

Seeking an escape to a new locale? Try a weekend away in the thriving Southern capital city of Raleigh, North Carolina. Long known as the "Smithsonian of the South," Raleigh is home to a large number of Smithsonian-affiliate museums (many of which offer free admission) and historical attractions. Lately, though, it has emerged as a blossoming culinary destination.



# Raleigh, North Carolina Getaway

Story: Jessica Holt  
Photos: Courtesy of Visit Raleigh

Raleigh restaurateur Ashley Christensen was recently named Outstanding Chef in the country by the James Beard Foundation (JBF). She is the first North Carolinian ever to win the distinguished award. Christensen owns a fleet of downtown Raleigh restaurants and bars but is best known for her original venture, Poole's Diner, which helped usher in a culinary renaissance in Raleigh when it opened 11 years ago. An "All Are Welcome" mural on the side of the building and signs reading "Don't Forget Kindness" printed on the front windows greet guests at this modern diner serving avant-garde comfort food.



Poole's Diner: Macaroni Au Gratin

After opening Poole's, Christensen added to the restaurant scene a low-key spot that offers chicken and waffles paired with champagne (Beasley's Chicken + Honey), a burger bar with house-ground 100 percent chuck burgers and spiked milkshakes (Chuck's), an underground craft cocktail bar with late-night munchie-inspired snacks (Fox Liquor Bar), and an upscale restaurant dedicated to wood-fired land and sea entrees (Death & Taxes). Her next venture, Poole's Side Pies, will open later this summer next door to Poole's Diner.



Garland

Southern fare isn't all Raleigh has to offer, though. Explore its bustling downtown streets to find an abundance of locally owned restaurants and shops. The convergence of global flavors and traditional Southern cuisine creates the diverse melting pot that is Raleigh.

Bida Manda, Sanskrit for father and mother, thoughtfully introduces guests to traditional Laotian cuisine. The beautifully adorned interior connects patrons with southeast Asian culture. A few blocks away from the funky restaurant Garland fuses customary Indian flavors with local Southern vegetables. The union of these ingredients makes for adventurous yet delicious dishes that are far from the offerings on a traditional Indian menu.



Garland Diner: Table Setting



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Raleigh Beer Garden

To quench your thirst, stop in one (or more) of the 30+ craft breweries in the area that are part of the Raleigh Beer Trail. Email a copy of your stamped beer trail passport to receive prizes for visiting five, 10 or 15 of the Raleigh area breweries.

The stunning Brewery Bhavana, which welcomes guests into a magical setting unlike any other, is a great place to start a beer trail excursion. Belgian-inspired beer, Chinese dim sum, a flower shop and a bookstore/library come together in this unique brewery. Another fan favorite is Trophy Brewing Company. What started as a nanobrewery and pizza joint has now grown to three distinctive locations in and around downtown Raleigh. Trophy brews limited-edition IPAs, progressive rotating casks, and will soon expand its original location to add on a barrel-aged and sour program.

Can't decide which brewery to visit? The Raleigh Beer Garden may be the place for you. Currently holding the Guinness World Record for the most different beers on tap (more than 350), there's definitely something for everyone here. Even non beer drinkers feel at home in the Beer Garden's Spiritual bar, where craft cocktails are on the menu.

Hip neighborhoods like the Warehouse District are popping up around downtown Raleigh. The red brick, industrial structures throughout the district reflect the city's history. Though the buildings' exteriors harken back to bygone days, the insides have been revitalized into innovative businesses, art galleries, nightspots, restaurants and more.

Visit the Raleigh Denim Workshop to witness jeans being handcrafted right in front of your eyes. Custom artisan garments, sold all over the United States, are produced in this storefront location. Stroll over to the state's only non-collecting contemporary art museum, CAM Raleigh. The ever-changing exhibits at CAM showcase up-and-coming works in the art and design world.

Whether it's planning a progressive dinner, sipping your way through the Raleigh Beer Trail, or hitting the museums and trendy neighborhoods, everyone can experience big-city entertainment with small-town appeal in Raleigh.



Raleigh Denim



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