



Launched in 1997, *Instinct* is one of the “top three” gay men’s lifestyle and entertainment magazines in the U.S. In the general market, *Instinct* compares as a gay version of *Details* magazine—trend-setting, fashion forward, informative and most importantly, smart and humorous. *Instinct* serves anyone interested in the gay perspective on travel, fashion, entertainment, health/fitness, home, auto, technology and dating/relationships.

Circulation = 130,000 (approximate)

Freelance journalist David Booth Perry visited Raleigh in January 2014 on an individual press tour sponsored by the Greater Raleigh CVB.

Goin' To CAROLINA

Say what you will, but Raleigh has nuts

BY DAVID PERRY



ROCKING RALEIGH
A perfect blend of small-town charm and big-city feel

IN NEW YORK —

Me: I'm going to Raleigh!

More than a few of my friends: Why?

IN RALEIGH —

Me: I'm visiting from New York!

More than a few Raleighites: Why?

STOP THAT, ALL OF YOU!

I'll admit it: When it comes to the South, gays are rightly dubious. Beyond Maryland I envisioned a landscape populated by hicks, yokels, bumpkins and other assorted products of inbreeding confirming that *Deliverance* was a documentary.

Then again, how rednecky can you be with not one, not two, but 30 Rodin sculptures staring back at you? Flung over 164 acres, the North Carolina Museum of Art was the perfect introduction to the Tar Heel State—and the perfect way to dispel a few preconceived notions. The NCMA's treasure trove of Rodin, paired with equally treasurable troves from ancient Greece up to the modern day in an unbroken line, is strategically jumbled to create an artistic blitz. Belle Epoque Artemis goes up against Greco-Roman Hercules; elegant masterpieces by

John Singleton Copley share the limelight—and the crowds—with boisterous Afrocentric work by Kehinde Wiley. Guarding over all are illuminated fiberglass giants crouching on the wall. Very avant-garde. The café ain't too shabby, either.

Triangle Man, Triangle Man

A few stereotypes hold: The hair is big, the gingham is worn proudly, and the BeDazzler is held at the ready—but it's a drag queen doing all three.

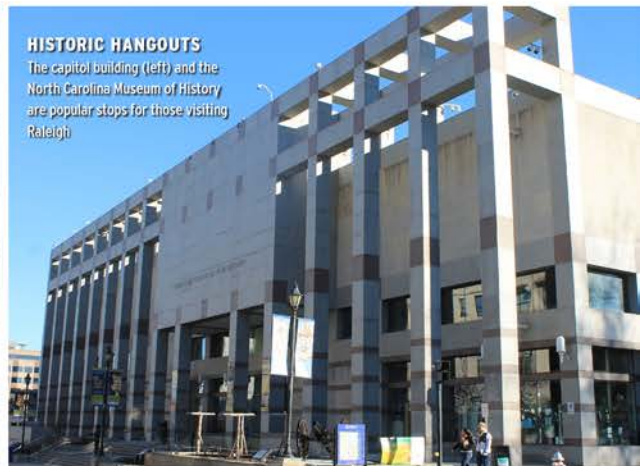
Thus began my crash course in disproving a few Jeff Foxworthy routines.

To write off the South is to write off the gays thriving there; the boonies may be red-faced in more ways than one, but the Triangle, the trio Raleigh forms with Durham and Chapel Hill, gleams a stunning blue. Proving the point, gay Raleigh is not only thriving, it's proliferating. But let the lover beware: The Triangle has a division like no other. I was surprised how male the Raleigh



HISTORIC HANGOUTS

The capitol building (left) and the North Carolina Museum of History are popular stops for those visiting Raleigh



scene is. And it makes perfect sense, because Raleigh is the gay one, Durham is the lesbian one, and Chapel Hill is the young one.

H-uh.

But who doesn't love an overload of gay good ol' boys? Joining stalwarts Flex and Legends are newcomers Fifteen and The Borough, and the four cover the field. The beautiful people? That's Flex, a cruisy basement bar whose suggestive lighting invites scrumptious scrutiny of all sorts. (Hee. I said "scru." Twice.) It's a marked difference from Fifteen, whose open, loungey feel is more for the Lorde-over-Gaga crowd. Both could fit in the venerable and cavernous Legends Nightclub Complex, first and foremost of Raleigh's gay nightspots. And they do mean "Complex"—along with a dance floor, there's a separate video bar, game room, patio and drag theater. Flouting the rule that says being gay is for those 21 and older, The Borough lets in the baby gays so they can interface somewhere besides the Internet.

In fact, I had a hard time finding any place that *wasn't* gay friendly. And some venues, like ORO (possibly the best eatery in town), go out of their way to make a point of it, sponsoring

gay events all over the state. Set in the rolling ripples of the Piedmont, Raleigh blends mountain traditions—bluegrass, some particularly potent whiskeys—with a burgeoning tech sector, 10 universities and a progressive Southern identity that extends to the entire state. You can literally go around the world in 80 paces, because right next door to Raleigh's finest in Laotian fare at Bida Manda is the city's finest in Irish fare at Tir na nOg. Throw in roving herds of jarheads on leave from Fort Bragg and a night on the town can lead to, oh, anything!

That's "Sir" To You

As suggested by his statue *werkin'* it in front of convention center, Raleigh is named for Sir Walter Raleigh, the explorer that got Queen Elizabeth I all aflutter in her petticoats. Little wonder, considering Raleigh's gigantic nuts.

Of course I'm speaking of Raleigh's

"City of Oaks" nickname and the area's ubiquitous acorn imagery, most monumentally the 1,250-pound copper whopper in Moore Square and most hypnotically at the Shimmer Wall, a high-tech mosaic on the back side of the convention center depicting an oak tree and made of 79,464 hinged aluminum tiles that ripple in the wind. Imagine a 9,284-square-foot lava lamp. Pretty.

Historians debate how far the fluttering flew, but queens of all sorts, and their paramours, would be satisfied by the sheer luxe of The Umstead, whose star rating is somewhere between "five" and "galactic." But its pastoral setting outside Raleigh makes for something of a hoof. Smack in the city center stands the Sheraton on Fayetteville Street, the economic spine of town. Its bull's-eye location makes it the go-to hotel when the city gets its gay on for Out! Raleigh, the daylong

Pride fest each May that commandeers Fayetteville from end to end and grinds the city to a halt. Rather than a parade, rainbow Raleighites throw a block party and invite everybody. Like a city-sized GPS, the street is so well framed by the Parthenon-inspired Capitol and the Acropolis-like Duke Center for the Performing Arts that you can wander onto it anywhere between

the two and get orientated by how close you are to either.

Them's Good Eatn'

One street over from Fayetteville is Wilmington, and those clinging to the idea that Southern food means sugar, fat, booze or a combo of all three—preferably deep-fried—have some catching up to do.

Raleigh revels in its food and serves it up New South style. If the clubs prove enjoyable, mornings demand the wake-up chow at Joule (I had "The Hangover," a grits-and-cheese concoction that neither confirms nor denies my behavior). If the clubs prove *really* enjoyable, the fried chicken with waffles at Beasley's Chicken & Honey, a short hop from Joule, make perfect brunch fare.

Just be prepared for a young crowd. Chapel Hill may be the fountain of



TAKE A WALKABOUT
(from top) Another view of the Capitol; the city's hard-to-miss globe installation; the Center for the Performing Arts; Estey Hall at Shaw University



youth, but Raleigh is itself nubile. Anybody over 30 may want to keep Alexis Carrington references to a minimum.

The Smithsonian Of The South

Exploring Raleigh's highlights is easy; they are either cheap or free. The latter includes most of the museums and the R-Line, a complimentary bus service looping the downtown. But the city is best experienced on foot. Bunching its best and brightest on top of one another while avoiding that looming feeling, Raleigh is a verdant walking path with a splash of tall buildings for variety.

I started at the Contemporary Art Museum, aka the CAM. An installation space whose exhibits switch out every month, the CAM is the crown jewel of the city's vibrant Warehouse District—which, by the way, is where most of the gay clubs are and is home to the LGBT Center of Raleigh. The city was once a major cargo depot, and when the trains moved on, artists of every kind moved in. Along with the CAM are Humble Pie and The Pit, two eateries everyone I met recommended.



LADIES OF THE STAGE
The Raleigh gays take their drag very seriously.



Post-Pie/Pit, I walked off yet another Carolinian food coma while en route to what the locals call the "Daily Planet," a silver replica of Earth 70 feet tall with Tierra del Fuego at eye level. Part of the larger North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, a sleek compound doubling as an active laboratory, it and the North Carolina Museum of History flank the Capitol, whose statue-studded grounds are also a bit of an education: Did you know North Carolina produced three presidents? Jackson (#7), Polk (#11) and Johnson (#17).

If all that fails to impress, perhaps a countertop will do. A Woolworth's countertop, to be exact, in all its Formica-coated glory. Enshrined in the North Carolina Museum of History, it is the very same Woolworth's countertop

where, in 1960, African-American college students, Ezell Blair, Jr., Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeil, and David Richmond sat down, requested service, defied the whites-only rule of the age, and delivered some of the first salvos against Jim Crow.

Woolworth's is long gone, but the lesson remains. And the parallels between one civil rights revolution and another are obvious to more than a few North Carolinians. In fact, North Carolina is a growing patchwork of municipalities recognizing same-sex marriages, and *Fisher-Borne v. Smith* may make the state the first in the South to come to its 14th Amendment senses.

So let's be fair: That *Deliverance* reference? Come, come—the movie was set in Georgia.

THE NITTY GRITTY

STAY

Sheraton
sheratonraleigh.com

The Umstead
theumstead.com

EAT

Beasley's
Chicken & Honey
ac-restaurants.com/beasleys

Bida Manda
bidamanda.com

Humble Pie
humblepierestaurant.com

Iris
ncartmuseum.org/dining/iris

Joule
ac-restaurants.com/joule

ORO
ororaleigh.com

The Pit
thepit-raleigh.com

Tir na nOg
tnnirishpub.com

PLAY & BE MARY

Fifteen
fifteenraleigh.com

Flex
flex-club.com

Legends
legends-club.com

The Borough
theboroughraleigh.com

SIGHTS AND SCENES

(clockwise from top left) Bites at The Pit; dining at Joule; a warm welcome to Bida Manda and the car scene at Flex

