

Knoxville Tennessee :: UT, World's Fair Park, Food & More

Surrounded by the backwoods wilderness of the Great Smoky, the Cumberland and the Blue Ridge mountains, KNOXVILLE, the original capital of Tennessee, is a rather quiet city of 180,000.

Modern skyscrapers, older brick buildings and a riverfront at the bottom of steep bluffs combine to give downtown an attractive edge, but specific places of interest are thin on the ground. On the northern fringe, the Old City, centered on Central Street and Jackson Avenue, is a small area of shops, galleries, restaurants and nightspots in Victorian warehouses.

On the western edge of downtown, the World's Fair Park is dominated by the futuristic Sunsphere, a huge glass ball mounted on a round concrete tower. There is an observation deck on the lower level of the sphere (Mon-Sat 9am-4.30pm; free).

The Knoxville Museum of Art, in the park at 1050 World's Fair Park Drive, hosts visiting exhibits and features a small permanent collection of paintings and a cleverly designed sculpture garden focused on a 200-year-old elm tree (Tues-Thurs & Sat 10am-5pm, Fri 10am-9pm, Sun noon-5pm; \$7; tel 865/525-6101).

Follow Cumberland Avenue up a few blocks and you come to the sprawling campus of the University of Tennessee. Lined with bars and diners, frequently bedecked in the orange and white colors of the Volunteers football team, the campus has two theaters and the Frank H. McClung Museum at Circle Park, which features displays on the city's archeology, art and history (Mon-Sat 9am-5pm, Sun 1-5pm; free).

The Gateway Regional Visitor Center, 900 Volunteer Landing Lane (daily 9am-5pm; tel 1-800/727-8045), celebrates east Tennessee's natural resources and its technological (predominantly nuclear) achievements. It stands among the waterfalls and foliage of the revitalized Volunteer Landing, which boasts riverside restaurants and a marina complex.

Greyhound buses stop at the depot on Magnolia Street; K-Trans city buses run a free trolley to the campus.

Hotels & Accomodations

The comfortable Days Inn - Campus, 1706 W Cumberland Ave (tel 423/521-5000, fax 865/540-3866, \$50-75/\$75-100), is fairly central, and there's a Comfort Inn further out at 5334 Central Ave Pike (tel 423/688-1010, fax 865/687-4235, ; \$50-75), while the Holiday Inn Select, 525 Henley St (tel 423/522-2800, fax 865/523-0738, ; \$75-100), is one of the more reasonably priced hotels near the downtown convention center. Rooms are at a premium when the Tennessee Volunteers are playing at home.

Restaurants

Knoxville's favorite restaurant, the rib specialists Calhoun's, overlooks the river downtown at 400 Neyland Drive (tel 423/673-3355).

In the Old City, Barley's, 200 Jackson Ave, serves hand-tossed pizza and grilled food, has 43 beers on tap and hosts live music most nights.

Tomato Head in the downtown Market Square Mall (tel 423/637-4067) is a wildly popular place for pizza and super-stuffed sandwiches throughout the day and evening.