

ERUDITE RALEIGH OFFERS MANY OPTIONS FREE OF CHARGE

*All photos courtesy Visit Raleigh*

THE NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM OF ART OPENED A LARGE EXPANSION IN 2010.

W

hen you think of Raleigh, North Carolina, you might not first picture giant dinosaurs, the country's largest outdoor art park or a cannon from Blackbeard's ship. But visitors to Raleigh can discover these treasures, each free of charge, at some of the state capital's

acclaimed museums.

Sometimes dubbed the Smithsonian of the South, the Raleigh area boasts more than 40 free attractions, including a number of renowned museums and cultural sites. Lifelong learners will love the unexpected breadth of Raleigh's edifying offerings at places such as the North Carolina Museum of History, the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences and the North Carolina Museum of Art.

Home to nine universities and colleges, Raleigh has been voted the "Most Educated City in America" by Men's Health magazine. Groups with a wide range of curiosities will enjoy perusing the innovative attractions of this educational hub.

## •• NORTH CAROLINA •• MUSEUM OF ART

In 1947, North Carolina purchased 139 works of European and American art. Since this initial acquisition, the North Carolina Museum of Art has grown to include Renaissance paintings, 19th-century paintings, Egyptian funerary art, Grecian vases, Roman sculptures and American art from the 18th century to today.

To house the now-extensive permanent collection, the museum opened the 127,000-square-foot West Building in 2010. About 50 percent of the exterior is glass, allowing the building to blend art and natural elements to highlight the museum's collection.

Outside, the museum's sculpture garden features reflecting pools and an impressive collection of Rodin sculptures.

"It would be very easy for a group to spend hours at the museum," said Ryan Smith, director of communications for the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau. "The museum also has the largest art park in the country. There is a lovely green trail that runs through the grounds past larger-than-life artworks."

Three miles of trails weave through the 164-acre Museum Park, which displays more than a dozen works of art. Groups can wander through fields, woodlands and creeks on their own or led by a guide.

The museum offers other group opportunities, such as a guided tour of the museum's permanent collection and an expert discussion focused on a compelling work of art or theme.



## •• NORTH CAROLINA •• MUSEUM OF NATURAL SCIENCES

The world's only dinosaur heart lies on display at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences. Scientists performing a CT scan on the remains of a *Thescelosaurus* nicknamed Willo found evidence that suggested the fossilized remains of a heart.

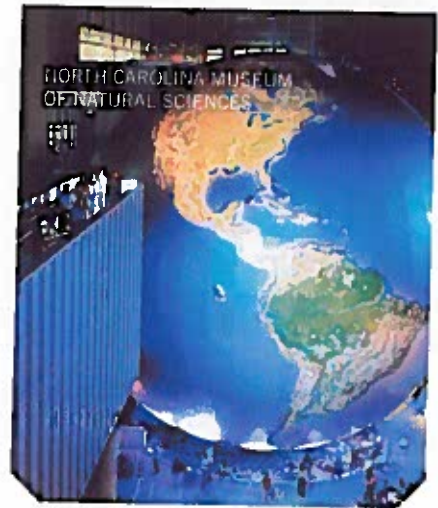
This unusual specimen, as well as other rare dinosaur skeletons, help make the museum the state's most visited attraction. The science museum not only houses dinosaur exhibits but also offers a plethora of permanent exhibits, touring exhibits, live programs and educational films.

With a mixture of dioramas, fossilized remains and live creatures, visitors become immersed in the complexities of the natural world. Living butterflies, insects, snakes and a two-toed sloth help illustrate various ecosystems that are still functioning today.

"It's a very tech-savvy, one-of-a-kind museum," said Smith. "At the Nature Research Center, groups can walk into a lab, and scientists will talk about what they are working on."

The 80,000-square-foot Nature Research Center opened in 2012 to teach guests how scientists develop, test and prove various types of research. The center's scientists invite visitors into their working labs to help them experience the scientific process firsthand.

Groups can arrange a hands-on experience led by scientists. Possible activities include assessing biodiversity in soil samples, modeling hurricane events or examining soft tissue in dinosaur bones.



## •• NORTH CAROLINA •• MUSEUM OF HISTORY

The idea for the North Carolina Museum of History germinated during Samuel A'Court Ashe's trip to Boston in the early 1880s. Ashe found the history of the city so well preserved that he started a campaign to collect artifacts from North Carolina's history. The museum eventually opened with those items in 1902 and continues to grow with the opening in 2011 of the permanent exhibit "Story of North Carolina."

"The museum has everything from artifacts from the earliest settlers to part of the counter in Woolworth from Greensboro," said Smith. "It gives people who do not have a sense of North Carolina's history a really good grasp of what the state is all about."

The 20,000-square-foot "Story of North Carolina" follows more than 14,000 years of the state's history in the largest exhibit ever produced at the museum. Artifacts, multimedia presentations, dioramas and hands-on interactive components keep the past accessible to visitors.

Stone tools dating from 12,000 to 1,000 B.C. tell most of what the world knows of the state's earliest inhabitants. In another display, groups can examine a cannon, gold flakes and other items recovered from Blackbeard's flagship, *Queen Anne's Revenge*, which was discovered off the state's coast in 1996.

Two full-size historic houses, the state's fourth-oldest house, dating from 1742, and a restored 1860 slave cabin, also allow guests to step inside a piece of history. Artifacts from the Civil War, an interactive textile-mill weaving room and a replicate of the Wright brothers' first plane also help visitors connect with historic events.



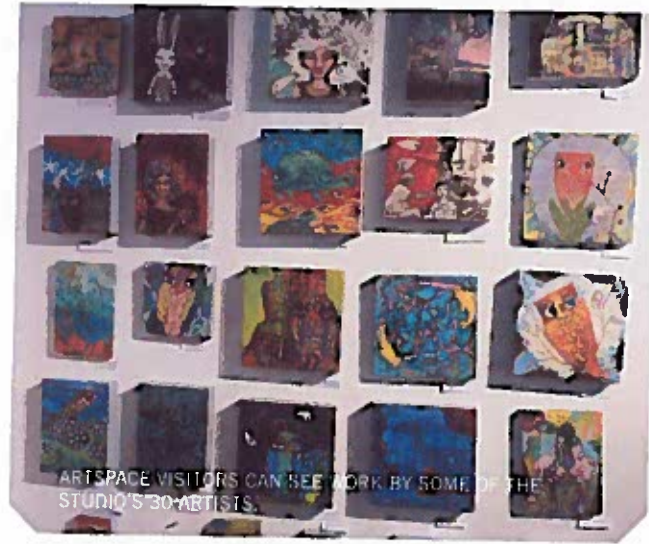
ARTSPACE

Whether a group wants to discover the process behind an elaborate artwork or dirty their own hands with paint, Artspace can provide both opportunities. The downtown visual-arts center seeks to engage the community with art through rotating exhibits, on-site working artists and workshops led by professional art instructors.

"Throughout the day, people can walk through, and if there is a potter making pottery, they can talk to the potter to find out more about the pottery process," said Smith. "It's really an opportunity for groups to get some one-on-one time with the artists."

About 30 artists create works in a variety of media inside the 30,000-square-foot facility. Previously the city's livery and a car dealership, the historic building in downtown Raleigh welcomes 100,000 visitors annually.

Guided tours tell stories about the founding of the program and lead groups through the facility's gallery spaces and artist studios for hands-on demonstrations. Artspace encourages guests to ask questions to understand more about creating art.



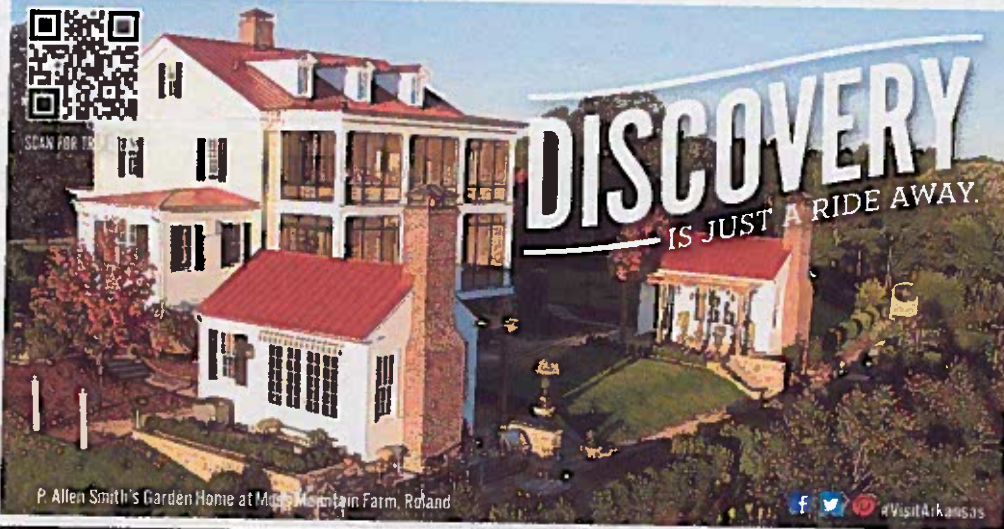
ONWEB

A BITE OF BARBECUE FROM RALEIGH, N.C.

WWW.GROUPTRAVELLEADER.COM



SCAN FOR TRAVEL



P. Allen Smith's Garden Home at Moss Mountain Farm, Roland

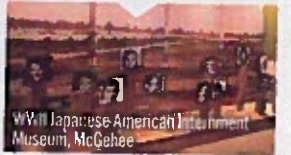
f t w VisitArkansas



Clinton House Museum, Fayetteville



Babe Ruth, Ho Springs Baseball Trail



WWII Japanese American Internment Museum, McGehee

From viewing this season's beautiful gardens to journeying back decades along the Baseball Trail or standing where Bill and Hillary Clinton got married, Arkansas is rich with culture and history for you to explore. FIND OUT MORE BY VISITING [ArkansasGroupTravel.com](http://ArkansasGroupTravel.com) OR CALLING 1-800-872-1259.

Arkansas  
THE NATURAL STATE