



## TRAVEL

# 12 Southern Trips We Can't Wait To Plan For Next Year

Add a trip to these destinations to your New Years resolutions.

By [Cynthia J Drake](#) | Updated on November 4, 2022



PHOTO: CYNTHIA J. DRAKE

A fresh year on the horizon means it's time to start dreaming of new travel plans. If you're looking to fill up a blank 2023 calendar with some fun, these suggestions for [winter trips](#) are sure to give you something to look forward to in the months ahead. Each destination has something new to offer in 2023 and many reasons for you to consider visiting for the first time, or revisiting if you've already been. Here are 14 trips we can't wait to schedule for early next year.

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PHOTO: COURTESY VISIT MACON

## Macon, Georgia

Macon will celebrate its bicentennial (200th birthday) in 2023, and the city is preparing to step out in a big way.

### What To Do

Celebrate the city's deep musical legacy (Otis Redding, Little Richard, the Allman Brothers, and Jason Aldean are a few of the folks who got their start here) by visiting the more than 50 restaurants, 30 bars and live music venues, five historic theaters, museums, and a planned new amphitheater in the [revived downtown](#). The [Cherry Blossom Festival](#) (a/k/a The Pinkest Party on Earth) will take place in March with 350,000 Yoshino cherry trees in bloom — that's way more than Washington, D.C.



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## Where To Stay

Downtown Macon's first hotel, [Hotel Forty Five](#), opened recently in an old bank building earlier in 2022, and a second boutique hotel, [The Woodward](#), recently opened, featuring an on-site speakeasy.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND TOURISM

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This [artsy city](#) with an outdoor soul (the city has been deemed the Mountain Biking Capital of the World) is a great destination to get inspired for the new year ahead.

## What To Do

Head to [Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art](#), the [Momentary](#) (at the site of an old 63,000-square foot Kraft Foods plant), or just take in the [vast array of public art all over town](#). The [Bentonville History Museum](#) just opened in 2022 and is free. Be sure to nosh on some delicious cuisine while you're in town. In 2022, three Bentonville restaurants landed James Beard Award semifinalist nominations: The Hive, The Preacher's Son, and Yeyo's El Alma de Mexico.

## Where To Stay

Enhance your artistic journey with a stay at [21c Museum Hotel Bentonville](#), a combination boutique hotel/art museum, and cultural center (plus home to the on-site restaurant The Hive) located right on the town square.



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PHOTO: ART BY KATE RAUDENBUSH; PHOTO BY MARC WHALEN

## Richmond, Virginia

A city that doesn't shy away from thought-provoking conversation (as evidenced by provocative public artwork and storytelling), visitors are welcome to join in, listen, and contribute their own ideas.

### What To Do

Take a virtual tour of Monument Avenue with [Monumental Conversations](#), telling some of the most pressing and difficult stories of this city's past and present through the use of augmented reality. The [Poe Museum](#) celebrates its 100 anniversary with writers R.L. Stine and Nnedi Okorafor honoring Edgar Allan Poe in January. [Kings Dominion](#) theme park begins its year-round operations for the first time this year and includes a new theme area, Jungle X-pedition. Later in 2023, the [Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden](#) welcomes Incanto: An Oasis of Lyrical Sculpture featuring five sculptures from Burning Man artist Kate Raudenbush in collaboration with poet Sha

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## Where To Stay

For a stay in historic environs, choose [Linden Row Inn](#) or [The Jefferson Hotel](#); [Quirk Hotel Richmond](#) embraces the city's conversation through art.



PHOTO: CYNTHIA J. DRAKE

## Johnson City, Texas

Fans of [Matthew McConaughey](#) and bourbon will rejoice at the news that the actor's collaboration with longtime Kentucky brand Wild Turkey to create [Longbranch Bourbon](#) has resulted in a pretty fantastic brand new [Texas Hill Country](#) retreat.

## What To Do

Head to Walden Retreats in Texas Hill Country for a true glamping experience with Longbranch, complete with safari tent (think: kitchens, full bathrooms with bathtubs and outdoor showers), along with branded swag. You can add on customized experiences like a private mixology experience, nighttime fly fishing, or an outdoor string quartet to make your stay one

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## Where To Stay

Longbranch suites at Walden Retreat are available to book with dates starting in March 2023.



PHOTO: CYNTHIA J. DRAKE

## Orlando, Florida

Though most people associate Orlando with its theme parks, getting off the beaten path yields its own rewards—including a brand new beer spa and an alcohol-free wellness resort.

## What To Do

Treat yourself to a performance at the new [Steinmetz Hall at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts](#), as near an acoustically perfect experience as you can get. You'll find Michelin-awarded restaurants in the city, such as [Knife & Spoon](#) and [Soseki](#) in Winter Park, and there's a new [Beer Spa](#) for soaking and sudsing. Over at the theme parks, the 50th anniversary celebrations at [Walt Disney World](#) continue through March. and don't forget



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Magical Creatures Motorbike Adventure and Jurassic World Velocicoaster are worth the wait in line!).

## Where To Stay

For a unique wellness option, stay at [ette](#), a new hotel and restaurant built with a dream of promoting health through its innovative nonalcoholic (but nonetheless exciting) beverage program.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CENTRAL STATION HOTEL

## Memphis, Tennessee

Start off 2023 on the right note with some sweet Memphis soul music.

## What To Do

Head to Crosstown Concourse (a former Sears warehouse now transformed

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maybe throw a record on the turntable at the nonprofit [Memphis Listening Lab](#). Enjoy drinks at [Tiger and Peacock](#) after checking out an independent play offered by Black repertory performance troupe [Hattiloo Theater](#). And for music fans, visits to [Stax Records](#) and the [Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum](#) are musts.

## Where To Stay

[Central Station Memphis](#) offers a unique stay at a historic train station, complete with a showstopper curated Memphis music soundtrack (head to the hidden listening lounge behind the bar for a cool experience).



PHOTO: COURTESY VISIT LAKE CHARLES

## Lake Charles, Louisiana

A region that was hit by two hurricanes in 2020 in addition to a freeze and a flood, [Lake Charles](#)' comeback story as a city fueled by passion and soul is the

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## What To Do

Head to two inaugural events this year: [Chuck Eats Restaurant Week](#) in January and the [Louisiana Food & Wine Festival](#) in the fall showcasing the city's culinary treasures. At other times of year, head to Lake Charles' Kirkman Culinary Mile, a tucked away culinary destination full of treasured restaurants representing international cuisine, such as [Area 337](#) (Latin American) and [Cousin's Lebanese Cuisine](#). Nearish to this area, be sure to grab a gooey sweet potato pie from [Mrs. Johnnie's Gingerbread House](#) before you leave town.

## Where To Stay

The city's casino resorts, [L'Auberge](#) and [Golden Nugget](#), provide deluxe, comfortable accommodations with many on-site restaurants and amenities — ideal even if you're not into gaming. For those who want to embrace nature, [Sam Houston Jones State Park](#) recently opened with new deluxe cabins, glamping tents, newly constructed walking trails, and more.



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PHOTO: CREDIT CHARLOTTE POPE

## Chickasaw Country, Oklahoma

Covering 13 counties in south-central Oklahoma, Chickasaw Country is a culturally rich destination ideal for starting off your 2023 travels.

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Head to the Chickasaw Cultural Center in Sulphur to learn more about the history of the Chickasaw Nation, the 12th largest federally recognized Indian tribe in the U.S. Dine on traditional cuisine at Aaimpa' Café. Head to [Chokma'si Gallery](#), a Native-owned gallery for unique artwork by local artists. Turner Falls Park features the largest waterfall in the state and a natural swimming pool, with natural caves and scenic hiking trails ideal for all levels of hikers. Along your drive through Oklahoma's scenic routes, be sure to grab a local delicacy: fried pie.

## Where To Stay

[NOUN Hotel](#) is a new boutique hotel located near University of Oklahoma in Norman; also open in 2022, the [Inn at Mulberry in Tishomingo](#) features eight guest rooms in a 1901 building. It was purchased and renovated by Miranda Lambert in 2014 before being sold to current owners, Chickasaw Native Ezekiel Walker and Kevin Goddard.



PHOTO: COURTESY LOST RIVER CAVE

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## **Bowling Green, Kentucky**

Spring wildflowers abound at Mammoth Cave National Park.

### **What To Do**

Immerse yourself in the splendor of spring wildflowers starting in March and going through fall at [Mammoth Cave National Park](#), when American columbos, blackberry lilies, eastern bee balm, eastern redbuds, and purple passion flowers brighten the landscape, which includes more than 80 miles of hiking trails. Free guided wildflower hikes are offered each week by a naturalist. In nearby Bowling Green, you'll find more wooded trails and flowers at [Lost River Cave](#), the only place in Kentucky where you can take an underground boat tour. Daily nature programs include the opportunity to create and take home a native wildflower seed bomb to plant in your home garden.

### **Where To Stay**

The [Kentucky Grand Hotel & Spa](#) is a cozy boutique option overlooking Circus Square Park in [Bowling Green](#), with the on-site Derby Piano Bar & Restaurant.



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PHOTO: COURTESY HILTON HEAD HEALTH

## Hilton Head, South Carolina

Looking to recommit to wellness this year? Head to the wellness resort Hilton Head Health for a brand new program focused on self care.

### What To Do

[Hilton Head Health](#)'s new RENEW program is a wellness experience focused on enhancing your mind, body, and spirit with programs that focus on nature, meditation, and nourishment. Guests meet with a licensed therapist to start an assessment and develop a customized itinerary. Cooking classes, spa treatments, daily yoga classes, and other experiences are included.

### Where To Stay

Hilton Head Health offers a three-night Healthy Getaway option and a

wellness individualized program

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PHOTO: CYNTHIA J. DRAKE

## San Antonio, Texas

San Antonio is in the midst of a culinary explosion, with new restaurants opening around the city at a dizzying pace. If you haven't been in a while, the city's Pearl District (the site of an old brewery) and vibrant surrounding neighborhoods are sure to draw you and captivate you with exciting flavors.

### What To Do

Head to the Pearl and style your own [culinary crawl](#), including restaurants like [Brasserie Mon Chou Chou](#) (French), [Best Quality Daughter](#) (Asian American), and [La Gloria](#) (Mexican), with a nighttime live performance at [Jazz, TX](#). A boat ride is a fantastic way to take in the River Walk—and be sure to hit up

### Where To Stay

Escape the bustle of the city with a truly relaxing stay at [La Cantera Resort & Spa](#), where the on-site Loma de Vida spa has treatments designed to

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kickstart your New Year with holistic wellness (we loved the sound bowl meditation experience, offered to guests on select days).



PHOTO: COURTESY ALABAMA TOURISM

## Montgomery, Alabama

Celebrate the life of legendary singer-songwriter Hank Williams, whose 100th birthday would have been in 2023, with a road trip through Alabama.

### What To Do

Start in Georgiana at the [Hank Williams Boyhood Home & Museum](#), where Williams was mentored by musician [Rufus "Tee Tot" Payne](#). This is where the [Hank Williams Festival](#) takes place in June. The [Hank Williams Museum](#), about an hour north in Montgomery, is where you'll find his stage costumes, guitars, and rare memorabilia on display. Stop at [Chris' Hot Dogs](#) for a bite to eat—it was a favorite of Williams'. His gravesite is located in [Oakwood](#)



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New Year's Day (the day he died in 1953), musicians play at Williams' gravesite in his honor.

## Where To Stay

Construction on a new Autograph Montgomery hotel inside the historic Murphy House is underway with a forthcoming opening date. In the meantime, visit [Renaissance Montgomery Hotel & Spa at the Convention Center](#), located on the riverfront with an on-site restaurant and spa.

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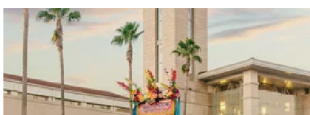
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