

THOSE WERE THE DAYS

# THE KING OF ROCK 'N' ROLL LIVES ON!

Celebrating Elvis' 85th birthday

BY MIRA TEMKIN

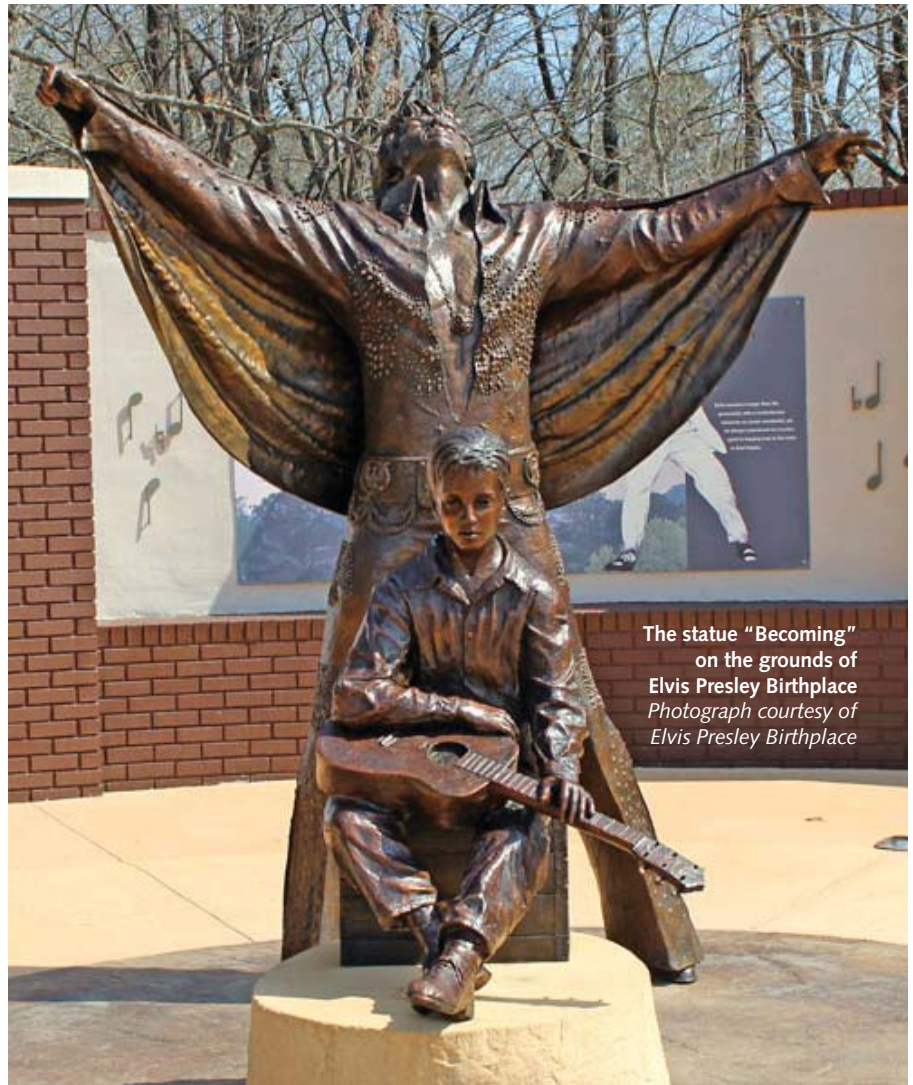
Jan. 8 of 2020 marks what would have been Elvis Presley's 85th birthday, and key places in his life are commemorating this date with a full lineup of events. Concerts, parties and Elvis-themed everything await fans.

## TUPELO, MISSISSIPPI, WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Tupelo is filled with the history of its favorite son and many ways to explore his early years. Born here on Jan. 8, 1935, to Gladys and Vernon Presley, Elvis lived in Tupelo until he was 13. When he turned 11, Gladys had taken him to Tupelo Hardware to buy a birthday present. He wanted a rifle, but his mother talked him into a guitar instead. The rest is history. The photo of the original guitar is on display at the store.

The Elvis Presley Birthplace in Tupelo ([ElvisPresleyBirthplace.com](http://ElvisPresleyBirthplace.com)) includes his home, church, the Elvis Presley Museum and Memorial Chapel and the Elvis Presley Park, which Elvis had gifted to the city. Walk through the grounds and admire the statues. Among the most famous is "Becoming" by Michiel VanderSommen, a sculpture that represents Elvis as a boy evolving into a world-famous icon.

Tupelo's 85th birthday festivities begin on Wednesday, Jan. 8, at the Elvis Presley Birthplace with birthday cake and special guests. That evening features a concert showcasing Taylor Rodriguez, the Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist 2019. The next day, the Lyric Theatre will unveil a new marker commemorating Elvis' heritage. According to local lore, Elvis would watch Western movies with friends at the Lyric Theatre, even crossing the racial barrier and sitting



The statue "Becoming" on the grounds of Elvis Presley Birthplace  
Photograph courtesy of Elvis Presley Birthplace

with his African American friends. On Saturday, the Alabama Ballet will put on the "Blue Suede Shoes Ballet" at the Performing Arts Center at Tupelo High School. [TupeloBallet.net](http://TupeloBallet.net)

While you're in Tupelo, take the Elvis Presley Driving Tour and discover each of the 13 stops on the four-mile tour that served as an influential part of Elvis' childhood. You can also do the route via bike. Snap a

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selfie along the Elvis Guitar Trail, where more than 25 Elvis-themed guitars are displayed. Pick up a map from the Tupelo Convention & Visitors Bureau. [Tupelo.net](http://Tupelo.net)

### EAT LIKE A KING!

Dig into Elvis' favorite foods at Tupelo's local restaurants with Elvis-themed culinary dishes and crafted cocktails. Go for the signature sandwich, the Blue Suede Grill by Café 212, made with peanut butter, banana and honey. Try a peanut butter banana cupcake by Holly-Pops Bakery or The Shakerag by Crave, a whiskey-espresso drink with caramel.

"Tupelo is all about the little boy who was born here and grew up to become the greatest entertainer of all time," said Dick Guyton, executive director of the Elvis Presley Birthplace. "Visitors who come here get a feel for what his early childhood was like and why he remained so humble and true to his roots."

### GRACELAND, 4 DAYS OF CELEBRATING

There'll be a whole lot of shakin' going on from Jan. 8 to 11, as Graceland heralds Elvis' birthday with special guests Priscilla Presley and Jerry Schilling, his lifelong friend ([Graceland.com/Elvis-Birthday](http://Graceland.com/Elvis-Birthday)).

"Jerry Schilling is scheduled to give personal tours of Graceland," said Chris Ross, Graceland representative. "Fans will have access to a special birthday party as well as ticketed events like concerts." Also planned is the annual Elvis memorabilia auction, which will offer merchandise from private collections.

Across the street from the Graceland Mansion is Elvis Presley's Memphis, a 200,000-square-foot exhibit and entertainment complex. Elvis fans will love the fabulous exhibits on his life and career, including his gold and platinum records and iconic jumpsuits.

### ELVIS HAUNTS IN MEMPHIS

Considered the birthplace of rock 'n' roll, it was in Memphis that Elvis' career really took off. Head to Beale Street, where the music blares from every door till the wee hours of the morn. Take a tour of Sun Studios, where Elvis recorded his first record. Listen to the cuts, hold his mike and hear how Sam Phillips launched the careers of Elvis, Johnny Cash and Jerry Lee Lewis.

While you're in Memphis, be sure to chow down on a fried peanut butter and banana sandwich at the Arcade Restaurant, one of Elvis' favorite spots. Shop where Elvis shopped at Lansky's, considered the "Clothier to the King," at the Peabody Hotel. [MemphisTravel.com](http://MemphisTravel.com)

Make plans to celebrate the King's 85th anniversary. It's now or never! **B**

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