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DESTINATION

Asheville

This charming North Carolina mountain city is enjoying a bohemian renaissance unrivaled on the East Coast.

By Mary Katherine Stump



Once a vacation destination for America's robber barons, Asheville, N.C., struggled to recover after the stock market crash of 1929 and only in the last 15 years has started to reap the benefits of a post-downturn boom. Its late bloom has allowed for the preservation of not only its beautiful terrain and architectural heritage but a continued appreciation for community and the pleasures of a simpler life.

Lodging

The Grand Bohemian Hotel (bohemianhotelasheville.com) in the historic Biltmore Village is the epitome of modern luxury with its

extensive art collection, off-beat décor and the renowned Red Stag Grill. The historic Grove Park Inn (groveparkinn.com), a favorite of F. Scott Fitzgerald, has extensive views of the Appalachians in addition to a 40,000-square-foot subterranean spa. For rustic lodging options, check out Mountain Vacation rentals (mountainvacationrentals.com).

Food

Posana (posanacafe.com), located in downtown Asheville's new and improved Pack Square Park, serves locally sourced, gluten-free dishes and is a great place to lunch and take in the art-deco architec-

ture of Asheville's downtown. Chef Brian Canipelli at the new Cucina24 (cucina24restaurant.com) sources all of his ingredients from North Carolina farms, adding a mountain twist to traditional Italian fare. S&W (for Steak & Wine, swsteakandwine.com) recently opened in an old, renovated art deco-style cafeteria and serves a decadent "Cowboy Steak," a bone-in ribeye.

Brew

Asheville recently beat out Portland, Ore., in a heated online poll for the "Beer City USA 2010" award. Check out Wedge Brewing Co. (wedgebrewing.com), one of Asheville's nine diverse craft breweries, or, for a sampling of all the ales that Asheville has to offer, take a ride on the Asheville Brews Cruise (brewscruise.com) for designated driver-led tours. For some morning brew, check out Waking Life, a coffee purist's heaven and one of more than 10 independent coffee shops in Asheville. Or take home a bag of locally roasted beans from Asheville Coffee Roasters (ashevillecoffee.roasters.com).

Outdoors

2010 marks the 75th anniversary of the Blue Ridge Parkway (blueridgeparkway.org), a 469-mile scenic highway stretching from Asheville up to Roanoke, Va. The parkway took more than 52 years

Asheville Crash Course

Watch PBS's *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* to conjure up a Clark Griswold-like enthusiasm for a Blue Ridge Parkway road trip. Go to pbs.org to purchase the series or to find out when it is airing on your local station.

For an understanding of the Asheville zeitgeist, check out *Shop Class as Soulcraft*, by Matthew Crawford. The book tells his story of leaving a corporate think-tank job in favor of opening a motorcycle repair shop, citing his disillusionment with cubicle culture and a need to work with his hands. It's the Asheville approach, in a nutshell.

to complete and is still Asheville's most spectacular attraction. At mile 422.4, hike Devil's Courthouse for an incredible view of the Pisgah National Forest. Just 20 miles north of Asheville, Navitat (navitat.com) offers canopy zip line tours of the Appalachians. These harrowing treetop courses stretch from 120 feet to 1,100 feet in length, including one line that gives you a 200-foot birds-eye-view of the forest floor. The Biltmore Estate,

George Vanderbilt's French chateau completed in 1895, is a must see for its indoor pool and bowling alley, as well as the acres of gardens and grounds designed by Frederick Law Olmstead, the famed landscape designer of Central Park in New York City and Highland Avenue in Birmingham.

Arts

The River Arts District is the central hangout for the increasing number of artists who call Asheville home. Visit Curve Studios (curvestudiosnc.com) to peruse paintings and sculpture, or to watch artists like potter Maria Andrade Troya at work. For music, check out the concert calendar for the Orange Peel (theorangepeel.net), voted one of the top five music venues in America by Rolling Stone magazine. And don't miss Pulp, the recently opened "members-only" club downstairs. ●