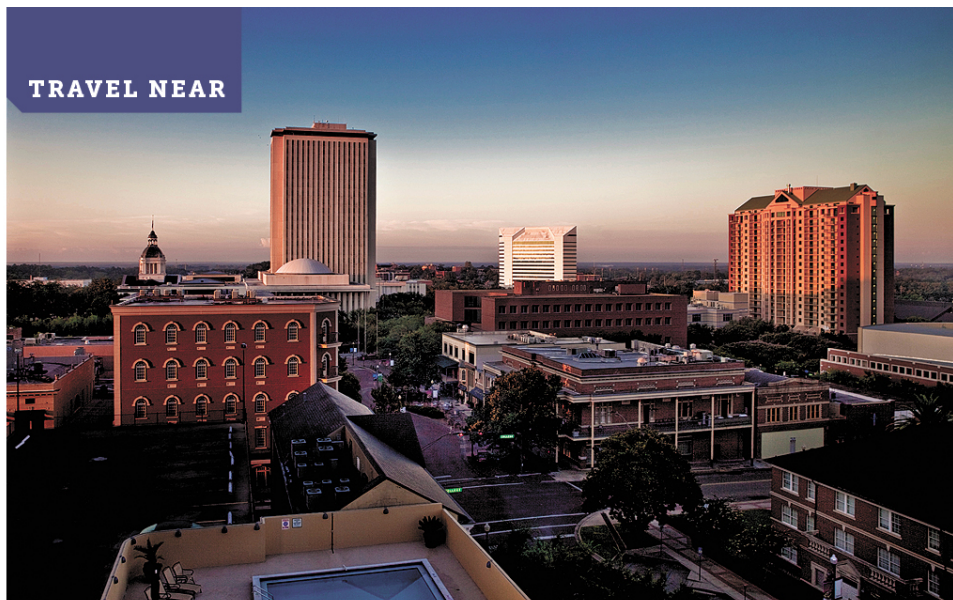


TRAVEL NEAR



TALLY HO A capital city getaway to Tallahassee

STORY: Caroline Eubanks

Before making the 4.5-hour drive from my home in Atlanta through the small towns of south Georgia, I had little to no knowledge of Tallahassee. The city's reputation as the home of Florida State University preceded it, so I went into my trip with an open mind, curious to see what a person who graduated many years ago could enjoy in a college town.

I drove into town on an oak-lined street straight out of a postcard before making my way into the city center. I passed the historic state capitol, with its red-and-white window awnings that make it look like a resort, and the surrounding buildings where the legislators work.

A few blocks away, I checked into the new AC Hotel by Marriott Tallahassee Universities at the Capitol, a sleek property overlooking Cascades Park. I dropped my bags to explore, starting with the park. It has an amphitheater that hosts live music, a playground, two restaurants in the city's former power plant and connects to the 2.5-mile Capital Cascades Trail.

I went to the hotel's eighth floor to grab an evening drink at Charlie Park, Tallahassee's first rooftop bar. I tried the purple-hued Charlie, the bar's signature cocktail made with lavender syrup and Empress Gin. It was the ideal refreshment as the sun set over the city, especially paired with the chocolate pretzel trifle.

The next morning, I fueled up with a croissant and Spanish omelet at the hotel before an active day, starting with the zipline course at the Tallahassee

Museum. The sprawling 52-acre outdoor museum lets visitors soar above the cypress swamp that features metal sculptures modeled after dinosaurs.

On a mission to pick up some souvenirs, I sought out the city's best shopping, starting with the Railroad Square Arts District. The mural-covered warehouse neighborhood is home to restaurants, vintage boutiques, art galleries and a small arthouse cinema.

That evening, my friends and I drove down a rural road to the legendary Bradfordville Blues Club. The cinderblock building under neon lights has been hosting some of music's best artists since 1964. The interior is covered in paintings of these famed musicians such as Big-Eyes Willy Smith and Johnny Winter.

The next morning, in need of a detox, I joined an outdoor yoga class at Maclay Gardens, a state park set around a 1923 estate. The sounds of the fountain and the soothing voice of the instructor calmed my mind and body.

After a quick detour at Hearth & Soul, a gorgeous home decor and clothing boutique owned by Susie Busch-Transou of the St. Louis brewing

The Bradfordville Blues Club has hosted notable acts since the 1960s.

family, it was time for brunch. Jeri's Midtown Cafe was the perfect spot for a meal. The garden courtyard gets crowded, so go early to enjoy gouda grits with apple butter and chicken salad croissant sandwiches. Afterwards, I browsed the stacks at Midtown Reader, the bookstore upstairs.

The day's activities were far from over. I borrowed a bike from a local outfitter and hit some of the more than 700 miles of trails throughout the city. I rode back to the hotel on a paved section of the Capital Cascades Trail, following a former rail line. Enthusiastic cyclists can ride all the way to the coast.

I secured a table at Il Lusso, one of the top restaurants in Tallahassee, for



Pablo Gabes

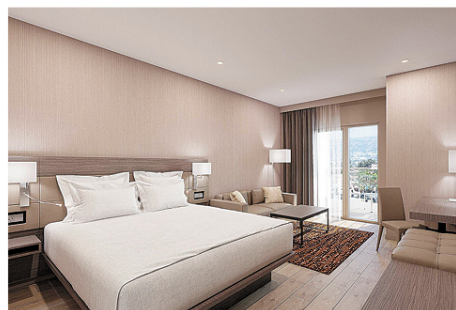
Above: The rooftop bar overlooks Cascades Park and is known for "The Charlie," a purple gin cocktail.

Left: The Tallahassee skyline includes views of the state capitol.



Visit Tallahassee

Above: Il Lusso is one of Tallahassee's most praised restaurants, crafting artful dishes such as seared octopus.



Visit Tallahassee

The AC by Marriott Tallahassee has the brand's European-inspired design.

my last night in town. Located steps from the capitol, the restaurant has a lengthy wine list and artfully prepared steaks, seafood and Italian dishes. I fell asleep easily that night, happy and full from my shrimp ravioli.

Before leaving town, I packed up my car with the goodies and souvenirs I'd purchased and made my way to brunch at Table 23, set in a former home. I sat underneath the oak trees and enjoyed chicken and waffles, my brunch dish of choice, while reminiscing about the trip, pleasantly surprised that Tallahassee has plenty to attract both students and alumni alike. ■

DETAILS

AC Hotel by Marriott Tallahassee Universities at the Capitol
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marriott.com, @achoteltallahassee

Visit Tallahassee
visittallahassee.com, @visit_tally