

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:  
The Blue Ridge Mountains skirt downtown. Asheville City Market produce. Lexington Avenue Brewery. Shops on Lexington. Melissa Metz serves food she grows at Sunny Point Café.

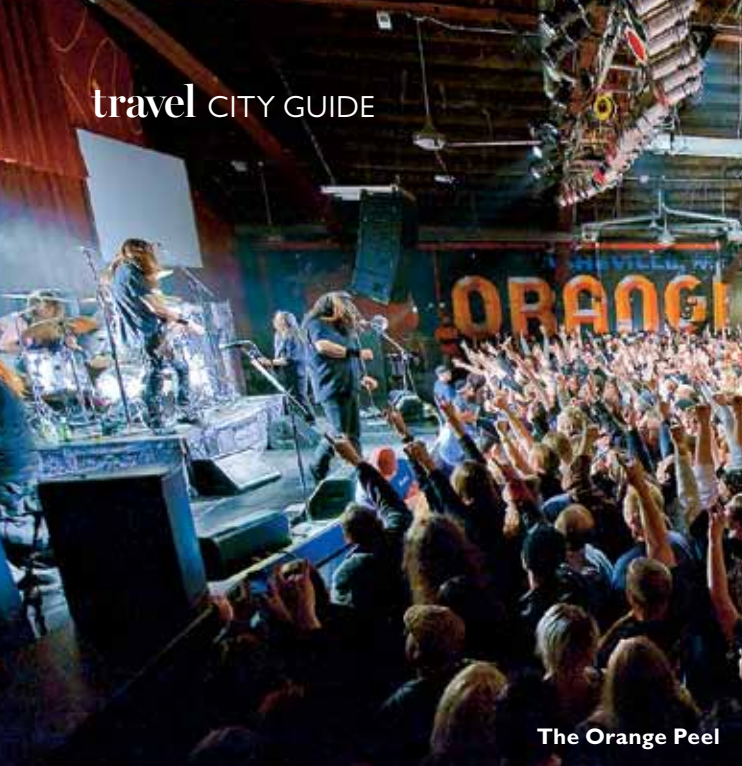


# The Best of Asheville, NC

Though beautiful any time, autumnal hues and Oktoberfest celebrations shine a golden spotlight on BeerCity USA

**A**sheville, in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains, is that strangest of vortexes, where hipsters and retirees actually adhere to an oft-spoken, rarely practiced, honor-infused concept: Think global, buy local. In the process, the South's most homegrown town—named BeerCity USA for the third year in a row—has created and closed an economic loop. "Mountain people are fiercely independent," says Elizabeth Sims, a consultant for the Asheville Independent Restaurants Association. "If you moved into a holler, you had to be self-sufficient—but you also had to rely on your nearest neighbor. This spirit translates to the quality and diversity that people here demand from their food, for instance, but also beer, music, and art."

If you haven't been here in a while, you are in for a treat. The Biltmore made it famous, but, with the resurgence of its Art Deco-peppered downtown, Asheville has evolved into a synapse of professionals and college students, families and artists, musicians and gastronomes. Inventive restaurants have sprouted up on every corner. The open-studio River Arts District along the French Broad River provides patrons with edgy pieces and insight into their creation. Trendy beats throb from venues, nightclubs, and dives. And, of course, there are breweries—more per capita than anywhere in America—which have so many varieties on tap that you'll either feel compelled to book a follow-up trip or be unable to leave. Here are some of our favorite spots, along with an itinerary for a perfect weekend. ⇨



The Orange Peel



LEFT AND ABOVE: Hip Replacements' Kip Veno (left) and Franzi Charen. The Market Place's Brasstown Beef Burger (\$10)



**SHOP Hip Replacements** This Lexington Avenue staple outfits visiting hipsters and locals with a spectrum of vintage-inspired apparel, including Pinup Couture dresses for women and PalmerCash wovens for men. [hipreplacementsclothing.com](http://hipreplacementsclothing.com)

**The Chocolate Fetish** This 25-year-old shop rewards indulgence with chocolate from the United States as well as five other countries. The African Queen truffle (\$2.25), made with single-origin Tanzanian chocolate and hazelnut wafers, should satisfy those poor souls at home who didn't make the trip. [chocolatefetish.com](http://chocolatefetish.com)

**Bruisin' Ales** The world's fourth-ranked beer retailer has more than 900 international and domestic beers in stock and a savvy staff. Begin your craft-brew odyssey here with a Thursday tasting, and leave with a "mix-a-six" pack of favorites. [bruisin-ales.com](http://bruisin-ales.com)

**EAT Bouchon** A native of Lyon, France, Michel Baudouin has created a menu that's Francophile with Southern nods. The local trout with almond crust (\$19) is surefire. Monday through Wednesday the mussels (\$14) are endless. [ashevillebouchon.com](http://ashevillebouchon.com)

**The Market Place** Chef William Dissen works with a host of local growers to produce scrumptious seasonal dishes like trout with lentils, bacon, and a confit-tomato vinaigrette (\$20). [marketplace-restaurant.com](http://marketplace-restaurant.com)

**I2 Bones Smokehouse** A line of locals—and wafting smoke—curls out the door and past the sign declaring "Good Cheap Butt" all day long. Wash down a full rack of ribs (\$17) with one of seven local brews on tap. [I2bones.com](http://I2bones.com)

**CAROUSE Asheville's Breweries** Oktoberfest is a good time to pay homage to the local specialty (\$25 gets you live Bavarian music and limitless beer tastings from tents lining downtown's Wall Street on October 8), but brewers here are rock stars year-round. Visit each of the brewhouses to find your own hoppy heaven. Maybe it's Highland Brewing Company's malty Gaelic Ale, Asheville Brewing Company's dark Ninja porter, or, if you're feeling brave, Wedge Brewing Company's addictive 3rd Rail IPA with 10% alcohol. [ashevilledowntown.org](http://ashevilledowntown.org)

**The Orange Peel** In 2008, this "Social Aid & Pleasure Club" was named to a *Rolling Stone* list of top five rock 'n' roll clubs. (Bob Dylan and Cyndi Lauper have graced its stage.) Themed dance parties are among its quirky offerings. [theorangepeel.net](http://theorangepeel.net)

**Battery Park Book Exchange & Champagne Bar** BPBX's 60,000 books line shelves and surround nooks with leather armchairs. Settle in with a glass of bubbly. [batteryparkbookexchange.com](http://batteryparkbookexchange.com)

**Storm Rhum Bar & Bistro** We recommend finding a table on the outdoor patio and ordering the Ecuadorian-style Ceviche Tipico (\$9) and Expatriot cocktail (\$12) with rum, pineapple juice, rye whiskey, and beet juice. [stormrhumbar.com](http://stormrhumbar.com)

**SLEEP Inn on Biltmore Estate** Opened in 2001, this 201-room, four-diamond AAA lodging provides guests expansive mountain views and access to the estate's 8,000 acres (from \$299). [biltmore.com](http://biltmore.com)

**The Grove Park Inn Resort & Spa** Built in 1913, the city's grande dame has 512 rooms, a 43,000-square-foot spa, and a Blue Ridge Mountain vista-laden golf course (from \$219). [groveparkinn.com](http://groveparkinn.com)

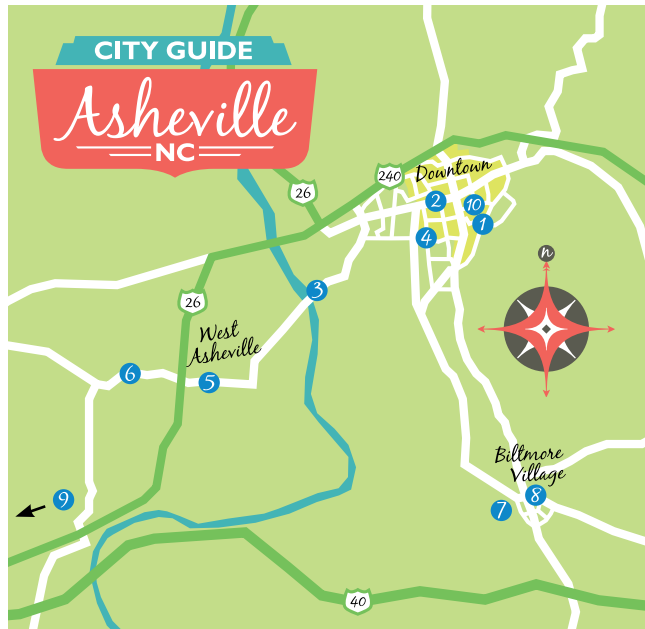
**Grand Bohemian Hotel** Located in Biltmore Village, stuffed trophies, artwork, antler chandeliers, and a stone fireplace accent this atmospheric hotel (from \$289). [bohemianhotelasheville.com](http://bohemianhotelasheville.com) ↗



Grand Bohemian Hotel

## ASHEVILLE WEEKEND PLANNER: A TEAR-OUT GUIDE

SHORT ON DAYS? HERE'S A STRATEGIC PLAY-BY-PLAY THAT LETS YOU SAMPLE BOTH BELOVED STANDBYS AND BURGEONING MUST-DOS IN A TIME-SENSITIVE SEQUENCE



### SATURDAY

10 a.m.

**1 ASHEVILLE CITY MARKET** Come to this producers-only market with reusable bag in hand and buy veggies straight from the source. In its fourth year and located downtown in the Public Works Building parking lot, the vending farmers typically come from within 60 miles. [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org)

Noon

#### 2 TUPELO HONEY CAFE

This downtown institution partners with more than 25 local farms. Roll up your sleeves for Not Your Mama's Meatloaf topped with a rosemary, tomato, and shallot gravy (\$14). The beef comes from Hickory Nut Gap Farm (20 minutes southeast). [tupelohoneycafe.com](http://tupelohoneycafe.com)

1:30 p.m.

#### 3 RIVER ARTS DISTRICT

Around 150 artists from nearly every medium occupy 20 or so buildings along the French Broad River. "Buying from the artists after watching them work is a fuller experience," says Curve Studios & Garden's Patti Torno. The district also boasts restaurants and a theater. [riverartsdistrict.com](http://riverartsdistrict.com)

3 p.m.

#### 4 BREWS CRUISE

The upside of the brewery walking tour, versus the mobile tour, is you visit more sites—four rather than three—and stay downtown. The downside: The stumble to the last one is a doozy. (Just keep it in mind, as you go.) During the excursions you'll sample concoctions and speak to their creators. [ashevillebrewscruise.com](http://ashevillebrewscruise.com)

7 p.m.

#### 5 THE ADMIRAL

This trendy West Asheville eatery is funky, but the menu is as sophisticated as an officer's dress blues. Start with a Dark and Stormy cocktail with homemade ginger ale, rum, and blackstrap molasses. Then try the Columbia River sturgeon, served with sweet breads, squash, and Brussels sprouts (\$27). After, the dining room morphs into a dance party. [theadmiralnc.com](http://theadmiralnc.com)

### SUNDAY

8:30 a.m.

#### 6 SUNNY POINT CAFÉ

In 2010, *Good Morning America* ranked Sunny Point, surrounded by its own vegetable and herb beds, among the country's top four breakfast spots. Manager Brigett Bolding recommends the heavenly huevos rancheros made with free-range eggs, local chorizo, cilantro crema, and homemade salsa verde (\$8.59). [sunnypointcafe.com](http://sunnypointcafe.com)

10 a.m.

#### 7 BILTMORE

Visited by about a million folks each year, America's largest private home, completed in 1895, has 250 rooms. You're likely less familiar with the property's Antler Hill Village, which opened in 2010 and allows you to try a local beer at Cedric's Tavern, enjoy a meal at the Bistro, or stop in for a tasting at the Winery. [biltmore.com](http://biltmore.com)

1 p.m.

#### 8 CORNER KITCHEN

Owner Kevin Westmoreland's restaurant hosted the Obamas and spreads across two floors of an 1890s Biltmore Village building. For lunch he suggests the Biltmore Village Reuben with house-cooked corned beef, homemade Thousand Island, and braised sauerkraut (\$10). [thecornerkitchen.com](http://thecornerkitchen.com)

3:30 p.m.

#### 9 MOUNT PISGAH TRAIL

Drive 30 minutes south along the Blue Ridge Parkway for a 3-mile moderate hike through autumn gold to Mount Pisgah's 5,721-foot summit, where you'll be able to capture ooh-inspiring views overlooking Asheville. [hikewnc.info](http://hikewnc.info)

8 p.m.

#### 10 CÚRATE

Flamenco over to the marble bar bordering the open kitchen of this Spanish tapas restaurant. Glass of red in hand, executive chef Katie Button suggests the Jamón Ibérica—the top shoulder cut from Jamón Ibérico de Bellota pigs—salt and peppered, grilled, and served with roasted cipollini onions and toasted pine nuts (\$11). [curatetapasbar.com](http://curatetapasbar.com) **SL**