

A Musical Tour of Mississippi River Country

The roots of American music run through Mississippi River Country. We're going to take a musical journey through America's heartland. Jazz, Blues, Gospel, Bluegrass, Country, Folk—all find their origins in this part of the United States. As the main transportation route during this nation's early years, the Mississippi River carried not only people and goods, but also different cultures and forms of music. The result is the rich musical landscape you see today in America. And it all can be traced back to Mississippi River Country. Join us now as we take a musical tour of Mississippi River Country, beginning in Louisiana.

Louisiana

We begin our journey in Louisiana, the state with arguably the richest musical heritage of all the 50 states.

Louisiana presents a rich gumbo of musical traditions. Cajun, Dixieland, Jazz, Blues, Country and Rock 'n Roll all have a foothold on this culturally diverse state. Annual festivals, like the Essence Music Festival in New Orleans each July, feature a long list of top-name artists. And world-famous Mardi Gras celebrations are filled with authentic New Orleans-born musical styles.

If you had to pick one place to enjoy the musical richness of Louisiana, it would have to be the French Quarter in New Orleans. Teeming with activity every night of the week, the French Quarter is as famous for partying as it is for its live Jazz. If you had to select one place to enjoy live music from such the long list of great clubs—such as Fritzel's European Jazz Club, Funky Butt, and Palm Court Jazz Café—it would have to be Preservation Hall.

Preservation Hall
726 St. Peters Street
New Orleans, LA
www.preservationhall.com
504-522-2841

The fabled Preservation Hall isn't so much a music club as it is a living museum to traditional New Orleans jazz with only one exhibit: the band. Don't look for a bar, reclining seats or even air conditioning in this evocative and character-soaked performance space. The building itself dates back to the 1750s, and it has alternately served as a home, a tavern, an art gallery and an informal rehearsal space. The present owner's parents, Allan and Sandra Jaffe, purchased the building in 1961 and opened it as a venue dedicated to keeping local jazz traditions alive.

Mississippi

The State of Mississippi is best-known as the home of Delta Blues, a style which is widely considered to be the progenitor of all other forms of the Blues.

Throughout Mississippi, you'll find Blues-related attractions, including Tunica's Bluesville Showcase Night Club and Blues & Legends Hall of Fame Museum. The ideal place to begin your Mississippi Blues journey is in the town of Indianola at the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center.

B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center
400 Second Street
Indianola, MS
www.bbkingmuseum.org
662-887-9539

The American music genre known as the Blues was born in the Mississippi River Delta, and no man's life tells the story of the Blues better than B.B. King. At the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center in Indianola, you'll learn the story of the Blues through the life of B.B. King. Follow King's career and the development of the Blues from its southern origins to its spread up the Mississippi River to Memphis and Chicago and eventually across the entire U.S. and the world. The spread of the Blues was directly responsible for the development of Rock & Roll as evidenced in Elvis Presley's roots in Delta music. Don't miss this fascinating museum experience.

Arkansas

Arkansas is a hotbed of Folk and Country music talent. Johnny Cash was born in Arkansas. Many musical historians believe the essential elements of Country music find their roots in the Ozark region of Arkansas and Missouri. Mountain View, Arkansas, in the heart of the Ozarks, is considered to be the "Folk Music Capital of the World." The perfect place to delve into authentic Folk music is the Ozark Folk Center.

The Ozark Folk Center State Park
1032 Park Avenue
Mountain View, AR
www.ozarkfolkcenter.com
1-800-264-3655

The Ozark Folk Center is a unique state park devoted to preserving Ozark crafts, music, and heritage. Traditional craft demonstrations, live music performances, living histories, apprentice programs and workshops tell the story of this mountain culture. The Ozark Cultural Resource Center houses the park's extensive collection of folklore. Live music performances feature the traditional folk music of the Ozarks with songs dating back to European origins. Local musicians and guest performers, many nationally known, perform ballads, fiddle tunes, square and jig dances, as well as autoharp, mountain and hammered dulcimer melodies, all dating before 1941.

Look for the popular Music Roots Series programs, featuring traditional music from various cultures around the country.

Tennessee

Tennessee is a state steeped in musical history. Memphis is called the “Birthplace of the Blues.” Nashville is “Music City, U.S.A.” Rock ‘n Roll, the Blues, Country—it’s all alive and well in Tennessee. Every year, thousands make the pilgrimage to Graceland in Memphis to tour the world-famous home of musical legend Elvis Presley. Nashville’s Old Reiman Theatre, Grand Ole Opry and Country Music Hall of Fame are hallowed ground to Country music fans.

Country Music Hall of Fame
222 5th Ave S
Nashville, TN 37203-4206
www.countrymusicHalloffame.com
(615) 416-2096

No trip to Tennessee would be complete without a trip to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. You’ll learn about Country music’s legends as well as some of its lesser known heroes. See rare memorabilia and trace the history of Country music back to its roots. Incredible photographs and outstanding exhibits make this a must-see for ever fan of American music.

Kentucky

The music of Kentucky has its roots in the Appalachian style of folk music. Kentucky is Bluegrass music was born in Kentucky. Bill Monroe, the father of Bluegrass, popularized the genre through his band the Blue Grass Boys. The list of Country music stars born in Kentucky is long and impressive. Kentucky’s musical heritage is kept alive in places like the Mountain Arts Center in Prestonburg and the Renfro Valley Entertainment Center. Located in Renfro Valley is the perfect place to learn about Kentucky’s vast musical heritage.

Kentucky Music Hall of Fame & Museum
2590 Richmond Rd
Renfro Valley, KY 40473
(606) 256-1000
www.kentuckymusicmuseum.com

Learn about Kentucky performers, songwriters, publishers, promoters, managers, broadcasters, comedians and other music professionals who have made significant contributions to the music industry in Kentucky and around the world. The museum includes an instrument room, where visitors see, touch, hear and perform, as well as a functioning sound booth where you can sing and record. It’s a true hands-on experience of Kentucky music. You’ll learn about famous names in music like Patty Loveless, John Michael Montgomery, Ricky Skaggs and Dwight Yoakam.

Missouri

Country, Bluegrass, Folk and Gospel music can trace their roots to the Ozark Mountains region of Missouri and Arkansas. The community of Branson, Missouri has become the ideal place to experience traditional Ozark music. More than 50 venues in Branson offer live performances. It's a smorgasbord of entertainment options. For a taste of Branson-style music and culture, visit the Little Opry Theatre.

Little Opry Theatre
3562 Shepherd of the Hills Expressway
Branson, MO
www.bransonimax.com
1-800-419-4832

The 210-seat Little Opry Theatre hosts a fantastic schedule of live shows throughout the year. In 2009, that line-up included Smoke on the Mountain, Goldwing Express, Rick Langston's "Keepin' It Country," Hank Williams Revisited, The John Wayne Story, Cowboy Church and Norma Jean and the Cowboys. For a slice of true Americana and some exceptional musical performances, you can't miss the Little Opry Theatre.

Iowa

Iowa's Quad Cities area is a great place to discover the musical heritage of America's Heartland. The Mississippi River flows through this metropolitan region, bringing with it a variety of musical influences. The Davenport River Music Experience is just a place to experience this combination of musical genres.

River Music Experience
129 Main Street
Davenport, Iowa
www.rivermusicexperience.org
877-326-1333

In addition to live performances, the River Music Experience also features a museum. Through exhibits and artifacts, the museum celebrates roots music, the unique musical heritage of the Quad-Cities, and the music of the entire Mississippi River corridor. Live music and educational programs nurture, educate and inspire musicians as well as listeners.

Illinois

The Blues and Jazz music born in America's south made their way up the Mississippi River to Illinois and the metropolis of Chicago.

The third largest city in the United States, Chicago has a world-class music scene. From the finest in symphonic music to the some of the most avant-garde bands you'll find anywhere, Chicago offers a stunning array of sounds. Legendary venues include the Aragon Ballroom, the

Empty Bottle, the Metro, and the Green Mill Jazz Club.

Green Mill Jazz Club
4802 N. Broadway Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640
www.greenmilljazz.com
773.878.5552

A visit to the Green Mill Jazz Club is like taking a step back into the 1940s. From Dixieland and traditional to bebop and contemporary, every kind of Jazz imaginable has been played at the Green Mill in the Uptown section of Chicago. It has hosted such legendary figures as Von Freeman, Franz Jackson and Wilbur Campbell, as well as young lions Kurt Elling, Eric Alexander and Orbert Davis. All capture the broad spectrum of jazz from its root rhythms in New Orleans to New York avant-garde.

Wisconsin

Milwaukeeans love live music, particularly the Blues. Venues throughout the city offer live Rock, Country, Jazz and Blues, in particular, throughout the week. The Up and Under Pub is probably the best place in the city to catch a live Blues performance.

But the real sound of Wisconsin is Polka. The German, Polish and Eastern European immigrants to Wisconsin brought with them polka. The Milwaukee style of polka is dominated by accordions and concertinas, a smaller, old-world European cousin to the accordion. And if you want to get a taste of what the world of Milwaukee Polka is like, you need to head to the south side of Milwaukee to Kochanski's Concertina Beer Hall.

Kochanski's Concertina Beer Hall
1920 S. 37th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53215
www.beer-hall.com
414-83-POLKA

You'll enjoy an outstanding selection of Polish and German beers, an authentic atmosphere and great live polka music. If you want to really experience the lively spirit of Milwaukee, this is the place to be.

Other notable attractions in Milwaukee include the Milwaukee Art Center and the Harley Davidson Museum.

Minnesota

Well-known Minnesota-born acts include Bob Dylan, the Replacements and Bob Mould. The most famous music venue in the Twin Cities area is First Avenue, a large nightclub famous for helping to launch the career of pop music legend Prince. In the last thirty years, the Twin Cities have produced an enormous number of popular musical acts.

The Twin Cities are also home to a number of excellent classical music venues, perhaps more than any other city in the 10-state region. Visitors can hear incredible music in breathtaking surroundings at the Ordway Center for the Performing Arts in Saint Paul.

But for Jazz lovers, the most important stop in all of Minnesota has to be the Dakota Jazz Club.

Dakota Jazz Club & Restaurant
1010 Nicollet Avenue
Minneapolis, MN
612-332-1010
www.dakotacooks.com

Located on Nicollet Mall in the heart of downtown Minneapolis, this is one of the best places on earth to hear live Jazz by some of the world's top performers. The intimate sound and lights, the stage and the expanded room provide an ideal atmosphere. Nightly performances, combined with fantastic local cuisine, make the Dakota Jazz experience one every music lover will savor.