

A nighttime photograph of two people walking across a suspension bridge. The bridge is made of wooden planks and ropes, spanning over a rocky waterfall. The background is a dense forest of tall trees under a dark sky with some stars visible. The overall mood is adventurous and serene.

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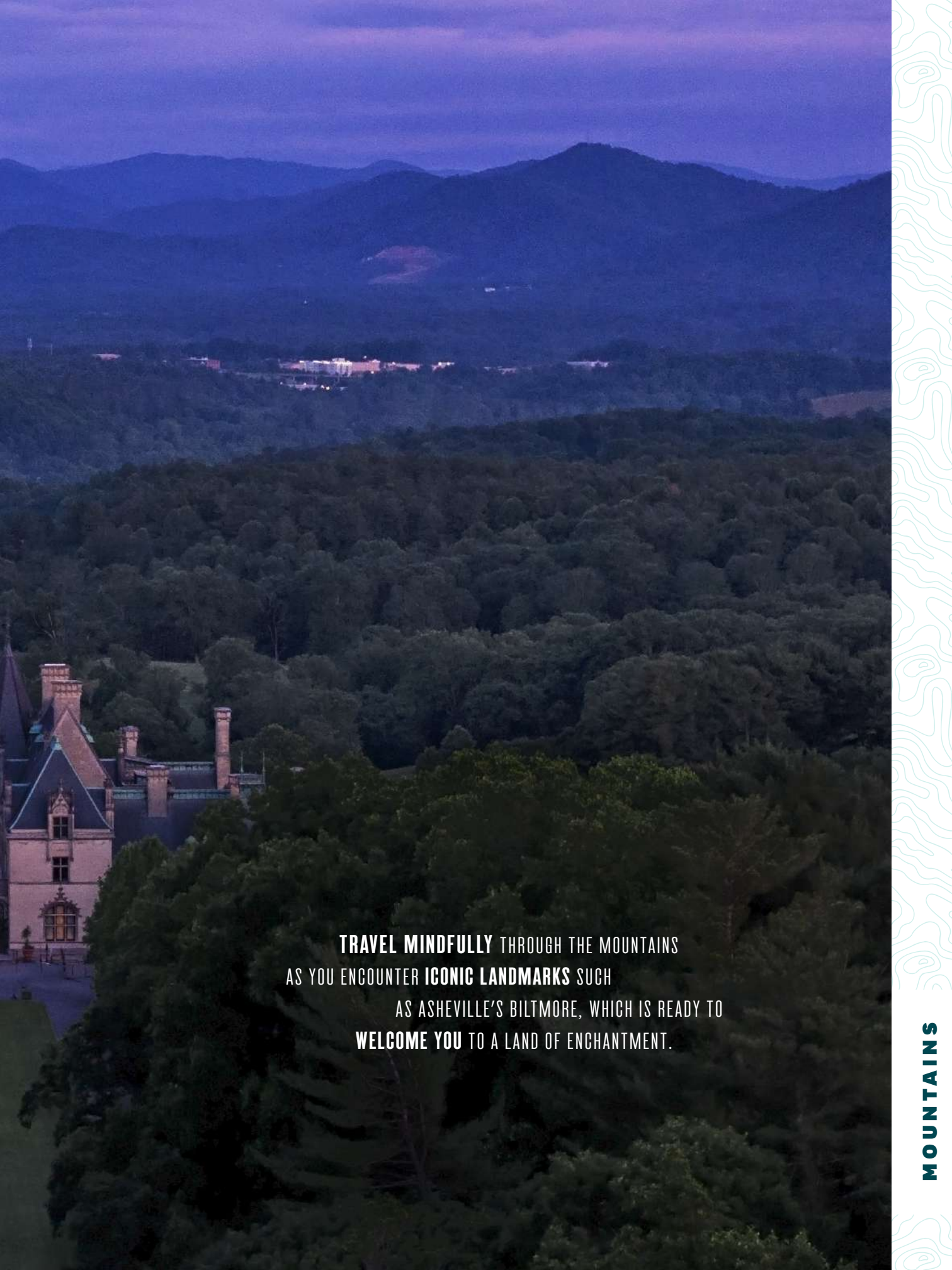


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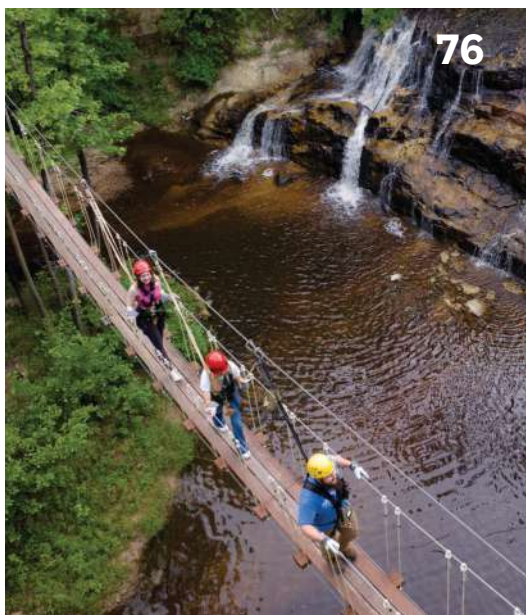
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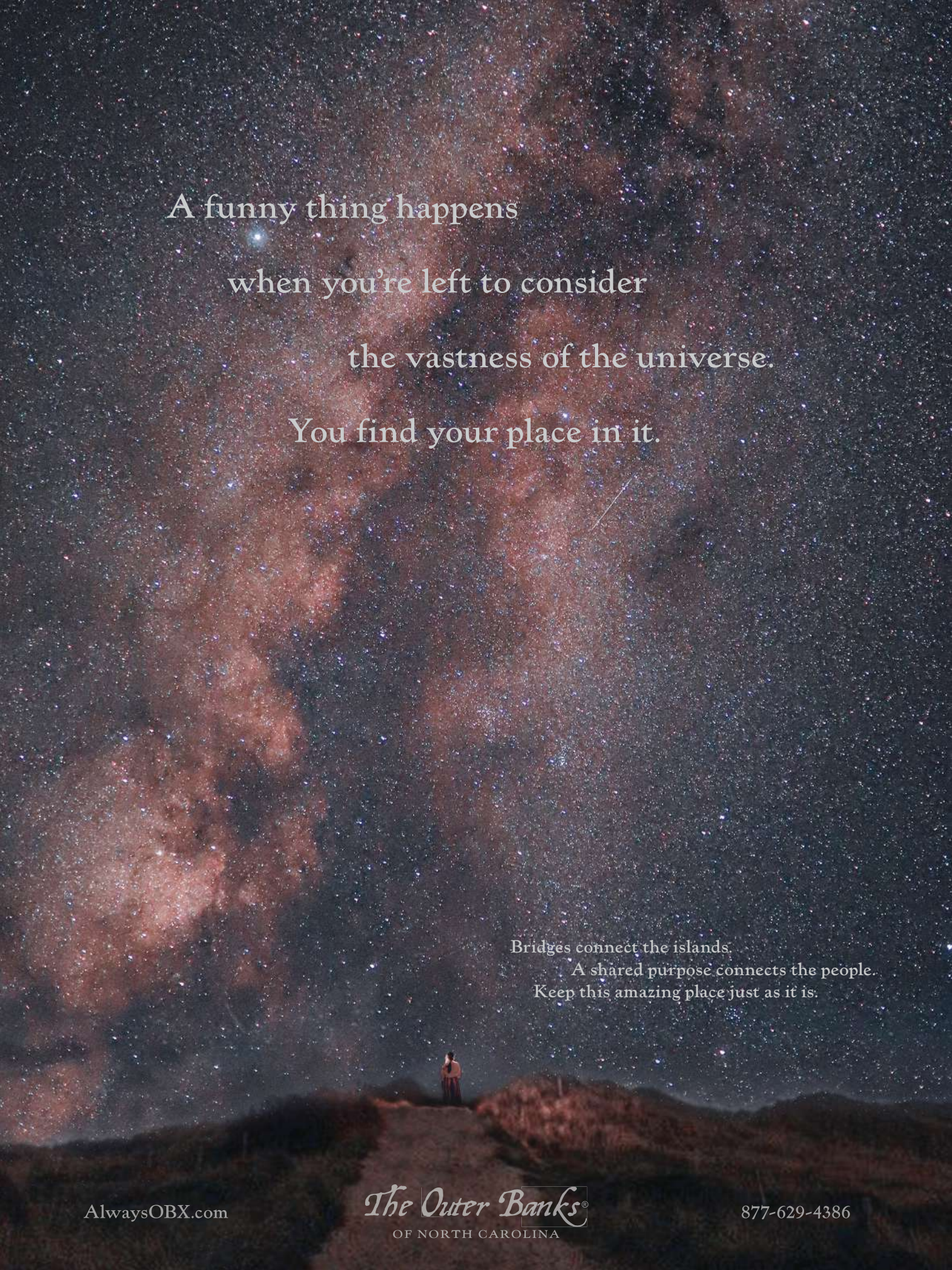
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A person stands on a dark, grassy hill under a vast night sky filled with stars and the Milky Way galaxy. The text is centered in the upper half of the image.

A funny thing happens  
when you're left to consider  
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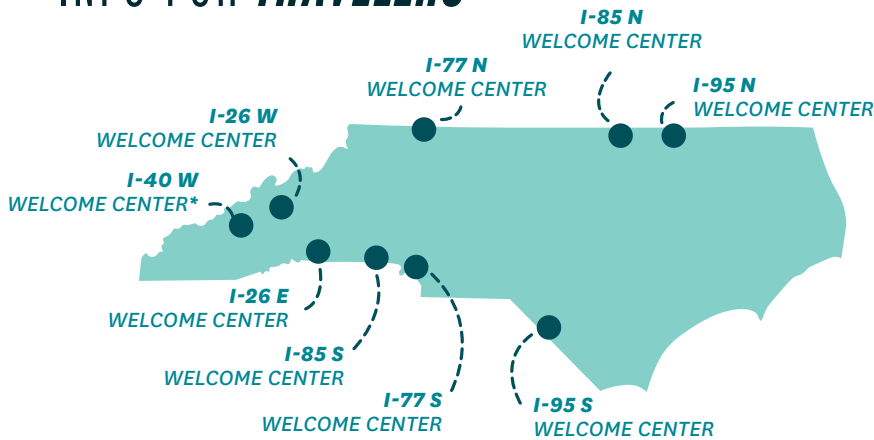


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# INFO FOR TRAVELERS



## WELCOME CENTERS AND REST AREAS

North Carolina's welcome centers feature professional travel counselors who offer free assistance with itineraries and booking room reservations for overnight visitors. The welcome centers are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, except New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Rest areas are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. [visitnc.com](http://visitnc.com) (800) VISIT NC (847-4862)

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### FERRY SERVICE

Vehicle ferries operate 365 days a year on seven routes along the coast: Bayview-Aurora, Currituck-Knotts Island, Cedar Island-Ocracoke, Swan Quarter-Ocracoke, Hatteras-Ocracoke, Cherry Branch-

Minnesott Beach, and Southport-Fort Fisher. The *Ocracoke Express* passenger-only ferry between Hatteras and Ocracoke Village operates during the summer months. [ncferry.org](http://ncferry.org) (800) BY-FERRY (293-3779)



### TRAIN SERVICE

Daily Amtrak passenger trains serve 16 North Carolina cities. There are also daily round-trip train services between Raleigh and Charlotte. [ncbytrain.org](http://ncbytrain.org) (800) BY-TRAIN (298-7246)

### ACCESS FOR EVERYONE

Information for visitors with disabilities is available online in English and Spanish. [ncdhhs.gov/documents/files/access-north-carolina-2015](http://ncdhhs.gov/documents/files/access-north-carolina-2015)

### SAFETY AND ALERTS

Review tips for hiking, swimming, camping, and visiting beaches and waterfalls. [visitnc.com/story/nEXa](http://visitnc.com/story/nEXa)

### STATEWIDE TRAVEL INFORMATION

Access important travel information by region, route or county for current conditions. [ncdot.gov](http://ncdot.gov)

## DEAR VISITORS,

Welcome to *The Official 2025 North Carolina Travel Guide*, your passport to explore a state with boundless opportunities to satisfy your wanderlust. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a lifelong resident, this rooted-in-real guide will cater to your desire for adventure, discovery, leisure and a host of other pursuits in all 100 counties.

For 2025, the guide unites the timeless appeal of North Carolina's scenic beauty with the dynamic appeal of authentic passion points. Raise a glass or mocktail in the state's blooming social district scene and at unique sipping venues. Bring binoculars for bird spotting and other wildlife encounters. Explore cities and towns that beam with artistic inspiration. Venture among historic hauntings, ghosts and unexplained mysteries that ensure your stay can be a scary good time if you wish. And check out inclusive destinations that make it easier for travelers of all ability levels to join the fun.

North Carolina has an unbreakable spirit — which you're sure to experience when you visit. I invite you to embrace the best of our state: pristine nature, rich culture, diverse cuisine and a spirit of hospitality that endures. Welcome to North Carolina.

Wit Tutnell  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, VISIT NC



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DEPUTY ART DIRECTOR John Meek

COPY EDITOR Diane Penningroth

CONTRIBUTORS Hilary Braaksma,  
Ann Marie Brown, Austin Cannon,  
Jason Frye, Kyli Hassebrock, Tree Meinch,  
Nikki Miller-Ka, Angela Ufheil

PUBLISHER Mark Josephson

NATIONAL TRAVEL DIRECTOR Katy Hildman

ADVERTISING SALES Stacey Rosseter  
(678) 571-7445

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**For additional travel information, contact:**

Visit North Carolina  
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Raleigh, NC 27601

PHONE: (800) VISIT NC (847-4862)

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ASHEVILLE, NC





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# OVERNIGHT SENSATIONS

You'll feel like a star at these remastered classics, family-friendly campgrounds and romance-filled resorts.



## Heights House Hotel

📍 Raleigh

After globe-trotting to overnight stays in celebrated lodgings, Sarah and Jeff Shepherd envisioned transforming their neighborhood's sleepy 1860 mansion into a similarly desired destination. Their dream evolved into a painstaking two-year transformation of the Italianate Heights House, now back to its original glory — and then some — with gleaming wood floors; a stained-glass-topped cupola; and nine guest rooms outfitted with fireplaces, vintage rugs and gold-framed televisions that display works of art. An original piece by Salvador Dali hangs in the airy dining room, where guests enjoy pastries from **Bolted Bread**, another Boylan Heights neighborhood treasure.



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# Grand Revivals

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## ← ARRIVE Wilmington

📍 Wilmington

On the site of the old Wilmingtonian Hotel (once damaged by an escaped circus elephant a century ago), ARRIVE rolls out a fresh welcome mat with vintage-radio-style Bluetooth speakers, cushy robes and neighborhood field guides in each room. Raise a glass at the courtyard Gazebo Bar and nosh on crispy Brussels sprouts at Dram Yard.

## The Flat Iron Hotel

📍 Asheville

Completed in 1926, one of Asheville's first "skyscrapers" (nine stories tall) now serves vacationers looking to stay in the heart of downtown's rich art, music and culinary scene. The hotel, which opened in 2024, boasts a popular rooftop that pairs Blue Ridge Mountain views with local wine and beer — along with small plates showcasing the bounty of area farmers.

## Opal and West House

📍 Shelby

A private home for generations of families, the 1860 building — transformed into a boutique hotel in 2023 — welcomes visitors to its seven bedrooms. The original hardwood floors and beadboard ceilings remain, with high-end finishes and furnishings adding mod touches. Contemporary comforts include sound machines and rain showers in each room.







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## Under the Stars

**Bring your nature-loving crew to these quiet campgrounds, with accommodations ranging from rustic to red carpet.**

### **Broad River Campground**

📍 Mooresboro

Living in a bubble has never felt more freeing. The campground's five geodesic domes — each appointed with themed comforters and furniture — allow guests to peer into nature while maintaining privacy. Hot tubs on each patio set the stage for literal forest bathing, and if you want to stay connected, there's free Wi-Fi and a smart TV in each dome.

### **Platform Camping**

📍 Roanoke River

Pitch your tent and fall asleep to the sound of gently flowing water from a camping platform on the Roanoke River. Spread out across 140 miles of the Roanoke River State Trail, more than 20 reservable campsites put paddlers and peace-seekers in the shadows of cypress trees and within sight of river otters and beavers. Plan ahead: Access to modern restrooms and shower facilities varies by location.

### **Turkey Creek Campground**

📍 Almond

Let songbirds provide your morning alarm in the Great Smoky Mountains. Whitewater rafting, mountain biking, the Appalachian Trail and Great Smoky Mountains National Park are all within reach of this campground with more than 40 tent and RV sites. Stay awake for a free evening light show of flickering fireflies throughout the spring and summer months.



### **OUTDOOR NC LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLE** *Be Careful with Fire*

If you choose to have a campfire, check regulations, secure a permit if needed and keep the fire small. Before leaving, confirm that the fire is completely out and the ashes are cold.







## Resort Getaways

**Surrounded by water and woods, these retreats have everything you need to kick back and savor reconnection.**

### Chetola Resort

📍 Blowing Rock

This mountain oasis has a way of reeling guests in and never letting go. Guides from the resort's Orvis-endorsed fly-fishing lodge lead clinics, as well as floating and wading fishing expeditions in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Fish at the resort or on nearby streams, then dive into seared trout with sauteed lemon arugula at Timberlake's Restaurant.

### Grandover Resort & Spa

📍 Greensboro

Swing into serenity at two 18-hole courses, including the newly renovated West Golf Course with fresh greens. Speaking of fresh greens, the 244-room property serves up a Southern-inspired salad with fried chicken skins, tomatoes, cucumbers and scallions at Finial restaurant. Cap off the day with a fireside cocktail at 1808 Bar.

### The Umstead Hotel and Spa

📍 Cary

Peruse a portion of the 98-piece art collection (including glasswork by Dale Chihuly) and chill in a luxe outdoor pool featuring a woodland backdrop. At Herons restaurant, frame-worthy entrees such as the Carolina chicken with leeks and chanterelle mushrooms showcase ingredients from the resort's own farm.

### Old Edwards Inn & Spa

📍 Highlands

A spa and dual outdoor mineral pools ease guests into relaxation at this European-style resort. Lie on a chaise in the Serenity Solarium (with fountains and a stone fireplace) while waiting for an immersive bath ritual and massage. To unwind even further, sip vino in The Wine Garden while listening to the cascade of a patio-side waterfall.

### Sanderling

Resort 📍 Duck

It's all about the view at this Outer Banks retreat. Rooms, suites and a handful of private vacation rental homes overlook the ocean and the Currituck Sound. When it comes to fun on the water, you have plenty of options. Rent SUPs, kayaks and boogie boards, or take a boat ride across the sound to Sanctuary Vineyards.



**PAW**

*of approval*

Fido deserves a beach escape too. For an additional fee, up to two dogs can stay in each Sanderling Resort guest room or vacation home.





# Where shopping becomes the ultimate “give it” or “keep it” debate.



by *Josie Roberts*  
Age 63  
Columbia, South Carolina

*I'm an antique-lover and upcycler. In short, I love the old things found in your grandma's attic and things other people consider junk. I find joy in turning a long lightbox into a mantle or an old door into a leaning shelf. I want my house and the stuff in my house to be as unique as I am. That's why I head to Kinston to do my picking for art, antiques and everything in between. I always find something I didn't even know I needed.*

*Some people say,* “Money can't buy you happiness.” I say it can buy you a slightly used canoe that you can turn into a coffee table. That makes me happy. So, isn't it basically the same thing? If you think like me, I suggest you hop in a car and head to Kinston. This little town in Eastern North Carolina has everything an amateur antique picker, shopaholic, and part-time hoarder is looking for.

This weekend, I'm headed to Kinston with Gail, my ride-or-die best friend of 20 years. I'm looking for something to fill that empty wall space in my living room that I've been staring at for two years. Gail is looking for something to

fill the empty room her son left behind when he moved off to college. Stop one on our list is Ironclad Marketplace – a store with a little bit of everything you didn't know you wanted.

On the outside, Ironclad Marketplace looks to be a simple warehouse. On the inside, it's a 12,000 square-foot antique and collectibles market with over 50 vendors. This place sells everything from furniture to handmade crafts and every sort of “somebody's got-to-have-it” you can imagine.

We head inside to begin our treasure hunt. This place is massive. In one booth I see retro modern side tables mingling with country sideboards. In another booth I see quilts falling



lazily over perfectly padded rockers. In yet another booth I see accent pillows in colors that match hand-blown glass vases and plates and paintings. If it was in Grandma's attic, excluding Grandpa, you'll probably find it here.

In mere seconds, Gail hones in on an antique dresser and bolts toward the back of the store. And, just like that, we're off. By the time I get to her she's in full on inspection mode. Drawers are opened and closed. Handles are checked and given the customary jiggle to see if they're loose. She lasers in on the paint job, running her hand over the finish, checking for any subtle scratches and wear. After a few minutes of playing ring around the rosey with the dresser, Gail stands and gives me the thumbs up. Looks like we have our first purchase of the weekend.

As Gail takes her tag to the front of the store to get the item marked as sold, I start to browse around. I'm drawn over to an antique wooden ladder that has been turned into a hanging shelf for storage



baskets. It's nice, but a little too tall for the wall in my living room. I move from booth to booth to booth. I find an antique Coca-Cola bottle cap that is about 4 ft. round and consider how I can mount it on a wall or turn it into a table. I look through some old Elvis records, because he's Elvis - thank you very much. I browse through some antique toys and find myself saying "I had one of those" until I realize it makes me seem as old as the antique toys.

In my shopping haze, I didn't even notice Gail hadn't made it back to me. I contemplate sending out a search party, then she arrives. It seems the owner of the store knew exactly the right pieces to go with her dresser. So, now she has an antique headboard that was an old grocery store sign, a depression glass lamp, and a side table made out of a wine barrel. She's even picked up two colonial-like paintings of children. I'm all for the bedroom pieces. But those paintings are a little too much on the creepy, "eyes-follow-you-around-the-room" side for me. After a few references to horror movies with us as the unlikely victims, Gail agrees. The paintings go back on the wall to haunt the next unlucky shopper.

At this point, we are three hours into our shopping weekend. Gail has already blown her budget, but she seems content. "Buyers remorse is for amateurs," she says. So, now the focus becomes finding that perfect piece for me.

A framed movie poster from Gremlins 2? Pass. A 1960s baker's rack painted neon pink and yellow? Not

### I BROWSE THROUGH SOME ANTIQUE TOYS AND FIND MYSELF SAYING "I HAD ONE OF THOSE" UNTIL I REALIZE IT MAKES ME SEEM AS OLD AS THE ANTIQUE TOYS.

for me. A set of dining plates adorned with various roosters? Cute, but pass again. A full box of LIFE magazines? Now, that's a possibility.

Looking through the box, there are about 30 total magazines in plastic sleeves. They all look like they're in great condition. I spot covers featuring Marilyn Monroe, the moon landing, Elvis (hi again, old friend). I start to picture row upon row of framed LIFE covers lining my wall mixed with pictures from my own life. It will be a virtual history of the world and of me. I love it. I pick up the box and announce

that my search is over. Gail is overjoyed. I think she really likes the idea. I also think she's getting hungry.

I hoist the box on the counter to pay up. That's when the owner tells me if I'm buying the entire box, he'll give me 20% off. "Great shopping and a discount? That just means more to spend tomorrow," I announce. And with that, Gail starts searching through her pocket book like she has lost something. "You okay?" I ask. "Yeah," she says. "I forgot this was only our first day here. I wanted to make sure I had another credit card." She then raises her hand with several cards displayed in a fan. "Charged and ready," she says. "Now, let's go get us some barbecue. I need some energy to make it through the rest of this town tomorrow."

Who is this woman? Is she excited or possessed? And from the corner I see the children in the pictures watching as we exit the store.



Check out some local shops



- Consigned Designs
- Once Again
- Just Add Salt
- Art 105
- Neuse Sports Shop & The Villager
- Community Council for the Arts Gallery
- Southern Heritage Folk Art and Antiques
- Copper Mill Mercantile
- Echoes of Time Emporium
- Ironclad Marketplace



**BARGAINS & BITES TOUR**

2 Days | 15 Stops

### Reward Program

Join Kinston Rewards today. Shop at participating local shops, restaurants, attractions, and lodging partners to save 10% on select purchases every time.



# THE FAST LANE

Powered by gasoline or gravity, all sorts of speeding vehicles race through North Carolina, inviting you to spectate and appreciate — or perhaps participate.

## Motorcycling

CHEROHALA SKYWAY  
ROBBINSVILLE

**Twist the throttle and hear “Born to Be Wild” while roaring down serpentine mountain highways that put you in hog heaven.**

Ride above the clouds at times on the 43-mile **Cherochala Skyway**, which hugs the crest of the Unicoi Mountains on the western edge of the Nantahala National Forest. The popular route makes sweeping curves as it follows NC-143 from Robbinsville to the state line. Rev up for seemingly endless mountain views and scenic overlooks.

With 318 tight turns—some banked racetrack style, **Tail of the Dragon** is a seriously sinister route that motorcyclists will literally lean into. The twisty 11-mile segment of US-129 in Deals Gap is bordered by the Great Smoky Mountains and the Cherokee National Forest, with few intersecting roads or driveways to worry about.

### RARE RIDES

Catch an *Easy Rider* vibe from one-off vintage choppers like those in the classic movie. **Dale’s Wheels Through Time Museum** in Maggie Valley houses around 350 motorcycles across 25 makes, including Harley-Davidson, Indian and Excelsior.



IT'S TIME TO CATCH YOUR  
BREATH BECAUSE SOON IT  
WILL BE TAKEN AWAY.



— VISIT —  
**HAYWOOD**  
WESTERN NC MOUNTAINS

Experience the unrivaled beauty of Haywood County through its charming mountain towns: Waynesville, Maggie Valley, Canton, Clyde, and Lake Junaluska.

Create an **UNFILTERED** experience at [VisitHaywood.com](https://www.VisitHaywood.com)






CHARLOTTE MOTOR SPEEDWAY CONCORD

# Auto Racing

*If you've got a fast car, you can be someone in North Carolina. Celebrate the exhilaration of auto racing at these venues.*

## THE INTIMIDATOR

More than a dozen attractions in Cabarrus County honor the memory of NASCAR legend **Dale Earnhardt**. A 9-foot-tall statue in Dale Earnhardt's hometown of Kannapolis captures the late NASCAR racer's larger-than-life presence.




### Charlotte Motor Speedway

Concord

NASCAR's flagship facility is also home to zMAX Dragway, the world's first four-lane drag-racing surface — it's nicknamed the Bellagio of drag strips for its 30,000-seat grandstand and 40 luxury suites. Back at the main venue, watch the Coca-Cola 600 and other races on the 1.5-mile quad oval, take a tour or book an on-track driving experience.

### North Wilkesboro Speedway

North Wilkesboro

The historic track opened in 1947 and hosted early NASCAR races. After powering down in 1996 and parking in idle for many years, the track was overhauled and returned to host the 2023 NASCAR All-Star Race. Fun fact: In 2024, construction crews discovered what was rumored to be an abandoned moonshine cave under the grandstands.

### NASCAR Hall of Fame

Charlotte

Some experiences here aren't just interactive, they're hyperactive — frantically changing a tire or filling the fuel tank during the Pit Crew Challenge, excitedly announcing a race from the broadcast booth, or white-knuckle driving a virtual track in a simulator. Other exhibits let you learn NASCAR history at a more leisurely pace.

### North Carolina Auto Racing Hall of Fame

Mooresville

Get a rear-view perspective and follow the evolution of North Carolina's motorsports industry through more than 40 cars on display. See a 1940 Ford Deluxe Coupe like the ones moonshiners used to race (that's what eventually led to NASCAR), Tony Stewart's signature orange No. 20 Chevy from his 2005 NASCAR championship season, and other vehicles associated with iconic racers and moments.





WHERE NAPA VALLEY *Lifestyle*  
MEETS BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS MAGIC



**ARRIVE TO** a lakeside inn surrounded by lush fields, gardens and forests with a woodland trail, just a five-minute drive from downtown Highlands.

**SETTLE IN** with delicious inclusions like a champagne arrival, afternoon hors d'oeuvres and a hot chef-made breakfast to start each day.

**RELAX IN** sumptuous style with spacious guestrooms, cozy fireplaces and terraces that look out into the forest.

**DELIGHT IN** the embrace of home-grown hospitality, handcrafted cocktails and live music on weekends.

Make Half-Mile Farm your next North Carolina getaway.

A Private Experience for Guests 18 and Older.



HALF-MILE FARM   
A Luxury Country Inn by Old Edwards



# Mountain Biking

**With hills, what goes up must come down, and that makes for marvelous mountain biking over Tar Heel State terrain.**



**OUTDOOR NC LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLE** *Tips for Mountain Biking*  
Reconsider riding options when the trail bed is soft. If you encounter patches of mud or ice, ride through them and not around. This prevents trail widening and damage to trailside plants.



## Lake Norman State Park

Troutman

Spend an hour or a day riding the 30-plus-mile Itusi Trail's loops of 0.25 miles to almost 10 miles. The routes are fast, flowy and rolling, ranging from easy to moderate in difficulty. Loops run clockwise in odd-numbered years, so in 2025 you can start the 3-mile Hawk Loop from the parking lot.

## Mountain Creek Park

Sherrills Ford

Variety is the spice of mountain biking life at this new outdoor hub, which features a 1.2-acre pump track and 18 miles of trails. Some routes are tight and twisty, while others are rolling and swooping. Wherever you ride, expect dirt rollers, berms, tabletops, rock jumps, gullies, drops and sweeping turns.

## San-Lee Park

Sanford

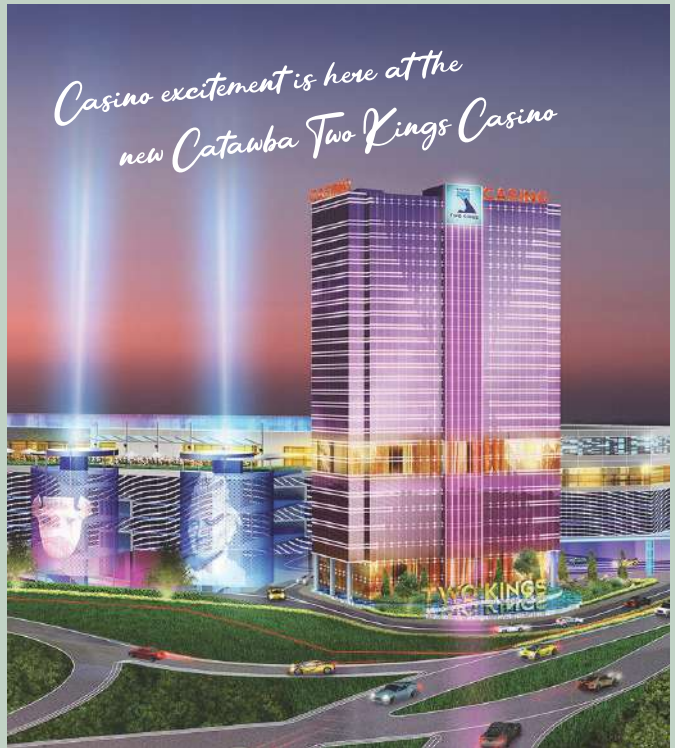
A rhythmic medley of uphill climbs, speedy downhill runs, technical boulder gardens and big jumps has bikers singing the park's praises. Warm up on the pump track before tackling the trails. Optional routes at the more technical sections accommodate beginning and intermediate riders without sacrificing thrills for more experienced riders.



Historic  
**KINGS MOUNTAIN**  
 NORTH CAROLINA  
*It's Revolutionary!*



*Experience a new world taste, with "Southern Charm" at Veronet Vineyards Winery*

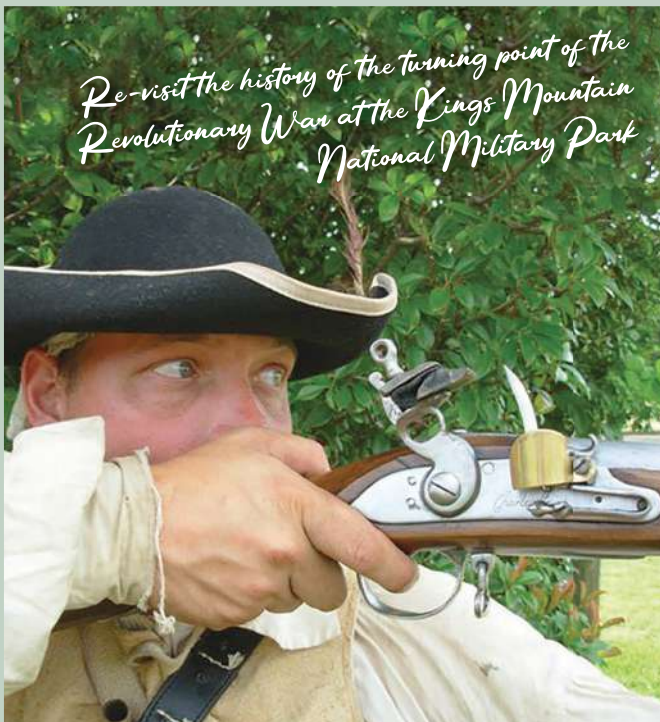


*Casino excitement is here at the new Catawba Two Kings Casino*

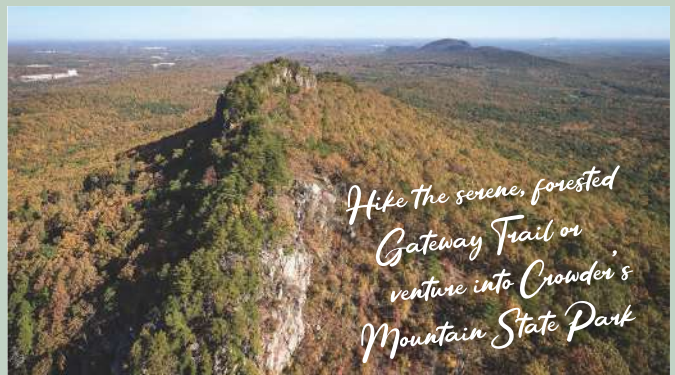


**Southern Artisan Spirits**  
 DISTILLERY & TASTING ROOM

*Try a tour and sip of the award winning Cardinal Gin*



*Re-visit the history of the turning point of the Revolutionary War at the Kings Mountain National Military Park*



*Hike the serene, forested Gateway Trail or venture into Crowder's Mountain State Park*

*Find yourself here*

[DiscoverKingsMountain.com](http://DiscoverKingsMountain.com)







**EARL SCRUGGS CENTER**

MUSIC & STORIES FROM THE AMERICAN SOUTH

103 S. Lafayette St.  
Shelby, NC

[www.EarlScruggsCenter.org](http://www.EarlScruggsCenter.org)  
704.487.6233



**DON GIBSON THEATRE**

318 S. Washington St.  
Shelby, NC

[www.DonGibsonTheatre.com](http://www.DonGibsonTheatre.com)  
704.487.8114





Discover a perfect escape in Shelby, located in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains where you can relax or find adventure! Plan your visit at [CityofShelby.com](http://CityofShelby.com).



**Carolina Harmony Trail**

**City Park Carrousel**



**Newgrass Brewing Company**



# Morgan and Wells Bed & Breakfast



This Craftsman style Bed & Breakfast in the heart of town offers six unique suites that blend vintage charm with modern hospitality and amenities. Enjoy luxurious ambiance and five-star service for a memorable stay. Walkable to Uptown Shelby's shops, attractions, trails and dining, striking the perfect balance between relaxation and adventure.

400 North Morgan St, Shelby, NC 28150  
[morganandwells.com](http://morganandwells.com)  
704-648-8000



## Rediscover Your Rhythm Boiling Springs ,NC

- Tranquil parks, peaceful rivers, and nature's beauty await.
- Local art, performances, and vibrant festivals enrich your experience.
- Hike, cycle, and explore—every step is a new thrill.
- Feel the adrenaline at Shadyside Drag Strip's racing action.
- Cheer on Gardner-Webb University's Division I athletics, home of the Runnin' Bulldogs.





# OYSTER QUEST

Lovers of bivalves, rejoice! The NC Oyster Trail is packed with aquatic farms and restaurants where you can eat your fill throughout the year.



**GHOST FLEET  
OYSTER COMPANY  
HAMPSTEAD**

## Tour

More than a dozen North Carolina oyster farms let you in on their secrets to mariculture (marine farming). Learn what conditions create the tastiest oyster, then shuck and sample a few while you're on the water. **Ghost Fleet Oyster Company** offers tours of their floating farms in Sneads Ferry and Hampstead, filling you in on all things oyster: life cycle, the importance of shell recycling and more. Farther down the coast, **Epic Excursions** provides three-hour tours of **Middle Sound Mariculture** farm near Wilmington, where the water is perfectly salty for raising a delicious oyster. Their tours include a boat ride to a barrier island for oyster snacking with wine pairings. Best of all, farmed oysters are safe to eat year-round.

## Taste

When you tour an oyster farm, you'll sample as many as you can shuck. For shuck-free savoring, make your way to a restaurant or seasonal event that puts these mollusks on the pedestal they deserve. Jackson's **Last Saturday Oyster Roast** takes place in January, when guests can dine on platters heaped high with roasted oysters.

**Rusty Hooks Dockside Grill** in Southport serves oysters on the half-shell, steamed and fried. (Pro tip: Enjoy your feast at a table with a sunset view.) **Ocracoke Oyster Company** serves select oysters from a trio of farms on the Outer Banks; enjoy yours on the half-shell with a zippy side of wasabi and ginger, doused in spicy mustard vinegar sauce, or prepared Rockefeller-style.

## LEARN MORE

Oysters are more than tasty treats — they're essential to the coastal ecosystem. At the **North Carolina Estuarium** in Washington and **Hatteras Island Ocean Center** on the Outer Banks, exhibits spotlight the role oysters play in the environment and the conditions that help oysters, clams, crabs and other sea creatures thrive.



# Real quality beach time.

Spend a little more time enjoying the beach with the ones you love and a little less time fighting for your spot in the sand at North Carolina's uncrowded coast.

CRYSTAL COAST N.C.

Book the uncrowded coast.  
[crystalcoastnc.com/Visit](http://crystalcoastnc.com/Visit)



**JOHN COLTRANE  
INTERNATIONAL JAZZ  
AND BLUES FESTIVAL  
HIGH POINT**

# TUNED IN

Turn up and turn out for these festivals, venues and legendary performers who help define North Carolina's diverse music scene.



**MERLEFEST  
WILKESBORO**

## Fab Festivals

***Music has the power to unite people, especially through festivals that draw folks from all over to share a common passion.***

Hip-hop superstar J. Cole invites some of his favorite artists to **Dreamville Festival**, a Black-owned music celebration held each April with a global playlist of artists in Raleigh's Dorothea Dix Park. The 2024 edition featured SZA, 50 Cent and Nicki Minaj. Jazz legend John Coltrane learned to play saxophone while growing up in High Point. Every Labor Day weekend, the town celebrates his legacy by hosting the **John Coltrane International Jazz and Blues Festival**. The lineup fuses jazz with blues and funk. The first **Lovin' Life Music Fest** took place in May 2024 at Charlotte's First Ward Park, with

Post Malone, Stevie Nicks and The Avett Brothers among more than 40 performers spanning genres and generations. An encore is planned for May 2025. Since 1988, April's **MerleFest** in Wilkesboro has honored the memory of Eddy Merle Watson, son of beloved folk musician Doc Watson. The music coming from a dozen stages is "traditional plus" — Appalachian roots sounds seasoned with country, blues, bluegrass and more. A family-friendly spirit pervades the **Shakori Hills Grassroots Festival of Music and Dance**, held each May and October in Pittsboro. Besides hearing a variety of live music, adults and kids can play games, take dance and yoga lessons, and learn about sustainability.

STORY: GARY THOMPSON. PHOTOGRAPHS: (COLTRANE) COURTESY OF JOHN COLTRANE FESTIVAL, (MERLEFEST) ALLISON ISLEY, (EARLE THEATRE) SAM DEAN



# Storied Venues

***Magic happens when artists, audiences and atmosphere vibrate on the same frequency. Each of these memorable spaces offers a distinct feel.***

## **Play That Funky Dive Bar**

Named one of the South's best dive bars, the **Backstreet Pub** in Beaufort has occupied a century-old converted bakery for decades, and the cozy brick building with patio seating rolls out live music every week with rock, funk and blues bands. The clientele is as varied as the performers, and it's always a friendly crowd.

## **Rock the Cradle of Bands**

Nirvana, Public Enemy, John Mayer, Joan Baez and Iggy Pop have all played at **Cat's Cradle** in Carrboro, less than a mile from UNC-Chapel Hill. Though its address has changed a few times, the 750-person venue has drawn established bands and up-and-comers for more than 50 years.

## **The Freshest Beats**

Once a produce warehouse where fruits and veggies arrived by train, **The Fruit** in Durham is now a cool place to see the fruits of human creativity. It's a museum by day and dance venue by night, curating photography exhibitions, electronic music performances and festival-like parties in one vibrant space.

## **Throwback Music Hall**

Built in 1920, the **Historic Earle Theatre** in Mount Airy houses the Old-Time Music Heritage Hall and the nation's second-longest-running live radio show — WPAQ's *Merry-Go-Round*, broadcast live every Saturday. Visit Thursday afternoons for free traditional dance, fiddle, banjo, mandolin and guitar classes.



*+ + i + + h*

**THIS WEEKEND** I "foodied" my way through Nash County. One night, I had dinner prepared by a celebrity chef. The next day, I drank a craft beer you can't buy anywhere else. I tasted award-winning mac n' cheese. Finally, I had BBQ that made me realize why diet is a four-letter word. I also think my pants shrank.

Start your great story at **EXPLORENASHCOUNTY.COM**



**NASH COUNTY**  
EXPLORENASHCOUNTY.COM



LP PROJECT MURAL AT  
DON GIBSON THEATRE  
SHELBY



PHOTOGRAPHS: COURTESY OF VISIT CLEVELAND COUNTY, (AVETT BROTHERS) COURTESY OF EXPLORE CABARRUS

## Legends of Shelby

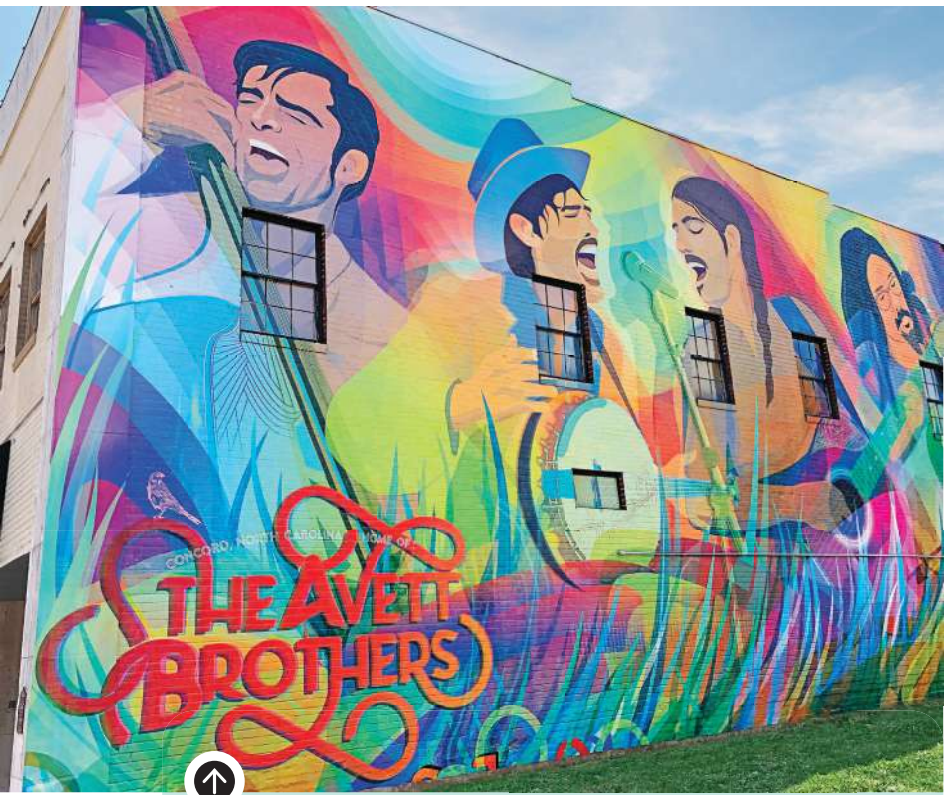
Shelby native Don Gibson wrote three country music standards: “Sweet Dreams,” “Oh, Lonesome Me” and “I Can’t Stop Loving You.” That feat, along with 80 chart recordings and a role in popularizing the Nashville Sound, earned him a spot in the Country Music Hall of Fame. The town of Shelby can’t stop loving Gibson — it named a music venue for him: The 400-seat **Don Gibson Theatre** welcomes nationally touring acts and rising stars in country circles

**Country music lightning struck twice in the Shelby area, where two artists became giants of the business — and their influence remains.**

and beyond. Along Uptown Shelby streets, local artists painted 3-foot-diameter “records” representing Gibson’s songs. Gibson is also honored in a building-size mural (on **Miss Molly’s Boutique**) by North Carolina artist Scott Nurkin. So is another country music icon from Cleveland County, Earl Scruggs. The 30×40-foot mural of Scruggs, covering the exterior of **Newgrass Brewing Company**, takes inspiration from a photo Scruggs’ son shared with Nurkin. It depicts

the five-string banjo virtuoso picking with the three-finger technique later known as Scruggs style. Shelby’s **Earl Scruggs Center** further celebrates the influential musician’s life and career. On a tour through the interactive center, see instruments belonging to Scruggs family performers, including the banjo on which Earl mastered his three finger pickin’ style. In spring and summer, the Center Stage Concert Series spotlights a variety of musicians inspired by the Scruggs legacy.





### ANOTHER NC ICON

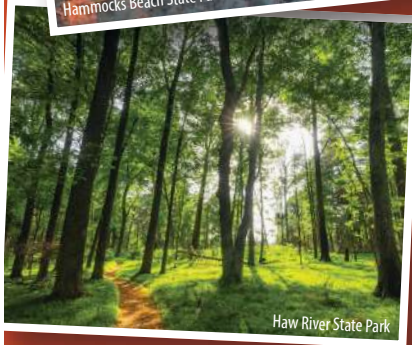
No hard feelings if you haven't yet seen the mural honoring folk-rock band The Avett Brothers in their hometown of Concord. North Carolina artist Caswell Turner created the colorful piece, which covers the exterior of **Hawthorne's NY Pizza and Bar** on Union Street North downtown. Titled *Bloom*, the work incorporates some of the group's lyrics.



**EARL SCRUGGS CENTER**  
SHELBY



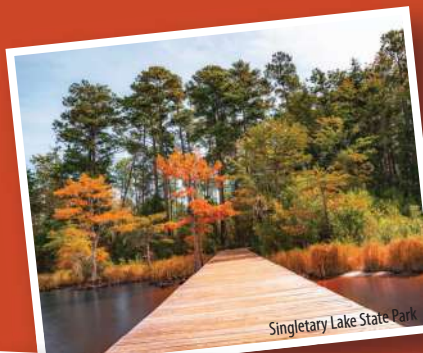
Hammocks Beach State Park



Haw River State Park

### North Carolina State Parks

Great trails are there for you to follow. Don't go off the trail to help make sure these parks will be there tomorrow.



Singletary Lake State Park



Elk Knob State Park



[ncparks.gov](http://ncparks.gov)







**Esteamed Coffee** 📍 Cary

Inside a renovated 1940 cottage in downtown Cary, the baristas have unique stories to tell, but also share a few qualities: They proudly wear aprons with the Esteamed Coffee logo, they'll welcome you with friendly smiles, and they all live with some form of disability. Founded by locals Angie Hudson and Tamara Lapsley, Esteamed and other North Carolina coffee shops are aiming to put a dent in the nation's high unemployment rate for adults with disabilities. Here, employees whip up mildly spiced chai lattes, espresso-based frappés and refreshing fruit smoothies. Signs encourage guests to speak clearly and take a first sip to ensure their beverage was properly made to order — a good reminder for all of us to slow down and savor.

**321 Coffee**

📍 Durham and Raleigh

At three locations, including the State Farmers Market in Raleigh, order sustainably sourced and roasted coffee in its pure form or in the Love Big Latte with French vanilla, whipped cream and a ribbon of caramel.

**A Special Blend**

📍 Greensboro and High Point

Membership to the Percolator Club comes with a free monthly drink (macchiatos, matcha-based drinks and milkshakes are just a few of the options) and helps sustain this nonprofit striving to provide “community in a cup” for both employees and customers.

# POURING WITH CARE

Get your fill of comforting beverages and warm service from coffee shop employees with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**Awaken Coffee**

📍 Greenville

Beans from Davidson-based Haerfest Coffee Roasting Company, which shares a similar mission of providing pathways to people with special needs, bring the buzz to The Lavender Bee latte with local honey.

**Bitty & Beau's Coffee**

📍 Wilmington

The original Bitty & Beau's opened here in 2016, and it sparked a movement. Now there are 18 of them across 11 states. Visit the OG location for a mango smoothie, mint chocolate frappé or cold brew.



# NEW BERN



*Step into the charm*  
of North Carolina's first capital city.

New Bern is a place where history, creativity, and adventure converge. From strolling through centuries-old streets to visiting the birthplace of Pepsi and experiencing the inspiration behind Nicholas Sparks' novels, every moment in New Bern is a story waiting to unfold.

[www.VisitNewBern.com](http://www.VisitNewBern.com)



# FRESH-AIR FAMILY FUN

With so many all-ages outdoor attractions across the state, North Carolina has the natural appeal to unite everyone from little tykes to big boomers.



## Mountain Treasures

**Take family fun to new levels with these open-air experiences that are sure to pique your interest and heighten your senses.**



### **Grandfather Mountain** Linville

A serpentine drive brings travelers to the Mile High Swinging Bridge, a walkway stretching across a chasm to Linville Peak. Leave your fear of heights in the car to admire the forest draping like a quilt across ridges. Experienced hikers trek the Grandfather Trail, encountering ladders en route to MacRae Peak.

### **The Orchard at Altapass**

 Spruce Pine

Dedicated to preserving Appalachian culture, the 100-year-old orchard grows 25 varieties of heirloom apples. From late July through late October, hayride passengers cling tight as a tractor pulls them over bumpy trails to the trees for U-picking. Savor the fruits on a stroll through the butterfly garden.



# Check In and BLISS OUT

Surround yourself in European-style luxury with premium leisure amenities in the heart of downtown Highlands, NC, with heated pools, world-class spa, farm-fed restaurants and live music venues.

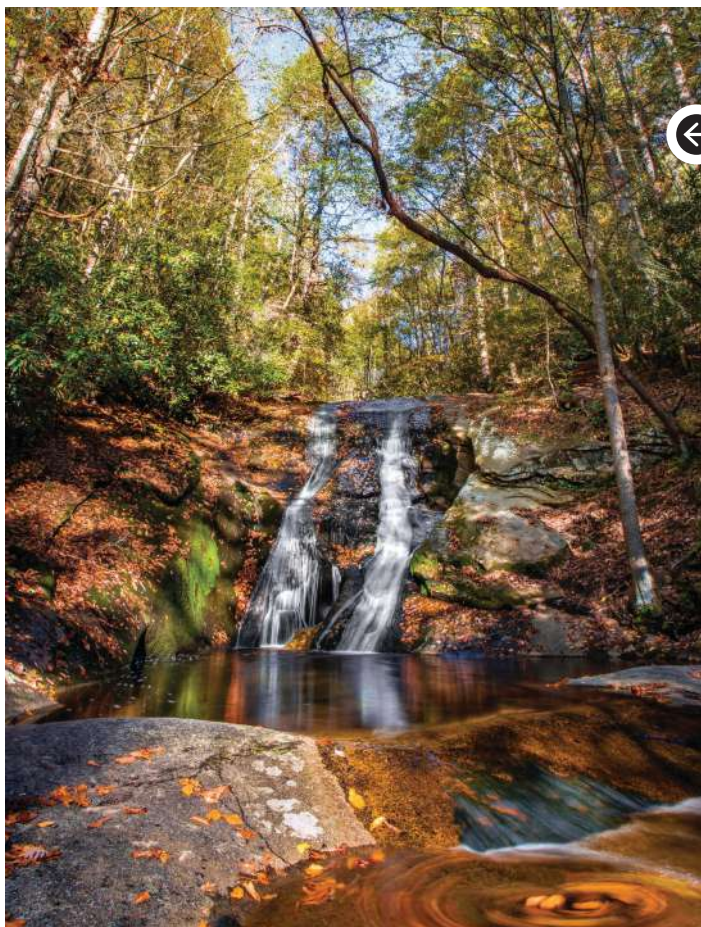


OLD  
EDWARDS  
INN *and Spa*

RELAIS &  
CHATEAUX

OPRAH DAILY HOTEL O-WARDS WINNER  
TRAVEL + LEISURE AMERICA'S BEST SMALL MOUNTAIN TOWN  
TRAVEL + LEISURE TOP 500 WORLD'S BEST HOTEL





### Stone Mountain State Park

📍 Roaring Gap

It took centuries for molten lava to cool and crystallize, forming the massive granite dome of Stone Mountain. From a distant overlook, the bald 600-foot-tall mound looks almost diminutive, but the landmark towers above hikers roaming the park's 20 miles of trails past waterfalls, lush forest and woodland lakes.

### Tweetsie Railroad

📍 Blowing Rock

The hiss of steam from antique locomotives sends visitors back in time at North Carolina's first theme park, founded in 1957. Chug through Wild West scenes — and beware of bandits — on a 3-mile train ride around the site. Get your kicks at *Diamond Lil's Can-Can Revue* and indulge sweet cravings at Fudge Works.



### COOL STAY

Find a gnome away from home at **Yellow House on Plott Creek Road** in Waynesville. Hunting the bed-and-breakfast's 5-acre grounds for whimsical garden ornaments is part of the fun, as is a bevy of board games to play. Relax amid ponds, a stream, a waterfall, walking paths and native plants.

**OUTDOOR NC LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLE** *Plan Ahead and Prepare*  
Before you travel, learn about your destination, its regulations and safety matters. Choose lesser-known areas to reduce your impact and have a backup plan if a location is crowded.



**SUGAR CREEK GEM MINE**  
BANNER ELK

**WHAT A GEM** Go for the gold; stay for the emeralds, garnets, rubies and sapphires. When it comes to prospecting for precious stones and metals, the Blue Ridge Mountains shine. **Emerald Hollow Mine** in Hiddenite is the world's only public emerald mine and home to the town's namesake (and rare) pale-to-emerald green mineral. At **Lucky Strike Gold and Gem Mine**, an old commercial mining site in Marion, pan for gold in the same stream as 1800s prospectors, or screen a bucket of ore for garnets, amethysts, topaz, rose quartz and other gems. **Sugar Creek Gem Mine** in Banner Elk offers prefilled buckets of rough gemstones that you take to the flume line, where you'll sift through sand and rock to find your tiny treasures. The outfitter guarantees you'll find precious or semiprecious stones on every trip.



200 Main 



**MOUNTAIN-CHIC LODGING BY OLD EDWARDS**  
Downtown Highlands, North Carolina



**We provide your playlist.**



**Take a Mountain Road Trip!** The scenic mountain vistas around the First Peak of the Blue Ridge are beautiful in every season. Historic Saluda, Tryon & Columbus, NC • 800-440-7848 • [firstpeaknc.com](http://firstpeaknc.com) • 



# Piedmont Playgrounds

*Even if you're not a kid anymore, you get to act like one at these spots where the whole family can frolic.*



## **Greensboro Science Center**

📍 Greensboro

The wonderland includes a zoo with plenty of animals to observe, such as leapin' lemurs. You can imitate the climbing and flying creatures at Skywild, an aerial adventure park towering above the zoo, or get more bird's-eye views gliding over Lake Sloan on the Flyway zipline.

## **North Carolina Zoo**

📍 Asheboro

From April to October, ride in an open-air safari vehicle on a Zoofari tour of the Watani Grasslands for an up-close look at rhinos, gazelles, antelope and elephants. You can also meet bears, barking tree frogs and hundreds of other creatures at the world's largest natural habitat zoo.



## **COOL STAY**

When the weather's warm, take a dip in the rooftop pool at **Unscripted Durham** hotel in downtown Durham. On weekend evenings, chill in a poolside cabana while a DJ spins groovy sounds. In winter, the rooftop holds cozy igloos for dining. Whatever the season, enjoy terrific city views.



## **First Ward Park**

📍 Charlotte

Adults can soak up the serenity of this 4.6-acre urban green space in Uptown while kids get soaked by the spray of its fountains. There's a walking path, fitness equipment and a large grassy area for playing and picnicking. The park is conveniently close to a light-rail stop.



# Live Louder.

There's More to Life.

Discover More at [ExploreCabarrus.com](https://ExploreCabarrus.com)



[VisitHendersonvilleNC.org](https://VisitHendersonvilleNC.org)

WELCOME TO THE HOME OF  
GRATITUDE AT ALTITUDE.

ESTD. 1847



  
**Hendersonville**  
NORTH CAROLINA

FIND GRATITUDE AT ALTITUDE.™



## Coastal Strolls

***If you like walks on the beach, make a date for a coastal rendezvous and be serenaded by nature's sights and sounds.***

### **Bodie Island Lighthouse**

📍 Nags Head

The striped 1872 beacon on Cape Hatteras National Seashore still helps ships navigate. A wooden walkway snakes through the lighthouse grounds, an area of grassy freshwater marshes where you can spot waterfowl. From late April through early fall, climb 219 steps to the top of the lighthouse and get rewarded with 360-degree views.

### **Goose Creek State Park**

📍 Washington

Thanks to slick engineering, you can wade through a cypress swamp and a freshwater marsh from the comfort of the elevated Palmetto Boardwalk trail. As you explore these waters that feed the park's namesake creek, see herons, egrets and red-winged blackbirds, plus massive longleaf pines indigenous to the Tar Heel State.



### **Corolla Beach**

This long stretch of oceanfront on the northern Outer Banks is famous for its wild horses descended from Spanish mustangs brought here more than 400 years ago. If you're lucky, you might spot one on a stroll — just stay 50 feet away, it's the law. There are boardwalks and nature trails, too, along with plenty of pristine sand for constructing the finest fortresses.



### **COOL STAY**

**Cashie River Tree Houses** in Windsor offers four houses nestled along the Cashie River. Each home includes an outdoor gathering area with chairs and benches for enjoying fresh air and views. Get a closer look at the river on a kayak or canoe excursion (rentals available) — or go hunting and fishing.





## **Come to relax seaside. Stay in style dockside.**

Stay in style just steps away from relaxing with a good book along spacious beaches. Oceanfront resorts, historic downtown riverfront hotels or even houseboat villas, here, you'll find your ideal waterfront retreat.

**Discover the best of the  
Carolina coast all in one place.**

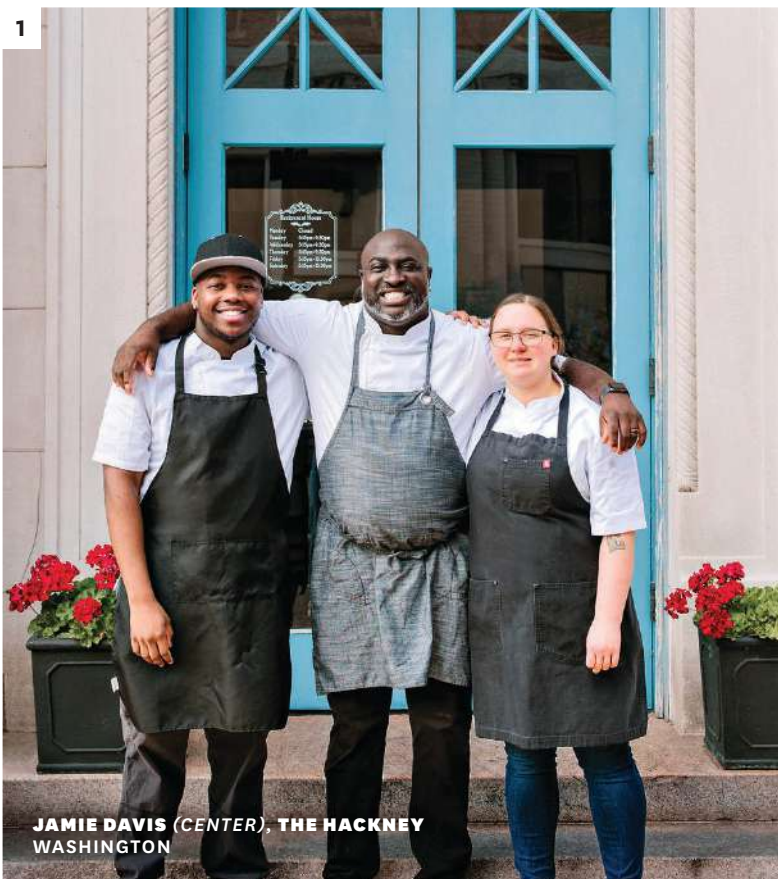
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# DISTINCT FLAVORS

Take a taste trip through award-winning restaurants, iconic barbecue joints, international eats and Southern staples.



**JAMIE DAVIS (CENTER), THE HACKNEY**  
WASHINGTON



**DEAN NEFF, SEABIRD**  
WILMINGTON



**CRAWFORD AND SON**  
RALEIGH

## The Finalists

*Innovative chefs and impeccable service helped these people and places earn recognition as finalists at the 2024 James Beard Awards.*

**1 BEST CHEF: SOUTHEAST**  
**Jamie Davis of The Hackney**

📍 Washington

Save up your pennies for fine dining in a restored 1922 bank building. Even if your expectations are as high as the interior ceilings, they'll be met by Jamie Davis' "Southern eclectic" menu of surf and turf. (Think seared scallops with purple asparagus or fried pork belly with a golden raisin mostarda.) Davis ensures the ingredients are as local and farm-fresh as possible — a promise you can take to the bank.

**2 OUTSTANDING CHEF**  
**Dean Neff of Seabird**

📍 Wilmington

You can almost feel the salty ocean breeze while diving into Seabird's swordfish schnitzel, tuna tartare and other stunningly plated dishes dreamed up by chef-owners Dean Neff and Lydia Clopton. The seasonal seafood tower is a showstopper worth sharing with the whole table; depending on the time of year, it may include deviled catfish, blue crab salad and a smoked sturgeon dip with osetra caviar.

**3 OUTSTANDING HOSPITALITY**  
**Crawford and Son**

📍 Raleigh

The team of chef Scott Crawford, chef de cuisine Aaron Salita and general manager Kat Rider ensures Crawford and Son runs like clockwork, down to the servers' knowledge of each ingredient's backstory on the hyper-seasonal menu. Curious about the origins of your grilled lamb loin, heirloom carrots with harissa yogurt, or peach and melon salad with duck prosciutto? They'll gladly fill you in.



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# Barbecue Legends

Nothing fires up a saucy debate like asking which style of NC 'cue is better — Lexington or Eastern. Decide for yourself after visiting some of these time-tested spots that serve the best of each.



**BARBECUE CENTER**  
LEXINGTON



## LEXINGTON-STYLE

Lexington-style barbecue stars a vinegary, tomato-laced “dip,” along with the meat of sliced, chopped or pulled pork shoulder. It’s traditionally served with a red-tinted slaw at places like Lexington’s **Barbecue Center**, the oldest of a dozen local spots still cooking in a pit. (They’re also known for their behemoth of a banana split.) Beyond Lexington, pit-cooked ‘cue runs in the family at **Red Bridges Barbecue Lodge** in Shelby. The grandchildren of founders Red and Lyttle (Mama B) Bridges run the business today, and they still cook the pork over hickory all night long. Hickory smoke also flavors tender pork at **Stamey’s Barbecue** in Greensboro. Pitmasters come in before the break of dawn to light hardwood coals that cook 15-pound pork shoulders.



**SKYLIGHT INN BBQ**  
AYDEN



## WHOLE HOG EASTERN-STYLE

On the coastal plain, Pitt County serves as a hub for Eastern-style ‘cue. After smoking over hardwood, the meat gets topped with a vinegar-based sauce. Sam Jones has become a barbecue icon after following in the footsteps of grandfather Pete Jones, who fired up Ayden’s **Skylight Inn BBQ** in 1947. At **Sam Jones BBQ** in Winterville and Raleigh, order the Jones Family Original BBQ Tray for wood-fired, whole-hog perfection. The late Wilberdean Shirley founded **Wilber’s Barbecue** in 1962, and the Goldsboro favorite has stayed true to its roots, cooking whole hogs all night over oak embers in open pits. In Greenville, follow the smoke to **B’s Barbecue**, an old general store with picnic tables. Arrive early (it’s popular) and bring cash to the lunch-only spot.





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# Around the World

**You won't encounter any TSA lines en route to these culinary adventures, unless your definition of TSA is "tasting something amazing."**



## **Chai Pani** 📍 Asheville

Indian street food lies at the core of chef Meherwan Irani's menu, but it's the perfect harmony of textures and flavors that led Chai Pani to winning the James Beard Award for outstanding restaurant in 2022. Fill up on vada pav (spicy potato dumplings) and tandoori chicken with a mint-yogurt chutney.



## **Afghan Kabob**

📍 Fayetteville

Army base Fort Liberty has helped turn Fayetteville into a vibrant hub of international culture and cuisine. Afghan Kabob's second location (the original sits on a base in Kandahar, Afghanistan) serves heaping plates of grilled kofta (ground beef and lamb) and falafel with rice, salad and other accompaniments.

## **Filipino Cuisine**

📍 Jacksonville

Love for lumpia (paper-thin fried spring rolls) has spread throughout this military town, with demand keeping this family-owned restaurant bustling. Choose from pork, beef, chicken or vegetable variations, and round out your meal with an entree of pork or chicken adobo.

## **The Lost Wombat**

📍 North Wilkesboro

The land of Down Under has made its way to North Wilkesboro. Order shrimp on the barbie (shrimp skewers coated with honey-garlic sauce) and enjoy the communal atmosphere on the sprawling lawn with picnic tables and yard games.

## **Toner's Irish Pub**

📍 Morganton

Jim and Iris Toner fell in love with a Dublin pub on a trip to Ireland, so naturally, they created a full-scale reimaging of it in their hometown — nearly 300 years after the original location opened. Imported materials give Toner's authentic flair, as does the menu: shepherd's pie, corned beef and cabbage, Scotch eggs, and more.

## **Dalaya Thai Cuisine**

📍 Sylva

Chef Kanlaya "Gun" Supachana whips up the flavors of Thailand — rich curries, sauced noodles, sticky rice (sometimes with mango) and savory seafood — with precision that earned a 2024 James Beard Award nomination. A specialty: Sai-Ua (pork sausage with green chili dip).



SMALL TOWNS  
*Big Adventures*



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★ NC ★  
*McDowell*

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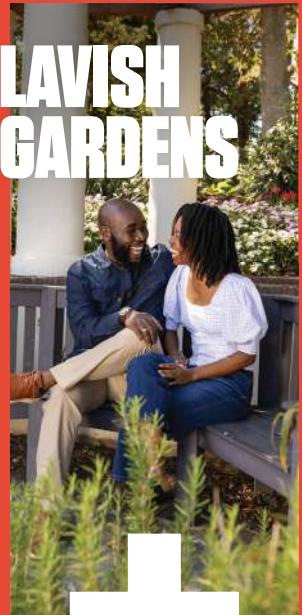
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# Southern Staples

**Make your way from the coast to the mountains for the ultimate progressive meal of comfort food. Heads-up: It's about 500 miles from start to finish. Plan accordingly.**

## APPETIZER

### Belcross Biscuit Company

📍 Camden

Jeff Burns has earned the nickname “Mr. Biscuits” for his flavorful and fluffy concoctions, including the signature sweet potato biscuit. Go big with the Hangover Biscuit sandwich: bacon, sausage, egg, cheese and hash browns — all drowned in gravy.

## 1ST COURSE

### Saltbox Seafood Joint

📍 Durham

The 2022 James Beard Award winner for best chef: Southeast, Ricky Moore, dresses up the freshest catches (blue crab, mahi-mahi and many more) with zippy seasonings. Don't skimp on the sides, especially Moore's addictive Hush-Honeys: honey-glazed cornmeal fritters.



## 2ND COURSE

### Magnolia 23

📍 Asheboro



If you feel like you've just walked into Sunday dinner with relatives, this family-owned restaurant considers its mission accomplished. The fried chicken has garnered national attention, and the candied yams, collards, and mac and cheese will keep you happily stuffed until the next stop.

## 3RD COURSE

### Good Hot Fish

📍 Asheville

Honoring the recipes of her fish-frying grandmother and other relatives, *Top Chef* contestant Ashleigh Shanti dishes sustainably sourced shrimp burgers and catfish sandwiches, plus a kicky sweet potato cabbage pancake with sorghum hot sauce.

## DESSERT

### Ice Cream Trail

📍 Hendersonville

The 13 stops on this sweet journey cater to all “coneheads” and frozen fiends. House-made scoops at **The Baker's Box** combine classic flavors with berries, candy and other edible inspiration.



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*Another hidden gem*



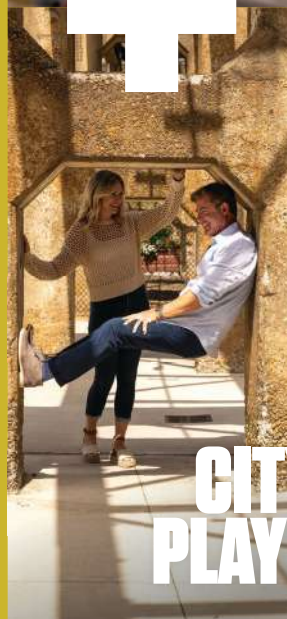
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when you cross

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An illustration of two hands holding a large, ornate ring. The background is a colorful floral pattern.

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A smartphone displaying the Explore Greensboro app. The screen shows a cityscape and three call-to-action buttons: "Where to Go.", "What to Do.", and "Where to Eat.". A "Get Started" button is at the bottom.

Download OUR APP 

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THERE'S A PLACE SET FOR YOU.

A photograph of a plate of food, including a burger, fries, and a drink, on a wooden table.

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**Piedmont**  
TRIAD REGION  
*we make north carolina*



# 10 WAYS TO WATER

Go with the flow when you visit H<sub>2</sub>O havens across the mountains, Piedmont and coast.

When you think of North Carolina waters, the first thing you might picture is a beachfront vacation or a tour of mountain waterfalls. While the state's 320-mile-long coastline and hundreds of cascades are a great place to start, expand your aquatic options with a peaceful paddle through the Albemarle Sound, fly-fishing in the Tuckasegee River, or a forest-lined tubing cruise down a Piedmont waterway. For crowd-free white-sand beaches, kick off your flip-flops and dive into a good read at White Lake, or try to solve the mystery of Lake Waccamaw, one of numerous Carolina bays whose formation has yet to be fully explained. One thing that's clear about all these spots (beyond the water itself): They're filled with potential for your next getaway.



**BOARD MEETINGS** Ideal wind conditions and geography bring primo surfing waves to Wrightsville Beach. Hang ten with Tony Silvagni Surf School in nearby Carolina Beach.



**PURE BLISS** Subterranean springs feed the pristine waters of White Lake near Elizabethtown. With no tides or currents, its shore is considered one of the nation's safest beaches.



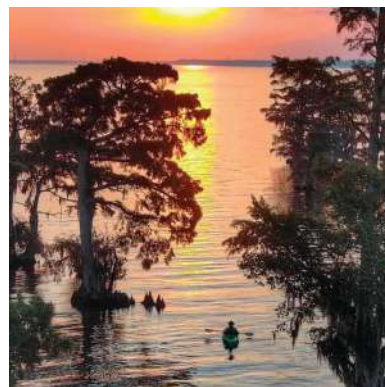
**MYSTERIES AFLOAT** Scientists can't say exactly when and how Carolina bays like Lake Waccamaw were formed, but it's no secret that this one's great for swimming, boating and dock-tastic photo ops.



**WHAT LIES BENEATH** Harmless hellbenders — the largest salamanders in the U.S. — slither in the New River, named a National Wild and Scenic River for its surrounding mountain majesty.



**LAZY RIVER** Let the gently flowing Dan River do the work during two- to three-hour floats with MadTown Tubing in Madison. Special tubes for your cooler allow easy beverage access.



**ROOTED IN BEAUTY** Join Native Girl Kayaking for a tour of cypress trees in the Albemarle Sound. The postcard-ready surroundings are known as the Cypress of the Shallows.

STORY: JESS HOFFERT, PHOTOGRAPHS: (WRIGHTSVILLE) RYAN DONNELL, (WHITE LAKE) STARBOARD AND PORT, (WACCAMAW) VISITNC.COM, (NEW RIVER) COURTESY OF NC DIVISION OF PARKS AND RECREATION, (DAN RIVER) COURTESY OF ROCKINGHAM COUNTY, TDA, (ALBEMARLE) COURTESY OF WASHINGTON COUNTY TRAVEL AND TOURISM AUTHORITY, (FLY FISHING) C2 PHOTOGRAPHY, (RAPPELLING) PATRICK SCHNEIDER, (CHEROKEE LAKE) COURTESY OF U.S. FOREST SERVICE, (HITCHCOCK CREEK) COURTESY OF VISIT RICHMOND COUNTY





**OUTDOOR NC LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLE** *Tips for Fishing*

If you're fishing on North Carolina's coasts or rivers, a fishing license is required for anyone 16 and older. Plan ahead and purchase a fishing license online prior to your outing.

**A QUIET ALLURE** Get your casting four-count rhythm in sync on the Western North Carolina Fly Fishing Trail, which includes the Tuckasegee River and more than a dozen other streams.



**ROPE WARRIOR** No experience is necessary (but you will need a bit of courage) to rappel down the rushing cascade of Little Bradley Falls with Green River Adventures in Saluda.



**PIER PARADISE** An ADA-accessible fishing pier, an abundance of picnic tables and bald eagles make for a family-friendly afternoon at Cherokee Lake Recreation Area near Murphy.



**TIME PADDLING** Canoe or kayak through tunnels of trees and past old textile mills once powered by Hitchcock Creek, now the 14-mile Hitchcock Creek Blue Trail in Rockingham.



# FABLED FAIRWAYS

Every golf course tells a tale, and these layouts are real page-turners, thanks to picturesque settings, intriguing backstories and designers' plot twists.



KILMARLIC GOLF CLUB  
POWELLS POINT

## Coast

***The game of golf is a breeze when you're playing on coastal courses shaped by waterways and windswept stands of trees.***

### **Kilmarlic Golf Club**

📍 Powells Point

Play your way through canopies of oak, pine and dogwood on a course that embodies Outer Banks beauty across 605 acres of maritime forest and wetlands. Though not a long layout, Kilmarlic is a challenging one, expertly bunkered and laced with water hazards — like the pond at the second hole, which you'll see again at the 11th, a par 3 with an island green.

### **Occano** 📍 Merry Hill

More than half the holes on this recently updated Arnold Palmer-designed course offer cart-stopping views of Albemarle Sound and Salmon Creek, particularly the par-three 17th — good luck keeping your eye on the ball and the flagstick. Wide fairways and frequent breezes invite aggressive driving (à la Arnie's hitch-up-your-pants style), but beware of challenging bunkers. The course is surprisingly rolling for the coast.

### **The Sound Golf Links at Albemarle Plantation**

📍 Hertford

Designer Dan Maples had a talented collaborator — Mother Nature — in carving out this course along Albemarle Sound. Holes ease through statuesque pines and moss-laden cypress trees, crossing ages-old marshes and waterways. The last three holes are especially memorable, thanks to amazing views of the Sound. The entire right side of the par-four 18th borders the water, letting you finish with a splashy flourish.





# One History, Many Voices.

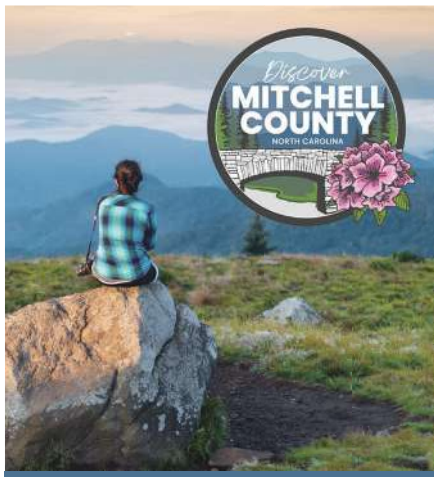
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## Piedmont

*Pinehurst is the pinnacle of Piedmont golf, but other worthy courses beckon from among the woods and gentle hills of North Carolina's sprawling midsection.*



### **Pinehurst Resort** Pinehurst

Native wire grass and rugged dunes from long-ago mining operations set apart Pinehurst No. 10, the newest addition to Pinehurst's stable of world-class courses. Tom Doak's design incorporates 75 feet of elevation change as it blazes through the Sandhills. (FYI, this is a walking course best played with a caddy. You can also use a complimentary pushcart.)

### **Caswell Pines Golf Club**

 Yanceyville

Off the beaten path yet less than an hour from Greensboro, this gem provides a tour of rippling Piedmont topography. Cart paths curve through groves of loblolly pines and mixed hardwoods, and greens slope significantly from back to front — keep your approach shots below the hole or face speedy downhill putts. The par-3 fourth hole is tricky, with two ponds poised to throw you off your game.

### **Southern Pines Golf Club**

 Southern Pines

One of the great Donald Ross' earliest courses, Southern Pines debuted in 1906, hosted a thrilling 1946 tournament duel between Ben Hogan and Sam Snead, and was painstakingly restored in 2021. It's perhaps the most dramatic golf terrain you'll find in the Sandhills, blurring lines between design and nature. Don't miss the "lost hole," a bonus par 3 inspired by Ross' original design.

### **Scotch Meadows Country Club**

 Laurinburg

Ross designed the front nine, which opened in 1938. The back nine came in 1965, courtesy of Russell Breeden, and now the whole course has a Ross vibe. The par-4 fifth hole is considered the hardest by most players. It's a dogleg left with out of bounds on the right and a hazard on the left. Par feels more like a birdie, and simply making it to the green is cause for celebration.



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## Mountains

**Next-level golf awaits in these mountain courses, where everything feels elevated, especially the sense of wonder fostered by the scenery.**



### **Sequoyah National Golf Club**

📍 Whittier

Owned by the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, this Robert Trent Jones II course leads golfers on a gorgeous yet challenging journey through oaks, firs and flowered valleys — with the Great Smoky Mountains looming on the horizon. The par-four 15th hole is especially stunning, its green seeming to float above the fairway. Signs at every tee box share stories of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

### **The Omni Grove Park Inn**

📍 Asheville

Follow in the spike marks of Ben Hogan, Bobby Jones, Jack Nicklaus and some U.S. presidents, all who've played the Donald Ross-designed course at this historic hotel. Ross finished the layout in 1926, and a 2001 update revived its roots. The course is not long, but undulating greens can cost you strokes. Views of the Blue Ridge Mountains make rounds unforgettable.



### **Apple Valley Golf Course at Rumbling Bald on Lake Lure**

📍 Lake Lure

The apple doesn't fall far from the tree, they say, so it's not surprising that Dan Maples — son of prolific course architect Ellis Maples — designed this layout. What's surprising is how level or downhill most of the holes are given the roller-coaster topography of the Blue Ridge foothills. But that doesn't mean the course is a pushover; steeply sloping greens test your putting prowess.

#### **OUTDOOR NC LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLE** *Leave It As You Find It*

North Carolina's golf courses and other green spaces are home to an amazing diversity of indigenous flora and fauna. Snap a picture instead of picking flowers and collecting pine cones.







# Visit Mother Nature's Playground

Whether you're strolling through the tree-lined streets of Downtown Elizabethtown, swimming in the crystal clear waters of White Lake, or enjoying one of many recreational areas; the Elizabethtown-White Lake area of North Carolina is truly a "great place to visit and a better place to live!"

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# GET SOCIAL



**STOCK AND GRAIN ASSEMBLY  
FOOD HALL HIGH POINT**

Explore North Carolina on the rocks, tapping into its booming social district scene, innovative mocktail menus and unique sipping venues that leave you stirred — not shaken. *writer* **NIKKI MILLER-KA**



UPTOWN GREENVILLE  
ARTWORK BY SIM ASHER AND  
JASON GREENBERG



## HOW TO BE *socially responsible*

When visiting a social district, pay attention to storefront signage that identifies where and when participating patrons can imbibe.

## SOCIAL DISTRICTS

***In more than 60 (and counting!) North Carolina cities, designated social districts allow you to carry open alcoholic beverages into participating shops, galleries and other attractions. Here's a sampler of four experiences across the state.***

### 1 Uptown Social District

📍 Greenville

*The home of East Carolina University is also home to a popular concoction fit for an alumni reunion. Now you can grab a refreshing Sup Crush to go, while taking in the revitalization of Dickinson Avenue and beyond.*

#### *Top spots*

##### **CRUSH VODKA DISTILLERY AND COCKTAIL BAR**

The Sup Crush, a spritzzy fusion of flavored vodka, freshly squeezed citrus and a dash of lemon-lime soda, gets the party started. The drink originated at **Sup Dogs**, a locally cherished hot dog joint across from the distillery.

##### **EMERGE GALLERY AND ART CENTER**

As the home of the Pitt County Arts Council, Emerge is not just an art gallery but a vibrant community hub. Check out rotating exhibitions and art installations, often showcasing local talent.

##### **NATIVE FINE DINER**

One part old-school diner, one part upscale canteen, it's a colorful contrast of nostalgia and innovation. Contemporary takes on classics include Disco Fries accented with truffles and Gruyère.

##### **PITT STREET BREWING COMPANY**

Sit under the covered beer garden in the front or romp around the pet-friendly outdoor space in the back and enjoy a few local brews here. The 15-barrel brewing system and craft beer production facility are in full view of the taproom inside this former Coca-Cola Bottling Company building.





## SOCIAL DISTRICTS

### 2 Sip n' Stroll Downtown

📍 Raleigh

*Historical architecture, high-tech wonders and modern public art define Raleigh's thriving downtown. Pair your explorations with one of many lively festivals held throughout the year.*

#### Top spots

##### BITTERSWEET

Can't choose between a cocktail and dessert? You don't have to. Weekends feature a blueberry peach galette topped with crème fraîche ice cream. (It makes a dreamy match with the toasted almond coffee cocktail.) A to-go window allows for uninterrupted neighborhood perusing.

##### DECO RALEIGH

Pop into this curated collection of fun and funky gifts — including gourmet foods, decor, candles, children's items, jewelry and home goods — from local independent makers, artisans, crafters and designers.

##### VIDERI CHOCOLATE FACTORY

The bean-to-bar chocolatier offers allergen-free confections sourced from fair-trade and organic farms. Witness the chocolate-making process and finish your visit on a sweet note: soft-serve topped with a chocolate cowboy hat and other glorious garnishes.

##### WHISKEY KITCHEN

Indulge in one of the house specialties, such as the Beer and Loathing with bourbon, amaro, lemon, honey and a splash of IPA. Elevate your experience with kitchen bites, including boiled peanuts or a slice of shoofly pie.



WHISKEY KITCHEN RALEIGH

##### OUTDOOR NC LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLE

*Trash Your Trash*  
Always remember to place your trash in garbage bags. Food scraps, cigarette butts and other litter can take years to decompose.







**NOMAD WINE WORKS**  
HIGH POINT

## 4 Main Street Social District

📍 Sylva

*Sylva proves you don't have to be a big city to be buzzworthy. Here, you can experience contemporary Main Street draws with a timeless mountain backdrop.*

### top spots

#### INNOVATION BREWING

A stop on the Jackson County Ale Trail, the brewery sits beside a mountain creek and serves up peak vistas. Hop into the rotating selection of seasonal brews, hard ciders and a house-made ginger ale. The on-site Cosmic Carry-Out food truck features pizza from Meatballs. (Learn more *below*.)

#### JACKSON COUNTY FARMERS MARKET

The year-round market invites you to sip, stroll and explore on Saturdays. Browse crafts vendors and artisans from Western North Carolina, peruse handmade pottery and treat yourself to baked goods — all to the tune of live music.

#### MEATBALLS

Santiago and Crystal Guzzetti own multiple hot Italian spots in town. This one's home to inventive pizzas — think pears, walnuts and balsamic vinaigrette as toppings — jazzed up further by zippy drink pairings like the spiced sangria.

#### WHITE MOON CAFE & DARK MOON COCKTAIL BAR

By day, White Moon welcomes you to their cozy cafe, only to morph into Dark Moon, a hidden cocktail bar nestled within the shop come nightfall. Nosh on avocado toast and other brunch favorites in the a.m., then return for evening delights as you savor cocktails amid a candlelit ambience.

## 3 Catalyst Social District 📍 High Point

*Anchored by the High Point Rockers baseball stadium, this buzzy area set within the Catalyst District boasts a brewery, a winery, a food hall and a colorful array of retailers.*

### top spots

#### THE BLOOMING BOARD

This boutique charcuterie and cheese shop invites you to gather, graze and shop. Check out the outdoor patio while you reserve a grab-and-go charcuterie board or stay and sip on *frosé* (all day).

#### NOMAD WINE WORKS

The first urban winery in the Triad region resides in a former furniture showroom. Nomad sources grapes, fruit and honey from around the country to make their cider, wine and mead.

#### PADDLED SOUTH BREWING CO.

Owner Dave Nissen “paddled south” from his native Minnesota to meet his wife, Amy, inspiring the name of this microbrewery. Try the Heat Series, a rotating lineup of fruited wheat beers tinged with serrano and habanero peppers.

#### STOCK AND GRAIN ASSEMBLY FOOD HALL

Choices, choices! High Point's sole food hall features two bars and seven food kiosks. Try Cahoots, a patio bar with Truist Point stadium (home of the High Point Rockers) providing the backdrop.



**WHITE MOON CAFE SYLVA**



WELDON MILLS DISTILLERY  
WELDON



**PAW**  
*of approval*

Furry friends are welcome inside or on the patio at **Weldon Mills Distillery**. Adjacent walking trails along the Roanoke River provide ample space for strolls and sniffs.

## SHOWSTOPPING SIPS

**Lights. Camera. Drink!** With surroundings both calm and cool, these spirited spots are ready for their close-ups.

### In a Theater

Originally a 1940s-era movie house, **Mars Theatre Brewing Co.** in Mars Hill earns a PG rating (pretty glorious) for its crowd-pleasing pub fare (nachos smothered in beer cheese) and craft beer lineup.

### In the Mountains

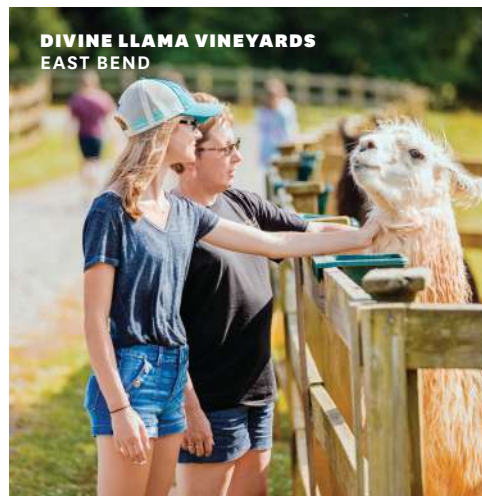
The rich, rolling terroir of the Hendersonville area lends itself to well-balanced vintages and serene vistas at **Stone Ashe Vineyards**. Plan your visit around a live music event, best enjoyed with a glass of estate-grown Riesling, Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc and others.

### In a Former Pharmacy

Once a community drugstore, New Bern's **The Old Pinnix** now soothes with gourmet toast instead of Tylenol. Locals arrive for their shot of caffeine in the mornings. At night, chat over cocktails — such as the Cherry Rosemary Old Fashioned. It's guaranteed to cure your ills.

### On a Llama Farm

Come for the vino and stay for the furry friendships at **Divine Llama Vineyards** in East Bend. For fun photo ops, try a llama trek along 2 miles of pastoral hiking trails that wind through the farm.



### Along a Canal

Follow history along the Roanoke Canal Trail while savoring the artistry of spirits produced at adjacent **Weldon Mills Distillery**. Sample Soldier's Cut bourbon and rhubarb gin inside an 1892 corn mill before hitching a trolley ride to the production facility for a tour.



## MARVELOUS MOCKTAILS

*Crafted with care and creativity, these zero- and low-proof cocktails use the finest ingredients, ensuring a flavorful journey with every sip.*

### MERLE'S WILKESBORO



### Il Cigno Italiano

📍 Swansboro

Renowned for its meatballs and manicotti, this traditional Italian restaurant boasts a whimsical mocktail menu. The standout is Swan Juice, where muddled raspberries and blackberries dance with orange and strawberry juices. It's all crowned with a splash of lemon-lime soda.

### Kindred

📍 Davidson

You'll never go wrong with the barkeeper's choice at the nationally recognized restaurant of Joe and Katy Kindred, famed for their milk bread. Discuss your preferences and savor a custom drink, which comes with a keepsake handwritten recipe.

### Lantern

📍 Chapel Hill

Under the stewardship of chef and owner Andrea Reusing, this decades-old restaurant has garnered national acclaim for its innovative fusion of Asian flavors. Dive into their spirit-free Yuzu Verjus Spritz, a blend of verjus blanc (white grape juice), yuzu citrus, cucumber and tonic.

### Merle's

📍 Wilkesboro

A 154-year-old cottage is home to this cozy, chic bar. Their garden-inspired, zero-proof cocktails are deceptively complex. Take the Smoking Citrus, a blend of juices served in a smoking bell and garnished with a rim of lime, smoked salt and poblano pepper powder.

### The Velvet Hippo

📍 Durham

On the rooftop or at an indoor tabletop, the Tomorrow-Friendly menu highlights low- and no-alcohol options. Get sweet with She Is the Moment (NA gin, lemon and muddled blackberries). It goes down easy after shared plates of Cuban sliders, Tajín-dusted elote dip and cheeses served with fig jam.

### THE VELVET HIPPO



### MERLE'S



### THE VELVET HIPPO DURHAM



# NO LIMITS

Throughout North Carolina, you'll find attractions that provide ways for everyone to enjoy visiting as fully as possible.

*writer* **GARY THOMPSON**



**RAQA // BY FRANK STELLA,  
NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM  
OF ART RALEIGH**

## ACCESSIBLE MUSEUMS

*This trio of inclusive destinations makes it easier than ever to explore, discover and learn.*

### **Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture**

📍 Charlotte

Patrons with vision loss can use Apple iBeacons to navigate the museum. The devices, installed as part of Charlotte's No Dark Doors initiative, use Bluetooth to transmit audio descriptions to nearby smartphones.

### **International Civil Rights Center & Museum**

📍 Greensboro

Three tour options suit different mobility and comfort levels. Interactive Virtual Tours are entirely online, consisting of prerecorded footage and a live discussion (via Zoom) with a senior museum docent.

### **North Carolina Museum of Art** 📍 Raleigh

Visitors who are deaf and hard of hearing can take a tour in American Sign Language on the third Saturday of every month. They'll find assistive listening devices in the auditorium and open captioning at video stations.





**NIDO & MARIANA  
QUBEIN CHILDREN'S  
MUSEUM HIGH POINT**

## A HIGH POINT FOR EVERYONE

*The Home Furnishings Capital of the World also leads the way in providing a different kind of comfort: helping visitors with autism and sensory sensitivity travel with confidence.*

Sensory-friendly attractions abound in **High Point**, the first Certified Autism Destination on the East Coast. **Distractions Art Studio** knows some of its painting customers prefer to create with little background noise, so they schedule Sensory Safe Hours on the first and third Saturdays each month and every Wednesday evening. The **Nido & Mariana Qubein Children's Museum** offers quiet areas for those needing to retreat when overloaded. The highly interactive museum also provides a sensory guide to its spaces and exhibits.

Realizing unfamiliar accommodations can throw off anyone, **JH Adams Inn** has headphones and fidget toys available, plus a low-sensory area where overstimulated guests can take breaks. Few corners of the world are judgment free, but **Q's Corner** is. The sensory-based gym lets all kids play without limitations. Their multisensory room is simultaneously stimulating and calming.

Restaurants can get noisy and crowded, so at **Sweet Old Bill's**, they serve North Carolina barbecue with a big helping of TLC — the staff is trained and certified to help diners with autism and sensory sensitivity feel welcome and comfortable. Before watching High Point Rockers baseball at **Truist Point**, check out the stadium's sensory guide. If someone needs to take themselves out of the ball game, the picnic area and team store offer quieter spaces.



**NIDO & MARIANA  
QUBEIN CHILDREN'S  
MUSEUM HIGH POINT**



# LET'S PLAY

*Everyone deserves a chance to experience nature, history and just plain fun in North Carolina's great outdoors. These fresh-air attractions put an accent on access.*

## **Carolina Beach**

Don't let mobility challenges throw sand on a day at the beach. Thanks to local groups, you can use one of several beach wheelchairs offered free of charge by the Carolina Beach Parks and Recreation Department. Reserve one for up to a week and pick it up on-site.

## **Carowinds** Charlotte

Rent strollers, wagons, wheelchairs and electric conveyance vehicles (ECVs) on a first-come, first-served basis

at the amusement park's rental center. Some ECVs can be rented in advance. Water wheelchairs are available at on-site Carolina Harbor Waterpark attractions.

## **Havens Gardens Park**

### Washington

An all-inclusive playground along the Pamlico River includes two fully accessible play structures, sensory panels, rubber safety surfacing and a Liberty Swing — an Australian innovation that sets wheelchair users free to glide with glee.







### **North Carolina Zoo**

📍 Asheville

When it feels like, well, a zoo here, reach for a sensory bag packed with fidget tools, noise-canceling headphones and other resources. Designated quiet zones provide more respite, and noisier areas are labeled Headphone Zones. Wheelchairs and ECVs are available to rent.

### **LeJeune Memorial Gardens** 📍 Jacksonville

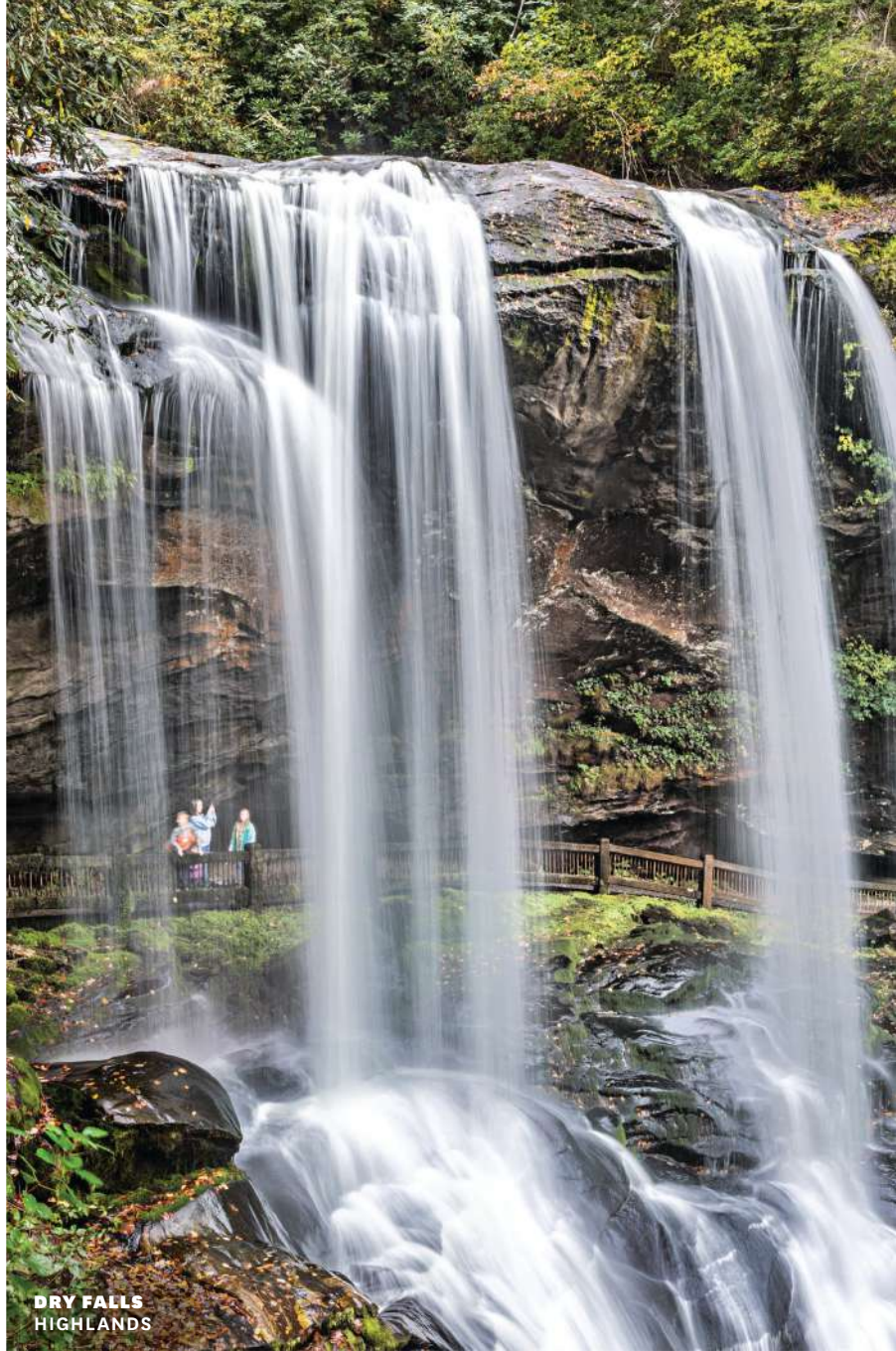
Paved, wheelchair-accessible paths make it easy for everyone to honor those who serve our country and remember the ones who sacrificed their lives for freedom. Highlights include a Vietnam Veterans Memorial and a 9/11 Memorial beam from the World Trade Center.

### **Sylvan Heights**

#### **Bird Park**

📍 Scotland Neck

Visitors in wheelchairs can access all the aviaries and use nearly all the nature trails — most paths are paved. Staff can suggest routes when you check in. Rent nonmotorized wheelchairs (free) from the Visitor Center.



**DRY FALLS**  
HIGHLANDS

## ROADSIDE WATERFALLS

No chasing these waterfalls — they flow near the road. **Dry Falls**, a 75-foot-tall cascade in Nantahala National Forest near Highlands, is named for how it drops over a cliff, leaving space to walk behind and stay dry. Wheelchair users can enjoy the view from a lookout ramp along US-64. Pull off US-276 just north of Brevard to reflect on 60-foot-tall **Looking Glass Falls**, a highlight of Pisgah

National Forest and arguably the state's most accessible waterfall — it's visible from the roadside as it swan-dives into a swimmable pool. The long and winding road that leads up White Oak Mountain from Columbus passes **Shunkawauken Falls**, a 150-foot-high thriller-spiller that passes beneath the road for double views. Marvel from your vehicle. (There's limited room to park or walk on the roadside.)



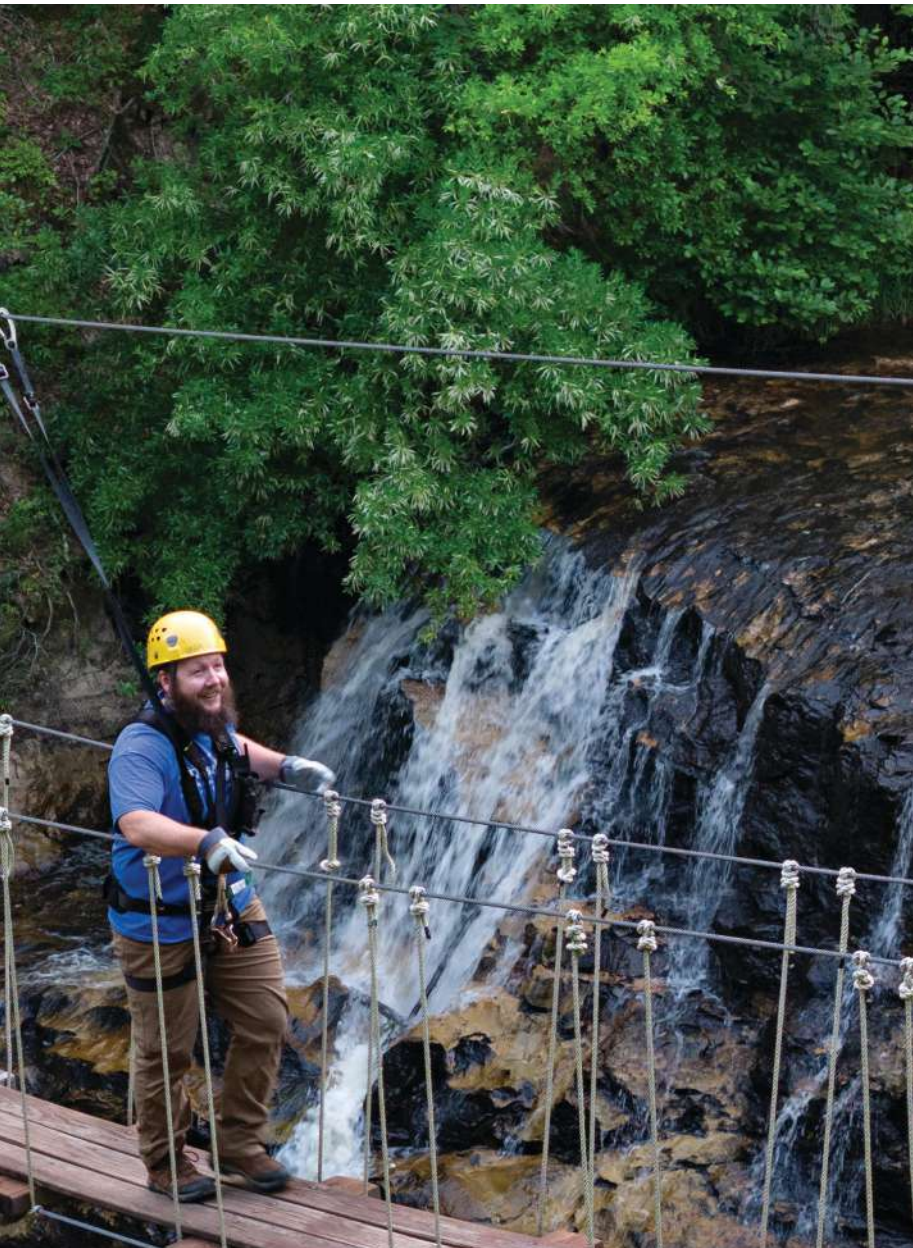
A photograph of two women crossing a suspension bridge over a waterfall in a forest. The woman on the left is wearing a pink top and black leggings, while the woman on the right is wearing a white shirt and blue jeans. Both are wearing red helmets and safety harnesses. The bridge is made of wooden planks and is suspended by ropes. The waterfall is visible in the background, and the surrounding area is lush with green trees.

# PASSION POINTS

*writer* **TREE MEINCH**

Human nature motivates us to share life's most inspiring moments, and our memories grow richer when other people get a taste. For a fresh dose of awe, follow the leads of local guides as you step boldly into your next travel frontier.





# ZIPLINING

**Think of them as express routes through nature — melding courage, adrenaline and environmental education along the way. These spots literally go**

**above and beyond in delivering unforgettable journeys.**

## **ZipQuest** 📍 Fayetteville

It's one thing to build an epic zipline park sustainably integrated into dense forest and waterfall terrain. It's another to ensure that destination is as accessible as possible, which is a North Star value at ZipQuest. "A big part of the tour guide's role is to coach and support guests in every way," course manager Greg Shinn says. During his 14 years at ZipQuest, one of his most memorable experiences involved supporting a wheelchair user who was determined to zipline after a paralyzing traffic accident. Shinn has also guided a 95-year-old guest and her 93-year-old sister through all eight ziplines. For a truly unique thrill, anyone can book a weekend NightQuest expedition, complete with a bridge walk past the course's waterfall illuminated by spotlight. "I call us the Disney World of Fayetteville," Shinn says.

## **MORE TO** *explore*

### **NANTAHALA OUTDOOR CENTER**

📍 Bryson City

Choose your active endeavor: mountaintop tour or adventure park in the trees? Both zipline excursions are just a taste of the heart-thumping feast at this 500-acre campus with Nantahala River whitewater and Great Smoky Mountains vistas.

### **NAVITAT CANOPY ADVENTURES**

📍 Barnardsville

Maybe you've zipped through a treetop canopy before. Ready to up the ante? Near Asheville, Navitat's premier Mountaintop Tour includes two lines spanning more than half a mile between two mountain peaks. Side-by-side lines allow you to fly with a buddy for moral support (or a little friendly competition).

### **THE SWAMP PARK**

📍 Ocean Isle Beach

Your feet are sure to stay dry when you stick to the treetops. And these aren't just any hardwoods. The Cypress Canopy Zipline Tour promises an intimate encounter with its swamp trees — some more than 100 years old. Watch for deer, raccoons and even wild boar in the wetlands below.

### **U.S. NATIONAL WHITewater CENTER**

📍 Charlotte

This home to the world's largest human-made whitewater river serves up more than paddling fun. Cable bridges, ropes courses and ziplines round out the adrenaline-pumping offerings. You can glide down some of the lines after dark or book tickets for a Zipline and Dine event, featuring local sips and bites.



# ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

**There's no substitute for local intel when encountering wildlife. Follow these experts and stewards for the lay of the land and learn how to tread respectfully.**



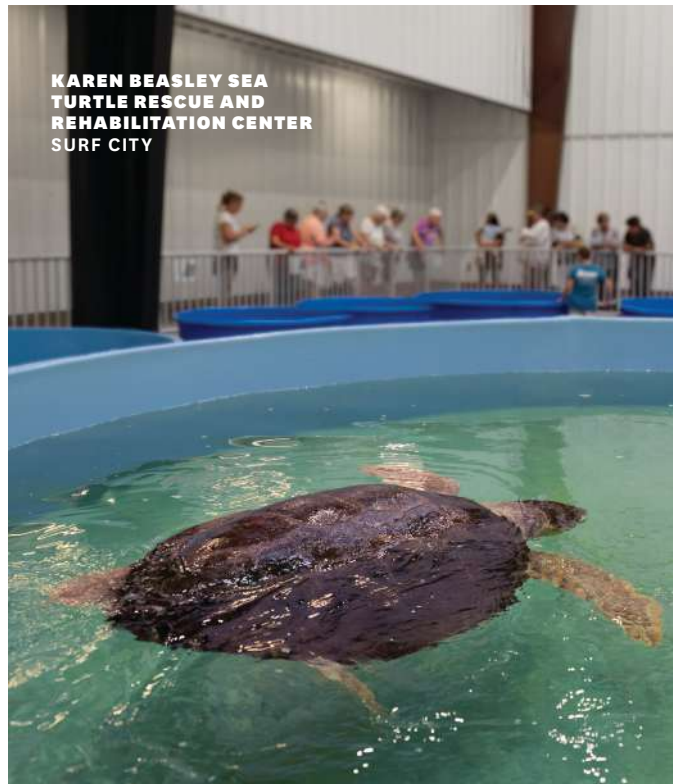
## **Black Bears** 📍 Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula

When it comes to the beloved black bear — often associated with the Appalachian Mountains — Outer Banks resident and wildlife photographer Mark Buckler likes to share a not-so-little secret. “We have approximately twice as many black bears on the coastal plains of North Carolina as they do in the Western NC mountains,” Buckler says. And the biggest ones in the world. He once counted 92 different bears on a one-day outing near his home.

Suffice to say, it pays for animal-loving visitors to hire an expert like Buckler. He's a trained wildlife biologist who spent two decades doing field research and teaching before pivoting to private immersive

wildlife excursions for visitors — cameras encouraged. One of his go-to regions, the Albemarle-Pamlico Peninsula beside the Outer Banks, claims the greatest concentration of black bears in the world. Two key sites there, the Pocosin Lakes and Alligator River national wildlife refuges, also boast bobcats, river otters, tundra swans and alligators. “We have an amazing variety of wildlife here that is really kind of a hidden gem,” Buckler says.

For the last 10 years, the town of Plymouth has been spreading the word via the **National Black Bear Festival**. Book a trip for the first weekend of June to encounter all things black bear at this equal parts educational and festive riverfront celebration.



**KAREN BEASLEY SEA TURTLE RESCUE AND REHABILITATION CENTER**  
SURF CITY



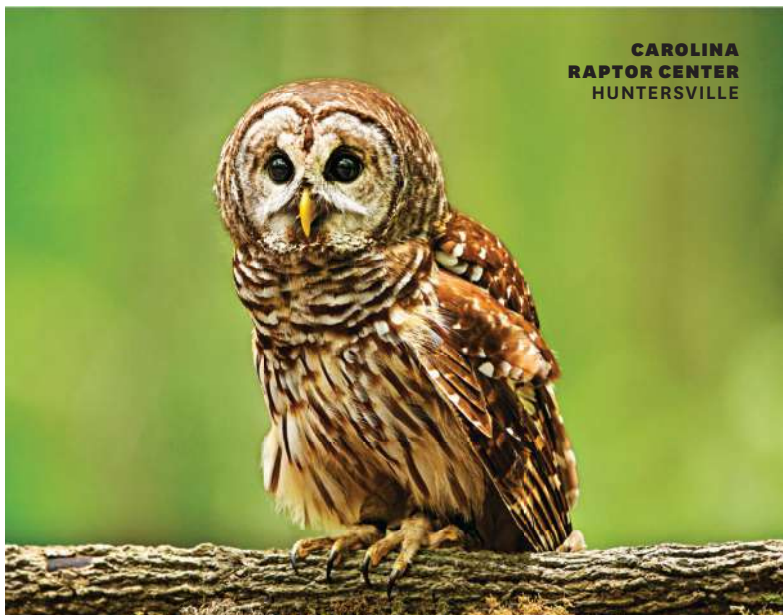
**WILD HORSE  
ADVENTURE TOURS  
COROLLA**



**OUTDOOR NC LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLE**

*Keep Wildlife Wild*

No matter whether you're visiting black bears, birds, horses or other creatures, all wildlife should be treated with respect in all areas.



**CAROLINA  
RAPTOR CENTER  
HUNTERSVILLE**

PHOTOGRAPHS: (BEAR) KRISTY MODLIN, (HORSE) RYAN DONNELL, (TURTLE) COURTESY OF KAREN BEASLEY, (OWL) PATRICK SCHNEIDER

**MORE TO** *explore*

**CAROLINA RAPTOR CENTER**

📍 Huntersville

Eagles, owls and other birds of prey put on a show at this rehabilitation and education center. Join for daily flybys, presentations and personal chats with the keepers. The site offers bags with noise-reducing headphones and other supports for anyone with sensory challenges.

**CAROLINA TIGER RESCUE**

📍 Pittsboro

Healing and safety take center stage for the tigers, lions, cougars and other mammals here. Most were recovered from roadside attractions, personal homes and other dire circumstances. Buy advance tickets (consider a twilight visit or an exclusive private tour) to witness the more sociable cats and support the cause.

**IT'S A ZOO LIFE** 📍 Macclesfield

Enjoy a hands-on introduction to Macclesfield's most photogenic residents. The exotic creatures include a sloth, a wallaby, a zebra and kangaroos. You can pet many of them (and even hold reptiles) while a trained guide shares educational and humorous stories.

**KAREN BEASLEY SEA  
TURTLE RESCUE AND  
REHABILITATION CENTER**

📍 Surf City

This reputable nonprofit has evolved into an eco-conscious destination since its humble start in 1997. Make a reservation to visit the active sea turtle hospital, and consider "adopting" a patient to fund its road to recovery and wild release.

**WILD HORSE ADVENTURE  
TOURS** 📍 Corolla

One of the first conquistadors to arrive in North Carolina introduced nearly 100 Spanish mustangs in the 1500s. Roaming free ever since, the equine descendants congregate along Swan Beach. Wild Horse Adventure Tours hosts safari-style visits in customized Hummers.



# HIKING

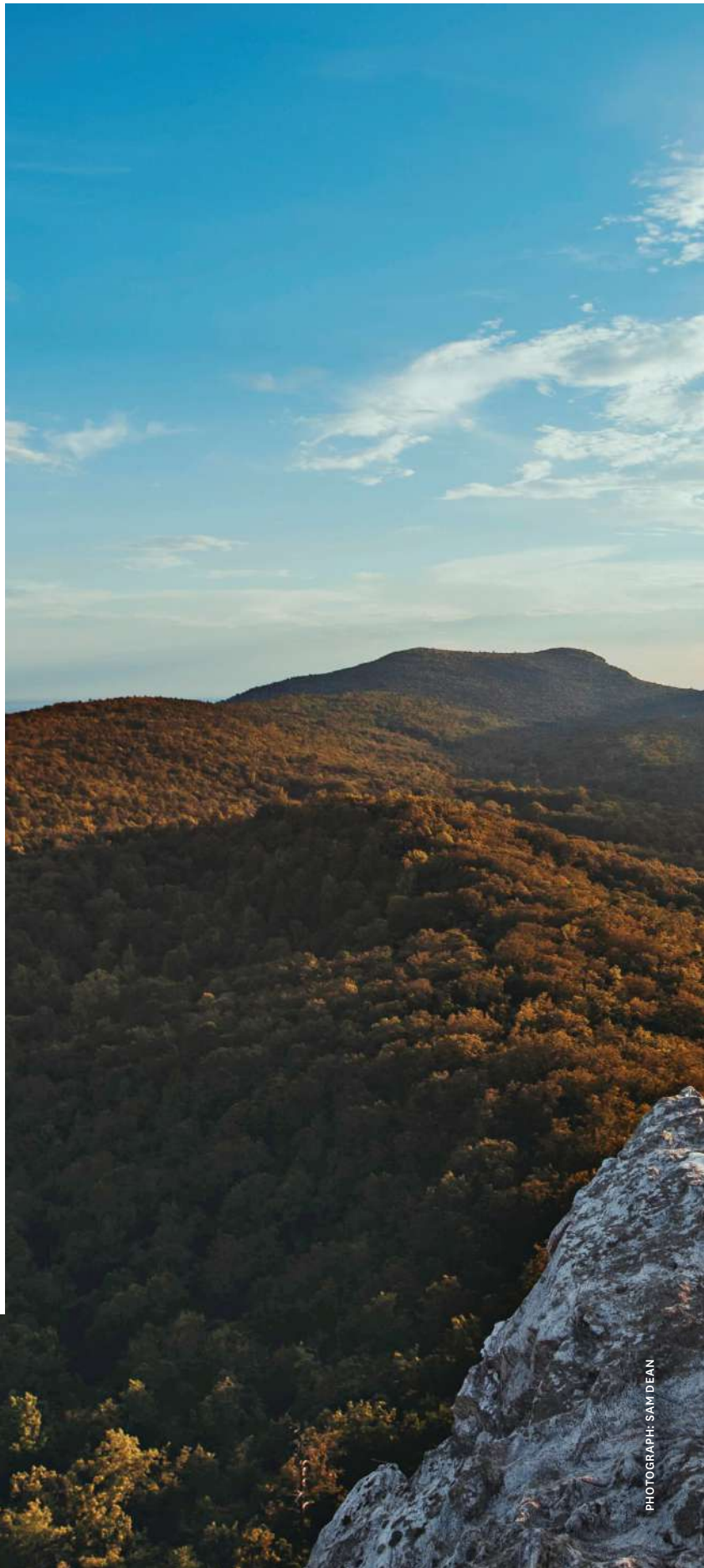
**The magnitude of coastal trails, Piedmont preserves and mountain wilderness is equal parts exhilarating and intimidating, even for an expert. Allow these entry points to narrow your focus.**

## **Great Smoky Mountains National Park** 📍 Bryson City

Sarah Jones grew up 20 minutes from Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The Saturdays of her youth were spent following trails through the maze of trees and wild rockscapes. But that wasn't enough. In adulthood she moved closer, now calling a Fontana Lake houseboat home. The pristine reservoir abuts the park's southern perimeter in North Carolina, where Jones spends much of her time introducing newcomers to the mountains of her youth.

"My dad has always said that they get into your soul," says Jones, a lead guide with **Carolina Bound Adventures**. "I think that has to do with the age of these mountains." Indeed the Appalachian Mountains are one of the world's oldest ranges. And North Carolina's stretch of the Smokies claims some 270,000 acres of protected national parkland. (Visit [nps.gov/grsm](https://www.nps.gov/grsm) for the latest status on trail and road conditions in the park.)

Visiting with a guide adds layers of depth and stories. If waterfalls are your thing, Jones can take you on an intermediate hike to three of them, plus the sites of former pioneer homes. "There are so many things you would have walked past without a guide," she says. As a forester who previously worked in the park, Jones can also name nearly every native plant along the way.







**OUTDOOR NC LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLE**

*Stick to Trails and Overnight Right*

Keep to designated trails and durable surfaces to protect trailside plants. Camp at existing or designated sites.

**MORE TO** *explore*

**CROATAN NATIONAL FOREST**

📍 Havelock

The ecologically abundant Neusiok Trail, a river-to-river trek, is one of the longest continuous hiking paths along the coastal plain. Bookended by a sandy beach on the Neuse River and a salt marsh along the Newport River, hikers wind through cypress groves, pine savanna and shrubby bogs. The 23-mile stretch is a favorite segment of the 1,175-mile Mountains-to-Sea Trail.



**HANGING ROCK STATE PARK**

📍 Danbury

The popular 3.6-mile Hanging Rock Trail showcases an erosion-resistant quartzite cliff in the ancient Sauratown Mountains. Named after the Saura Indians, these formations represent the state's most easterly peaks. Plan at least an hour to reach the crown jewel above the Piedmont forest and countryside.

**HARPER CREEK FALLS TRAIL**

📍 Collettsville

One of the pristine swimming holes anchoring this backcountry gem measures bigger than an Olympic-size pool. Add in the multitiered waterfall backdrop and rocky ledges (plus a second swimming hole), and the National Wild and Scenic River designation needs no further explanation. Various routes offer moderate-to-strenuous treks between 3 and 10 miles long.

**MORROW MOUNTAIN**

**STATE PARK** 📍 Albemarle

Birders, runners, hikers, horseback riders and leashed dogs all find solace in this sanctuary 45 miles east of Charlotte. It's home to some of the most extensive prehistoric quarries in the U.S. Follow the park's Morrow Mountain Trail 5 miles round-trip to take in the panorama atop the peak.





# EXPLORING THE SHORE

**Savor the sea spray, paddle  
the shoals and climb  
spiral staircases preserving  
centuries of history  
with an endless soundtrack  
of soothing waves.**



## **Old Baldy Lighthouse** Bald Head Island

When you sink your toes into the salty sea-foam and sand of South Beach on Bald Head Island, you're touching the southernmost point in North Carolina. The rugged, patchy spire of Old Baldy pierces the western horizon as the oldest standing lighthouse in the state. For a moment, your senses may whisk you away to the 19th century. The absence of motorized vehicles sprinkles magic across this sanctuary of coastal ecosystems. Miles of secluded

beaches and dunes meet marshland and maritime forest. And it's just a 20-minute ferry ride from the mainland.

"Biking is a beautiful way to get around," says Jake Grossman, an island guide and collections coordinator with the Old Baldy Foundation. Golf carts, too, are available for rent beside the ferry dock. Grossman offers history tours that immerse visitors in the terrain and other forces that shaped the island since the Revolutionary War. This pivotal

land mass at the mouth of the Cape Fear River helped guide countless 18th-century cargo ships transporting North Carolina tar. And the lighthouse once served a stint as a WWII radio tower.

When you climb Old Baldy's 108 spiral steps today, the uninhibited outlook captures the geographical novelty of this land bridging river and sea as well as past and present. "It takes a couple of breaths to get up there, but it's a breathtaking view," Grossman says.





**OUTDOOR NC LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLE**  
*Caring for the Coast*

Stick to designated trails and durable surfaces to and from the beach or water. Coastal grasses are fragile and can easily be impacted by visitors traveling across them.



**MORE TO** *explore*



**HAMMOCKS BEACH STATE PARK** 📍 Swansboro

With a kayak or canoe, paddle your way to four remote barrier islands inside this park spanning mainland and marshland. Bear Island — accessible by ferry starting in spring 2025 — presents sun-soaked dunes, beach access and solitude.

**BOW TO STERN BOATING**

📍 Oriental

Choose a sailboat, kayak or a nimble power boat among the fleet of 60-plus options. Charters include half-day river cruises and multiday sea excursions. Or take sailing lessons with this riverfront boating center in The Sailing Capital of North Carolina.



**JOCKEY'S RIDGE STATE PARK** 📍 Nags Head

Celebrating 50 years in 2025, the park claims the tallest active sand dunes on the Atlantic Coast. More than 100 years ago, the Wright Brothers tested gliders nearby to prepare for their groundbreaking flight. Try soaring above it all today in a replica 1902 aircraft via the Wright Glider Experience with Kitty Hawk Kites.

**THE LOST COLONY** 📍 Manteo

Sea, sand and live symphonic drama come together in perfect harmony at Waterside Theatre. The true drama about the mysterious disappearance of the first English settlers in the Americas unfolded right here on Roanoke Island. This theatrical retelling has thrived for 88 years.



**ROANOKE RIVER LIGHTHOUSE** 📍 Edenton

At this point you might call it a striking mobile home. This screw pile-style lighthouse has occupied three different sites since the 1860s. Preservationists moved the beacon to Edenton Harbor in 2007, and major restoration work was done before it opened to the public. A replica can be found a few miles south in downtown Plymouth.



# NATIVE CULTURE

**Acquaint yourself with the earliest-known humans in the state's landscape. Many Indigenous cultures remain present and vibrant today.**

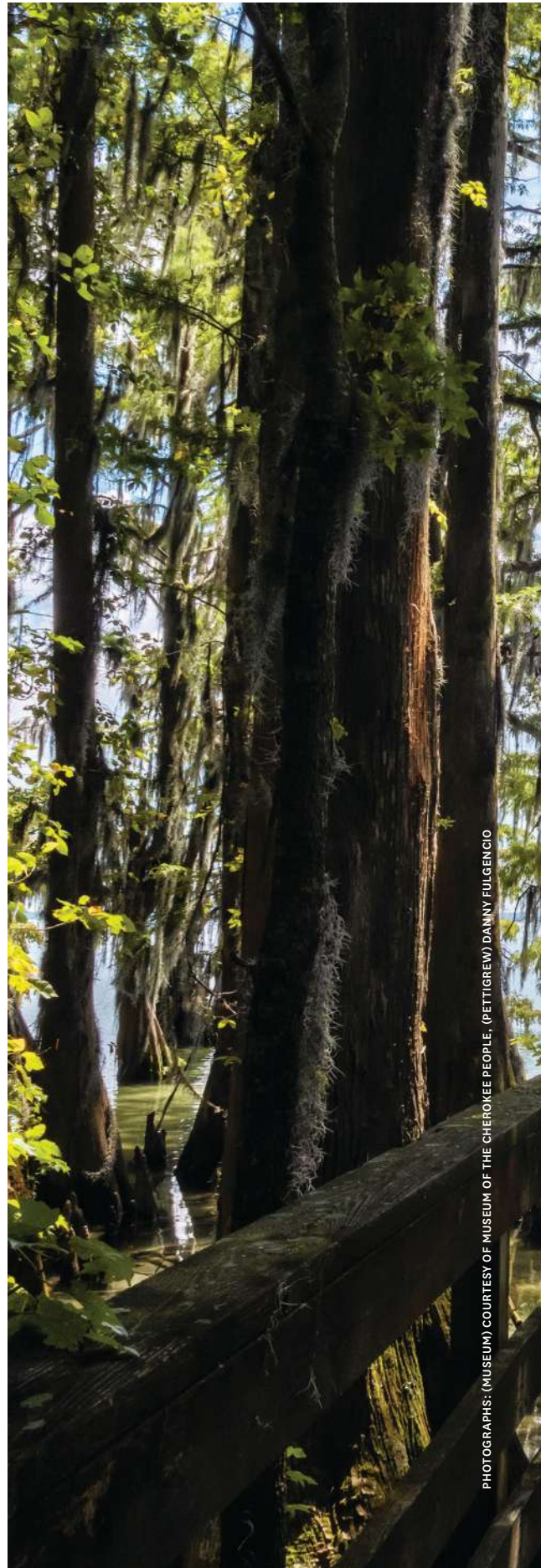
## Museum of the Cherokee People

📍 Cherokee

Museum of the Cherokee People Executive Director Shana Bushyhead Condill likes to quiz visitors: How many Indigenous tribes are registered in the U.S. today? The correct answer — 574 — surprises most people. Guesses often start in the single digits. Beyond any stats, though, Bushyhead Condill wants people to know the vibrant and present-day Cherokee culture, which has remained and adapted within the region now called Western North Carolina. “For all of us, these mountains are home. We are of this place,” she says.

Bushyhead Condill, a citizen of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, is leading a multiyear renovation and rebrand at the museum, which is one of the longest-operating tribal museums in the country. She says it's becoming “a living, first-voice museum.” Rotating exhibits might dive deep into fashion or current government sovereignty on tribal lands, and the store introduces Indigenous makers through home decor, CBD-infused creams, clothing and an extensive collection of books.

Across the street, **Qualla Arts and Crafts Mutual** is another must-stop for original Cherokee art, wares and jewelry. Nearby, the reservation's **Fire Mountain Trails** system draws many mountain bikers who also flock to **BC Outdoors** bike shop and taproom. The gear-and-beer haven is conveniently located along the Oconaluftee River, which is itself a timeless entity tying the community together.



PHOTOGRAPHS: (MUSEUM) COURTESY OF MUSEUM OF THE CHEROKEE PEOPLE, (PETTIGREW) DANNY FULGENCIO





## MORE TO *explore*

### **CLIFFS OF THE NEUSE**

**STATE PARK** 📍 Seven Springs

Before colonial contact, the Native Tuscarora and Saponi tribes performed ceremonies here, drawn to the elevation and medicinal plants. Today, the 90-foot-tall bluffs above the Neuse River hold secrets about their ancient past. You might spot seashells or marine fossils in the colorful layers forming the rock face.

### **FRISCO NATIVE AMERICAN MUSEUM & NATURAL HISTORY CENTER** 📍 Frisco

Examine an expansive collection of Indigenous artifacts, including an exhibit dedicated to the original Outer Bankers: Native Roanoc, Hatorask, Croatoan and other barrier island tribes. Annotated trails guide visitors through acres of maritime forest.

### **MUSEUM OF THE SOUTHEAST AMERICAN INDIAN** 📍 Pembroke

The permanent Indigenous artifacts include a 1,100-year-old dugout canoe recovered 40 years ago in a nearby river. The museum grounds are also their own piece of history, being located at UNC Pembroke, the only state-supported school in the U.S. created by and for American Indians.

### **PETTIGREW STATE PARK**

📍 Creswell

Native American history here has sparked a National Geographic Society project and vast archaeological research. Through joint work, 30 dugout canoes and hundreds of Indigenous artifacts have been identified in the park's Lake Phelps, the second-largest natural lake in the state.

### **TOWN CREEK INDIAN MOUND**

📍 Mount Gilead

Mystery surrounds the Indigenous community that built a large earthen structure rising 15 feet high. Experts believe this marked a political and religious center between 1100 and 1400 A.D. Artifacts on display include materials from as far as the Great Lakes region, indicating impressive trade routes.





# REVOLUTIONARY AND CIVIL WAR HISTORY

**Since before the birth of the United States, North Carolina played a lead role in shaping history. Visit the battlefields and structures that paved the way to life today.**



## Halifax State Historic Site Halifax

With less than 200 residents, Halifax might be easy to overlook on an atlas. But it's hard to chart the birth of the United States without the early influence of this Colonial community within a few miles of Interstate-95. On April 12, 1776, the provincial Congress here unanimously adopted the Halifax Resolves. This made North Carolina the first Colony to call for total independence from Great Britain. Less than three months later, the Declaration of Independence was signed in Philadelphia.

"With America's 250th anniversary commemoration taking place right now, it's a pretty big deal," says Frank

McMahon, assistant site manager at Halifax State Historic Site. Depending on the day, you can find McMahon and other costumed interpreters giving Colonial beer-making presentations, leading printing-press demonstrations and teaching 18th-century games in the restored 1790 Eagle Tavern. "Taverns in those days were like a hotel, restaurant and bar," McMahon says of the civic gathering place.

Along the Roanoke River, Halifax also served as a hub in a maritime Underground Railroad for freedom seekers, which McMahon highlights on tours. (Visitors can also follow a short Underground Railroad trail with

interpretive signage along the river.) A renovation of the visitors center at Halifax State Historic Site is slated for completion during the ongoing 250th celebrations. And negotiations are underway to secure on loan an original Halifax Resolves document from the Library of Congress.

## THE BIG EVENT

Stay up-to-date on America's 250th anniversary celebrations at [America250.nc.gov](http://America250.nc.gov)



## AMERICA'S SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL?

You won't hear this in the musical *Hamilton*, but the American Revolution may have started in Mecklenburg County. On May 20, 1775, the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence (existence unproven) was reportedly signed in Charlotte. Celebrate its 250th anniversary by strolling the Charlotte Liberty Walk — there's a marker at the site of the room where it (possibly) happened.



### OUTDOOR NC LEAVE NO TRACE PRINCIPLE

*Be Considerate of Others and Share the Outdoors*

People have a range of skill levels and different ideas about how to enjoy the outdoors. Respect others so that North Carolina's natural spaces will be welcoming and relaxing for all.

## MORE TO explore

### AVERASBORO BATTLEFIELD AND MUSEUM

📍 Dunn

More than 28,000 Union and Confederate troops clashed on this former plantation of the John Smith family in March 1865. The multiday battle left nearly 1,500 wounded and dead. You can visit the restored Chicora Civil War Cemetery and a tract of land that the Confederates' first defense line occupied.

### BENTONVILLE BATTLEFIELD STATE HISTORIC SITE

📍 Four Oaks

Plan a March trip for the dynamic 160th anniversary reenactment of the state's largest-ever battle. The grounds mark where Confederate troops mounted the only significant attempt to defeat Gen. William T. Sherman's march through the Carolinas.

### FORT FISHER STATE RECREATION AREA

📍 Kure Beach

Once home to a firing range and other services in the early 1940s, visitors now meander through marshland, forest and beaches, following 6 miles of shoreline to sightings of loggerhead sea turtles and piping plovers.

### FORT MACON STATE PARK

📍 Atlantic Beach

The U.S. Army built this brick fortress before the Civil War as a national coastal defense. An ambitious restoration preserved impeccable details throughout the barracks and exterior walls. It's no wonder the popular park draws some 1 million visitors a year.

### MOORES CREEK NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD

📍 Currie

When loyalist forces reached Moores Creek on February 27, 1776, it sparked the first battle of the American Revolution in North Carolina. The National Park Service site offers a visitors center, miles of trails and a November candlelight tour of the battlefield after dark.





# BIRD SPOTTING

Avian aficionados flock to North Carolina year-round to spy winged wonders soaring, resting and nesting. *writer* **BRIAN KRAMER**





## WINTER WONDERLANDS

The birding fun doesn't have to stop when temps drop. Astonishing numbers of migrating waterfowl — including thousands of mallard, ring-necked and wood ducks — spend the winter months at **Pelee National Wildlife Refuge** and are easy to track from your vehicle on the 2.5-mile Wildlife Drive near Wadesboro. Greater snow geese, swans and raptors catch their breath at **Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge** in

Rodanthe. Weekly guided bird walks take place all year. The unique elevated wetlands at Columbia's **Pocosin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge** draw tundra swans (**Z**) and rarer ducks like northern shovelers and hooded mergansers. Chart your own route through the

Pungo Unit, a bird-friendly zone with 44 miles of dirt and gravel roads.

### 1 SEA OF BLUE

Although solitary hunters, great blue herons raise their young in colonies, notably tiny Heron Island in **Lake Norman**, near the town of Cornelius. A restoration project added vegetation and rocks to prevent the island from being washed away by waves, resulting in a rookery with 60 to 80 nests that are protected from human visits from April to August. Watch the action through binoculars or via a live stream at [ncwf.org](http://ncwf.org).

### 2 BIRD'S-EYE PERSPECTIVE

Hikers have long loved the short but rigorous climb (1.5 miles round-trip) to the top of **Hawksbill Mountain** near Linville Falls for stunning views of the gorge below, but birders will find their eyes gazing skyward to watch the raptors that frequent the area. Peregrine falcons, turkey vultures, owls and numerous hawk species seem to float effortlessly above the craggy landscape — then suddenly dive for dinner.

### 3 FLOATS OF FANCY

**Lady Swan Boat Tours** launch out of Swansboro, taking a maximum of 26 passengers into the surrounding marshes from early spring through early winter. The pontoon-style boats allow for unimpeded vistas during the gentle one- to two-hour rides, many of which focus on wildlife, including ospreys that appear in early March and build elaborate nests above the water.

### 4 BEACH DWELLERS

Rare flora and fauna coalesce on **Bird Island Reserve**, a protected 1,481-acre barrier island at the west end of Sunset Beach. Loggerhead sea turtles may be the marquee attraction, but a year-round cast of shorebirds — such as brown pelicans, black skimmers, ibis, egrets, terns and herons — will also lift your spirits. After exploring the island, leave a message in the beloved Kindred Spirit mailbox, about 1.5 miles southwest of the public beach access.

### 5 AVIAN CENTRAL

For a birding double-shot, head for Sanford. Skirt the two lakes at **San-Lee Park** and glimpse a bevy of water-loving birds, notably the belted kingfisher with its distinctive blue mohawk. A scenic 17-mile drive north, **White Pines Nature Preserve** features 6 miles of trails through forests populated with wild turkeys and pileated woodpeckers. Keep your ears open for migratory musicians, including yellow-billed cuckoos and yellow-throated warblers.

### 6 EDUCATION STATION

Boost your birding IQ with a visit to **Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center** in Four Oaks. This 2,856-acre property offers guided walks and classes, many on topics like migration and birdhouse building. Download their Bird Checklist to track how many of the 176 species you've encountered (which may include white-eyed vireos or Kentucky warblers).

## GLIDE AND SEEK

The expert guides of **Native Girl Kayaking**, based out of Hertford, have a well-trained eye for avian life. Their fall trips through the **Dismal Swamp Canal** are likely to include sightings of bald eagles and pileated woodpeckers, along with the occasional green heron, black bear and migrating monarch butterfly. Follow the 4.4-mile water trail loop at **Merchants Milpond State Park** in Gatesville, looking and listening for woodpeckers and warblers darting among old-growth cypress trees.



The free Merlin Bird ID app is a favorite recognition tool for both beginning and seasoned birders. The popular Photo ID feature suggests ornithological names for your pics of feathered friends.





**TRYON PALACE**  
NEW BERN



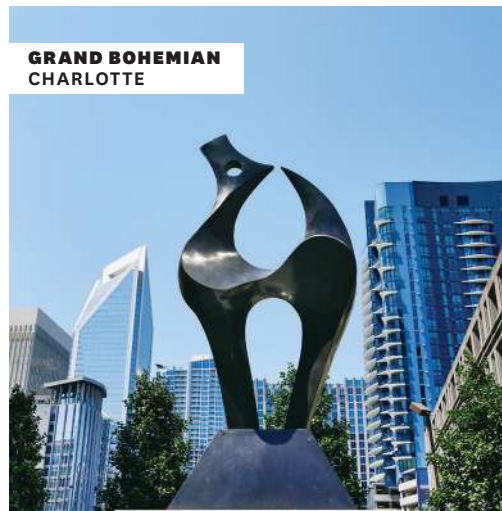
**GROVE ARCADE**  
ASHEVILLE

# ARTISTIC SHOWCASE

It's tough to compete with the innate beauty of North Carolina's majestic mountains, tranquil beaches and enchanting forests, but these seven creative cities and towns overflow with inspiration. *writer* **ANN MARIE BROWN**



**KIMPTON CARDINAL**  
HOTEL WINSTON-SALEM



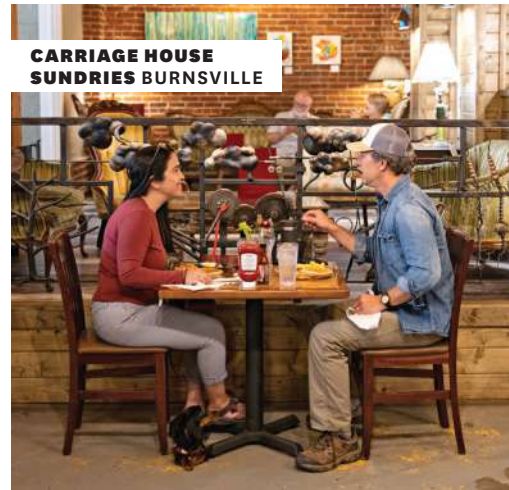
**GRAND BOHEMIAN**  
CHARLOTTE



**ELIA BIZZARRI**  
HILLSBOROUGH



**THE CARGO**  
DISTRICT  
WILMINGTON



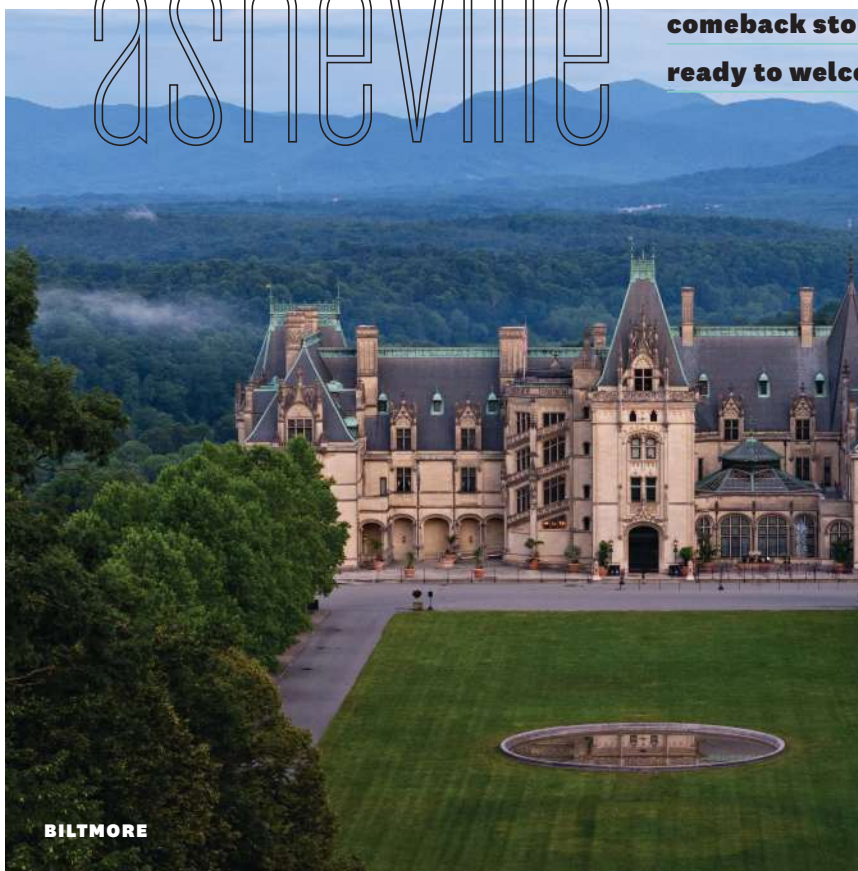
**CARRIAGE HOUSE**  
SUNDRIES BURNSVILLE



## FRAME-WORTHY EXPERIENCES IN

# asheville

**As this creatively driven pocket of the mountains continues to rebuild from Helene, become part of its emerging comeback story at inspiring stops ready to welcome you back.**



BILTMORE

### Asheville Art Museum

Two connected buildings — a 1926 library and an ultramodern glass edifice with a rooftop sculpture terrace — hold more than 7,500 works of 20th- and 21st-century American art. Join a basket-weaving or drawing class or attend a music performance.

### Biltmore

The 250-room Biltmore House was built in the late 1800s and was the vision of George Vanderbilt, grandson of shipping and railroad magnate Cornelius Vanderbilt. You can't visit all 35 bedrooms and 43 bathrooms during audio-guided tours, but you will

see a wealth of intricate architectural flourishes, 16th-century Flemish tapestries, and world-class paintings by the likes of Monet and Renoir.

### Grove Arcade

Embellished with winged lions and grinning gargoyles, this Tudor Revival structure contains a public market with 30 boutiques and eateries, including a mash-up of a champagne bar and used book shop. Outside the building, artisans sell jewelry, paintings and locally made honey.

### LaZoom

Live comedy clashes with local history in the best

way on wacky bus tours through downtown and the Montford Area Historic District. Get your rubber chicken "ticket" at check-in, order a beverage to go and prepare for hilarity to unfold on the bus as well as outside your window.

### The S&W Market

This gilded Art Deco food hall houses a sampler of Asheville's diverse food and beverage scene, with eight vendors, including mezzanine-level Highland Brewing. A couple of must-try highlights: crispy sandwich perfection from Buxton Chicken Palace and silky salted caramel ice cream from The Hop.

## SHADES OF BLACK MOUNTAIN

Artistic mavericks like John Cage, Buckminster Fuller and Robert Rauschenberg pushed 20th-century boundaries at Black Mountain College. The experimental school closed in 1957, but its creative energy thrives in this hill-encircled hamlet 15 miles east of Asheville. Park on Cherry Street, then explore Black Mountain on foot. Check out the class schedule at **Black Mountain Center for the Arts** for pottery, visual arts and dance experiences. Numerous shops brim with local and regional art, such as the metal character sculptures and painted gourds at **Mountain Nest**, which showcases more than 100 area artists.





HEARTH GLASS  
AND GALLERY

# burnsville

## TRAILS TO TREASURE

**This mountain enclave punches well above its weight for public art. Street sculptures, murals, and a collection of studios and galleries dot this town of 1,600.**

Drive through its leafy valley and spot barns and churches gussied up with painted wooden squares. Two driving tours showcase Burnsville's many quilt blocks, which comprise one of the largest concentrations of this rural art form. A special block decorates the *Yancey Common Times Journal* building near the town square: **Burnsville Sundial** is the world's only quilt block that tells time.

More artsy surprises are within walking distance. On West Main Street, two fourth-generation glass artists run **Hearth Glass and Gallery** out of a former gas station. See the works of local glassworkers — cups, vases,

ornaments, bowls, lighting — or attend a glassblowing demonstration. For a full-blown arts getaway, visit during the **Mount Mitchell Crafts Fair** the first weekend in August and peruse 200-plus vendors to the tune of bluegrass music.

Stay for the weekend at the 22-room **NuWray Hotel**, an 1833 charmer that's just been restored with a blend of original and contemporary touches. Sleep in the main hotel building or in one of four spacious rooms in the Carriage House, and dine at **Carriage House Sundries**, where the menu features pizzas and grilled sandwiches, plus an array of beer, wine and scotch.

## MOUNTAIN MURALS

Mural making is a grassroots effort in Morganton, 55 miles southeast of Burnsville. School kids and community members help to choose mural themes and join in painting parties. Sterling Street's **Reflections of Legacy** highlights the dreams of Burke County's African Americans. Green Street's **Our Legacy** depicts the cultural connection between 1970s Laos and modern Morganton. Project manager Kathryn Ervin says, "The project has brought families, neighbors and coworkers together around the idea of identity and belonging."



## A COLORFUL WEEKEND IN

# winston-salem

**The past and present blend seamlessly in this former tobacco hub that's been reinvented as a destination for art, food and culture.**

### FRIDAY

Check in at **Kimpton Cardinal Hotel** downtown. The former R.J. Reynolds headquarters (which provided architectural inspo for the Empire State Building) is now a fun-loving lodging with stylish decor, bowling lanes and a two-story spiral slide. Dinner awaits downstairs — steak frites and onion soup at **The Katharine Brasserie and Bar**.

### SATURDAY

Kick off the day by rewinding the clock at **Old Salem Museums & Gardens**, a restored

Moravian settlement dating back to 1766. Chat with costumed interpreters as you wander the town's cobblestone streets. Stand inside the tavern where George Washington slept, and pop into **Winkler Bakery** to purchase a tasty souvenir — traditional Moravian ginger cookies.

At lunchtime, swing over to **Incendiary Brewing Company** and nab an outdoor table by the railroad trestles — the brewery was built under an abandoned train track. Kick back with an award-winning IPA, then walk five



blocks to Liberty Street's **ARTivity on the Green**, an art-themed park dotted with giant steel ribbons, an ever-changing mural wall and grassy berms for picnicking. Save time to drop by **Underdog Records** and flip through racks of vinyl LPs.

When evening falls, join the festive crowd at **Earl's** for soulful Southern fare and live country and bluegrass music. Finish your peach cobbler and see a concert at **The Ramkat**, a hopping venue across the street.

### SUNDAY

Wrap up the weekend at **Reynolda House Museum of American Art**. The 1917 mansion built for a tobacco tycoon now contains artworks by Thomas Eakins, Frederic Edwin Church and Georgia O'Keeffe. Deputy Director Phil Archer says, "It's a small collection, but what you see is recognizable, much-studied work by important artists — the work they created when they were at the pinnacle of their powers."





# hillsborough

## STROLL

**This hive for right-brained creatives buzzes  
with five downtown galleries and other artistic endeavors.**



ELIA BIZZARRI

Renowned Hillsborough woodworker **Elia Bizzarri** makes Windsor chairs, rockers and barstools the old-fashioned way, using only hand tools to transform raw oak and pine into fine furniture. Each chair requires about 35 hours of labor in his custom-built workshop 100 feet from his house.

Bizzarri's in good company. The community's artistic anchor is **Hillsborough Gallery of Arts**, a light-filled space owned and operated by artists. Located in the historic Mercantile Center, the gallery stocks works in nearly every medium. A few steps away, the **Hillsborough Arts Council Gallery** hosts **Last Fridays & the Art Walk**, an event that links galleries, shops, and **Yonder: Southern Cocktails & Brew** restaurant for a lively once-a-month block party. Musicians play along the route, and artists give demonstrations at **Anne and Arthur Fine Arts Supply**, the local go-to for paintbrushes and creative advice.

Hillsborough has tempting food stops, too, like **Matthew's Chocolates**, an artisan purveyor of truffles, gelato, baked goods and espresso drinks. Stock up on favorites before visiting the expansive gallery at **Eno Arts Mill**, a working studio and public art space in a historic textile mill.



## PATCHWORK PARADISE

Get behind the wheel for a backroads drive on the **Person County Quilt Trail**. Start at Roxboro's **Person County Museum of History**, where a painted wood quilt square hangs on a weathered tobacco barn. Cruise through rolling farmlands and search for quilt squares on barns, homesteads and the **Boar's Nest**, a free museum dedicated to *The Dukes of Hazzard* television show.



## STYLE GUIDE TO

# charlotte

**A cosmopolitan hub merges its banking-minded personality with chic museums, cutting-edge street art and undeniably cool spots to eat and sleep.**

### EXPLORE

The **Bechtler Museum of Modern Art** is easy to spot. The 17-foot-high *Firebird*, a Niki de Saint Phalle sculpture glittering with mirrored tiles, guards the entrance. Inside, three floors hold some 1,500 works by modern masters like Paul Klee and Pablo Picasso. Next door is the sleek **Mint Museum Uptown**, where Summer Wheat's *Foragers* inspires awe. Four-story-high vinyl panels glow like stained glass, filling the atrium's 96 windows. Even without an admission ticket, you can dine at chic **Mariposa** or browse the museum store, and entry is free on Wednesday evenings. Four miles northeast, **NoDa** is the Queen City's street-art enclave, with colorful murals splashed across North Davidson Street's taverns, boutique shops and trash receptacles.



### DINE

Many Southerners worship a perfectly cooked steak, so it's fitting that **Supperland** steakhouse is housed in a former church. Gather around the table and tuck into an 18-ounce ribeye or Wagyu pot roast, then share the seasonal pie. Indecisive eaters find their bliss at **Optimist Hall**, where 20-plus food stalls cook up Sichuan dumplings, Indian street food, Southern barbecue and ramen bowls. Local bands play in the outdoor

courtyard. For date night, impress your sweetheart with a reservation at **The Fig Tree**, which serves sauteed sea bass and grilled octopus in an enchanting Craftsman-style bungalow.

### STAY

An overnight at **Grand Bohemian Charlotte** feels like sneaking into a swanky art gallery after closing time. Vibrant paintings, haute furnishings and bold accents populate the guest rooms, hallways

and on-site Argentinian-style **Mico Restaurant**. Indulge in a hydrofacial at **Poseidon Spa**, then sip a snazzy cocktail on the rooftop patio. For even more pampering, check into **The Ritz-Carlton, Charlotte**, a LEED Gold-certified property with a rooftop garden, heated indoor pool and bi-level penthouse spa. Sample the sweets at chocolate lounge **Bar Cocoa** and work off calories in the city-view fitness center.



# CELEBRATE CREATIVITY

In May, the eight-day **North Carolina Plein Air Art Festival** draws artists from around the country, who leave their studios behind and head outdoors to paint the spectrum of New Bern's street and waterfront scenes.



## TIME TRAVEL THROUGH

# new bern

**History touches everything in this Inner Banks town that cherishes its past while serving up modern comforts.**

Completed in 1770, **Tryon Palace** was an architectural crown jewel of the former British Colonies. After the American Revolution, it became the state's first Capitol and even hosted George Washington in 1791 when he attended a ball and danced the night away with approximately 70 local women. "Just think of the conversations that occurred within those walls," palace spokesperson Nancy Figiel says.

The grand Georgian-style structure burned to the ground in 1798, but 20th-century preservationists rebuilt it,

staying true to the original architectural plans. On a guided tour, you'll time travel through opulent rooms filled with centuries-old furniture, silver, glassware and other decorative arts while costumed interpreters bring early American history to life. Afterward, wander 16 acres of formal gardens overflowing with seasonal blooms and bordered by artfully shorn hedges.

Then flip the calendar forward to the present-day. Wander through downtown New Bern to hunt for the city's colorful bears. Nearly 100 hand-painted fiberglass Bruins stand sentry

at street corners and storefronts. At Pollock and Hancock streets, admire the ***Greetings from New Bern*** mural (painted by community members), then catch a play or music performance at the neighboring **New Bern Civic Theatre**, a 1910 movie house upgraded with ADA-accessible seating and restrooms.

Cap off the day with live music at **Baxter's 1892**, a brick-walled speakeasy. Restful sleep awaits at **The Harvey**, a 1790s mansion that marries old-time architecture with contemporary furnishings.



# wilmington

## COASTAL CANVAS



THE PLANT OUTPOST

**A dynamic art museum, indie boutique shopping and a riverside promenade place this coastal city high on the list of America's coolest waterfronts.**

### Cameron Art Museum

This 42,000-square-foot institution houses 4,500 works, including Japanese woodblock prints and Mary Cassatt paintings, plus an ambitious schedule of workshops, gallery talks, film screenings and concerts. An outdoor sculpture park honors the United States Colored Troops, who won a critical Civil War battle here. On-site **Cam Cafe's** weekend brunch draws a crowd.

### The Cargo District

Shopping is more fun at Wilmington's anti-mall, a nine-block radius of repurposed shipping containers that shelter shops, cafes and drinkeries. Browse locally made goods at **Crafted Outpost**, tropical houseplants at **The Plant Outpost** and esoteric LPs at **The Fuzzy Needle**. When hunger calls, **CheeseSmith** whips up next-level grilled cheese sandwiches.

### The Hive

This trendy lodging straddles the line between vacation rental and traditional hotel. Eighteen loft-style suites have full-size kitchens and living rooms with ample seating, so friends and family can hang out together or carve out solo work spaces. Original art and au courant furnishings add to the fashionable vibe.

### Wilmington Riverwalk

Spanning nearly 2 miles, this waterside walkway skirts the Cape Fear River, overlooking Wilmington's historic district and the moored **Battleship North Carolina**. It's become the city's main connector to public parks, shops, boutiques, galleries and outdoor cafes.

## SPLASHY DISPLAYS

As Carolina Beach celebrates its centennial in 2025, its creative tide is rising. The seaside promenade is splashed with murals, such as the colorful scenes of a famous partner dance in JEKS' **Tribute to Carolina Shag** and Scott Nurkin's **Summer on the Boardwalk**, which wraps around Hurricane Alley's cafe. Fourteen more murals depict subjects such as sea turtles, jellyfish and the region's native Venus flytrap.



TRIBUTE TO CAROLINA SHAG BY JEKS



## PAW of approval

You and your canine companion can get in your steps along the **Wilmington Riverwalk**.

As sunset draws near, nosh on a giant soft pretzel at **Anne Bonny's Bar and Grill** and linger at the outdoor bar until golden hour.



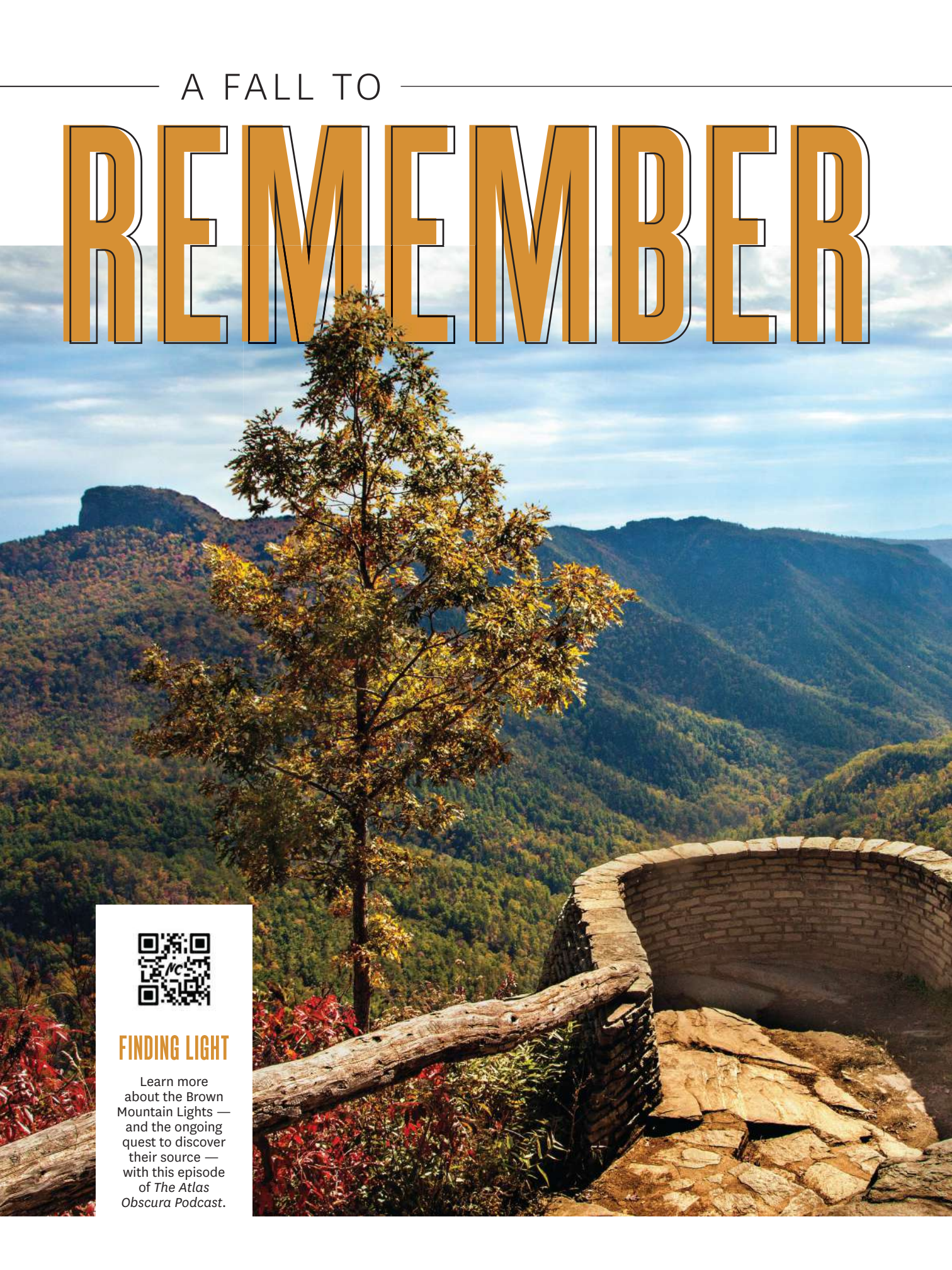
A FALL TO

# REMEMBER



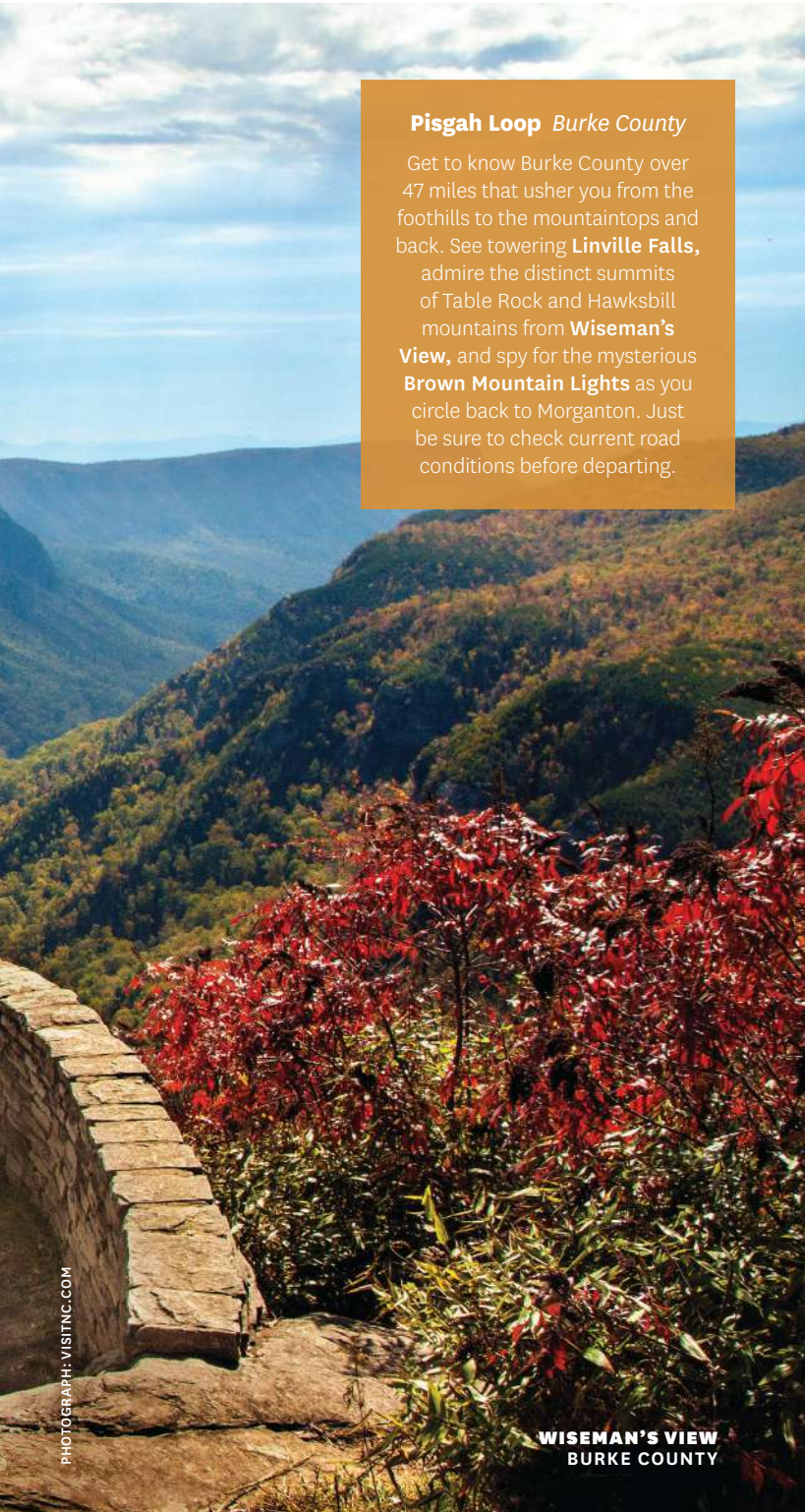
## FINDING LIGHT

Learn more about the Brown Mountain Lights — and the ongoing quest to discover their source — with this episode of *The Atlas Obscura Podcast*.





As fireflies fade and nights turn cool, fall color washes down mountainsides and spreads across North Carolina. Join the party with scenic drives, vibrant vistas and events ranging from pure fun to downright spooky. *writer* **JASON FRYE**



**Pisgah Loop** *Burke County*

Get to know Burke County over 47 miles that usher you from the foothills to the mountaintops and back. See towering **Linville Falls**, admire the distinct summits of Table Rock and Hawksbill mountains from **Wiseman's View**, and spy for the mysterious **Brown Mountain Lights** as you circle back to Morganton. Just be sure to check current road conditions before departing.

**WISEMAN'S VIEW**  
BURKE COUNTY

PHOTOGRAPH: VISITNC.COM

## inspired routes

### **These lesser-known scenic drives**

**deliver a bounty of fall color, cool**

**coastal discoveries and scenes that**

**have excited generations of artists.**

#### ■ **Alligator River Route**

*Lake Mattamuskeet to Manteo*

You'll definitely have the chance to spot the namesake of this 71-mile path, especially as you get out and explore the wetlands of **Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge**. Along with gators, try to spy any bears or wolves before crossing the Croatan Sound to **Roanoke Island**, the site of a mysterious English settlement — the empire's first in what would become the United States.

#### ■ **NC-12 Ocracoke Island**

Along this short but striking 13-mile strip of coastal highway, you'll find marsh creeks winding through emerald grasses, groves of evergreen maritime forest and beaches where your footprints may be the only ones around. Pair oysters and the day's catch (available on numerous restaurant menus) with orange-tinted sunsets.

#### ■ **Pottery Highway Seagrove**

Along this 25-mile stretch of NC-705, explore the rolling hills and piney woods where dozens of pottery studios and October's **American Craft Week** welcome creatives of all media. Between Eagle Springs and Seagrove, studios like **Carolina Crockery**, **Ben Owen Pottery**, **Crystal King Pottery** and **Eck McCanless Pottery** keep this art tradition thriving.

#### ■ **Surry Scenic Bikeway Surry County**

The heart of Yadkin Valley overflows with wineries along more than 500 miles of cycle-friendly pathways. Pedaling mountain bikes to the top of **Pilot Mountain** pays off with Piedmont panoramas as you gain a half-mile of elevation in only 3.6 miles of roadway. And rolling into wineries (like **Shelton Vineyards** in Dobson and **Old North State Winery** in Mount Airy) gives you numerous occasions to toast the ride.



# unique perspectives

**Capture a fresh view of autumn with the help of hot-air balloons, steam locomotives, ranchers and nature guides.**

## FROM THE *pasture*

In Ayden, the Jersey cows at **Simply Natural Creamery** produce the milk that makes the ice cream at **Sally's Dairyland**. Icy treats, family-friendly farm games, and a meet and greet with cows and calves make for a sweet stop. In Chapel Hill, join sheepdog Sophie on the Sheep Herding Experience at **Union Grove Farm**. Watch her masterfully move 240 Katahdin sheep from pasture to pasture.



## FROM THE *air*

With the wind in your hair and the Piedmont countryside spread like a patchwork quilt below, join one of Statesville's hot-air balloon pilots for an unforgettable flight. In October, **Carolina BalloonFest** fills the skies with billowing balloons above town, while a feast of festival food and live music ensures the party on the ground is just as good.

## FROM THE *beach*

While you're shelling on the **Shackleford Banks**, don't be surprised if you see hoof prints in the sand or hear a horse whinny in the woods nearby. More than 100 wild horses call this stretch of the Crystal Coast home. See their coats shining (from at least 50 feet away, per the law) as they wade in the surf, frolic in the dunes, and browse for a lunch of marsh grass and new-grown leaves.



## FROM THE *water*

As the wind rises, sails snap and a flotilla of sailboats scatters across the surface of **Kerr Lake**. This 50,000-acre reservoir in the rolling hills of Henderson has plenty of room for sailors, paddlers, water-skiers and anglers. Cast a line for largemouth and striped bass, listen for the call of kingfishers, or go for a swim in these pristine waters.

## FROM THE *rails*

Soak up peak views aboard the **Great Smoky Mountains Railroad** steam locomotive that puffs its way through fiery foliage in the Nantahala Gorge. Depart Bryson City Depot for scenic excursions, and book a Raft and Rail package through October if you want to add a splash of whitewater rafting to your autumn.



# frightfully fun

**Seasonal scares are close at hand throughout fall, when ghosts and ghouls take to woods, fields and storied streets. Ready for horror — or just a good time? Use the Scare-O-Meter to find the haunt that's right for your crew.**



## FIRST IN FRIGHT

Packed with paranormal places, scary stories and local haunts, North Carolina frightens visitors in the best way.

Explore the NC Haunted Trail's three regional segments (Mountain Mysteries, Paranormal Piedmont and Creepy Coast) or combine them into one thrilling statewide journey. Start plotting your supernatural escape at the above QR code, which also delves into spooky places to stay and gets you connected to the *First in Fright* podcast, a perfect accompaniment for your next haunted road trip across The Tar Heel State.

### **Granville Haunt Farm** *Oxford*

Drive out of reality and into a horror movie at Granville Haunt Farm, where clowns and horror icons from the big screen produce hair-raising thrills outside your vehicle.

SCARE-O-METER RATING: **7**

### **Haunted Forest at Panic Point** *Youngsville*

Will werewolves attack your hayride? Can you escape the corn maze with your sanity intact? With five haunted attractions on hand, you're in for the scare of your life.

SCARE-O-METER RATING: **10**

### **Hawfields Civitans Haunted Forest** *Mebane*

Howls and screams emerge from the wild woods, curling the toes of the faint of heart. Too scary for you? Their no-scare walk-throughs offer a more family-friendly experience.

SCARE-O-METER RATING: **2-6**

### **Historic Ghost Walk** *Elizabeth City*

Connect with the spirit world as ghosts and phantoms from Elizabeth City's past spin tales of the city's haunted history. Meet notable local residents at historic homes and along the streets of downtown.

SCARE-O-METER RATING: **2**

### **Hollerin' Haunts Hayride** *Clinton*

Masked murderers and creepy clowns stalk the woods and hunt the hayrides in both summer and fall. Their Halfway to Halloween Festival in early June boasts a Zombie Prom.

SCARE-O-METER RATING: **7**

### **Kersey Valley Spookywoods** *Archdale*

Frightening folks for four decades, these woods feature a nightmare-inducing cast to keep your adrenaline pumping. Good luck making it through the dark tram ride.

SCARE-O-METER RATING: **9**

### **Punkin' Chunkin' Festival** *Brasstown*

How far can a pumpkin fly? Find out via catapults, an air cannon and trebuchets that launch the orange gourds a country mile at the family-friendly fest.

SCARE-O-METER RATING: **1**

### **Reaper's Realm Haunted Farm and Trail** *Salisbury*

With a snort and a roar, a mutant hog lunges out of the dark, scaring you into the arms of an ageless witch and leaving you panting.

SCARE-O-METER RATING: **7**

### **Warrenton Fright Night** *Warrenton*

It's an event fit for the Addams Family — and possibly your family too. All ages find something to enjoy among the haunted house, ghost walk and kid-friendly games.

SCARE-O-METER RATING: **3**





# CELEBRATE WINTER



Embrace the cold or escape it. Swish down a mountain or unwind in a historic hotel, then light up the night at a glowing festival. Welcome to North Carolina's coolest season.

*writer* **AUSTIN CANNON**

**SUGAR MOUNTAIN RESORT**  
**SUGAR MOUNTAIN**





PHOTOGRAPHS: (SUGAR MOUNTAIN) LESLIE RESTIVO, (HAWKSNEST) JARED KAY



HAWKSNEST SNOW TUBING  
SEVEN DEVILS

# THRILL

***Pick your transportation mode of choice — skis, tubes or an alpine coaster — then whoosh down a mountain. You'll make it to the bottom just in time to do it all over again.***

## **Beech Mountain Resort**

📍 Beech Mountain

At the highest ski area in the eastern United States, 17 runs cascade from the mountain's 5,506-foot-high peak, forming a 95-acre snowbound playground. Each winter, the resort hosts Adaptive Ski Week, an instructional skiing clinic that welcomes hundreds of people with disabilities.

## **Cataloochee Ski Area**

📍 Maggie Valley

North Carolina's first ski area opened in 1961 to give local ranch hands somewhere to work during the winter. Today, the mountain hosts skiers and snowboarders making their alpine debuts: 44 percent of the slopes are rated for beginners, and you can reserve a lesson ahead of time.

## **Hawksnest Snow Tubing**

📍 Seven Devils

Spinning and sliding hundreds of feet down a snowy hill is almost guaranteed to put a smile on your face. After you pick one of the 25 lanes, deposit yourself and

the kiddo into an inner tube and unleash some joyful screams on the way down.

## **Sugar Mountain Resort**

📍 Sugar Mountain

Toward the bottom of the 5,300-foot-high peak, new skiers can swish around Easy Street and Little Nell. Oma's Meadow and Sugar Slalom are for the more experienced skiers, and while Whoopeddoo is fun to shout into the clouds, the run of the same name is only for experts. Après-ski at the Last Run Lounge? That's for everyone.

## **Wilderness Run Alpine Coaster**

📍 Banner Elk

Gravity shepherds riders down this 3,160-foot-long coaster that weaves and twists through the trees, with speeds reaching 27 mph for those who only brake when it's mandated. The track stays open during gentle flurries, so a ride in the winter months often comes with your own snow globe moment. Opt for the three-ride ticket; you won't regret it.

## Indoor Rushes

**Pump up the adrenaline inside. The country's largest vertical indoor skydiving wind tunnel awaits at Paraclete XP Indoor Skydiving in Raeford. Fly spread-eagle for several minutes — no plane necessary. Or get behind the wheel at Morrisville's Rush Hour Karting, where you can race your crew at up to 45 mph.**





**DANIEL STOWE BOTANICAL GARDEN BELMONT**

### **In a Century-Old Bank**

**The O’Neil**, a 101-year-old Renaissance Revival structure in Kinston, contains former bank and dentist offices that have been transformed into seven hotel rooms. The accommodations sit above the lobby’s original 16-ton vault door. Admire the hotel’s intricate plaster ceiling before hopping aboard the first registered elevator in North Carolina.

### **With Butterflies**

Butterflies representing dozens of species flutter around a glass-walled conservatory at Durham’s **Museum of Life and Science** when they’re not resting on more than 200 varieties of tropical plants. Step into the Insectarium for a closer look at invertebrates from around the world, including buzzing honeybees and fanged tarantulas.

### **At a Restored Cotton Mill**

Wander through a collection of taprooms, shops and restaurants across the **Rocky Mount Mills** campus, where the 19th-century mill in Rocky Mount was once one of the state’s largest textile producers. When you’re ready to call it a night, adjourn to your tiny house rental at adjacent **River and Twine**.

# CHILL

*Historic inns and a tiny house village recharge your batteries, while walks among orchids and butterflies offer a sneak preview of spring and summer.*

### **Among the Flowers**

You can meander Belmont’s **Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden** year-round, but for a burst of winter color, duck into the Orchid Conservatory. The five-story, 8,000-square-foot glass house is filled with blooming orchids and tropical plants near a waterfall.

### **On a Wraparound Porch**

Each room at **The Inn at Rosehill** in Monroe features French doors that open up to a 10-foot-wide porch on both the first and second floors. That’s where you’ll enjoy the sun rising over the 52 acres before a soul-warming, country-style breakfast.



## PAW

*of approval*

Your furry friend can join you for a patio brew at many of Rocky Mount’s breweries, and pets under 40 pounds are allowed to hog the human bed at **River and Twine**.



# ILLUMINATE

*The holiday season brings flickering light shows, rousing carols and — if the kids stay on the Nice List — a meeting with a certain big guy in a red suit.*

## Candy Land Christmas

📍 Lincolnton

**NOVEMBER–DECEMBER**

For more than a month, downtown Lincolnton is Christmas cheer central, especially during the annual candy-themed parade and tree lighting. On December nights, kids can meet Santa Claus in the park while adults relax on a carriage ride.

## Country Christmas Train at Denton FarmPark

📍 Denton

**NOVEMBER–DECEMBER**

The Handy Dandy Railroad chugs past Christmas light displays, a live nativity scene and dancing elves on its 1.5-mile track. Afterward, snag a photo with Santa at the train depot before heading to the Gingerbread House for cookies.

## Down Home Country Christmas

📍 Rose Hill

**NOVEMBER–DECEMBER**

The heartwarming show at Duplin Winery combines stories and carols with a multicourse meal in the winery's bistro. To make the most

of your evening, schedule a wine tasting beforehand and try the cheese dip.

## A Flat Rock Playhouse Christmas

📍 Flat Rock

**NOVEMBER–DECEMBER**

This lively performance of yuletide carols and choreography is sure to soften any Scrooge. The show changes each year, with performers blending classic holiday tunes and new foot-tapping favorites.

## Mike's Farm Festival of Lights

📍 Beulaville

**NOVEMBER–DECEMBER**

Come for the 10-layer chocolate cake at the farm's bakery; stay for an after-dark hayride through the holiday light display. You can also reserve a table at the farm's restaurant for a meal of classic fried chicken and mashed potatoes.

## NC Chinese Lantern Festival

📍 Cary

**NOVEMBER–JANUARY**

More than 40 LED-fueled lanterns may take the form of dragons, tigers



and pagodas to warm the evening sky at Koka Booth Amphitheatre. When you're finished walking through the displays, catch nightly performances of traditional martial arts, dance and acrobatics.

## Candlelight Christmas Tour

📍 Murfreesboro

**DECEMBER**

Horse-drawn carriage rides transport visitors through 1800s Murfreesboro. Candlelit walkways — and perhaps sparks from the blacksmith demonstration — will guide you toward 19th-century estates, including the boyhood home of Walter Reed, the army doctor whose work helped eradicate yellow fever.

## Southport Winterfest Flotilla

📍 Southport

**DECEMBER**

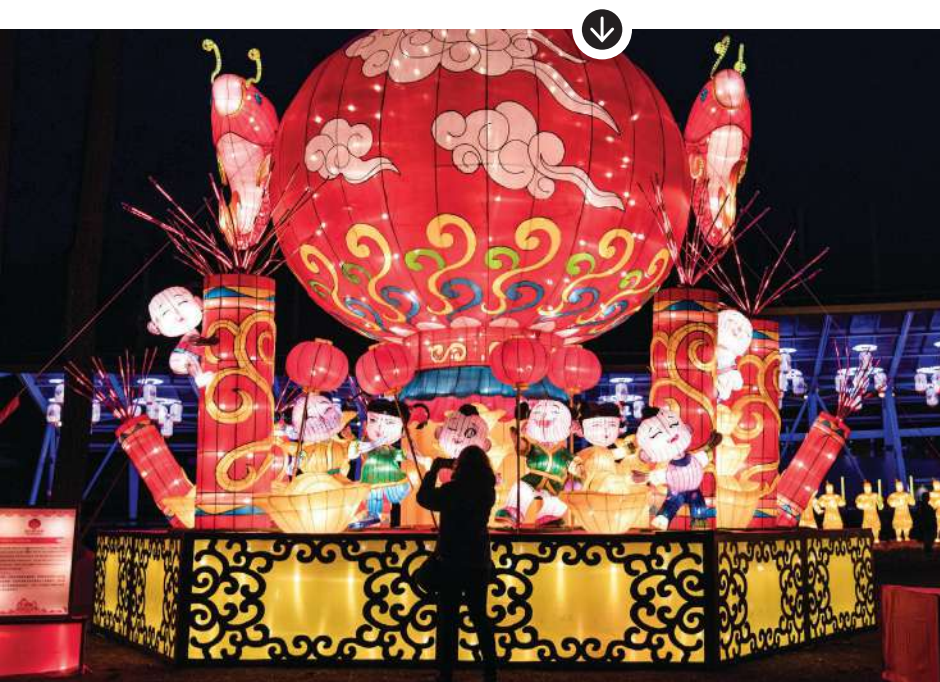
Bring your lawn chair, blanket and hot chocolate for this maritime light show. Vessels adorned with bright holiday lights and decorations cruise past the waterfront, where local elementary school students decide on the best-decorated boat.

## Winterfest at Tryon International

📍 Mill Spring

**NOVEMBER–JANUARY**

Roll down the windows as you cruise past the light-up snowmen, Christmas trees and reindeer that take over the equestrian resort each winter. When you finish your lap, lace up some ice skates and glide around the Tryon Stadium rink.





## Local Information Sources

### MOUNTAINS

**Alexander County EDC**, 119 NC Hwy. 16 N., Suite A, Taylorsville 28681; (828) 352-7756; alexanderedc.org

**Alleghany County C of C**, 58 S. Main St., Sparta 28675; (336) 372-5473; alleghanycountychamber.com

**Ashe County C of C**, 01 N. Jefferson Ave., Suite C, West Jefferson 28694; (336) 846-9550; ashechamber.com

**Avery County C of C**, 4501 Tynecastle Hwy., Unit 14, Banner Elk 28604; (828) 898-5605; averycounty.com

**Blowing Rock TDA**, 132 Park Ave., Blowing Rock 28605; (828) 295-4636; blowingrock.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 5**

**Blue Ridge National Heritage Area**, 31 College Pl., Suite 120, Asheville 28801; (828) 298-5330; blueridgeheritage.com



**Burnsville-Yancey C of C**, 106 W. Main St., Burnsville 28714; (828) 682-7413; yanceychamber.com

**Caldwell County C of C**, 1909 Hickory Blvd. SE, Lenoir 28645; (828) 726-0616; explorecaldwell.com

**Cherokee County TDA**, 20 Tennessee St., Murphy 28906; (828) 557-0602; visitcccnc.com

**Cherokee Welcome Center**, 498 Tsali Blvd., Cherokee 28719; (828) 497-9195; visitcherokeenc.com

**Clay County C of C**, 96 Sanderson St., Hayesville 28904; (828) 389-3704; claychambernc.com

**Explore Asheville CVB**, 27 College Pl., Asheville 28801; (828) 258-6109; exploreasheville.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 2-3**

**Explore Boone**, 171 Grand Blvd., Boone 28607; (828) 266-1345; exploreboone.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 5**

**Explore Brevard**, 175 E. Main St., Brevard 28712; (828) 884-8900; explorebrevard.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 61**

**Franklin Area C of C**, 98 Hyatt Rd., Franklin 28734; (828) 524-3161; franklin-chamber.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 63**



**Graham County T & TA**, 474 Rodney Orr Byp., Robbinsville 28771; (828) 479-3790;

**grahamcountytravel.com**  
**Advertising Partner, p. 65**

**Highlands C of C**, 108 Main St., Highlands 28741; (828) 526-2112; highlandschamber.org

**Advertising Partner, back page**

**Jackson County TDA**, 773 W. Main St., Sylva 28779; (828) 586-2155; discoverjacksonnc.com

**Madison County TDA**, 56 S. Main St., Mars Hill 28754; (828) 680-9031; visitmadisoncounty.com

**McDowell County TDA**, 91 S. Catawba Ave., Old Fort 28762; (828) 668-4282; destinationmcdowell.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 53**



**Mitchell County TDA**, 26 Crimson Laurel Cir., Suite 11, Bakersville 28705; (828) 537-1690; discovermitchellnc.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 61**



**Morganton/Burke County TDA**, 140 N. Sterling St., Morganton 28655; (828) 433-6793; discoverburkecounty.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 109**

**NC High Country Host**, 6370 US Hwy. 321 S., Blowing Rock 28605; (828) 264-1299; highcountryhost.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 4-5**

**Northwest NC VC**, 2121 E. US Hwy. 421, North Wilkesboro 28659; (336) 667-1259; wilkeschamber.wixsite.com/nwncvisitorcenter



**Polk County T & T**, 20 E. Mills St., Columbus 28722; (828) 894-2324; firstpeaknc.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 43**

**Rutherford County TDA**, 146 N. Main St., Rutherfordton 28139; (828) 287-6113; visitncsmalltowns.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 51**

**Smoky Mountain Host**, 4437 Georgia Rd., Franklin 28734; (828) 369-9606; visitmokies.org

**Sugar Mountain Tourism**, 251 Dick Trundy Ln., Sugar Mountain 28604; (828) 898-9292; seesugar.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 4**

**Swain County TDA**, 2 Everett St., Bryson City 28713; (828) 488-7857; explorebrysoncity.com

**Advertising Partner, inside front cover**



**Valdeese Dept. of Tourism**, 400 Main St., Valdeese 28690; (828) 879-2126;

**visitvaldeese.com**

**Visit Banner Elk**, 100 W. Main St., Banner Elk 28604; (828) 898-5398; bannerelk.com

**Visit Haywood**, 91 N. Lakeshore Dr., Suite 2, Lake Junaluska 28745; (828) 944-0761; withaywood.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 25**

**Visit Hendersonville**, 201 S. Main St., Hendersonville 28792; (828) 693-9708; withendersonvillenc.org

**Advertising Partner, p. 45**

**Wilkes C of C**, 717 Main St., North Wilkesboro 28659; (336) 838-8662; wilkeschamber.com/experience-wilkes

### PIEDMONT

**Alamance County VB**, 200 S. Main St., Burlington 27215; (336) 570-1444; visitalamance.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 56**

**Anson County TDA**, 114 W. Wade St., Wadesboro 28170; (704) 694-4181; visitanson.com

**Cabarrus County CVB**, 10099 Weddington Rd., Suite 102, Concord 28027; (704) 782-4340; explorecabarrus.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 45**

**Caswell County C of C**, 106 Court Square, Yanceyville 27379; (336) 694-6106; caswellchamber.org

**Chapel Hill/Orange County VB**, 308 W. Franklin St., Chapel Hill 27516; (919) 245-4320; visitchapelhill.org

**Charlotte Visitor Info Center**, 329 S. Tryon St., Charlotte 28202; (800) 231-4636; charlottesgotalot.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 10-11**

**Davie County C of C**, 135 S. Salisbury St., Mocksville 27028; (336) 751-3304; daviechamber.com

**Discover Durham CVB**, 212 W. Main St., #101, Durham 27701; (919) 687-0288; discoverdurham.com

**Distinctly Fayetteville**, 245 Person St., Fayetteville 28301; (910) 483-5311; distinctlyfayettevillenc.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 7**



**Dunn Area TA**, 103 E. Cumberland St., Dunn 28335;

(910) 892-3282; dunntourism.org

**Advertising Partner, p. 65**

**Explore Nash County**, 1104 Falls Rd., Rocky Mount 27804; (252) 972-5080; explorenashcounty.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 35**

**Franklin County TDA**, 112 E. Nash St., Louisburg 27549; (919) 496-3056; franklin-chamber.org

**Gaston County TD**, 620 N. Main St., Belmont 28012; (704) 825-4044; gogastonnc.org

**Granville County TDA**, 124 Hillsboro St., Oxford 27565; (919) 693-6125; visitgranvillenc.com

**Greensboro Area CVB**, 2411 W. Gate City Blvd., Greensboro 27403; (336) 274-2282; visitgreensboronc.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 56-57**

**Heart of North Carolina VB**, 500 Albemarle Rd., Asheboro 27203; (336) 626-0364; heartofnorthcarolina.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 56**

**Hickory Metro CVB**, 1960 13th Ave. Dr. SE, Hickory 28602; (828) 322-1335; withickorymetro.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 13**

**I-73/I-74 VCs**, 4393 I-73/74 - Northbound; 4390 I-73/74 - Southbound, Seagrove 27341;

(336) 873-7213; ncdot.gov/travel/restareas

**Johnston County VB**, 234 Venture Dr., Smithfield 27577; (919) 989-8687; johnstoncountync.org

**Advertising Partner, p. 63**

**Lake Norman CVB**, 19900 W. Catawba Ave., Suite 102, Cornelius 28031; (704) 987-3300; visitlakenorman.org

**Advertising Partner, p. 55**

**Lexington TA**, 2 N. Main St., Lexington 27292; (336) 236-4218; visitlexingtonnc.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 56**

**Lincolnton-Lincoln County C of C**, 101 E. Main St., Lincolnton 28092;

(704) 735-3096; lincolnchambernc.org

**Lumberton VB**, 3431 Lackey St., Lumberton 28360; (910) 739-9999; lumberton-nc.com

**Monroe Tourism & VB**, P.O. Box 69, Monroe 28111; (704) 282-4542;

monroenc.org/266/Tourism



**Montgomery County TDA,** 100 W. Main St., Troy 27371; (910) 573-3153; discoveruwharrie.com

**Mooreville CVB,** 129 Mecklynn Rd., Suite C, Mooreville 28117; (704) 799-2400; visitmooreville.com

**Mount Airy Tourism,** 200 N. Main St., Mount Airy 27030; (336) 786-6116; visitmayberry.com

**Person County TDA,** 2800 Durham Rd., Roxboro 27573; (336) 597-2689; itsbetterinperson.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 61**

**Piedmont Triad VC,** 700 NC Hwy. 700, Pelham 27311; (336) 388-9830; piedmonttriadvisitorcenter.org  
**Advertising Partner, p. 56-57**

**Pinehurst, Southern Pines, Aberdeen Area CVB,** 155 W. New York Ave., Suite 300, Southern Pines 28387; (910) 692-3330; homeofgolf.com

**Pittsboro-Siler City CVB,** 964 East St., Suite 204, Pittsboro 27312; (919) 542-8296; visitpittsboro.com

**Raeford-Hoke C of C,** 101 N. Main St., Raeford 28376; (910) 875-5929

**Richmond County TDA,** 101 W. Broad Ave., Rockingham 28379; (910) 895-9057; visitrichmondcounty.com

**Rockingham County TDA,** 425 NC Hwy. 65, Reidsville 27320; (336) 342-8138; visitroconc.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 57**

**Rowan County CVB,** 204 E. Innes St., Suite 280, Salisbury 28144; (704) 638-3100; visitrowancountync.com

**Scotland County TDA,** 507 W. Covington St., Laurinburg 28352; (910) 277-3149; visitnc-soul.com

**Stanly County CVB,** 1000 N. First St., Suite 11, Albemarle 28001; (704) 986-2583; visitstanly.com



**Statesville CVB,** 300 S. Center St., Statesville 28677; (704) 682-7756;

**visit.statesvillenc.com**  
**Advertising Partner, p. 19**

**Stokes County Tourism,** 1014 Main St., Danbury 27016; (336) 593-2496; hangingrock.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 57**

**Tarboro Edgecombe C of C,** 500 Main St., Tarboro 27886; (252) 823-7241; discoverededgecombe.com

**Thomasville VC,** 44 W. Main St., Thomasville 27360; (336) 472-4422; visitthomasvillenc.com

**Union County C of C,** 903 Skyway Dr., Monroe 28110; (704) 289-4567; unioncountycoc.com



**Vance County TDA, 946-T W. Andrews Ave., Henderson 27536; (252) 438-2222; kerlake-nc.com**

**Visit Cleveland County,** 200 S. Lafayette St., Shelby 28150; (704) 484-4804; landofrhythm.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 29-31**

**Visit High Point,** 515 W. English Rd., Suite 101-A, High Point 27262; (336) 884-5255; visithighpoint.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 57**

**Visit Raleigh,** 500 Fayetteville St., Raleigh, 27601; (919) 834-5900; visitraleigh.com

**Visit Sanford,** 229 Carthage St., Sanford 27330; (919) 718-4659; visitsanfordnc.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 109**

**Visit the Yadkin Valley,** 257 Standard St., Elkin 28621; (336) 526-1111; yadkinvalley.org  
**Advertising Partner, p. 109**

**Visit Winston-Salem,** 200 Brookstown Ave., Winston-Salem 27101; (336) 728-4200; visitwinstonsalem.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 51, 53, 55**

**Warren County EDC,** 602 W. Ridgeway St., Warrenton 27589; (252) 257-3115; warrencounty.com

**Wilson County TDA,** 228 Goldsboro St. SW, Wilson 27893; (252) 243-8440; comeseewilson.com

**Yadkin County TDA,** 205 S. Jackson St., Yadkinville 27055; (336) 679-2200; visityadkin.com

## COAST

**Ahoskie C of C,** 310 S. Catherine Creek Rd., Ahoskie 27910; (252) 332-2042; ahoskiechamber.net

**Camden County TDA,** 2356 US Hwy. 17 N., South Mills 27976; (252) 771-8333; visitcamdencountync.com

**Columbus C of C & T,** 601 S. Madison St., Whiteville 28472; (910) 642-3171; thecolumbuschamber.com

**Crystal Coast TDA,** 3409 Arendell St., Morehead City 28557; (252) 726-8148; crystalcoastnc.org  
**Advertising Partner, p. 33**

**Currituck County Dept. of Tourism,** 106 Caratoke Hwy., Moyock 27958; (252) 435-2947; visitcurrituck.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 49**

**Duplin County TDA,** 195 Fairgrounds Dr., Kenansville 28349; (910) 296-2181; uncorcduplin.com

**Elizabethtown-White Lake C of C,** 207 E. Broad St., Suite B, Elizabethtown 28337; (910) 862-4368; elizabethtownwhitelake.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 65**

**Gates County,** 200 Court St., Gatesville 27938; (252) 357-2495; gatescountync.gov

**Greene County C of C,** 208 N. Greene St., Snow Hill 28580; (252) 747-8090

**Greenville-Pitt County CVB,** 417 Cotanche St., Suite 100, Greenville 27858; (252) 329-4200; visitgreenvillenc.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 55**



**Halifax County CVB,** 260 Premier Blvd., Roanoke Rapids 27870; (800) 522-4282;

**visithalifax.com**  
**Advertising Partner, p. 1**

**Hyde County EDC,** 30 Oyster Creek Rd., Swan Quarter 27885; (252) 926-4178; hydecountync.gov/departments/planning\_and\_economic\_development.php


**Jones County EDC,** 134 Industrial Park Dr., Trenton 28585; (252) 448-1315; jonescountync.gov

**Kinston-Lenoir County TDA,** 101 E. New Bern Rd., Kinston 28504; (252) 522-0004; visitkinston.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 22-23**

**Martin County TDA,** 132 W. Main St., Williamston 27892; (252) 792-6605; visitmartincounty.com

**Murfreesboro C of C,** 116 E. Main St., Murfreesboro 27855; (252) 398-4886; murfreesborochamber.com

**NC Coast Host,** coasthost-nc.com

 **NC's Brunswick Islands - Brunswick County TDA,** PO Box 1186, Shallotte 28459; (910) 755-5517; ncbrunswick.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 113**

**Northampton County TDA,** 127 W. Jefferson St., Jackson 27845; (252) 534-0331; visitnorthamptonnc.com

**Onslow County Tourism,** 1099 Gum Branch Rd., Jacksonville 28540; (910) 347-3141; onlyinonslow.com

**Outer Banks VB,** 1 Visitors Center Cir., Manteo 27954; (252) 473-2138; outerbanks.org  
**Advertising Partner, p. 9**

**Pamlico County C of C,** 10642 NC Hwy. 55 E., Grantsboro 28529; (252) 745-3008; pamlicochamber.com



**Pender County Tourism,** 106 E. Wilmington St., Burgaw 28425; (910) 259-1278; visitpender.com

**Advertising Partner, p. 109**

**Perquimans County TDA,** 104 Dobbs St., Hertford 27944; (252) 404-2910; visitperquimans.com

**Sampson County CVB,** 414 Warsaw Rd., Clinton 28328; (910) 592-2557; visitsampsonnc.com

**Tyrrell County VC,** 203 S. Ludington Dr., Columbia 27925; (252) 796-0723

**Visit Edenton,** 101 W. Water St., Edenton 27932; (252) 482-0300; visitedenton.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 51**

**Visit Elizabeth City,** 400 S. Water St., Suite 100, Elizabeth City, 27909; (252) 335-5330; visitelizabethcity.com

**Visit Goldsboro,** 119-C N. Center St., Goldsboro 27530; (919) 580-4336; visitgoldsborong.com

**Visit New Bern,** 316 S. Front St., New Bern 28563; (252) 637-9400; visitnewbern.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 39**

**Visit Ocracoke,** 161 Irvin Garrish Hwy., Ocracoke 27960; (252) 928-6711; visitocracokenc.com

**Washington County TT&A,** 111 W. Water St., Plymouth 27962; (252) 793-6627; bearolina.com

**Washington TDA,** 102 W. Stewart Pkwy., Washington 27889; (252) 946-9168; visitwashingtonnc.com

**Wilmington and Beaches CVB,** 1 Estell Lee Place, Suite 201, Wilmington 28401; (877) 945-6386; wilmingtonandbeaches.com  
**Advertising Partner, p. 47**

**Windsor-Bertie County C of C,** 121 E. Granville St., Windsor 27983; (252) 794-4277; windsorbertie.com





**VOLLIS SIMPSON  
WHIRLIGIG PARK  
WILSON**

## State Information Sources

### STATE AGENCIES

**NC Agritourism Office,**  
1020 MSC, Raleigh 27699; (919) 707-3120;  
[ncagr.gov/divisions/marketing/agritourism](http://ncagr.gov/divisions/marketing/agritourism)

**NC Dept. of Natural & Cultural  
Resources,** 4601 MSC, Raleigh 27699;  
(919) 814-6800; [ncdcr.gov](http://ncdcr.gov)

**NC Dept. of Transportation - Ferry  
Division,** 2300 Ferry Rd., Havelock 28532;  
(252) 463-7020; [ncdot.gov/divisions/ferry](http://ncdot.gov/divisions/ferry)

**NC State Parks,** 1615 MSC, Raleigh 27699;  
(919) 707-9300; [ncparks.gov](http://ncparks.gov)

**NC Wildlife Resources Commission,**  
1701 MSC, Raleigh 27699; (919) 707-0040;  
[ncwildlife.org](http://ncwildlife.org)

**Visit North Carolina,** 150 Fayetteville St.,  
Suite 1200, Raleigh 27601; (800) 847-4862;  
[visitnc.com](http://visitnc.com)

### WELCOME CENTERS

**I-26 East NC Welcome Center,**  
I-26 at Mile Marker 68, Columbus 28722;  
(828) 894-2120

**I-26 West NC Welcome Center,**  
I-26 at Mile Marker 6, Mars Hill 28754;  
(828) 689-4257

**I-40 West NC Welcome Center,**  
I-40 at Mile Marker 10, Waynesville 28786;  
(828) 627-6206

**I-77 North NC Welcome Center,**  
158 I-77, Mount Airy 27030; (336) 320-2181

**I-77 South NC Welcome Center,**  
93001 I-77, Charlotte 28273;  
(704) 588-2660

**I-85 North NC Welcome Center,**  
231 I-85, Norlina 27563; (252) 456-3236

**I-85 South NC Welcome Center,**  
I-85 at Mile Marker 2, Kings Mountain  
28086; (704) 937-7861

**I-95 North NC Welcome Center,**  
I-95 at Mile Marker 181, Pleasant Hill 27866;  
(252) 537-3365

**I-95 South NC Welcome Center,**  
I-95 at Mile Marker 5, Rowland 28383;  
(910) 422-8314

**NC Welcome Centers & Tourism Call  
Center,** 4324 MSC, Raleigh 27699; (800)  
847-4862; [visitnc.com/welcome-centers](http://visitnc.com/welcome-centers)

### GENERAL INFORMATION

**Blue Ridge Parkway Association,**  
PO Box 2136, Asheville 28802;  
(828) 670-1924; [blueridgeparkway.org](http://blueridgeparkway.org)

**NC Ski Areas Association,** [goskinc.com](http://goskinc.com)



# EXPLORE NATURE'S PLAYGROUND



## DISCOVER BURKE COUNTY

Home to the Linville Gorge Wilderness (pictured), Lake James as well as 6 waterfalls and more than 250 miles of trails!



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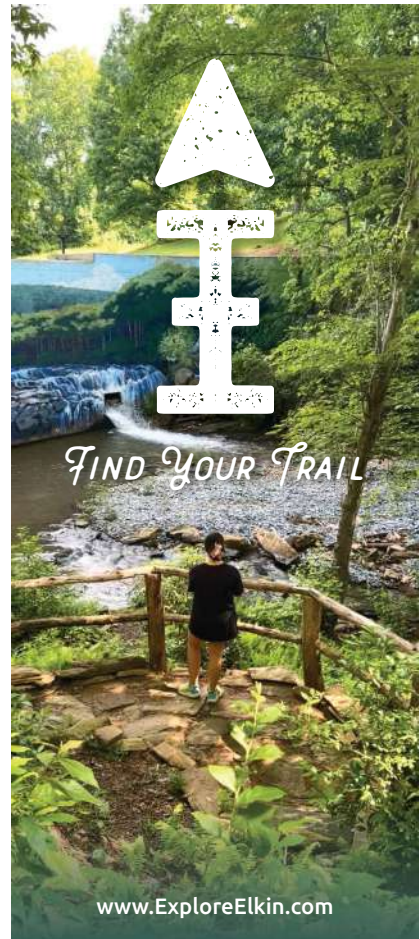
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## NORTH TOPSAIL BEACH





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## 1 Airlie Gardens

📍 Wilmington

Azaleas, tulips and camellias thrive among fountains, sculptures (including a chapel comprised of colorful glass bottles) and towering centuries-old oaks dripping with Spanish moss across the lush 67-acre property.

## 2 North Carolina Botanical Garden

📍 Chapel Hill

Roam through rare wildflowers in the Piedmont habitat and step into the restored cabin of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Paul Green at this paradise dedicated to conserving native North Carolina plant species.

## 3 The Fields at Sunflower Trail

📍 Mocksville

Become fully engulfed in a maze of blazing-yellow sunflowers — some up to 8 feet tall — during the summer bloom (typically July and August). Pick a few, and the owners will wrap them up for you.

## 4 I-26 West NC Welcome Center

📍 Mars Hill

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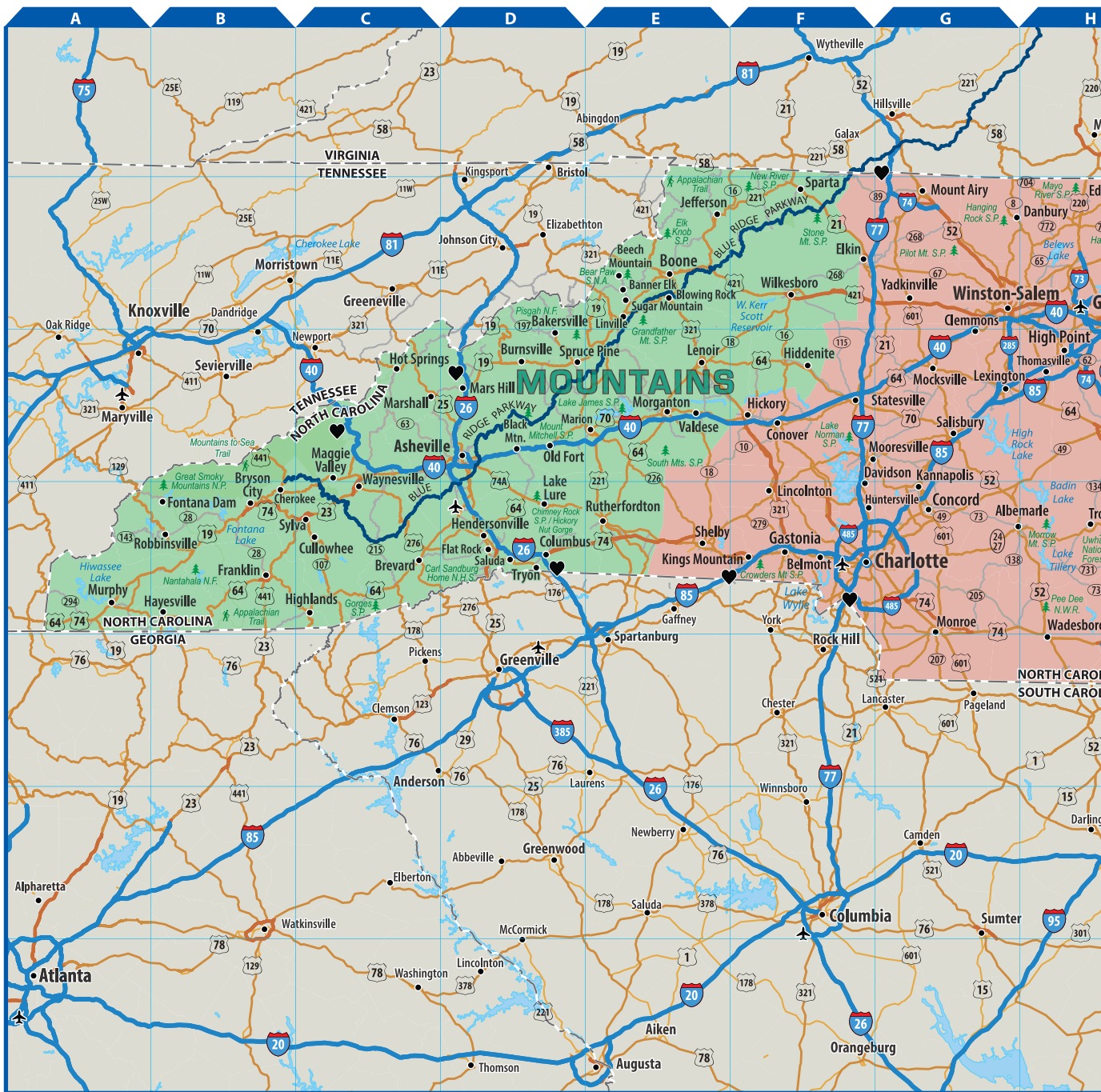
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**Abbreviations used on map**  
 S.P. .... State Park  
 S.N.A. .... State Natural Area  
 N.P. .... National Park  
 N.F. .... National Forest  
 N.H.S. .... National Historic Site  
 N.W.R. .... National Wildlife Refuge

**Towns and Cities**

Ahoskie ..... M2  
 Albemarle ..... H4  
 Asheboro ..... H3  
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 Atlantic Beach ..... M5  
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 Burnsville ..... D3  
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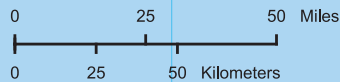
Cary ..... J3  
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