



ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

This southern city comes alive in April with brewery crawls, hiking, and lots and lots of art.

By Madeline Bilis

IF YOU THOUGHT New Englanders loved craft beer and hiking, just wait until you set foot in Asheville. The bohemian city near North Carolina's western border offers both in spades, which explains why young outdoorsy types have been visiting in growing numbers each year. Top it off with James Beard–nominated chefs, a flourishing arts district, and stylish new places to stay, and you have a very worthwhile escape from mud season in Boston.

EAT

Asheville, in a word, is *hip*. One of the major reasons it's become so trendy is its buzzy drinking scene—you can't make it more than a few blocks without finding a nifty place to

Hiking in Asheville is always an adventure.

grab a pint. **Wicked Weed Brewing** is a favorite, though you should also make it a point to stop at the brewery's **Funkatorium** offshoot in the South Slope brewery district. While the taproom is dedicated to sours, you'll also find IPAs with interesting tasting notes. Down the street, sample *Kölsch*, pilsners, pale ales, and more at **Burial Beer Co.**

Once you've gotten your beer fix, see if you can get into **Pink Moon Bar**, a well-hidden speakeasy serving natural wines. (To enjoy your pét-nat, you'll need to

find the industrial freezer–style door down an alley, then enter a password from the bar's Instagram story.)

Need some food to pad your stomach? Given that the city is home to both established chefs and talented newcomers, there are plenty of top-notch dining options. Be sure to make a reservation at **Table**, chef Jacob Sessoms's longtime farm-to-table spot serving up New American fare. In his own words, you can never go wrong with the roasted chicken and dumplings. For



something more casual after a day of brewery-hopping, stop by **Botiwalla by Chai Pani**, where lauded chef Meherwan Irani serves Indian street food.

PLAY

No visit to Asheville would be complete without experiencing the **Biltmore Estate**. Built for George Vanderbilt and completed in 1895, the Gilded Age mansion is the largest privately owned house in the United States. (Consider reading *The Last Castle* by Denise Kiernan on your flight from Boston.) Set aside another day for an outing with **Blue Ridge Hiking Company**, which can help you select the best hike and then whisk you to the trailhead.

GETTING THERE

JetBlue offers seasonal service to Asheville from Logan, while budget airline Allegiant runs nonstop flights to Asheville twice a week all year long. You'll be in the air for a mere two hours and 30 minutes.



The Lookout Trail in nearby Montreat is a solid choice for moderate-level hikers, thanks to a steep 623-foot climb to the top culminating in 360-degree views of the surrounding peaks.

SHOP

The Black Mountain College, an influential art school founded in the 1930s, is part of what makes Asheville's history in the arts so rich. Learn about the institution's innovative past firsthand at the **Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center** before heading to the **River Arts District** to see what the city's contemporary artists are up to. You could spend a whole day wandering more than 20 buildings filled with studios and galleries, but if you're short on time, duck into **Art Garden AVL** and **Wedge Studios** to check out one-of-a-kind paintings, sculptures, and more. Across the street, the **North Carolina Glass Center** does glassblowing demonstrations and showcases colorful vases and stemware for sale.

Wearable art should also be on the agenda: Designer **Jeffrey Burroughs's** eponymous shop carries custom and fine jewelry, plus a hard-to-find selection of fragrances. Next door is **There There**, a sunny shop specializing in "comforting goods," as owner Mindy King puts it, a.k.a. cozy loungewear, sculptural décor, and accessories.

STAY

A fitting launchpad for exploring the River Arts District, **the Radical** is one of the newest hotel openings by Amesbury-based Lark Hotels. Seventy funky rooms inside the former factory debuted in October, aiming to appeal to edgier travelers. **Zelda Dearest**, meanwhile, is the Radical's sister property and another new addition to Asheville's hotel scene. Its 20 rooms were created from a cluster of turn-of-the-century mansions, offering luxurious suites and art deco flair in the spirit of its namesake, Zelda Fitzgerald.

From top, a view of the regal Biltmore Estate; the rooms at the Radical hotel are full of color; a fiery demonstration at the North Carolina Glass Center; tempting Indian street food at Botiwalla by Chai Pani; sipping brews at Wicked Weed Brewing.