

FOLLOW THAT DREAM

What is **YOUR** lifelong dream?

Do you have more than one? Have any of your dreams been fulfilled? How many of you have or have had a visit to Elvis' **GRACELAND** on your bucket list?

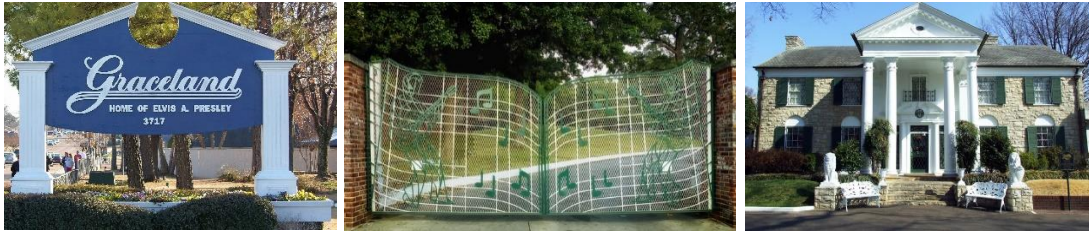
Well, back in 2009 four of BSH's founding members set off on a personal adventure, shouting all the way to the airport,

“We're going to Graceland, Graceland, in Memphis, Tennessee, We're going to Graceland ...”

We joined up with the **Official Elvis Presley Fan Club of Great Britain** at JFK International and what a roller-coaster of a ride we had! Our guide throughout the trip was **David Wade**, then with Arena Travel UK. We did it all, stayed in **Heartbreak Hotel** and the **Doubletree**, visited **Sun Studios** where it all happened, hit the road to Tupelo where at **The Birthplace** we met **Guy Harris**, one of Elvis' school friends, had lunch at **Johnny's Diner** and joined the friendly members of the **Tupelo Elvis Fan Club** who gave us a wonderful, warm welcome.

In Memphis, we headed off Downtown, had a wee glass or two in the numerous bars, soaking up the magic and music of **Beale Street**. We watched the Duck Master and his performing **Memphis Ducks** in the **Peabody Hotel** and paid a visit to **Lansky's Clothier** where Elvis did his personal clothes shopping! David even organised a baseball game for us, the **Memphis Reds** (Elvis loved his sport) who unfortunately lost but it was such fun!

A big highlight was spending about two hours with **Larry Geller**, Elvis' mentor and hairdresser who used to provide Elvis with the spiritual books he liked to read. Larry invited us as his guests to the **Memphian Theatre**, now the **Playhouse on the Square** where he was doing a sit-down chat for a documentary **At the Gates**. This is the theatre that Elvis used to hire out for the night to watch his favourite movies with his invited guests. We also had VIP tickets for that year's Elvis **Celebration Concert** at the **Cannon Center for the Performing Arts**, where we met members of the original **TCB band** and the **Sweet Inspirations** after the show: a wonderful memory!



Of course, the dream really came true for all of us as we walked through those famous gates for the first time, walked up that winding driveway and placed our toes across the threshold into Elvis' home! There we stood, in the entrance hall of **Graceland**, facing the staircase that Elvis walked up and down so many times, imagining for a split second that he was coming down to meet us, the dining room on our left and the living room and music room to our right. A few deep breaths at that point!

Graceland was different back in 2009. Many of us have visited since but when you were there in those earlier days, there was a magic that is really very difficult to explain but poignant enough to make thousands of fans from around the world name Graceland their favourite and most peaceful place on earth! Just being there felt almost like a spiritual experience. Probably to do with it being far less commercialised than it is today and even was in 2013.

The highlight of the trip, you guessed it ...



THE CANDLELIGHT VIGIL 2009

If you look closely at the above vigil picture, middle bottom, you may just recognise two friends!

"Lord Almighty, feel my temperature rising"

It was **HOT** and **HUMID**! Graceland was armed with cooling stations, water and paramedics for the candlelight vigil! Temperatures hit 100+ [38.8°C]

Coming from South Africa, we were fine but it was very uncomfortable for many Northern Hemisphere visitors not used to those temperatures and especially the extreme humidity! We joined the queue around 6pm and left Graceland after midnight and it still felt like 38 degrees! We were dripping! It was beautiful and very emotional, something that every hard-core Elvis fan should experience once.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The first and impromptu vigil took place in 1978 on the anniversary of Elvis' death when people gathered outside the gates of the mansion and set up their own shrines with candles and pictures to remember Elvis and celebrate his life and what he left us. Now more than four decades later, throngs of fans from all over the globe still make the pilgrimage to Graceland during Elvis Week which generally runs from 9th August to 16th August.

Click here for details about Elvis Week 2024:

<https://www.graceland.com/elvis-news/posts/elvis-week-2024-schedule-announced#:~:text=The%20Elvis%20Week%20schedule%20for,Mefille%20with%20unforgeable%20Elvis%20experiences>

<https://www.graceland.com/elvis-week-tickets>

Unable to make it to Graceland? EPE has you covered! Watch live broadcasts including the Candlelight Vigil, from anywhere in the world, streamed digitally through **Livestream**. Head out here: -

<https://www.graceland.com/live-from-graceland#:~:text=Video%20broadcasts%20from%20Graceland%20are,Presley%20events%20here%20at%20Graceland>

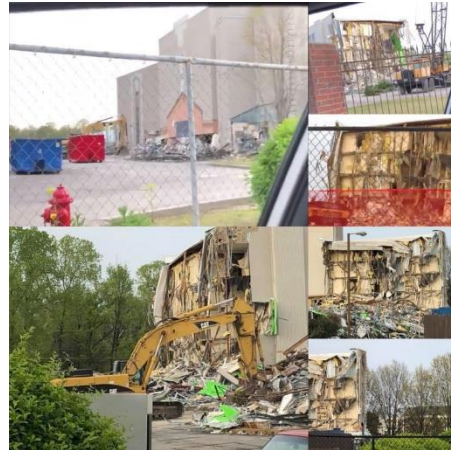
Alternatively, you can celebrate privately in your own way or together as a club. Whatever you choose to do, you can be a part of the events during Elvis Week, culminating in the Vigil on August 15th.



● HEARTBREAK HOTEL

How many of you out there in the Elvis World are so grateful to have stayed there before it was closed in late October 2016 making way for the new Guest House and Graceland Resort?

It was something special wasn't it, with its themed rooms, heart-shaped pool and vibrant colours? And don't forget that pink fuzzy telephone in the foyer, your direct line to **Marlowe's Restaurant and Ribs**. All you had to do was lift the receiver and wait for the pink Cadillac to come and pick you up!



It has pretty much been verified by **ROLLING STONE** that a suicide note published in a 1955 newspaper was the inspiration for Elvis' number one hit song which catapulted him into an orbit never-before seen in the musical world! A young man of 27, a criminal, walked into a police station one day and gave himself up. He was tired of life and his note expressed his deep sadness as he 'walked a lonely street'. How very sad!

Check out the full story here:

<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/solving-the-mystery-of-heartbreak-hotel-61745/2/>

MEMORIES

"Pressed between the pages of my mind"

Here are a few of our memories from 2009

- **David Wade** has had a long friendship with Tupelo going back to the 70's when he brought his first tour groups to the city. His visitors were always welcomed by a police outrider escort during their guided tour of all the Elvis sights in Tupelo. This was only done for Elvis Travel



Service guests. We also enjoyed that experience feeling like heroes as we stopped the traffic and ran the red lights!

We were sure some of the onlookers must have thought we were hardened criminals!

- My darling friend, my 'roomie' was quite a gal! She never stopped leaving messages for **Larry Geller** requesting a short meeting with him. I reckon he gave in just to shut her up! Well, as I said earlier, we had a wonderful two hours with him and met up later, thank you my friend for being that 'dog with a bone'!
- In Tupelo, everybody but I mean everybody knew Elvis personally, the man had so many relatives! At least we knew that Guy Harris, Elvis' school friend **was** the real deal! Also in Tupelo, we ordered Nachos supposedly for two! We were hungry but never even managed a third of it!
- A few of you might just feel slightly sympathetic with this one! First of all, the Tupelo Fan Club in 2009 did not serve alcohol! Nor did some of the hotels there or in Memphis serve alcohol on a Sunday! My boy, my boy, were we thirsty!



- At the vigil we were packed tight, and we had just lit our candles from the Eternal Flame, waiting to be ushered through the gates. Suddenly, there was a burning smell! Yes, hair too close to the flame, but it was worth it!
- Probably my fondest memory is sitting on the bench between the Trophy Room and Vernon's office. It was August 17th, Elvis Week was officially closed and many visitors had already left. It was just so quiet and peaceful looking at the house, the grounds, the fields where the horses roamed and Lisa Marie's play area. We could have stayed there forever but it was time to make tracks and head home.

Why not let us know about YOUR special memories of your trip to Memphis and Graceland?

