

North Carolina Holiday Destination...Asheville!

With the last leaves falling from the trees, the holidays are upon us. And, there is no better location in the southeast to get you into the holiday spirit than Asheville, NC. Asheville is the perfect starting point for your holiday enjoyment! With crafts and festivals galore and special Christmas celebrations in every nook and alley, this top-rate mountain destination is bound to get you in the mood for the holidays.

Here are some tips when planning your next visit to Asheville. There are tons of locations and activities in Asheville and the surrounding area to keep everyone in your family entertained. You can visit America's largest privately-owned home, take in some spectacular mountain scenery, indulge in some great dining and much more.

Planning a Visit to the Premier WNC Mountain City...Asheville

No visit to this luxurious mountain city would be complete without a visit to America's grandest home – the Biltmore Estate. Each year, the staff gears up to dress out the estate in all its finery! On this 8,000-acre estate, activities abound. Why not take a quiet stroll or visit the winery? Take in the beautiful decorations and dazzling lights that adorn this impressive home built by George Vanderbilt in 1895. With several restaurants and events planned year-round, there is something for every member of your family to enjoy.

The downtown Asheville area boasts a wide array of restaurants and shops. Galleries of local art are abundant. Theatre and concert goers will also find a wide array of choices from the classical to the funky.

The National Gingerbread competition held each year at the Grove Park Inn is another must see! Both top culinary pros and homespun gingerbread house makers compete. The National Gingerbread House Competition™ and Display takes place on Nov. 16, 2009 and the gingerbread houses will be on display from November 18 through January 3, 2010. These displays would even put a smile on the face of Ebenezer Scrooge himself!

Looking for something a bit more off the beaten track? Watch Old Saint Nick as he repels down a famous 315-foot unique rock outcropping at Chimney Rock State Park. And, yes, the rock is shaped like a chimney! This park is just a short drive from Asheville, located in the charming Chimney Rock Village near Lake Lure

National Culinary Destination

In recent years, Asheville has also turned into a culinary destination. Microbrew businesses are popping all over and Asheville. In fact, in a recent poll, more than 16,000 people from 46

countries cast their votes between March 18 and May 7 for their favorite Beer City USA. In the end Portland, Ore. and Asheville, NC tied for first place.

Asheville is also known for being a leader in the sustainable food scene. Chefs in local restaurants take great pride in using local and seasonal products when available. And, choices are many. Visitors can enjoy a spectrum of ethnic flavors, styles and venues. Seafood lovers will find calabash-style seafood at Fisherman's Quarters II, a family-seafood restaurant in West Asheville; a great steak can be had at the Bohemian, a newly installed restaurant that resembles an Austrian hunting lodge at the gates of the Biltmore Estate; and organic eggs and sausage are a local favorite at the Early Girl located on downtown's Wall Street.

Farmers, food producers and brewers have truly taken on celebrity status in this region and visitors are reaping the benefits!

Accommodations

Whether it's just you or the whole family, again, lodging choices abound. From luxury boutique hotels to family-style lodging –it's all here. The Biltmore Estate and the Grove Park Inn are two top locations for travelers wanting a high-end experience. Asheville also has a string of small independently- owned hotels. The Residences at Biltmore, the Indigo Hotel and the Haywood Park Hotel all provide attractive and mountain-like settings. Rentals are also numerous.

For more information, visit the Web site for the Asheville Chamber of Commerce.