

NORTH CAROLINA | RALEIGH

Heights House
Hotel

AMANDA CASTLE PHOTOGRAPHY

Capital Time

Get out and explore the ever-growing city of Raleigh

By Lia Picard

IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG to fall in love with Raleigh. Although it's among the fastest-growing cities in the U.S., it has a small-town feel that exudes Southern charm with plenty to explore. Neighborhoods lined with Craftsman-style and Victorian homes practically beg to be traversed,

while eclectic eateries and cultural venues provide their own sources of fun. And with 14 airlines servicing Raleigh-Durham International Airport, it's an easy weekend getaway.

Located in North Carolina's "Research Triangle" (along with Durham and Chapel Hill), Raleigh is the state's capital and boasts 10 colleges and universities. One of Raleigh's most unique features,

however, is how it effortlessly weaves in and out of nature. Known as the City of Oaks, it's easy to feel like you're driving through a forest at times or find patches of wildflowers. There are 9,000 acres of park spaces and almost 1,300 acres of water making it easy to enjoy natural beauty without going far.

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Whether you're an outdoor enthusiast, a foodie or both, there's something for everyone to do. Here's how to make the most of a trip:

WHERE TO EAT

When it comes to Raleigh's dining scene, it's the seasonally driven dishes in high-end, yet approachable settings that shine. Chef Scott Crawford masters this approach at his restaurants **Crawford & Son**, located in the Oakwood neighborhood, and **Jolie**, a French-inspired bistro just down the street. Depending on when you visit Crawford & Son, you'll find dishes like heirloom tomato salad with whipped mozzarella and yellowfin tuna crudo with fermented pepper mignonette. **Mandolin**, in the Hayes Barton neighborhood, presents chef Sean Fowler's fresh take on Southern dishes with offerings such as chilled strawberry bisque topped with brioche croutons and crispy ham, and the pork short rib with Cheerwine-baked peas and peach miso barbecue.

Build in time for casual fare, too, with stops at **Yellow Dog Bread Co.**, which sells an assortment of delicious pastries like hand pies and cupcakes, in a sun-filled spot; **Two Roosters** for classic ice cream flavors with a twist, like the sea salt chip cookie dough; and **Brewery Bhavana** for a lunch or dinner of expertly folded dim sum and house-brewed beers.

WHAT TO DO

Since Raleigh is both a state capital and a college town, cultural opportunities abound. Start with one of the great museums, such as the **North Carolina Museum of Sciences**, the largest of its kind in the southeastern United States. It contains thrilling exhibits, from a blue whale skeleton to gemstones uncovered in North Carolina. In 2024, the museum will unveil its *Dueling Dinosaurs* exhibit with the most complete skeletons of *Tyrannosaurus rex* and *Triceratops*. The **North Carolina Museum of Art**, a quick 10-minute drive from downtown, marries art and nature with its modern structure surrounded by reflecting pools, gardens and courtyards. Inside, the museum displays art ranging from the Italian Renaissance to ancient African and Egyptian works. Even if the museum is closed, plan a visit to the 164-acre **Museum Park** located

on the property — it entices with manicured trails, picnic areas and larger-than-life outdoor sculptures. Take in skyline views from **Dorothea Dix Park**, and, if you go in the late summer, you can catch sunflowers standing tall in the 5-acre field.

Hoping to get some shopping in, too? **Quail Ridge Books**, located in the North Hills neighborhood, has two levels of carefully curated books and hosts speakers. **The Edge of Urge**, a boutique in downtown Raleigh, specializes in self-proclaimed "unlikely" finds to scratch that itch for something unique, whether it's clothing or home décor. In the Warehouse District, **The Flourish Market** purveys sustainable fashion and accessories from global designers and artisans. **Rebus Works**, located in the Boylan Heights neighborhood, calls to those seeking an off-the-beaten-path market meets art gallery (check out the selection of locally roasted coffee).

WHERE TO STAY

If you're traveling with kids, centrally located accommodations are key. **The Casso** sits near the heart of the action, only a half-mile walk from attractions like the **North Carolina Museum of History** and the state's Capitol. The boutique property features 126 guest rooms and stunning art throughout the hotel but is far from fussy. The industrial-glam lobby or the hotel's café, **Good Day, Good Night**, makes for a great place to sip a cup of coffee or enjoy a quick bite.

Luxury seekers find it at **Heights House Hotel**, which resides within a historic Italianate-style mansion. Boylan Heights, its neighborhood, sits only a mile from downtown, but the quiet residential area makes it feel farther removed. A Heights House stay includes breakfast (and the parlor downstairs serves Italian cocktails), and a stroll through the stately neighborhood is highly recommended. If you're willing to stay about 15 minutes out of town, it's hard to beat **The Umstead Hotel and Spa**'s plush setting. The well-appointed rooms soothe with earthy tones. Amenities such as the hotel's spa and outdoor pool offer a chance to luxuriate in style. Even if you don't stay there, The Umstead's restaurant, **Hérons**, is worth visiting for its intimate setting and whimsically plated dishes.

