



PHOTOGRAPHY: KARIM SHAMSI-BASHA

left: The *General Jackson* Showboat rolls along the Cumberland River past Nashville's city lights.

below: Downtown shopping offers family-pleasing favorites such as the Ernest Tubb Record Shop on Broadway.

Why I Love Nashville

Music City hits just the right note with my family.

Gliding over the Cumberland River on the *General Jackson* Showboat, we roll past Nashville's shimmering skyline. Nine-year-old twins Joshua and Brennan adopt a casual stance beside their dad at the railing. My son and daughter wear poker faces, too cool to show all-out exuberance. But slight grins give them away—they're thrilled at this urban adventure.

Nashville Serenade

Of course, music figures into our plans. Plenty of places in Nashville offer renowned musical venues. Lower Broad boasts such crowd-pleasing favorites as Second Fiddle, The Stage, and the famous Tootsies Orchid Lounge. For family entertainment, however, we seek a toe-tapping evening at the Grand Ole Opry.



PHOTOGRAPHY: BLAKE SIMS

President Andrew Jackson's home, The Hermitage, provides history for visitors.

The city offers so much, including Belle Meade Plantation with its wonderful restaurant, Martha's at the Plantation; the Bluebird Cafe; and the Music Valley Wax Museum of the Stars. If you want to shop for music, be sure to stop by the Ernest Tubb Record Shop.

Opulent Opryland

Our stay at the sprawling Gaylord Opryland Resort & Conference Center proves entertaining all on its own. Blessed with directional prowess, my son navigates his less talented family members through the 9-acre Nashville landmark. Joshua and Brennan are amazed at the resort's interior jungle of greenery, fountains, and waterfalls. They gape in awe at the indoor river.

Scampering on to the Delta Flatboats, we wind our way through the 4½-acre indoor atrium. The children compete to see who can spot more of the 200 fish swimming these waters.

Refreshed, we head for the resort's convention center to see a traveling art exhibit. If there's time, we plan on visiting some of the city's outstanding art facilities, such as the Frist Center for the Visual Arts and the Tennessee State Museum.



PHOTOGRAPHY: ADAM BAUREIS

Dining Delights

What's a vacation without a bit of over-indulgence? Great food at Gaylord Opryland—from the casual Rachel's to the reservations-required Old Hickory Steakhouse—fuels us throughout our stay. At Opry Mills, The Aquarium Restaurant with its aquatic display and tasty menu provides a great family dining spot. The sweet potato pancakes at the kid-friendly Pancake Pantry (near Vanderbilt University) offer a delicious option as well.

Finally, we round out our trip with a bit of history, taking the short drive down I-40 east to The Hermitage. President Andrew Jackson's home brings the kids' school lessons to life, providing the perfect ending note for our family vacation.

NANCY DORMAN-HICKSON

For more information: Contact the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau at 1-800-657-6910 or www.musiccityusa.com. Also visit www.tnvacation.com.