



Chapel Hill: A Cool
College Town to
Experience Year
Round

2020 Story Ideas & Reasons to Profile Chapel Hill & Orange County, NC

Chapel Hill in central North Carolina, is home to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the nation's first state university. A great place to visit any time of the year, this quintessential college town is a mix of historic sites, unique gardens, wonderful museums and exciting college sports. Its vibrant downtown is home to craft beer, comedy, live music, vintage clothing and boutiques, a wide variety of dining and more. Don't forget our neighbors, former mill and railroad town **Carrboro**, home to the famous Cat's Cradle and **Hillsborough**, a small town getaway full of historic charm which has the popular 1.8 mile Riverwalk beside the Eno River (part of the Mountain-to Sea Trail) through town and the historic Ayr Mount Plantation (1815). Orange County especially Hillsborough is home to numerous writers and authors and has been called the South's Best Little Literary Town.

Hotel News

[AJ Capital Partners](#) has acquired the Franklin Hotel in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The property's renovations are currently underway and will relaunch in June 2020 as the **Graduate Chapel Hill**, a 70-key, five-story addition to the [Graduate hotels](#).

The historic **Colonial Inn**, which dates to 1838 in downtown Hillsborough, NC is coming back to life. Anticipate completion in summer 2020. The inn was closed in 2001. New buyers purchased the property last year and are renovating it into a 28-room boutique hotel, event center, wedding lawn and bar that will be open to the public. <https://www.facebook.com/thecolonialinnnc/>

Coming - 97-room, four-story **TRU Hotel by Hilton**, plus potential for 100 more rooms in a second building coming to east side of Chapel Hill. 2020 groundbreaking. A two-story, 136-space parking deck would be built behind the hotel.

For consideration - A developer is floating the idea of a 140-room hotel that would surround the Historic Town Hall building at the corner of West Rosemary and North Columbia streets in downtown Chapel Hill. The preliminary plan is for a four- to five-story hotel with meeting rooms, a restaurant and a rooftop terrace on West Rosemary Street. <https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/counties/orange-county/article234218302.html#storylink=cpy>

Carolina Inn, AAA Four Diamond property planning renovations in next couple of years. The Inn celebrates 100 years in 2024. www.carolinainn.com. Also **Sheraton Chapel Hill** planning renovations beginning in 2020.

Signature Attractions

The first planetarium in the South is getting an \$8.5 million facelift expected to be complete in Fall of 2020. Opened in 1949, the [Morehead Planetarium and Science Center's](#) renovations will re-imagine this North Carolina icon as a modern-day, technology, and science hub. **Morehead renovation plans include:** 1-Moving the main entrance to the building's west end facing McCorkle Place. 2-An exhibit hall that will pay tribute to UNC's history as a pioneer of science exploration. More than early 60 astronauts between 1959 and 1975 trained in celestial navigation at the Planetarium, including 11 of the 12 men who walked on the Moon. 3-An interactive

“maker space” that is part exhibit, part program 4-An updated science demonstration stage and 5-Expanded exhibit galleries (increasing space from 1,000 sq ft to 5,000 sq ft) showcasing the advances researchers are making in science, health and technology and more. Upgrades to fulldome theatre and gift shop.

<https://www.wral.com/like-a-modern-science-center-morehead-planetarium-to-embark-on-massive-renovation-in-may/18352497/>

The [Ackland Art Museum](#) at UNC is the only public university art museum in the United States to own a collection of Rembrandt’s drawings. Seven drawings from the Museum’s Peck Collection, celebrates the legacy of Rembrandt. The drawings in the Ackland’s collection, which were created over 20 years from about 1635 to 1656, depict biblical and genre scenes, figure studies and the Dutch landscape.

Anniversaries

Two downtown popular food venues nearing 100th anniversaries – [Carolina Coffee Shop](#) in 2022, is North Carolina’s continuous running restaurant and [Sutton’s Drug Store](#) in 2023, is an old fashioned soda fountain on Franklin Street serving shakes, burgers and cherry cokes since 1923 and check out the wall of photos. Vintage candy and sodas.

UNC’s [North Carolina Botanical Garden](#) is 70 in 2021 The **Botanical Garden**, one of the largest natural **botanical gardens** in the southeast, features nature trails, carnivorous plant collections, perennial borders, aquatics and herb **gardens**.

Dining & Food Updates

Chapel Hill is home to the Triangle’s first Food Hall and it has a focus on vegan and vegetarian options. [Blue Dogwood Public Market](#) Find Persian dishes, empanadas, vegan wraps, vegan soul food, organic produce, tea, coffee, fresh juices, beer, and more. On site cooking classes. **Downtown Chapel Hill, 306 West Franklin Street. Open Wed – Sun. Small with six vendors but room for more.** Outdoor beer garden.

Chef Brandon Sharp the North Carolina native, Michelin star winner, and former chef at Crossroads at the Carolina Inn, has his first restaurant, [Hawthorne & Wood](#), at Chapel Hill’s East 54 development. The menu draws much of its inspiration from California where the chef has spent the majority of his career. He collected seven prestigious Michelin stars along the way.

Chapel Hill - Dame's Chicken & Waffles plans to open in the former BSkis at 147 E. Franklin Street. [Deli Edison](#), a project from Sam Suchoff, owner of Lady Edison hams is open in the Bagel Bar location on Weaver Dairy Road near The Pig and PiggyBack Bar. [Savor Eatery and Bakery](#) is open at 110 N. Columbia Street, a Gluten-Free, Diabetic Friendly, and Keto Happy Place. [Blue Spoon Microcreamery’s](#) homemade in-house cryogenic ice cream is open in downtown Chapel Hill on Franklin Street. **Market and Moss** coming to Southern Village.

Carrboro is home to North Carolina’s only Roman-style pizza restaurant with opening of [Coronato Pizza](#) by **Chef Teddy Diggs**. Located in the new South Green shopping center at 501 S. Greensboro St. Enjoy cold craft beers, prosecco on tap and select Italian wines by the glass, alongside affordable bottles of wine and bubbles that pair perfectly with pizza. [Luna Rotisserie and Tap Room](#) is open in the former **Milltown** location at 307 E. Main Street. [Thai Station Restaurant](#) is open in the former CrossTies Bistro & Beer Garden location in Carrboro at 201 E. Main Street. [401 Main Bar](#), an upscale dive bar is open with a large front patio for your dog to lounge.

Coming Soon to Hillsborough - Rasoi Ventures announced they are opening a new global tapas-style bistro and cocktail bar at 122 W King St. called [Nomad](#). In **West Hillsborough**, Carrboro restaurants [Napoli pizza](#) and

[Glasshalfull](#) wine bar will partner on a new restaurant slated to open in the space that formerly house Mystery Brewing Public House on 230 S. Nash Street. It will feature small plates and entrees, some of which will also be cooked in the wood oven.

What's Up in Brews & Spirits

Newest Brewery - New small batch nano-brewery and bottle shop, **Craftboro Brewing Depot** is open. This onsite craft brewery has a beer garden and wine, beer and spirits store. Opened in the Carrboro's new development [South Green](#). <https://www.facebook.com/Craftboro-Brewing-Depot-267495500393612/>

Will bring Orange County's total to 5 breweries with on-site tap rooms to visit – currently Carolina Brewery, Top of the Hill Restaurant & Brewery, Vecino Brewery and Steep String Brewery.

[Gizmo Brew Works](#) recently opened bringing a beer tap room to downtown Chapel Hill in Amber Alley (former Rathskeller location).

Orange County is home to [Dingo Dog Brewing Company](#), North Carolina's first "non-profit" brewery. Located in an up-fitted horse barn on PlowGirl Farm, Dingo Dog strives to craft locally-conscious beers in its "zero waste" facility. Dingo Dog funnels its profits into providing capital and operational grants to independent, "no-kill" animal sanctuaries and rescue organizations in North Carolina. **Dingo Dog Taproom** in Carrboro, NC opening in 2020. – Ongoing project.

Carrboro's Steel String Brewery is building [Pluck Farms](#): a 6,000 square foot production brewery, working farm, destination event site, festival site, culinary pop up venue and disc golf course seated on 57 acres of pasture and woodlands ten miles west down HWY 54 from their current brewery. Beers will be created with foraged, forgotten and unique ingredients found on the land in their small ecosystem. Expected completion **2020**.

BROTHER AND SISTER TEAM LEAD ORANGE COUNTY'S FIRST WINERY & CIDERY- [Botanist and Barrel](#) in Cedar Grove, NC in northern Orange County. They are beautifully situated on certified organic Cedar Grove Blueberry Farm just north of Hillsborough, NC which features organic blueberries. They craft a variety of barrel aged and stainless steel dry fruit wines, ciders and sours, using only the finest fruits, blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, peaches and apples. Tasting room open Thursdays – Sunday. Winery/Blueberry Farm tour Sundays at 12:15 pm, \$15 per person for groups up to 10 people.

Tours still available at TOPO Distillery in downtown Chapel Hill producing award-winning organic spirits.

<http://www.topodistillery.com/bookatour>

FEW FOOD ACCOLADES

Chapel Hill is home to two 2011 James Beard Award Winners **Andrea Reusing** (Best Southeast Chef) of Lantern and the restaurant **Crook's Corner**, An American Classic. Lantern was a semi-finalist for 2013 Outstanding Restaurant in the James Beard Competition and In 2017 Reusing was a semi-finalist for Outstanding Chef in the Country. **Aaron Vandemark, a six-time James Beard Best Southeast Chef nominee (2011-2016) and chef of Panciuto in Hillsborough** (pop 6,600). IN 2018 - **Gabe Barker, of the Pizzeria Mercato** in Carrboro, for the second year in a row was a semi-finalist for Rising Star Chef. Downtown Chapel Hill's [Als' Burger Shack](#) voted best burger in America by Trip Advisor/Food and Wine in 2018.

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