

ALASKA • BONNIE RAITT • ICELANDIC HORSES

Hemispheres

APRIL 2022



THIS MAGAZINE
HAS BEEN
TREATED WITH AN
ANTIMICROBIAL
PROCESS

Three
Perfect
Days

London

CHARLOTTE STREET HOTEL

Where you
can have a
flag-waving
English
breakfast
in the
West End

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

UNITED



Shore Thing

A scenic ride along Alabama's Mobile Bay



I'm headed south today in search of a little sunshine, seafood, and history, but instead of Mexico or the Caribbean, I'll be staying stateside and exploring Alabama's coastal shoreline. The towns along Mobile Bay—packed with the effervescent charm that inspired native son and *Forrest Gump* author Winston Groom—are connected by a scenic byway that hugs the coast.

I start out in the bay's namesake city. Walking around downtown, with its iron-framed buildings and Spanish moss-draped oaks, feels like stepping back in time. Mobile has at various points been controlled by the French, British, and Spanish, each of whom left their own mark on the local cuisine and architecture, but the French influence is the strongest; the city claims to be the American home of Mardi Gras, with its Carnival celebrations dating back to 1703.

Sightseeing makes me hungry, so I snag a table for Sunday brunch at **The Hummingbird Way**, which is helmed by *Top Chef* alum Jim Smith. I start out with a few oysters from the nearby Murder Point Oyster Co.,

a family-owned operation known for its buttery Gulf bivalves, and tack on a soft-shell crab *gribiche* and a slice of Lane cake, Alabama's official state cake.



Next, I get a little more educated on the area with a visit to the **History Museum of Mobile**, where I learn about everything from the aforementioned Carnival traditions to notable figures such as Archibald Gracie, who survived the sinking of the *Titanic*. I consider myself fortunate to stay above water as I cross Battleship Parkway and continue on U.S. Route 98 toward the beaches of Gulf Shores.

Before dipping my toes in the bay, I stop in Fairhope for a little shopping. At **Page & Palette**, a third-generation, family-owned bookstore, I browse books

by Alabama authors, picking up a copy of Daniel Wallace's picaresque novel *Big Fish*. Feeling a little peckish, I visit **Panini Pete's** for an order of airy beignets, topped with a signature squeeze of lemon. From here, it's just a three-minute drive to **Magnolia Beach Park**, a public park with tree-shaded benches and a small stretch of sand, where I roll up my jeans and wade in.

Dusting off the sand, I hop back in the car and head on toward the quaint town of Magnolia Springs, passing the stunning Weeks Bay Pitcher Plant Bog along the way. Tree-lined Oak Street looks as if it were taken straight off of a postcard, and I'm having dinner at one of those charming storefronts, **Jesse's Restaurant**. My meal of marinated crab claws and shrimp and grits hits the spot.

I'm too beat for dessert, but thankfully a restful night's sleep is just 20 minutes away, once I double back toward Point Clear and **The Grand Hotel Golf Resort & Spa, Autograph Collection**. The property opened in 1847—every day, a replica cannon fires at 3:45 p.m. to honor the hotel's role as a Civil War hospital—and has hosted the likes of Dolly Parton and Margaret Thatcher.

Before cozying up in my oceanfront room, I grab a nightcap at Bucky's Lounge. While a pianist plays Billy Joel, I sip the bar's signature drink, The Texas, made with white whiskey and limoncello. Suddenly a bell rings—which happens every night at around this time—and everyone turns to look out the window at a perfect sunset. I watch as Mobile Bay melts into a shade of orange and raise my glass to a beautiful day.

THE CAR

2022 Lincoln Black Label Nautilus

The best car for a coastal drive? The aptly named Lincoln Nautilus. The midsize SUV got a lavish makeover in 2021—including a giant 13.2-inch touchscreen infotainment display—and its 2022 updates make it even more luxurious. Jules Verne described Nemo's *Nautilus* as "a masterpiece containing masterpieces," and while the Lincoln can't drive underwater, its sleek interiors, 19-speaker Revel Ultima audio system, and 335-horsepower, 2.7-liter turbocharged V6 make it worthy of that description as well. \$65,090, lincoln.com

