

Make a To Do List When Visiting Chapel Hill, NC

For Release Ongoing

Chapel Hill, NC While you are in town for a vacation getaway, meeting or conference, take advantage of the many sights and sounds of Orange County. In Chapel Hill, stroll down Franklin Street, the heartbeat of this community, to visit a multitude of shopping, dining, and entertainment venues that are open night and day.

Some of the downtown features include T-shirt and memorabilia shops, gifts, collectibles and clothing stores. You can buy everything from unique gifts to custom jewelry or bike shorts to hip trendy fashions. Restaurants and food are plentiful with everything from Asian and Mexican cuisine to deli counters, brewpubs, coffee shops, and ice cream parlors.

Speaking of food, **Al's Burger Shack**, home of the best burger in America according to TripAdvisor, is in the heart of downtown Chapel Hill. **Sutton's Drug Store** features an old fashioned soda fountain, cool milkshakes and heavenly cheeseburgers. You'll also find two James Beard Foundation award winners on W. Franklin Street from the 2011 "Best Chef in the Southeast" Andrea Reusing at Pan-Asian **Lantern Restaurant** to **Crook's Corner Café and Bar**, a James Beard Foundation "American Classic" famous for its shrimp and grits. Lantern also received the 2013 nomination for "Outstanding Restaurant." The oldest restaurant in Chapel Hill, which opened in 1922, is the **Carolina Coffee Shop** also on Franklin Street. There is also a growing Food Hall, **Blue Dogwood Public Market** to enjoy.

Other must try restaurants include longtime **Merritt's Grill** known for their famous BLTs and new Blues on Franklin, Market & Moss, Jed's Kitchen and Hawthorne & Wood. Check locations for days and hours open.

There are five craft beer breweries in Orange County you can visit, including two in downtown Chapel Hill. The triangle's oldest brewery is the W. Franklin Street, 26-year-old **Carolina Brewery** and nearby **Top of the Hill Restaurant and Brewery**, whose outdoor patio overlooks Franklin Street. In Carrboro visit Steel String, Vecino and Craftboro Brewing Depot. The newest taprooms are E. Franklin Street's **Gizmo Brew Works** and **Dingo Dog Ciderhouse & Taproom** in the new Shelton Station in Carrboro. In Cedar Grove, visit cidery and winery **Botanist and Barrel** located on an organic blueberry farm.

The newest hotel in downtown is the West Franklin Street **Graduate Chapel Hill** which opened in August 2020. The **AC Hotel Downtown Chapel Hill**, which opened in December 2017, is a 123-room Marriott property on Rosemary Street, two blocks from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill campus and has a European flare melding contemporary architecture with local art, including a community mural. The historic hotel in town is the nearby **Carolina Inn** on the edge of the campus. This Destination Hotel, which opened in 1924, is an AAA Four Diamond property on the National Register of Historic Places featuring 185 guestrooms and the Crossroads Chapel Hill Restaurant & Bar.

Steps from The Carolina Inn is the Ackland Art Museum, which houses an internationally respected collection of more than 18,000 objects, drawings, and prints representing Asia, Africa, Europe and America, with works ranging from ancient times to the 21st century. There is also a retail gift show in the museum.

Additionally for **art lovers** don't forget the popular 2nd Friday ArtWalk when more than a dozen art galleries and other businesses stay open from 6-9 pm highlighting their art with entertainment and food. The music scene includes live music clubs including **Local 506** and **The Cave** on West Franklin.

For **kids**, the popular **Kidzu Children's Museum** has exhibits and hands-on activities focused on kids infant to tweens. The 8,500 sq ft museum is located in the University Place (formerly University Mall).

The older streets, just a block from the downtown business district, are lined with historic houses and charming cottages. For **history lovers**, The Preservation Society of Chapel Hill and Chapel Hill Historical Society have teamed up to provide Heart of Chapel Hill Tours. Visit <https://heartofthehilltours.com/> to register. Visitors may also tour the Horace Williams House, which is the only **historic** house in Chapel Hill open to the public. Visit preservationchapelhill.org for details. Additional free guided tours of downtown are available via the site www.freewalkingtourschapelhill.com/

A visit to Chapel Hill would not be complete with a walk on the UNC campus, the oldest state university in the country. Take a self-guided historic walking tour or a Zoom Sense of Place Tour. Please contact the UNC Visitor's Center at (919) 962-1630 for more information. On the campus, make plans to visit the new-look **Morehead Planetarium & Science Center** after its \$9.2 million dollar renovation with its grand reopening in the November 2020. Visit www.moreheadplanetarium.org for details. Known for its breathtaking star shows, this first planetarium in the South once served as a NASA training center for astronauts from 1959 to 1975. Experience Fulldome Digital Video Technology with super-high-definition resolution and digital surround sound system and reconfigured seating for better sight lines. See shows about everything from astronauts, to Black Holes, the solar system to the current Carolina Skies. See the large iconic sundial and rose garden in front.

Another campus treasure is the **North Carolina Collection Gallery** in Wilson Library. Noted as the largest collection of documents and artifacts on a single state, the collection contains over 650,000 rare books, maps, photographs, oil portraits, currency, antique furniture, and other historical artifacts. While temporarily closed, you can read more at <https://library.unc.edu/wilson/ncc/>

If you **love the outdoors**, drop by the [**North Carolina Botanical Garden**](#), the largest botanical garden in the southeast. This garden contains piedmont nature trails; mountain, coastal plains and sandhills habitat collections; ferns, carnivorous, aquatic and rare plant collections; an extensive herb garden and plant family garden. A 29,000 square foot "Green" Education Center, which has a Platinum LEED designation, is temporarily closed, but you can visit the display gardens and trails.

Make time to visit the **Honeysuckle Tea House**, a tea house and old apothecary about 8 miles west of Chapel Hill. Recycled telephone poles support the pagoda-style roof, and the tables were made from a 98-year-old pine tree that fell down during a storm. The Honeysuckle Tea House organically grows its own produce, invents recipes for tea blends, tinctures, honey-wines, soups, salves, chocolates, soaps and balms. Save for a few items, every product under their roof has grown, processed and packaged on site.

For **sports lovers**, tour the free 8,000 square foot interactive **Carolina Basketball Museum** next to the Dean E. Smith Center basketball complex, or stop by the Frank Kenan Football Center, both on the UNC campus. The basketball museum highlights a century of Carolina Basketball while the football center's Charlie Justice Hall of Honor, houses

historical artifacts, bowl trophies and vintage photographs dating back to the first football game in 1888. Enjoy the hands-on computer kiosks and the digital surround-sound 30-seat video theater. Also catch exciting college sporting events for more than two dozen men and women's teams on the UNC campus. Also check out the UNC Women's Basketball Museum in the Carmichael Arena on the UNC Campus. All are temporarily closed, but visit www.goheels.com for updates.

Chapel Hill offers a multitude of performing arts opportunities. Enjoy theatre, dance, opera, concerts and more at the **PlayMakers Repertory Company** or at the beautiful historic **Memorial Hall** on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus.

Check out one of many wonderful shopping locations in the town.

In Carrboro, some of the most progressive music can be heard at the famous **Cat's Cradle** and wonderful plays, music and dance is at the **ArtsCenter**. **Carr Mill**, the town's first textile mill, is now a charming shopping mall. Each spring through early fall on Sunday morning and Thursday evening; listen to Jazz music outside the **Weaver Street Market**. You can find everything from soybean margarine or baked tofu to goat's milk soap and organic olive oil at Weaver Street, the southeast's largest food co-op market.

Shop Carrboro's popular **Farmers' Market** adjacent to the Carrboro Town Hall on Saturday morning's year round, expanding spring through fall adding Wednesday afternoon hours. The area's oldest market, which opened in 1979, features produce, flowers, baked goods and more all from farmers within a 50 miles radius. Other farmers markets are year round in Chapel Hill and Hillsborough.

Shop for unique antiques and crafts at places like the **NC Crafts Gallery**, which features - the original works of North Carolinian artists and craftspeople and **Womancraft Gifts**, which was founded by a handful of local women 41 years ago and continues to carry on the tradition of being owned & operated by local artists.

There are numerous shops and restaurants at the growing 300 East Main Street development. Don't forget the popular **Open Eye Café** with **Carrboro Coffee Roasters** on site and award-winning **Neal's Deli** on S. Greensboro Street.

Historic Hillsborough, just north of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, is sometimes referred to as "a museum without walls." In Hillsborough, you'll find an entire downtown district that has been named to the National Register of Historic Places, with more than 100 late 18th and early 19th century structures still standing today. Guided and self-guided tours of Hillsborough's historic district are available.

You'll also find the nationally recognized **Montrose Gardens** (open for tours September – May), which was started in the mid-1800's, the Old Burwell School Historic Site, a 19th century Presbyterian school for young ladies, the 18th century Alexander Dickson House and the 1815 Ayr Mount federal-era plantation,. Can't miss attraction is the 1.8 mile **Riverwalk** hiking, walking and biking trail which runs along the Eno River through Hillsborough and is part of the statewide Mountains-to-See Trail.

In Hillsborough, visitors can stroll the charming downtown district along Churton Street for unique treasures as well as chocolates, wine and much more.

Orange County has a wealth of parks in the community ranging from small city parks with playground equipment to larger city and county parks with picnic shelters, baseball fields, swimming pools and tennis courts. Two area lakes spring through fall weekend opportunities for fishing, canoeing, kayaking and picnicking. And don't forget Eno River

State Park straddling Durham and Orange counties near Hillsborough. The park provides canoeing, fishing, camping, nature study programs and more than 18 miles of beautiful hiking trails. Hikers will also enjoy the beautiful views from **Occoneechee Mountain State Natural Area**, the highest point in Orange County.

For information about Orange County call the Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau dial (919) 245-4320. Ask for an Official Visitors Guide and map or visit the bureau's web site at www.visitchapelhill.org. Due to COVID, the visitors center has no set hours, but if in town at 501 West Franklin Street, visitor guides, maps and dining maps are in a box at the front door. Check the events page on the bureau's website for any current events taking place. Beginning in the spring of 2021, enjoy buskers playing music weekend evenings on Franklin Street.

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For the foreseeable future due to COVID - 19, visit the websites to see what's open and hours of attractions in 2021. When visiting Orange County, NC, please wear a mask, wait six feet and wash hands often and use hand sanitizer. <https://www.orangecountync.gov/2332/Coronavirus-COVID-19>. For the latest on the UNC Campus www.unc.edu

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