

# HEAD TO NC'S CAPITAL CITY FOR HISTORY, BASKETBALL, AND MORE

Raleigh is the official seat of government for the State of North Carolina. It's also home to a plethora of libraries, museums, galleries, and shops, plus plenty of history awaiting discovery.

The city was named after Sir Walter Raleigh, who organized

Queen Elizabeth's ill-fated colony on the Outer Banks in 1587.

Although he never set foot in North Carolina, there is an 11-foot statue of him, looking the part of a cavalier, in front of the entrance to the **Progress Energy Center for the Performing Arts**.



Michael Robson

The city of Raleigh, North Carolina, is jam-packed with history, culture, art, and fabulous food.

## Touring NC's Capital

Several tour companies provide inside information on the city and its interesting history. If you are in good physical shape, consider touring the city on a sporty three-wheeled electric Trikke, provided by **Carolina Touring Co.** And **Raleigh Walking Tours** offers public and private tours focusing on history, downtown murals, public art, ghost stories, and more!

If you want a tour that covers different parts of the city in a little over an hour, a good choice is the **Historic Raleigh Trolleys**, styled after the city's original trolleys from the early 1900s. Narrated trolley tours begin and end at the **Mordecai Historic Park Visitor Center** and include the **Historic Oakwood neighborhood**. Raleigh is called the "city of oaks" because of the many trees that line its neighborhood.

## Historic Sites, Libraries, and Museums

Originally encompassing 5,000 acres, **Mordecai Historic Park** was the largest plantation in the area

during colonial times. The main house, built in 1785 for Joel Lane, is the oldest house in Wake County still on its original foundation. The park also includes the birthplace and childhood home of President Andrew Johnson, the Ellen Mordecai Garden, the Badger-Iredell Law Office, the Allen Kitchen, and St. Mark's Chapel. Open every day, the park charges for guided tours.


After the first Capitol building burned in 1831, a new **State Capitol** was completed in 1840 to accommodate all state government operations. Today the governor and his staff work on the first floor, while other government offices are housed in nearby buildings. One of the country's finest and best-preserved Greek Revival public buildings, the Capitol is open for self-guided, free tours on weekdays and Saturdays.

Two outstanding museums that offer free admission are located just a few steps from the Capitol. The **North Carolina Museum of History** covers more than 14,000 years of history, from Native American times to the present day. *The Story of North Carolina* exhibit,

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featuring various artifacts, chronicles the history of the state.

The **North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences**, the largest museum of its kind in the Southeast, highlights the state's diverse natural habitats and inhabitants, as well as natural treasures such as the indigenous Venus flytrap. There is a charge for James Cameron's *Challenging the Deep* exhibit, which opened on Oct. 15 and runs through May 7, 2023.

Another free attraction worth visiting is the **City of Raleigh Museum**, located on Fayetteville Street in the center of downtown. It is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the history of Raleigh, from its beginning to current times. While downtown, you might check out the **Marbles Kids Museum**, offering hands-on exhibits and IMAX films (admission charged).

The **North Carolina Museum of Art**, five miles west of downtown, opened its doors in 1956, thanks to support and funding from the state legislature. Its current collection, free and open to the public, spans more than 5,000 years of artistic work, from antiquity to the present. The museum also hosts celebrated exhibitions and public programs throughout the year.

Library aficionados should take time to visit the **James B. Hunt Jr. Library**, named for a former governor who held leadership positions as a student at NC State. Considered one of the most beautiful libraries in the world, the Hunt Library emphasizes collaboration, innovation, learning, and experimentation. Don't miss bookBot, a robotic book delivery system.

## BBQ, Blues, Brews, and More

In recent years Raleigh has become a destination for lovers of barbecue, blues, and brews. The **BBQ, Blues, and Brews Festival**—featuring a regional barbecue competition, live blues music, and locally brewed craft beverages—is planned for November 12 in nearby Fuquay-Varina. The **Raleigh Beer Trail** draws year-round visitors who may participate in a passport program that leads to prizes. **City Brew Tours** include behind-the-scenes tours of the city's best breweries, featur-



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The North Carolina State Capitol, in Raleigh, is open daily for free self-guided tours.

ing up to 15 different beers, a beer-paired meal, and transportation.

Raleigh is also known for its variety of restaurants, including more than 50 that offer al fresco dining. Our short visit last year included a stop at **Shorty's Famous Hot Dogs** in Wake Forest, which dates to 1916 and is known for its "red" hot dogs. We also enjoyed a hearty country breakfast at **Big Ed's Restaurant** in the City Market, lunch at **Sam Jones BBQ**, and dinner at the famous **Angus Barn**, in business since 1960 and known for its prime steaks. Locals and visitors alike patronize the restaurant year-round, especially during the holidays when lavish decorations abound. We also enjoyed the luxury and convenience of the **Heights House Hotel** during our stay.

## Holiday Events

Raleigh welcomes visitors any time of the year, but the holidays are especially exciting. The **78th Annual ABC11 Raleigh Christmas Parade** will take place on November 19 in Downtown Raleigh. Ira David Wood III's adaptation of **A Christmas Carol** is planned for December 9-10 at Raleigh Memorial Auditorium. **First Night Raleigh** on December 31 features sleigh rides, a Ferris wheel, live music, and a giant copper acorn dropping from the sky at midnight.

## Planning Your Trip

You can drive, fly, or take the train or bus from the Mid-Atlantic to Raleigh, located off I-85 south of the Virginia state line. The drive from the D.C. area takes about four hours. When planning your trip, check out the visitraleigh.com website for tips on tours, accommodations, restaurants, attractions, and events.

Carol Timblin welcomes travel news at [ctimblin@gmail.com](mailto:ctimblin@gmail.com).

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