Music has been called “the universal language of mankind” (thanks to poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow). Today’s travellers are drawn to music destinations just as they were when Longfellow penned those words nearly two centuries ago.

Across the United States, there is no shortage of song-infused places known for uniquely homegrown styles ranging from Motown and country to jazz and soul. Want to find cities that showcase “invented-in-America” music?

Just a hop across the Ambassador International Bridge is Detroit, home to the funky Motown pop sound of the 1960s and early ’70s. Detroit’s music history is preserved at Hitsville U.S.A.—the museum in what was once the recording studio to artists like Stevie Wonder, Marvin Gaye, The Temptations, Smokey Robinson and The Supremes. motownmuseum.org

New Orleans is synonymous with jazz, a born-in-the-South musical style that’s a fusion of slave field songs, gospel, Caribbean rhythms and harmonies and melodies from classical music. Jazz artists from this port city are among the most revered of all musicians. In the historic French Quarter, Preservation Hall is the city’s oldest, largely intact jazz venue and the iconic setting for traditional New Orleans jazz. neworleansinfo.com

The small Virginia town of Bristol is the spot where country music tunes were first recorded in 1927. The story that made music history is on display at The Birthplace of Country Music Museum, a Smithsonian affiliate. virginia.org

Austin bills itself as the “Live Music Capital of the World” with dozens of performances on any given night. The laid-back city is known for bending and shaping traditional styles, creating an independent music scene at more than 250 live venues. austinexs.org

Memphis is world-famous for the Beale Street blues (B.B. King gigged there), the Stax Records soul and R&B of Otis Redding and The Staple Singers. It’s also the birthplace of rock and roll at Sun Studio where producer Sam Phillips launched the careers of Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Roy Orbison, Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash. memphistravel.com

In Nashville—Music City USA—the beautiful acoustics of the Ryman Auditorium make it the “Mother Church” of country music. Nashville’s Grand Ole Opry—the longest-running radio broadcast in U.S. history—spread the gospel of country music via the radio waves. Country-western stars like Hank Williams, Patsy Cline, the Carter Family and Minnie Pearl have taken their bows on the Opry stage. visitmusiccity.com

In tiny Muscle Shoals, Alabama, music history was made when the hothouse rhythm section known as The Swampers collaborated with world-famous artists like Rod Stewart, Paul Simon, Etta James and Wilson Pickett. In the 1960s through the ’80s, The Shoals was one of the most sought-after recording locations in the world. Two historic studios—FAME and 3614 Jackson Highway—are open for public tours. visitflorenceal.com

Discover more information on travel to the USA at visittheusa.ca.