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# TRAVEL & CULTURE

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THE GUIDE

## The Magic Triangle

Durham, Raleigh, Chapel Hill—North Carolina's urban oasis has transformed into one of the most dynamic corners of the South

BY HANNAH HAYES | PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBBIE CAPONETTO

Local Lobby  
Triangle residents  
love The Durham  
Hotel just as much  
as its guests do.



**Architectural Gem**

The Durham Hotel is a mid-century icon downtown.

**Have a Pint**

Ponysaurus Brewing Co.



**Green Room**  
Tour the Sarah P. Duke Gardens at Duke University.

**Y**OU'VE HEARD OF THE humblebrag, a vehicle of self-deprecation or woe that actually delivers a boast. Picture a New Orleanian constantly complaining of choice paralysis from the dizzying array of acclaimed restaurants or a Nashville dweller infuriated by traffic on yet another vibrant, event-packed weekend.

For locals in North Carolina's Triangle—Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill—the humblebrag becomes a more literal expression. They're keenly aware that their cities don't have the same flash or festivals as, say, Austin or Atlanta. And they're quick to say that's exactly what they like about them. Free of the fuss, these towns, known more for their major universities and the international companies headquartered

at The Research Triangle Park, have discreetly transformed into a bucolic-urban oasis where the arts and tech synergize and anything homegrown (from businesses to vegetables) is enthusiastically exalted. This place isn't a playground for tourists; it's a living room for locals.

Should you try to visit all three cities in a single day? With around a half-hour drive separating Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill from each other, hopping from one place to the next is easy. But with so much to do, just don't be surprised if you can't get to everything on your list.

## Durham

Of the three, Durham perhaps best embodies the less-is-more ethos. Once a boomtown built by tobacco, it was home to wealthy families like the Dukes of their namesake university and to Parrish Street, a bustling boulevard of African-American owned companies known as Black Wall Street. Cast aside in recent decades, Durham became a group project as chefs, artists, and entrepreneurs set about rebuilding a city they would want to live in. Now everyone else in the Triangle wants to live there too.





▶ **On Tap**  
Local culture  
inspires beers  
at Fullsteam  
Brewery.



▶ **Botanical Bliss**  
Unwind at Sarah  
P. Duke Gardens.

"Durham isn't a place that has it all, but I don't want to live or work in a city that does," says Sean Lilly Wilson, founder of **Fullsteam Brewery**, which became a town hall-style gathering spot soon after it was founded in 2010. "That mind-set attracts people who want to create a strong sense of community."

It was community spirit that convinced **Merge Records**, one of the country's most successful independent labels, to move there from

Chapel Hill. Started by Laura Ballance and Mac McCaughan, members of the band Superchunk, Merge broke major acts like Spoon and Arcade Fire. This year, they're celebrating the label's 30th anniversary. "It feels like the creative community is rooting for each other here," says cult-followed musician M.C. Taylor, who plays under the name Hiss Golden Messenger and signed with Merge. "We also egg each other on to do something bigger or take more risks."



▶ **Catbird Seat**  
The Durham  
Hotel's sunny  
rooftop bar

The development of the vacant Home Savings Bank building into **The Durham Hotel** is one risk that clearly paid off. The first boutique hotel downtown, the mid-century modern marvel's Piet Mondrian-meets-*Mad Men* lobby doubles as chef Andrea Reusing's newest restaurant. The Durham hosts as many locals downstairs as guests upstairs, with tables full of diners lingering over house-made charcuterie and trays of fresh Atlantic oysters.

Betting the long game on Durham has worked in favor of chefs like Ricky Moore and his nationally renowned walk-up window **Saltbox Seafood Joint**, where he serves North Carolina-caught fish with citrus-dressed slaw and Hush Honeys (fennel-spiced cornmeal dumplings glazed in honey).

Other spots to see the revitalized dining scene include **Pizzeria Toro** for wood-fired pies; new-wave Jewish deli **Lucky's Delicatessen** and the trattoria next door, **Mothers & Sons**; wine alcove **Bar Brunello**; coffee shop **Cocoa Cinnamon**; and a new brewery and taproom on the block, **Ponysaurus Brewing Co.** Venture toward **Vert & Vogue**, where owners Nadira and





**Walk Around**  
Explore the North  
Carolina Museum  
of Art in Raleigh.



Ryan Hurley sell responsibly made clothes by independent designers and hold happy hours with talks by culture creators.

Locals also suggest taking advantage of the major events at the glass-ensconced **Durham Performing Arts Center**, enjoying an exhibit at the **Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University**, or seeing a show at the **Motorco Music Hall**. But their best piece of advice? Take a walk around the city's neighborhoods. "People say that Durham feels like Brooklyn meets Mayberry," says Alicia Hylton-Daniel, a general contractor and interior designer who creates new modernist homes. "You can see four different building styles on a single block here." She recommends going to Open Durham's website ([opendurham.org](http://opendurham.org)) to put together your own architecture tour.

## Raleigh

When Vansana Nolintha wanted to open a design-minded combination brewery, flower shop, bookstore, and dim sum restaurant that paid homage to his Laotian roots, he knew it was ambitious. But he and two cofounders—his sister Vanvisa Nolintha and friend Patrick Woodson—had a hunch that **Brewery Bhavana** would work. After all, he had seen someone else try something kind of crazy before him—his

## IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION (Continued)

There has not been a confirmed serious case of spread of toxin effect away from the injection site when BOTOX® has been used at the recommended dose to treat chronic migraine.

BOTOX® may cause loss of strength or general muscle weakness, vision problems, or dizziness within hours to weeks of taking BOTOX®. **If this happens, do not drive a car, operate machinery, or do other dangerous activities.**

**Do not receive BOTOX® if you:** are allergic to any of its ingredients (see Medication Guide for ingredients); had an allergic reaction to any other botulinum toxin product such as Myobloc® (rimabotulinumtoxinB), Dysport® (abobotulinumtoxinA), or Xeomin® (incobotulinumtoxinA); have a skin infection at the planned injection site.

**The dose of BOTOX® is not the same as, or comparable to, another botulinum toxin product.**

**Serious and/or immediate allergic reactions have been reported**, including itching, rash, red itchy welts, wheezing, asthma symptoms, or dizziness or feeling faint. Get medical help right away if you experience symptoms; further injection of BOTOX® should be discontinued.

**Tell your doctor about all your muscle or nerve conditions** such as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease, myasthenia gravis, or Lambert-Eaton syndrome, as you may be at increased risk of serious side effects including difficulty swallowing and difficulty breathing from typical doses of BOTOX®.

**Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions, including if you:** have or have had bleeding problems; have plans to have surgery; had surgery on your face; weakness of forehead muscles; trouble raising your eyebrows; drooping eyelids; any other abnormal facial change; are pregnant or plan to become pregnant (it is not known if BOTOX® can harm your unborn baby); are breastfeeding or plan to (it is not known if BOTOX® passes into breast milk).

**Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take**, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Using BOTOX® with certain medicines may cause serious side effects. **Do not start any new medicines until you have told your doctor that you received BOTOX® in the past.**

**Tell your doctor if you received any other botulinum toxin product in the last 4 months;** have received injections of botulinum toxin such as Myobloc®, Dysport®, or Xeomin® in the past (tell your doctor exactly which product you received); have recently received an antibiotic injection; take muscle relaxants; take allergy or cold medicines; take sleep medicine; take aspirin-like products or blood thinners.

**Other side effects of BOTOX® include:** dry mouth, discomfort or pain at injection site, tiredness, headache, neck pain, eye problems: double vision, blurred vision, decreased eyesight, drooping eyelids, swelling of eyelids, dry eyes; and drooping eyebrows.

For more information refer to the Medication Guide or talk with your doctor.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit [www.fda.gov/medwatch](http://www.fda.gov/medwatch) or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please refer to the Summary of Information about BOTOX® on the following page.



Find us on





**Beer and Buds**  
The floral shop  
at Brewery  
Bhavana



▲ **True Brew**  
Brewery Bhavana  
has a rotating  
cast of globally  
inspired beers.

◀ **Serenity Now**  
The Umstead's  
pool is nestled  
in the forested  
property.



mentor, chef Ashley Christensen. She laid the foundation for Raleigh's restaurant scene with **Poole's Diner** in 2007, gambling that the city would respond to her regionally influenced cooking. Christensen has started four more places under her hospitality group since and, earlier this year, won the James Beard Award for Outstanding Chef. "There was a temptation five years ago to think that Raleigh needed to look like Charlotte or Atlanta to be relevant," Vansana says. "But because of leaders like Ashley, Raleigh searched inward for inspiration."

At **Garland**, Cheetie Kumar plays both executive chef, rock guitarist, and director for the venue next door, **Kings**. Her Indian dishes made with Southern ingredients pay homage to her family's double identity. **Gallo Pelón Mezcaleria** is North Carolina's first mezcal bar. Colombian transplant and owner Angela Salamanca refers to it as a community-driven bar where the menu is comprehensive but the service is far from pretentious. Other must-sees: **Boulded Bread**, **Yellow Dog**

**Bread Company**, **Short Walk Wines**, and **Transfer Co. Food Hall**.

To see the city's forward-looking, egalitarian attitude manifested, look no further than North Carolina State University's **James B. Hunt Library**, a futuristic monolith and home to the bookBot, a robotic delivery system that can retrieve any item from more than 18,000 bins within five minutes. There's also the free-admission **North Carolina Museum of Art**, set within a band of trails on 164 acres dotted with over a dozen contemporary

sculptures. **The Umstead Hotel and Spa**, a serene mini resort just outside the city, also features a world-class art collection, which serves as the inspiration for executive chef Steven Devereaux Greene's tasting menu at its on-property restaurant **Herons**.

Vansana believes these spaces (in addition to Brewery Bhavana) are just the beginning of Raleigh's revival. "I think that this community is really ready for more creativity," he says. "I hope all of this inspires even more courageous projects."





## Chapel Hill

The edgier college town that Raleigh and Durham dwellers often drove to for restaurants and concerts at **Cat's Cradle** (and still do), Chapel Hill seems a bit calmer now as the momentum has shifted. But it's a welcome respite where much of what residents have always loved about the town endures.

Marcie Cohen Ferris, author and professor emerita at the University

of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, attributes that appeal to the farmers' markets, an idyllic campus, walkable neighborhoods, and independent bookstore **Flyleaf Books**. Well past the decade mark now are renowned cocktail bar **The Crunkleton**; Andrea Reusing's first restaurant, **Lantern**; from-scratch daytime staple **Neal's Deli**; and destination country-cooking spot **Mama Dip's Kitchen**. They've all become area standards. "There's a

strong new generation in the food scene," says Ferris. "They're aware of the shoulders they stand on."

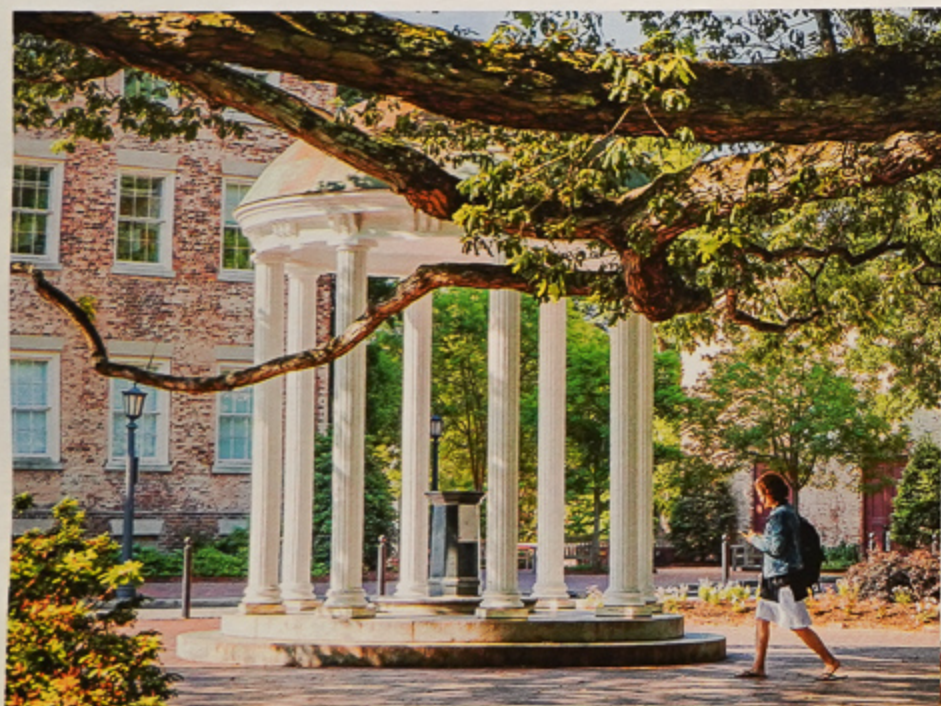
In a more publicized changing of the guard, Justin Burdett recently took the helm of **Crook's Corner**, the Southern institution started in 1982 when chef-owner Bill Neal decided shrimp and grits and collard greens were worthy of steak house-style presentation. Its beloved second chef, Bill Smith—who put his own mark on the menu with items like honeysuckle sorbet—retired in January.

"When I was a younger cook, this place had all these dishes that made me think, 'That's so brilliant!'" says Burdett. "But because it's so iconic, I want a younger generation to see that it can be their weekday spot too."

Burdett will eventually make the restaurant his own just like Smith did—he's already pickled the bamboo shoots growing on the patio. Still, he's mindful of its sentimental legacy. "My neighbors introduced themselves to me

and wanted to know when the chicken livers would be back on the menu," he says with a laugh. **SL**

**The Original**  
Shrimp & Grits is legendary at famed Crook's Corner.



### Old School

UNC-Chapel Hill celebrates its 230th birthday this year.

### Two of a Kind

Crook's Corner chefs Bill Smith and Justin Burdett

