

College Life in Tuscaloosa

A student's guide to the University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

Home to the University of Alabama and a full SEC football culture, Tuscaloosa runs on “Roll Tide” energy from August through November — and settles into a relaxed, affordable college town the rest of the year.

Quick Facts

University	University of Alabama (UA) — SEC, Division I FBS
Enrollment	About 42,360 total students (fall 2025); ~36,160 undergraduate
Nearest airport	Birmingham-Shuttlesworth Intl. (BHM), about 60 miles
Nickname / colors	Crimson Tide — crimson & white

Housing & Cost of Living

Freshmen are generally required to live on campus (with some exemptions), but the majority of UA students move off campus after their first year — roughly 73% of students live off campus overall. Off-campus housing runs about \$600–\$900 per bedroom in shared units, with studios starting around \$700–\$900/month and one-bedrooms in the \$850–\$1,200 range.

- The Strip — steps from campus, the center of student housing and nightlife
- Downtown Tuscaloosa — about a mile from campus, walkable or a short bike ride
- Many off-campus communities offer resort-style amenities: pools, 24-hour fitness centers, study lounges
- The Off Campus Association can help set up utilities and cut deposit costs for members

Getting Around

Alabama is a car-friendly, car-dependent state, and Tuscaloosa is no exception once you're off campus. Most freshman campuses allow first-year vehicles with a parking permit — confirm the exact policy with UA Parking Services. On campus, the Crimson Ride shuttle system connects residence halls, classrooms, and The Strip, so a car isn't required day-to-day if you live close in.

Food & Nightlife

The Strip is ground zero for student nightlife — Rounders, Houndstooth, Two Dimes, and Twelve25 Sports Bar all draw a steady student crowd, especially on game days. Downtown adds Rhythm and Brews (line dancing, mechanical bull), Red Shed (karaoke, dive-bar charm), and Rabbit Hole (live music, courtyard stage). For food: Glory Bound for Mediterranean with a full bar, Quick Grill for late-night eats until 3 a.m.,

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Innisfree for a downtown Irish-pub game-day favorite, and Druid City Brewing Company for a laid-back local taproom near campus.

Things to Do

Fall Saturdays revolve around Bryant-Denny Stadium and the walk through campus before kickoff — it's the defining Tuscaloosa experience. Outside football season, the Riverwalk offers an easy outdoor escape along the Black Warrior River, and Lake Tuscaloosa and Lake Lurleen State Park are both a short drive away for hiking, boating, or a weekend outside. Downtown also holds real local history — the Old Tuscaloosa County Courthouse and the Murphy African American Museum are both worth a visit.

Staying Safe

Like any college campus, staying aware of your surroundings matters most on The Strip and downtown late at night. UA Police Department patrols campus and campus-adjacent housing, and most off-campus communities include secured entry. For current safety data and campus alerts, check directly with the UA Police Department rather than relying on secondhand reviews.

Questions Students & Parents Ask

Is Tuscaloosa affordable for students?

Generally yes — rent and everyday costs run below many comparable SEC college towns, particularly for shared off-campus housing.

Can freshmen have cars in Tuscaloosa?

Most Alabama campuses allow freshman vehicles with a parking permit, but confirm the current policy directly with UA Parking Services before you arrive.

What's the closest major airport?

Birmingham-Shuttlesworth International Airport (BHM), about 60 miles / roughly a one-hour drive.

Thinking about buying or renting near campus — for yourself or a student in your life? I help families navigate Alabama's college towns every day. Reach out anytime.