## Try a Southern road trip for quirky Americana

My sister, best friend and I travel together every year, usually out of the country. We've been to the Dominican Republic, St. Lucia and Mexico - incrpensive with blue waters. A tricky economy and airline jitters impacted my travel buddies on this trip. They wanted to stay in the states so we deeded to drive as far south as the road would take us.

It was our 10-day road trip a la Thelma & Louise ... and Louise; minus fleeing from the law, a suicidal path and Brad Pitt in our backesat. You know, the journey rather than the destination.

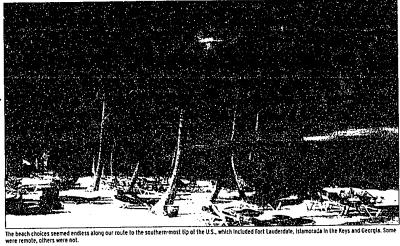
This trip wasn't about art museums or theater. We were seeking Quirky America as we headed south. This was our path:

Day One: Drive through the boring flat lands of Chilo and stop overnight in Darren County, Kentucky. We decide to eat or drink the specialty from every city we sleep in, provided its vegetarian.

By 10 p.m., most of the restaurants in Darren County are closed. A waiter bocking the dors of his diaer told us were in dry county, but we could buy boure illegally in the parking of a nearby drugstore after 11 p.m. of the botton. Not of the day of the hours. Not bourbon. No of the of the orthon of the hours bort delive to word of the orthon of the hours of the day to word of a nearby drugstore after 11 p.m.

p.m.
No thanks, No bourbon, No good food, but a short drive to the Days Inn cost less than \$25

the Days Inn cost less than 223 carch.
Day two: A dry night means an early rise. We debour to Gatlinburg. Tunn. Quirky America at its finest: Dollywood and paneake houses. At the Log Cabin Paneake houses. At the Log Lobin Paneake houses, 423 Airport Road, we enjoy pecan, blueberry and bannan paneakes with four different kinds of SSTIO.



Hazzard carl You can stand next to it for \$10, pose like Dalsy Duke and get ploot tographed. Next it's the Ripley's Believe or Not Museum and a brief glimpes of the Elvis Museum. Then a fast drive in the Smoky Mountains.

Days three and four: Swing through charming Savannah. The residents are so wonderful friendly that we're uncomfortable.

That night we linger at the

afficiation of Galliaburg, Trun, Quirky
America at its finest: Dellywood and pancake houses. At the Log Cabin Pancake houses, 4233 Airport Road, we enjoy pecan, blueberry and banana pancake swith four different klads of syrup.

Driving into downtown Galliaburg we pass, and qulcky reverse the car at the sight of—The General Lee - the Dukes of Savannah occurred there. It's a

long story that involves doors slamming shut by themselves in the women's halfroom and other creepy things, Locals aren't surprised to hear our ghost stories and they tell us the place is haunted. Ghost stories are part of Savannah's mystique. We loved it.

From there we walk to the Mercer House, 429 Bull St. The book and movie Midnight of The Garden of Good and Kui'ls centered around this house because of the notorious killing that occurred there, (Read the book.) Tourism has thereased in Savannah slance the book was published.

We furget to eat Georgia peach pie.

Days the and six: By noon, we're in a warm Fort Lauderdale beach. No springbreakers, thankfully. Highlight: Mal Kai Tolyneslan Restaurant and Dinner Show. A restaurant with a Polynesian stillage attnusphere including thick tropical green-

ery and waterfalls plus an authentic Polynesian show. It's known for its scafood, but we had the spicy That Coconut Primavera and Hawallan tabooleh with pinsapple. Located at 3599 N. Federal Highway. Web site: www.mnika.com. Drank Florida orange julce once.

Drank Florfido orange julce once.

Days seven and eight: Traffle is brutal on the road to the Florfido Keys, but who cares when you're with friends, wearing swimsults and listening to socca music? We discover a pristine descried turquoise beach right off the highway on Islamorada. Two hours later we realler we're attacked by no-see run bugs on the sand. Our shins are covered in they hites and we then for the trip's remainder.

It mid-afternoon we're in the southern end of Key West, which means it's the southernmost point of the U.S.

We know this because there's a big cement marker that reads

"Southern Most Tip of the U.S." On Key West, we stay at the El Patio motel that costs less than \$100. Don't expect luxury for the cheap rate, but it's clean, cute, has a nice pool and is cen-trally located; 800 Washington St.

trally located; 900 vassings on St.

Later, we partake in the Key West ritual to applaud the sunset and listen to street must-claus perform Oils Redding's 'Sittin' on the Dock of the Bay' too many times.

Before heading home on day nine we tell the EI Path desk clerk of our quirky journey to the most southern point of the U.S.

U.S.
Actually the southern most the of the U.S. is down the street on military property, you can't go there. The landmark that you found is just for the tourists.

Quirky, Perfect.
We forget to eat key lime pie. Even better.

### TRAVEL BRIEFS

Send items for consideration in Going Piaces to Keely Kaleski, Observer & Eccentric Hewspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009, fax (248) 644-1314 or e-mail kkaleski/Foe homecomm net

Metijer Gardens in
Grand Rapids is hosting
the largest temporary butterfly exhibit in the country through Wednesday,
April 30.
Twenty-five species
native to South and
Central America and 10
species native to Asia will
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and pools of the garden's
conservatory.
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activities.
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or

or www.meijergardens.org/e vents/butterfly.htm

Travel to Chleago on Amtrak, call (877)-YES-RAIL for rall inclusive vacation packages from your city.

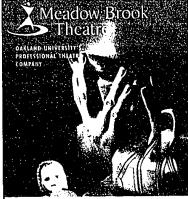
Purchase a Chicago City Pass that allows you to save 50 percent off regular admission to the Art Institute of Chicago, the Field Museum, Sears Tower Skydeck and other attractions, www.amtrak.com

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