



# The 50 Best Things to Do in Asheville

**BY: KELLI ACCIARDO**

*July 29, 2019*

Southern American cities like New Orleans, Nashville and Austin may get a lot of love, but Asheville, North Carolina, is coming in hot these days thanks to a thriving culinary scene of rising chefs with pedigreed backgrounds, a booming craft brewery business, eclectic arts and music offerings and quirky-cool sensibility. Plus, its serene Blue Ridge Mountains landscape proves why getting back to basics in this Appalachian neck of the woods is always a good idea. Home to a plethora of national forests and wildlife preserves—in addition to some of America’s oldest estates and factories turned swanky hotels and bars—there’s a little bit of everything. Here are 50 of the best things to do in the Land of the Sky.



WERKSMEDIA/GETTY IMAGES

## 1. BOOK A DISCOUNT FLIGHT

Pro tip: book your flight on **Allegiant Air**. This discount airline has the shortest flights for the lowest fares, from most major metropolises.

## 2. MAKE A RESERVATION AT THE FOUNDRY HOTEL

Located in the historic “Block” district, the boutique **Foundry** hotel (which was once a former steel factory) is officially one of the newest-oldest hot spots

in town. And they don't skimp on the extras here. Private neighborhood tours (by [Hood Huggers International](#)), luxury fly-fishing excursions and wildflower bouquet classes are a few of the offerings that will make you feel like you're definitely in Asheville.

### 3. TRY THE ALOFT OR AC HOTEL FOR MORE AFFORDABLE DOWNTOWN STAYS

The [Aloft Asheville Downtown](#) and [AC Hotel by Marriott Asheville](#) are both centrally located options with plenty to please guests—a rooftop bar and pool (Aloft) and pet-friendly rooms (AC Hotel).

### 4. BOOK THE HORSE SHOE FARM FOR A RIVERFRONT VIEW

For alternate lodging, consider [The Horse Shoe Farm](#): Located ten minutes from the Asheville Regional Airport, this 85-acre riverfront estate boasts an enclave of well-appointed cottages and manor homes fit for larger groups and a tranquil setting you can't find downtown. Plus, there's a meditation silo, yoga studio, stable spa, baby livestock petting shed and daily fresh juice bar. It's also where you'll witness the most epic sunsets over the Blue Ridge Mountains.

### 5. STAY IN MONTFORD FOR A QUAIN BED-AND-BREAKFAST

Romantic rendezvous can be held at one of the nine quaint B&Bs in the idyllic Montford neighborhood, just north of downtown. A night or two at the [Black Walnut Inn](#), [Lion and the Rose](#), [1900 Inn](#) or your choice of historic home will leave you with a happy heart and happier stomach.

INN ON MONTFORD



### 6. HOP ON A KITSCHY TOUR BUS

Camp is alive and well on the [LaZoom's City Comedy Bus Tour](#), which makes you laugh *while* teaching you all about Asheville's history. And if you don't

wind up staying in Montford, you'll ride through it, as well as downtown Asheville, the River Arts District and more. Did we mention it's BYOB?

#### 7. BECOME A LEAF PEEPER

Nestled in between the highest peaks in the east, Asheville is prime turf for 360-degree views of stunning fall foliage. Be sure to download the [PeakFinder](#) app to determine which craggy summit you're near at any given time.

#### 8. RAPPEL THROUGH A ROPES COURSE

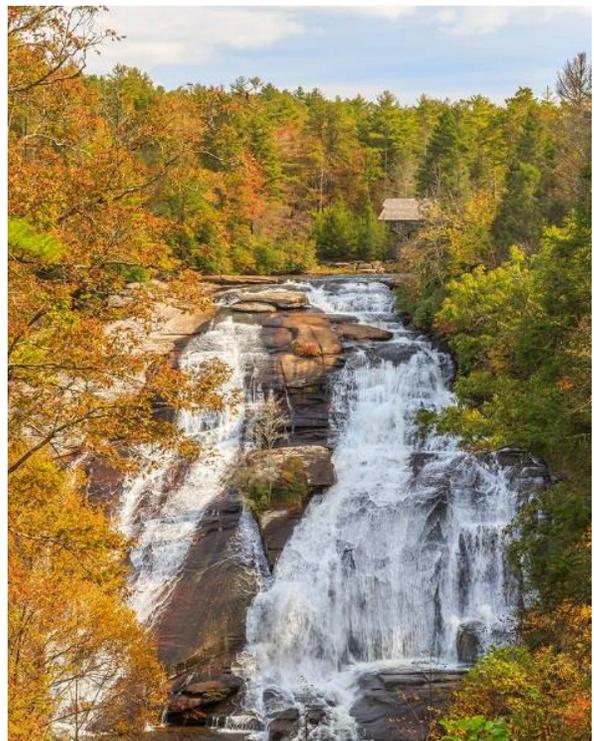
The area's bountiful forest canopy was made to be seen from up above—climb, [zip-line](#) and rappel your way through the trees at [Asheville Tree Top Adventure Course](#).

#### 9. GO BIRD WATCHING

Grab the binoculars. Asheville and its surrounding topography are ripe with incredible birds to see—bald eagles, peregrine falcons, great blue herons and pileated woodpeckers are just a few of the 200 species flying over Asheville year-round. Check out [Elisha Mitchell Audubon Society](#) for tips and tricks or to even join a bird walk.

#### 10. HIKE TO WATERFALLS

As one can expect in a nature haven such as this, there are countless waterfalls to explore. Hike to any number of waterfalls in [Dupont State Forest](#) including Triple Falls, Hooker Falls and Bridal Veil Falls. You might recognize the latter from cameos in films like *The Hunger Games* and *Last of the Mohicans*.



JRAYUPCHURCH/GETTY IMAGES

## 11. STROLL DOWNTOWN ASHEVILLE

Wind your way through downtown Asheville until you explore every tucked-away street and worthy hideaway fit for foodies and shoppers alike.

## 12. NOSH ON BUTTON & CO. BAGELS FOR AN EASY BREAKFAST

Start every morning right with a fresh-baked bagel and seasonal schmear at **Button & Co. Bagels**. And if you really want to go big, top that off with a genius heaping of house-made gravlax, or smoked sable rubbed in wild sumac. And maybe grab something to go for that hike you're going on.

## 13. TRY A TOAST LIKE NO OTHER AT OWL BAKERY

**Owl Bakery** is another locals-loved haunt for European pastries, specialized toast (we kid you not) and coffee.

## 14. TRAVERSE THE WESTERN N.C. CHEESE TRAIL

For midday munchies, there's fromage to be sampled at multiple creameries along the **Western NC Cheese Trail**. One of Asheville's biggest claims to fame is that it's home to dozens of cheesemongers honoring the traditions of Appalachian artisan cheese production. Many of these farms even let you get hands-on with their cows and goats while receiving a behind-the-scenes look at a day in the life (and a taste of their offerings).

## 15. GO WINE TASTING

Nothing washes down cheese like a glass of wine, and the **French Broad Vignerons** collective (consisting of **Addison Farms Vineyard**, **Burntshirt Vineyards** and **Pleb Urban Winery**) would be happy to oblige—slash educate you on their grapes. The organization of regional grape-growers and winemakers also hosts meetings, lectures and special events for those interested in viticulture.

## 16. MAKE NEW FRIENDS AT THE NATURE CENTER

Guys, there are adorable, too-cute-to-handle red pandas at the [Western North Carolina Nature Center](#) that need your personal attention stat. There are also grey wolves (besties, Nova and Wayah), Nigerian dwarf goats, Sicilian donkeys and sleepy-looking barn owls to say hello to. Can't handle goodbyes? Become a "wild parent" through the animal adoption program and lend support to the Nature Center at the same time.

## 17. VISIT THE CHILDHOOD HOME OF LITERARY LEGEND THOMAS WOLFE

If you've ever read the writer's classic, *Look Homeward, Angel*, you'll undoubtedly enjoy wandering about the 29-room, [Old Kentucky-style home](#) he grew up in. And even if you haven't, the Victorian estate that dates back to 1883 and retains most of the original furnishings (plus Wolfe's writings) is fascinating to behold.

THOMAS WOLFE MEMORIAL STATE HISTORIC  
SITE/FACEBOOK



## 18. BECOME A BOOKWORM

Take advantage of the city's abundant independent bookseller's scene to stock up on new (and old) best sellers. There's [Malaprop's](#) for rising author readings, [Captain's Bookshelf](#) for rare copies and first editions, [Downtown Books & News](#) for fine art with a side of tomes, and the [Battery Park Book Exchange](#) for an-all-pups welcome spot that serves Champagne and wine alongside its well-stocked shelves.

## 19. BOND WITH YOUR FOUR-LEGGED PAL

And speaking of places your pooch will like, Asheville has a **huge roster** of parks, trails and eateries that cater to canines. It is one of the most dog-friendly cities in the country after all.

## 20. TRANSPORT YOURSELF TO SPAIN AT CÚRATE

Chef Katie Button (who trained under Spanish superstar José Andrés) offers a taste of Spain in the Carolinas at **Cúrate**. Look forward to spicy chorizo wrapped in potato chips, all the *jamón* you can dream of and a vermouth bar you could only find in Spain (and Asheville, of course).

CURATE/FACEBOOK



## 21. SCHEDULE ZEN TIME AT THE HOT SPRINGS

Eight minutes from downtown Asheville—and 2,500 feet above sea level—sits **Shoji Spa & Lodge**, a Japanese-inspired woodland sanctuary that features private salt hot tubs ideal for soaking stress away.

## 22. BREATHE IN THE AIR IN A THERAPEUTIC SALT CAVE

Also popular in the wellness space is Asheville's **Salt Cave and Spa**, which can release 84 trace elements and minerals in the body, once you're inside its cave saturated with 20 tons of pure pink salt. Very much needed after a big night out. Chillax on a zero gravity chair or get nice and salty on a blanket on the ground.

## 23. PLAY BOTANIST FOR A DAY

At the **North Carolina Arboretum** and **Botanical Gardens of Asheville**. Surrounded by hundreds of species of Appalachian wildflowers and trees, there's no greater habitat for forest bathing.

#### 24. INDULGE IN SOUTHERN SOUL FOOD AT BENNE ON EAGLE

With a nod to the African-American roots established in Asheville in the 1800s, **Benne on Eagle** serves refined farm-to-table soul food and artisan cocktails in a modern warehouse setting. Think: black-eyed pea hummus, fried catfish and waffles, and crispy quail.

#### 25. SWAP YOUR SPOTIFY PLAYLIST FOR LIVE MUSIC

Take in an elevated musical experience by the **Asheville Symphony Orchestra** or **Asheville Lyric Opera**, and if that's a little too highbrow for this trip, there's **The Orange Peel**, **Grey Eagle** and **ISIS Music Hall** for rock concerts, jazz riffs, country crooners and mega headliners.

#### 26. GET BUZZED SAMPLING LOCAL HONEY

The **Bee Charmer** is a honey-tasting parlor that curates over 50 varieties of fresh honeybee nectar from western North Carolina and beyond. And you're going to want to bring some back, trust us.

#### 27. DANCE TO THE BEAT

If you happen to be in town on a Friday night, make your way to Pritchard Park for the weekly "Drum Circle" ritual that takes over downtown.

#### 28. HAVE A MEMORABLE MEAL AT RHUBARB

Five-time James Beard nominee (and Blackberry Farm alum) chef John Flear pretty much runs Asheville with three restaurants, but his crown jewel is **Rhubarb**. With a laid-back vibe and a menu centered around Asheville's bountiful produce, local cheeses, and Appalachian heritage, you'll want to allocate a few solid hours here—along with your entire appetite.

### 29. TOUR THE BILTMORE, AMERICA'S LARGEST PRIVATELY-OWNED RESIDENCE

With 35 bedrooms, 43 bathrooms and 65 fireplaces, George Vanderbilt's French-inspired dream home, the **Biltmore**, is #chateaugoals to say the least. And now there's The Inn and Village Hotel on Biltmore Estate, Antler Hill Village for dining and shopping, and a falconry school to boot.



BILTMORE ESTATE

### 30. COOL OFF IN THE PISGAH NATIONAL FOREST

Not to negate the rest of the items on this list, but you're going to want to set aside ample time for the naturally-made, **60-foot water slide** that awaits here.

### 31. SATISFY SWEET TOOTH CRAVINGS

**The French Broad Chocolate Factory** is pure heaven if you're a chocolate lover, or brownie fan, or caramel loyalist. And not to worry, it has vegan and dairy-free treats as well. You can even take an insider tour of the chocolatey magic process.

### 32. HIT UP GROVE ARCADE

And peruse several homegrown shops, galleries and eateries before making your way to the Battery Park end of the building, which is home to the **Makers Market**. This outdoor bazaar has a dozen stalls filled by artisans selling directly to the public and treasures of all types can be found, if you wander long enough.

### 33. BE A KID AGAIN ON A PINBALL MACHINE

Appease your inner child at the **Asheville Pinball Museum**. This retro game room has wall-to-wall vintage pinball machines on the premises, so gather

your gang and get to playing. They entertain private parties as well, and occasionally put some of the crazier machines up for sale. Just sayin’.

#### 34. MAKE ROOM FOR DINNER AT THE ADMIRAL

Don’t overlook **The Admiral**’s modest cinderblock exterior. Inside it’s churning out an ever-changing menu of globally-inspired delights and small plates, each more delicious than the next.

#### 35. DO A CRAFT BEER CRAWL

Craft breweries are a BIG deal in Asheville (rivaling Portland’s massive circuit), so allocate plenty of time to roam their 30-plus OG and newbie taprooms. Now trending: **Burial Beer Co.**, **Nantahala**, **Green Man**, **Catawba**, **The Funkatorium**, **Wicked Weed**, **Hi-Wire** and **Eurisko**.

#### 36. CATCH A LIFT (WHILE DRINKING MORE BEER)

Too thirsty to walk to all the beer spots? Trade your sneaks for wheels and hop onboard the **Brews Cruise**, which will deliver you to the more remote breweries. Or, pedal your way around on a **Pubcycle**.

#### 37. DRIVE THE BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

Down the most-talked-about scenic route in the United States—The Blue Ridge Parkway—and bonus points if you rent an old-school convertible for the outing.



WICKED WEED BREWING

### 38. CHECK OUT THE RIVER ARTS DISTRICT

This artsy area winds around the riverbank of the French Broad and is home to dozens of working artist studios. See their process up close and personal, then purchase a new piece for your collection.

### 39. GET A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE LAND OF THE SKY

And a history lesson at the same time, with [Asheville Rooftop Bar Tours](#). SkyBar and [Hemingway's Cuba](#) are two of the tippy-top stops for refreshing libations.

### 40. CHANNEL SHAKESPEARE IN THE PARK—IN ASHEVILLE

Have a poetic moment in the park during a free outdoor Shakespearian play performed by the [Montford Park Players](#).

### 41. TAKE A BITE OUT OF THE WORLD-FAMOUS BISCUITS AT TUPELO HONEY

Be prepared for a food coma at [Tupelo Honey Café](#), the Southern flagship downtown that's famous for honey-dusted fried chicken served eight ways and highly addictive biscuits.

TUPELO HONEY/FACEBOOK



### 42. PERFECT YOUR SWING AT THE OMNI GROVE PARK INN

Play a round on the 18-hole, Donald Ross-designed golf course—and official hotel of the PGA Tour—[The Omni Grove Park Inn](#). Then quench your thirst at Sunset Terrace and The Great Hall Bar or spend the night, as ten U.S. presidents have in the past.

#### 43. HAPPY HOUR IT UP AT THE BULL AND BEGGAR

**The Bull and Beggar** is a wise choice for a mouthwateringly good meal, and its raw bar happy hour and Monday burger special can't be beat.

#### 44. WATCH GLASS ARTISTS AT WORK

At **Lexington Glassworks**, the premier glassblowing studio and gallery in town, you'll be mesmerized watching artisans at work. You'll also be tempted to take home a sparkling souvenir, but don't worry, they ship (in case your carry-on can't handle that).

#### 45. BRUSH UP ON YOUR ARCHITECTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Admire the Spanish Baroque Revival masterpiece, the **Basilica of Saint Lawrence**, which is revered for having the largest freestanding dome in North America.

RIVERNORTHPHOTOGRAPHY/GETTY IMAGES



#### 46. DO DINNER AT PLANT-CENTRIC SOVEREIGN REMEDIES

Make a reservation at the vintage-chic **Sovereign Remedies**. Bespoke cocktails and plant-based specialties dominate the forager-focused menu, but comfort classics like bone marrow tater tots are not to be missed.

#### 47. GET SPOOKED

Nighttime-centric shenanigans include the **Haunted Asheville** tour, where you'll be subjected to stories that will make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up in a creepy alleyway behind the Asheville Masonic Temple. Before walking around to other well-known spots spirits frequent.

#### 48. GO OFF THE WAGON AT A DEULING PIANO BAR

**Off the Wagon Dueling Piano Bar** draws a lively crowd and boisterous entertainers, who are always up for requests (with a flash of cash).

#### 49. SADDLE UP TO THE BAR AT THE CROW & QUILL

Pop into quirky speakeasy **The Crow & Quill** for live music and a digestif, but be prepared to face a lofty list of spirit options—it has over 700 in house.

#### 50. HAVE A NIGHTCAP AT ANTIDOTE ON YOUR LAST NIGHT IN TOWN

Also noteworthy for must-try tipples is **Antidote**. This whimsical mixology lounge offers what it call “the cure for the common cocktail.”