

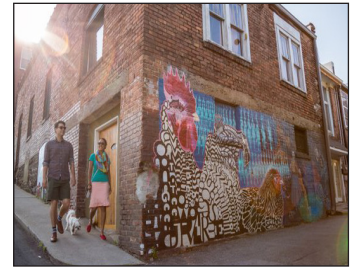


## Free Spirit | Cultural Cool | Beautiful Blue Ridge

Exhilarating outdoor explorations in a Blue Ridge paradise amidst seemingly never-ending vistas, profound cultural roots from literary giants to American royalty and inspired locals whose passion projects jump from pop-up kitchens to performance art. Asheville, N.C., has been a point of pilgrimage since the 1800s as a destination for inspiration, wellness, rejuvenation and self-expression. It doesn't take long to see why George W. Vanderbilt chose this Blue Ridge city for his greatest legacy, Biltmore.

### Art Scene News: River Arts District Evolves + A New Mural Tour

Asheville's **River Arts District (RAD)**, is coming into a new era as a walkable riverfront destination and entertainment district that fully embraces its scenic location along the French Broad River. An improved greenway system with art-infused pedestrian connectivity offers visitors a new way to experience this intensely creative area (home to more than 230 artists) by foot, bike or floatation-device-of-choice via new river access points. **NEW: ► Asheville By Foot Walking Tours** now offers the **"Asheville Murals Walking Tour,"** a guided walking tour focusing on the history and stories behind the murals and art installations around town, some several stories high, some only inches tall, all Instagram-worthy.



### Culinary Festival Explores Racial Justice, Climate Change & Food Justice

Celebrating the foodways and makers of the Southern Appalachian region - **Chow Chow** - returns in 2021 with a deepened intention to honor community and explore what it means to celebrate justly. Chow Chow will host a series of immersive in-person and virtual events June - Sept. A sampling of the events include **Racial Equity and the Wine Industry, Chocolate and Climate Change, Sustainable Waters, Forest as Farm, and A Find Dining Experience**, in which participants will get a taste of wild Appalachia while learning from expert foragers on how to find food in the wild. Ticket prices range from \$15 for virtual programs to \$50 - \$200 for in-person signature events.

### Fresh New Music Venues + Find Your Vibrational Balance

**NOW OPEN: ►** A historic Black-owned tourist court from the segregation-era South, is getting new life as a musician rehearsal space and soul food kitchen. Claude Coleman Jr. (30-year drummer for the alternative rock band Ween) and lifelong musician and producer Brett Spivey are behind the effort to restore this landmark, honoring the Black community of Southside in Asheville and the history of the Rabbit's Motel, including famous guests like Richard Pryor and R&B legend Jackie Wilson. Practice rooms at **SoundSpace @ Rabbit's** are open and soul food kitchen/cafe **Areta's** will open in late 2021. **► Citizen Vinyl** offers an immersive music experience with a record-pressing plant, independent record store, music cafe and bar. **► Rabbit Rabbit** in the South Slope district is a new outdoor event venue from **Asheville Brewing Company** and **The Orange Peel**. The space offers live music, movie screenings, DJ-spun dance parties, local beer and food trucks. **COMING SOON: ►** Clear your mind and relax in a peaceful atmospheric soundscape at **Skinny Beats Sound Shop**. This year, the shop will unveil a new "sound chamber" where visitors will experience silence and stillness with an array of deep frequency gongs, crystal bowls, hand pans and percussion.

### New Downtown Hotels Celebrate Asheville's Architecture and Vistas

**NOW OPEN: ►** Asheville's famed Art Deco skyline has gained a new icon and a four-star luxury property. **The Kimpton Hotel Arras** is a four-star 128-room luxury property with floor-to-ceiling windows offering views of downtown and the Blue Ridge Mountains. Set in the the tallest building in Western North Carolina, the Art Deco façade is a nod to Asheville's iconic architecture. **COMING SOON: ► Element Asheville Downtown** opens in 2021 offering an easy walk to downtown, views of the cityscape with the Blue Ridge Mountains in the background, and a rooftop event space that will also host guest activities such as yoga and stargazing.

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spirit  
run free

### New Ventures Take Flight on The Block, Asheville's Historical Black Business District

From the late 19th through 20th centuries, The Block was home to hundreds of Black-owned-and-operated enterprises – a city unto itself with doctors' offices, restaurants, a drug store, a boarding house and a library. From the 1950s through the '70s, Urban Renewal projects dismantled this formerly flourishing area. Today, individuals like DeWayne Barton have helped amplify the voices and the history of the community. Barton leads Hood Huggers International and its **Hood Hugging Tours**. **NEWS FROM THE BLOCK:** ► **Noir Collective AVL** has an important mission as a retail space for Black entrepreneurs, artists, makers and social activists. ► **Malcom McMillian** has been named the new chef de cuisine at **Benne on Eagle**, Chef John Fleer's Foundry Hotel restaurant that pays homage to its Eagle Street neighborhood and the often-overlooked contributions of African American cooks to Appalachian and Southern food. ► **LEAF Global Arts Center**, a cornerstone in the continued rebirth of The Block, offers dynamic educational experiences for guests rooted in music, art, community and culture inclusivity.

### Colossal Work of Art Woven Into Biltmore Landscape + Honoring 200 Years of Olmsted in 2022

**NEW:** ► Unique outdoor sculptural works by environmental artist Patrick Dougherty, known as "Stick Man," are on exhibit at **Biltmore** through September. Renowned worldwide for his monumental creations, Dougherty weaves saplings and branches into intricate artworks, fashioning whimsical forms ranging from gigantic snares and cocoons to sculptural interpretations of notable buildings. ► In 2022, Biltmore will celebrate 200 years of Frederick Law Olmsted's enduring legacy. George Vanderbilt asked the famous landscape architect to design the grounds and gardens at Biltmore. Today, the estate's staff of 50 gardeners, groundskeepers and arborists are tasked with carrying on Olmsted's vision for the Vanderbilt family's grounds. Special programming for 2022 will be announced soon.



### Beverage Culture: Boozy Boom Downtown

**NOW OPEN** ► **Cultivated Cocktails**, formerly H&H Distillery, has opened a second location in downtown Asheville with food, coffee and specialty breakfast cocktails like a White Russian-like cocktail garnished with Fruity Pebbles. ► **Botanist & Barrel Tasting Bar + Bottle Shop**, known for their small-batch, bone-dry ciders has opened up shop in downtown Asheville. **COMING SOON:** ► **Plēb Urban Winery** is expanding beyond its River Arts District location to open a new wine tap room in downtown Asheville. ► **Bold Rock**, a top-selling hard cider nationwide is slated to open a new downtown Asheville location this summer. The cidery also has a location in nearby Mills River. Plans for the space include small-batch cider production, a locally-influenced food menu and event space.

#### ► Food Scene. FAST:

**250+** independent restaurants; **15** James Beard-nominated Asheville food folk; **50+** breweries; **14** farmers markets; **1** spice factory; **1** vegan butcher; **1,000+** family farms; **1** wild-foods market, the first in the nation; **1** butcher bar; **5** craft hard cideries using local apples; the **fifth** micro saké brewery in the nation; **1** rum distillery (the only one in Western N.C.); **1** kombucha bar, all local; **2** honey boutiques; **1** underground supper club with wild themes and secret locations; **4** insanely creative donut shops; **3** locations to get bean-to-bar local chocolate; **1** mushroom-man tour guide; and the **first** woman to legally distill moonshine.

**NEW BITES/SIPS:** ► Chef Jacob Sessoms, Asheville's original James Beard semifinalist (2010) and an innovator of Asheville's modern take on Appalachian cuisine, has moved his restaurant Table to make way for **El Gallo AVL**, with tacos and sandwiches by day and market-driven Mexican plates at night by Chef Luis Martinez. Sessoms has also now opened the new **Table** nearby with **Right There Bar**, a burger bar, opening in the same building. ► **Leo's House of Thirst** in West Asheville offers sandwiches, pasta, tartines and an extensive wine list. ► **Asheville Proper** is a take on the classic steakhouse, centered around live-fire cooking and a locally sourced seasonal menu. ► Restaurateur and modern-day spice trader, Chef Meherwan Irani, has opened a grab-and-go eatery, **Nani's Rotisserie Chicken**, in the Grove Arcade. ► **Baby Bull**, a spinoff from Asheville's iconic Bull & Beggar restaurant (known for fine dining hidden on a loading dock in the River Arts District), has opened in the RAD with sandwiches, sides and the much-loved double patty Bull & Beggar burger. ► James Beard Chef Meherwan Irani and Highland Brewing Co. have joined forces for a new food and beer hall in the iconic S&W Building, **S&W Market**. **COMING SOON:** ► Chef Silver Cousler plans to open Asheville's first Filipinx restaurant, **Neng Jr.'s** in West Asheville. Look for a Filipino-style hot dog, trout roe served with pork rinds and traditional dishes served with sides like collard greens with coconut milk.

More at [ExploreAsheville.com/Foodtopia](https://ExploreAsheville.com/Foodtopia).