

Nashville's Historic Hermitage Hotel

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Photography by Dana Finimore and courtesy of The Hermitage Hotel

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Nashville bursts with energy from morning 'til night. Known as Music City, it offers everything from great music and museums to upscale shopping and lively restaurants.

The Tennessee capital is a wonderful getaway city, particularly when your visit includes a stay at one of the South's most exquisite antique hotels.

Before taking in the sights, enjoy a little pampering in the historical setting of The Hermitage Hotel. The beaux arts-designed beauty built in 1910 has recently

undergone an 11-month-long, \$18 million-dollar renovation. Spend time in the lobby enjoying lemonade and cookies while you soak up the gorgeous architecture and fine craftsmanship of the establishment.

Italian sienna marble, Russian walnut panels, vaulted stain-glass ceilings and Persian rugs come together to create dramatic awe-inspiring views. Defining a new standard in luxury, guests at the Hermitage Hotel enjoy attentive personal service and rooms loaded with amenities.



The impeccable marble bathrooms, featuring large, separate showers and soaker tubs, are brimming with Molton Brown hair and skin products. The custom-made beds are covered with down comforters, plenty of fluffy pillows and lavished with crisp Frette linens.

The Hermitage Hotel played a significant role in local and national history. It began in 1914, when the hotel boldly hosted the National American Women's Suffrage Association's national convention. By 1915, newspapers predicted that Tennessee's powerful suffragists might win the vote for all American women.

In 1920, the hotel played host once again to both the pro- and anti-suffrage forces during the campaign to pass the 19th Amendment. Both parties used the hotel as the platform for arguing their beliefs on behalf of American women.

The impasse ended on August 18, when State Rep. Harry Burn broke a 48-48 tie in favor of women's suffrage. Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the amendment, thus giving all American women the right to vote.

The hotel's fascinating musical heritage comes from its role as a social nucleus during the 1930s and 1940s. The Francis Craig Orchestra entertained Nashvillians in the Oak Bar for 16 years, considered by many the longest running hotel gig on record.

The orchestra was also the first to broadcast over WSM; it performed a program that was aired over the entire NBC network for 12 years. In 1949, the show introduced



Lamb chops are just one of the many delicious entrees that diners may enjoy at the hotel's renowned Capital Grille.

The oversized guestrooms at The Hermitage Hotel provide a spacious elegance along with luxury amenities like DVD players, Frette linen and complimentary high-speed Internet access.





In 1920, Tennessee became the 36th state to ratify the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, giving women nationwide the right to vote. The hotel (above, at left) was headquarters for both pro- and anti-suffrage forces. The anti-suffrage movement used the hotel as a platform for decrying the loss of womanhood and motherhood, certain results if suffrage passed, they believed.

Gene Autry is shown here checking into the hotel with his horse, Champion



newcomer Dinah Shore, who entertained her audience with a new song entitled *Near You*.

There is no need to go outside the hotel to find a good restaurant. The hotel's Capital Grille offers a superb dining experience. Executive Chef Tyler Brown adds imagination as well as a flair for Southern food to his culinary delights.

From the Tennessee Black Angus beef, the lamb and the market-fresh seafood to the signature desserts and everything in between, Brown takes pride in what he serves. The wait-staff members address you by name and gladly offer suggestions from a most comprehensive wine list.

The Hermitage Hotel boasts six presidents as former guests, while a plethora of





celebrities provide testament it has seen glitz and glamour.

An autographed photo of Gene Autry signing in at the front desk – with his horse – hangs proudly in the lobby’s lower level. Legend has it that Autry and his trusty steed, Champion, used the service elevator to reach their third-floor suite. Cracks still evident in the lobby’s marble flooring are attributed to Champion’s iron-shod hooves.

Bette Davis and Greta Garbo also stayed at the hotel when in town.

The Hermitage Hotel is located downtown, just steps away from many of the city’s attractions. The Frist Center for the Arts, Ryman Auditorium, The Wild Horse Saloon and Music Row are all within walking distance. Take a cab in the evening since Nashville, like many cities, has a few undesirable areas where newcomers could become lost at night.

Several attractions, such as The Grand Ole Opry, The General Jackson steamboat and Opry Mills Mall, are all located near Interstate 40. Note local traffic reports since I-40 may back up during rush hours. Taking alternate routes is advisable during those peak traffic times.

There is no argument that Nashville is home to country music. Landmarks

where legends of the genre have played during the years make musical attractions the city’s lifeblood. The Grand Ole Opry, Ryman Auditorium and the Country Music Hall of Fame are must-sees for country-music fans, but also for visitors who may just be curious about its roots.

Even though music is a main focus when visiting Nashville, there are still plenty of other things to do in the city. Before country music became her vocation, Nashville already boasted a long and prolific history.

The Hermitage mansion and estate, home to Andrew Jackson, provides a wonderful glimpse into the life of the illustrious seventh president and his family. Visitors view many artifacts original to the home, and also see a film detailing the events during Jackson’s life. Daily tours are led by guides dressed in period costume.

Interestingly, the estate’s 1,200 acres are still farmed; a portion of that income goes to preserving the mansion.

While many American cities make great getaways, Nashville is a place visitors can glimpse the past, when courtesy and service with a smile were the norm. *



(Opposite) Costumed tour guides lead visitors through Andrew Jackson’s home, The Hermitage, pictured above. The 1,200-acre estate is still farmed today.