

A DAY IN JoCo

It's been the butt of jokes but Johnston County, colloquially known as JoCo, isn't just the Triangle's country bumpkin brother to the south any more. On the contrary, once you cross county lines, you're heading to a place that, while still oozing with rural charm, has a lot to offer in terms of culture, entertainment and cuisine.

Consider Clayton, one of 11 JoCo towns and the county's largest, with its vibrant downtown comprised of longstanding mom-and-pop shops mingled with a brewery, rooftop dining, arts and music festivals and a bustling weekend farmers' market. There's also picturesque Benson, and Smithfield, the county seat, serene in its placement along the Neuse River, brimming with history and the hometown to many notable people including actress Ava Gardner and a handful of sports luminaries.

One of the largest counties in the state, JoCo was incorporated in 1746 and named for Gabriel Johnston, the governor of North Carolina from 1734 to 1752. Smithfield earned its place in history books when General Joseph E. Johnston established a Confederate headquarters there in 1865; following Johnston's defeat in the Battle of Bentonville—the largest land battle fought in the state—General William Tecumseh Sherman converted Smithfield's courthouse square to a Union headquarters where he later announced the end of the Civil War.

Just minutes away from downtown Raleigh, JoCo is worthy of a day trip: Try great local food and drinks, go shopping, take a tour and visit a museum or two.

GETAWAY
JOHNSTON
COUNTY



Clockwise from top: Bentonville Reenactment; Ava Gardner Museum; Double Barley Brewing.

Photographs courtesy of visitjoco.com

DO
Hinnant Family Vineyards
In Pine Level, you'll find the largest muscadine vineyard in the state with more than 100 acres of grapes. Wines range from a traditional white scuppernong to a dry blanc du bois. Take a tour to see how the wines are made, then enjoy a curated tasting or wine flight (plus a cheese board) on the front porch overlooking the vineyards. hinnantvineyards.com

155th Bentonville Reenactment
March 21-22
Every five years, the Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site—the largest state historic

site in North Carolina—hosts a reenactment of the Battle of Bentonville, which took place March 19-21, 1865 and marked the last Confederate offensive of the Civil War. You'll learn the history of the battle between General Joseph Johnston's Confederate soldiers and General Sherman's advancing Union troops. Explore additional free programs at the Village of Bentonville. johnstoncountync.org/155th-bentonville-reenactment

Ava Gardner Museum
The fabulous Ava Gardner was born just seven miles away from Smithfield and a museum in the town honors the beloved Hollywood star with 16 permanent exhibits exploring her early

childhood and rise to stardom. At an interactive kiosk, visitors get a more in-depth look at Gardner's life beyond Hollywood. The museum also features a collection of Gardner's original scripts, photos, clothes, movie costumes, posters and personal belongings. avagardner.org

Clayton Sculpture Trail
Explore Clayton's self-guided sculpture trail, which takes visitors through 15 public art pieces starting at Town Square and finishing at Clayton Community Center. This year, the rotating outdoor exhibit features pieces from artists located throughout the country, including a kinetic sculpture made from repurposed

steel and a moving piece that makes music in the wind. Download the map at townofclaytonnc.org/Downtown-Clayton/sculpture-trail.aspx.

EAT



Redneck BBQ Lab
The Benson-based Redneck BBQ Lab combines science and barbecue to produce some of the best pulled pork, burnt ends, brisket, ribs, and chopped chicken in the state—with a vast trophy collection to prove it. Along with award-winning meats, classic sides, such as mac and cheese, slaw and cornbread, are made fresh daily. Look for the Lab at the Old North State Food Hall opening in Clayton this spring. theredneckbbqlab.com

Jones Cafe
Since William and Emily Jones opened it in 1958, Clayton's Jones Cafe has gained a cult following for its hot dogs—Carolina Packer red hots from Smithfield boiled in a secret blend of cooking oils, served with a heap of Stevens Chili (also from Smithfield). The restaurant offers burgers, sandwiches, fries and a full breakfast menu as well, all in a retro setting complete with red and white checkered tablecloths. [facebook.com/Jones-Cafe-116290391732380](https://www.facebook.com/Jones-Cafe-116290391732380)

Simple Twist
Chef Nathan Roby works with local farmers and vendors to curate menus of scratch-made dishes. Open for lunch, dinner and weekend brunch, Clayton's Simple Twist offers cornmeal crusted fried green tomatoes, smoked chili shrimp, a salmon BLT, and mac and cheese with lobster and shrimp. Cocktails, local draft beers and wine round out the menu. simpletwistnc.com

Cornerstone Cafe & Coffee
The Benson cafe's drool-worthy loaded waffles come in flavors such as maple bacon, s'mores, apple cinnamon and chocolate and are available all day. Pair with a specialty latte or frappe or opt for an item off the brunch menu, served daily until 11 a.m. cornerstonecafe.coffee

DRINK



Revival 1869
Located in historic downtown Clayton, Revival 1869 offers a selection of more than 100 whiskeys from across the globe, along with seasonal cocktails made from freshly squeezed juices and house-made syrups and tonics. Cozy up in a plush chair and enjoy live jazz every Thursday and Saturday night. revival1869.com

Double Barley Brewing
At this Smithfield brewery, brewmaster Larry Lane creates bold-flavored craft brews with the finest malted barley, hops and yeast. Award winning beers include Field of Dreams, SteakCake Stout, Abby's Amber Ale, Thrilla in Vanilla Porter and Touché IPA. doublebarleybrewing.com

Ugly Mug Bean & Brew
It may have a Garner address but this family-owned coffee shop is definitely a JoCo staple. Pair your hot, iced or frozen coffee drink or smoothie with an all-day breakfast and lunch menu. umcoffee.com

InStill Distilling Co.
Before you head home, stop by Clayton's InStill Distilling to grab a bottle of the distillery's signature white rum. The liquor, released last May, is made from a molasses and sugar combo with a light finish of dry apricot, banana and sweet molasses aromas. Take a guided tour of the distillery, too, and finish with a tasting or a cocktail. instilldistillingco.com

AS SEEN IN
MARCH 2020
RALEIGH
RALEIGH

EXPERIENCE MUDCATS BASEBALL



TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

APRIL 2020 SCHEDULE						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 WS 7:00	10 WS 7:00	11 WS 5:00
12 WS 2:00	13 WIL 7:00	14 WIL 7:00	15 WIL 10:30am	16 @LYN	17 @LYN	18 @LYN
19 @LYN	20 @FAY	21 @FAY	22 @FAY	23 DE 7:00	24 DE 7:00	25 DE 5:00
26 DE 2:00	27 OFF	28 MB 7:00	29 MB 10:30am	30 MB 7:00		

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