



Alvin Hall is a regular *Weekend* columnist, and this week, to mark Black History Month, he's written an incredible feature about his new series of podcasts *Driving the Green Book*, a record of a trip he took across the US last summer (opposite).

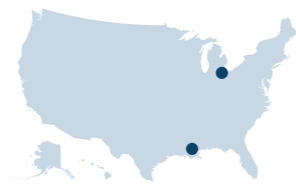
Until recently, the menopause was a taboo topic and rarely discussed publicly – that's shocking considering it affects half the population. Meg Mathews, the former wife of Oasis's Noel Gallagher, is the latest high-profile individual to talk openly about her experience to help people gain a better understanding (p36).

Beauty editor Jo Fairley writes about rebooting your regime for the autumn, with advice on skin problems associated with constant hand washing and facemask wearing (p44).

Garden expert Mark Lane suggests spring bulbs to plant now for some welcome colour early next year (p46). Give it a go – we all need something to look forward to.

GEORGINA GOLD

Partners & features editor



A book of revelations

Presenter Alvin Hall's new podcast series is inspired by a guide produced between the 1930s and 1960s to keep African Americans safe on their travels in the US

The road trip from Detroit to New Orleans to create my podcast series *Driving the Green Book* always felt like it would be affecting and revelatory – about African Americans, about America, about today.

Most people first heard of travel guide the *Green Book* with the 2018 release of the moving buddy-movie starring Viggo Mortensen and Mahershala Ali. *The Negro Motorist Green Book*, to give it its full title, was published in the US from 1936-67. Created by Victor Hugo Green and his wife Alma, the idea for it most likely came from the aggravating, demeaning experiences the couple had when they drove south to visit Alma's relatives.

Victor wrote that he would continue the guide until "we can go wherever we please, without embarrassment". He died in 1960. Publication ended with the 1966/67 edition.

In Detroit, I had visited the Motown Museum and the Detroit Institute of Arts. However, being shown the Detroit Eight Mile Wall was shocking. It is six feet high, one foot thick and runs for half a mile through a neighbourhood near 8 Mile Road. Constructing this barrier in 1941 to segregate African Americans from newly built whites-only homes was the only way the developer could get loans backed by a US government agency. Imagine the thoughts I had about the past and certainly the present as I stood in front of it.

Continuing south, in Columbus, Ohio, we interviewed a lady about her idyllic summers in Idlewild, Michigan. Called the 'Black Eden', it was where African Americans of means holidayed – happily away from Jim Crow and segregation. Idlewild was the US's 'largest African American resort', but there were others. Today, the best known

of these is Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. It's where the Obamas stay.

In Cincinnati, we did our interviews at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Before entering, I stopped and looked at the Ohio River. I was standing on 'the other side of the Jordan River', the banks to reach on the Underground Railroad journey from slavery to freedom. I instantly heard the words to the spiritual *How I Got Over* in my mind.

Nashville, our next stop, is home to three legendary historically black colleges and universities (referred to as HBCUs): Fisk University (founded 1866); Meharry Medical College (1876); and Tennessee State University (1912). I felt such a sense of reverence and pride that these places of black excellence are still thriving.

The Lorraine Motel, part of the National Civil Rights Museum complex, was our stop in

Memphis, Tennessee. I could feel my emotions rising even as we approached the place where Martin Luther King Jr was shot on 4 April 1968. The other feelings, as I walked through the exhibition, came from an awareness of the many emotions people from around the world bring with them to this place. The

'I felt a sense of pride that these places of black excellence are still thriving'



Lorraine should be a World Heritage Site.

Most of my relatives knew the black main street or area in every major city and town. In Louisville, Kentucky, it was Walnut Street (now Muhammad Ali Boulevard); in Nashville,

Tennessee, it was Jefferson Street; in Mobile, Alabama, Davis Avenue (now Dr Martin Luther King Jr Avenue); in New Orleans, Claiborne Avenue; and in Jackson, Mississippi, it was our next stop, Parish Street.

Parish Street was the 'place to be seen'. Businesses thrived. It pulsed with the



RECORD OF THE ROAD

The largest archive of copies of *The Negro Motorist Green Book* (later known as *The Negro Travelers' Green Book*, left) is at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Visit digitalcollections.nypl.org to view digital images of every edition.



FACES AND PLACES ALONG THE WAY
The Lorraine Motel (left); Kemi Aladesuyi, Tony Bingham, Janée Woods Weber with Alvin Hall (above, left to right); the infamous Edmund Pettus Bridge (below left)

MAPPING OUT ALVIN'S CITY-TO-CITY PILGRIMAGE ONLINE

You can travel with me from Detroit to New Orleans, seeing and learning about the locations in the *Green Book*, important sites of the Civil Rights Movement, and more – all from the comfort of your favourite place at home. In a first-of-its-kind collaboration, I've worked with Apple Maps to create a curated guide of *Driving the Green Book* to complement the podcast.

You can access Apple Maps' guide at apple.co/explorethegreenbook.

With this online guide, you can view photographs of the notable locations we visit, discuss or reference during the trip. More places are added with each episode and the guide automatically updates when you access it. You can also easily save and share it.

Being able to clearly see these places and learn more – just shortly after hearing about them in an episode of *Driving the Green Book* – is an especially beneficial feature during this time when our ability to travel faces unprecedented limitations. As new technologies help us to visualise different journeys in the world, a once witty comment may soon be a little too real: 'You don't have to have been there to have been there.' Except to smell the flowers and taste the food!

country, with its many hidden or ignored truths, live side by side.

energy of African Americans enjoying their lives – temporarily away from the white gaze. Today, it is in a state of benign neglect.

Birmingham and Montgomery, Alabama, have rich, complicated histories – about slavery, white supremacy, Jim Crow, segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. There are many iconic places to visit: the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham; Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery. Newer sites are uncovering long-ignored truths. The AG Gaston Motel in Birmingham, one of the best *Green Book*-listed hotels for African Americans, is being restored. The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) in Montgomery opened the National Memorial for Peace and Justice (often called the Lynching Memorial). I walked through too moved to speak.

Since it was only a one-hour drive away, I had to go to Selma, Alabama, to take a symbolic walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge, the site of the 1965 Bloody Sunday attack by local police on Civil Rights marchers.

In Mobile, Alabama, we enjoyed a guided tour around the former Davis Avenue (now Dr Martin Luther King Jr Avenue) where we were able to imagine its heyday as a hub of African American life, and then headed to our last stop: NOLA!

The culture of New Orleans is unique in America. After we recorded our last stories and visited another HBCU, Dillard University, we treated ourselves to a meal at Dooky Chase's Restaurant. Its food, with all its local delicacies and flavours, in so many ways captures the warmth and distinction of the city.

After driving 2,021 miles, visiting 12 cities in 12 days, and talking to more than 40 people, I was reminded that America is a place where the myth and reality of the

country, with its many hidden or ignored truths, live side by side.

Subscribe to *Driving the Green Book* free on Apple Podcasts

