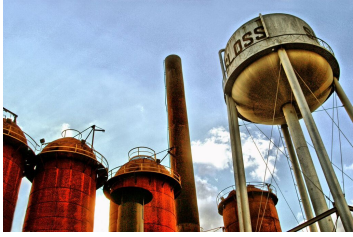
During her 53 days in Alabama, Pavlovic stayed with friend in Sterrett and almost every day reported "visitations" from the Virgin Mary. Throngs of pilgrims from around the country descended on the tiny farm community hoping to catch a glimpse of the young woman. Pavlovic (now married with the last name Lunetti) returns to Birmingham generally once a year, and the fame of the small community of Sterrett has spread. Though the site and the claimed visitations are not recognized by the Catholic Church, a group of devout believers has developed a communal lifestyle around the reported holy visits. The alliance is called *Caritas*, Latin for *love of all people*. A huge stone and stained glass structure, the [Tabernacle of Our Lady's Messages](#), is the centerpiece of the community. Across the road, a statue of the Virgin Mary stands alone in a great open field. Residents and pilgrims gather there for prayers several times each day.

The trip back into Birmingham requires a meal at [Lloyd's](#) on the Hwy. 280 return route. The spacious restaurant has been making diners happy since 1937 and continues to serve up good Southern cooking at reasonable prices.

## Steel Away: The Story of Birmingham's Famed Industrial Days

*Iron and steel gave birth to the South's foremost industrial center.*

Pig iron, which fed Birmingham's foundries and steel mills, was the force that gave birth in the late 1800s to the South's foremost industrial center. Though Birmingham today has an economy rooted in health care, the history of her famous iron and steel industry is fascinating. The story unfolds with a tour through the massive furnaces and smokestacks at [Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark](#). When it ceased operation in 1971, the old iron-making complex became a city-operated museum, the only facility of its kind being preserved in the world today.



From Sloss Furnaces, the tour moves up to mountain to [Vulcan Park and Museum](#). Vulcan is the largest statue ever cast in iron and is the city's iconic and unofficial symbol. He is patterned after the mythical Roman god of the forge. In 1903, Alabama was invited to exhibit at the St. Louis World's Fair. A group of Birmingham businessmen decided to create the largest iron statue in the world, a nod to the city's powerful position in the iron and steel industry. After some unusual fundraising activities, Vulcan was cast from Birmingham iron ore at Birmingham Iron and Steel Company. The statue won the exposition's grand prize. Vulcan's viewing platform offers the best panoramas of the city and surrounding areas.



All this history of heat and flames just naturally calls for some great open-pit barbeque. Steer the tour toward [Jim 'N Nick's Community Barbeque](#) in historic Five Points South. Their award-winning meats are cooked low and slow with great attention to detail.

Then head out to find more history at [Tannehill Historical State Park](#), the birthplace of Birmingham's iron and steel industry and a major supplier of pig iron for Confederate forces during the Civil War. The [Alabama Iron and Steel Museum](#) is an interpretive center on 19th century iron making technology with belt driven machines of the 1800s and tools and products of the times. From spring through fall, the blacksmith, miller and craftsmen demonstrate their skills. Craft shops occupy restored pioneer cabins, and the cotton gin, pioneer farm and working grist mill preserve a long-gone way of life.

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## A Patchwork Quilt: Hit the Highlights of Birmingham's Top Attractions

*Just two days to tour? Here's how to see some of everything...*

### Day #1:

Wake up the animals at [The Birmingham Zoo](#)! Orientation begins with a train ride around the grounds—all ages love this steam locomotive. See the Predator Zone, the Sea Lion Splash Show, and the amazing [Trails of Africa](#) with the rare feature of having an all-male herd of African elephants.

Just across the street from the zoo, the beautiful [Birmingham Botanical Gardens](#) blanket more than 67 acres. Twenty-five themed areas include a massive conservatory, the Southern Wildflower Garden and the Japanese Garden with authentic teahouse. Make reservations to lunch at *The Gardens Café* where the menu of local ingredients changes seasonally.

It doesn't take a motorsports enthusiast to appreciate the country's most stunning collection of cars and motorcycles at [Barber Vintage Motorsports Museum](#). The museum houses more than 1,200 vintage and modern motorcycles and an extensive collection of Lotus cars, along with other significant makes. And every vehicle in the museum is in working order.

A fine way to wrap up a day of touring is with a [Birmingham Barons](#) baseball game at the new Regions Field. The team plays in the Southern League and is the Double-A affiliate of the Chicago White Sox. The menu at the park goes far beyond peanuts and Crackerjacks with everything from "Magic City dogs" to Dreamland barbeque.

When it's not baseball season, tours find grand evening entertainment with performances by the [Alabama Symphony Orchestra](#) or the [Alabama](#)



**Ballet.** Especially popular with group tours are the Alabama Ballet's seasonal performances of George Balanchine's "The Nutcracker."

#### Day #2:

Let's make this an artsy kind of day with the first stop at the [Birmingham Museum of Art](#). The museum holds a rich panorama of cultures, including Asian, European, African, Pre-Columbian and Native American. Highlights include the museum's collection of Asian art, the collection of 18th century European decorative arts, and the museum's world-renowned collection of Wedgwood. The museum also regularly hosts top-quality traveling exhibitions. This is a good place for lunch as well, with Oscar's at the Museum serving sophisticated American cuisine.

Schedule your tour to coincide with one of Birmingham's many art festivals. The [Magic City Art Connection](#) is highly regarded nationwide, and attracts painters, sculptors, potters and jewelry craftsmen from around the country for this three-day festival each spring. In the fall, Birmingham's annual [Art Walk](#) transforms the downtown loft

neighborhoods into art districts, with the work of more than 100 visual artists, live music, street performers, and food and drink vendors.

Then check out the art of discovery at the [McWane Science Center](#). A ball for all ages, McWane adventures include four floors of interactive exhibits, from a walk with dinosaurs to the shark and ray petting tank. Alternate attractions tours might consider are visits to [Aldridge Gardens](#), known for their spectacular hydrangeas, and the [Alabama Sports Hall of Fame](#), honoring legendary athletes with ties to the state.

Consider too an afternoon tour at the [Mercedes-Benz US International Visitors Center](#) in nearby Vance. The visitors center, the first one of its kind outside Germany, displays the star-studded history of these high-end vehicles. Factory tours are available by reservation and are well worth scheduling.

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### Study This: Educational and Entertaining Tours for Student Groups *Birmingham is a popular destination for youth groups of all interests.*

#### Day #1

Head up Red Mountain to [Vulcan Park and Museum](#) to see a really big attraction. The world's largest cast iron statue, Vulcan is the mythical god of the forge, a nod to Birmingham's early beginnings in the iron and steel industry. An observation deck high up on the statue gives visitors a panoramic view of the surrounding area.

At [Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark](#), visitors get a deep look into the iron and steel industry that was responsible for the birth of Birmingham. This 32-acre blast furnace plant produced iron for nearly 100 years and typifies the technology that gave rise to America's industrial dominance. Sloss is the only 20th century blast furnace in the country being preserved and interpreted as a museum.

From Sloss Furnaces go over to the *Civil Rights District*, and begin your tour at the [Birmingham Civil Rights Institute](#). Richly detailed exhibits in the institute reveal slices of black and white life from the late 1800s to the present. A series of galleries tells the stories of daily life for African-Americans in Alabama and the nation, and how it differed dramatically from the lives white people of that era took for granted. *(See In Their Footsteps for more itineraries in the Civil Rights District.)*

Find outdoor fun at [Red Mountain Park](#), where adventures are designed for children and adults of all ages. Try a flight over the treetops on the Red Ore Zip Tour. Take the challenge of swaying bridges, tight ropes, wall climbing and more in the Hugh Kaul Beanstalk Forest. Or grab hold at the 80-foot-tall Kaul Adventure Tower, with eight lanes for rappelling and traditional rock climbing with hand-holds and vine climbs. Then there's the Mega Zip which reaches speeds up to 30 mph.

#### Day #2



Start the day at the [Birmingham Museum of Art](#). You'll find really astounding collections of Asian, African, European Decorative, and Modern and Contemporary Art that span more than 4,000 years.

Other interesting and entertaining attractions to tour include the [Alabama Sports Hall of Fame](#), where visitors find tributes to major athletes with Alabama ties. Displays include memorabilia from Alabama Coach Paul "Bear" Bryant, Olympic great Jesse Owens, "Hammering" Hank Aaron, baseball legend Willie Mays and boxing great Joe Louis.

Then go over to [McWane Science Center](#) where visitors find four floors on interactive, hands-on exhibits suitable for entertaining and educating all ages. Changing exhibitions and adventures such as ScienceQuest provide hours of fun and challenge. Their gift shop is so chocked full of really cool

stuff that they named it “Really Cool Stuff.”



Find sports history at the [Negro Southern League Museum](#). The collection dates back to the late 1890s with the industrial teams of steel workers and miners in the area. The museum also details the history of the Birmingham Black Barons, who played at the city’s historic Rickwood Field, America’s oldest ballpark.

Church and youth groups find day-long fun at [Alabama Splash Adventure](#). If you’re visiting in the late spring or summer, pack up the beach bag and sunscreen, and plan to spend the day here. The teens and tweens will want to ride the Rampage wooden roller coaster time and again. In the water park area, everyone loves Junior Bumper Boats and Neptune’s Plunge.

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## Greater Birmingham Convention & Visitors Bureau

2200 Ninth Avenue North  
Birmingham, Alabama 35203-1100  
Toll-Free: (800) 458-8085  
Phone: (205) 458-8000  
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