



Successful Meetings Start Here

Asheville, North Carolina is situated in the heart of the Blue Ridge Mountains and is one of America's most vibrant destinations. The breathtaking mountain scenery is met with a sophisticated yet bohemian culture and provides an ideal backdrop for inspired meetings. The area boasts a thriving arts community, diverse outdoor adventures, a fun and inviting downtown, numerous historic attractions and amazing food. Planners of conventions, conferences, trade shows and other events will also find:

- Meeting space ranging from 2,500 to 83,000 sq. ft.
- 8,000+ hotel rooms, and a total of 10,000 rooms by 2020
- Asheville is an easy drive from many locations in the eastern United States.
- A variety of group activities and venue options in a four-season mountain setting
- Asheville Regional Airport (AVL), located 12 miles from downtown, offers nonstops and easy connections through major U.S. and international hubs, with 50 direct flights daily to 20 destinations and served by six airlines. Named the **second-fastest-growing small hub airport in the country** by *Bloomberg News* in 2018 following record growth (serving 1 million+ annual passengers for the first time), AVL is nearing the completion of \$80 million in improvements. In 2019, United Airlines will offer twice-daily nonstop service to Washington, D.C., American Airlines will start a daily nonstop to Philadelphia and a nonstop to Lagaardia and Allegiant will offer nonstop service to Sarasota-Bradenton International Airport (SRQ).

Hotel Growth Continues + New Event Space at the Omni Grove Park Inn & Biltmore

Current hotel development and future plans will bring more than 1,500 additional rooms to the already expanded Asheville inventory.

NEW DOWNTOWN: ► **The Foundry Hotel Asheville**, Curio Collection by Hilton, opened last November on The Block, Asheville's historical African-American business district, with 3,000 square feet of functional meeting and event space. The hotel's 100-seat upscale restaurant **Benne on Eagle**, the newest venture of five-time James Beard semifinalist Chef John Fleeer, pays homage to its historic Eagle Street neighborhood and the often-overlooked contributions of African-American cooks to Appalachian and Southern food.

COMING DOWNTOWN SOON: ► Asheville's famed Art Deco skyline will get a new icon and a four-star luxury property when **Hotel Arras** opens this fall. The 128-room hotel will offer 5,000 square feet of meeting space.

COMING LATE 2019: ► **Element By Westin** will bring 100 rooms and 1,200 square feet of meeting space near downtown.

NEW AT OMNI GROVE PARK INN: ► The 230-person **Seely Pavilion** (opened in January of 2018), perfect for weddings and group meetings, offers floor-to-ceiling doors and windows providing panoramic views of the surrounding mountain range.

NEW AT BILTMORE: ► Opened last fall, **Amherst** is Biltmore's largest event venue with 11,000 square feet of meeting and exhibit space. The Amherst Ballroom features space for 850 people and vast windows displaying the lush forests and fields of the estate.



Explore Asheville: A Vital Piece of the Planning Process

Explore Asheville provides support to help create a planner's most successful and memorable meeting ever. Planners that send RFPs to Explore Asheville receive local expertise, a comprehensive view of Asheville and time-saving assistance.

- By sourcing meetings through Explore Asheville, planners receive the best local info and a full menu of **Exclusive Services**, which includes registration staffing, attraction value cards for attendees and more.
- The **Have More Fun on Us** incentive program offers planners with eligible meetings up to \$2,500 to incorporate unique-to-Asheville elements into their meetings.
- Planners are invited to tour hotel properties and experience activities for themselves at the **Asheville 48-Hour Experience**.



NEW Downton Abbey Exhibition Comes to America's Largest Home

► On display Nov. 8 through April 7, **"Downton Abbey: The Exhibition"** brings elegant costumes, props, jewelry, meticulously recreated sets and exclusive multimedia elements (such as virtual characters) to transport visitors into the world of the television (and now movie!) phenomenon. The show closely parallels the lives of the Vanderbilts and their staff during the early years at Biltmore Estate, one of the only locations in the country that can offer a true glimpse into Gilded Age glamour at the turn of the 20th century.

Cultural Opportunities Expand With Downtown Museums

► **Asheville Art Museum** reopens this fall (Nov. 14) after a major renovation with a new state-of-the-art building. Self-guided and guided group tours of its collection and exhibitions, as well as numerous education-program opportunities, will be available. The expanded facility will have multiple venues for events of all kinds, including social events and conferences. ► **The Center for Craft** expands this year with The National Craft Innovation Hub, including new galleries, lecture space, classrooms and a co-working space, set to reopen Nov. 16. ► **The Moogseum** opened in May and celebrates the life of Bob Moog (inventor of the Moog Synthesizer that revolutionized almost every genre of music), with bays of synthesizers, theremins and effect pedals that allow people to explore the science behind electronic music.

New & Unique Tour Offerings

► **NEW: Asheville Rooftop Bar Tours** give a bird's-eye view from some of the city's newest scenic venues, while **Asheville LIT Tour** is a walking tour focusing on locations with literary themes and authors with ties to downtown. **Namaste in Nature** combines yoga, meditation and hiking experiences, accommodating 10 or fewer but also able to split up larger groups. ► **Hood Huggers International** leads interactive tours focusing on Asheville's African-American community's resilient history and future. ► **Wai Mauna** offers a massive, six-person paddleboard, plus stand-up paddleboard tours on the French Broad River, serving groups up to 40. **NEW**, try Whitewater SUP! ► **RECENTLY OPENED:** Offering daily tours, the **new French Broad Chocolate Factory** has opened the doors to their sweet new location in the RAMP (River Arts Makers Place) Studios.

"Beer City USA" Offers Large Group Experiences

With more breweries per capita than anywhere else in the U.S., Asheville is Beer City USA. The area (with a brewery count over 50!) offers multiple beer festivals, a plethora of brew tours and a neighborhood known for its concentration of breweries (South Slope). Large groups can also get "hopping." ► **Sierra Nevada** can host up to 50 people for a private brewery tour and offers private dining space rental. ► **Asheville Brewery Tours** can handle private tours for 10 to 150 people. ► **Highland Brewing** can host private brewery tours of 40. ► **Many breweries offer unique event space:** Catawba Brewing, Highland Brewing, Hi-Wire Brewing, Green Man Brewing, New Belgium Brewing and Wedge at Foundation.

Tune in to the Sounds of Asheville

Hop on the **LaZoom** bus for a wild ride to breweries with local musicians in tow on their **"Band & Beer" tour**. For a more hands-on experience, head to **Skinny Beats** to take drum lessons (djembes are provided!) or take a tour of the **Moog Factory** downtown to experiment with handcrafted synthesizers. ► Many concert spaces double as special event venues, like **Isis Restaurant and Music Hall**, a restored former 1930s theater that can be rented for private functions.

Food Scene, FAST:

250+ independent restaurants; **12** James Beard-nominated Asheville food folk; **50+** breweries, more per capita than any city in the nation; **14** farmers markets; **1** vegan butcher; **1,000+** family farms; **1** wild-foods market, the first in the nation; **3** craft hard cideries using local apples; the **fifth** micro sake brewery in the nation; **1** kombucha bar; **1** honey bar/boutique; **1** underground supper club with wild themes and secret locations; **4** insanely creative donut shops; **2** locations to get bean-to-bar local chocolate; **1** mushroom man tour guide; and the first woman to legally distill moonshine.