

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



**Laws of Attraction:
*The Parkway at Clinton, Jackson, and Ridgeland***

Get ready to take the plunge: Music, art, crafts, history, museums galore, hot nightlife, cool neighborhoods, local color, literary legends, and shopping. And then there are those 33,000 acres of gorgeous azure water for boating, swimming and fishing.

The Clinton-Jackson-Ridgeland area is where artists and writers, thinkers and doers all come to make a splash. They make the state laws here, they make music, they frequently make history, and they'll make you so welcome this happening place will feel like home before you can spell Mississippi.

In fact, when you roll into Clinton don't be surprised if they're playing your song at the Clinton Visitor Center on the Parkway. Requests are welcome at the monthly jam sessions of the Mississippi Olde Time Music Society. Even if you don't make the jam, there are plenty of other tasty Mississippi-made treats available at the Center—everything from artwork to books to pottery to jam, as in the sweet sticky kind. There are also historical exhibits to devour and the structure itself that you'll want to visit. Designed to resemble the sort of "dogtrot" home that would have been located on the Old Natchez Trace in the early 1800s, the Center was constructed using hand-made bricks like those at Monticello and old cypress reclaimed from a sugar mill.

That kind of pursuit of the ideal goes hand-in-hand with pursuit of knowledge in this quintessentially charming Southern college town. Mississippi College, a Baptist college, was the first institution of higher learning in Mississippi, and the first co-ed college in the nation to confer degrees to women—to two women, in 1831. On your stroll through campus, be sure to stop at the Samuel Gore Art Gallery and Statue Garden.

Gore, a Mississippi College professor for 50 years, mentored students who went on to become regionally and nationally respected artists, some of whose works you'll find in and among the quaint shops and emporiums on the brick streets of Old Town. Those streets were the inspiration for the name of the town's theatre group, the Brick Street Players.

Take in a show, or take home a treasure, or in the Clinton Community Nature Center, take a hike through the 33 acres of lush native trees, ferns and foliage. There are benches for relaxing, or you can follow a piece of the Old Natchez Trace that winds through the center. The birds will certainly be singing your song here at the nature center, and there may very well be a royal welcome by monarchs in the lovely butterfly garden.

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There may also be other winged creatures when you touch down in Jackson, since the all-new Mississippi Museum of Art's debut in June 2007 with its first exhibit, "Between God and Man: Angels in Italian Art," curated by the Director General of the Vatican Museum. With its open design matched with friendly admission policies and compelling exhibits, the new \$11 million pavilion promises to become a "museum without walls."

In that respect, the MMA is a perfect match for the culture-rich scene of Jackson museums. In Jackson, when it comes to museums, there's no subject left behind and no subject that can't be rendered fun and fascinating. At the Museum of Natural Science, visitors go nose-to-nose with real live gators and amazement comes in jumbo size, in the 100,000-gallon aquarium. The Agriculture and Forestry Museum sits you smack in the middle of an 1860s working farm and on the streets of an old-timey Mississippi town, circa 1920. The Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and Museum puts you up to bat with stats, bios and trivia in interactive exhibits on Mississippi sports legends from Dizzy Dean to Archie Manning to Jerry Rice to Bret Favre.

Historical museums come in all sizes and shapes, whether it's the homes of literary great Eudora Welty and the great Civil Rights leader Medgar Evers, or the troves at the Margaret Walker Alexander National African American Research Center and Smith Robertson Museum and Cultural Center. Yet always, the guiding principle is to make history come alive. In one case, that's easy—the Mississippi Governor's Mansion introduces the fascinating story of Mississippi history—and should you run into him, say hello to the governor, too. He lives there, in second oldest continuously occupied gubernatorial residence in the U.S.

All politics aside, the Discovery Zoo, the children's area at the Jackson Zoo, has been named by the New York Times Travel Guide as one of the top five children's zoos east of the Mississippi, and now with the \$8 million addition, called the Wilderness Mississippi Area, you can see native cougars, black bears, river otters, and beavers in habitats of the latest design.

As you can see, there's a lot to see, but along with your walking gear, be sure to pack your dancing shoes. The downtown club scene is jumping in Jackson's Arts, Entertainment and Convention District, which includes the evolving Farish Street Historic District, where revelers will soon sing and dance the blues at places where greats like Lionel Hampton and Louis Armstrong once played. Check out other hot spots in and around downtown for live music and lively hospitality.

Downtown Jackson is about more than arts and entertainment, it's also about living. In historic neighborhoods like Belhaven where the Eudora Welty House Museum is located and the Fondren District where neighbors and visitors greet each other on the trolley line, shops, galleries, and eateries are woven seamlessly into a vibrant fabric of life.

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And now, about the dancing shoes: you'll find those and much, much, much more in the premier shopping destination that goes by the name of Ridgeland. Home to Northpark, the largest indoor mall in Mississippi, Ridgeland is also where you'll find the second largest antiques mart in the state.

With its artists'-colony ambience and its close association with the Mississippi Craftsmen's Guild, Ridgeland has long been known as a haven for artisans and a heaven for collectors. The crafts tradition in this region is rich and deep. Guild members, who now number more than 400 professional artisans from all across the Southeast, produce every sort of beautiful (and functional) items imaginable. From glass blowing to weaving to pottery to papermaking, these are truly one-of-a-kind items.

In 2007, those items will be able to spread out in spacious new digs, when the Guild opens its new 20,000 square foot crafts center. Nestled in a wooded area just off the Natchez Trace Parkway, with an upstairs view that takes in the blue skies and blue waters of the Ross Barnett Reservoir, the crafts center is the perfect place to find that perfect something, or just to browse and admire the view—and the craft.

You'll also admire the view sitting at one of the outdoor cafés or on one of the wrought iron benches of Renaissance at Colony Park. Opening at the end of 2007, this massive outdoor lifestyle center offers an out-of-ordinary retail experience that's about premium brands and much more. Modeled after an old-world European village, Renaissance features luxurious touches like tiled roofs, fountains, lush greenery, and a village green for concerts and other cultural events.

Now about that plunge: There still a big one to come – 33,000 acres of it, to be exact. If Ridgeland is a shopper's heaven, it's still also a sportsman's paradise on the Ross Barnett Reservoir, a man-made wonder. It's perfect for sailing, boating, swimming, fishing and bird-watching with miles of hiking trails on the Natchez Trace.

And as to your last question, where will you stay? Not to worry, Ridgeland hosts your every need, with over 1,100 rooms available and more hotels in the works. Dining is a feast of more than 115 restaurants. Bon appetit.

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