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PROFILE  
**Tallahassee**

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Left, a building at Goodwood Museum & Gardens; top, musicians perform under Tallahassee's iconic live oaks; on the previous spread and above, Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park

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## The city's neighborhoods boast canopies of live oaks and a leisurely pace to daily life.

Tallahassee's residential areas rival those of classic Old South cities, such as Mobile, and they're distinctive for their many live oak-canopied lanes. For even older residential areas, check out Mission San Luis, national winner of the "Preserve America" Presidential Award and a spectacular archeological wonder close to the Florida State University campus. Once the site of New Spain's western-most settlement, the mission merits a full day's visit to enjoy guided tours, photography, and even a picnic on the manicured grounds.

East of the mission are Florida State

and Florida A&M University, which support Tallahassee's thriving arts and cultural community through the symphony, opera, ballet, and the Tallahassee Museum of History & Natural Science.

If you want a bit of beach in your Florida experience, the Gulf of Mexico is a mere 25 miles from downtown Tallahassee. On the way, stop in Wakulla Springs, fed by the Floridan aquifer. The Springs was once the site of Hollywood outdoor movie sets including the original *Tarzan*; today, it offers luxury lodging, fine dining, and guided boat tours of Florida wildlife.



# Natural Charms

Where Deep South beauty meets thriving culture, history, and commerce

by **Doc Lawrence**

Welcome to Tallahassee, the epicenter of North Florida's Big Bend, the elbow of land connecting the peninsula to the panhandle. It's the Sunshine State's capital: quintessentially Deep South, defined by abundant natural beauty and a leisurely daily pace, and a center of government and heralded institutions of higher education. Museums, gardens, and numerous city parks are brightened with enough flowers to fill a Monet painting — making this city a bloom worth visiting.

Tucked in Florida's hill country, Tallahassee is a walker's dream. City sidewalks connect businesses, restaurants, and retail stores to ten beautifully landscaped downtown parks.

Just beyond downtown is Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park, a masterpiece of floral architecture and a bird watcher's paradise with two trails meandering through the woods overlooking Lake Hall. Another outdoor treasure is Goodwood Museum & Gardens featuring one of the South's finest antebellum plantation houses with original 19th-century furnishings and collections that include pieces by Meeks, Belter, Phyfe, Baccarat, and Tiffany.



# Explore the Past

Take a trip back to Old Florida in some of Tallahassee's historical attractions.

by **Julie Hatfield**

**W**hen people conjure an image of Florida, they think of spring breakers and Mickey Mouse, or of big cities they're surprised don't hold the title of "capital": Miami, Orlando, Tampa.

Tallahassee is different. Here there are oak trees, not palm trees. Shaded hills, not sunny beaches. And instead of shell-art souvenir shops, tourists can explore antebellum homes and archaeological dig sites.

Tallahassee is steeped in history. It was a ceremonial center for American Indians as early as eight centuries ago, home to a Spanish mission for some of America's first explorers, and Florida's capital since before white men thought of inhabiting South Florida.



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“An explorer in St. Augustine got on a horse and started riding west, and an explorer in Pensacola got in a boat and started traveling east,” says Katie Kole, marketing director for the Tallahassee Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. “Where they met in the middle, they established the capital.”

History buffs can turn back the hands of time at many Tallahassee attractions. Here, a few worth visiting.

**Mission San Luis.** Florida had more than 100 Spanish colonial missions, but this is the only one that has been re-created and opened to the public. Franciscan monks and Apalachee Indians co-existed for military, economic, and religious purposes. The Apalachee fled British invaders in 1704 but they haven’t disappeared. About 10

years ago, mission staff were contacted by a group of 200 Apalachee living in Louisiana. Now they visit about once a year. “It’s pretty amazing that there are any left,” says Jennifer Hoelsing, the mission’s public information specialist. Highlights at the mission include the five-story council house and costumed interpreters who bring history to life. [www.missionsanluis.org](http://www.missionsanluis.org)

**Museum of Florida History.** This state museum tells Florida’s unique story. The collection celebrates the ancient — with a fully reconstructed mastodon skeleton — and the modern, including posters from Florida movies such as *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. [www.museumoffloridahistory.com](http://www.museumoffloridahistory.com)

**Tallahassee Museum of History and Natural Science.** This kid-friendly

Costumed interpreters (far left) tell the story of Mission San Luis; near left, explore 52 acres of scenic lakeshore woodlands at the Tallahassee Museum.

museum has a true “Old Florida” feel. Its extensive network of boardwalks takes you through breathtaking swamp and past exhibits of Florida panthers, black bears, and red wolves. For history lovers, there’s a collection of historic buildings, including Bellevue, one of the few remaining modest plantation homes once common across the South. [www.tallahasseeemuseum.org](http://www.tallahasseeemuseum.org)

**Goodwood Museum & Gardens.**

Five families have owned this antebellum estate since the 1830s. Its main house features some of the earliest frescoes in Florida, and its furnishings are original to the house — extraordinary for such museums. The gardens, full of camellias, roses and magnolias, are designed in styles typical of the early 20th century. “It’s unusual that you can be in the middle of a city and really have a sense of what rural life was like,” says executive director Larry Paarlberg. [www.goodwoodmuseum.org](http://www.goodwoodmuseum.org)

**Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State**

**Park.** A wealthy New York banker who made his winter home in Tallahassee first planted these formal gardens in the 1920s. The property was given to the state upon his death and opened to the public. Trails offers scenic tours for hikers, bikers, and equestrians. [www.floridastateparks.org/maclaygardens](http://www.floridastateparks.org/maclaygardens)

**Historic Capitol of Florida.** This 1845 building, finished just before Florida became a state, faced demolition when a new skyscraper was being built to replace it in the 1970s. But citizen activists saved the old structure and had it restored. It may lie in the shadow of Florida’s working capitol, but with its stained-glass dome and striped awnings, it doesn’t fade into the background. [www.flhistoriccaptol.gov](http://www.flhistoriccaptol.gov)

**The Mary Brogan Museum of Art and Science.** Local artists and museum collections share the spotlight at vibrant museum. Beginning next month, visitors can see the traveling exhibit *Our Body: The Universe Within*. [www.thebrogan.org](http://www.thebrogan.org)

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