

Heart of the South

February 15 - 28, 2025 * 14 Days

February 24, 2024

2025 Adventures, including *Heart of the South*, are currently in the initial planning phase. Travelers who wish to hold their spot on this tour are encouraged to submit a refundable \$100 pre-registration deposit by clicking the green PRE-REGISTER button below.

Tours popular in the pre-registration phase will be finalized with firm dates, updated itineraries, and final pricing. The tour is then released for full registration. Pre-registered travelers have one week of priority access to full registration, which requires an additional \$200 (\$300 total registration). Registration deposits are non-refundable.

Travel information presented below describes the 2023 edition of *Heart of the South*. The 2025 version may have a day added in Montgomery, Alabama.

Introduction

Offered in two parts, *Heart of the South* is a fast-paced survey of the 7 southern states of Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia! Join us for Part 1 or Part 2 or combine both to create a memorable 13-day Adventure in the sunny South. Travelers who participate in both parts receive a credit off the combined tour price. Travelers rooming single also receive a reduction.

Heart of the South: Part 1

February 15 - 22, 2025 • 8 Days • 2023 price - \$2450
Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama

This volkssport adventure is offered in two parts. Heart of the South Part 1 starts in San Antonio at the end of the mega walking event combo of the 18th IVV Olympiad and the IML Texas Trail Roundup and continues east offering walks in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Capital walks in all four states are included and we spend two nights on the edge of the French Quarter in New Orleans.

Heart of the South: Part 2

February 21 - 28, 2025 • 8 Days • 2023 price for 7 Days - \$2150

Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, Georgia

Part 2 of Heart of the South begins in Montgomery, Alabama as Part 1 ends, finishing up in Atlanta, Georgia, and includes walks in 4 states set in the very heart of the South! Again, capital walks in all four states of Alabama, Florida, South Carolina and Georgia are included and we spend two nights in the delightful colonial town of Savannah!

[Pre-Register Contact Us](#)

[Tour Type: Volkssport](#)

Overview / Trip Details

- [Overview](#)

Heart of the South: Part 1

Including:

- All land travel as outlined
- Superior-tourist class or better hotel accommodations. Placement of hotels relative to walk start/finish and activities is a priority.
- Meals: All breakfasts as denoted (B)
- 9 walk routes in 4 states: 1 at the Texas Trail Roundup and 4 capital walks (average distance 6 km; average rating 1.1/A)
- Fees for 9 walk stamps for those collecting AVA credit
- 2-hour swamp cruise through a Louisiana bayou
- WAI guide service throughout
- All tipping for coach driver and group meals
- Pricing is based on double occupancy. A limited number of single rooms are available for a supplement. We also provide a roommate matching service.

Optional Excursions:

- Tour of Vicksburg National Military Park – Day 6
- Activities along walk routes: Several walks offer points of interest and attractions along the route that may interest walkers. WAI will help identify these en route. However, especially on days where a full day is devoted to a walk (New Orleans) travelers are encouraged to plan ahead and consider where they might like to peel off the route to explore on their own or with a group of friends.

Heart of the South: Part 2

Including:

- All land travel as outlined
- Superior-tourist class or better hotel accommodations. Placement of hotels relative to

walk start/finish and activities is a priority.

- 7 Meals: All breakfasts and a Farewell Dinner as denoted (BD)
- 8 walk routes in 4 states and 4 capital walks (average distance 6 km; average rating 1.6/A+)
- Fees for 8 walk stamps for those collecting AVA credit
- WAI guide service throughout
- All tipping for coach driver and group meals
- Pricing is based on double occupancy. A limited number of single rooms are available for a supplement. We also provide a roommate matching service.

Optional Excursions:

- Activities along walk routes: Several walks offer points of interest and attractions along the route that may interest walkers. WAI will help identify these en route. However, especially on days where a full day is devoted to a walk (Savannah) travelers are encouraged to plan ahead and consider where they might like to peel off the route to explore on their own or with a group of friends.

- [Pre-Register](#)
- [360.260.9393](tel:360.260.9393)
- [Email Us](#)



Adventure Pace

Tour Pace: 1 2 3 4 5

Walk Challenge: 1 2 3 4 5

[About Adventure Pace](#)

Adventure Pace

How much Adventure do you want? Here are a few features to help gauge the following factors on each tour.

Tour Pace: On a scale of 1 (slowest pace) to 5 (fastest pace), we've rated the following factors: number of 1-night hotels; driving miles per day; fullness of schedule; mid-tour airline flights; high elevation setting; and average amount of walking per day.

Walk Challenge: This number represents an average walk difficulty rating for the tour using a scale of 1 (easiest) to 5 (hardest).

[Pre-Register Contact Us](#)

Important Info



Group Size

Maximum 24 travelers



Hotels

Strategically located Tourist Class hotels or better



Meals

All breakfasts included plus Farewell Dinner at the end of Part 2 in Atlanta



Airfare

Not included. Part 1 travelers fly into San Antonio, TX and depart from Montgomery, AL. Part 2 travelers fly into Montgomery, AL and depart from Atlanta, GE



Transportation

Included. We use motorcoaches with a seating capacity of 40+ seats.



Traveler Age

Our travelers usually range from 50-75 years of age. All ages welcome!

Your Guides



Tim Friesen

Tim has been guiding for Walking Adventures since 2003, most often leading our summertime adventures in Europe. Tim recently retired from a long and fruitful career as a high school music teacher in Molalla, Oregon and has been known, on occasion, to burst into song on the trail!

Tim has worked extensively planning all details of the *Heart of the South* tour, and will be lead guide on this one-of-a-kind Walking Adventure.

Itinerary

Travel information presented below describes the 2023 edition of *Heart of the South*. The 2025 version may have a day added in Montgomery, Alabama.

Click on each day to reveal more details. BD refers to Breakfast, Dinner.

Heart of the South: Part 1

[Day 1: Arrive San Antonio, Texas](#)

Travelers arrive in San Antonio today for the Texas Trail Roundup IML walking festival, and the start of the WAI Texas Trail Roundup & Southern States walking tour. Walkers are encouraged to consider arriving a day early to maximize participation in the Roundup.

Later this evening, we rendezvous for the first group activity, a Welcome Orientation to get acquainted and talk about the Adventures that lie ahead!

[Day 2: San Antonio - Austin, Texas \(B\)](#)

San Antonio River Walk - 5 km, rated 2A

Austin Texas State Capital - 6 km, rated 1A

Another slate of Texas Trail Roundup walks are on tap this morning. After participating in the famed San Antonio Riverwalk trail, we point our bus north for the state capital — Austin, Texas.

Walkers with a hankerin' to bag a capital walk have that opportunity this evening. Our hotel is situated on the 6 km route, which crosses Lady Bird Lake and includes the State Capitol Complex.

[Day 3: Austin - Lake Charles, Louisiana \(B\)](#)

Texas A&M Walk - 5 km, rated 1A

Lake Charles Walk - distance and rating to be announced

Not far down the road is the town of College Station and our first walk of the day through the Texas A&M Campus, including Kyle Field (famous Aggie football stadium), Reed Arena, Bonfire Memorial, the Academic Building and the Century Tree.

Today's second walk is across the state line in Lake Charles, a town on a lake of the same name in the Acadiana region of Louisiana. Upon check-in to the hotel, the late afternoon is free for this walk through a town known for its culinary delights and rhythm and blues music.

[Day 4: Lake Charles - New Orleans, Louisiana \(B\)](#)

Baton Rouge, Louisiana Capital Walk - 6/10 km, rated 1A

Situated on the east bank of the Mississippi, Baton Rouge is the capital of Louisiana and the home of Louisiana State University. The local club route here takes us through the downtown area of Baton Rouge, past the capitol building and through Spanish Town.

En route to New Orleans we take a detour into a Louisiana bayou for a swamp cruise. A 2-hour ride with a knowledgeable captain sharing local history and pointing out gators and

other wildlife is quite a contrast to where we spend the next two evenings in the “Big Easy”!

Late-afternoon, we depart for New Orleans memorable stay in this icon of French and Creole living in the southern USA.

Our hotel is strategically situated on the edge of the French Quarter, offering access to a fun selection of activities and uniquely “Big Easy” dining opportunities.

[Day 5: Activities in New Orleans \(B\)](#)

New Orleans Walk – 6/10 km, rated 1A

All day is devoted to enjoying New Orleans using the local club walk that includes the riverfront, French Quarter, Bourbon Street, and the WWII Museum.

The French Quarter is the oldest and most famous part of the city. Music clubs, museums, antique shops, and delightful old-line restaurants are just around the corner from our hotel.

In addition to the French Quarter, consider a ride on the oldest continuously operating streetcar in the US; a riverboat cruise, possibly with classic New Orleans music and cuisine; a cooking class to learn the secrets of Creole and Cajun cooking; or a ride past landmarks of New Orleans in a traditional mule-drawn carriage.

[Day 6: New Orleans – Vicksburg, Mississippi \(B\)](#)

Vicksburg, Mississippi Walk – 5/10 km, rated 1A

Today’s walk is across the Mississippi state line in the town of Vicksburg. The route takes us through the picturesque, historic town of Vicksburg where walkers have a choice of participating in the 5 km route, then adding the optional battlefield tour, or enjoying more time to do the longer 10 km walk.

Optional Excursion: Vicksburg National Military Park: *Vicksburg was the site of a critical battle during the Civil War. It became a turning point due to its commanding position on the Mississippi River, the so-called “Gibraltar of the Confederacy”.*

Though one objective of a longer 18-month campaign, General Ulysses S Grant made his mark by capturing the Confederate fort after a 47-day siege on July 4, 1863, just one day after the South also lost the better-known Battle of Gettysburg.

We hear the story of the battle, and the people whose lives were impacted, from our coach on a 2-hour tour with a licensed battlefield guide. Price: \$50 per person

[Day 7: Vicksburg – Montgomery, Alabama \(B\)](#)

Jackson, Mississippi State Capital Walk – 5 km, rated 1A

Montgomery, Alabama State Capital Walk – 5 km, rated 2A

The city of Jackson was founded in 1821 specifically as the site for a new state capital. It was named in honor of Andrew Jackson not for his role as seventh president of the United States, but for his military leadership as General Andrew Jackson in the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812.

The town of Jackson subsequently suffered during the Civil War when Union forces under General Sherman laid siege and burned the city following their victory at Vicksburg.

We start our day with the Mississippi capital walk which passes the Old Capitol Museum, the Governor's Mansion and the Mississippi State Capitol.

Later this morning, we continue east into Alabama, bound for Montgomery, and another state capital walk. After checking into our hotel, the Montgomery walk route takes us along the riverfront, and past many historic buildings.

Montgomery has been a center for the Civil Rights Movement and boasts many of its landmarks including the new Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. Other features of the walk include the Alabama State Capitol building, the White House of the Confederacy, Martin L. King Memorial, several historic churches, a Confederate cemetery and Hank Williams's grave site. There's a lot to see in Montgomery!

[Day 8: Depart Montgomery, Alabama \(B\)](#)

Travelers participating in *Heart of the South: Part 1* leave us today. We hope you've been enriched by your walking experience in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama!

Heart of the South: Part 2

[Day 1: Arrive Montgomery, Alabama](#)

Montgomery, Alabama State Capital Walk - 5/8/11 km, rated 2A

Travelers arrive today for a 7-day walking adventure in the *Heart of the South: Part 2*-Alabama, Florida, South Carolina, and Georgia. The group coming from the Texas Trail Roundup & Heart of the South: Part 1 arrives about 3 pm into our hotel. Travelers arriving into Montgomery prior to 3 pm are welcome to complete the walk self-guided. The route takes us along the riverfront, and past many historic buildings. Montgomery has been a center for the Civil Rights Movement and boasts many landmarks of this movement, including the new Legacy Museum and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. Other features of the walk include the Alabama State Capitol building, the White House of the Confederacy, Martin L. King Memorial, several historic churches, a Confederate cemetery and Hank Williams's grave site.

[Day 2: Montgomery - Tallahassee, Florida \(B\)](#)

Quincy, Florida Walk - 6 km, rated 2B

Tallahassee, Florida State Capital Walk - 5/10 km, rated 2B

Named for our sixth president, John Quincy Adams, Quincy is a small, rural Florida town twenty miles west of Tallahassee which dates back to 1828.

It has an agricultural heritage linked to Cuban tobacco, an interesting history in the area of civil rights, and was named an All-American City in 1996. The walk takes us through the town square, suburbs and historic neighborhoods.

Deeper into Florida's panhandle, we arrive at the state capital of Tallahassee. After checking into our hotel, just a stone's throw from the walk start, choose from a 5 or 10 km walk.

The route winds through capitol grounds, state museums, the Florida State University campus and downtown Tallahassee. On campus, we route past the Visitor Center, FSU Circus, athletic training facilities, and Bobby Bowden Field.

[Day 3: Tallahassee - Savannah, Georgia \(B\)](#)

Historic St Marys, Georgia - 5 km, rated 1A

Located in southeast Georgia, St. Marys is a small coastal village rich in history, natural beauty, and southern hospitality. This idyllic town is the gateway to the Cumberland Island National Seashore, a pristine barrier island accessible via ferry only.

Today's route takes us through the historic area of St. Marys, the Oak Grove Cemetery with graves dating back to 1801, and along the scenic waterfront with glimpses of Cumberland Island in the distance.

We finish the day up the coast in Savannah, the historic, riverside birthplace of the colony of Georgia.

When Union General Sherman entered Savannah on his infamous "March to the Sea" in 1864, the mayor gave him full access to the city in exchange for leaving it untorched. For this reason, Savannah is one of the few major cities in the South that retains its antebellum architecture and charm.

[Day 4: Activities in Savannah \(B\)](#)

Colonial Savannah Walk - 5/10 km, rated 1B

General James Oglethorpe's visionary 1733 city plan of more than 20 public squares provides the basis for Savannah's exquisite antebellum ambiance and the venue for an all-day walk through one of our country's best-preserved colonial towns.

Delightful distractions abound along the route and include: trolley, carriage, and riverboat tours; visits to the Savannah History Museum, the Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum, and

the Owens-Thomas House.

Simply strolling past restored homes dating back to the 1700's and through beautiful park squares with statuary and Spanish moss-draped live oak trees is also a perfect way to spend your day in Savannah.

[Day 5: Savannah – Columbia, South Carolina \(B\)](#)

Colonial Charleston, South Carolina – 5 km, rated 1A

Columbia, South Carolina State Capital Walk – 5 km, rated 2A

Charleston is another historic southern port town renowned for colonial architecture. Attractions include the Historic District, a waterfront park, White Point Gardens, the Market area and the College of Charleston.

Deeper into South Carolina, today's capital walk in Columbia includes the impressive State House, the campus of the University of South Carolina, and historic sections reflecting the grace of the South, which either survived or were rebuilt after Sherman's destructive "March to the Sea".

[Day 6: Columbia – Atlanta, Georgia \(BD\)](#)

Atlanta, George State Capital Walk – 5/10 km, rated 2A

We cross the state line back into Georgia, bound for Atlanta, capital city of Georgia, and in many ways the leading city of the South.

Our final walk of the adventure winds through the heart of Downtown Atlanta passing a host of big name attractions like

- the Georgia Capitol building with its gold-leaf dome;
- the Olympic Rings and Flame from the 1996 Olympics;
- the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium; Phillips Arena;
- Georgia State University Campus;
- Centennial Olympic Park;
- the Georgia Aquarium;
- World of Coke (headquartered in Atlanta),
- National Center for Civil and Human Rights; and
- the College Football Hall of Fame.

Walkers have all afternoon to enjoy the walk. Our bus will shuttle to the hotel twice to accommodate those walking the 5 km and those walking the full 10 km.

Later this evening, join us for a Farewell Dinner to laugh, remember, and reminisce about our exploration of the history, culture and natural beauty in the Heart of the South!

[Day 7: Depart from Atlanta \(B\)](#)

Our hotel offers a shuttle service to Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Travelers are welcome to depart at their leisure. Thanks for sharing this volkssport adventure in a fascinating part of the USA!

More Details

Click on each heading for more details.

[How Do I Lock in My Place on This Adventure?](#)

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[What is a Volkssport tour?](#)

WAI offers walking adventures all over the planet. Most of the walks featured on these tours are developed by WAI tour planners in cooperation with local walking guides. These itineraries are the result of extensive on-site planning by WAI staff. A Volkssport Tour, on the other hand, streamlines the tour planning process and focuses more on walks and less on sightseeing. The objective is to feature more walking, offer more volkssport stamps (a record of walks volkswalkers keep in a passport-like walking book), and keep the price lower. Primary differences between Volkssport Tours compared to Curated Classic Tours include:

- Walks offered are hosted by clubs, not planned by WAI staff. Usually, they are self-guided walks using club-provided maps and directions.
- Itineraries focuses more on local club walks, and less on sightseeing and cultural activities.
- Itineraries tend to be paced faster, giving us the ability to offer walks in more locales.
- Extensive work is done by in-office, but on-site planning is generally not done by WAI tour planners (experience gained on previous editions of the tour, however, produces improvements to subsequent itineraries).
- Volkssport Tours tend to be limited to the USA. International tours generally follow the Classic Curated model.
- A larger number of walkers is accepted on the tour. During 2023, however, the maximum for all tours is 24 travelers.

[Walk Ratings](#)

We generally walk at a pace of 2 to 3 miles per hour. Several walks on this trip are oriented more towards education, and therefore take longer due to stops for guide commentary. Nature walks, on the other hand, generally continue at a steadier pace because we're stopping less to talk.

In most cases, we are not "strolling." We are walking at a relaxed but steady pace. Your experience will be significantly affected by your level of physical fitness. If not walking regularly at home, we strongly recommend that you make a priority of "training" beforehand to both enjoy the trip and avoid medical issues due to overexertion. If you have questions about your ability to participate, please contact our office at fun@walkingadventures.com.

We have adopted a walk difficulty rating system which contains a numeric indicator for trail incline and an alpha indicator for trail terrain. The explanation for this system is presented on the table below:

INCLINE

1. Minimal hills or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: <200 feet.
2. Some moderate hills and stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: 200-1000 feet.
3. Some significant hill or stair climbing. Cumulative elevation gain: 1000-2000 feet.

TERRAIN

- A. Almost entirely on pavement.
- B. A significant part of the route is on well-groomed trails with very few obstacles.
- C. A significant part of the route is on somewhat difficult terrain (rocky / rooted paths or soft sand).

[How is Airfare Arranged?](#)

The official start point is our initial hotel in San Antonio, Texas, and the official end point is our hotel in Atlanta, Georgia.

Transfers between the airports and hotels not included in San Antonio. At the time of publication, our hotel in Atlanta offers a complimentary airport shuttle.

Details about flight arrangements and recommended travel agent contact information will be provided by email after you register for the Adventure. Please do not book your airfare prior to receiving these flight details from us!

[Optional Excursions](#)

As a volkssport adventure, the emphasis of our time together will be spent on walks, more so than sightseeing. Many of the walk routes have activities available to walkers, which walkers may prioritize according to their own tastes and preferences. These activities are

optional, and not included in the tour price.

As 2023 walk routes are finalized by local clubs, we will take a closer look at adding in additional, fun optional activities throughout our itinerary where available time and opportunities intersect – so stay tuned! In the meantime, we have one optional activity currently available for your consideration.

Tour of Vicksburg National Military Park - Day 7: *Vicksburg was the site of a critical battle during the Civil War. It became a turning point due its commanding position on the Mississippi River, the so-called “Gibraltar of the Confederacy”. Though one objective of a longer 18-month campaign, General Ulysses S Grant made his mark by capturing the Confederate fort after a 47-day siege on July 4, 1863, just one day after the South also lost the better-known Battle of Gettysburg. We hear the story of the battle, and the people whose lives were impacted, from our coach on a 2-hour tour with a licensed battlefield guide. Price: \$50 per person*

[Travel Insurance](#)

WAI believes strongly in the importance of travel insurance for financial and medical protection from any number of unforeseen circumstances that can arise before departure or during your Adventure. Many travel insurance providers are available for you to consider. Laura Pfahler and Sharon Mitchell of World Travel Inc. are travel agents who provide air travel and insurance services to many WAI travelers.

- Laura Pfahler: 503-434-6401 or llp@wtpdx.com
- Sharon Mitchell: 971-261-2091 or smitchell@wtpdx.com

Check out [Insurance Tips](#) from World Travel for a short introduction to travel insurance. (NOTE: WAI receives no commission or financial remuneration from World Travel Inc.).

As always, do some shopping to ensure you are getting best value. Using the [SquareMouth.com](https://www.squaremouth.com) website can be a good way to compare pricing.

Other options for travel insurance include:

- Allianz
- Betins
- Travel Guard
- Travel Insured International

NOTE: We suggest purchasing from a reputable, well-established insurance company (avoid buying insurance from an unknown company found only online). Travelers interested in purchasing “cancel for any reason” insurance coverage should be careful to check pricing and terms BEFORE they register for a tour. Recent changes in the international travel landscape have caused changes in the policies of some insurance companies, and made the purchase of this particular type of policy even more time-sensitive.

[What if WAI Cancels the Tour?](#)

Walking Adventures International reserves the right to cancel this tour departure with fewer than 12 participants, in which case registered participants will receive a 100% refund of payments received.

This refund policy contains one exclusion. Many suppliers require non-refundable deposits as a condition of booking services. Though it is rare, unforeseen circumstances can force us to cancel a tour. In cases where supplier's non-refundable policies are imposed, WAI attempts to retrieve as much of these deposits as possible, but cannot guarantee a 100% refund. In cases where full refunds cannot be obtained for a cancelled tour, we will do our best to transfer unrefunded money as traveler credits to be applied to a future tour to that destination.

[Wellness Procedures for This Tour](#)

Our approach to wellness on tour is to encourage travelers to:

- Focus on health before the tour so you start healthy.
- Pace yourself while on tour; travel is inherently stimulating and can produce adrenalin boosts that mask energy drain. Guard your energy reserves and consider the length of the trip and whether to opt out of some activities and/or walks.
- Be self-aware. If you feel yourself tiring or feel a bug coming on, take precautions to block it (e.g. extra rest, extra doses of vitamin C, etc).
- If you feel a bug coming on or if you take ill, distance yourself from others when possible.
- If you feel ill, isolate yourself towards the back of the bus and away from others

Click [WAI Wellness on Tour Policy](#) to view the WAI policy on Wellness on Tour.

[What Happens Next?](#)

Tours popular in the pre-registration phase will be finalized with firm dates, updated itineraries, and final pricing. The tour is then released for full registration. Pre-registered travelers have one week of priority access to full registration, which requires an additional \$200 (\$300 total registration). Registration deposits are non-refundable.

A final payment is due 90 days before departure and is non-refundable after the due date. You will receive a prompt email from us a week or two in advance. Please see our [General Tour Conditions](#) for the full terms and conditions for participation in this Adventure.

Around 2-3 weeks before departure, you will receive a final email packet with details of the program, including hotel names and contact information, a list of fellow travelers, and a more detailed daily schedule.

Take a few minutes to peruse this new itinerary. We're happy to be returning to this storied region of our nation, and we think you will agree that walking is still and always the best

way to experience our world. Join us for this unforgettable Walking Adventure program as we savor this journey of discovery through the *Heart of the South* together!