

# CitySmart

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## CHASING CHAMPIONS

Audi makes racing history

## SOUTHERN CHARM

North Carolina's dual delights

GRILLING 411  
Barbecuing brilliance

# White NIGHT

A declaration of style

# Raleigh-Durham is really delightful!



Photo courtesy of Greater Raleigh, CFB

A trip to either of these North Carolina destinations will not disappoint, especially if good food and incredible attractions are tops on your vacation list.

BY DAWN NIKITHSER

Despite being commonly known as "Raleigh-Durham," these two cities in North Carolina, while close together, each contains more than enough for an entire vacation each. Restaurants, museums, history, shopping, spas and more abound in both areas – it's just a question of figuring out where to begin and how to spend enough time in each.

Raleigh, North Carolina's capital city, is a booming metropolis. There is an incredible array of museums in Raleigh, with displays of all kinds. Exploris is a "state of the art interactive global learning center" where the goal is encouraging connections with all



The North Carolina Museum of Art features works spanning 5,000 years, including some from ancient Egypt. Internationally recognized Renaissance, Baroque, British 18th-century and American 19th-century painters are also represented.

Local restaurants and bars reflect the unique architecture of the surrounding city.

Photos courtesy of Greater Raleigh CVB

the cultures on our planet. Artspace is a visual and performing arts center in downtown Durham, where more than 30 artists work in open studios, encouraging the public to view the creative process. There are historic museums such as the Mordecai Historic Park and the Pope House Museum. And the North Carolina Museum of Art showcases an exceptional collection, where more than 5,000 years of art is represented, including the finest collection of Old Master paintings in the Southeast. Paintings, sculptures and visual arts are all on display here, as well as a number of outdoor exhibits and seasonal lectures.

Hotels abound in the region, but the real treat is staying in a bed and breakfast just outside of downtown Raleigh. The Oakwood Inn B&B is a wonderful option, within walking distance of most of the downtown attractions, shopping and restaurants. The house dates from 1871, one of four surviving homes from the original Oakwood district, known for its architectural variety. Period antiques create a charm that harkens back to the Victorian era, and the gorgeous guest rooms feature the perfect combination of old world atmosphere with modern charms, like large private bathrooms and in-room massage appointments (on Saturdays only). Breakfast is served each morning by innkeepers Gary and Doris Jurkiewicz, who have been enjoying hosting visitors at the Inn since 2001.

The restaurants available in Raleigh are impressive, and cuisines range from Southern cooking to fine gourmet meals. Cuisines of all cultures are in evidence, as well, and a fine choice is The Duck and Dumpling, a contemporary Asian dining establishment serving incredible Chinese and Vietnamese food. The restaurant and its chef, David Mao, have been written about in magazines like Southern Living. Specialties include handmade dumplings, edamame hummus



and noodle entrees, plus nightly specials. If the Lion's Head special is available, don't miss it. This traditional Chinese dish – an amazing combination of ground pork seasoned with cilantro and scallions – is a must-try. Roar for it if you have to.

Another eatery garnering applause from locals and visitors alike is Enoteca Vin restaurant and wine bar. Vin, as it is commonly known, offers the finest wine and fresh, seasonal cuisine, served in the coolest of all atmospheres – a former ice-cream freezer! The restaurant and its chef, Ashley Christensen, were featured in a 2004 issue of Food and Wine magazine, where it was described as what "just might be the perfect American wine bar." The menu includes tasty small plates and gorgeous entrees with separate menus for cheese and cured meat selections; the deviled eggs are divine and the cured meat plate is a salty, carnivorous delight.

Heading over to Durham, about a 30-minute drive from Raleigh, a great place to start is the Blooming Garden Inn, a beautifully restored historic inn (circa 1890). It's all Victorian charm on the outside, with a huge wraparound porch and lovely gardens in which to wile



The North Carolina State Fair draws approximately 700,000 people each year (above). Breweries are great places to visit and unwind after the sun sets (top right). Brightleaf Square is a popular destination for locals and tourists (right).

Photos courtesy of Greater Raleigh CVB, Heather Jack and Durham Convention Visitors Bureau.

away the hours. Inside, a colorful combination of period antiques and vibrant art comfortably and admirably bring the present and the past together. Hosts and owners Frank and Dolly Pokrass spent three years intensively restoring the house, which they opened for business in 1990.

A mile from Blooming Garden is Brightleaf Square, the first commercial district in North Carolina to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is now home to more than 30 shops and 12 restaurants. Pick up a walking tour map from the visitor's bureau and wander as your heart desires. Feeling peckish? You'll find no shortage of places to snack, but locals love Pop's, a "Durham trattoria" offering fine eats at great prices. Start with the marinated olives, toasted marinated almonds or creamy gorgonzola-dressed baby field greens. Entrees range from paninis and pizzas to pastas, fish and meat. Desserts should not be missed, especially the brown sugar and buttermilk panna cotta with berry sauce and almond brittle.

Also in Brightleaf is Fowler's fine food and wine shop, recently awarded AOL CityGuide's Best 2005 Healthy Dining award. Fowler's has been an institution for 80 years. Skip Roach, the wine buyer, is a font of knowledge: talk to him about local treats and internationally

respected vintages, as well as wine tastings and special events. Treat yourself to cheese and deli selections, as well as an impressive international market, where you can fill your basket with non-perishable snacks to enjoy during your stay.

For more funky stores and restaurants, there is the Ninth Street shopping district. Get an early start and enjoy breakfast at Elmo's Diner. Don't miss the grits and make sure you come hungry! This is down-home cooking at its finest and most filling. Many diners barely make their way through the short stack pancakes, featuring two plate-sized fluffy delights in a variety of flavors. Those in search of a true Southern specialty should go straight for the biscuits and gravy, served with two eggs and your choice of one additional breakfast meat. Elmo's also serves lunch and dinner, along with beer and wine.

If you're not shopped-out yet, Durham is well known for antiquing. Everything from fun "junk" shops to high-end specialty boutiques can be found all over Durham and the surrounding area. Brightleaf is home to some of the more upscale boutiques, such as James Kennedy Antiques. This shop specializes in scientific, nautical and medical "instruments and associated antiques," and the shop is fascinating to even the most casual of collectors. Another favorite is



Lake Crabtree, a 520-acre lake and park, offers hiking, cycling and nature trails; boat rentals; playgrounds; picnic facilities; canoe and kayak rental; and fishing (top). Pullen Park, a scenic and charming oasis situated in downtown Raleigh, features a 1911 Denzel carousel as well as train rides, pedal boats, kiddie boat rides and picnic facilities (middle). North Carolina has some of the country's best golf courses, including the Washington Duke Inn and Golf Club (bottom).  
 Photos courtesy of Greater Raleigh CVB.

the wonderfully named Everything But Granny's Panties, right off of Interstate 85 at exit 175. This is a great shop to wander amid furnishing and buried treasures. Don't let the shanty atmosphere deter you: dig away!

Nearby Duke University, famous for basketball and academics, is a perfect place to admire American Gothic architecture. Central to the university is the Washington Duke Inn and Golf Club, a fine deluxe hotel where Southern hospitality is the order of the day. The hotel features treasures and trinkets of the Duke Family, creating a feeling that one is a guest in a palatial home, albeit one fully staffed with concierges and golf pros. This is the only area hotel with a golf course and pro shop. The course was designed by Robert Trent Jones and recently redesigned by the architect's son, Rees Jones. It features 18 championship holes in a setting of North Carolina pines.

The crown jewel of Duke is the Sarah P. Duke Gardens, a 55-acre park in the heart of Duke's West campus considered "one of the premier public gardens in the United States." It is "renowned both for landscape design and the quality of horticulture." More than 300,000 people visit the gardens annually. There is no fee to visit, though donations are, of course, accepted. This is a perfect place to walk, relax and observe the gorgeous rainbow of natural plants and flowers. Visitors will see locals and college students lounging on the lawn and resting among the incredible foliage.

Durham has an amazing array of historical sights, including the Duke Homestead, Stagville and the Beechwood Cemetery, all locations along the African-American Heritage trail (maps are available from the visitor's bureau). Stagville – properly known as Historic Stagville – is the center of one of the largest plantations in antebellum North Carolina. Stagville was originally a plantation of several thousand acres, with an active slave community. The slave quarters on the property are both fascinating and sobering, most of them being one-room, one-story structures. The Horton Grove quarters are large by comparison with four two-story, four-room houses, but miniscule when one considers that an estimated 80 slaves lived there, all at the same time. The presence of the one-time occupants remains in the chilled and somber atmosphere. In fact, a recent Halloween night excursion to the quarters resulted in countless photographs of "spirit orbs," considered by parapsychology and paranormal investigators to be evidence of ghost energy from those who once occupied the place.

For a fun diversion, head to the Museum of Life and Science. It's primarily a kid-friendly destination, but visitors of all ages will relish the butterfly house, known as Magic Wings Tropical Conservatory. It is one of the largest butterfly houses in the Southeastern United States and the world, with 5,000 square feet of tropical plants and more than 50 exotic species of butterfly, which fly freely throughout the conservatory. Visitors are not only able but encouraged to touch the butterflies. They may well opt to light upon your head and clothing, an incredible experience that teaches guests to appreciate these delicate creatures. Museum personnel watch closely and will happily show you the right way to touch the butterflies without causing harm.

Both Raleigh and Durham are cities well worth your time, in a region you will want to experience again and again. The many shops, restaurants and local diversions are sure to be listed among your favorite spots to visit, whether you're there for the history, the shopping, the food or the atmosphere. **CS**