

HOLIDAY FEASTS
AN INTERNATIONAL MEDLEY

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Atlanta

CELEBRATING 200 ISSUES INSIDE OUR NORTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOODS



Celebrating
200
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OUR NORTHSIDE
NEIGHBORHOODS

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NASHVILLE

Nashville's Union Station Hotel



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BIRMINGHAM

Extend Relevant Renaissance

written by COLLEEN ANN MCNALLY

Birmingham's Grand Bohemian Hotel

PHOTOS COURTESY OF UNION STATION HOTEL, GRAND BOHEMIAN HOTEL



● RELEVANT RENAISSANCE

Number
193
NASHVILLE
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ENNESSEE'S FAMED MUSIC CITY may clock in less than four hours from the Northside, but the drive can feel much longer as anticipation builds with each curve along winding mountain roads. It's

akin to the buzzing excitement before your favorite star takes the stage for a live concert. Although I had experienced both the glamour and grit of Nashville before, this visit would be different.

Nashville has exploded in recent years with success stories that don't necessarily involve record deals. This time around, I ventured to the burgeoning Nashville beyond Broadway, hot chicken and cowboys — and from this perspective, no boots are necessary.

LEATHER AND LUXURY

The Union Station Hotel Nashville, an Autograph Collection hotel, was my first stop so I could hand car keys to the valet and stow luggage in one of the property's luxurious guest rooms. Located in a turn-of-the-20th-century former railway station, the hotel is in the heart of Music City. It's an ideal homebase for travelers whose intended target is the Frist Center for the Visual Arts, the resurrected Ryman Auditorium, the numerous nightspots on Broadway, Music Row's mighty record label offices, radio stations, recording studios or Bridgestone Arena, home to the National Hockey League's Nashville Predators, conference basketball tournaments and main-act concerts.

A noteworthy ballad of another kind unfolds within the walls of Union Station. Beneath a heavy-stone Richardsonian-Romanesque design and designation as a National Historic Landmark, the hotel's lobby



Germantown Inn

is a showstopper: a soaring, barrel-vaulted ceiling with gold-leaf medallions and 100-year-old, original Luminous Prism stained glass reigns over marble floors, oak-accented doors, bas-relief details and stately limestone fireplaces.

Originally built to accommodate the eight passenger railroads that served Nashville in 1900, the building was transformed into a boutique hotel in 1986, and just last year was reimagined with an extensive \$15.5 million dollar renovation to seamlessly preserve the authentic architecture while incorporating contemporary details. From cowhide headboards and leather touches to custom wire chandeliers and commissioned sculptures, the combination embodies what Nashville is and what Nashville has become. Hungry for more of it, I hopped in an Uber and headed off to get my fill.



NEIGHBORHOOD SPOTLIGHT

As East Nashville has developed its own vibe, communities like 12 South, the Gulch and Germantown have also evolved with their own distinct styles.

The latter's renaissance is responsible for an enclave of restaurants like Rolf and Daughters, City House and 5th & Taylor – just to name a few – as well as the charming Germantown Inn. Located in one of the oldest buildings in the historic neighborhood, the two-story, Federal-style house dating back to 1865 is now an inspired six-bedroom luxury boutique Inn.

Opened in December of last year, each light-filled suite is named for a former president with connections to Tennessee, complete with colorful presidential portraits by a local artist. In fact, the Inn itself is a celebration of the vast well of creativity in the city, with custom pieces commissioned by local talent, from the drapery fabric to the wallpaper to custom lighting. If you're traveling with a large party, consider booking all six suites and making yourselves completely at home in Nashville. germantowninn.com

EAST OF NORMAL

My next stop was the historic East Nashville neighborhood. A short drive from Broadway's entertainment district, this eclectic enclave has a distinct vibe. From the dishes lining eatery menus to the sounds filling intimate music venues, it's apparent that locals have broader tastes than what is portrayed on television or at the annual Country Music Association (CMA) awards celebration. But rumor has it, if you mingle with the patrons of the local hangouts, you're bound to meet more than a few musicians and songwriters.

Sample this theory at Vinyl Tap, part draft house and part record store, located at the corner of Greenwood and Porter. Founded and co-owned by Todd Hedrick, a fourth generation local, the casual atmosphere encourages sipping while you shop through

a variety of genres. Stay late and sample live in-store action from rising stars.

Feeling hungry? The wise will take their growling stomachs to The Pharmacy Burger Parlor & Beer Garden. It's a tough call between the brew or gourmet shakes and signature burgers or housemade, smoked Wursts, but it's a win-win either way. Appease your sweet tooth at Olive & Sinclair Chocolate Co. Tennessee's first and only bean-to-bar chocolate company since 2007, a century-old method for stone ground grits using melangeurs (two giant granite rollers on top of a granite slab grinds cocoa nibs to paste and then liquid) inspired their technique for "Southern artisan chocolate." Only pure cane brown sugar is added for a robust flavor, making it even sweeter to indulge with buttermilk white chocolate, aged cacao in bourbon barrels, Duck Fat Caramels and Smoked Nib Brittle

PHOTO COURTESY OF GERMTANTOWN INN



Chauhan Ale & Masala House

using Benton's Bacon. Learn more with a factory tour, offered every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the hour and lasting about 35 minutes. Tours are \$5 per person and include samples — debatably one of the best deals in Nashville.

A LASTING IMPRESSION

Speaking of tours, be sure to book tickets in advance if the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum is on your Nashville bucket list. This massive, self-guided museum suggests allowing about 3 hours for the best experience, but tickets are valid all day so visitors can come and go as they please. Additionally, the museum offers an off-site tour of Historic RCA Studio B, which played a pivotal role for hitmakers ranging from Elvis Presley, Willie Nelson and Dolly Parton to modern rockers like The Strokes.

Short on time? Opt to spend just one hour at Hatch Show Print, one of America's oldest letterpress print shops, which now operates out of the Country Music Hall of Fame. In their iconic style, designer-printers create more than 500 colorful posters each year for venues, businesses and organizations around the globe. Tours offer the chance to handle the tools of the

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trade and smell the ink as you pull your own keepsake print, but the real lasting impression is Nashville's evolution as a world-class city.

CULINARY CROSSROADS

The evolution also is echoed in the food scene, with Strategic Hospitality leading the charge. Owned by brothers Benjamin and Max Goldberg, the duo has shaped the city's dining landscape by continuously introducing innovative, one-of-a-kind concepts.

These range from a kitschy honky tonk called Paradise Park to Pinewood, a trendy coffee shop and restaurant with six bowling lanes and outdoor pools. Then, there's Bastion, a cocktail bar and hangout in the Wedgewood-Houston neighborhood that snagged a semifinalist spot in the 2017 James Beard Awards for Best New Restaurant. It's no coincidence that Bastion translates to "stronghold," or "a place or system in which something (such as an old-fashioned idea) continues to survive."

For an effervescent evening, I ventured to Le Sel in Midtown, Strategic's fresh take on a French brasserie. The artful interiors are as appealing to the eye as the creative cuisine is to the tastebuds.

Back at Union Station, the hotel lobby was busy with people preparing for Cochon 555. This epic culinary competition celebrates heritage breed pigs by gathering renowned chefs, sommeliers and barkeeps, and it starts in New York and makes a dozen stops before the Grand Cochon in Chicago. A look at the tour's lineup is further evidence that when it comes to amassing the country's top food cities, Nashville can't be missed.

After reluctantly checking out of the Union Station, I had one more place to check off the list: brunch at Chauhan Ale & Masala House. The local favorite is surrounded by funky street art and helmed by Food Network rockstar, Chef Maneet Chauhan, who has made history by beautifully colliding her Indian roots and zest for travel with her affection for Southern cuisine. Take for instance, the house Bloody Mary with vindaloo curry, or the deviled eggs made with tikka masala, tandoori chicken and bacon. Just like Chauhan's newfound hometown, she shows no signs of slowing down. Next door, she recently opened Tansuò, a contemporary Chinese restaurant — reason enough to plan a return visit soon.

When the Bloody Marys arrived, they brought me back to the present moment. Both hot and refreshing, the mix was quite unlike anything I had tasted before — just like the new Nashville.

unionstationhotelnashville.com
countrymusicshalloffame.org
chauhannashville.com