

THE **Nation.** TRAVELS

US Civil Rights: On the Road to Freedom – Jackson, Little Rock, Memphis, Selma, Birmingham, and Montgomery

September 30 – October 7, 2018

Join us as we visit the iconic sites of the civil-rights movement, meet with people who were a part of history, and immerse ourselves in the spirit that continues to inspire today's fight for justice and equality.



SEPTEMBER 30: JACKSON

After arriving independently in Jackson, make your own way to **The Westin** hotel.

This afternoon, visit the recently opened Mississippi Civil Rights Museum and Museum of Mississippi History. The two museums tell their own stories of the state's rich and complex history. (D)

OCTOBER 1: JACKSON

Begin the day at the Medgar Evers Home Museum. Evers, the first field secretary for the NAACP in Mississippi, was assassinated in the driveway of his Jackson home in the early-morning hours of June 12, 1963. The driveway still bears faint bloodstains that trace the path Evers crawled after he was shot. Meet with **Minnie White Watson**, the curator of the property.

Enjoy an evening welcome reception and dinner with fellow travelers.



Continue on to the studio of Malaco Records to meet with co-founder **Wolf Stephenson**. Malaco Records defines the state of contemporary southern rhythm and blues, soul, and gospel, with more than 30 years of making black music for black people, focusing on local artists and songwriters.

Visit historic Farish Street in central Jackson. This neighborhood was the center of African- American life in the city during the Jim Crow era. These days, many storefronts are shuttered, but the Big Apple Inn, which opened in 1939, still remains. We'll stop here for a small bite of smoked-sausage sandwiches or, for the more daring, Big Apple's famous pig-ear sandwiches. This unique local delicacy has attracted its fair share of celebrity admirers, including B.B. King, Bizarre Foods host Andrew Zimmerman, and even President Obama.

Close by is a former Greyhound bus station. A prominent site from the 1961 Freedom Rides against segregation, it has been lovingly renovated by architect Robert Parker Adams, whose architectural firm now occupies the art deco structure. It's a few blocks from the State Capitol, which was built in 1903 and is where the Mississippi Legislature passed its notorious Jim Crow laws. Local business owner **Daniel Dillion** will lead our group through the Farish Corridor before stopping by for lunch at his restaurant, Frank Jones Corner.

Stop at the Smith Robertson Museum. This cultural center is the site of Jackson's first school for African-American children and showcases the history and achievements of black Mississippians. Future literary giant Richard Wright attended school here, where he was valedictorian of his junior-high class.

Visit Greenwood Cemetery, the final resting place of many of Jackson's former residents both black and white, including Eudora Welty and the Rev. Marion Dunbar, a deacon for a black congregation that held services in the basement of the First Baptist Church.

Schedule permitting, meet with **Kali Akuno**, the co-founder of the Jackson Cooperation, whose mission is to develop a network of cooperatives and worker-owned enterprises in the city which empower black and Latino communities.

Tonight, enjoy dinner at the Parlor Market, where the kitchen executes playful interpretations of classic Southern dishes. Nearby is Hal and Mal's, a bar and restaurant that has been bringing blues, jazz, and country music to Jackson for more than 25 years. You may opt to stop by after dinner. (B,L,D)

OCTOBER 2: LITTLE ROCK

Depart Jackson in the morning and head north through the flatlands of the Mississippi Delta. Stop at the B.B. King Museum. From the cotton fields, street corners, and juke joints of the Mississippi Delta came the blues. Considered by many to be the only truly indigenous American music, blues music has influenced musicians worldwide and is deeply rooted in the Delta soil— and so is the man who helped spread this musical form as its foremost ambassador, Riley B.B. King.



Ride through Baptist Town, which was established in the 1800s in tandem with the growth of the local cotton industry. Known for its strong sense of community, it is anchored by the McKinney Chapel Missionary Baptist Church and a former cotton compress. Meet with **Sylvester Hoover**, who will lead the group through Baptist Town and tour the Back in the Day Museum, a community museum exploring the history of the blues, Baptist Town, and African-American culture in the Delta.

Enjoy a special lunch prepared by **Mary Hoover**. Sylvester and Mary had run several popular soul restaurants over the years, one of which was destroyed by a fire in 2007. Today Mary still occasionally sells her baked goods, including her famous "butter-roll" from Hoover Grocery which they own. Mary was also involved in preparing the spreads for the food scenes in the movie, *The Help*.

Afterward, visit the nearby town of Money, where the first marker on the Mississippi Freedom Trail was placed at the former site of Bryant's Grocery. This is where Emmitt Till was accused of whistling at white shopkeeper Carolyn Bryant in August 1955. The 14-year-old was kidnapped, tortured, and killed a few days later in a crime that helped set the civil-rights movement in motion. Today, the dilapidated building has almost crumbled to the ground from neglect.

Continue north, stopping in at Dockery Farms, once one of the most important plantations in the Delta. At its peak, Dockery Farms was essentially a self-sufficient town. In the early 20th century, Dockery housed 400 tenant families, most of whom were African Americans who migrated to the region in pursuit of work. Will Dockery earned a reputation for treating his tenants fairly, with many of them residing there for long periods of time.

While the precise origins of the blues are lost to time, one of the primal centers for the music in Mississippi was Dockery Farms. For nearly three decades, the plantation was intermittently the home of Charley Patton (c. 1891–1934), the most important early Delta blues musician. We'll have a chance to hear some of Charley Patton's recordings.

Stop in Sumner at the Emmett Till Interpretive Center, which educates visitors about the Emmett Till tragedy and points a way toward racial healing. Meet with museum director, **Patrick Weems**.

Enjoy dinner at Abe's Bar-B-Q, founded in 1924 in the center of the origins of Delta Blues music. It is a local myth that blues legend, Robert Johnson ate at Abe's Bar-B-Q while sitting on a Coca-Cola case under one of

the sycamore trees that was prominent at that corner back then.

Continue on to Little Rock and check-in to the **Burgundy Hotel**. (B,L,D)

OCTOBER 3: MEMPHIS

This morning, visit Little Rock High School, a national historic site. The school was at the heart of the often-violent struggle over school desegregation, which helped force the nation to resolve to enforce African-American civil rights in the face of massive Southern defiance during the years following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Meet with current Principal of Little Rock Central High School, **Principal Rousseau**.



Continue on to the William J. Clinton Presidential Center, housed in a gleaming modern space designed by the award-winning architect James Polshek and overlooking the Arkansas River. President Clinton himself narrates the audio tour, which includes his thoughts on one of his heroes—the late anti-apartheid leader and South African President Nelson Mandela. Enjoy lunch at the center’s restaurant.

Nearby is the headquarters of Heifer International, whose mission is to work with communities to end world hunger and poverty. A tour of the building, which uses half the energy of other buildings the same size, will show how a former industrial-waste site was transformed into a thriving wetlands habitat.

Ride for about three hours to Memphis and check into the **Napoleon Hotel Memphis/Madison Hotel**.

Enjoy dinner this evening at McEwens, a local restaurant serving upscale southern food. (B,L,D)

OCTOBER 4: MEMPHIS

Start the morning at the Lorraine Motel, now the home of the National Civil Rights Museum. The motel was bought in 1945 by Walter and Loree Bailey and became a modest safe haven for black travelers who were welcomed, served home-cooked meals, and offered an upscale environment. The motel was listed in *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, also known as the “Green Guide,” a listing of businesses that were friendly to African Americans during the Jim Crow era.

On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. stepped out of Room 306 of the Lorraine Motel and spoke with friends in the parking lot below. As King turned to walk back to his room, a bullet struck him in the neck, instantly taking his life.

The museum is filled with artifacts, films, oral histories, and interactive media that guide visitors through five centuries of history, from slave resistance to the numerous protests of the American civil-rights movement. A large white wreath hangs on the balcony outside Room 306. It's possible to gaze into the room, which has been preserved to capture exactly what it looked like on that tragic night.

Across the street is the Legacy Building (the boarding house from which the assassin's shot was allegedly fired), which examines the investigation of the assassination, the case against James Earl Ray, and ensuing conspiracy theories.



Lunch today is at the world-famous Gus's Fried Chicken.

This afternoon, we'll focus on Memphis's music history, with a special tour led by a professional Beale Street musician. Learn about Memphis's strong affiliations with not one musical genre but three: It's the birthplace of rock 'n' roll and the cradle of soul, and—though the blues weren't born here (that distinction goes to the rural parts of the Mississippi Delta)—it was the Memphis-based musician and "Father of the Blues" W.C. Handy who helped get those "lonesome songs" out into the world. Stop at the Stax Museum of American Soul, which provides an insight to the civil-rights story set within the Memphis music scene.

A mile north is the Slave Haven Underground Railway Museum, where dark cellars, hidden passageways, and trapdoors were used by runaway slaves attempting to flee to freedom in the North. Built by abolitionist and German immigrant Jacob Burkle, this modest home tells the story of the Memphis slave trade and the Underground Railroad.

Dinner is at your leisure this evening. (B,L)

OCTOBER 5: BIRMINGHAM

Travel to Birmingham and visit the 16th Street Baptist Church. It was here that a bomb killed four young African-American girls as they prepared to sing in their choir on September 15, 1963. The incident caused national outrage and brought attention to the horrors endured by Southern blacks at the hands of the Ku Klux Klan. Meet with **Dr. Rev. Carolyn McKinstry**, who was 14 and inside the church when the bomb exploded.

Visit the Selma and Brown Chapel. Founded by freed slaves in 1908, the Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church was the site of Malcolm X's address in support of voting rights, Dr. King's eulogy for Jimmie Lee Jackson, and Jackson's funeral. Here we will meet with **Michelle Browder**, founder of I AM MORE THAN..., a Montgomery-based non-profit which encourages and serves young adults.



Continue on to the Edmund Pettus Bridge. A group of approximately 500 civil-rights advocates left Brown Chapel on March 7, 1965, and attempted to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge to march along US Route 80 to Montgomery, the state capital. At the bridge, the Alabama State Police blocked the road and ordered the assembled marchers to disperse. When the marchers refused, the troopers attacked and beat them, forcing them back to Brown Chapel.

Though the marchers did not succeed in reaching Selma, their treatment by the police highlighted the danger to people of all races who supported the civil- rights movement and universal voting rights.

In August of 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, granting the redress sought by the thousands who marched and countless others throughout the country. The final Selma-to- Montgomery march that ended at Montgomery's Capitol steps on March 25, 1965, was the culmination of the modern civil-rights movement.

The group will travel the 54 miles between Selma and Montgomery and follow the route of the marchers who helped change American history. The Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail commemorates the events, people, and route of the 1965 voting-rights march in Alabama.

In Selma, visit the Interpretive Center, which marks the location where armed forces attacked the first wave of unarmed marchers on Bloody Sunday. Later, stop at the Lowndes Interpretive Center, which is the site of a memorial dedicated to Viola Liuzzo, a civil-rights activist from Michigan who was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan in 1965.

Arrive in Montgomery and check into the **Renaissance Montgomery Hotel**.

Dinner this evening is on your own. (B,L)

OCTOBER 6: MONTGOMERY

This morning, visit the Rosa Parks Museum. The museum is set in front of the bus stop where Parks took her stand and features a video re-creation of that pivotal moment that launched the 1955 Montgomery bus

boycott by African Americans that lasted over a year. It paved the way for the abolition of segregation in the South, launched the civil-rights and voting- rights movements; and catapulted 26-year-old Baptist minister Martin Luther King Jr. onto the world stage.

Walk to the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church and Parsonage, where Martin Luther King Jr. was a pastor from 1954 to 1960. See where he lived when his house was bombed, an event that cemented Dr. King's commitment to nonviolence. Meet with **Wanda Battle** who will lead the group in song.

Continue on to the Southern Poverty Law Center and meet with **Lecia Brooks**, Outreach Director for the center and Director of the Civil Rights Memorial, to learn more about the center's key initiatives and work on social justice issues. Afterward visit the nearby Civil Rights Memorial, created by Vietnam Veterans Memorial designer Maya Lin.



Enjoy lunch at Chris' Hot Dogs, which was founded on historic Dexter Street in 1917. Dexter Street is where many momentous historical events occurred, including where the order to start the American Civil War was sent by telegram; where Martin Luther King Jr. accepted his call to ministry; and where Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat. Dexter Street has been an avenue of change over its many years.

After lunch, visit the Freedom Rides Museum, which is located in a former Greyhound bus station. This is where on May 20, 1961, a group of Freedom Riders were attacked by a local mob. The museum explores a compelling American story using artwork as well as quotations, photographs, and architectural elements.

End the day, with an exclusive meeting at the Equal Justice Initiative with the organization's Founder and Executive Director, **Bryan Stevenson**.

Tonight, enjoy a farewell dinner and reception at Central restaurant. (B,L,D)

OCTOBER 7: DEPART

Depart independently to the airport and flights home. (B)

B: Breakfast, L: Lunch, D: Dinner, R: Reception