



40 Reasons To Love Tennessee



PHOTOGRAPHS: MEG MCCORMACKY, ALLEN ROKACH

top: From whence cometh our strength—the Great Smoky Mountains.
above: Beale Street, B.B. King, and the blues make Memphis special.

To celebrate four decades of *Southern Living*, we offer 40 points of Tennessee pride in no particular order. Choosing a mere 40 was a bit like putting together a 1,000-piece puzzle with 960 missing pieces. The winnowing reminds us just how rich and varied our state truly is.

1 Homes, Sweet Homes “Welcome to the Three States of Tennessee” is a slogan used to greet visitors. East, West, and Middle Tennessee remain geographically and culturally their own. Vive la différence, we say. Each region possesses a distinct personality; all of them pure Tennessee.

2 Great Smoky Mountains National Park Its divinely inspired ridges strengthen the weak and humble the strong. Besides the vistas, an estimated 100,000 species of plants and animals abound in the most visited park in America.

3 Music No matter if it's country, bluegrass, blues, gospel, R & B, pop, rock 'n' roll, or classical, musical genius and genres flourish here.

4 Barbecue In Memphis, Jim Neely's Interstate Bar-B-Que, Charlie Vergos' Rendezvous, and Don Pelts's Corky's win rave reviews. Fans all over the state pledge allegiance to their own locally famous joints.

5 Rivers Run Through It Land-locked Tennessee boasts no ocean. But rivers abound, if not from A to Z, at least from B (Bald) to W (Wolf), including such forces as the Cumberland, the Ocoee, the Mississippi, and the Tennessee. ▶



above, left: The Tennessee walking horse holds a place of distinction in the equine world. **above:** Leon and Myrna Vlahos of Pralines by Leon in Nashville make life sweeter. **left:** We love the sweet sound of Dolly's voice.

of Fame in Knoxville pays homage to such hoops derring-do.

9 Art for Art's Sake Tennessee Performing Arts Center. Appalachian Center for Craft. Arrowmont School for Arts & Crafts. Frist Center for the Visual Arts. We give up. Narrowing our artistic entities and major museums resembles painting with a tiny box of primary colors instead of the jumbo box our state so richly deserves.

10 Horse Country A horse is a horse of course. Unless, of course, it is a Tennessee walker. Shelbyville hosts the national celebration each year.

11 Brownsville The town boasts the West Tennessee Delta Heritage Center, a heralded Abraham Lincoln collection, the oldest continually practicing Jewish temple in the state, and *The Mind Field*, a four-story steel sculpture by artist Billy Tripp.

12 Chattanooga and the Aquarium This Phoenix of a city rose with water, not fire. The Tennessee Aquarium initiated the rebirth of the river town.

Our state enjoys the splendor of four seasons.

13 Jack Daniel Distillery and Miss Mary Bobo's Boarding House Most days, Lynne Tolley focuses on feeding folks at the Lynchburg boarding house. But Jack Daniel's great-grandniece leaves time to taste-test the latest batch from the distillery.

14 Dolly Parton We will always love you too, Dolly. For your soulful singing. For Dollywood. And for your Imagination Library.

15 The Peabody and Memphis Media frenzy ensued when the venerable Memphis hotel went duck-master hunting. Daniel Fox now handles the famed fowl march. "Home of the Blues, Birthplace of Rock 'n' Roll," Memphis owes its saved soul to Peabody owner Jack Belz, who pied-pipered downtown's resurgence in the 1980s.

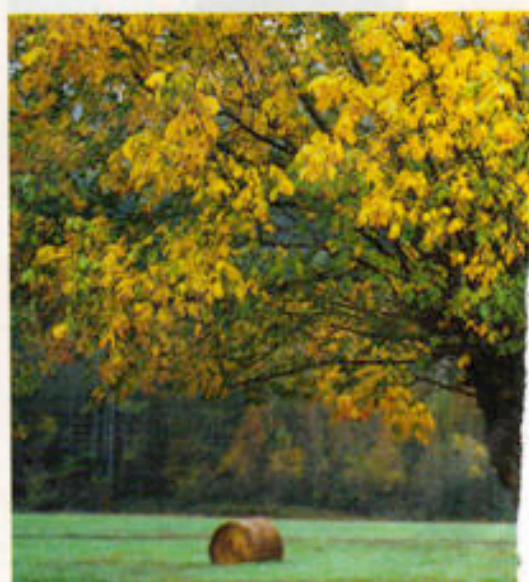
16 Sports Too many deserve mention, so we let Brentwood mom Cheryl Nash sum up what athletic spirit means to Tennesseans. Her son's fledgling football team at Ravenwood High School captured last year's class 5A State Championship. "It is a story of a group of boys who have lived and played by the motto 'Courage, Commitment & Character' and the fans that stand behind them," she wrote. Ditto that sentiment for all the other proud Tennessee teams and supporters.



6 National Storytelling Festival Truth be told, Tennesseans love to tell. Jonesborough adds the punch line to our storied legacy with its festival, this year on October 6-8.

7 Graceland and Sun Studio Everyone visits Elvis's home eventually. Most recently, *American Idol* contestants succumbed to Jungle Room fever, followed by President Bush and the prime minister of Japan. Elvis and Sam Phillips have gone to their great reward, but the studio that sparked the careers of The King, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash, and Roy Orbison lives on.

8 Got Game The University of Tennessee Lady Vols coach, Pat Head Summitt, makes hoop dreams happen. In March of 2005, she beat Dean Smith's all-time wins record by notching her 880th victory as a head coach. The Women's Basketball Hall



17 Pancakes Both Gatlinburg and Nashville belly up for butter, fresh-whipped cream, and from-scratch flapjacks from their own versions of The Pancake Pantry.

18 Grand Ole Opry & the Ryman Auditorium Country musicians still write home to their mamas when they make it to the Grand Ole Opry and perform on the hallowed circle, a 6-foot diameter section of dark oak wood transferred from the original stage at the Ryman Auditorium.

19 Lookout Mountain "See Rock City" barn painter Clark Byers brought first attention to Garnet Carter's craggy attraction. All atop the mountain, view seven states, mar-

vel at the world's largest underground waterfall, and thrill to the hill on the world's steepest passenger railway.

20 Historic Rugby This tiny 1880s utopian village, south of Big South Fork National Park, celebrates its 40th anniversary of historic preservation efforts this year.

21 MoonPies In Bell Buckle, festival revelers honor the beloved confection from the Chattanooga Bakery.

22 The University of Tennessee Football The Big Orange prompts people to douse themselves in paint, wear ridiculous hats, and make croaking calls to ENT specialists after game day.

23 Double Dog Dare Country Knoxville native David Keith plays the father of Ben Affleck's hero character in the film *Daredevil*. The state lives up to that title, with hang gliding in Sequatchie County, drag racing at Bristol Motor Dragway,

whitewater rafting and kayaking on the Ocoee River, skydiving in Tullahoma, scuba diving in Cookeville, cross-country skiing at Roan Mountain, power hiking at Bays Mountain Park in Kingsport, and more.

24 St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Entertainer and philanthropist Danny Thomas kept his promise, and children heal because of it.

25 Blackberry Farm A recipient of numerous accolades from the discerning, this Walland treasure offers sumptuous pleasure.

26 Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center The hotel's winding indoor river ride makes the wide-eyed child in anyone come out to play.

27 Halls of Fame The Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville makes hearts sing. The International Rock-A-Billy Hall of Fame in Jackson gets toes tapping. The Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame in Pigeon Forge shows amazing grace.

28 It's Easy Being Green A list of our public gardens resembles (but, rest assured, never showcases) kudzu—it just goes on and on. Take in the botanicals in Chattanooga, Clarksville, Cookeville, Harrogate, Jackson, Knoxville, Martin, Memphis,



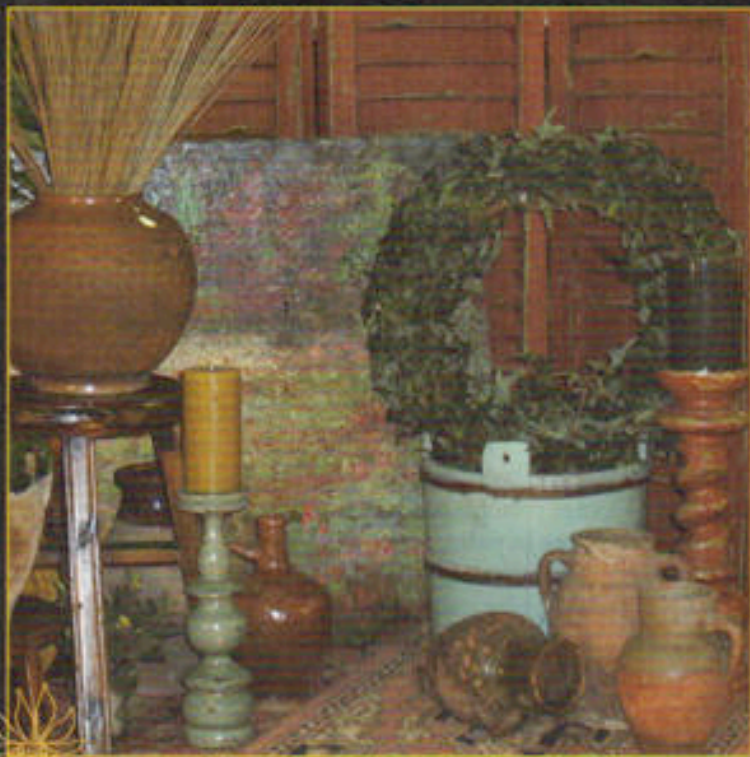
left: At Graceland, fans honor Elvis. below: Smokey is the Tennessee Vols' biggest fan. below, right: Colorful roadside bounty pops up all over the state.



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29 Chattanooga Choo Choo Answer the "All Aboard!" call from trolley conductor Mark Parks, and try to resist singing, "Pardon me, boy, is that the Chattanooga Choo Choo?" Can't be done.

30 Colleges and Universities The world-class medical reputation of Vanderbilt University. Scholars at Rhodes College. Religious studies at The University of the South. The Jubilee Singers of Fisk University. Bluegrass music training at East Tennessee State University. And so on and so on. Our cup runneth over with distinctive places of education.

31 Clingmans Dome It seems entirely possible to find the answers to life at the dome's 6,643-foot peak.

32 Beale Street To play their mournful, mirth-filled music, Delta bluesmen rolled like the

Jim Neely's Interstate Bar-B-Que in Memphis represents one of many great joints in our state.



PHOTOGRAPH: CHARLES WALTON IV

Mississippi River onto this fabled Memphis street. The venerable B.B. King still plucks magic from his beloved Lucille here.

33 The Lost Sea This underground lake near Sweetwater is one of the the country's largest.

34 Sweet Tooth Satisfaction Get your sugar fix from McKee Food's Little Debbie in Collegedale or Pralines by Leon in Nashville. Try the frozen treats from Las Paletas, also in Nashville, and Mayfield Dairy Farms in Athens.

35 The Bluebird Cafe Shhh! You're entering sacred ground at this iconic Nashville club where Garth Brooks got his start. Listen in, and earn the right to say, "I heard 'em first."

36 Critter Country The eagles of Reelfoot Lake. The Appalachian Bear Center in Townsend. The elk reintroduction in the Royal Blue Wildlife Management Area. All God's creatures find a comfortable haven in Tennessee.

37 Alex Haley The Pulitzer prize-winning author of *Roots* made his home in Henning. Today, Haley Farm near Clinton is a valuable resource for the Children's Defense Fund.

38 Doodle Soup Days & Other Festivities Bradford celebrates the barnyard chicken and a spicy soup made from it. South Pittsburg heats up cast-iron skillet for cornbread fans. Paris fries up more than 10,000 pounds of fish. The Grainger County Tomato Festival includes Tomato Wars.

39 Ernest Tubb Record Shop Music aficionados, as well as curious tourists, love to browse

bins in this legendary store on Broadway in Nashville.

40 Four Seasons To everything there is a season. Here that means an honest-to-goodness spring, summer, fall, and winter—each more glorious than the last, no matter which of the "three states of Tennessee" you call home.

NANCY DORMAN-HICKSON

Share your Tennessee pride with Nancy at nancy_dorman-hickson@timeinc.com.



A visitor spends a contemplative moment at Haley Farm near Clinton.



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