

Wilmington, Delaware: Plenty Of Tasty Reasons To Visit



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Published Sep 16, 2019

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There are lots of reasons to visit Wilmington, Delaware these days. With the addition of excellent restaurants, a beer garden, and bike trail, Wilmington is a great place for a long weekend escape.

Grand home of the Brandywine Valley



Source: Kurt Jacobson ()

For decades, travelers in the know have come to see the classic estates of the du Pont family that are open to the public. Both Winterthur and Nemours are former du Pont homes that are reason enough to visit Wilmington. And the Hagley Museum and Library shows visitors where the du Pont family's fortunes began in the Brandywine Valley. If this is your first time visiting Wilmington, it's worthwhile to visit at least one of the above du Pont sites. What's different nowadays is the addition of several top dining establishments in the city center and beyond.

A tasty lineup of restaurants



Source: Kurt Jacobson ()

For casual fine dining, the addition of Bardea (downtown) and Ciro Food & Drink (near Blue Rock's ballpark) are top-shelf choices. Bardea was nominated for a coveted James Beard award in just its first year. Serving lunch and dinner with an Italian flare; Bardea diners dig into garden-fresh salads, rustic pizzas, exquisite pasta dishes, and sandwiches at lunch. At dinner, add Mediterranean favorites like charred octopus, dry age lamb skewers, and a roasted chicken for the whole table. I tried the Nona's Meatballs; it was so good hardly a drop of sauce was left on the plate.

For other tasty treats, in the downtown area find DE.CO, a food hall with something for everyone. Open for lunch or dinner seven days a week; find everything from sushi to pizza in their seven separate eateries. Even Bardea has a presence here at DE.CO with a pizza place. For Indian food, Verandah will be popular with both meat-eaters and vegetarians. Connie's Chicken and Waffles, Spark'd, Stripp'd, and Phub's round out the offerings. A full bar is available to pair your favorite adult beverage with lunch or dinner.

For burgers, The Farmer and The Cow in Downtown Wilmington got the nod from famed TV foodie Guy Fieri in his Diners, Drive-ins, and Dives show. Choose from 12 types of configurations to dress one of six kinds of patties. Their menu has a house beef patty, turkey, salmon, lamb, chicken, or veggie patty. Appetizers, salads, shakes, and a full bar add to the dining experience.

For dessert in the downtown core, don't miss UDairy Creamery. This tasty place doesn't just have excellent ice cream but also serves grilled cheese, salads, and burgers from the University of Delaware farm. I tried the Holy Fluffernutter ice cream cone and was instantly hooked. UDairy is run by students and is a fun stop on your food tour of the city.

Beyond downtown



Source: Kurt Jacobson ()

A local's favorite breakfast spot is De La Coeur Patisserie, located near the Delaware Art Museum. Indulge in a lovely menu featuring breakfast sandwiches, French toast, crepes, upscale toast, and my favorite was the hash bowl. Pastries, salads, and lunch sandwiches are also offered. The menu changes often with the breakfast bowl, lunch sandwich, and lunch salad changing each week. After breakfast or lunch, take a walk to the Delaware Art Museum, Brandywine Park, or check out the old water tower at Rockford Park. It would be easy to spend half a day just in this part of Wilmington taking in the best of indoor and outdoor activities.

Beer lovers will enjoy the massive beer garden called Constitution Yards near the Wilmington Riverwalk area south of downtown. Like many cities, Wilmington has spent a lot of money and effort to revive their riverfront property. Constitution Yards is one of the biggest draws in the warm season where beer drinkers have plenty of room to play. Families are welcomed with sandboxes for the kids, corn hole for all, volleyball, badminton, and even ax throwing for something new and different. Beer selections include craft beers on tap or in cans. Wine and mixed drinks are also available as is tavern food. This is the place to go when the weather is good, but beware if rain is in the forecast!

Dinner at Ciro Food and Drink is surprisingly good for a strip mall located restaurant. Two seasoned chefs, both graduates of the famed Hyde Park Culinary Institute of America, are firmly in control. With a wine shop next door, these two businesses combine talents for pleasing fans of exceptional food. A tasting menu is offered for those who want to immerse themselves in a two to three hour wine and dine extravaganza. A 4-course meal with wine pairings will cost 85 USD, or kick it up with a 5-course or 6-course option. Seafood lovers will enjoy the decadent crab and lobster cakes, while fans of red meat will like the Kobe pork ribs or braised short ribs. This menu changes often to highlight what's in season.

Take a hike or bring a bike



Source: Kurt Jacobson ()

For an invigorating bike ride, the new Jack A. Markel trail connects south Wilmington with New Castle. This 7.9 mile/12.7 km trail is suitable for biking or hiking. If you are riding from Wilmington to New Castle, be sure and stop at Jessop's Tavern. Housed in a building that's over 300 years old, this place will take you way back in time. Quench your thirst and take care of grumbling tummies at Jessop's. Try the shepherd's pie, but consider spitting it as this is a large portion of delicious beef and mashed potatoes. Jessop's also has a decent selection of Woodside Creamery ice cream.

Where to stay

For classic opulence, the Hotel Du Pont sets the bar high for luxury. This full-service hotel has fine dining at the Green Room, valet service, concierge, and 217 gorgeous rooms. The Westin Wilmington, a newer upscale hotel near the Riverwalk is next to the Chase Center and Wilmington Blue Rocks baseball field.

Wilmington is easily reached by car, just off Interstate 95, or by Amtrak train service. Now that you know what to see, do, drink, and eat in Wilmington, it's time to visit.

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