

Explore

Decatur-Morgan



Turtle Power

An endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle named Kale has become the unofficial mascot of the Cook Museum of Natural Science. But he's far from the only attraction in a museum with an immersive cave and rare hellbender salamanders.

Where to find the best bites

From barbecue to Mexican cuisine to pizza and upscale dining, local restaurants have diverse and delicious menus

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Explore

2021-22

Decatur-Morgan

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Decatur-Morgan

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ON THE COVER

Photo by Jeronimo Nisa

This year's cover features Kale, a rescued Kemp's ridley sea turtle who can't be released back into the wild. A member of an endangered species, Kale makes his home in the 15,000-gallon saltwater aquarium at the Cook Museum of Natural Science in downtown Decatur. For more on Kale, turn to page 42.

Welcome to

DECATUR & MORGAN COUNTY!

Putting together this annual magazine makes us realize two things. First, Decatur and Morgan County have an abundance of places to see, things to do and unique restaurants to try. Second, there are several world-class attractions within a 30- to 60-minute drive, including Helen Keller's birthplace at Ivy Green, the U.S. Space and Rocket Center and the Rosenbaum House designed by famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

In Decatur, it all starts with the Cook Museum of Natural Science, which celebrates its second anniversary this year. The \$32.4 million facility contains 62,000 square feet of exhibit galleries that include a 15,000-gallon saltwater aquarium, an immersive cave, an interactive sand table and live animals.

For fun and cooling off during the summer months, it's hard to beat Decatur's Point Mallard Aquatic Center, which is celebrating 50 years of operation. The water park includes one of the nation's first wave pools, water slides, a lazy river attraction and children's play area.

If you prefer simpler pursuits, immerse yourself in Decatur's natural beauty that revolves around the Tennessee River. Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge is the city's crown jewel with its hiking trails and bird-watching opportunities.

The city also has a burgeoning arts community. Visual arts exhibits are open throughout the year at the Carnegie Visual Arts Center and Alabama Center for the Arts (ACA).

Railroad buffs will be interested in Decatur's Historic Railroad Depot. The restored depot, which was built in 1905 by Southern Railway, includes memorabilia, photographs and a model train layout depicting the city.

This is only a sampling of what is offered in Decatur, the rest of Morgan County and the surrounding area. This magazine is a guide to all of the natural wonders, attractions and festivals that make visiting — and living — in the Decatur area so pleasurable. If you can't fit it all in during one visit, that's understandable. We'll just plan to see you again soon.

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ATTRACTIONS

STILL MAKING *Waves*

POINT MALLARD AQUATIC CENTER

Park celebrates 50 years of speed slides, suntans and rolling water

An icon of Decatur's recreation scene, the Point Mallard water park will celebrate 50 years of operation this summer. The celebration comes after a year of waiting, due to the coronavirus, which shuttered the water park's 2020 season.

For details on the 50th anniversary celebration, visit pointmallardpark.com.

The idea for the water park, the first of its kind in the region, stemmed from J. Gilmer Blackburn's visit to Munich, Germany. Blackburn, who served as Decatur's mayor from 1962-68, visited Munich to get a firsthand look at a wave-making facility that was the rage in Europe.

On Aug. 8, 1970, the wave pool, one of the first constructed in the United States, and an Olympic-sized pool opened at Point Mallard Park and helped it become the hub of Decatur's social circle.

The park hosts many of Decatur's most popular events, including the Alabama Jubilee Hot-Air Balloon Festival on Memorial Day weekend, Spirit of American on the Fourth of July, the Dragon Boat Festival on Mother's Day weekend, and Battle for Decatur, a Civil War reenactment, on Labor Day weekend.

A former president, national politicians, chart-topping musicians, astronauts, Silver Star soldiers and Olympic medalists have visited the park. The pool served as a training facility for the 1976 U.S. Olympic diving team, which included Greg Louganis, a gold medalist in the 1984 and 1988 Olympics, and Jenny Chandler, a gold medalist in the 1976 Olympics.

Over the years, the J. Gilmer Blackburn Aquatic Center, named for the former mayor, expanded to include speed slides, a lazy river and a children's area. On average, more than 150,000 people visit the water park every season, which opens Memorial Day weekend and closes on Labor Day. Along with the water park, Point Mallard's features include a golf course, baseball fields, soccer fields, campground, archery range and walking trail.

Hours:
Opens at 10 a.m. Closes at 8 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays and July 4. Closes at 6 p.m. all other days.

Admission:
Prices vary by day and age.

Website:
pointmallardpark.com

Telephone:
256-341-4900

Point Mallard water park includes wave pool, lazy river, water slides and more.





HISTORIC RAILROAD DEPOT

Built by Southern Railway in 1905, the historic Decatur depot features railroad memorabilia, artifacts and photographs and a model train layout depicting the city. Notable pieces include the original depot superintendent’s desk, the baggage cart and benches, all from 1905. Restored in 2015 and 2016, the building’s original features include the doors and brick and plaster walls. The museum celebrates Decatur’s railroad heritage, which dates back to the 1830s when the first railroad west of the Allegheny Mountains, the Tuscumbia, Courtland and Decatur railroad, was built.

Historic Railroad Depot
701 Railroad St. N.W., Decatur

Website:
 Decaturparks.com

Hours:
 1-3 p.m., Monday-Tuesday; 10 a.m.-3 p.m.,
 Wednesday; 10 a.m.-noon, Thursday and Saturday

Admission:
 Free



OLD STATE BANK

Alabama's oldest standing bank transports visitors into the past. Built in 1833, the building, one of four in Decatur that survived the Civil War, served as a hospital, guardhouse, bank and dance hall. The building's columns still show scars from the bullets fired. Unique features include a banking lobby with the original walk-in vault and replica of tellers' cages, an apartment area furnished with items from the 1830s and a community garden.

Old State Bank
925 Bank St. N.E., Decatur

Telephone:
256-341-4818

Website:
Decaturparks.com

Hours:
9:30 a.m.-noon, 1-4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday

Admission:
Free



CARNEGIE VISUAL ARTS CENTER

The Carnegie Visual Arts Center houses rotating exhibits featuring paintings, sculptures, photographs and fabric art created by local, regional and national artists. Past exhibits included works by folk artist Mose T, the Gee's Bend Quilters, David Gordon, who worked on "SpongeBob SquarePants," biophilia artist and visual ecologist Doug Baulos, Smithsonian Institute's traveling "Water 1 Ways" and mixed-media artist Arthur Price. Built in 1904, the building that houses the arts center originally served as Decatur's first public library. Focused on expanding beyond the arts center's walls, the Carnegie installed exhibits at the Somerville Public Library and the Huntsville International Airport. The center also oversees Carnegie Carnival, one of Decatur's premiere events.



Carnegie Visual Arts Center
 207 Church St. N.E., Decatur

Phone:
 256-341-0562

Website:
 Carnegiearts.org

Hours:
 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Friday; 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Saturday

Donations accepted



POND SPRING

The former home of Gen. Joe Wheeler, who served as a lieutenant general for the Confederacy during the Civil War and as a general for the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War, sits on Alabama 20 between Courtland and Hillsboro. The 50-acre Pond Spring plantation includes the general's home, a log cabin built before 1818 and later used as slave quarters, a log barn, a 19th century icehouse, family cemeteries and gardens.

Pond Spring
12280 Alabama 20, Hillsboro

Hours:

9 a.m.-noon and 1-4 p.m., Wednesday through Saturday; 1-5 p.m. Sunday.

Website:

ahc.alabama.gov/properties/pondspring/

Admission:

Fee charged



JESSE OWENS MUSEUM

Jesse Owens Museum and Park honors an Olympic legend and one of Lawrence County’s most prestigious athletes. Born in Oakville, the track-and-field athlete Jesse Owens captured the world’s attention at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. By winning four gold medals, Owens delivered a blow to Adolf Hitler’s ideology of Aryan supremacy. The museum and park feature a statue of Owens, a replica of his childhood home, a gold medal tree, long jump pit, trophies Owens won in high school and replicas of his track uniforms, shoes and medals. During years with Summer Olympics, such as this year with the XXXII Olympic Summer Games set for July and August in Tokyo, interest in the museum increases.

Jesse Owens Museum and Park
 7019 County Road 203, Danville

Phone:
 256-974-3636

Website:
Jesseowensmemorialpark.com

Hours:
 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Tuesday and Thursday-Saturday; 1-4 p.m.,

Admission charged

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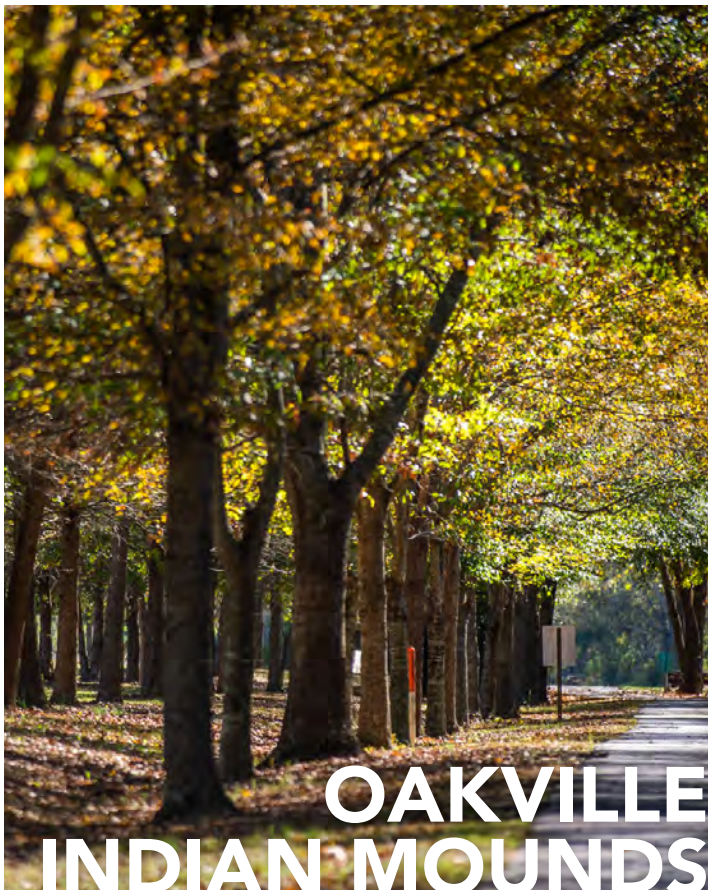
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Home to a museum, artifacts dating back to 10,000 B.C. and what historians believe to be the largest Woodland Mound in Alabama, Oakville Indian Mounds spotlights North Alabama’s Native American history. With thousands of artifacts, the museum provides a look into the area’s beginnings when Creek, Yuchi, Shawnee, Chickasaw and Cherokee Indians lived in Oakville. In 1924, a team from the Smithsonian identified five mounds, including two that remained intact. Covering 1.5 acres and 27 feet high, the Oakville Ceremonial Woodland Mound is the largest Woodland Mound in Alabama. The Oakville Copen Mound covers a quarter of an acre and rises 20 feet high. The site also features a statue of Sequoyah, the Old Settlers cemetery, hiking trails and fishing opportunities.

Oakville Indian Mounds
1219 County Road 187, Danville

Phone: 256-905-2499

Website: Oakvilleindianmounds.com

Hours: 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Friday; 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Sunday

Admission charged



PRINCESS THEATRE

For the past century, the Princess Theatre in downtown Decatur served as an entertainment center for north Alabama and neighboring states. Founded as a livery stable in 1887, the Princess Theatre transformed into a vaudeville playhouse in December 1919. Known for its neon marquee, the 677-seat theater has hosted George Washington Carver, Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, Tony Randall, Cloris Leachman, the Count Basie Orchestra, Arlo Guthrie, The Blind Boys of Alabama, St. Paul and the Broken Bones, the Secret Sisters and Roseanne Cash. Along with large-scale concerts, the theater also offers intimate singer-songwriter sessions and screenings of movies.

Princess Theatre Center for the Performing Arts
 112 Second Ave. N.E., Decatur

Phone:
 256-350-1745

Website:
Princesstheatre.org

Admission:
 charged for shows





ALABAMA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Windows along the Alabama Center for the Arts in downtown Decatur offer passers-by a glimpse at exhibits on display in the gallery. The center's displays range from national watercolor exhibits to life-size sculptures to creations by the area's youth. Along with the gallery, the Alabama Center for the Arts' performing arts building houses the Alabama Arts Hall of Fame. The permanent exhibit pays tribute to actors Dean Jones and Nell Carter, musicians the Drive-By Truckers and Emmylou Harris, composer Henry Panion III, author Truman Capote, photographer Tillman Crane, artists Nall Hollis, Richard Zoellner, Mildred Nungester Wolfe, the quilters of Gee's Bend and Bruce Larsen and dancer Wes Chapman.

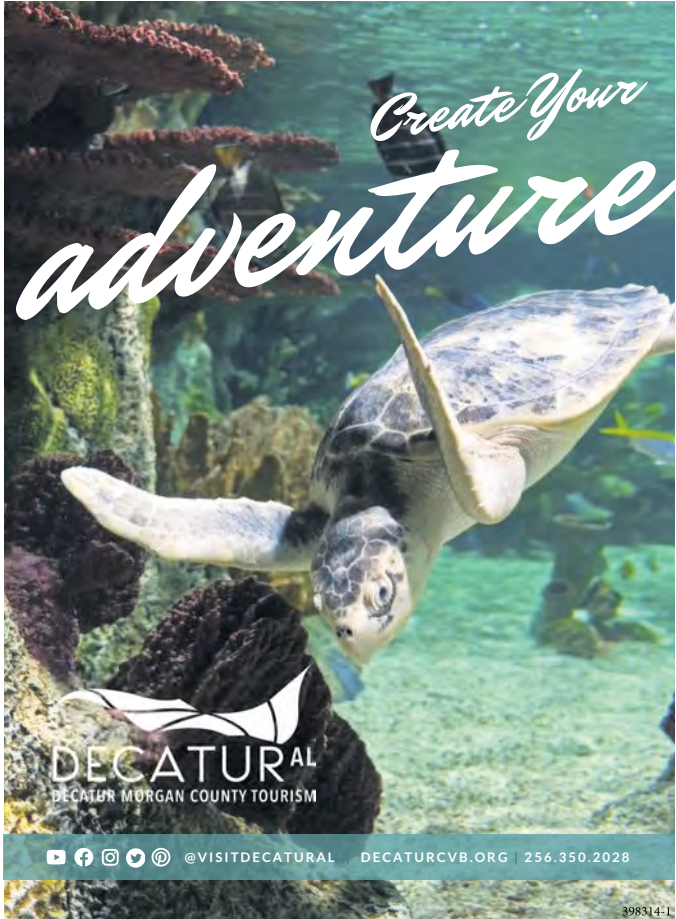
Alabama Center for the Arts
133 Second Ave. N.E., Decatur

Phone:
256-260-4293

Website:
AlabamaCenterforthearts.org

Hours:
8 a.m.-8 p.m., Monday-Thursday; 8 a.m.-noon, Friday

Free Admission



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ALABAMA VETERANS MUSEUM

Artifacts from the Revolutionary War, Civil War, World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom fill the Alabama Veterans Museum & Archives in Athens. Through the items – uniforms, medals, photographs, books, tapes, letters and weapons – the museum brings the experiences of Alabamians who served in the military to life.

Alabama Veterans Museum & Archives
100 Pryor St., Athens

Phone:
256-771-7578

Website:
Alabamaveteransmuseum.com

Hours:
9 a.m.-3 p.m., Monday-Saturday

Donations accepted



U.S. SPACE & ROCKET CENTER

With interactive simulators, a Saturn V Rocket and thousands of rocketry and space artifacts, the U.S. Space & Rocket Center offers visitors a chance to explore outer space and North Alabama's connection to space exploration. In Huntsville, Wernher von Braun and his team developed the Redstone Rocket, which put the first U.S. astronaut, Alan Shepard, into space. The center also hosts traveling exhibits.

U.S. Space & Rocket Center
1 Tranquility Base, Huntsville

Phone:
1-800-637-7223

Website:
Rocketcenter.com

Hours:
9 a.m.-5 p.m., daily

Admission charged





LONG WAIT FOR TRASH PANDAS NEARS END

Area welcomes first minor league baseball season since 2014

By David Elwell | Sports Writer

As spring began, the giant scoreboard at Toyota Field in Madison continually flashed the countdown for the number of days until the Rocket City Trash Pandas' first home game.

Anticipation for the first professional baseball game at the state-of-the-art, \$47 million stadium had been building for four years, and the countdown finally had a target date when the first pitch was scheduled for May 11.

"We're happy to finally see some Trash Pandas baseball coming to Toyota Field," said Josh Caray, the director of broadcasting and baseball information for the team.

The story of the Trash Pandas has been one of starts, stops and changes of direction with twists and turns in between.

This project started in 2017 when BallCorps Managing Partner and CEO Ralph Nelson first came to the area pitching a plan to return minor league baseball. The idea quickly caught fire.

In 2018, groundbreaking came for the stadium. A name-the-team contest with over 30,000 votes was followed by record-setting sales of anything with the Trash Pandas name or logo.

The excitement continued to grow with the construction of Toyota Field next to Interstate 565 helping spur season ticket sales for the 7,500-capacity facility. Many premium seats sold out for the first three seasons.

Then just as the countdown for the 2020 opening day was quickly gaining speed, it went into a holding pattern because of COVID. Eventually, the 2020 season was scrubbed with a new launch date set for 2021.

"Our fingers are crossed that nothing stops us this year," Caray said.

The minor leagues scheduled a later start this year, May 4, because of a delay for the teams' spring training. As part of baseball's COVID restrictions, minor league camps don't start until the end of major league camps.



Because of the late start, the season was cut to 120 games instead of the usual 140. That left the Trash Pandas with 60 scheduled home games instead of the anticipated 70 before the end of the season Sept. 19. No playoffs were planned this year.

Limited individual reserved seating tickets for the Trash Pandas are \$16 and \$14, if purchased in advance. The prices go to \$18 and \$16, if purchased the day of the game. Standing-room-only tickets will be \$8.

Game days begin with the gates opening at 5:30 p.m. and first pitch at 6:35 p.m.

When the Trash Pandas are at home, each Tuesday will be Ladies Night. Wednesdays will be the night to bring your dog to the park. Thursdays will feature happy-hour promotions. Post-game fireworks are the treat each Friday and Saturday. "We are putting all of our emphasis into the game day experience," said Lindsey Knupp, vice president of marketing, promotions and entertainment for the Trash Pandas. "That's what it's all about with minor league baseball."

After a revamping of minor league baseball by the major leagues, the Southern League is now officially called Double-A South. The league went from 10 teams to eight with Jacksonville, Fla., moving up to Triple-A and the Jackson, Tenn., franchise going out of business.

The Double-A South rivals include the Birmingham Barons, Chattanooga Lookouts, Montgomery Biscuits, Pensacola Wahoos, Mississippi Braves, Biloxi Shuckers and Tennessee Smokies.

Another change starting this season involves scheduling. Every team in the Double-A South will be off on Mondays. The teams will play a six-game series each week in one city.

The Trash Pandas will be the AA affiliate of the Los Angeles Angels. In the last five years, the Angels have had a top 10 draft pick three times, which could mean some interesting young talent may soon call Toyota Field home.

Mural, mural on the wall...

By Catherine Godbey//Staff Writer

Take an outdoor outing and view works of art covering building exteriors across the area.

Across north Alabama, works of outdoor art – over-sized butterfly wings, a Native American design, veteran memorial and celebration of women's suffrage – cover area buildings.

To view the public art, follow this guide of murals in Morgan, Limestone, Lawrence and Madison counties.

DECATUR



Tribute to Jimmy "Yellowhorse" Webster

113 Sixth Ave. N.E.

Completed in July 2020, the artistic tribute to Decatur icon Jimmy "Yellowhorse" Webster stands 15 feet tall and 40 feet long. Internationally-known artist Michael McPheeters, better known as "Mister Mural," painted the multi-colored war horse surrounded by geometric designs on the side of Webster's Karate on Sixth Avenue.

The mural, which celebrates the Native American culture in north Alabama and the influence of Webster, a Cherokee descendant, represents the first project created by the Decatur-based Chasing Art.

"Public art has a responsibility to the community. If it doesn't inspire the community to want to be better, it's just paint on a wall. Each piece, I pray, lets us all realize the one thing we have in common is this town. We all want to live in a community we are proud of. I hope the murals create some pride in our community and connect us all," said Glenn Mitchell, founder of Chasing Art.



"What Lifts You" Wings

219 Second Ave. S.E.

For an interactive mural, stop by the "What Lifts You" art piece on the back of the Shops on 2nd Avenue in downtown Decatur.

Painted by noted muralist Kelsey Montague, the large-scale 15-foot-tall delicate wings feature peacock feathers with hints of pink, green and blue. The mural, completed in nine hours in October 2020, was the second project organized by Chasing Art.



"Homecoming"

206 Second Ave. S.E.

Depicted on the side of Pineapple's Home Décor on Second Avenue, "Homecoming," which features a young girl holding a flower, pays tribute to the artist's sister.

Adam Stephenson, a Decatur native, used a photograph of his sister, Lara Chandler Whitehead, as a flower girl at a wedding, to create the mural, which covers the wall.

"I've had this photo of my sister for a long time. I've kept it with me in my sentimental belongings. I knew I always wanted to do something with it. I like her pose in it and the innocence of it. This is how most of us who knew Lara remember her," Stephenson said.

Stephenson and fellow artist Yehimi Cambron completed the mural in the fall of 2019. The mural represents the debut project of the Foundation for the Alabama Center for the Arts' Urban Art initiative.

While in downtown Decatur, stop by the Alabama Center for the Arts, 133 Second Ave. N.E., where a 30-foot-tall metal owl sculpture created by Fairhope artist Bruce Larsen stands. Larsen's sculpture features found and reclaimed material, such as gears and scrap metal. Two of his pieces, a dragonfly and heron gateway, appear at Delano Park's Riverwild Garden, on Gordon Drive Southeast between Eighth and Ninth avenues.

For outdoor art on a smaller scale, search for the turtles on the Downtown Turtle Trail. Envisioned by Lucy Orr, a 2021 graduate of Decatur Heritage Christian Academy, the trail features 10 bronze sculptures of turtles. From the turtle holding a microphone outside the Princess Theatre to the turtle playing the saxophone at Jones Park to the turtle wearing a top hat outside the former Cotaco Opera House, the trail tells pieces of Decatur's history. For more information, visit decaturovb.org/things-to-do/activities/trails/downtown-turtle-trail.

ATHENS



Alabama Veterans Museum

100 Pryor St W

Local artist Jamie Adams, along with Athens State University students, began a mural in honor of area veterans in the summer of 2020. The mural, through portraits, will tell the story of hundreds of Limestone County active duty military members and veterans.

"This is a way to honor those individuals who we need to remember, honor and celebrate," said Adams, an assistant art professor at Athens State. "A lot of people don't get the recognition they deserve, especially men like my two uncles who passed away. Having a way to honor their memory, having their portrait where thousands of people see it as they drive by, keeps their memories and sacrifices alive."

The 40-foot-long by 15-foot-tall mural features three soldiers in front of an American flag consisting of a mosaic of 200 photographs of Limestone County servicemen and women.

MOULTON



“Be the Difference”

Court Street

In April 2020, on the first anniversary of a fire that destroyed four buildings in downtown Moulton, volunteer artists transformed the site on Court Street into a piece of art.

Painted on the plywood wall separating the fire damaged area from the street, the mural depicts interactive scenes and sites iconic to Lawrence County, including the Jesse Owens Museum, Bankhead National Forest and Oakville Indian Mounds.

The mural also includes the motto “Be the difference in your community” – the motto of the Moulton Lions Club, which organized the art project.



“Koi”

132 Spring St. S.W.

Created by artist Dustin Timbrook in 2016, the “Koi” mural celebrates the fish found at Big Spring Park. The larger-than-life mural brings pops of orange, blue, gold and red to downtown Huntsville.

HUNTSVILLE



“This Girl Can”

Washington Street

In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment, which allowed women the right to vote, the “This Girl Can” mural in downtown Huntsville features a young girl with a “Votes for Women” watering can.

Nashville-based artist Kim Radford designed and completed the three-story mural in the summer of 2020.



“Space is Our Place”

2610 Clinton Ave. W.

A nod to Huntsville’s nickname as “The Rocket City,” the “Space is Our Place” by Huntsville artist John “Jahni” Moore features a woman with an astronaut’s helmet beneath planets and a rocket. Completed in 2018, the mural is on the side of Straight to Ale at Campus 805.



“Little Richard”

MidCity District

Danville native Logan Tanner painted the 40-foot-long by 30-foot-wide mural of rock ‘n’ roll legend Little Richard on the side of Wahlburgers. Tanner created the colorful mural with images of the entertainer singing and playing the piano as a memorial to Little Richard, who died in May 2020.



“Galactic”

Homes Avenue

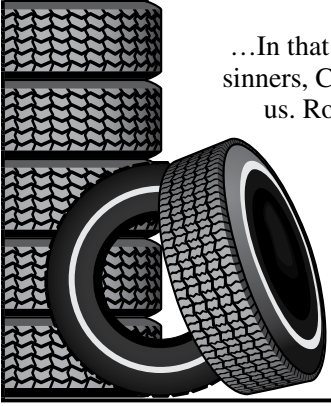
Galactic, a mural by North Alabama artist Jessie Andrews, celebrates Huntsville’s history with the aerospace industry. The mural, which depicts a galaxy, features aluminum planets against a shimmering background.

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...In that we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8



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MOORESVILLE

Mooresville, the Limestone County town “older than the state” is home to a church where James Garfield, the 20th president of the United States, preached in 1863, a post office built in 1840 and the Stagecoach Inn and Tavern built before 1825. Andrew Johnson, the 17th president of the United States, worked in Mooresville while serving as a tailor’s apprentice. The town also served as the filming site of Walt Disney’s “Tom & Huck.” The quaint town currently houses a bike shop, a candy store, a coffee house and a farm. Created by Laurence and Natasha McCrary in 2011, the three-acre 1818 Farms – a nod to the year of the town’s formation – is home to Southdown Babydoll sheep, chickens, pigs and goats. 1818farms.com.



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leejr@LeeGreene.com www.LeeGreene.com

398331-1

Mooresville

Website:
Mooresvilleal.org

Admission:
Free





JOE WHEELER STATE PARK

From golfing to boating to lakeside dining, Joe Wheeler State Park offers a variety of resort activities and amenities. Its lodge includes a restaurant and accommodations. The park also offers hiking trails, cabins, cottages, RV campsites, fishing, boat slips, a marina, boat rentals, and convention and banquet facilities.

Joe Wheeler State Park
4401 McLean Drive, Rogersville

256-247-5461

Website:
alapark.com/parks/joe-wheeler-state-park

Admission:
No charge for trails, and rates vary for golf, dining and marina.



IVY GREEN

The site of the birthplace of Helen Keller features the home and grounds, including the famous pump where teacher Annie Sullivan showed a young Keller how to spell w-a-t-e-r in sign language. That single lesson opened the outside world to the child. For two weeks in the summer, Ivy Green serves as the backdrop to productions of “The Miracle Worker,” a play about Keller and Sullivan.

Ivy Green: The Birthplace of Helen Keller
 300 N. Commons St. W. Tuscumbia

Phone:
 256-383-4066

Website:
Helenkellerbirthplace.org

Hours:
 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Saturday





AVE MARIA GROTTTO

Built over 40 years by Brother Joseph Zoetl, a monk at St. Bernard Abbey, the grotto features 125 small stone and cement structures, including St. Peter's Basilica, the Monte Cassino Abbey, Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the Alamo in San Antonio, German castles, South African shrines and scenes from the Holy Land.

Ave Maria Grotto
 1600 St. Bernard Drive, Cullman

Phone:
 256-734-3946

Website:
 Avemariagrotto.com

Hours:
 April to September: 9 a.m.-6 p.m., daily
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GOLF IN MORGAN COUNTY

The options are varied for those looking for a round of golf in Morgan County and the surrounding area.

Point Mallard, a public course, offers 18 holes covering 6,988 yards close to the waters of Wheeler Lake. The course, designed by John LaFoy, is part of the Point Mallard Park complex that is operated by the City of Decatur.

Burningtree Country Club is a private club that offers special opportunities to golfers wanting to test their skills on the 7,000-yard course across 180 acres. The course was

designed by prolific golf course designer George W. Cobb, who wanted to create attractive layouts that the average golfer would find enjoyable.

The course is home to the annual Spirit of America Classic. It has also hosted qualifying rounds for the U.S. Amateur Championship.

Quail Creek Resort in Hartselle features a par-71 course that covers 6,500 yards. It was co-designed by John C. Eyster Sr. and Matthew L. Nail.

MORGAN COUNTY

Point Mallard Golf Course

2600A Point Mallard Drive, Decatur
Pro shop: 256-341-4925

Burningtree Country Club (Private)

2521 Burningtree Drive, Decatur
Pro shop: 256-355-5982

Quail Creek Resort

233 Quail Creek Drive, Hartselle
Pro shop: 256-784-5033

LIMESTONE COUNTY

Southern Gayles Golf Course

22230 Mooresville Road, Athens
Pro shop: 256-232-9888

Canebrake Club (Private)

23015 Founders Circle, Athens
Pro shop: 256-232-2412

MADISON COUNTY

Hampton Cove Course

450 Old Highway 431, Owens Cross Roads
Pro shop: 256-551-1818

Sunset Landing

346 James Record Road SW,
Huntsville
Pro shop: 256-464-5050

CULLMAN COUNTY

Chesley Oaks Golf Course

1035 County Road 1583, Cullman
Pro shop: 256-796-9808

Terri Pines Country Club

700 Pine Hill Drive, Cullman
Pro shop: 256-739-0738



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Decatur Morgan Hospital is a full service community hospital located in Morgan County in the city of Decatur. With four campuses, Decatur Morgan Hospital serves Decatur, Hartselle, Priceville and surrounding communities. Our mission is to provide quality care that improves the health of those we serve.

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- North Alabama Neuro-Stroke Network
- Pediatrics
- Psychiatric Services
- Sleep Disorders Center
- Surgical Services
- Surgery Center
- Therapy and Wellness
- Travel Medicine
- Women's Health
- Vein Center
- Community Health Education
- Wellness Center with indoor pool



www.decaturmorganhospital.net

Decatur Parks

ATTRACTIONS



DELANO PARK

Sixth Avenue Southeast to Somerville Road and Prospect Drive to Gordon Drive.
Delanopark.org

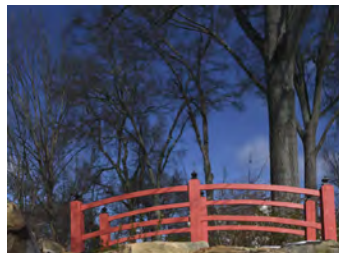
Stop and smell the roses before jumping in the splash pad and playing on the playground at Delano Park, the oldest park in the city. The 28-acre park features a rose garden, splash pad, tennis courts, playground, trail of history and picnic shelter. Alabama's first licensed female architect, Carolyn Cortner Smith, designed the park's stone structure in the 1930s.



RHODES FERRY PARK

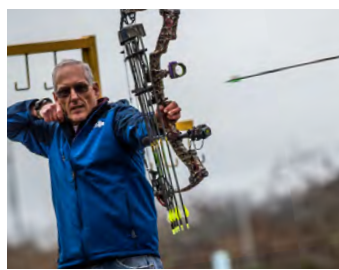
100 Market St. N.E.
Decaturparks.com

Set on the banks of the Tennessee River, Rhodes Ferry Park offers visitors a chance to play and learn. Along with the playground and pavilions, the park features historical markers about the Trail of Tears and Benson Field, Decatur's football stadium from 1931-47.



FRAZIER PARK

309 Cherry St. N.E.
Decaturparks.com
Celebrating Decatur's Southern heritage and Japanese influences, the calm and serene Frazier Park includes a Japanese Tea Garden, a Southern garden, a fountain and small stream.



ARCHERY PARK

2900 Point Mallard Circle S.E.
Decaturparks.com

Calling all Robin Hoods and Katniss Everdeens, this is the park for you. Archery Park includes a 20-target course, a 12-foot-high platform and targets ranging from 5 to 50 yards. Archers, 16 to 65, must have a valid hunting or heritage license.



HOSPITALITY PARK

4799 U.S. 31 North
Decaturparks.com

A popular spot for anglers, Hospitality Park sits along the north side of the

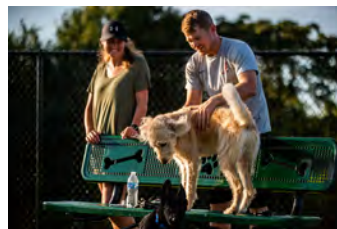
Tennessee River and also features a birding trail.



AC BANKS PARK

705 McCartney St. NW
Decaturparks.com

With two playground areas, a baseball field and pavilions, AC Banks Park is a centerpiece of the northwest Decatur community, often host to gatherings and reunions.



DECATUR DOG PARK

6372 Beltline Road SW
Decaturparks.com

Opened in May of 2019, the two-acre Decatur Dog Park offers an area for large dogs, 25 pounds and over, and one for small dogs, 25 pounds and under.



ADVENTURE PARK

Beltline Road, between Central Parkway and Sandlin Road SE
Decaturparks.com

A wooden castle playground greets visitors to Adventure Park. The playground includes swings, slides, climbers and exercise stations. The park sits next to Wilson Morgan Park, which features tennis courts, softball fields, a soccer field and a walking trail.



JACK ALLEN RECREATIONAL COMPLEX PLAYGROUND

2616 Modaus Road SW
Decaturparks.com

Housed at Decatur's premier soccer complex, the playground's highlights include a balance beam, ladder, rock wall, slides, climbers and more.



PINES PARK

1612 Fifth St. NW
Decaturparks.com

With swings, slides, benches, picnic tables, multi-purpose court with bleachers and a one-half mile walking trail, Pines Park attracts visitors, young and old.



Hartselle Aquatic Center

Hartselle Parks

SPARKMAN PARK

1102 Main St. SW
Hartselle.org

A centerpiece of Hartselle, Sparkman Park features baseball and softball fields, picnic areas, playgrounds, a walking trail and sits next to the city's Aquatic Center and SNAP Playground for all children.

HARTSELLE AQUATIC CENTER

406 Nanceford Road SW
Hartselle.org; admission charged

Open starting on Memorial Day weekend, the Hartselle Aquatic Center offers an escape from the summer heat with a pool, slides, diving boards, splash pad and lazy river.

JOHN MARK STALLINGS S.N.A.P. PLAYGROUND

406 Nanceford Road SW
Hartselle.org

Named after the son of former University of Alabama football coach Gene Stallings, the John Mark Stallings S.N.A.P. Playground was built to be accessible by all children, specifically individuals with disabilities. Features include slides, climbing bars, musical instruments, a periscope, sensory panels, elevated sand pile, pulse tennis table, seesaw and more.



Sparkman Park

Moulton Parks

H.A. ALEXANDER PARK

13550 Court St.

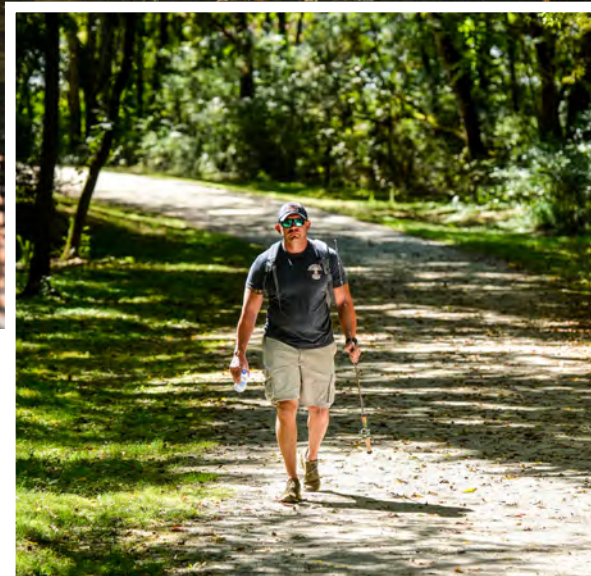
H.A. Alexander Park, an entertainment staple of the Moulton community, features baseball fields, softball fields, tennis courts, walking track and playground

MOULTON SPLASH PAD

Located next to H.A. Alexander Park, the splash pad, open Memorial Day to Labor Day, includes seven water features to entertain young children.

ALEXANDER MINI PARK

Just south of the splash pad sits Alexander Mini Park. A celebration of nature, the 10-acre park features mature hardwoods, a creek and an amphitheater, where Moulton's Music in the Park concert series takes place.



Athens Parks

BIG SPRING PARK

350 Market St. East

Athensalabama.us

Bring pieces of stale bread to feed the birds that gather at Big Spring Park's duck pond. The site also features a pavilion, playground and tennis court.

ATHENS GREENWAY TRAIL

1403 U.S. 31 North

Athensalabama.us

Escape into nature at the Athens Greenway Trail, a mostly shaded 2.3-mile trail that starts at Athens Sportsplex and winds down U.S. 72. Explorers will see a covered bridge, pastoral sites, wildflowers and, perhaps, a deer, heron and songbirds.

LINCOLN-BRIDGEFORTH PARK

815 Westview Ave.

Athensalabama.us

Get ready for a day of play at Lincoln-Bridgeforth Park. Perfect for a picnic, the park houses a basketball court, horseshoe pits, playground, kitchenette and pavilion.

SPORTSPLEX

1401 U.S. 31 North

Athensalabama.us

Set off U.S. 31 North, the Athens Sportsplex is home to a variety of activities, from disc golf and soccer to swimming and softball. The park also features an all-accessible playground and a 1.2-mile walking trail.



THE ROSENBAUM HOUSE

This is the opportunity to experience the work of Frank Lloyd Wright from inside the walls of one of the homes he designed. The 1,540-square-foot home is the only Wright-designed building in Alabama. It was created in a Usonian style that incorporates organic simplicity by bringing in the outdoors.

The Rosenbaum House
601 Riverview Drive, Florence

256-718-5050

Website:
wrightinalabama.com

Hours:
10 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday;
1-4 p.m., Sunday

Admission:
Fee charged

Performing Arts



Dream Weavers Children's Theatre:

The troupe for children and teens, which reorganized after a 10-year hiatus, began offering acting experiences for young thespians and introducing newcomers to the stage in 2017. The casts, which number 100 and more, have staged "Charlotte's Web," "Beauty and the Beast, Jr.," "The Wizard of Oz," "Frozen, Jr.," "Snow White" and more. dreamweaversct.com.



Bank Street Players:

Since re-forming in 2012, Bank Street has performed sold-out productions of "1776," "Fiddler on the Roof," "Oklahoma" and "Hairspray," brought plays to local coffee houses, schools and arts centers and premiered "Humbug!," a creation by local actor and playwright Chuck Puckett. bankstreetplayers.org.



Orchestra Sul Ponticello:

In 2014, Viljar Weimann created Decatur's first orchestra, Orchestra Sul Ponticello. In the past five years, the orchestra's members performed compositions by Bach, Mozart, Raid, Beethoven, Vivaldi, Verdi, Prokofiev and Handel and selections with singers, from "Barber of Seville" to "La Boheme." orchestrasulponticello.com.



Decatur Youth Symphony:

Created in 1998 as a way to teach the violin to all third-grade students in Decatur City Schools, the Decatur Youth Symphony expanded to include other string instruments and drum circles. The group performs a free winter and spring concert every year and is often a featured performer at Decatur's summer concert series Concerts by the River. decaturyouthsymphony.org.



Footlights Community Theater:

When Kristi Kargic moved back to north Alabama in January 2018, one of her first missions was to establish a performing arts group to expose children to theatre. In July of that year, the Athens-based Footlights Community Theater held its first production. The group stages original and popular productions.



The Athenian Players:

Headed by Hugh Long, The Athenian Players of Athens State, which calls the Alabama Center for the Arts in downtown Decatur home, staged productions ranging from Greek tragedies to Shakespearean comedies to modern dramas. The theater group's resume includes "Hamlet," "Sherlock Holmes," "Geek," "The Frogs" and "Verdigris." Playwright Jim Beaver, an actor known for his roles as Bobby Singer in "Supernatural," Whitney Ellsworth in "Deadwood" and Sheriff Shelby Parlow in "Justified," attended a performance of The Athenian Players' "Verdigris."



College Street Players:

The Hartselle community theater group appeals to both youth and experienced actors. The group’s offerings range from “The Lion King, Jr.” and “Mr. Popper’s Penguins” to “Into the Woods” and “Legend of Sleepy Hollow.” collegestreetplayers.org.



Curtain & Lights Theater Company:

Based out of First Baptist Church in Decatur, the Curtain & Lights Theater Company, headed by Heather Anderson, stages two shows a year. Past shows include “Charlie Brown Christmas,” “It’s a Wonderful Life” and “Annie Get Your Gun.”



Calhoun Theatre Department:

Headed by Calhoun Community College faculty Bill Provin and Lauren Cantrell Salerno, the Calhoun Theatre Department performs at the Black Box Theater at the Alabama Center for the Arts. The theater group has staged “Doubt,” “The Diviners,” “The 25th annual Putnam County Spelling Bee,” “The Comedy of Errors: A Pop Musical,” “Romeo and Juliet” and a musical version of Shakespeare’s “Two Gentlemen of Verona,” complete with a live six-piece band and aerial performers.



Huntsville Symphony Orchestra:

Under the direction of Gregory Vajda, the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra brings to life the music of classical composers, popular bands and more. The orchestra’s 2021 season includes a tribute to 1980s music, The Beatles, Mozart, Mahler and more. hso.org



Huntsville Ballet Company:

Directed by Phillip Otto, the professional ballet company typically stages three to four productions a year. Past productions include “Peter Pan,” “Romeo and Juliet,” “Cinderella” and “The Nutcracker.” huntsvilleballet.org



W.C. HANDY MUSEUM

W.C. Handy became famous in the music world for his compositions such as “Memphis Blues” and “St. Louis Blues” and as a band conductor and author. He is heralded as the “Father of the Blues.” But before his famous life, he was born in a small log cabin in Florence on Nov. 16, 1873. The museum in his honor houses a collection of memorabilia, including his famous trumpet and his personal piano, as well as personal papers and original sheet music.

W.C. Handy Museum and Library
 620 W. College St., Florence

256-760-6434

Hours:
 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday

Admission:
 Fee charged



ALABAMA MUSIC HALL OF FAME



This is the place to learn the rich history of music in Alabama, and especially the renowned Shoals music scene. Exhibits include a 12-foot jukebox, a wax figure of Nat King Cole, recording equipment used in Sam Phillips' Memphis Music Service, apparel and instruments from many artists.

Alabama Music Hall of Fame
617 U.S. 72 W., Tuscumbia

Phone:
256-381-4417

Website:
alamhof.org

Hours:
9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday

Admission charged



HUNTSVILLE MUSEUM OF ART

The Huntsville Museum of Art features a permanent collection of more than 3,200 objects, including pieces of American art from the 19th and 20th centuries, pieces by Andy Warhol, James McNeill Whistler and Robert Rauschenberg and contemporary works in wood, glass, metal and clay. The museum also hosts traveling exhibits.

Huntsville Museum of Art
 300 Church St. S., Huntsville

256-535-4350

Website:
hsvmuseum.org

Hours:
 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Thursday; noon-5 p.m., Sunday

Admission:
 Fees charged



LOWE MILL

For a look at the creations by area artists and artisans, stop by Lowe Mill in Huntsville. Housed at a former textile mill, Lowe Mill features more than 200 artists. Visitors can expect to see cigar box guitar makers, ceramicists, painters, printmakers, jewelry makers, musicians, sculptors, woodworkers, book binders and more.

Low Mill
 2211 Seminole Drive S.W., Huntsville

Website:
lowemill.art

Hours:
 Noon-6 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday; noon-8 p.m., Friday; 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday



Created and designed to connect children with the history and heritage of North Alabama, EarlyWorks features giant-sized instruments, a Kidstruction zone and a talking tree. Children can explore a 46-foot Keelboat, try on clothing from the 1800s, trade wares at the General Store and get an inside glimpse of how popular toys, such as the Etch-a-Sketch, Hungry, Hungry Hippo and Jack-in-the-Box, work.

EarlyWorks Children's Museum
 404 Madison St., Huntsville

Website: Earlyworks.com

Hours: 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday

Admission charged



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HUNTSVILLE BOTANICAL GARDENS

Covering 112 acres, Huntsville Botanical Garden features an open-air butterfly house, a Biblical garden with plants mentioned in the Bible, perennial, aquatic, herb, vegetable and daylily gardens, dogwood trees and a nature trail with black tupelo, red maple, sycamore and sweetgum trees. Two of the garden's most popular events are the Scarecrow Trail in the fall and Galaxy of Lights in the winter.

Huntsville Botanical Garden
4747 Bob Wallace Ave., Huntsville

256-830-4447

Website:
hsvbg.org

Hours:
April to September - 9 a.m.-7 p.m., Monday-Thursday; 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Friday and Saturday; 11 a.m.-6 p.m., Sunday

October to March - 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Saturday; 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Sunday

Admission:
Fee charged



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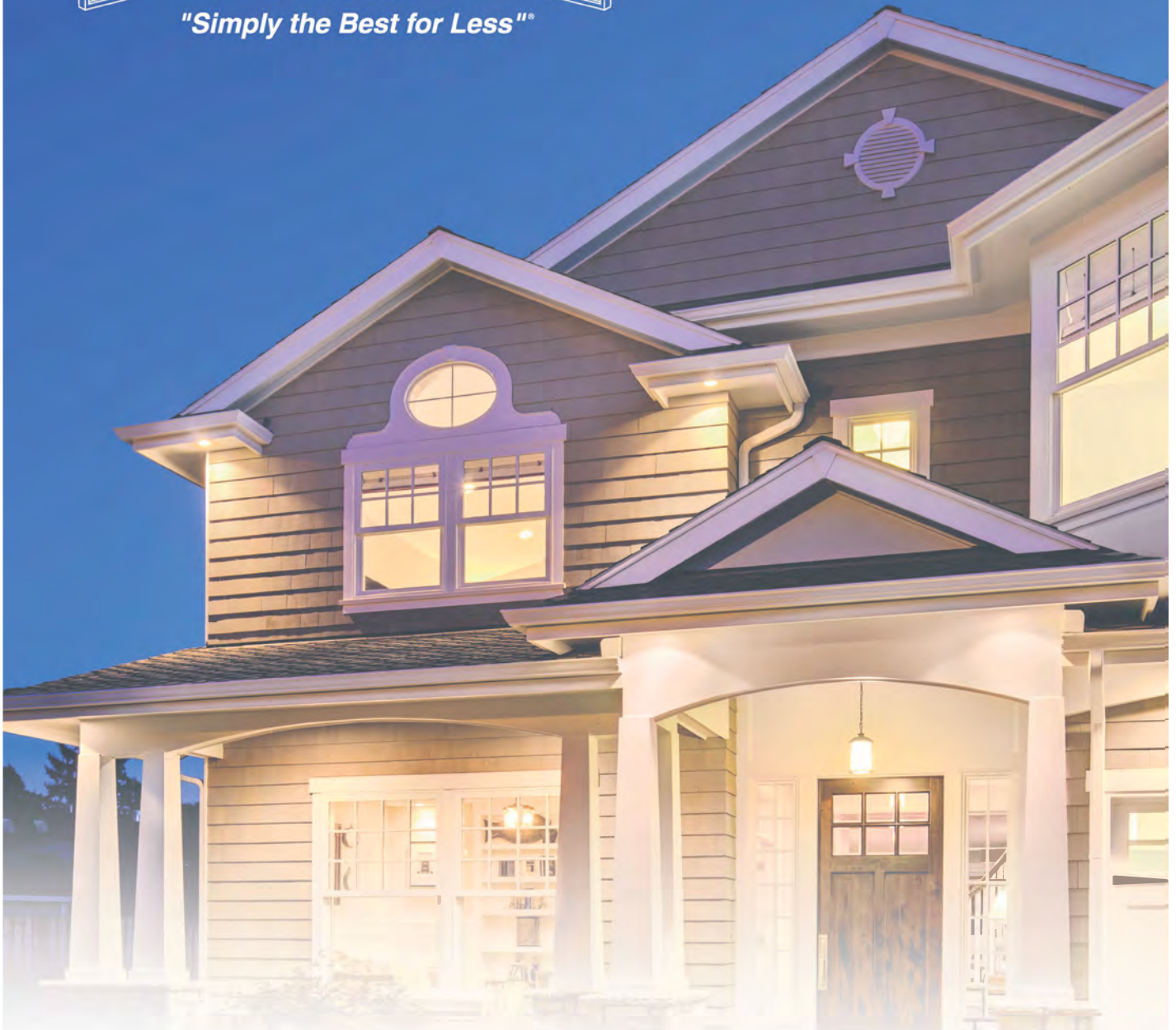


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Ambassador Kale

COOK MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCE

By Catherine Godbey//Staff Writer

Rescued sea turtle is unofficial mascot at facility dedicated to educating the public

Tucked in the corner of the 15,000-gallon saltwater aquarium, beneath coral structures, Kale, a Kemp's ridley sea turtle, one of the most endangered sea turtles in the world, slept soundly as batfish, blue tangs and foxface rabbitfish swam above him.

Since Kale's arrival at the Cook Museum of Natural Science in downtown Decatur in June 2020, Cassandra Elias, the museum's live animal manager, has watched him adapt to his new home.

"It's been neat to see his progress since we got him. He was a little intimidated at first, figuring out his surroundings. Now, he has his favorite sleep spots in the aquarium. Usually, if he's not swimming around, we know the three places to look for him," Elias said.

As the only animal with a name, Kale has become Cook Museum's unofficial mascot.

"People love to come and visit him. Kids come in asking to see Kale," Elias said. "One of the neat things about Kale is he can see people just as they can see him. So, it is interesting to watch his interactions with visitors."

As a critically endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtle, Kale fits in perfectly with the museum's purpose of educating the public.

"Kemp's ridley sea turtles are a great ambassador. They also nest sometimes on Alabama beaches, so it is really the perfect turtle to educate people on in Alabama. And, if we're being honest, they are adorable and people love them," Elias said.

For three years, the Cook Museum awaited the arrival of Kale.

The process began in 2017. As the exhibit's team designed and built the saltwater tank, the museum reached out to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service about housing a sea turtle. In May 2020, the agency contacted the Cook Museum. A juvenile Kemp's ridley sea turtle needed a home.

Accidentally hooked by a recreational fisherman in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay, Kale, as the Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center's Stranding Response Program named him, underwent surgeries to repair the damage to his throat. The surgeries, Elias said, created a fistula.

“The fistula is a hole where debris can get stuck. The Virginia Aquarium asked for him to be non-releasable because of the fistula, which can cause severe harm and death to this animal. At the museum, we are able to watch him and give him the medical care he needs,” Elias said.

With Kale on display, the Cook Museum hopes to teach visitors about the importance of protecting the environment.

The Endangered Species Act of 1970 and the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List of Threatened Species classify the Kemp’s ridley sea turtle as critically endangered. Researchers attribute that status to beach erosion caused by storms and land development, plastic debris in the water and fishing nets meant for other species.

For the past five decades, the Kemp’s ridley sea turtle has battled extinction.

Efforts to protect the turtles began in 1966 when the Mexico government sent a team of biologists to protect the eggs at Barra del Tordo, where the females nested. In the late 1970s, Mexico and the United States worked together to start a secondary nesting colony on Padre Island, Texas.

In 1985, scientists recorded 702 nests, down from the 1,000 nests observed in 1978. They attributed the low numbers to the thousands of turtles trapped in shrimp trawler nets. In 1987, when the United States required shrimpers to equip their nets with turtle excluder devices, the number of nests began to rise. During the past decade, the number of recorded nests ranged from 12,000 to 21,000.

At 30 pounds and with an estimated age of 5 to 7 years old, Kale is still a juvenile.

“He’s still growing a lot and is very food motivated. His favorite food is squid. Usually, we will try to stuff other food, such as shrimp and crayfish, inside the squid so he will get the vitamins he needs,” Elias said.

Kemp’s ridley sea turtles can grow up to 2 feet long, weigh up to 100 pounds and live in the wild for up to 50 years.

“Because they live for a really long time, people will be able to bring their children and grandchildren here for years to come to see Kale,” Elias said.

Along with Kale, other species at the Cook Museum listed as endangered or threatened include diamondback terrapins, an eastern indigo snake, Mexican alligator lizards and eastern hellbenders, which are nicknamed snot otters and lasagna lizards.



While at the museum, check out one of the newest additions, a taxidermy juvenile whooping crane. For the museum, the whooping crane represents three years of work.

“In 2016, we started talking with the International Crane Foundation. We let them know that if they had any whooping cranes in captivity die that we would like to receive the crane. In 2019, they let us know they had a juvenile whooping crane for us,” said Kara Long, collections and gallery experience manager.

As a juvenile, the whooping crane at the museum has white and cinnamon-colored feathers as opposed to the all-white feathers seen in adult whooping cranes.

Opened on June 7, 2019, the 62,000-square-foot museum at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Lee Street Northeast features exhibits with more than 60,000 bees, a multitude of bugs, 260 other animals and seven aquatic tanks. The \$32.4 million high-tech facility with interactive displays is centered around exhibits on rocks, minerals and weather patterns, oceans, space, caves, rivers and streams, arctic, desert and insects.

Highlights include an interactive kinetic sand table, a climbable tree and an explorable cave with stalagmites and stalactites.

The museum at 133 Fourth Ave. N.E., is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Tuesday-Friday; and 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday. Admission is \$20 for adults, \$17 for ages 65 and older and military, \$15 for ages 3 to 14 and free for children 2 and younger. cookmuseum.org.

Cook Museum of Natural Science

Phone: 256-351-4505

Website: cookmuseum.org

Hours: Open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Closed on Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Admission: Prices range from \$15 to \$20, with discounts for groups



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FESTIVALS



ALABAMA JUBILEE

Dozens of hot-air balloons take to the air above Decatur during the Alabama Jubilee Hot-Air Balloon Classic on the Saturday and Sunday of Memorial Day weekend.

The free two-day festival features a Hare and Hound Race, key grab, balloon glow, tethered rides, antique tractor display, car show, arts and crafts, live music and fireworks. The balloons plan to take to the sky for the 44th annual festival on May 29-30 this year. Admission is free.



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FESTIVALS

3RD FRIDAY

Classic cars, musicians, line dancers and artists descend on downtown Decatur every third Friday of the month, from April to October. Started in 2009 as a way to attract people to downtown, the 3rd Friday street festival brings in hundreds of visitors every month. Admission is free.



RIVER CLAY FINE ARTS FESTIVAL

Named for the material used to construct some of Decatur's oldest structures, the River Clay Fine Arts Festival features more than 70 sculptors, painters, photographers, jewelers and carvers creating art from wood, fiber, clay, oil, glass and stone.

Along with artists, the two-day festival held on Decatur's City Hall lawn showcases music, children's activities, student art exhibits and artist demonstrations. This year's festival is scheduled for Oct. 15-17. Riverclay.org. Admission charged.



RIVERFEST BBQ AND MUSIC FESTIVAL

Riverfest, the second oldest barbecue competition in Alabama, celebrates two of North Alabamians' loves — music and food.

Set for August at Ingalls Harbor, the two-day festival will feature music and a double steak competition with a pork and cocktail ancillary. The festival will open Aug. 27 at 5 p.m. with three or four musical acts. The cook-offs will take place on Aug. 28.

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FESTIVAL OF THE CRANES

The call of the wild — literally, the sound of thousands of cranes — lures visitors to the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge in Decatur for the Festival of the Cranes every January. Created to celebrate the more than 10,000 sandhill cranes and the dozen or so endangered whooping cranes that winter in North Alabama, the festival features music, art, nature walks, birds of prey shows and more. The whooping cranes started wintering at Wheeler in 2004. More than 5,000 people attend the free festival each year. [fws.gov/refuge/wheeler](https://www.fws.gov/refuge/wheeler). Admission is free.





CARNEGIE CARNIVAL

Held the Saturday before Fat Tuesday, the Carnegie Carnival — Decatur’s Mardi Gras celebration — brings parades, jazz bands, costumed canines and art to downtown.

The all-day event features a children’s parade, dog parade, half-marathon run, bluegrass music and an art creation station. The celebration culminates in the evening with the main parade that includes floats and revelers dressed as pirates, flappers, sirens and more. Admission is free.

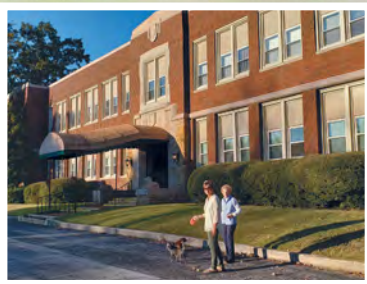
In the weeks leading up to the parade, look for unique events, such as a drag queen bingo, mystery dinners, trivia nights and more. carnegiecarnival.org

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DAIKIN FESTIVAL

With happi coats, traditional music, kimonos, taiko drummers and yakisoba, the Daikin Festival celebrates Japanese culture. Described as a gift to the community, the festival provides guests with free admission, free food, free music, free happi coats and free tethered hot-air balloon rides, weather permitting. The festival typically takes place in May. Admission is free.



DRAGON BOAT FESTIVAL

More than 1,000 paddlers propelling 46-foot-long dragon-headed boats compete in the annual Dragon Boat Festival at Point Mallard Park. The event, which raises money for the Decatur Morgan Hospital Foundation, attracts teams from area high schools, gyms, churches and businesses.

An opening ceremony kicks off the races and features the dotting of the dragon's eye and a performance by the Daikin drummers. The races typically take place the second Saturday in May. Admission is free.



SPIRIT OF AMERICA

Fireworks light up the sky above Point Mallard Park in celebration of the Fourth of July. The free celebration also includes a children's bike parade, a golf tournament and the recognition of community servants and patriotic individuals. Admission is free.





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398338-1



BATTLE FOR DECATUR

More than 200 reenactors gather in Decatur on Labor Day weekend to bring to life the Battle for Decatur. The two-day event held the Saturday and Sunday before Labor Day commemorates the four-day encounter between the North and the South in October 1864.

Activities include mock battles, a Ladies' Tea, a military ball, a church service and Civil War camps with authentic equipment and dress. Admission is free.





FIDDLERS CONVENTION

Nicknamed the “Granddaddy of Midsouth Fiddlers Conventions,” the Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention attracts more than 15,000 music lovers and 200 musicians from 30 states to Athens State University every year. The three-day convention with competitions in buck dance, banjo, fiddle and old-time singing, culminates with a “fiddle off” between the junior, intermediate and senior division fiddle winners. This year’s celebration is scheduled for Sept. 30-Oct. 2. Tvtotfc.org. Admission charged.



ATHENS GREASE FESTIVAL

With the motto, “You can eat healthy the other 364 days of the year” — 365 during a leap year — the Athens Grease Fest serves up a celebration of all things fried. Complete with a toga dress code and quirky games, including the frozen turkey toss, the festival marries the Greek origin of the city’s name with the South’s love of fried food. Inventive foodies have served up fried banana pudding, Snickers, artichokes, cheese steak, candy corn, pies, meatballs and bologna. The event is held in October. Athensmainstreet.org. Admission charged.



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Other Celebrations & Festivals



Racking Horse Spring Celebration:

Dozens of horses compete for the title of grand champion at the Spring Celebration every year. The four-day competition at the Morgan County Celebration Arena will take place April 21-24. Rackinghorse.org. Admission charged.



Concerts by the River:

A staple of Decatur's summer, Concerts by the River is an outdoor concert series held on Mondays from May to August. The music ranges from classical to country to jazz. Concerts take place at Rhodes Ferry Park and Founders Park. Admission is free.



Piney Chapel American Farm Heritage Days:

Combine antique tractors, cars and trucks with gasoline and steam engines, horse-drawn equipment and competitions for the annual Farm Heritage Days celebration held the first Friday and Saturday of August in Athens. Activities include a parade of power, slow races, ladies' skillet throw, kids' pedal pull, wheat threshing exhibit, entertainment and more.



Kiddie Carnival:

A staple of summertime in Athens, the Kiddie Carnival features rides, from a roller coaster to swings to a Ferris wheel, and games for children. Open Thursday-Saturday during the summer, proceeds from the 50-cent per ride event go to the Athens Lions Club outreach programs. e-clubhouse.org/sites/athensal



Celebrating Early Old Town with Art:

Watercolor paintings by Decatur artist Frances D. Tate offer viewers a peek into one of the city's oldest neighborhoods, Old Town. An exhibit of Tate's work takes place every Fall. oldtowndecatur.com. Admission is free.

AMANDA G. SCOTT, CPA

Revenue Commissioner - Morgan County, Alabama



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I appreciate the support and trust you have placed in me as Revenue Commissioner of Morgan County. It is my goal and privilege to continue to serve you, and I look forward to every opportunity to make a difference for you and Morgan County.

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Monday - Friday 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

Mailing Address

Amanda G. Scott, CPA
Revenue Commissioner
P.O. Box 696
Decatur, AL 35602

Morgan County Courthouse

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Second Floor
Decatur, AL 35601

Hartselle Satellite Office

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Crestwood Shopping Center
Suite 10
Hartselle, AL 35640

Lacey's Spring Satellite Office

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Somerville, AL 35670
Mon.-Thurs. 6:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

www.morgancountyrevenue.com

398520-1



Hartselle Depot Days:

A tribute to the railroad industry, Hartselle Depot Days, with music, a truck and motorcycle show, arts, crafts and games, attracts more than 19,000 people to downtown Hartselle every September. hartsellechamber.com.

Admission is free.



Eva Frontier Days:

A down-home celebration, complete with greased pig-catching, frog jumping and pig-calling skills, highlights the Eva Frontier Days in Eva every year. The weeklong community celebration in September includes a parade, antique tractors, car show, crafts, baking contest, hayride, community singing and music. Admission is free.



Helen Keller Festival:

The weeklong festival scheduled for June 24-27 celebrates the life and accomplishments of Helen Keller. The festival includes music, family bike rides, runs, a car and truck show, golf tournaments, arts and crafts, parade and performances of “The Miracle Worker.” The festival takes place at Spring Park in Tusculmbia, which is near Keller’s Ivy Green birthplace. helenkellerfestival.com.



Holiday Parades:

More than a dozen parades, including one on the water, bring the Christmas spirit to Morgan, Lawrence and Limestone counties every year. The parades in Decatur, Hartselle, Priceville, Athens, Courtland, Moulton, Trinity, Mount Hope, Elkmont, Hatton, Ardmore, Hillsboro and Town Creek feature marching bands, floats, Santa and more. In the Parade of Lights, boats adorned with Christmas lights and decorations float down the Tennessee River between Riverwalk Marina and Rhodes Ferry Park in Decatur.



W.C. Handy Music Festival:

The 10-day music extravaganza in July honors W.C. Handy, Father of the Blues. Bands come from all over to perform in every nook and cranny in Florence. wchandymusicfestival.com.



Historic Decatur Christmas Tour of Homes:

Every December, residents in the historic Decatur neighborhoods of Albany and Old Decatur open their homes to visitors. The Historic Decatur Christmas Tour of Homes, scheduled for Dec. 11, typically features six to eight homes, several churches, public spaces and more. decaturchristmastour.com. Admission charged.

PLACES TO Stay



Decatur and Morgan County offer visitors a variety of convenient places to stay.

LODGING FACILITIES IN DECATUR AND MORGAN COUNTY INCLUDE:

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bestwestern.com

Baymont Inn & Suites

2212 Danville Road S.W., Decatur
256-355-1999
wyndhamhotels.com

Comfort Inn

3239 Point Mallard Parkway, Priceville
256-355-1037
choicehotels.com

Courtyard by Marriott

1209 Courtyard Circle S.W., Decatur
256-355-4446
marriott.com

Doubletree by Hilton Riverfront

1101 Sixth Ave. N.E., Decatur
256-355-3150
Decaturriverfront.doubletree.com

Hampton Inn

2041 Beltline Road S.W., Decatur
256-355-5888
hampton.com

Holiday Inn Express & Suites

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Home2 Suites by Hilton

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home2suites.com

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Residence Inn by Marriott
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From colorful, blooming flowers in the spring to lush green trees in the summer to reds, oranges and yellows of leaves in the fall to the sight of endangered birds in the winter, north Alabama offers experiences for nature lovers throughout the year.

For outdoor adventures, check out these forests, creeks, tree-lined paths and waterfalls in Morgan, Lawrence and Limestone counties.



WHEELER NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

'Regional treasure'

Birdwatching paradise also popular for hiking, biking, fishing and boating

By Catherine Godbey//Staff Writer

Home to more than 115 fish species, 75 species of reptiles and amphibians, 47 mammal species, 38 species of freshwater mussels, 26 species of freshwater snails and 300 species of birds, the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, tucked along the busy thoroughfares of Alabama 67 and Interstate 65, serves as an ecological wonderland.

Described as the “hidden gem” of north Alabama, the refuge, which spans 35,000 acres in Morgan, Limestone and Madison counties, features forested wetlands, upland hardwoods, creeks, a bat cave, Alabama’s largest duck population, alligators and 10 endangered species.

Tom Ress, a member of the Friends of Wheeler Refuge group, labeled the wildlife sanctuary as his Nirvana.

“Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, right here in Decatur, is a regional treasure that has 35,000 acres of incredible scenic land and water virtually on the edge of the city. Visitors come from all over the United States to witness the annual waterfowl migration and to see the thousands of geese, ducks, sandhill cranes and endangered whooping cranes.”

Since the whoopers – a term used by avid whooping crane watchers who refer to themselves as “Craniacs” – started wintering in north Alabama in 2005, they have become a main attraction at the refuge.

To celebrate the 5-foot-tall birds, identifiable by their white bodies, black-tipped wings, red crowns and a wingspan of 7½ feet, the Friends of Wheeler, a local

conservancy group, organized the Festival of the Cranes, held in January. During a typical year, thousands of spectators from across the country converge at the refuge for the Festival of the Cranes.

Overall, Wheeler, which was created in 1938 as a result of the Tennessee Valley Authority’s construction of dams to control flooding from the Tennessee River, attracts an estimated 650,000 visitors annually, according to the Alabama Tourism Department.

“I like to think of Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge as a natural oasis along the Tennessee River,” said David Young, park ranger at Wheeler.

The refuge is a popular spot for hikers, bicyclists, anglers, boaters, hunters and birdwatchers. The North Alabama Birding Trail has eight bird watching sites on the refuge, which is home to more than 2,000 geese, 20,000 sandhill cranes and 75,000 ducks. Young, an avid hiker and kayaker, listed the Beaverdam Boardwalk as one of his favorite trails.

“I love seeing that grove of water tupelo trees. Each season, it looks beautiful, whether the trees are leafed out in the summer or flooded in the winter and you can see the reflection of the trees in the water. It’s so peaceful,” Young said. “The further down the trail you go, the quieter it gets. You feel like you are getting away from society for a bit.”

Admission to the refuge is free.

Seasonal attractions at the refuge:

Spring: Listen for the songbirds along any of the refuge’s forested trails, including Flint Creek Trail. Look for warblers and other birds that spent the winter in Central and South America. “It’s just as much a listening experience as it is a looking experience,” Young said.

Summer: Look for long-legged water birds, such as herons and egrets, and snakes. “I know a lot of people are afraid of snakes, but at a distance, they can be beautiful to watch,” Young said. At sundown, listen for the frogs. Fishing is a popular activity on the refuge during the summer. Late in the season, butterflies will appear along the roadside.

Fall: Explore the Truck Trail bordered by stately hickory and oak trees along the Tennessee River. The trail is accessible at the end of Old River Road Southeast. While the majority of refuge roads are closed to car traffic, hikers and bicyclists can still access the paths.

Winter: “Winter is the season that a lot of people recognize Wheeler for,” Young said. Winter ushers in the arrival of thousands of ducks, pelicans, sandhill cranes and the endangered whooping cranes. The whooping cranes show up in mid-November on an average year and stay through late January and early February. For a chance to see the cranes, stop by the visitors’ center.

For more trail recommendations, visit fws.gov/refuge/Wheeler. Gates to the refuge’s visitors’ center, 3121 Visitor Center Road, Decatur, are open 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Tuesday to Saturday from March to October; and 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Sunday to Saturday from November to February.

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OUTDOORS

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BANKHEAD NATIONAL FOREST

Where: Lawrence County

Cost: Free in most areas, \$3 per car at Brushy Lake and Siskey recreation areas

An outdoor playground for nature enthusiasts, Bankhead National Forest covers 181,230 acres in Lawrence, Winston and Franklin counties, offering trails to hike, waterfalls to visit, caves to explore and creeks to paddle.

“Sometimes you’ve just got to stop and look up. We are here to appreciate this beautiful place,” said Janice Barrett with Wild South, an environmental conservation organization. “There are so many special things to see.”

If hiking with children, Barrett recommended visiting the two-mile round-trip wheelchair-accessible Brushy Lake trail, which winds beneath the bluffs and serves as a prime spot for bird-watching, and Caney Creek Falls, a two-mile round-trip that ends at a waterfall.

Also check out the Siskey Picnic Area. Developed as a recreation area by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, the half-mile Siskey Trail winds along the lake and in and out of coves with waterfalls.

During the summer, Wild South leads family-friendly hikes on Wednesdays.

For more trail recommendations, visit the Wild South office, 552 Lawrence St., Moulton. wildsouth.org



TAKE A RIDE

Where: Decatur and Athens

Cost: Free

Throughout north Alabama, trails exist for bicycle lovers to go on two-wheel adventures. Explore the trails at Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge, Bankhead National Forest, the Dr. Bill Sims Bike Trail and Richard Martin Rails-to-Trails.

The 12-mile Bill Sims Bike Trail, decaturovb.org/things-to-do/activities/outdoors/hiking-biking/dr-bill-sims-bike-trail, winds through Decatur, linking Point Mallard to Wilson Morgan Park via Rhodes Ferry Park and downtown Decatur.

A popular family-friendly spot for bikers and horseback riders, the 11-mile Richard Martin Rails-to-Trails, visitathensal.com/richard-martin-trail.html, connects Piney Chapel to Veto in Limestone County and features covered bridges, a refurbished railcar, waterways, wetlands and a Civil War battle site. The relatively flat trail accommodates strollers and wheelchairs.

The Swan Creek Greenway Trail at Athens Sportsplex features views of a covered bridge and creeks.

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OUTDOORS



WONDERS OF THE WATER

Where: Morgan, Limestone, Lawrence and Walker counties

Cost: Free

Explore the natural wonders of north Alabama with adventures along the area's rivers, creeks and streams.

In Morgan County, the 20-mile Flint Creek trail serves as a prime spot for kayakers and canoers. The trail winds from Alabama 36 near Hartselle to Point Mallard Park and crosses through parts of Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge. The trail is accessible at Alabama 36 near Hartselle, Vaughn Bridge Launch 5 miles from the start of the trail, U.S. 31 Boat Launch across from the WaterWorks Center for Environmental Education, Osprey Point Landing at Alabama 67, Hickory Hill Boat Launch with access from Hickory Hill Road off Alabama 67, and Duncan Hill Launch on the refuge adjacent to the Tennessee River channel.

In Limestone County, Limestone Bay, accessible off Arrowhead Landing Ramp in Mooresville, offers views of birds, including geese and the occasional bald eagle, and deer in the late fall. Also explore the Alabama portion of the Elk River, which winds 22 miles from Veto, Tennessee, at the state line to Elk River Mills Road in Athens. For uninterrupted views of the tree line, paddle the 10-mile section from Veto to Easter Ferry Road.

Other recommendations include the Tennessee River from Lake Guntersville to Wheeler Lake, Sipsey River and Brushy Creek in Bankhead Forest, the Sipsey Fork River in Walker County and the Flint River in Madison County.



CHASE WATERFALLS

Where: Lawrence County and Madison County

Cost: Free

Make sure to bring a camera to capture the beauty of north Alabama's waterfalls.

In Lawrence County's Sipsey Wilderness, head to Turkey Foot Falls, which is a 30-minute walk from the Sipsey River picnic ground. Turkey Foot Creek, which runs through a sandstone canyon, empties into the Sipsey Fork. After seeing Turkey Foot Falls, head west to 15-foot Kinlock Falls in the Bankhead National Forest. northalabama.org/trails/waterfalls.

In Madison County, visit Bethel Springs Nature Preserve on the Land Trust of North Alabama. The preserve's Carpenter Trail, Falling Sink Trail and Mill Trail create a 1.3-mile round-trip to the waterfall. landtrustna.org/properties/bethel-spring-preserve.

Secret Sauce

By Catherine Godbey//Staff Writer

TIME TO EAT



BIG BOB GIBSON BAR-B-Q

Restaurant with national following has traditions of tasty barbecue, family atmosphere

In 1925, a 6-foot-4-inch, 300-pound railroad worker named Bob Gibson started serving barbecue, slow-roasted in a hand-dug pit, with a distinct white sauce from the backyard of his Danville Road home.

Quickly, word of Big Bob, his tangy white sauce and Brunswick stew spread. Now, 96 years and five generations later, the legacy of Big Bob Gibson's BBQ, a culinary staple of Decatur, the state of Alabama and the United States, continues to grow.

Led by Don McLemore, Gibson's grandson, and Chris Lilly, who married Gibson's great-granddaughter, Big Bob Gibson's BBQ has appeared on the Food Network, earned 15 World BBQ Championships, five Memphis in May grand championships, appeared on NBC's "Today Show" with Al Roker and participated in the South Beach Food & Wine Festival and Aspen Food & Wine Festival.

McLemore credited the restaurant's success and longevity to the friendly atmosphere and, of course, to the food.

"Pretty much everything is the same as when my grandfather made it," McLemore said. "We have added items, but we haven't messed with the sauce."

Created by Gibson, that signature white sauce formed the foundation for the award-winning barbecue joint.

"I think that's why his barbecue restaurant became so popular with everybody. He had something a little different, something that appealed to folks," McLemore said.

People loved the white sauce so much, they followed Gibson as he moved the restaurant from his home to Old Moulton Road, Moulton Heights, downtown Decatur and Alabama 67. In 1987, the restaurant moved into its current location on Sixth Avenue and, in 1992, opened a second location on Danville Road.

All five of Gibson's children, including McLemore's mother, followed in the family business.

"My mom went to see my grandfather, who liked to hunt and fish, in the early 1950s. She told him she would run the restaurant and he could do whatever he wanted," McLemore said. "Many days, he'd sit up on the chair next to the cash register and give kids bubblegum."

In 1977, three years after his grandfather's death, McLemore started working at the restaurant. In addition to Lilly, the five generations of the Big Bob Gibson family also include McLemore's two grandsons.

"My grandsons made me so proud. It feels good that they liked what I did enough that they wanted to do the same thing. I'm very proud of them," McLemore said.

For their contributions to the culinary world, Lilly was inducted into the American Royal World Series of Barbecue's Hall of Fame in 2016 and McLemore received the Pioneer of Barbecue award from Jack Daniel's World Championship Barbecue in 2015.

The Alabama Department of Tourism's "100 Dishes to Eat in Alabama" recommends eaters try Big Bob Gibson's pies and barbecue chicken with white sauce.

McLemore agreed, but also offered other options.

"I should say my favorite food is the chicken with the white sauce. And I do love that, but I'm more of a pork man than a chicken man. Then you've got to remember we've got pies. But that's a different thing than barbecue, so I can say I love the pork and I love the pies too," McLemore said.

For a taste of Big Bob Gibson's, stop by 1715 Sixth Ave. S.E., from 9:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m. every day of the week, or 2520 Danville Road S.W., from 9:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Monday to Saturday.



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TIME TO EAT!



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ASIAN

Canton House

Where: 609 14th St. S.E., Decatur, 256-350-8868, ezordernow.com/cantonhouse

Hours: 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and Sunday; 10:30 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

The oldest authentic Asian restaurant in Decatur, Canton House has been family owned and operated since 1995. The menu offers everything from its Hawaiian Five "O" specialty dish to staples like Sweet and Sour Pork or Chicken and General Tso's Chicken. The lunch buffet starts at 10:30 a.m., and the dinner buffet begins at 3:30 p.m. You'll love the generous portions with takeout meals.



BARBECUE



Big Bob Gibson Bar-B-Q

Where: 1715 Sixth Ave. S.E., Decatur, 256-350-6969; bigbobgibson.com

Hours: 9:30 a.m.-8:15 p.m. daily, the drive-thru remains open until 8:30 p.m.

2520 Danville Road S.W., Decatur, 256-350-0404

Hours: 9:30 a.m.-8:15 p.m. Monday-Saturday, the drive-thru remains open until 8:30 p.m.

When you walk in to the original location on Sixth Avenue in Decatur, you'll see many of the trophies that Big Bob Gibson's award-winning barbecue has earned. Big Bob's, as it's known locally, has been serving up barbecue since 1925 and has been featured on Food Network, the Travel Channel and more. The restaurant's food is described as "quintessential Alabama Southern cooking."

Chief & Snoogie's Hickory Pit

Where: 23419 Alabama 24, Trinity, 256-351-9904;

Hours: 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday
Stop in for barbecue at Chief and Snoogie's in Trinity. With pork, turkey, ribs and more that are smoked daily, you'll find lots to choose from. Try their BBQ Nachos and grab a dessert while you're at it.

Holy Smoke BBQ

Where: 900 U.S. 31 N.W., Hartselle, 256-751-2000

Hours: 10:30 a.m.-8 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday

Holy Smoke is a small, family-owned barbecue restaurant that is dedicated to cooking fresh foods daily, the old-fashioned way. The restaurant is best known for their smoked chicken wings and barbecued ribs, but you can also get juicy pulled pork and deliciously smoked beef brisket, and all the homemade sides you could imagine.

LawLers BBQ

Where: 725 Beltline Road S.W., Suite A, Decatur, 256-822-1006;

and 1506 U.S. 72 E., Athens, 256-233-1818; lawlersbarbecue.com
Hours: 10:30 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Saturday

LawLers BBQ was started by two brothers from Athens, Alabama. LawLers uses old-fashioned recipes and every bit of the hickory smoked, pulled pork is still picked by hand. You can get barbecue by the pound, St. Louis style ribs, or maybe try a "stuffie" – a baked potato stuffed with cheese and your choice of barbecue meat.

Pigskin All Sports BBQ

Where: 400 Nance Ford Road, S.W., Hartselle, 256-754-5055

Hours: 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Pigskin All Sports BBQ offers a variety of barbecue plates, sandwiches, melts and much more. On Fridays, in addition to their usual menu, they offer catfish plates and fried pies. Get a slice of homemade pies for dessert, or take a whole one home for the whole family to enjoy.

Scrugg's BBQ

Where: 1315 Alabama 20, Decatur, 256-351-7937; scruggsbbqdecatur.com

Hours: 11 a.m.-5:30 Tuesday-Friday

Located near the Tennessee River, Scrugg's BBQ is making a name for itself. Local patrons declare that they have the best brisket on the planet, not to mention their fried catfish or stuffed taters. Stop on in and see if you agree.

Smokey C's Bar-B-Que & Wings

Where: 3075 Alabama 20, Decatur, 256-353-7787; smokeycsbbq.com

Hours: 10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. Monday - Friday

Located on the western edge of Decatur, this family-run barbecue restaurant is known for more than just its award-winning white sauce. Stop in on a weekday for a great lunch of signature pork loin or a BBQ Tater Bowl and be sure to get a serving of their much-loved homemade banana pudding.

Whitt's BBQ

Where: 2532 Spring Ave., S.W., Decatur, 256-350-2748; whitts3.com

Hours: 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Whitt's BBQ has several locations to choose from in Decatur and Athens that are locally owned and operated by the Whitt family. Check out their website to find a location nearest to you, where you can get barbecue by the pound and all the sides you'd want, or a family pack to take home and enjoy.

PIZZA/ITALIAN



Alfonso's Pizza & Italian Restaurant

Where: 725 Beltline Road S.W., Suite E, Decatur, 256-350-0211;

thealfonsospizza.com

Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Afonso's has been a family-owned restaurant since 1977 with three generations having been a part of it. Alfonso's is best known for its brick oven pizzas with the thin, crispy crust with freshly made dough and sauces. Other options on the menu include shrimp alfredo, spaghetti bake and many more things to choose from.

Francesco's Italian Restaurant & Pizzeria

Where: 2613 U.S. 31 S., Decatur, 256-584-6770;

francescositalianrestaurant.org

Hours: 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and Sunday, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Francesco's is an Italian restaurant and pizzeria located in southern Decatur. On their menu, you'll find classic Italian dishes such as fettuccini, lasagna or calzones. All of the dishes are made to order with fresh ingredients. Try their famous pinwheels.



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Pizza Ed

Where: 305 Main St. W., Hartselle, 256-502-9959; [Facebook.com/thepizzaed](https://www.facebook.com/thepizzaed) Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday

Pizza Ed offers New York Style, brick oven pizza in the heart of downtown Hartselle. In addition to fresh-made pizza, you can find a variety of offerings, such as fettuccini alfredo, lasagna, calzones, strombolis, salads and more. You might even like to try a slice of lemoncello mascarpone cake for dessert.

Terranova's

Where: 105 N. Jefferson St., Athens, 256-800-8061; Hours: 4 p.m.-8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday

This is Terranova's second location and is on the historic square of downtown Athens. At Terranova's you will find savory Italian dishes like pasta Portofino or eggplant Parmesan to enjoy, while taking in the ambiance of Italian antiques and "spunky memorabilia."

The Village Pizza

Where: 15728 East Limestone Road, Athens, 256-232-3388; [Facebook.com/TheVillagePizzaEastLimestone](https://www.facebook.com/TheVillagePizzaEastLimestone) Hours: 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, 4 p.m.-8 p.m. Sunday

This restaurant has been creating handmade pizzas since 1989. You can find pizzas, pasta, wings and more in this family-friendly and locally loved pizzeria.

Village Pizza

Where: 222 W. Market St., Athens, (256) 233-7627; villagepizzaathens.com Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Sunday

This family-owned restaurant serves pizzas cooked in a brick oven and has a lively atmosphere for those dining onsite. Village Pizza's Fire and Ice Wings are one of the most popular items on the menu, and it also offers a selection of craft beers.

MEXICAN

Camino Real

Where: 2504 U.S. 31, Decatur, 256-353-6727 Hours: 11 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday and Sunday, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Opened in 1985, this decorative Mexican restaurant on U.S. 31 offers traditional cuisine including margaritas. An authentic Mexican atmosphere adds to the dining experience. The restaurant offers dine-in, takeout and delivery service. It has family seating up front and long tables in the back that can accommodate teams and other large groups.

Don Alejo Mexican Restaurant

Where: 800 U.S. 31 S.W., Suite D., Hartselle, 256-778-3325; don-alejo-mexican-restaurant.business.site Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Don Alejo Mexican Restaurant is a family-owned restaurant offering classic Mexican cuisine in a welcoming environment. You'll find many things to choose from on their menu, from fajitas and chimichangas to flaming cheese. Try their xango for dessert – fried cheesecake with ice cream, and be sure to stop in for "Taco Tuesday."



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TIME TO EAT



El Portal Mexican Restaurant

Where: 1901 U.S. 31 S.W., Hartselle, 256-751-1159
and 1315 U.S. 31 N.W., Hartselle, 256-751-2962

Hours: 11 a.m. - 9:30 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-10:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday

El Portal has two locations to choose from. At their locations you will find lots of variety on their menus, from fish tacos to a “Speedy Gonzales.” You will also find a vegetarian section and kids portion of the menu.

La Monarca International Food

Where: 2528 Spring Ave. S.W., Decatur, 256-686-4447

Hours: 8 a.m.-9 p.m. Daily

La Monarca is a restaurant tucked in the back of a Mexican market. Locals and visitors alike come in to get what they consider authentic Mexican foods like Diablo shrimp, an agua fresca – or you’ll even find grilled cactus.

Las Vias Mexican Grill

Where: 1000 Beltline Road S.W., Suite Q, Decatur, 256-552-7772;

Hours: 10:30 a.m.-9:30 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m.-11 p.m. Friday and Saturday

2224 Sixth Ave., S.E., Decatur; 256-686-3344;

Hours: 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

and 711 Nance Ford Road, Hartselle, 256-751-1402

Hours: 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. daily

lasviasmexicangrill.com

Las Vias offers classic Mexican foods in three convenient locations – two in Decatur as well as one in Hartselle. Stop on in to see why people love their delicious food and Southern hospitality.

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Cahoot's

Where: 117 Main St. W., Hartselle, 256-751-4723
Hours: 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday (subject to change)
Facebook.com/cahootscafe

At Cahoots you'll find nostalgic décor in every nook and cranny. Every table is different. This restaurant offers homemade Southern favorites for lunch in a casual and fun environment. Check out their Fried Green Tomato BLT or Bacon Jam Club sandwich.

Carl's Deli

Where: 3151 Alabama 67, Somerville, 256-606-3465
Hours: 5 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Stop on in for an early morning breakfast of country ham and biscuits, or order pancakes and sausage at Carl's Deli in Somerville. They also offer daily lunch specials and classics like burgers or grilled ham and cheese sandwiches.



Let's Do Lunch

Where: 435 Holly St. N.E., Decatur, 256-340-1317; letsdolunchdecatur.com
Hours: 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Friday

Just as the name indicates, this is a great place to stop in for a tasty lunch. Everything is made fresh and has no preservatives or additives. Try their turkey bacon berry wrap or strawberry pretzel salad! This restaurant was featured in the "Alabama Tourism 100 Dishes to Eat Before You Die."

Nature's Table Café

Where: 133 Fourth Ave. N.E., Decatur – inside the Cook Museum, 256-898-6301; cookmuseum.naturesstable.com
Hours: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Nature's Table, located inside the Cook Museum, offers a blend of traditional and new foods with fresh ingredients. You'll find Acai bowls, smoothies, sandwiches, protein bowls and more.

Sugar Mama's

Where: 101 Railroad St., Hartselle, 256-919-5075
Hours: 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday

Sugar Mama's greets you on the corner of Railroad and Main Streets as you enter historic Downtown Hartselle from the east. This quaint shop offers homemade cinnamon rolls, breakfast burritos and other great breakfast items to go with your morning coffee. They offer a lunch menu, including a variety of salads, sandwiches or lunch specials. Sugar Mama's also offers "take and bake" casseroles. Grab a pan of lasagna, chicken poulet or several others, for a great family supper.

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Westside Coffee Place & Café

Where: 2699 Sandlin Road, Suite B5, Decatur, 256-353-2025;
westsidecoffeeplace.com
Hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Westside Café has been serving homemade soups, salads and sandwiches since 2001. They also offer hot daily specials and whole frozen casseroles to go.

Wildwood Deli

Where: 113 W. Market St., Athens, 256-206-9384
Hours: 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Monday – Thursday, 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. and 5 p.m.-8 p.m. Friday

Here you can enjoy fresh, made-to-order deli fare and gourmet salads. As well as Southern favorites like a pimento cheese sandwich with homemade soup. Wildwood Deli is located just a stone's throw from the Limestone County Courthouse.

FAMILY

Chick-Fil-A

Where: 2502 U.S. 31 S., Decatur, 256-822-1014
1809 Beltline Road S.W., Decatur, 256-355-3035
and 1291 U.S. 72 E., Athens, 256-233-8900; chick-fil-a.com
Hours: 6 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 6 a.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Chick-fil-A offers all things chicken – from sandwiches and tenders to fresh-made salads. There are two locations in Decatur as well as a location in Athens. You might also like to stop in for a frosted

lemonade. The lemonade is made fresh each day.

The Freight House

Where: 200 Railroad St. S.W., Hartselle, 256-773-4600;
freighthousehartselle.com
Hours: 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday-Wednesday, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday

The Freight House is located in the historic, 1915 L&N railroad freight depot and offers classic Southern cooking at its finest. You will find classics from hand-cut prime rib to slow-cooked pinto beans. Enjoy a great meal, followed by a slice of their famous strawberry cake, as you watch the trains roll by right outside the windows.

JW Steakhouse

Where: 45 Marco Drive, Decatur, 256-355-5560; jwsteakhouse.com
Hours: 4 p.m.-9 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday, 4 p.m.-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday

JW Steakhouse is conveniently located just off of Interstate 65 in the Priceville area. JW Steakhouse offers hand-cut, aged steaks, homemade cheesecake and much more. They have a new bar with a wide selection of beers and wines. They offer catering and event hosting, as well as monthly wine tasting events.

Libby's Catfish & Diner

Where: 1401 Alabama 67 S., Priceville, 256-353-9767
Hours: 5:30 a.m.-7:50 p.m. Monday-Thursday and Saturday, 5:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Fridays.

If you have a craving for catfish, that is what Libby's is best known for. But in addition to catfish and seafood with homemade tartar sauce, you can also find steaks, burgers and a variety of country style breakfast sandwiches.

Mr. Henry's Neighborhood Restaurant

Where: 701 Nance Ford Road S.W., Hartselle, 256-773-8101
Hours: 6:00 a.m.-2 p.m. Sunday-Friday, 6 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturday

Mr. Henry's is a beloved restaurant in Hartselle, offering home style cooking such as ribeye steaks or meatloaf sandwiches and daily specials. With their early hours, it is a favorite go-to location for a hearty breakfast as well.

Oh! Bryan's Family Steak House

Where: 727 Main St. W., Hartselle, 256-773-8788; ohbryans.com
Hours: 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Oh! Bryan's Family Steak House offers hand cut, flame broiled steaks cooked to order. You'll also find a salad bar with over 30 items to choose from. Come find out why this restaurant is so beloved, with the iced tea glass that never runs empty.

Ramona J's Restaurant

Where: 1212 U.S. 31 S., Athens, 256-444-4005; ramonajs.com
Hours: 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Ramona J's Restaurant offers "good food to go," with a great variety and all made to order. Whether you choose a Caribbean Jerk Cheese Steak Burger or a catfish with wings, you're going to love every bit of it. And don't forget the candy bacon deviled eggs or pound cake for dessert.

Ro's Grille

Where: 300 E. Hobbs St., Athens, 256-230-2716; rosgrille.com
Hours: 10:30 a.m.-8 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday, 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 10:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. Sunday

Ro's Grille is a casual restaurant featuring a twist on traditional grilled foods. You'll find Caribbean chicken, ribeye, Cajun salmon, 9-ounce burgers and more to choose from. The restaurant also offers daily specials. Ro's Grille has a second location opening in 2021 near the Publix in Athens.

Smith's Seafood Company

Where: 1102 U.S. 72 E., Athens, 256-998-5078; Facebook.com/DaSeafoodPlug
Hours: 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday

When it comes to seafood, there's no place like Smith's Seafood Company. You'll find Louisiana style cooking, loaded shrimp fries, catfish, and even gator bites. Stop for some fresh seafood take-out. How fresh? They have their own seafood market.

Such-n-Such Burgers and Tacos

Where: 2614 U.S. 31 S., Decatur, 256-686-3598; suchnsuchburgersntacos.com
Hours: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursdays, 9 a.m.-8 p.m. Friday, 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Saturday

Such-n-Such Burgers and Tacos has something for everyone. No need to choose between a burger or taco place when they offer both. But these aren't your typical burgers or tacos. With things like brisket burgers or mahi-mahi in a taco, you'll have a hard time picking your favorite. Saturday mornings Such-n-Such also offers a great breakfast selection, where you'll see things like a "Get Meaty" - a brisket, bacon and pepper maple jam biscuit.

Sweet Thymes

Where: 407 N. Clinton St., Athens, 256-444-4142
Hours: 10:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Monday-Friday

Sweet Thymes gets their name for their signature desserts, but you'll also find great entrees for lunch as well. Their menu offers things like honey pecan chicken and toasted ham subs alongside their sweets.



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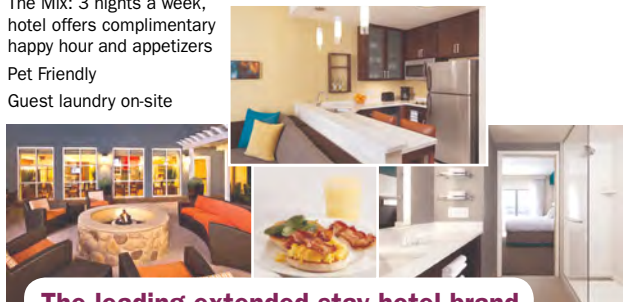
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TIME TO EAT

The Old Cookstove

Where: 89 Reeder Road, Danville, 256-462-1151; oldcookstove.com
 Hours: 4 p.m.-7 p.m. Thursday, 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Friday and Saturday

This off-the-beaten-path restaurant is a rustic little gem nestled in the countryside of Danville. The Old Cookstove is known for hosting a “Seafood Friday” and serving homemade dishes just like your grandma used to make. Take a drive in the country, enjoy the scenery and stop in for a meal of comfort foods like country fried steak or pot roast and maybe some peach cobbler with homemade ice cream.

Whisk’d café

Where: 115 Johnston St. S.E., Decatur, 256-580-5244; Facebook.com/whiskdcafedecatur
 Hours: 7 a.m.-1 p.m. Daily

This is a breakfast café that features farm-to-table, seasonal Southern favorites with a New Orleans flair by Chef Jared Newcomb. You might choose from a funnel cake with raspberry jam, biscuits with chocolate gravy, or even a carnitas omelet.

BAR AND GRILL

Bank Street Grill

Where: 719 Bank St., Decatur, 256-686-2006; bankstreetgrillal.com
 Hours: 5 p.m.-9 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday

At Bank Street Grill, you can enjoy hand-cut filet mignon, freshly ground Angus burgers. Or maybe you would prefer unique starters like bacon-wrapped quail breast, or buffalo fried okra and fried green tomatoes.

B.B. Perrins Sports Grille

Where: 608 Holly St. N.E., Decatur, 256-355-1045; bbperrins.com
 Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Decatur’s first local sports bar and grille was established in 1988 by Benny and Braxton Perrin. The restaurant has a tradition of creating delicious barbecue that is hickory smoked and served with homemade sauces. Try their “seafood-less” gumbo, their Glover special or their PB Fudge Pie. There’s lots to choose from.

Bentley’s at the Outhouse

Where: 200 Main St. W., Hartselle, 256-754-5188; bentleysouthouse.com
 Hours: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Friday and Saturday

With a name you won’t forget, Bentley’s at the Outhouse is a bustling burger joint in downtown Hartselle. It offers everything from bacon mac & cheese to peanut butter burgers. This restaurant has a down-home, sports bar feel, with 15 TVs, outdoor seating, a full bar, and live music events.

Brick Deli

Where: 112 E. Moulton St., Decatur, 256-355-8318; brickdeli.com
 Hours: 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, 11 a.m.-11:30 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, 11 a.m.-2 a.m. Friday and Saturday

The Brick Deli offers a selection of original sandwiches like the Father Guido or 5 Finger Banjo Picker. You’ll also find live music and a full-service bar with 25 beers on tap. Prior to 9 p.m. it is a very family-friendly environment.

Crossroads Steak & Grill

Where: 5828 Alabama 36 W., Danville, 256-751-2722
 Hours: 10:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and Sunday, 10:30 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday

Crossroads Steak & Grill is a family-owned restaurant offering local favorites like fried catfish, shrimp and of course steak! This cozy restaurant does not accept “plastic,” so bring cash and enjoy a great meal.



Brick Deli



Bank Street Grille



B.B. Perrins Sport Grille

COFFEE HOUSE

Square Clock Coffee

Where: 121 S. Marion St., Athens, 256-233-8248
 Hours: 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday

Square Clock Coffee has all of the classic and specialty coffee beverages you would expect, and is located right by the courthouse in downtown Athens. You can also get baked goods and salads, and try their Reuben sandwich.

Warehouse Coffee

Where: 315 Main St. W., Hartselle, 256-227-8220
 Hours: 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday

Warehouse coffee is an inviting coffee shop located in the heart of Hartselle. You can find classic coffee shop breakfast and lunch offerings like muffins or sausage balls as well as lunch items to fill you up. Of course, specialty coffee drinks are a must, or even an ice cream milkshake. Warehouse offers free Wi-Fi and plenty of space to relax, enjoy your coffee and recharge – with plenty of outlets available for your devices, too.



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The Railyard

Where: 209 Second Ave. S.E., Decatur, 256-580-5707; opentable.com/r/the-railyard-decatur
Hours: 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday-Thursday, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday

The Railyard offers a seasonally changing menu of “farm-to-fork” comfort foods that highlight locally grown and harvested ingredients, in addition to their selection of craft beers and seasonal libations. The restaurant is located downstairs from the Second Avenue Southeast entrance and can also be accessed from parking lot level off of First Avenue Southeast.

Simp McGhee’s

Where: 725 Bank St. N.E., Decatur, 256-353-6284; simpmcghees.com
Hours: 5 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 5 p.m.-9 p.m. Friday-Saturday

Located on historic Bank Street, Simp McGhee’s serves up a variety of Cajun offerings such as crawfish egg rolls, crab Florentine, lobster ravioli and Rhodes Ferry duck. If the weather is nice, you can take advantage of their pet-friendly outdoor seating as well.



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At the Cook Museum of Natural Science, you will experience nature close-up through interactive exhibits and hands-on activities. From an immersive cave experience to a 15,000-gallon saltwater aquarium, your entire family will be engaged.

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For tickets & more information, visit [COOKMUSEUM.ORG](https://www.cookmuseum.org).

MEDITERRANEAN

Josie's Mediterranean Café

Where: 109 Second Ave. N.E., Decatur, 256-822-2229
 Hours: 4 p.m.-10 p.m. Tuesday and Wednesday, 4 p.m.-11 p.m. Thursday, 4 p.m.-1 a.m. Friday and Saturday
 Located right in downtown Decatur, Josie's has classic Mediterranean dishes, such as paella, steak marsala or flatbreads. They offer daily specials made from fresh, seasonal ingredients. Of course, in addition to a delicious meal, you can also choose from their wines, cocktails and tapas.



Josie's Mediterranean Cafe

SPECIALTY

C.F. Penn Hamburgers

Where: 214 Sixth Ave. S.E., Decatur; 256-274-9358
 Hours: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. (or until they run out) Monday-Saturday

C. F. Penn's Hamburgers is an iconic restaurant that touts deep-fried burgers that even the king loved. Yes, that king – Elvis Presley. C. F. Penn's Hamburgers has been featured on Food Network. They've been serving up burgers since 1927. Try their famous Slugburger.



C.F. Penn Hamburgers

Downtown Dawgs

Where: 1820 Sixth Ave. S.E., Suite C, Decatur, 256-345-3796;
 Facebook.com/DowntownDawgs2011
 Hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Everyone loves a classic hot dog and Downtown Dawgs takes them to a whole new level. From the Cool Rancher with nacho cheese and crushed cool ranch chips to the Mac Daddy with Mac-and-cheese. There's something for everyone to choose from.

Royalty Funnel Cakes and More

Where: 1614 Beltline Road S.W., Decatur, 256-822-2205
 Hours: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday

You don't have to wait for the fair to come to town to enjoy everyone's favorite dessert. Royalty Funnel Cakes and More has every funnel cake variation you could imagine, and so much more than you would ever find at the fairgrounds. Come see what everyone is talking about!



Royalty Funnel Cakes and More



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Decatur Locations

1715 6th Avenue SE (US Hwy 31)
256-350-6969
7-days 9:30 am - 8:30 pm

2520 Danville Road, SW
256-350-0404
Mon-Sat 9:30 am - 8:30 pm