

# Taste the Old South in Mississippi mansions

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in outbuildings for \$90 per couple, which includes breakfast and a tour, but not dinner. Dinner may be served though at \$27.50 per person.

Madewood is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Contact Madewood, Route 2, Box 478, Napoleonville, LA 70359, or call (504) 369-7151.

Nottoway

Nottoway is not as homey as Madewood. An overnight stay is more like staying in an elegant hotel. What I remember best is the scolding birds that woke me in the morning. Here, about 40 miles from New Orleans, I was truly in the country.

Another memorable part of my visit was the chance to explore the mansion on my own, after the guided tours were finished for the day. The lights were dimmed. There was no one to guide or hurry me along, and I was free to linger in what felt like a private museum.

Nottoway was built using the best wood available on a 7,000-acre sugar plantation. Completed in 1859 and designed by the Madewood architect, the mansion was built by the John

Randolph family. It's the largest plantation in the area, with 64 rooms, 53,000 square feet of living space and, like Madewood, 365 openings. Italianate and Greek revival in style, the mansion has 22 supporting columns and two flanking staircases leading to the main entrance.

A beautifully restored home, the gentlemen's study features curtains that are replicas of those used by Scarlett O'Hara to make her dress in "Gone With the Wind."

There are 11 bedrooms and two suites available for overnight guests, including the master bedroom and a bridal suite with a Jacuzzi. Each has a private bath, and all are furnished with antiques and decorated with fresh flowers. There is also a pool for the use of overnight guests.

Rates range from \$125 to \$250 per couple, including wine and snacks upon arrival; a morning wake-up with coffee, juice and a wonderful sweet potato biscuit; a country breakfast on the ground floor of the mansion; and a guided tour.

Randolph Hall restaurant is open for lunch and dinner across the grounds from the main mansion. It's large and elegant, with impressive

**Visitors to Madewood are treated like friends of the family, welcome to explore the home with its beautiful antiques and impressive art work, and actually use the rooms.**

chandeliers and a grand piano in the main dining room. Service is attentive and the food is wonderful; small portions beautifully prepared and presented.

Nottoway is open daily, except Christmas, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For information, write P.O. Box 160, White Castle, LA 70788, or call (504) 545-2730.

Other plantations with guest accommodations include Oak Alley (which is straight out of "Gone With the Wind"); Tezcuco, a small sugar plantation with simpler accommodations; and Ormond Plantation, which I haven't seen.

The 28 oak trees from which Oak Alley takes its name dominate the landscape and, in some ways, eclipse the mansion. Planted by a French

settler in the early 1700s to form a path to the Mississippi River, the trees are now so big that limbs extend to the ground. The mansion, Greek revival with 28 columns duplicating the oaks along the drive, was used as the setting for the TV movie, "The Long Hot Summer."

The back yard features more large oaks along the pathway to the slave cabins, some of which have been made into cottages for overnight guests. (The cottages rent for \$75 to \$100 per night and include a continental breakfast.) For information, call (504) 265-2151, or write to Route 2 Box 10, Vacherie, LA 70099.

Tezcuco

Large oaks covered with moss also greet visitors to Tezcuco, built in Greek revival style in 1855 with a Creole influence. The mansion is fur-

nished with antiques, some of which belonged to the original owners. Most overnight accommodations are restored and converted outbuildings and slave quarters, and include kitchens. Many also have fireplaces. The price range is \$60 to \$95 per night.

A suite with kitchen and two bedrooms is available in the main house for \$185 per night. All rates include wine in your room upon arrival, a tour of the mansion and a Creole breakfast served in your room.

Tours are conducted daily by guides in antebellum costumes from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The grounds include a chapel, a carriage house and a children's play house. There's an antique and gift shop in the mansion basement. For information, call (504) 562-3029, or write Tezcuco Plantation, 3138 Hwy. 44, Darrow, LA 70725.

Houmas House

Named for the Houmas Indians who once owned the land, Houmas House was built in 1840. The original dwelling, a Spanish-style home built in the late 1700s, was preserved and later attached to the main house by a carriage way. The house is near Convent, LA. (504) 473-7841.

**San Francisco plantation**

Built in 1860, San Francisco plantation is decorated with a nautical theme. The style of the home blends old Creole with Greek revival. Located on LA 44, south of Houmas House, (504) 525-2341.

**Destrehan plantation**

The oldest plantation in the area, with the central portion built in 1787, Destrehan was used during the Civil War as a training grounds for freed slaves. Located on LA 48, eight miles from New Orleans International Airport, (504) 764-9315.

**Ormond plantation**

Styled after the sugar plantations of the West Indies, Ormond was built in 1789. Overnight accommodations are offered. Located on LA 48, near Destrehan.

**Restaurants**

The Cabin, at the corner of LA 44 and LA 22 just north of Houmas House, is housed in several restored slave cabins. Open 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Wednesday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, (504) 473-3007.

Lafitte's Landing, just under the Sunshine Bridge, was purportedly one of Jean Lafitte's hangouts during the early 1800s. Open 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday, (504) 473-1232.

## Reader has tips on Alaska and Florida

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them by mail from Box 242, Middleburg, VA 22117.

Stand in front of Tirvela Real Estate and read the house ads. All of them state "Price upon request," which translated means, "If you have to ask, you can't afford it."

The town's laundromat includes a sign that reads, "Only use the green machines if you're washing horse blankets."

The Red Fox, a famous and historic inn, provides late lunch, tea, a beer, or early dinner. The low-beamed tavern room with open hearth, polished plank tables, copper pots, fresh flowers, white-washed walls and recessed windows create a perfect ambience. The food is excellent and the overnight accommodations outstanding, well worth the focus of another weekend.

Another detour from Leesburg is to nearby Aldie, home of The Little River Inn and the charming owners, Tucker and Mary Ann Withers. The inn includes the main house with five bedrooms, living room, dining room and two small cot-

tages as well as a no-frills inn called Woodburn.

With their own home, their antique shop, their involvement in the restoration of the old mill and son Calder's tomato stand, it's evident that the Withers own most of Aldie.

A goat, several sheep and a donkey add to the ambience of this small town. Rooms are \$75 to \$125 a night, breakfast included. For reservations call (703) 327-6742.

We returned to Leesburg for dinner at The Lighthouse, across the street from The Norris House Inn. Owned and operated by Christina and George Vetsch, it offers a delightful combination of gourmet meals and the simple pleasure of George's warm cheese bread. The service is excellent, the dining leisurely, and the surroundings pleasant.

Christina, a knockout brunette, greets the guests in a classy tutu and spends time at each table, chatting with the patrons and carefully explaining the items on the menu. This is dining at it's best. Reservations are suggested. (703) 777-7492.

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## Virginia towns are wonderful spots to leave hubbub behind

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**I prefer to stay at The Norris House Inn. My prejudice may well stem from the fact that my daughter Libby is the innkeeper! But the inn is charming.**

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Sundays are leisurely in Leesburg. After breakfast there are many his-

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