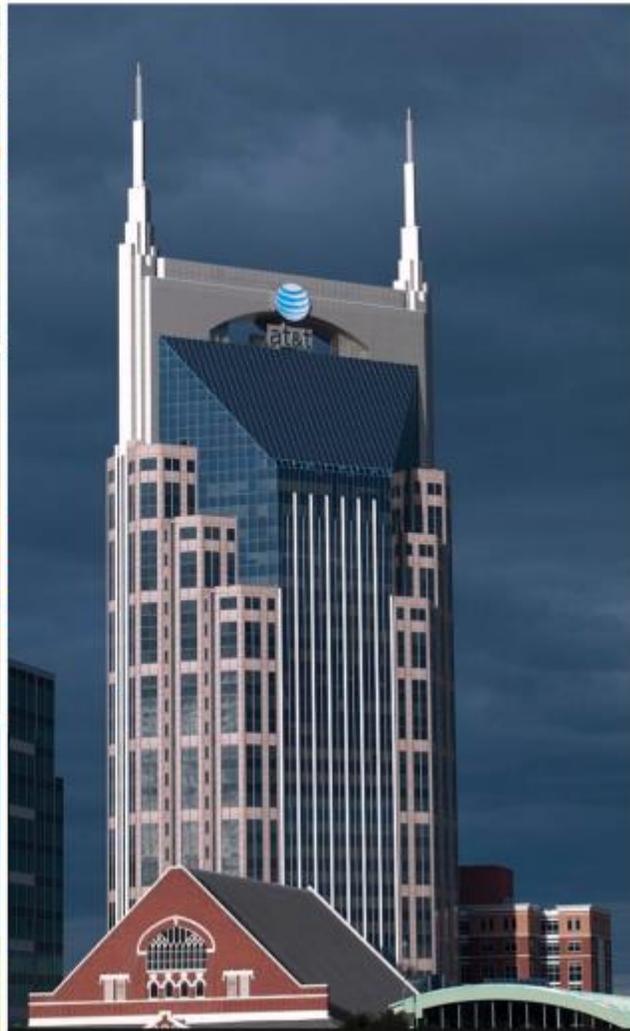


- Your Guide to Nashville - for LTEN 2017 Conference Attendees

by Steve Woodruff, President, Impactiviti (and Nashville-area resident)



Attending the LTEN 2017 Conference? Welcome to Music City – one of the friendliest places you’re going to visit this year.

That’s right. When we say, “welcome,” we actually mean it. Get ready for a few days of easy smiles and polite greetings. Bask in the warmth of the mid-South culture. You might not want to leave.

The conference is being held at the *Gaylord Opryland Hotel*, an absolutely ginormous facility in which you are guaranteed to get lost (but, you’ll enjoy the experience). There are shops, restaurants, waterfalls, paths, forests...you can spend several days here and never leave. But I hope you will do some exploring, which is why I’m writing up this guide.

Because Nashville is a whole lot more than the Gaylord Opryland Hotel!

If you get a chance to visit downtown Nashville, what you’ll notice above all – literally, above all – is the cranes. This city is in the midst of a major growth spurt and its skyline is undergoing a transformation. Entire neighborhoods are being renewed. It’s vibrant, it’s exciting, and it’s a little bit crazy.



Yes, we have music, but the Nashville eating and entertainment scene is growing by leaps and bounds, and downtown (and the surrounding neighborhoods) is chock-full of great places to visit. You will be entering a diet-free zone – just plan right now on an extended series of “cheat” days!

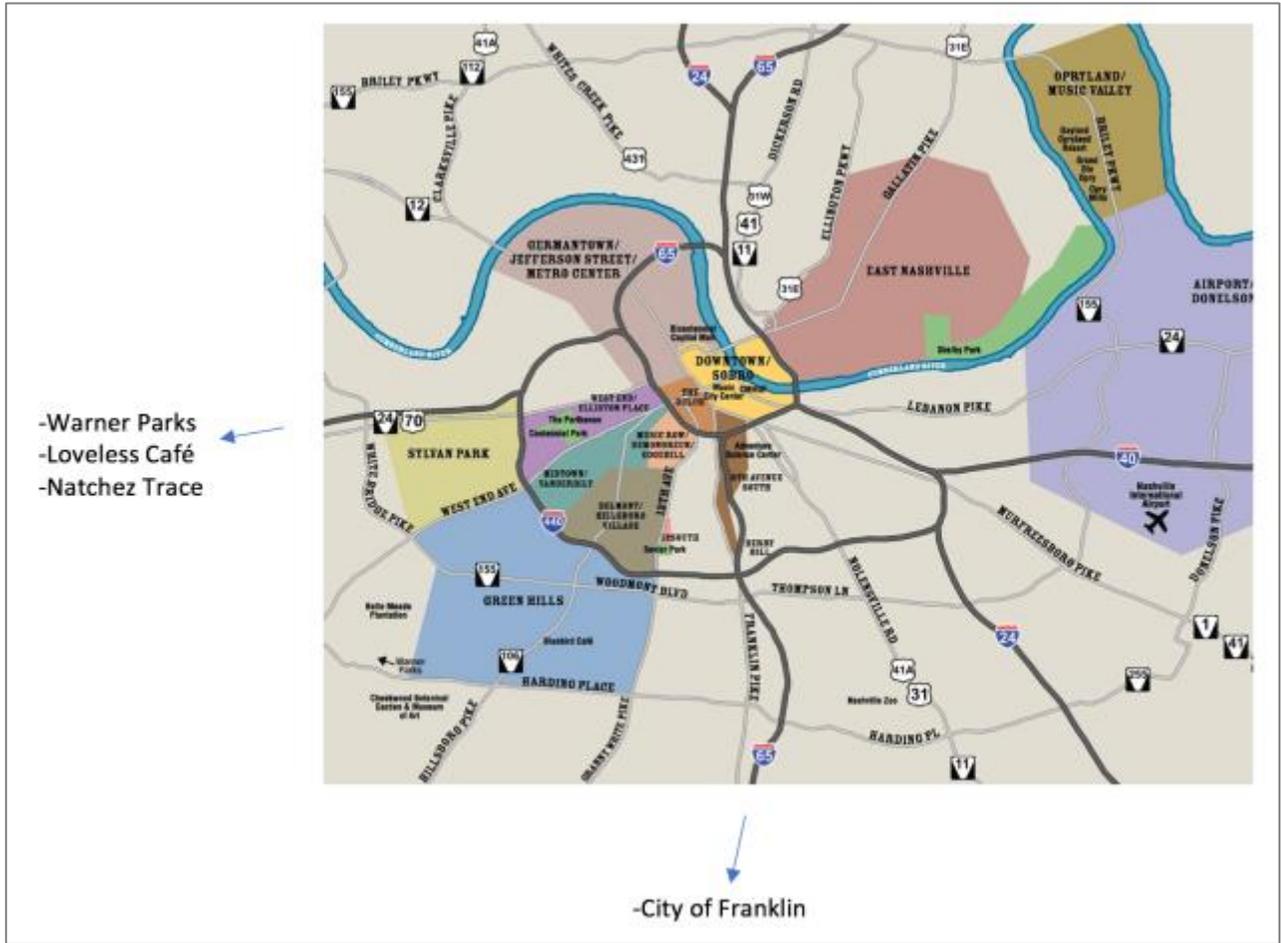
I moved back to the Nashville area a few years ago after 30 years in New Jersey, because – well, I love it here. I always mention the 3 C’s that drew me back: ***Climate***, ***Culture***, and ***Cost of living***. My college experience at Vanderbilt made me a fan of the mid-South, and I’m very happy to share our city with you during your brief stay.

Let's start with a bit of interesting Nashville Trivia

- The iconic AT&T Tower downtown (also called the “Batman Building”) is the largest building in Tennessee.
- Nashville contains the only scale model replica of Greece’s Parthenon.
- The greater Nashville area is now growing at a rate of 100 people per day. CNNMoney named Nashville one of the Top 10 fastest growing cities in 2014.
- Not surprisingly, Nashville has the highest concentration of people working in the music industry per capita than anywhere else in the world.
- Nashville contains 21 institutions of higher education (hence its nickname, “Athens of the South”). The picture below is of Vanderbilt’s Kirkland Hall.
- Nashville is home to the largest Kurdish community in the United States.
- Oprah Winfrey grew up in Nashville.
- The top 4 industries in middle Tennessee are Healthcare, Music, Tourism/Hospitality, and Automotive Manufacturing. Publishing is also big. Tech is growing. And there is a vibrant entrepreneurial scene.
- According to U.S. News and World Report, Nashville is ranked 13th out of the 100 best cities to live.
- The city is bisected by the Cumberland River. Which usually stays within its banks. Except in 2010. Do a Google Image search on “Nashville flood 2010” – ouch.



Now, just to get oriented, let's take a quick 30,000 foot view of Nashville and its neighborhoods:



You'll (most likely) be flying into the *Nashville International Airport*, to the east (why is it labeled "BNA"? It used to be called Berry Field/Nashville). Unlike most airports, this one is actually a pleasure to visit! And just north of the airport is the *Opryland* complex, where the conference will be held. It's all about 20-25 minutes from downtown (shuttles and car-sharing services like Uber can help get you around).

If you're going to be in-and-out to the conference with no chance to explore – well, dang. You'll still enjoy your taste of Nashville. But if you're going to spend at least one night on the town, or if you're going to add some time before or after the conference, then read on – I'll be your advance tour guide as you think about your adventures!

What to see...

>> Only have one night, or a few hours, or maybe half a day of free time to explore? Sounds like you're going **Downtown**.

- You can wander through the many honky-tonks, tourist shops, and bars/restaurants on lower Broadway. Music, ice cream, BBQ, boots, pedal taverns (Google it) – that's the scene.
- You can visit the iconic spots: *Ryman Auditorium*, *Country Music Hall of Fame*, *Frist Center for the Visual Arts*, and more.
- With a bit of walking you can find the "hip" places – *Pinewood Social* (bar/restaurant/bowling alley); *Crema coffee*; *Peg Leg Porker BBQ*; or a whole bunch of cool spots that have popped up all over **East Nashville** ([here's a list](#) of those). There's a very nice pedestrian bridge across the river.

>> Going to carve out a day or two to explore before or after the conference? Good for you! Here are some suggestions for your visit, depending on your interests:

A short walk northwest from downtown brings you into the rapidly-gentrifying **Germantown** neighborhood. Lots of buildings getting restored here, and some top-notch restaurants.

The Gulch – which used to be a kind of trainyard wasteland – is now booming with new construction and has become a vibrant area with new offices, condos, and restaurants. Very easy walk from downtown. Nicest architectural touch – the old *Union Station* (Nashville's train station, now converted to a hotel).

If you're really into the music scene, and want to see where it all began – that's the **Music Row** area. Maybe you don't want to see a bunch of music studios but still want a lively bar/restaurant scene? **Demonbreun** is vibrant and fun.

>> OK, maybe you're looking for quieter, more cerebral explorations. **Midtown/Vanderbilt/West End** has plenty to offer.

At the top of the list is *Centennial Park*, where the full-scale replica of the Parthenon resides. Across the street is the pastoral *Vanderbilt University* campus, which has a very impressive collection of (labeled) trees scattered throughout its leafy grounds. This area also contains plenty of music joints, shops, and restaurants. Not far away is the impressive *Belmont University* campus, and the bustling **Hillsboro Village**, which has its own share of (usually-crowded) destinations.

A walk in the woods, you say? A drive out west will bring you to the *Warner Parks*, or if you prefer a more intimate setting, a drive south along Granny White Pike will

bring you to one of Nashville's favorite hidden gems, *Radnor Lake*. Both destinations have great walking trails. If you choose to head west, you must go to one of the top eating places in the known world, which is *Loveless Café*. I can't even find the words to tell you how wonderful the Loveless is – one bite of the biscuits and you'll be a convert.



In the mood for a turn-back-the-clock meandering drive through woods? Just past the Loveless Café is the entrance to the *Natchez Trace Parkway* (see pic of the iconic bridge above), which goes all the way to Natchez, MS. One minute on this road and you'll know why it's a favorite. But, 10 minutes going south on the Natchez Trace brings you to the outskirts of the cutest little gem in the area: the town of [Franklin](#) (my hometown).

If you have a chance to visit *Franklin*, at the very least, spend some time shopping in the charming downtown district, and grab some fabulous southern food at Puckett's or one of the other fine restaurants. If you dare, have the galaxy's best doughnut experience at Five Daughters Bakery in The Factory. If you're into Civil War history – this is your spot to do informative tours focused on the famous Battle of Franklin.

Bonus – into wine? Believe it or not, the Nashville area has a very cool destination called *Arrington Vineyards* (south and east of the city). Google it. They have a huge lawn for family picnics, musical events – it's a neat find.

But wait, there's more! Here are some additional links to help you plan your adventure:

<http://www.visitmusiccity.com/Visitors/thingstodo>

<https://www.thrillist.com/nashville>

[http://travel.usnews.com/Nashville TN/Things To Do/](http://travel.usnews.com/Nashville_TN/Things_To_Do/)

<http://www.visitacity.com/en/nashville>

<http://mentalfloss.com/article/12505/11-cool-places-nashville-you-really-must-visit>

<http://www.tennessean.com/story/life/2015/09/08/nashvilles-best-restaurants/71877730/>

<http://nashville.eventful.com/events/june>

I hope this is helpful as you prepare for your visit. And, while you're at the conference, I'm happy to serve as your "tour guide" in the LTEN Exhibit Hall. My goal is to introduce you to the *right* vendors for your needs so that your time is well spent. You can text or call me at 201-323-4660 and we'll set up a guided tour for you and/or your colleagues.

Looking forward to seeing you in Nashville!



Steve Woodruff
aka Mayor of LTEN