

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:



Love, American Style ***Romance Blooms on the Natchez Trace Parkway***

For Pulitzer-prize winning novelist Eudora Welty, the Natchez Trace inspired the dramatic tale of the Robber Bridegroom, a handsome highwayman who disguised his face with berry juice and stole his maiden bride as he galloped past on horseback, sweeping her off her feet in a heart-pounding ride to his lair.

While Welty's story was a fairy tale, it should be noted that the romance of the Natchez Trace is not mere fiction, it is also historic fact. Niagara Falls may be the more famous honeymoon spot, but when it comes to lovers' lanes, the Natchez Trace is surely the longest and one of the most historic, even as it continues to attract couples of all ages today. Along the Natchez Trace, love has always seemed to bloom as easily as the trees and wildflowers that line its route.

How else to explain the actions of Aaron Burr, former vice president, famed duelist and would-be conqueror of Mexico? It is no exaggeration to say that Burr was, at least for a time, the toast of Natchez, Mississippi. But when Burr's Mexican scheme collapsed, charges were brought and an arrest warrant was issued. Friends urged Burr to make his escape, but for two long days he held his ground to woo a Natchez widow. Only when he realized that lovely widow Madelyn would never marry him did he finally flee the territory.

The former vice president may not have succeeded in winning his lady love, but future President Andrew Jackson had better luck, at least in his courting. After his marriage to Rachel Donelson Robards, the couple enjoyed a rustic honeymoon on the Natchez Trace, sharing a blanket under the stars. They were not alone; in those days safety dictated travel in large groups. Later, when one of the Jacksons' traveling companions testified to the shared blanket, what had protected the couple from robbers' pistols and Indian arrows would feed the fires of scandal after it was revealed that on that rustic honeymoon that Rachel had still been legally married to another man!

Today on the Natchez Trace, the scenery is very nearly as beautiful and unspoiled as it was in the Jacksons' day, and sharing a blanket under the stars is still a romantic possibility in any of the many campgrounds on and around the Trace. However, for those who prefer sleeping in the great indoors, lodging along the Trace offers a variety of welcoming options, everything from charming B&B's to four-star hotels with a wide range of choices in between. Dining along the Trace is equally varied and sumptuous.

MORE

Add Page 2 – Romance on the Natchez Trace

In fact, it is variety in all things that makes the Natchez Trace the perfect getaway for the couples of any age—variety in attractions and activities, variety in rhythms and tempos. Even the beautiful scenery offers an ever-changing panorama.

Romantic backdrops abound, of course. Couples can steal a kiss on a nighttime carriage ride through antebellum Natchez, share an intimate walk under the moss-draped canopy of a darkly beautiful Cypress Swamp, sail into the sunset on the Ross Barnett Reservoir or Pickwick Lake, talk about the art of love while strolling among the art at the Mississippi Museum of Art or at Nashville's Frist Center for Visual Arts. In Port Gibson, the splendid Ruins of Windsor, with its 23 elegant and ghostly columns, set the scene for the cinematic passion of Elizabeth Taylor and Montgomery Clift in the classic movie *Raintree County*; today, Windsor's haunting beauty still exerts the same seductive power.

And speaking of the art of love, few gifts speak more eloquently than the one-of-a-kind creations made by the artisans and craftsmen of the Craftsmen's Guild of Mississippi. Over the past two decades, the Guild's growth has been exponential, and 2007 marks the opening of a new 20,000-square-foot multi-purpose crafts center in Ridgeland. Nestled in a beautiful natural area just off the Natchez Trace Parkway, the center is itself something of a work of art, with a dramatic upstairs' view of the Ross Barnett Reservoir. While sure to be a favorite getaway for an afternoon of browsing, the center, with its ample meeting space and blue water–blue sky vista, holds all the ingredients to become a popular spot for wedding vows as well!

Something old, something new—Ridgeland is also an antiquing paradise, with the largest antique mall in central Mississippi. And for couples who share a love for power shopping, the city offers an unbeatable variety of venues, from the indoor Northpark Mall, the state's largest, to the massive new outdoor lifestyle center, Renaissance at Colony Park, scheduled for opening at the end of 2007. Modeled after a European style village, Renaissance welcomes visitors with fountains, benches, outdoor cafes, and attractive green spaces.

In Tupelo, the Barnes Crossing Mall offers selection and quality in a charming indoor mall with a working carousel as its centerpiece, and in Nashville the metropolitan expanse of retail options is well-known. And for those inclined to get off the beaten path, Natchez is browsing delight squared, in charming town squares and historic districts yielding captivating memories as well as unique treasures.

MORE

Add Page 3 – Romance on the Natchez Trace

Historic districts, landmarks and sites are not only common on the Parkway, they are an integral part of the experience, from the antebellum mansions of Natchez to Nashville's Hermitage, the historic home of those scandalous honeymooners, Mr. and the not-quite-Mrs. Andrew Jackson. Major Civil War battles sites and Native American sites run the entire length of the route. Couples can create their own special memories exploring vital and fascinating national ones.

And if, as the poet once said, music is the food of love, the Natchez Trace plays on and on, from Jackson's Farish Street blues to Nashville's Bluebird Café. The revitalization of the Farish Street Historic District is only one dynamic new element in Jackson's vibrant club scene, as the city's downtown revival has drawn people and praise from all over the nation. Attendance routinely tops 50,000 at the Mal's St. Paddy's Parade and Festival (which features the home-grown Sweet Potato Queens, whose outrageously funny books authored by Jacksonian Jill Connor Browne, have been national bestsellers). Jackson cultural offerings are diverse and plentiful—museums run the gamut from sports to natural science to history to art. This year, the innovative and exciting new Mississippi Museum of Art makes its debut with an exhibit of the art of Renaissance angels curated by the Director General of the Vatican Museum.

Not to be outdone, nature will also put on quite a show this year, as she does every year on the Natchez Trace. From the Spanish moss of Natchez to the gently rolling hills of Nashville, the Trace always welcomes with an ever-changing array of breath-taking vistas that open the way for a true engagement of the soul. Even a simple leisurely drive down the Trace is an experience to savor, an opportunity to recharge. Or, throw your cares to the wind on a sailboat on the Ross Barnett Reservoir. Want to enjoy long walks? With over 60 miles of National Scenic Trail, and 52 different hiking, nature and horse trails, couples have almost 100 miles to wander, from the dark beauty of Cypress Swamp to the spectacular waterfalls at Shoals Creek Preserve. And when it comes to the birds and the bees, the Trace has them, too: approximately 150 types of birds and 350 different types of wildlife, including at least 22 federally listed threatened or endangered species.

Yet even as Nature welcomes, even as the fun and the fantastic shopping exert their calls, it is the warmth of the people of the Trace that makes the Parkway the ultimate destination for couples looking for a deeply satisfying experience. Natchez Trace hospitality is not only renowned, it is genuine.

It is said that all the world loves a lover. Certainly, the Natchez Trace loves its lovers—and the feeling is mutual.

For visitor information: www.scenictrace.com