



ALABAMA HERITAGE

Text by CATHY STILL MCGOWIN



Most of us have heard the sounds of The Shoals long before we heard of all the exciting reasons to visit. Book a long weekend at the Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa in Florence and get to know why this area is one of Alabama's brightest stars.





Enjoy a seat overlooking the pool on the covered veranda at the Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa. In warmer months, fans maintain a cool breeze. On cooler nights, enjoy the outdoor firepit.

Alabama's northwest corner continues to garner national attention thanks to a documentary on two acclaimed recording studios (Muscle Shoals, 2013), the luxurious Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa, and fashion favorites Natalie Chanin and Billy Reid. While it used to hang in the shadow of other Alabama cities, The Shoals is claiming its own identity as a great place to visit and call home. With four cities comprising The Shoals, (Florence, Tuscumbia, Sheffield, and Muscle Shoals), there's more than enough fun to fill a long weekend.

STAY

Spend the weekend at the Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa. The hotel is poised to take in panoramic views of the Tennessee River and the waterfall pool below. Be sure to ask for a room on the river side. While there's plenty to do off-property, there's more than enough reasons to stay and relax. In season, the zero-entry pool offers a spot to relax or a place for family fun. Speakers are tuned to the sounds of the Shoals, playing songs recorded in the area's studios (listen for artists including Lynyrd Skynyrd, the Rolling Stones, Drive By Truckers, and the Black Keys). Need a little getaway time? Indulge in the Southern Comfort package at the resort's spa—a blissful massage, facial, and pedicure. Book during lunch hours to enjoy healthy offerings from the spa menu.

Marriott Shoals Hotel & Spa
256.246.3600 • marriott.com



photo by Art Meripol

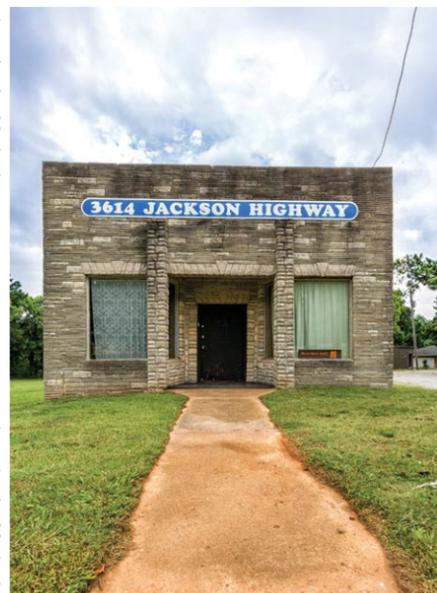


photo by Art Meripol

LISTEN

“Now Muscle Shoals has got The Swampers.”

Many people don't realize that this famous line in Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Sweet Home Alabama" is a tribute to The Swampers—the band that started the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio at 3614 Jackson Highway. After seeing the Shoals documentary, Dr. Dre of Beats Electronics has invested in revitalizing the studio that recorded music greats such as the Rolling Stones, Paul Simon, Rod Stewart, and Bob Dylan. Music lovers also need to stop by The Alabama Music Hall of Fame.

Visit: FAME Recording Studio, the predecessor to the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, 256.381.0801 • fame2.com; The Alabama Music Hall of Fame, 256.381.4477 • alamhof.org





Billy Reid's flagship store is located in downtown Florence, AL. A historic building serves as the backdrop for his bespoke men's and women's clothing lines. Racks filled with silks and cottons line the walls, while ties are splayed on an antique table. Sofas and chairs encourage customers to take their time while shopping the latest styles.

EAT

For more music history, memorabilia, and photos of recording artists, grab a cocktail and browse the gallery at Swampers Bar and Grill, located inside the Marriott Shoals Hotel and Spa. Most nights the bar side of the restaurant features live local and regional music. Hungry? Don't miss the buffet at breakfast, pimento cheese sandwich for lunch, or for dinner, the grilled pork loin set up with a lima bean succotash, cheddar grits, and Alabama sauce. For a romantic dinner or a nightcap with a view, make a reservation at Marriott 360 Grille—a revolving restaurant atop Renaissance Tower. **Marriott Shoals Hotel & Spa • 256.246.3600 • marriott.com**

Hungry for more? Take a short drive to downtown Florence and find four restaurants along Court Street that will satisfy any palate. For an old-fashioned (and inexpensive) lunch, pull up a seat at Trowbridge's Ice Cream Bar. The lunch menu offers soda shop favorites such as chicken salad, pimento cheese, and egg salad. Save room for the homemade ice cream. Our favorite? Orange-pineapple sherbert. **Trowbridge's Ice Cream Bar 256.764.1503.**

For Tex Mex, try Rosie's Mexican Cantina, a lively neon-infused spot that is always upbeat. The more sophisticated menu has made this a local favorite. If you do have to wait for a table, the margaritas and housemade sangria are quite tasty. **rosiesmexicancantina.com • 256.767.5599**

Seeking Italian? Reserve a table at Ricatoni's Italian Grill. Located in an old downtown building with exposed brick walls and high ceilings, the atmosphere is as good as the food. **256.718.1002 • ricatonis.com**

Right next door, you'll find the best burger in town at City Hardware. For a twist on the old favorite, try the fresh ground burger with black truffle mayonnaise, fried egg, red onion marmalade, swiss cheese and greens on a brioche bun. Open for brunch every Saturday and Sunday until 2 p.m. **City Hardware • cityhardwareflorence.com • 256.275.3666.**

SHOP

Home to fashion favorites Natalie Chanin and Billy Reid, Florence has made its mark as a creative center for style. Billy Reid left his New York digs and resettled in Florence, opening his flagship store on Court Street downtown. (He also has 10 other stores around the country and a thriving online business). Billy Reid is known for his bespoke casualwear for men and women. The shop itself, housed in a downtown building, is a treat for the visual senses with its exposed pipes, antique furnishings, and sophisticated little corner that recalls a gentleman's study. It's

welcoming and unpretentious—just like the designer himself. **Billy Reid • billyreid.com • 256.767.4692.**

Natalie Chanin opened Alabama Chanin in 2000 with the goal that clothing would be hand-sewn by artisans to create heirloom pieces. Sustainability is key—fabrics are made in the USA from organic cottons. As Channin's popularity has grown, so has her mission to educate and promote her art. She regularly offers workshops (both in her Florence, AL, factory and on location). And she sells do-it-yourself patterns and fabrics to help perpetuate the art of hand-sewing. *The New York Times* named her "the greenest designer out there." The Factory is open for shopping, tours (every weekday at 2 p.m.), and now, lunch. The Factory Cafe serves organic, local ingredients with menu offerings changing daily. **alabamachanin.com**

SEE & PLAY

Don't miss the only Frank Lloyd Wright structure located in Alabama. (It's also the only one open to the public in the Southeast.) Built in 1939, the Rosenbaum House (named for the original owners) is an example of Wright's Usonian style (named for the United State of America). He offered this design as an affordable home option for middle income families. Originally 1,540 square feet, the structure gained a 1,084-square foot addition designed by Wright in 1948. The home's two-acre lot faces the Tennessee River. **The Rosenbaum House • 256.740.8899 • wrightinalabama.com**

Another not-to-be-missed famous house in The Shoals is Ivy Green, the childhood home of Helen Keller. Enthusiastic tour guides will share stories of Keller's life. Don't miss the museum where you can view memorabilia. (Did you know Helen Keller wrote more than 22 books?) The well pump where Anne Sullivan taught Helen to communicate is on display, as well as the school house and bedroom filled with original furnishings. Be sure to check out the far back corner of the property where Helen's speeches are played through a loudspeaker. **Birthplace of Helen Keller, Ivy Green, Tusculumbia. 888.329.2124 • helenkellerbirthplace.org**

A visit to The Shoals isn't complete without a drive through The University of North Alabama. After lunch at Trowbridge's, grab your ice cream to go and stroll the treelined sidewalk to campus. Sights not to miss: the UNA Lions and the grand, tiered fountain located in the center of campus.

Take a swing or two at the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail courses—the Fighting Joe and the Schoolmaster. Both courses are long (about 8,000 yards each), and they follow the wooded topography and rolling bluffs along the Tennessee river. **Robert Trent Jones Golf Course at The Shoals, Muscle Shoals, AL • 256.446.5111 • rtjgolf.com**