

A Tale of Two Cities -

By Thomas Boc & Terri Papproth



Clockwise: Guest room at the Grand Bohemian Hotel in Asheville; The Biltmore Estate; Scattered among the shops are numerous "Mom and Pop" restaurants that offer everything from the classic breakfast to European and Asian delights.

As fall approaches, Atlantans get that familiar "tug" to drive northward and take in the orange and yellow hues of the changing season. The Smoky Mountains offer many stunning vistas, but where do you go for an easy getaway from Atlanta that offers both an awe-inspiring journey and a great destination? Here are two cities that will take you there, with two very different experiences.

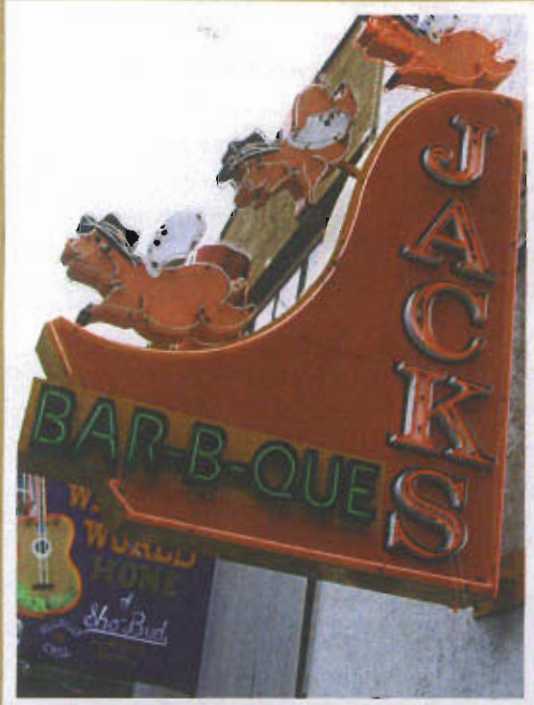
Asheville

Just four and a half hours drive northeast from Atlanta lies a hidden gem - a little big town that is anything but sleepy. Arts and crafts, antiques and original art fill countless streets that meander across the landscape of downtown Asheville. Scattered among the shops are numerous "Mom and Pop" restaurants that offer everything from the classic breakfast to European and Asian delights. One could easily

spend several days shopping, exploring and eating at the many locally owned businesses that populate the downtown area.

Of course finding the right place to stay is of utmost importance when traveling to a new city and the newest house on the block is the Grand Bohemian Hotel Asheville. Located almost directly in front of the entrance to the Biltmore Estate, the hotel is nestled in the prestigious Town & Country shopping area full of art galleries, restaurants and boutiques that make exploring and shopping all that much more convenient. The hotel, which boasts the refined interior of an old-world hunting lodge, displays original art paintings in the halls of every floor, which guests can enjoy on the journey to their room. The on-premises Red Stag Grill is quickly becoming the envy of the finest eating establishments in Asheville and offers a full complement of gourmet dishes to please any palate whether dining for breakfast, lunch or dinner. If you have an hour or two, treat yourself to a variety of wonderful and

Asheville & Nashville



Clockwise: Jack's Bar-B-Que pours out a steady stream of hickory-flavored smoke, drawing people from all over the world on their visit to Nashville; Gaylord Opryland Hotel Grand Ole Opry's stage; Carl Perkins' Blue Suede Shoes at the Country Music Hall of Fame.

soothing facial and body pampering treatments at the Poseidon Spa for a truly relaxing experience!

Our stay was most notable due to the unique open design of our room. With all the usual upscale amenities including a flat screen TV with Internet capability, the oversized bathroom and tub open into the bedroom with a curtain provided for those who wish privacy. Clearly extensive planning went into the design and execution of this hotel and it was well worth the effort.

Since we were so close to the Biltmore Estate, one full day was devoted to touring the mansion, the gardens and the vineyard. The estate still presents the largest privately owned mansion in the U.S. and going to Asheville without touring the estate would be missing a true architectural wonder. The grounds and gardens, landscaped by Frederick Law Olmsted who also designed Central Park, are a marvel of rolling hills and captivating beauty. One could easily spend a day just

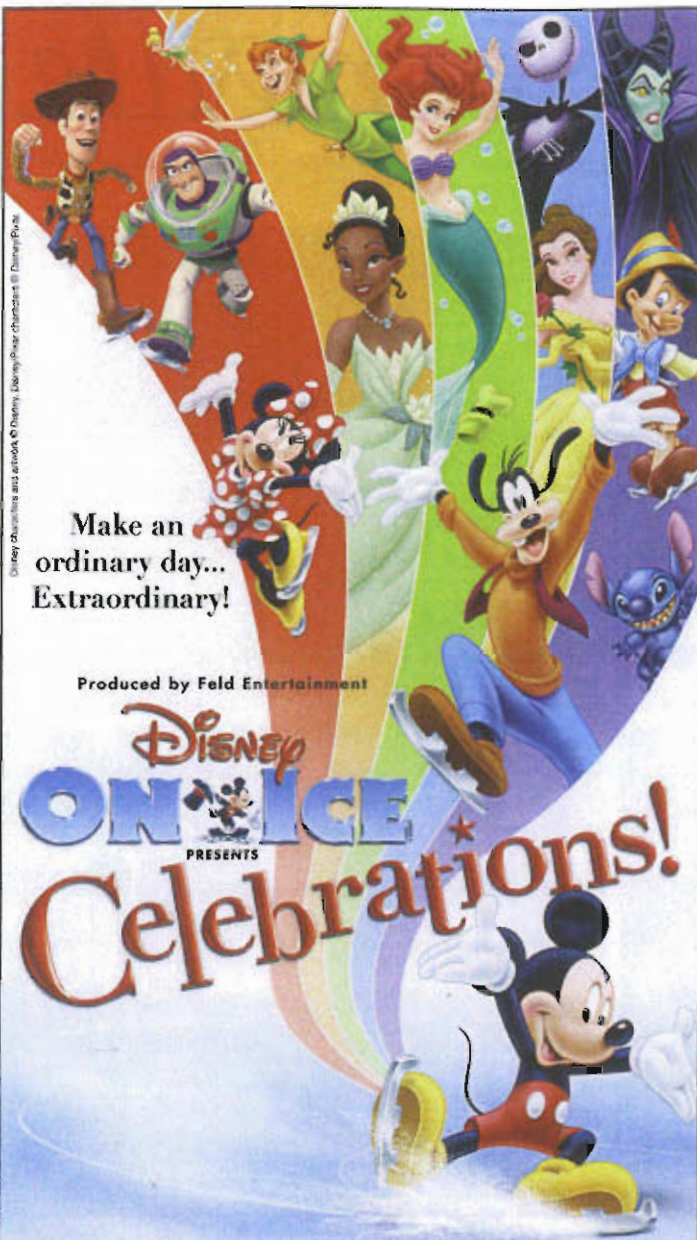
walking the grounds of the estate taking pictures.

Since The Arts & Crafts Movement is celebrated here every spring at the Grove Park Inn, a visit to Asheville would not be complete without a tour of America's most famous stone lodge.

Nashville

Yes, the names rhyme, but from there their similarities diverge significantly. From "Nashborough's" fiddle-playing and story-telling Davy Crockett days to today, "Music City" has become known worldwide for its country music with origins of Blue Grass born in the Appalachians.

"Country" is the best adjective to describe the atmosphere in Nashville. From the fascinating Country Music Hall of Fame to Jack's Bar-B-Que and the Bluebird Café, if you enjoy Country and Western music this is the best town in the U.S. to grab a seat and enjoy it, from local talent singing in honky-tonk cafés to the national line-up present-



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ed at the Grand Ole Opry. Even if you're not a big country music fan, the family-like enthusiasm of those on stage as well as the electric energy from the audience becomes absolutely contagious and might just change you into being a little more country and a little less rock and roll.

Visit the RCA Studio B on "Music Row" where Elvis recorded more than half his music. There's a surreal energy in the room that will make you feel as though The King is sitting right there at the grand piano recording a session. The history of Nashville's artists and immersion of young and old talent will give a lift to your heart and soothe your soul.

For the full effect, stay at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel, a conglomerate of 2,881 rooms and 15 restaurants, and even a radio station all under one roof. Yes, this massive hotel can more than populate the town where I grew up. Peek into the 650 WSM-AM radio station and you might see a country music star sitting in for an interview with host, Bill Cody.

Step outside and The Grand Ole Opry is just around the corner. Its weekly radio performances have been running before a live audience for 80 years as of this year. And just as they have for decades live radio commercials are aired between the performances of the stars, truly an experience not to be missed. Guided backstage tours are available daily.

With great food, top-notch talent and a down-home atmosphere that only a city in the South can provide, a few days in Nashville will provide you with some very warm memories that I believe you will keep for a lifetime. ❖

Asheville

WHERE TO STAY:
Grand Bohemian Hotel Asheville
www.bohemianhotelasheville.com

WHERE TO SHOP:
Biltmore Village
www.biltmorevillage.com

WHERE TO EAT:
Corner Kitchen
www.thecornerkitchen.com

River Arts District
www.riverartsdistrict.com

WHAT TO DO:
Table Restaurant
www.tableasheville.com

The Biltmore Estate
www.biltmore.com

Tupelo Honey Café
www.tupelohoneycafe.com

Nashville

WHERE TO STAY:
Gaylord Opryland Hotel
www.gaylordhotels.com

WHAT TO DO:
Grand Ole Opry
www.opry.com

WHERE TO EAT:
The Bluebird Café
www.bluebirdcafe.com

Country Music Hall of Fame
RCA Studio B Tour
www.countrymusichalloffame.com

Jack's Bar-B-Que
www.jacksbbq.com

650 AM WSM
www.WSMonline.com

Capitol Grill
www.thehermitagehotel.com

Ryman Auditorium
www.ryman.com