



THIS IS SEC COUNTRY

For Texas A&M fans, an introduction to the schools, teams and places of the Southeastern Conference, the new home of Texas A&M.

The Southeastern Conference

Members

-  Alabama Crimson Tide
-  Arkansas Razorbacks
-  Auburn Tigers
-  Florida Gators
-  Georgia Bulldogs
-  Kentucky Wildcats
-  Louisiana State Tigers
-  Ole Miss Rebels
-  Mississippi State Bulldogs
-  Missouri Tigers
-  South Carolina Gamecocks
-  Tennessee Volunteers
-  Texas A&M Aggies
-  Vanderbilt Commodores



Number below logo indicates mileage from College Station.



As Texas A&M prepared for its first year in the SEC, The Association of Former Students reached out to Aggies who live and work in SEC cities to learn about each university's key traditions, landmarks and other local hotspots.



University of Alabama www.ua.edu

On the banks of the Black Warrior River in Alabama sits a school that once bordered the town, but now sits in the center of Tuscaloosa. At Texas A&M, the mascot is a dog and the Aggies say “Gig ‘em,” which fits right in with the University of Alabama—“Bama” for short—where the mascot is an elephant and the fans chant, “Roll Tide.” Both traditions began when a sports writer referred to the Alabama linemen as a herd of big elephants that rolled over the opponent like a crimson tide—a phrase that stuck after another writer described a game against Auburn that was played in a sea of red mud. On gamedays the Quad, also known as the “heart of campus,” floods with tents and tailgaters bedecked in crimson and white, as well as black and white houndstooth—a print adopted

by UA fans as a nod to long-time football coach Paul “Bear” Bryant, who was known for wearing a houndstooth hat during games. “Ninety percent of tailgating for UA fans takes place on the Quad (Simpson Drill Field times two); the other ten percent are in areas around the stadium,” said Savannah Gable ’07, career advisor at UA.

On the north side of the Quad there is a pep rally on the steps of the Gorgas Library, after which the Million Dollar Band marches to Bryant-Denny Stadium as part of the pre-game Elephant Stomp that takes place an hour before game time.

It would be difficult to visit Tuscaloosa without stopping for one of the

famous homemade biscuits at The Waysider, Tuscaloosa’s oldest restaurant that was featured on ESPN’s “Taste of the Town” segment in 2008. The closest A&M Club to Tuscaloosa is the Birmingham A&M Club, tx.ag/BAMC. For a list of hotels in Tuscaloosa and the surrounding areas, try tx.ag/UAhotels.



Gorgas Library

Photo by Clyde Woodruff, Jr.



University of Arkansas www.uark.edu

The University of Arkansas campus is located on a hilltop overlooking the Ozark Mountains in Fayetteville. Originally, the mascot of the University of Arkansas was a cardinal, but after playing a football game against LSU “like a wild band of Razorback hogs,” Arkansas is now represented by Tusk, a live Russian boar that resembles a razorback hog. But, Tusk is not alone. There is an entire family of uniformed mascots: Big Red, the “fighting razorback,” Sue E, the female hog, Pork Chop, the “kid-sized” mascot, and Boss Hog, a nine-foot inflatable mascot. Visiting teams tailgate along Maple Street on the north side of the stadium. At Reynolds Razorback Stadium fans chant, “Woo Pig Soobie,” which is their official Hog Call—a tradition that came out of a group of farmers who wanted to spur on the football

team with hog calls. When they sing the university’s alma mater, Arkansas students point toward Old Main—the university’s signature building that appears on its seal. Similar to the Century Tree on Texas A&M’s campus, Spoofer’s Stone—a chunk of limestone left behind from the construction of Old Main—is a popular spot for marriage proposals. The walkway in front of Old Main is called Senior Walk, because the cement bears the names of all former students dating back to the first graduating class in 1876.

In case game day doesn’t provide enough exercise, Fayetteville offers many hiking trails and caves. Stop by Doe’s Eat Place on Dickson Street or Hugo’s for their award-winning burgers. Accommodations can be found at

tx.ag/Arkhotels. Be sure to connect with the Ozark A&M Club: tx.ag/OzarkAggies.



Big Red, Sue E, Pork Chop and Boss Hog

Photo by David School



University of South Carolinawww.sc.edu

As the proverbial rooster crows to begin the day, so does the revealing of Cocks the gamecock signal the beginning of a football game at the University of South Carolina. The USC football stadium is about a mile away from the campus, so no tailgating takes place on campus. Visitors will hear The Sandstorm played over the speakers at Williams-Brice Stadium, a song that sprung up at a turning point in a game four years ago and quickly became a USC tradition. Inside the stadium, dubbed “The Cockpit,” USC fans yell, “Game!” and the opposite side replies, “Cocks!”—a volleying chant that continues across the stadium. They also make a hand sign to signify the spurs on a gamecock that means, “Go, Cocks!” Assistant Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life Ryan Williams ’01

said, “It’s almost a hang loose hand sign—a gig ‘em hand sign with your pinky sticking out.”

Iron gates can be seen in many places around campus. The iron gates on the campus’s academic plaza, referred to as “the horseshoe” because of how the street is shaped, are the same gates that appear on the USC logo. The horseshoe is the oldest part of campus and features the oldest library in the state.

Stop by Pawley’s Front Porch for their assortment of hamburgers named after landmarks

in South Carolina. Pawley’s was mentioned on the Food Network’s “Diners, Drive-ins and Dives” show in 2010. Be sure to connect with the South Carolina A&M Club while you’re in Columbia: tx.ag/SCaggies. For hotel information, tx.ag/USChotels.



best Thomas Sufox

The Horseshoe

T University of Tennesseewww.utk.edu

The Tennessee Volunteers—often shortened to “Vols”—adopted their name from the state’s nickname, “The Volunteer State,” which stemmed from the number of brave soldiers from Tennessee during the War of 1812. About two hours before the game, the football team walks down Payton Manning Pass to the stadium as

part of Vol Walk, and fans line up to watch and cheer them on. The team is ushered into Neyland Stadium by Tennessee’s Pride of the Southland Band as part of a giant “T” formation. One of now four canine mascots in the SEC, the University of Tennessee is represented by Smokey, a blue tick coon hound that sits on the field

during games. It is Smokey who leads the Vols football team out of the band’s giant “T” and onto the field. Shields-Watkins Field is flanked by orange and white-checkered endzones—a design that began in the 1960s with former coach Doug Dickey.

Boasting the largest seating capacity in the SEC, Neyland Stadium was named in honor of former athletic director and coach General Robert Neyland, who attended Texas A&M prior to receiving an appointment to West Point. A unique approach to game day, UT fans take advantage of the Tennessee River that borders one side of the stadium where upwards of 200 boats dock together to form the “Vol Navy,” which acts as a floating tailgate party. “We’ve never done it, but seeing as how we have a maroon and white boat, we might join in now,” said Kristin Rearden ’98, associate professor of science education at UT. Check for hotels, tx.ag/UThotels, and be sure to connect with the East Tennessee A&M Club while you’re in Knoxville: tx.ag/ETAggies.



Smokey IX

Photo by Ben Moser



Mississippi State was originally called Mississippi A&M College and the fans were called Aggies before Bully the English Bulldog came along. Prior to game time, Dawg Walk takes place, where the MSU football players walk through the Junction—a circular area by the Davis Wade Stadium where many MSU fans tailgate. Visitors' tailgates are mainly located in the area west of Stone Boulevard toward the MSU Vet School. The Bulldogs don't wave towels or pom-poms at football games; they ring cowbells, a tradition that started when a jersey cow wandered onto the playing field during a game against Ole Miss. The SEC has allowed the bells in the stadium, provided they only ring them at specific times during the game. "We have an award-

winning band, but everyone is looking forward to seeing the Aggie Band perform," said Dana Franz '01, associate professor at MSU. Before the game starts, the song "Who Let the Dogs Out?" plays to rev up the football team.

The Little Dooley is a popular hangout and barbeque spot, although it rivals Petty's, which is a roadside stand on Highway 12. MAFES (Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station) Cheese Store on campus features cheeses made in Starkville that sell out early in the football season. Starkville is a small town and there is an additional fee for in-town accommodations, so MSU fans and visitors sometimes opt to stay in neighboring Columbus,



Bully the Bulldog

Photo by Jay Parker

Louisville and West Point. For area hotels, try tx.ag/Starkhotels. Be sure to connect with the Golden Triangle A&M Club while you're in Starkville: tx.ag/StarkvilleAgs.



The University of Missouri is the other 2012 addition to the SEC, adding another tiger to the group—Truman the Tiger, who is named after Missouri-born former President Harry Truman. These other Bengal Tigers live halfway between Kansas City and St. Louis in Columbia, Missouri. The football team arrives at Memorial Stadium and walks across the pedestrian bridge and down the south tunnel as part of Tiger Walk, which takes place two hours before kick-off. During the game it is common for one side of the stadium to chant, "M-I-Z," and then the other side to return, "Z-O-U," as a mid-game spirit chant. The Mizzou Golden Girls dance team does not include Betty White, but they perform alongside of the Marching Mizzou band, dubbed "The Big 'M' of the Midwest." Carol Lorenzen '93, assistant professor at Mizzou, suggests parking downtown on game day. "All of the garages

downtown are free and they're within walking distance of campus," she said. Missouri is the birth place of homecoming celebrations, which began when a former athletic director invited alumni to "come home" for a football game against the University of Kansas.

If Stadium Grill is packed on game day, head over to the cash-only Booches for mini burgers in downtown Columbia. Downtown has a host of locally-

owned restaurants, but perhaps the most famous is Shakespeare's Pizza, which was named "America's Best College Hangout" by Good Morning America in 2010. Stop by Ernie's Steakhouse or Broadway Diner for breakfast before leaving town. The closest A&M Clubs are the Heart of America A&M Club in Kansas City (tx.ag/HAAMC) and the Gateway A&M Club in St. Louis, (tx.ag/GAMC). Find a Columbia lodging guide here: tx.ag/Mizzouhotels.



1892 Academic Hall Columns



Like College Station, Auburn is a college town and is a twin city to Opelika, Ala. Finding a hotel might be a challenge, but check out area hotels here: tx.ag/AUhotels. “Tailgating takes place all over, although Samford Hall is a nice open spot,” said Mark Dutton ’05, contracts and grants administrator at Auburn. “It is definitely a sport in the SEC.” Parking is scarce, so park-

and-ride locations are advisable. Parking and helpful game day tips can be found on tx.ag/AUgameday. Fans line up along Donahue Drive two and a half hours before kick-off for Tiger Walk, where players walk in a single-file line from Sewell Hall to the stadium and stop to give high-fives to fans. The action takes place at Jordan-Hare Stadium, which is named after Ralph “Shug”

Auburn’s battle cry—both a greeting and term of endearment—a tradition where an eagle touches down on Pat Dye Field before a game. After a winning game, watch the skies for...a bird? A plane? No. Watch for flying rolls of toilet paper at Toomer’s Corner, the intersection of Magnolia Avenue and College Street. If there’s a swimming and diving competition, stop by the James E. Martin Aquatics Center to watch AU’s men’s and women’s teams that are regular SEC champs. While in Auburn, grab a burger at Niffer’s Place, enjoy catfish at Cock of the Walk, or devote some time waiting for a spot to open up at Creole and Seafood Shack, which was featured in ESPN’s “Taste of the Town” segment in 2008. An Auburn A&M Club is forming—stay tuned!

Jordan, the university’s football coach with the most wins, and Cliff Hare, a member of Auburn’s first football team and president of the SEC. Although Auburn’s official mascot is Aubie the Tiger, “War Eagle” is



Toomer’s Corner

Photo by Sam Dockery



University of Florida is located in Gainesville, also known as Title Town. Situated no more than two hours driving time from neighboring Jacksonville, Orlando and Tampa, there are several options for flying in for a game. “For those who are able to travel, getting in town a day early is a good idea. Interstate 75 gets backed up on game weekends with Florida people who will be traveling in on the day of the game,” suggests JoCynda Hudson ’02, assistant director of housing for conduct and community standards at UF. On game day, the Pride of the Sunshine Band marches through campus along with the football team into the Ben Hill Griffin Stadium—better known as “The Swamp.” The Florida Gators are represented by Albert and Alberta Gator. Similar to Aggies singing “Saw Varsity’s Horns

Off” before the fourth quarter, Florida fans alternate rows and sway back and forth while singing, “We are the Boys from old Florida” at the end of the third quarter. Sunscreen is a good idea, as visitor seating in The Swamp is not in the shade.

the Baughman Center, which is a nondenominational pavilion, used for silent meditation and small performing arts events. For hotels in Gainesville, check tx.ag/Ufhotels. Be sure to connect with the North Central Florida A&M Club: tx.ag/NCFaggies.

After the game head over to Satchels for organic homemade pizza, or check out one of the many Gator-inspired eateries near campus, like The Swamp, Gator City, Gator Zone and Gator’s Dockside. Nearby Lake Alice is home to many live alligators and



Albert and Alberta Gator

Photo by Jason Kruse

University of Georgia www.uga.edu

The University of Georgia is located in Athens and is home to Uga, an English bulldog, and Hairy Dog, the costumed bulldog. Like Reveille, all of the Ugas are buried in one of the endzones outside Sanford Stadium, which is named after former UGA President Steadman Vincent Sanford. The action takes place “between the hedges,” which refers to the privet hedges that surround the entire field inside the stadium. Dawg Walk happens two hours before game time, where the football team walks through the crowd with the Redcoat Band to the stadium. The Georgia football uniform of red and black includes silver britches, which started with former coach Wally Butts. The university’s fight song, “Glory, Glory” is sung to the easily recognizable tune of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” and performed by the marching band.

UGA fans’ battle cry is, “How ‘Bout Them Dogs,” which caught on after it was on a newspaper headline when they won the national championship in 1980. After a victory, the Bulldogs ring the Chapel Bell—a tradition that began when the playing field was located next to the Chapel and first year students would ring the bell until midnight.

Across from the UGA campus is the campus arboretum, not to be confused with the State Botanical Garden of Georgia that is also in Athens. Enjoy local fare at Farm 255 or sample the award-winning menu at Five & Ten, whose chef, Hugh Acheson, has been nominated for the James Beard “Best Chef Southeast” Award four years in a row. “One thing to consider is that, like College Station, you will want to book your

room early, as hotels in Athens fill quickly” said Deborah Dietzler ’91, executive director of the UGA Alumni Association. Information on hotels in Athens can be found here: tx.ag/UGAhotels. The closest A&M Club to Athens is the Atlanta A&M Club, tx.ag/AAMC.



Photo courtesy of Ted Mayer, Georgia/IMG

University of Kentucky www.uky.edu

The University of Kentucky is home to the Wildcats—a nickname that started when a former head of the university’s military department told a group of students that the UK football team had “fought like wildcats” during a game. But football isn’t what gets UK fans riled up. “It’s all about hoops,” said Jeff Reese ’00, assistant professor

of counseling psychology at UK. “Going to a basketball game is kind of a religious experience.” Similar to an Aggie basketball game, the student section at Rupp Arena has its own name—the “Eruption Zone.” Rupp Arena was named after Adolf Rupp, a famous UK basketball coach, and doubles as a concert venue in downtown Lexington. UK fans make a hand sign resembling the Wrecking Crew sign in Aggieland. Reese remembers, “When I first saw it I thought, ‘Wrecking crew!’ But it was actually for the Wildcats.” Be prepared for pyrotechnics, because blue and white fireworks

shoot into the sky whenever the football team scores a touchdown, and there are even indoor fireworks at basketball games when the starting line-up is introduced. For football games, parking near the stadium on campus is not a challenge; however, navigating downtown Lexington for the Wildcats’ basketball arena can be time consuming.

True to its nickname, the “Horse Capital of the World,” Lexington has sprawling horse farms that surround the Blue Grass Airport, like Calumet Farm, and horse racing venues, like well-known Keeneland and The Red Mile. Find hotels in the Thoroughbred City here: tx.ag/UKhotels. The closest A&M Club to Lexington is the Kentuckiana A&M Club in Louisville, tx.ag/KAMC.



Rupp Arena

Photo by Eric Angevine



Louisiana State University www.lsu.edu

The neighboring school to Texas A&M is Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, although most people know it simply as LSU. Just 340 miles east of Aggieland, Baton Rouge is home to the LSU Tigers, also referred to the Bayou Bengals. Prior to each game, Mike the tiger joins the cheerleaders and the Golden Girls dance team as they lead the LSU football team and coaches for a lap around Tiger Stadium (also known as “Death Valley”). Tailgating takes place all over campus, but a popular spot is on Nicholson Drive near the baseball stadium, where “girls dress up. Anything purple and gold goes, but mostly you will see dresses and gold jewelry and shoes—there are no t-shirts here,” according

to Jamie Everett '07. Check tx.ag/LSUgameday for updates on tailgating rules, parking and traffic on LSU campus. Paying homage to Louisiana’s French heritage, the Tigers’ chant is “Geaux Tigers” (“Go Tigers”). The characteristic “-eaux” suffix appears on everyday words, like “bistreaux” (bistro).

As the only SEC school located in Louisiana, Cajun food makes the to-do list for a weekend at LSU. There’s plenty to choose from, but a few notable spots are Boutin’s, The Chimes, Walk On’s, Sammy’s

Grill and Acme Oyster House, which serve authentic Cajun cuisine. Be sure to connect with the Baton Rouge A&M Club while in town (tx.ag/BRaggies) and for accommodations, try tx.ag/BRhotels.



Photo by Alicia Lee



University of Mississippi www.olemiss.edu

Oxford hotels fill up months in advance, but take your chances at tx.ag/oxfordhotels. Hailed as the nation’s No. 1 tailgating school by *Sports Illustrated*, tailgating is a renowned Ole Miss Football tradition. Forty to 60,000 fans gather in legendary tailgating areas like the Grove, a 10-acre grassy plot of ground that is heavily shaded by large oak trees, and The Circle,

a round plot of grass near the Grove that is the focal point of the campus. “The first time I saw it I thought I was in a parallel universe. For six weekends a year, Oxford quintuples in size,” said John Bruce ’86, chair and associate professor of political science at Ole Miss. The Rebels take their traditional “Walk through The Grove” two hours and 30 minutes before kickoff, which started when head football coach Billy Brewer began taking the same route through campus on his way to Vaught-Hemingway Stadium in 1985. The University Police Department provides shuttles from the Grove to the stadium before, during, and after football games.

Among the sea of red you’ll see the Rebel Black Bear, the Ole Miss mascot that got its name from the legend that Theodore “Teddy Bear” Roosevelt refused to shoot a bound black bear in Mississippi. The crowd chants “Hotty Toddy” as the Rebels take the field.

After the game, head over to the City Grocery in downtown Oxford for some French-inspired Southern fare from chef John Currence, who won the James Beard Foundation award for Best Chef South in 2009 (reservations fill up months in advance there, too). The closest A&M Club to Ole Miss is the Mid-South A&M Club in Memphis, Tennessee, tx.ag/MemphisAgs.



Photo by Jeffrey W. Williams



★ Vanderbilt University www.vanderbilt.edu

Vanderbilt University—“Vandy” for short—sits in the heart of Music City Nashville, Tennessee. Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt gave the founding gift to the SEC’s only private university and inspired the school’s mascot, the Commodore. Tailgating takes place in “Vandyville,” which is along Natchez Trace. Joyce Liu ’06, resident physician at Vanderbilt Medical Center, said, “While many things feel very different from Aggie football, like how small the stadium is and how dressed up people tend to get here, there are some things that are the same everywhere. And that is the college football game day spirit that is very much alive at Vandyville!” An hour and fifteen minutes before kickoff, Vandy fans and cheerleaders watch the football team as they walk down Jess Neely Drive from the

McGugin Center to Vanderbilt Stadium as part of Star Walk. Fans shout, “Go Dores!” and form the V-U hand sign, which is a relatively new tradition that involves forming the letters by extending the thumb, index and middle fingers. Vandy’s colors are black and gold, which is fitting for the Spirit of Gold Marching Band and the university’s fight song, “Dynamite,” that is performed while cheerleaders run across Dudley Field with flags that spell out, “V-A-N-D-Y.”

Consider stopping by Robert’s Western World for a fried bologna sandwich before the game, or sample the sweet potato pancakes at the Pancake Pantry around the corner from the Vanderbilt campus. Loveless Cafe and Monell’s are well-known spots for southern food in Nashville. For hotels in Nashville,

check tx.ag/Vandyhotels. Connect with the Middle Tennessee A&M Club while you’re in town: tx.ag/NashvilleAgs.

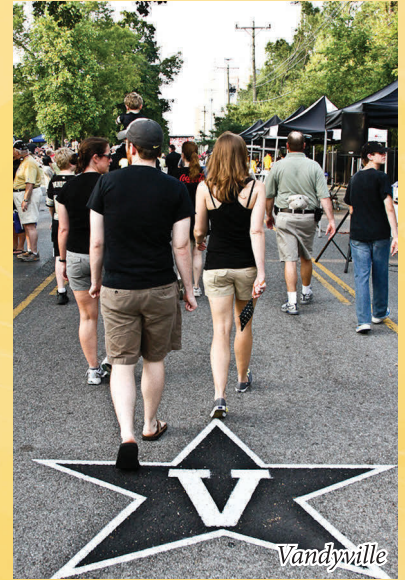


Photo by John Brassil

Key Facts About the Schools of the SEC

Total Enrollment

Texas A&M	50,000
Florida	50,000
Georgia	34,667
Missouri	33,805
Alabama	31,747
Kentucky	28,000
Tennessee	27,523
South Carolina	27,149
Louisiana State	26,000
Auburn	25,078
Arkansas	21,405
Mississippi	20,844
Mississippi State	20,424
Vanderbilt	12,714

* Universities not listed were not ranked by U.S. News & World Report in 2011.

U.S. News & World Report College Rankings 2011*

★ Vanderbilt	17 (AAU)
Texas A&M	58 (AAU)
Florida	58 (AAU)
Georgia	62
Alabama	75
Auburn	82
Missouri	90 (AAU)
Tennessee	101



Endowments

University	Endowment†
Texas A&M (System)	\$5,738,289
★ Vanderbilt	\$3,044,000
Florida	\$1,104,573
Missouri (System)	\$974,900
Alabama (System)	\$854,382
Kentucky	\$778,890
Tennessee (System)	\$728,726
Arkansas	\$673,120
LSU (System)	\$578,588
Georgia	\$491,164
Mississippi	\$415,219
South Carolina	\$414,002
Auburn	\$395,257
Mississippi State	\$291,434

† In thousands, as of 06-31-10. Source: Chronicle of Higher Education, “College and University Endowments, 2009-2010,” (Jan. 27, 2011), <http://chronicle.com/article/Sortable-Data-College/126056/>