



AllWays Traveller

Mobile Bay, Alabama

www.allwaystraveller.com

The best of both worlds around a beautiful bay

Alabama lies at the heart of the American Deep South and is bordered by Tennessee to the north, Georgia to the east, Florida and the Gulf of Mexico to the south and Mississippi to the west.

It is a state rich in the heritage of the American Civil War and civil rights, while today offers a welcome for travellers based on the friendliest of folk, fine food and foot stomping music.

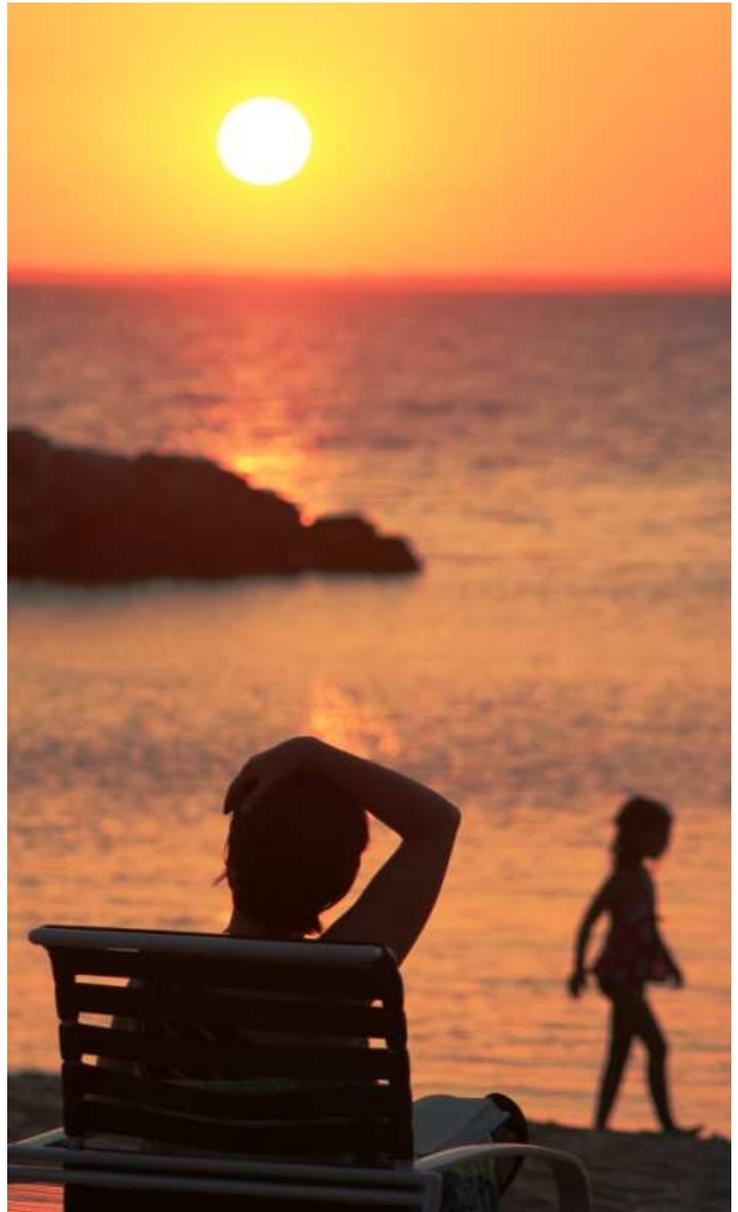
While the cities of Montgomery and Birmingham are a 2.5-hour drive from Atlanta, the coastal area of Mobile and the Gulf Shore beaches are the same distance from New Orleans.

The rural northern part of the state, which takes in the small cities of Florence/Muscle Shoals the larger Huntsville and the DeSoto State Park are under two hours drive from Nashville and Chattanooga, Tennessee.

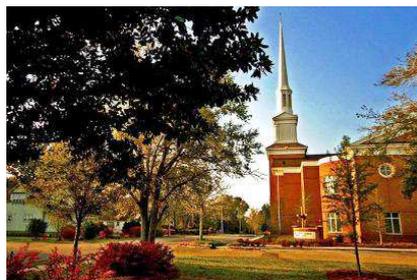
This *AllWays traveller*, one of five in the Alabama series, takes a look at Mobile Bay, an area that offers a vibrant city break in Mobile itself, a picture perfect small community at Fairhope and glorious sunsets.

Ashley Gibbins

Managing editor
AllWays traveller



Ted Denson



A personal view of Mobile Bay

Enjoying life on and around the water



By Ashley Gibbins

The city of Mobile itself is located at the head of Mobile Bay while, around the bay, is Fairhope, as delightful a small American town as one could hope to find.

Our trip to the Mobile Bay area of Alabama, took a three hour, pleasant drive along a forest lined Interstate 65.

Others will get hers via New Orleans, which takes about two hours.

Mobile offers a vibrant experience

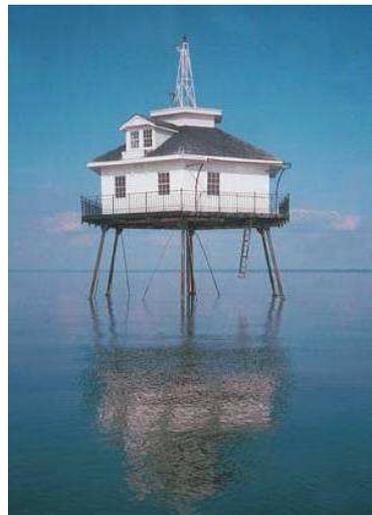
Mobile, the largest city in this area, is not large by other standards, which makes getting around on foot or by bike the best option.

Walking is also a good way to appreciate the city's fascinating past and the influences upon it.

A French heritage

Mobile was established as the first capital of colonial French Louisiana, in 1702, before transferring to British and then Spanish colonial control.

Alabama and Mobile became part of the United States, in 1813, but left the Union in 1861 to join the Confederate States.



Mobile Bay lighthouse

Four traumatic years later, with the South defeated, Alabama was taken by the Union.

A eclectic mix of cultures

For the traveller today, Mobile offers an eclectic mix of cultures, cuisines and architectural styles all infused with that warm Southern welcome.

While in Mobile Bay

Delta Safaris



Delta Safaris operate throughout the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, the second largest river delta in the USA and a prime location to see wildlife and explore the recently expanded Bartram Canoe Trail – now at more than 200 miles long.

*** and his great team offer a range of excursions from two hour trips on the bay to multiple day camping and fishing excursions.

According to the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program, the Mobile-Tensaw Delta is considered the best remaining delta ecosystem of its kind in the USA.

It supports more than 300 species of birds, including eagles, ospreys, pelicans, herons, kites, owls, warblers, vireos, wrens, egrets and a variety of woodpeckers, including the Pileated woodpecker, which can grow as long as 19 inches and is the largest woodpecker in North America.

www.5rds.com/the-mobile-tensaw-delta

The Bragg-Mitchell Mansion



Built in 1855 by Judge John Bragg, the Bragg-Mitchell Mansion is a Greek Revival facing Springhill Avenue in Mobile.

Judge Bragg built the home for his wife and family to enjoy Mobile's social season - Thanksgiving through Mardi Gras.

The Bragg family split their time between the Mansion and their cotton plantation in Lowndes County outside of Montgomery.

Judge Bragg died in 1878, and four additional families have owned the home since his passing.

www.braggmitchellmansion.com

A downtown of vibrancy and colour



Downtown Mobile, like Birmingham and Montgomery up the road, is enjoying a renaissance.

It too had declined in recent decades but, over the last 15 years, much has been done to revitalise the area with projects coordinated by the Downtown Mobile Alliance.

Skyscrapers are now dotting the skyline and historic buildings are being renovated at a rare pace.

A blaze of colour



Restaurants, bars and boutique shops are opening and the city seems a blaze of colour thanks to the floral arrangements.

These are just a sign of the warm and caring community here.

As is a wonderful on street initiative where by residents and visitors can leave a book and take a book, from sidewalk shelves, day or night.

Brown bag Wednesday



Then there is 'brown bag Wednesday', where restaurants prepare a special bagged lunch for a set price - to be eaten in the city squares to live music.



Old Dauphine district



De Tonti district



Oakley Gardens

Just beyond downtown are the city's historic districts including Oakley Gardens, Detonti Square, Lankau and Old Dauphine.

Each of these districts have a distinct identity and a mix of coffee shops and restaurants.

More information

www.visitmobile.com
www.cityofmobile.org

The true home of Mardi Gras



Mobile is where Mardi Gras was born and is the oldest annual carnival celebration in the United States, having started in 1703.

This was fifteen years before New Orleans Mardi Gras was founded.

Mardi Gras in Mobile is a family orientated celebration of Fat Tuesday, when public parades of masked revellers, on floats or horseback, toss gifts (known as throws) to an enthusiastic audience.

Clubs and local bars also offer their own particular events.

www.themobilemask.com

The Carnival Museum



The Mobile Carnival Museum is housed in a downtown Bernstein-Bush mansion.

It takes visitors through over 300 years of Carnival and Mardi Gras in the city, with displays that tell the story of how the local celebration evolved from its early days to the modern tradition it has become.

The Queen's Gallery houses gowns, trains, and jewels worn by the queens of Carnival.

Also on display is the attire of a 1920s flapper queen, as well as costumes of several jesters of well-known parading societies along with original Mardi Gras art and posters.

The mansion's former carriage house contains interactive exhibits, including one that allows visitors to "ride" and throw doubloons from a carnival float.

www.mobilecarnivalmuseum.com

Around the bay



The great thing about the Mobile Bay area is that less than half an hour away is Fairhope, which is also a world away.



Fairhope is one of those, almost picture perfect, small American towns where everyone says hi with a smile - and you just know they mean it.

The town has a large community of artists and this is reflected in a vibrant downtown with its unique shops and galleries, gourmet restaurants and bohemian cafes.

Floral arrangements are everywhere, as are sidewalk benches to let you sit and chat.

In the heart of Fairhope is the French Quarter, which may take its name from that in New Orleans although this place is a very small courtyard, for relaxing.

Pete's place

And here one also finds Panini Pete's, one of the down right nicest places anywhere, and where you can get Alabama beignets to die for and great panini's for breakfast and lunch.

In one and a half days at Fairhope, we eat there three times, which is recommendation enough.



Panini Pete's

The place is run by Pete Blohme, one of the area's top 'celebrity' chef's who has a sister establishment in downtown Mobile.

www.paninipetes.com

Fairhope Pier



Known locally as the 'town square', the first Fairhope pier was the city's original commercial pier and dated back to 1894, before it was destroyed by hurricane Katrina 2005

The current pier, opened in 2006, is a real magnet for strolling along, fishing from or watching the pelicans diving for their fish.

www.cofairhope.com

USS Alabama and Battleship Memorial Park



The battleship USS Alabama was commissioned in 1942 and served in World War II and saw action in the Atlantic and Pacific.

The sixth ship of the United States Navy named after the state, she was decommissioned in 1947 and assigned to the reserve duty and retired in 1962.

In 1964, Alabama was taken to Mobile Bay and opened as a museum ship and was added to the National Historic Landmark registry in 1986.

Now sitting at Battleship Memorial Park visitors can walk the decks of the vessel, go below in a World War II submarine and view cockpits of combat aircraft.

Also on display are tanks and a Vietnam river patrol boat.

www.ussalabama.com

The South Alabama Jaguars football



Photo by Nancy Scelfo

The South Alabama Jaguars, the American football team of South Alabama University, play at Ladd Peebles Stadium in Mobile.

www.usajaguars.com

Moonpie over Mobile

Moonpie over Mobile – the city's New Year's celebration is one of the unique and fun celebrations in the country.

Over 40,000 revellers in downtown Mobile enjoy live musical acts; a laser show lighting up downtown buildings; fireworks and the MoonPie Drop - a 600 pound electric pie that lights up the skyline and welcomes the New Year.

www.mobilenewyear.com

A place to stay in Mobile Bay : The Grand Hotel Marriott Resort, Golf Club & Spa



By Ann Mealor

The Grand Hotel Marriott Resort, Golf Club & Spa, situated on the beautiful Mobile Bay, is one of the Historic Hotels of America. Originally built over 160 years ago, in 1847 guests arrived by steamboat and docked at what is now the marina.

During the American Civil War the hotel was turned into a hospital for Confederate soldiers.

Three hundred died at the hospital, and are buried shoulder-to-shoulder in the on-site cemetery, Confederate Rest.

In 1869 a fire destroyed the documents that identified the dead and so a monument to the unknown soldier now stands in their memory.

After the Civil War the hotel returned to business as usual until World War II, when in 1944, the Army Air Force used it as a Maritime Training School. In total, 5,000 Army Air Force servicemen were trained at the Grand Hotel.

Today the hotel continues to honour its military influence. Each day a procession begins at the lobby, weaves its way through the grounds, and concludes with the firing of a cannon at 4pm.

This is followed by complimentary afternoon tea for all in the main reception. As guests, not only did we enjoy the spectacle but we also had a very interesting American history lesson.

Although visitors no longer approach by water, the drive through Fairhope and Point Clear towards the Grand Hotel is tree lined and very pretty.

Stunning grounds

The hotel is set in 550 acres of stunning grounds and is spread along the eastern shore offering glorious views of the marina and the bay.

We saw the most wonderful sunsets here, and it was a real pleasure to sit in one of the many chair swings that line the promenade, sip a glass of wine and watch the sun go down.

Our room was newly renovated, spacious and comfortable with a balcony overlooking the marina.



Again, we enjoyed just sitting here of an evening, watching the pelicans, drinking prosecco and listening to the boats bobbing gently in the water.

For the energetic

For the more energetic there is bike hire, a fitness trail, a fully equipped gym, tennis, kayaking and sailing.

There are also three swimming pools and a luxurious European style spa offering a range of rejuvenating and relaxing treatments in tranquil surroundings.

The well tended grounds also make for pleasurable walking.

The beautiful live oak trees are cared for by a specialist team and the many berry-laden shrubs throughout the property provide food for the birds that migrate to, or live at the resort.

Where dining is concerned, there are plenty of options.

We enjoyed sitting around the fire pit of an evening enjoying traditional southern fare from Bucky's Birdcage Lounge and listening to the many talented pianists that played there.

However, there are many other restaurants to choose from, including the award-winning Dining Room, The Grand Steakhouse and the Saltwater Grill.

It is easy to see why The Grand has won so many awards for excellence – it is outstanding in many ways.

www.marriott.com



The Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail



The Grand Hotel boasts two challenging and picturesque golf courses as part of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail

This is a stunning collection of 11 championship golf courses in Alabama.

Each course is linked to a five star resort hotel in destinations including Montgomery, Huntsville, Mobile and Muscle Shoals.

www.rtjgolf.com

A snapshot of Mobile Bay, Alabama



Oyster eating contests



Go Jags



Airboat on the Delta : Ted Denso



Dauphin Street Beer Fest





Grab your keys. It's time to take an Alabama road trip.

This *AllWays traveller to Mobile Bay*, is one of five *AllWays traveller* features in the Alabama series.

The others are :

Birmingham

Birmingham

Montgomery

Montgomery

Gulf Shores

Gulf Shores

North Alabama

North Alabama

To download these visit : www.allwaystraveller.com

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Ashley Gibbins

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Ann Mealor

Ann Mealor is a professional travel writer and photographer and Commissioning Editor of *AllWays traveller*.



Ashley Gibbins



Ann Mealor