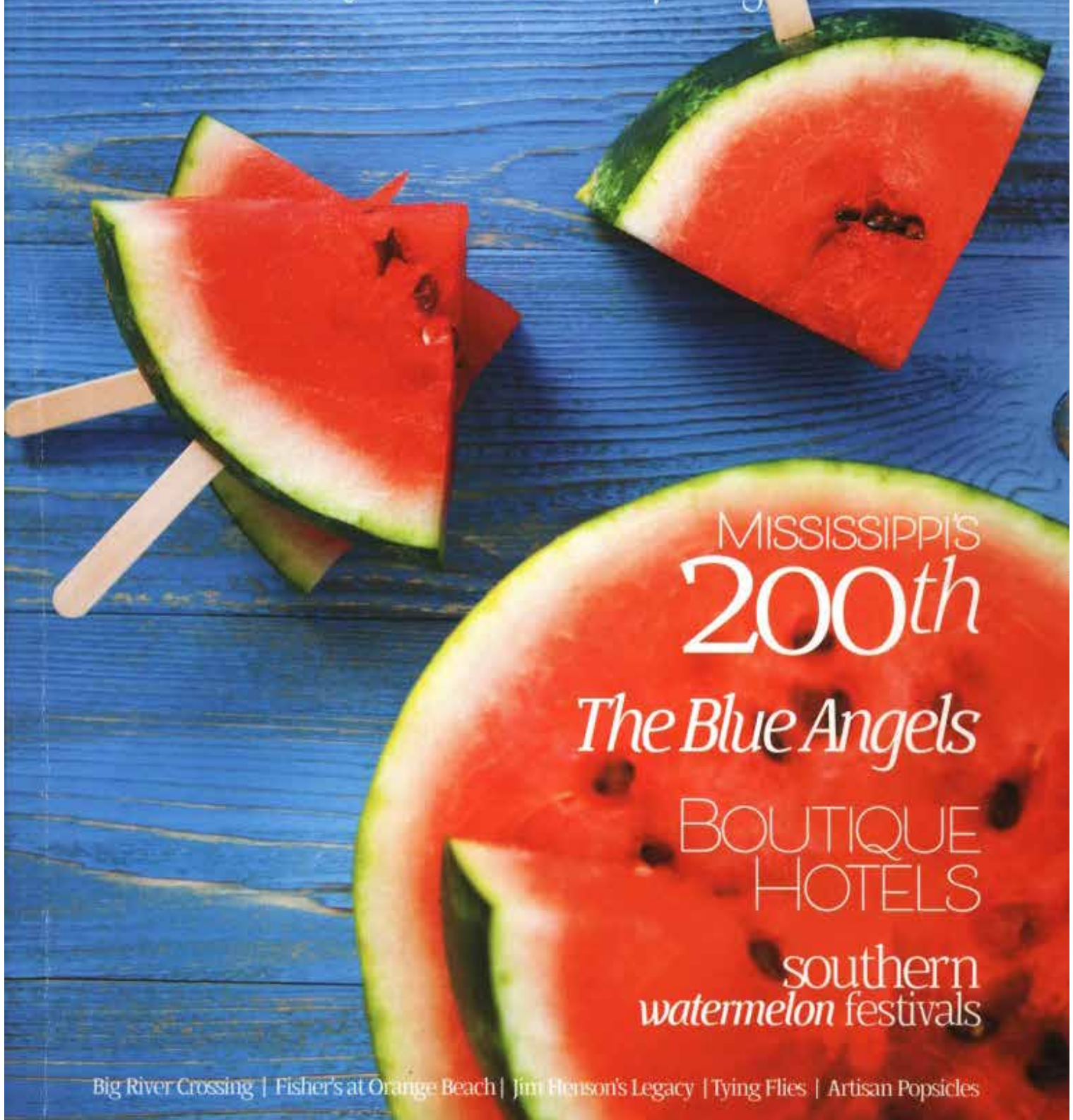


# DeSoto

July 2017

Exploring the South



MISSISSIPPI'S  
**200<sup>th</sup>**

*The Blue Angels*

BOUTIQUE  
HOTELS

southern  
watermelon festivals

Big River Crossing | Fisher's at Orange Beach | Jimi Henson's Legacy | Tying Flies | Artisan Popsicles



# *Sweet, Juicy Fun!*

By Cassidy Broadaway.

Photography courtesy of Water Valley Chamber of Commerce, Cave City Watermelon Festival Committee and [watermelon.org](http://watermelon.org)

For many people, summertime equals relaxation, vacationing and enjoying refreshing eats and drinks. All this merriment, however, comes with the price of hotter-than-pleasant temperatures. In the South, though, we combine it all together in a way that makes it enjoyable for everyone: hence, watermelon festivals!

Who knew so many towns would claim fame for the luscious red fruit? In northeastern Arkansas, Cave City boasts of having "The World's Sweetest Watermelons." Just east of Tupelo in Franklin County, Alabama, small-town Russellville claims to be "The Watermelon Capital of Alabama." Water Valley also flaunts its watermelons during one of the South's top-rated festivals. Luckily, for those who love this sweet fruit, or just love music and good times, nearby festivals are scheduled throughout summer. Here are a few of our favorites:

### **"Searching for Lost Melons" Cave City, Arkansas**

Cave City Park is the destination for this year's 38th annual Watermelon Festival from July 27-29. West of Jonesboro and approximately two-and-a-half hours from DeSoto County, the Cave City festival certainly has something for everyone. Enjoy live music, a Saturday-morning parade, a car show, the 5k Melon Dash, a kid's fishing derby, a kid's wet zone, watermelon games (including The Watermelon Selfie Challenge,) and, of course, endless melon and other great foods.

First held in 1980, the event was comprised of a parade and a few vendor booths with the primary vision of encouraging viewers to support local merchants. The one-day festival also crowned its first "Watermelon Queen" that year. Now the ensemble starts as early as mid-July for the natives with a softball tournament, "The Lost Melon Search," as well as "The Amazing Watermelon Race." The celebrations conclude in late-July with a free three-day festival. For hometown folks, the event serves as a reunion and homecoming for many former residents.

Don't miss the special music on Friday evening as country favorite Backroad Anthem takes the stage at 8:30 p.m. On Saturday night, award-winning country artist Daryle Singletary will also perform on the Main Stage. For more information on the entire event, visit [cavecitywatermelonfestival.com](http://cavecitywatermelonfestival.com).

### **"Boosting Morale with Watermelons" Water Valley, Mississippi**

The Water Valley Watermelon Carnival on Aug. 4-5 is a big one! In fact, the Southeastern Tourism Society has named this to be among the Top 20 festivals in the South. Gearing up for its 48th year, planners estimate approximately 20,000 people will attend the free event that is spread out across the city. Gaieties will include games, contests, arts and craft vendors, a street dance, a free 3K walk/run, an antique car show, festival foods, live music and even fireworks on Friday night! Local favorite Oxford All-Stars is just one of the many bands scheduled to perform. A barbecue cooking contest is scheduled on Saturday, and attendees will be able to purchase sample plates.

The carnival originated during the depression when the city wanted to boost morale of its residents whose spirits were downed from the economy. First occurring in 1931, the festival continued for nine years before stopping during World War II. It was reinstated in 1980 and has thrived ever since. Today, the event serves as a mini-homecoming for its natives.

This year's carnival kicks off on Thursday evening

at the Civic Auditorium with a music festival. Arts and craft vendors will set up early Friday, and air-conditioned trolleys will run between the city park and downtown for festival goers.

Water Valley is conveniently located near Oxford, Batesville and Grenada, approximately a 30-minute drive from each of these towns. For more details about the carnival, visit [watervalleychamber.info/watermelon-carnival-2](http://watervalleychamber.info/watermelon-carnival-2).

### **"Weighing In and Spitting Seeds" Russellville, Alabama**

The 37th Annual Franklin County Watermelon Festival will be held Aug. 18-19 in Russellville, in northeastern Alabama. Jam-packed with fun, the festival will offer two days of continuous music, entertainment, arts and craft vendors, a 5k run, an antique car and truck show, a tractor show, festival foods, a bike ride and endless amounts of free watermelon. Among the contests will be the Best Dressed Melon, Most Unusual Melon, Best Tasting Melon, The Largest Melon, and also a Seed Spitting contest. Previous year's winners for the largest fruit weighed in at 193 pounds and 185 pounds, back-to-back years.

Originating in 1981, this free admission festival typically draws more than 20,000 people in just two days. Russellville is just over an hour's drive east of Tupelo.

So, if watermelon is your thing, what better way to say goodbye to hot summer days than a carnival filled with delicious treats, entertainment and fun music? In the South, that is what we do best.

