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## Stop 7. Graceland

Arrival datetime: Wednesday April 10, 3:30PM  
Sites visited: Mud Island, Graceland, Beale Street  
Accommodations: Heartbreak Hotel  
States traveled: Tennessee

Reveling in the local culture, Michael played country music on the radio. But other than that, the drive was uneventful. The landscape was now completely devoid of mountains, just farms and mini-malls. Our highway exit into Memphis led us straight to Mud Island River Park. In the parking lot, we changed to hiking boots. How silly of us. There is no mud on Mud Island. The whole park is paved with concrete.

On display near where we parked was the original World War II bomber, Memphis Belle. Running through the center is a 30:1



*The Memphis Belle.*

replica of the Mississippi River. The replica was very well done and provided an hour of entertainment. We strolled from Cairo, Illinois to the Gulf, hopped between islands, and landed on major cities portrayed in slate. At the end was a swimming pool portrayal of the Gulf of



*River Park.*

Mexico, where we were tempted to rent one of the paddle boats, but Graceland beckoned.

Graceland was very well done. In sharp contrast to the furniture, Elvis possessions, and videos of screaming teenagers, the organization of the tour was quite tasteful. Elvis music and video broadcast in strategic places, was a constant reminder of why the King deserved the status of legend. In addition to the house tour, there was a car tour, a memorabilia tour, and an airplane tour.



*The livingroom at Graceland (Elvis had left the building).*

After the tours, we spent at least a half hour in one of five or so gift shops, deciding just which Elvis albums to own, as we had none as yet. We ended up with three.

In the Heartbreak Hotel, we hung out over work email and web page updating, Elvis movies played continuously in the background. Jennifer fielded work emails ranging from software licensing to business partner access to data. Michael had gotten a fantastic photo of Elvis' living room that earned rave reviews, even from those who thought we were insane for going there. We told everyone about the Heartbreak Hotel package deal, but still they were

incredulous. We were vindicated a week or so later when the New York Times did a piece on going to Graceland. We wondered if some reporter had been forwarded our web link.

Our hotel package included dinner in the Elvis Café on Beale Street. Beale Street was a half-hearted attempt to imitate the tourist atmosphere of a downtown Houston or Denver. The result presented no contest even to the Atlanta Underground. It missed its mark so badly it more closely resembled the Bronx. We did not even walk the length of the six or so blocks. But the Elvis Café seemed perfectly safe. We lingered

over dinner in order to catch the first set  
of a local rock band.

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Miles traveled: 259  
Departure datetime: Thursday April 11, 9:20AM  
Departure weather: Sunny 70°