



# Alabama Journey

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## Park It!

Relax and enjoy the amenities at Alabama's state park resorts

The lowdown on  
**Highlands, NC**

Let go of your  
cares on **Bonaire**

**DownHomeWith...**  
Exploreum's mad scientist





## DeSoto

**N**amed for Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto, who swept through Alabama in 1540–41, this 3,502-acre park has been nicknamed “the Home of Mother Nature” because of its scenic beauty, according to park superintendent Ken Thomas.

The CCC built DeSoto as State Park Number 5 in the 1930s. Many of the original CCC structures are still in use, including the large picnic shelter, four log cabins, and the lodge, although the original commingled nine-hole

### LODGING

Cabins: 7 log,  
4 CCC

Chalets: 11

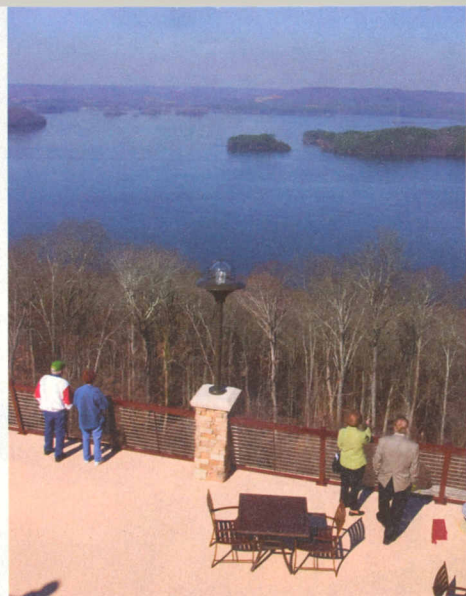
Lodge: 25 rooms



golf course and landing strip no longer exist. The Mountain Inn Restaurant owes its rustic atmosphere to the fireplace made from sandstone quarried in the park and rough-hewn logs that were actually machine-milled but made to look hand-tooled by CCC workers.

The park works with the Little River Canyon National Preserve and the Jacksonville University Field School, adjacent to DeSoto, to present educational programs about the CCC program, American Indian history, and the area’s archaeology, flora, birds, and other wildlife. Cloudmont Ski and Golf Resort is nearby, as is the arts-and-crafts community of Mentone.

DeSoto State Park, 13883 County Road 89, Fort Payne. (256) 845-0051; [www.alapark.com/DeSotoResort](http://www.alapark.com/DeSotoResort).



## Lake Guntersville

**C**reated by the damming of the Tennessee River in the 1930s, the 69,000-acre Guntersville Reservoir occupies a southern extension of the Sequatchie Valley. Lake Guntersville State Park sits on the lake’s southeastern tip.

The lodge atop 1,100-foot Taylor Mountain reopened in February after a four-year, \$25 million renovation, during which it was gutted.

A new restaurant, the Pinecrest Dining Room, offers a popular Sunday brunch and panoramic views of Lake Guntersville. To maintain a rustic feel, the lodge’s original stone fireplace was preserved, and more stone and timber were added throughout.

Naturalist Patti Donnellan leads many of the park’s nature programs, including Saturday morning flora and fauna hikes year-round and a wildflower program in May. During Eagle Awareness Weekends in January and early February, she leads trips to popular viewing spots. “We almost always see wintering bald eagles,” Donnellan says.

Vibrant fall colors are a big draw here: Beech, elm, hickory, locust, persimmon, and sycamore produce radiant gold; red oak and sassafras glow orange; and black cherry, dogwood, sourwood, white oak, and red maple blaze with red.

Lake Guntersville State Park, 7966 State Highway 227, Guntersville. (256) 571-5444; [www.alapark.com/lakeguntersville](http://www.alapark.com/lakeguntersville).

### LODGING

Cabins:  
15 lake view

Chalets: 20

Hotel: 112 rooms,  
including 13 suites



LEFT TO RIGHT: DAN BROTHERS; BILLY POPE