

# History



Franklin County is rich in history with a number of interesting tales to be told. The county was established February 6, 1818 by the Alabama Territorial Legislature, making it older than the State of Alabama which was created on December 14, 1819. The county was named in honor of the illustrious American patriot Benjamin Franklin who had been dead less than 30 years.

The county originally extended north to the Tennessee River, but a parcel was later divided off and became Colbert County. It is a land that once was called home by several Native American Tribes, most notably the Chickasaws, Creeks, and Cherokees.

During its first 100 years, the county seat changed four times beginning with Russellville, then moving to Frankfort followed by Belgreen before finally settling back in Russellville.

Other noteworthy facts about Franklin County include:

- Jackson Avenue in Downtown Russellville was part of Andrew Jackson's Military Road
- Gaines Trace is an original road predating the incorporation of the city of Russellville & the state of Alabama
- Jackson Avenue and Gaines Trace aided in the transportation of goods and quicker military responses & are still in use today
- Phil Campbell was the first town in Alabama named after a person's first & last name
- Franklin County is home to Alabama's first Junior College, now known as Northwest Shoals Community College
- Notable People: Carl Elliott, Sonequa Martin-Green, Billy Sherrill, and country music star Tammy Wynette.



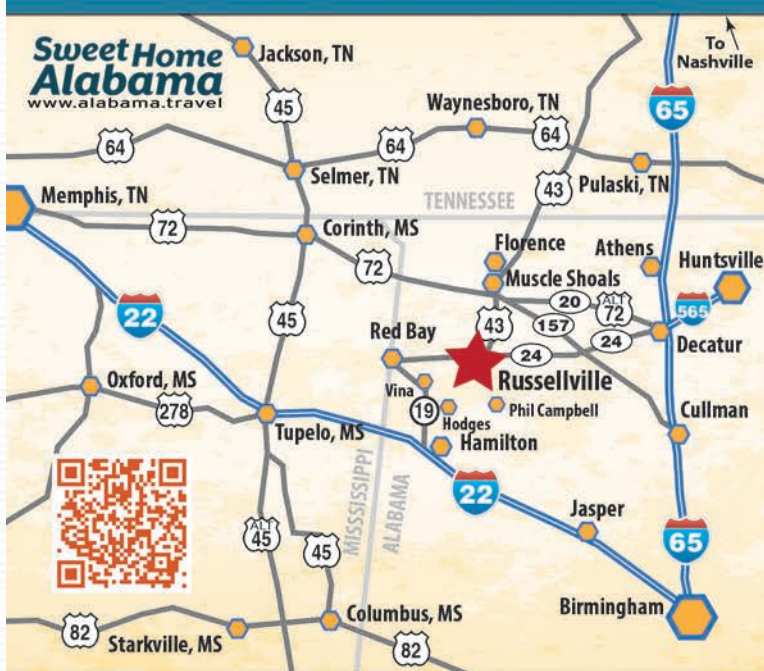
Franklin County Courthouse in Russellville.

## ALABAMA'S Hidden ADVENTURES

# FRANKLIN COUNTY

RUSSELLVILLE • RED BAY • PHIL CAMPBELL • SPRUCE PINE • HODGES • VINA

Bear Creek Collaborative • Bear Creek Lakes • Bear Creek Floatway  
Dismals Canyon • Hodges Equestrian Park • Red Bay Museum  
Red Bay Family Fun Park • Historic Roxy Theatre  
The Venue at Overton Farm • Turkey Path Ranch • Willow Oak Lodge



**Downtown Russellville GPS: 34.5082099, -87.7284574**

Birmingham, AL 110 miles      Tupelo, MS 71 miles  
Nashville, TN 152 miles      Huntsville, AL 74 miles



**Franklin County Chamber of Commerce**  
103 Jackson Avenue N, Russellville, AL 35653

**256-332-1760**

**FranklinCountyChamber.org**

- Facebook: Franklin County Chamber of Commerce
- Instagram: @FranklinCountyChamber
- Facebook: Franklin County Watermelon Festival
- Instagram: @FC\_Watermelon\_Festival

Printed in U.S.A./12-25/15m

## ALABAMA'S Hidden ADVENTURES

# FRANKLIN COUNTY

Watermelon Capital of Alabama

RUSSELLVILLE • RED BAY • PHIL CAMPBELL

SPRUCE PINE • HODGES • VINA



**256-332-1760**

**FranklinCountyChamber.org**

# Festivals



## Phil Campbell Festival

When: 3rd Weekend in June  
Where: Memorial Park, Phil Campbell, AL  
Phone: 205-993-5313

Web: [www.philcampbellal.com](http://www.philcampbellal.com)  
Facebook: Phil Campbell Festival

Starting out as a convention for people who shared the same name as this small town, the Phil Campbell Festival has grown into an annual summer celebration! Each June the Town of Phil Campbell welcomes the



surrounding community and Phil Campbells from all over the world to Memorial Park for vendors, games, a car show, and live music both nights!

## Jam on Sloss Lake

When: 4th of July  
Where: Sloss Lake Park, Hwy 24, Russellville, AL  
Phone: 256-332-6060

Web: [www.franklincounty-chamber.org](http://www.franklincounty-chamber.org) | [www.russellvilleal.org](http://www.russellvilleal.org)  
Facebook: City of Russellville, Alabama- Government

The City of Russellville invites everyone to celebrate America's Independence with great food, great music, and a great fireworks show over the water! Come to Sloss Lake Park on Highway 24 in Russellville each year on July 4th for a freedom party like no other!



## Vina July Fest

When: Last Saturday in July  
Where: Vina Fire Department, Vina, AL  
Phone: 256-356-4996

Web: [www.vinaalabama.org](http://www.vinaalabama.org) | Facebook: Town of Vina  
Every year, the Town of Vina hosts July Fest to encourage the community to come together & to raise funds for the Vina Fire Department and the Vina Rescue Squad. This family-friendly event includes live music, a variety of vendors, a car show, inflatables for the kids, a wonderful fireworks show, and the much-anticipated draw-down!



## Franklin County Watermelon Festival

Franklin County is the official "Watermelon Capital of Alabama"

When: 3rd Weekend in August  
Where: Jackson Avenue, Downtown Russellville, AL  
Phone: 256-332-1760

Web: [www.franklincounty-chamber.org](http://www.franklincounty-chamber.org) | Facebook: Franklin County Watermelon Festival | Instagram: @fc\_watermelon\_festival  
Come to the heart of downtown Russellville for some FREE FRUITY FUN! Since its inception in 1981, this festival has grown to be the largest in the county with attendance estimated to be around 30,000 visitors each year. Franklin County was designated the "Watermelon Capital of Alabama" in 2013 and is proud to hold that title. Festivalgoers can enjoy a large variety of vendors, unique food options, a car & truck show, 5K and 1 Mile Run, watermelon contests, and live music on both nights! Prior to the festival, a Watermelon Pageant is conducted to crown the official Miss Watermelon Queen. The Franklin County Watermelon Festival is also a frequent stop for Miss Alabama during her reign. The Watermelon Cutting & Contests continue to be a crowd favorite. Contest categories include: the largest weighing watermelon (from Franklin County), the largest weighing watermelon (outside Franklin County), best tasting watermelon, best dressed watermelon, the most unusual watermelon, and a seed spitting contest! Over 100 watermelons are sliced up and given away for free to keep the crowds cool during this hot Alabama August weekend.



## Red Bay Founder's Fest

When: 4th Saturday in September  
Where: Bay Tree Park, Red Bay, AL  
Phone: 256-356-4473, ext. 3

Web: [www.cityofredbay.org](http://www.cityofredbay.org) | Facebook: City of Red Bay  
The City of Red Bay celebrates its extensive history each year at Founder's Fest in September. Attendees are welcomed to the beautiful Bay Tree Park to enjoy vendors, food, a car show, a fried pie contest, a photography contest, a quilting contest, and live music throughout the day! The Red Bay Museum is open for tours and downtown merchants offer special sales. The family friendly atmosphere is just one of the reasons Founder's Fest was named "Event of the Year" in 2022!



## Spirit of Hodges Festival

When: 2nd Saturday in October  
Where: Hodges Town Park, Hodges, AL  
Phone: 205-935-3445

Web: [www.franklincounty-chamber.org](http://www.franklincounty-chamber.org)  
The name "The Spirit of Hodges" takes on special meaning and reflects the town's history. The Spirit of Hodges was a P-51 Mustang fighter aircraft used in World War II. The plane was named for the town after the residents of Hodges raised more than \$47,000 in war bonds in 1943. The annual event includes live entertainment, inflatables, door prizes, and vendors of all kinds.



## Spruce Pine Day

When: 3rd Saturday in October  
Where: Spruce Pine Community Center, Spruce Pine, AL  
Phone: 256-332-1760

Web: [www.franklincounty-chamber.org](http://www.franklincounty-chamber.org) | Facebook: Spruce Pine Community Center & Historical Society  
Spruce Pine Day began in 1999 when the local grocer and postmaster made chicken stew and invited the community. That same tradition of togetherness continues today during Spruce Pine Day. Visitors can enjoy a variety of food and craft vendors, along with a car show and live entertainment! The Spruce Pine Museum is often open for tours, and the Spruce Pine Historical Society has their annual Bean Dinner fundraiser inside the community center. A fun day to celebrate community for the whole family!



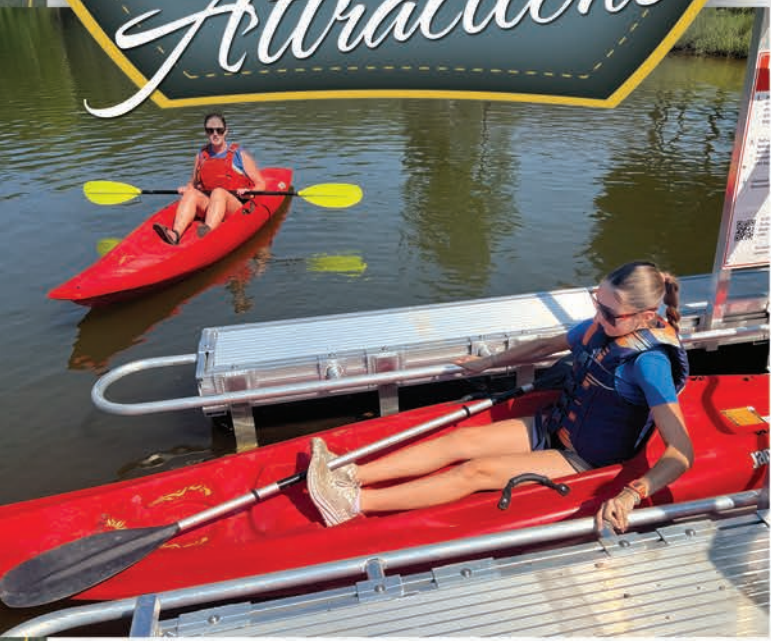
## Franklin County Latino Heritage Festival

When: 4th Saturday in October  
Where: Jackson Avenue, Downtown Russellville, AL  
Web: [www.franklincounty-chamber.org](http://www.franklincounty-chamber.org) | Facebook: Franklin County Latino Heritage Festival

The Franklin County Latino Heritage Festival started in 2023 to showcase the diverse Latin cultures present in our local community. The historic downtown Russellville streets come alive with the sights, sounds, and smells of Latin culture! Festivalgoers have the opportunity to experience the rich diversity within the Latino community, promoting cultural unity and fostering positive relationships. This family-focused festival features interactive events like live entertainment, dancing competitions, hands-on children's activities, a street soccer match, vintage car show, a parade to finish the day, and a diverse lineup of food trucks and



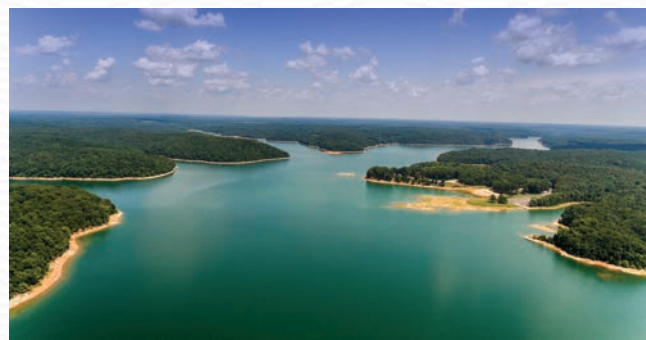
# Attractions



## Bear Creek Collaborative

256-810-5539; [www.bearcreekcollab.org](http://www.bearcreekcollab.org)  
 Facebook: Bear Creek Collaborative  
 2300 Overton Farm Rd, Hodges, AL

Bear Creek Collaborative expands access to the outdoors to support the well-being of all. By prioritizing accessibility and removing barriers, it ensures people of all backgrounds and abilities can experience the physical, mental, and social benefits of nature. BCC creates hands-on, multisensory learning environments for schools, nonprofits, and community groups, blending education and play to support emotional, behavioral, and intellectual growth. Through outdoor recreation—such as kayaking, archery, and hiking—it promotes stress relief, improved mood, and a deeper connection to nature and adventure.



## Bear Creek Lakes

256-332-4392; [www.BearCreekLakes.com](http://www.BearCreekLakes.com)  
 1111 Co. Rd. 88, Hodges, AL  
 Camping/Cabins

Bear Creek offers over 160 campsites in 5 campgrounds on more than 15,000 acres of land maintained by the Bear Creek Development Authority (BCDA).

### Fishing

Fishing in one of BCDA's many lakes is ranked among the top in the country. Occupying over 8,000 acres, the clean waters provide anglers with abundant small and largemouth bass as well as crappie and channel catfish.

### Boating and Swimming

Swimming in one of Bear Creek Lakes is popular because of the clean water and sand beaches. Also, the warm climate offers an extended swimming season.

## Bear Creek Floatway

256-332-4392; [www.BearCreekLakes.com](http://www.BearCreekLakes.com)

Rated as one of the best floatways in Alabama. Releases from Upper Bear Reservoir are made to provide adequate flow on all weekends and holidays, Memorial Day through

# Accommodations

## HOTELS

**Best Western Plus Russellville Hotel & Suites**  
 13770 Hwy 43, Russellville, AL 35653; (256) 332-1002;  
[www.bestwestern.com](http://www.bestwestern.com); Facebook: BW Plus Russellville

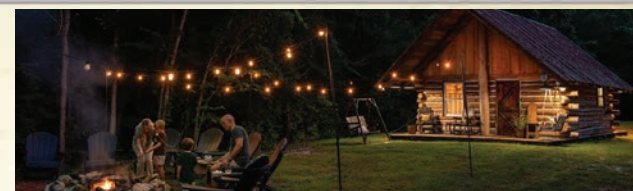
**Econo Lodge**  
 13600 Hwy 43 Bypass, Russellville, AL 35653; (256) 398-7444;  
[www.choicehotels.com](http://www.choicehotels.com)

**Hotel Red Bay**  
 107 4th Ave SE, Red Bay, AL 35582;  
 (256) 668-0181 or (256) 356-9912;  
[www.hotelredbay.com](http://www.hotelredbay.com);  
 Facebook: Hotel Red Bay



## RV Parks

For a list of RV Parks, scan this QR Code



## CABINS & CAMPGROUNDS

**Bear Creek Development Authority**  
 1111 Co. Rd. 88, Hodges, AL 35571; (256) 332-4392;  
[www.BearCreekLakes.com](http://www.BearCreekLakes.com)

**Cedar Ridge Campgrounds**  
 140 Campground Rd, Russellville, AL 35653; (256) 324-9218;  
[www.cedarridgervcampgrounds.com](http://www.cedarridgervcampgrounds.com)

**Turkey Path Ranch**  
 767 Highway 162, Russellville, AL 35653; (866) 969-7262;  
[www.turkeypathranch.com](http://www.turkeypathranch.com); Facebook: Turkey Path Ranch

**Willow Oak Lodge**  
 8410 US Highway 43 N, Spruce Pine, AL 35585;  
 (256) 810-5946; [www.visitwillowoak.com](http://www.visitwillowoak.com);  
 Facebook: Willow Oak Lodge

Labor Day. Releases shut off at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday. If traveling long distances, please call ahead to check current conditions. The Floatway is considered a Class I course with exceptions. Take special note: Upper Factory Falls and Lower Factory Falls are Class VI and are dangerous. Please note that access is allowed at designated points only.

## Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts

256-356-9289; [www.baytreecouncil.com](http://www.baytreecouncil.com)  
 Facebook: Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts  
 303 4th Ave SE, Red Bay, AL

The Bay Tree Council for the Performing Arts began with its first play in 1996; since then, they have produced more than 50 family-friendly plays, each in February, April, and November. Their center stage is located in the theatre of Community Spirit Bank's Weatherford Centre. Each production features citizens of the community drawing audiences from surrounding cities and states. The BTCPA has involved more than 200 volunteers in play performances while being enjoyed by thousands. Large and small groups are welcome with dinner packages available.



## Dismals Canyon

205-993-4559; [www.DismalsCanyon.com](http://www.DismalsCanyon.com)  
 Facebook: Dismals Canyon  
 901 Hwy 8, Phil Campbell, AL

Dismals Canyon - located in Northwest Alabama - is an 85-acre Natural Conservatory privately owned and operated. It is not a State Park or a National Park. However, it was designated a "National Natural Landmark" in 1975 by the National Natural Landmarks Program.

Through the heart of the canyon flows "Dismals Branch", a winding stream that enters the canyon with a roar through "Rainbow Falls". A 1.5-mile hiking trail on the canyon floor follows the stream through sky reaching boulders, past thundering waterfalls, into a secret world of mossy-green and pearl gray filled with ferns and giant trees. Guided night tours allow visitors to view the Dismalites, rare "glowworms" unique to only a few places on Earth, Australia, New Zealand, and Phil Campbell, AL.

After hiking the canyon floor, make a refreshing stop at the Soda Fountain and visit the Country Store for supplies and Native American wares.



## Historic Roxy Theatre

Facebook: The Historic Roxy Theatre  
 208 Jackson Ave N, Russellville, AL

Since 1949, The Historic Roxy Theatre has been an icon of downtown Russellville. Its legacy continues as a movie theatre as well as a venue for concerts and theatre productions. The Roxy hosts the annual Christmas Spectacular, a theatrical performance of holiday favorite characters, scenes and music. Community members young and old bring each scene to life.

The Roxy is located inside the Americana Music Triangle where professionals and locals perform country, folk, gospel, the blues, and rock and roll.



## Red Bay Family Fun Park

256-356-4473; [www.cityofredbay.org](http://www.cityofredbay.org)  
 650 2nd St NW, Red Bay, AL

Red Bay Family Fun Park, featuring Red Bay Water Park, includes a pavilion, picnic areas, basketball court, walking trail, playground, skate park, and an outdoor fitness court. The Water Park opens Memorial Day and closes Labor Day; it includes two adult water slides, a splash pad, four children's water slides, a large swimming pool and a concession stand. Season pass and private parties available.



## Red Bay Museum

[www.cityofredbay.org](http://www.cityofredbay.org); [www.redbaymuseum.com](http://www.redbaymuseum.com)  
 Facebook: Red Bay Museum  
 108 4th Ave SE, Red Bay, AL

Visitors are greeted by a re-creation of the Red Bay Hotel lobby, complete with original counter, neon sign, room door with transom and staircase. Other exhibits are examples of general merchandise or dry goods stores, and an original soda fountain from an early drug store. The Bay Theater is depicted, showcasing the original ticket window glass and a player piano used for silent movies. A large portion of the top floor is dedicated to country music star Tammy Wynette, originally from Tremont, MS where she was born and went to school. She called Red Bay her hometown since she shopped, visited relatives and went to the movie theater there. Open Tuesday and Thursday afternoons from 1:30-4:00 p.m. and by appointment.

## Hodges Equestrian Park

205-935-3436; Facebook: Hodges Horse Park  
 331 Trail Head Road, Hodges, AL

Hodges Equestrian Park is a horse trail with miles of picturesque trails winding through acres of woodlands and canyons with points of interest and overlooks. Trails for both the adventurous and leisure riders. The park has campsites with full hookups with horse stalls directly across (reservations accepted), day use areas with bathrooms, bath houses, and an entertainment center.



## North Alabama Hallelujah Trail

Two Franklin County historic churches are listed on the trail. Each church is over 100 years old and on its original site.

**Mount Pleasant Methodist Church**  
 35021 Hwy. 724, Russellville, AL corner of Hwy. 724 and Co. Rd. 87.

In the early 1800s, this church's congregation survived many tragedies, including a flu outbreak and a deadly tornado. The framing of the present structure maintains pegs and square nails that date prior to 1900. Outside visits only.



Mount Pleasant



First United

## Red Bay First United Methodist Church

509 4th St. SW, Red Bay, AL

A missionary from Booneville, Mississippi, set out to preach under a brush arbor in northwest Alabama, which was called "Oak Grove." On split log seats, the community worshipped there until they were later able to build a cabin. After the Methodist Church became part of the Alabama circuit, Oak Grove changed their name to the current title. The church has grown from logs to an encased brick structure.

