



Charlotte



Urban Oak, Raleigh



Sullenberger Aviation Museum, Charlotte

Successful

Booming North Carolina cities set the table with interesting offsite options

By Tyler Davidson

OFFSITES



Steven Tanger Center for the Performing Arts, Greensboro

"It's a perfect time to be here."

Cool Greensboro offsite venues include:

Steven Tanger Center for the Performing Arts

This jaw-dropping 3,000-seat downtown performing arts venue opened in 2021 and is one of the largest between Washington, D.C., and Atlanta. Its Phillips Hall boasts an 8,000-square-foot limestone and glass lobby, with additional rental options that include the Koury Family Grandview Room, Lee-Wrangler Lounge, Brady Services Suite, Carroll Family Terrace, Joseph M. Bryan Starlight Veranda and Founders Lounge.

The Cadillac Service Garage

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, this grand former Cadillac dealership built in 1921 is a 13,000-square-foot brick-and-steel showpiece that features event spaces such as The Classic Showroom, The Spacious Garage and The Garden & Outdoor Spaces.

Charlotte

North Carolina's largest metro, nicknamed the Queen City, is also enjoying increased prominence as a convention destination.

"Charlotte's dynamic energy and welcoming diverse community are just the beginning of what makes it an exceptional meeting destination whether you're planning a large-scale

North Carolina is a rising U.S. economic powerhouse, with major manufacturing and technology companies bringing scores of new residents to rapidly developing communities, and with them, of course, the meetings and events that inevitably follow such success.

Fortunately, the state is chock-full of interesting meeting and event venues. Following are some offsite superlatives in its major destinations: Charlotte, Raleigh and an ambitious new entrant, Greensboro.

Greensboro

All of North Carolina is in on the secret that Greensboro is hot, hot, hot, and soon the rest of the U.S. will be in on it, too.

"The community is definitely on a huge upward trajectory," said Anthony Cordo, president and CEO of Visit Greensboro, who assumed leadership of the DMO in July. "You've got several new aviation companies—leading aerospace manufacturers—that are bringing in tens of thousands of new jobs over the next couple of years here. North Carolina is the fastest growing state for economic development for new business relocations, and you're seeing that definitely

hit the Greensboro area. And Greensboro is one of the more affordable areas of North Carolina, and that translates into kind of a hipster, cool atmosphere. There's a lot of colleges and universities here and it's kind of that neat underground city that is on its way up and hasn't quite matured yet."

On the affordability side, Visit Greensboro cited the following statistics to bolster its claim:

- ▶ Hosting a meeting in Greensboro can save an association or corporation 45%-55% (over \$50 per attendee, per day) on core costs like venue rental and food and beverage compared to the average top 10 meeting destinations in the U.S.
- ▶ Lodging costs are lower by an average of 37% compared to the top 10 meeting destinations, reducing a three-night stay from an average of \$536 to just \$334.
- ▶ The total cost of a typical three-day trip to Greensboro, including airfare and hotel, is on average \$115 less than a trip to a tier-one convention city like Chicago or Atlanta.

Cordo said the destination is also gearing up for a major renovation of the Joseph S. Koury Convention Center.

"We're really excited to see that growth in the meetings industry to correlate with those industries that we're seeing success with on the economic development side," he said.



Anthony Cordo



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Asheville Emerges

All systems are go as a North Carolina mountain gem recovers from Hurricane Helene

By Tyler Davidson

The images from Western North Carolina as it rode out Hurricane Helene were jarring, with epic floods and major roadways—including the iconic Blue Ridge Parkway—washed away, leaving ever-capable locals to heroically help one another weather the storm.

The region's major tourism and meetings destination, Asheville, suffered the brunt of the catastrophic cyclone, taking the charming mountain town off the tourism map in its immediate aftermath.

Flash forward to nearly a year later and this quaint, historic enclave known for its mountain music, craft beer and arts scene is firmly back in business and ready to welcome visitors of every stripe with its signature brand of inclusive hospitality.

"The Asheville area has made tremendous progress following Helene and we're almost at the one-year milestone. We have 2,000 business partners at Explore Asheville and 90% of them are open and operational, and we have more that are planned to open in September and October," said Victoria "Vic" Isley, president and CEO of Explore Asheville, in a September interview with Meetings Today. "From a meetings infrastructure standpoint, everything in Asheville is golden and we have a brand-new airport terminal, so air access is great and is expected to be at record capacity by October."

Asheville Regional Airport offers service from more than 20 destinations and major daily connections from Charlotte and Atlanta. The destination is also less than a two-hour drive from Charlotte International Airport.

Asheville's major meetings and tourism draws are back in business, including Biltmore Village and its hotels,

Omni Grove Park Inn and the essentially brand-new Grand Bohemian Lodge, along with local favorites such as Corner Kitchen and French Broad River Brewing—one of the many craft brewery standouts in the city's nationally recognized beer scene.

"When visitors come to Asheville and Buncombe County, they spend almost as much in food and beverage as they do in lodging," Isley said. "It's great news to share that almost all of that is fully functional and operational."

The city's popular River Arts District, which took a significant hit from Helene, is also up and running again, with its galleries, restaurants—and breweries—tapping kegs for thirsty customers once again.

"There are lots of locals and craft beer fans that are toasting that reopening," Isley offered.

Grateful for Industry Support

Isley said she and her colleagues in the Asheville meetings and events community have been heartened by the industry support they've received.

"One of the things that has been amazing coming out of this is that the meeting professional community across the country has really answered the call from our business development team," she said. "We have booked more conferences and events in the last year than we have in the history of our organization—nearly 480 conferences and events, more than \$67 million in direct spending—and they're from groups like the Home Depot, Southern States, the American Folklore Society; really great, values-aligned organizations that are choosing to come to Asheville for their conferences and events."

Isley said Asheville's typical client base is drawn from Southeast regional associations, but it is growing further afield into the Midwest and Northeast. Automotive industry groups typically buy out properties en masse, no doubt drawn by the epic driving experience offered by the Blue Ridge Parkway, one of the most iconic drives in the world. Given Asheville's prodigious nature offerings,



River Arts District

outdoor clothing companies are also a prime client.

"We've also been growing in sports," she added. "We just announced the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics 2026 and 2027 men's and women's Outdoor Track & Field National Championships at UNC Asheville. And the governor of North Carolina for 60 years has held the North Carolina Awards; for the first time in 60 years, they're holding it here in Asheville instead of Raleigh. Those have been really great shots in the arm, and votes of confidence for bringing groups here."

Isley suggested planners should consider coming to Asheville during its fall and spring shoulder seasons, with spring being an especially pleasant time. And even though it's in the mountains, Asheville's location in a valley means that winter typically doesn't bring much snow.

connection

► Explore Asheville
exploreasheville.com

conference or an intimate gathering," said Ned Blair, director of sales for Visit Charlotte, a division of the Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority. "Charlotte is the engine that drives 157 new people to move to the region each day. That growth has helped make the Queen City the 14th largest city and the sixth-fastest growing city in the U.S. The Charlotte region's phenomenal growth has resulted in record-breaking interest in Charlotte as a meetings destination."

Popular Charlotte offsite options include:

Sullenberger Aviation Museum

The recently reopened Sullenberger Aviation Museum, a hub for aviation and STEM



Sullenberger Aviation Museum

innovation, offers ample flexible event space, hands-on exhibits and immersive storytelling. The featured exhibit is the "Miracle on the Hudson" original aircraft that pilot Chesley Sullenberger landed on the Hudson River in 2009.

Carolina Theatre

The newly restored historic Carolina Theatre began life as a silent movie palace in 1921, and after sitting vacant since 1978 reopened in March 2025. This historic Uptown venue now frequently hosts meetings, symposiums and elegant networking events.

NASCAR Hall of Fame

A part of the NASCAR Hall of Fame Complex adjacent to the Charlotte Convention Center, this paean to American motorsports is a no-brainer off-site option for larger groups. Groups of up to 3,000 can do a full buyout or



NASCAR Hall of Fame



Victoria "Vic" Isley



Biltmore Village

rent specific areas such as the Great Hall; Inside NASCAR & Heritage Speedway room; Legends Room; High Octane Theater & Lobby; Hall of Honor; and The Plaza. Attendees will appreciate rare NASCAR artifacts and memorabilia as well as pristine racing cars, and can also jump in a racing simulator to really get an adrenaline rush.

Raleigh

Set in the Piedmont and fed by an area dubbed The Research Triangle because of its long-standing leadership as a center of the technology industry, the state capital is a natural for meetings, boasting an eminently event-friendly downtown that is primed for citywides organized by a DMO, Visit Raleigh, that is one of the best in the nation servicing such meetings.

While cordoning off blocks of downtown is a popular option for larger groups and festivals, the city also has a number of smaller offsite venues that show off its status as an up-and-comer on the national scene.

According to Visit Raleigh, prime rooftop offsite venue examples include:



RH Rooftop Restaurant at RH Raleigh

Urban Oak

Raleigh's tallest rooftop bar sits atop the newly opened Tempo Raleigh Downtown. The vibe is clean and contemporary, with sleek firepits, wraparound views and just enough greenery to soften the cityscape.

RH Rooftop Restaurant at RH Raleigh

This rooftop restaurant atop the 60,000-square-foot design gallery of a former Restoration Hardware furniture store is representative of that iconic brand's style: wildly elegant, drenched in natural light by day and soaked in moody glamour by night.

La Terrazza

In the heart of Raleigh's walkable downtown Warehouse District and located on top of The Dillon hotel, La Terrazza serves



up breezy Mediterranean vibes with skyline views of the capital city and Mediterranean-Southern Italian fare. □

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