

73 THE ENTERTAINMENT  
ISSUE

**DOM KENNEDY**

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Words by  
BY BECCA BLOND

# Where Music + Civil Rights History Collide: How To Explore Memphis

When it comes to legacies, Memphis is rich. Known as the birthplace of rock 'n' roll and blues, it was the home of Elvis, BB King and Johnny Cash - and today, "grind city" has music deeply embedded in its soul. But this city on the banks of the Mississippi River also tells an important Black story. This is where MLK was murdered in 1968 at the Lorraine Motel, and that piece of hallowed ground now serves to educate future generations about this part of American history in the form of the National Civil Rights Museum.

Photo Credit: Joshua J. Cohen







EXPERIENCE

Begin with a stroll down the iconic Beale Street, which is Memphis’ version of Nashville’s Honky Tonk Row. It has also served as a hub for Black culture and commerce throughout the city’s history. Pop into attractions such as the Rock ’n’ Soul Museum or simply grab a drink and listen to live music at one of the bars lining the pedestrian-only pavement.

Serious fans may want to pay a visit to Elvis’ final resting place at his Graceland Estate, which doubles as a museum. Also make sure to check out Sun Studios, where Presley, Cash Roy Orbison and Jerry Lee Lewis all cut records. It is still a working recording studio.

Located in the South Main Arts District, just south of downtown, the National Civil Rights Museum preserves the Lorraine Motel, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in 1968. The museum traces

the history of America’s civil rights movements from the 17th-century to present day in a number of thought-provoking interactive displays. The Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum is also notable.

STAY

Just across the street from the museum is the new ARRIVE Memphis, which is where we recommend staying while in town. It is an elegant yet unpretentious boutique property with fabulously designed rooms. The rooms feature exposed brick walls, large windows and vintage rugs. The lobby doubles as a lounge space decorated like a cozy living room with plenty of seating that’s popular with locals and guests. The property is also super dog friendly if you’re traveling with a pup.

Here you will find Hustle & Dough, where you can grab coffee and breakfast [including homemade pastries] in the mornings

and the best wood-fired pizza in Memphis come evening. They also have a bar with a craft cocktail menu and gifted mixologists who create personalized drinks based on taste and liquor preference.

EAT AND DRINK

Just a few blocks down the street from ARRIVE is Memphis’ oldest restaurant, The Arcade. Founded in 1919, it cooks up greasy-spoon American breakfast classics in 1950s diner style environs complete with old school booths and countertop seats.

For an elevated dinner experience, the Gray Canary is also in the neighborhood and wows the foodie. Expect innovative American fare that changes with the seasons along with some excellent vegetable creations and fantastic cocktails. If you just want fried chicken, Gus’ World Famous Fried Chicken usually has a line out the door.

Of course you can’t really visit Memphis without trying the barbecue. What constitutes the best is always a toss-up. Personally, I’ve always loved The Rendezvous in a downtown alley. But Central BBQ also gets high marks for its combination of dry rub spices and 24-hour marinades.

Also in the South Main Street Arts District, inside the Central Station Hotel, Eight & Sand is one of the most unique music venues in Memphis. The lobby bar features turntables and a 20,000 title vinyl music collection all of which has a Memphis music connection. Live DJ’s spin regularly and the vibe is vintage cool. Order a seasonal cocktail and just sit back and chill.

WHERE TO EAT:



HUSTLE & DOUGH

477 S Main St, Memphis, TN 38103  
(901) 701-7577



THE GRAY CANARY

301 S Front St, Memphis, TN 38103  
(901) 249-2932



THE RENDEZVOUS

52 S 2nd St, Memphis, TN 38103  
(901) 523-2746

WHERE TO STAY:



ARRIVE MEMPHIS

477 S Main St, Memphis, TN 38103  
(901) 701-7575



CENTRAL STATION HOTEL

545 S. Main St.  
Memphis TN 38103  
901.524.5247



BIG CYPRESS LODGE

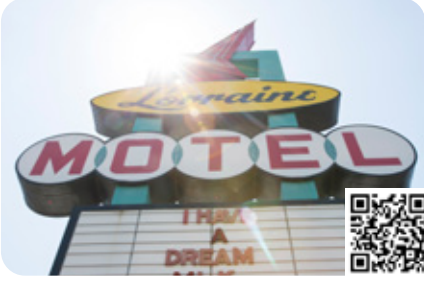
1 Bass Pro Dr, Memphis, TN 38105  
(901) 620-4600

WHAT TO DO:



BEALE STREET

Memphis, TN



NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM

450 Mulberry St, Memphis, TN 38103  
(901) 521-9699



SUN STUDIOS

706 Union Avenue, Memphis, Tennessee