



FACT SHEET

General Info

- Asheville is the largest city in Western North Carolina, with more than 93,000 city residents and more than 277,000 residents in Buncombe County.
- Asheville Regional Airport (AVL) is Western North Carolina's largest airport. Five airlines, Allegiant, American, Delta, Sun Country and United, offer nonstop service to 26 destinations, with easy one-stop connections beyond. In 2025, AVL welcomed 2.24 million passengers, the second-busiest year in airport history. The airport is midway through AVL Forward, the largest infrastructure investment in its history. The new North Concourse and TSA checkpoint opened in June 2025, adding five jet bridges with capacity for up to eight gates at peak; a partial new baggage claim opened April 17, 2026; and new rental car counters followed in May 2026. When the project is complete, the terminal will span 335,000 square feet with two concourses and 12 gates, drawing its design from the Blue Ridge Mountains, the French Broad River and Asheville's art deco architecture.

Recent Accolades

- AFAR ranked Asheville No. 3 on "The Best Small Cities in the United States" (Aug. 2026)
- Asheville ranked No. 3 on Expedia's "Top 10 Trending US Summer Destinations" for 2026 in Parade and No. 3 among Google's top trending domestic summer travel destinations for 2026 as reported by Travel + Leisure (2026).
- EatingWell named Asheville its "2026 Best Wellness Town in America" (May 2026).
- The Points Guy included Asheville on its list of the 17 best places to travel in 2026 (Jan. 2026).
- Reader's Digest named Asheville the "Nicest Place in America" for 2025 (Sept. 2025).
- Asheville earned the No. 13 spot on Travel + Leisure's 2026 "Best Cities in the United States" and No. 3 on CNN Travel's "America's Best Towns to Visit 2025."

Attractions

- Biltmore, George Vanderbilt's 250-room estate and America's Largest Home™, is located in Asheville. Completed in 1895, the mansion is modeled after the 16th-century chateaux Blois, Chenonceaux and Chambord in France's Loire Valley. Architect Richard Morris Hunt designed the house and Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New York's Central Park, landscaped the estate.
- George Vanderbilt was instrumental in founding the first forestry school in America when he hired Carl Schenck to succeed Gifford Pinchot as manager of Vanderbilt's 100,000-acre forest. Known today as the Cradle of Forestry in America, this national historic site operated by the U.S. Forest Service is located about 20 miles southwest of Asheville off U.S. Highway 276 in Pisgah National Forest.

15 ASHEVILLE RESTAURANTS GET MICHELIN GUIDE HONORS

Asheville's food scene garnered impressive recognition in the MICHELIN Guide American South, announced in Nov. 2025. Modern Italian-meets-Appalachian restaurant Luminosa received a prestigious Green Star for its sustainable kitchen practices and sourcing. Luminosa, Little Chango and Mother also received the Bib Gourmand distinction, which recognizes establishments that offer high-quality dining at a reasonable price. The full listing of MICHELIN's recommended Asheville restaurants can be found at [ExploreAsheville.com](https://exploreasheville.com).

Attractions

- The Basilica of Saint Lawrence contains the largest free-standing dome in North America. With only 94 basilicas nationwide, architect Rafael Guastavino constructed the structure from 1905 to 1909. The structure contains no wood or steel beams; all walls, floors, ceilings and pillars are made of tile or other masonry materials.
- One of America's most esteemed authors, Thomas Wolfe, was born and raised in Asheville. Wolfe spent his boyhood years at his mother's boardinghouse, the Old Kentucky Home, which he later used as the setting of his most famous novel, "Look Homeward Angel." Although many of the rooms and furnishings were damaged by a fire that ravaged the house in July 1998, the house has been completely restored and offers tours. Located on Market Street and directly behind the house, the memorial and visitor center is open to the public.
- The world's largest public collection of furniture and lighting fixtures from the Arts & Crafts era can be found at The Omni Grove Park Inn. Elbert Hubbard's Roycrofters custom-made furniture and hand-hammered copper lighting fixtures originally for Grove Park, and much of it remains there today. E.W. Grove, who made a fortune in patent medicines, opened the now 513-room Grove Park Inn in 1913.
- Asheville's River Arts District is a living, breathing creative corridor shaped by former warehouses, working studios and the river that runs alongside it. Hundreds of local artists work across the area, firing kilns, stretching canvases, welding, weaving and throwing clay in spaces that welcome visitors to watch the process up close. Cafés, breweries and galleries sit just steps apart, and many studios are open every day, all year round. The River Arts District Artists host a Second Saturday Art Stroll each month. The district is accessible by car from downtown, West Asheville and Biltmore Village, with plenty of free parking.
- The Montford Area Historic District is one of Asheville's oldest and most architecturally distinctive neighborhoods. In subtle ways, it mirrors Asheville's cosmopolitan character at the turn of the century, with details drawn from national architectural trendsetters. Zelda Fitzgerald, the wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald, died in the Old Highland Hospital, formerly located at the north end of Montford.

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

Cresting the Southern Appalachians' loftiest ridges, the 469-mile Blue Ridge Parkway is Asheville's passage to outdoor wonder and mountain panoramas. It is free to drive, open 24 hours a day year-round, and marked by stone mileposts at every mile. Four main entrances serve the Asheville area, the closest just six miles from downtown at Milepost 382.6. Highlights near the city include the Folk Art Center and Blue Ridge Parkway Visitor Center at Milepost 382, Craggy Gardens at 5,640 feet at Milepost 364.4, Mount Mitchell at Milepost 355.4, and Mount Pisgah, Graveyard Fields, Black Balsam and Devil's Courthouse to the south.

Note: Construction continues north of Mount Mitchell, and a handful of picnic areas remain temporarily closed, so check current conditions with the National Park Service before you go.

Outdoor

- Mount Mitchell's summit, at 6,684 feet, is the highest point east of the Mississippi River. The peak sits in Mount Mitchell State Park off the Blue Ridge Parkway at milepost 355.4, roughly 35 miles northeast of downtown Asheville. Visitors can drive nearly all the way to the summit, where an observation deck offers views as far as 85 miles on a clear day. The park reopened Sept. 15, 2025.
- The Blue Ridge Mountains surrounding Asheville make a premier Southeastern destination for autumn leaf watchers. The fall color season extends from late September through early November, with significant variance in elevation meaning there is no single "peak." Color arrives first at the highest elevations, roughly 4,000 feet and above, in late September and early October, then works its way down through the valleys.
- Nine of North Carolina's 11 major waterfalls are located in the western part of the state, many of them within an easy drive of Asheville.
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park, located about 50 miles southwest of Asheville, is the country's most visited national park and the most biodiverse park in the National Park System.
- The ancient French Broad River flows through Asheville and helped shape the Appalachian Mountains. It is one of the oldest rivers in the world and runs from south to north, joining the Tennessee River.

ASHEVILLE

Food & Beverage

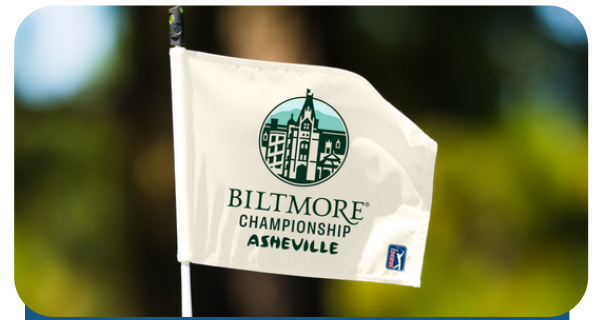
- Asheville's food scene isn't a collection of restaurants—it's Foodtopia. A whole food culture in motion, shaped by open-fire kitchens, mountain-made craft beer, and makers who forage forests, wander fields, and pull inspiration straight from the soil. Here, eating isn't just a reservation. It's a trail through ramps and mushrooms, a seat at a farm table, a tasting poured beside the people who grew it. Foodtopia's pantry is Appalachian at heart, global by curiosity, sweetened by local honey, and energized by a nationally celebrated beer scene. Awards like MICHELIN, James Beard, and sustainability honors are proof of a city where collaboration is culture and craft is currency—where meals happen in gardens, on farms, in forests, at breweries, and wherever curiosity gets hungry next.
- From Ethiopian to vegetarian, fine dining to down-home diners, Asheville offers a variety of eateries that go well beyond its Southern cooking and barbecue roots. The city is best known for restaurants that use traditional Appalachian ingredients farmed or foraged locally, including ramps, serviceberry, creasy greens, honey, apples and wild mushrooms. Pork, beef and trout from local farms are widely used, as are goat and cow cheeses from local creameries.

Culture

- Downtown Asheville holds one of the largest collections of art deco architecture in the Southeast, most of it built in the late 1920s and early 1930s.
- Asheville is home to the Southern Highland Craft Guild, the second oldest of its kind in the nation, located at the Folk Art Center off the scenic Blue Ridge Parkway, just 15 minutes from downtown.
- The Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, held in late summer, is the oldest of its kind in the nation. Celebrating music indigenous to the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky mountains, some of the region's best musicians entertain capacity crowds and compete for prize money. The mountain music and clog dancing performed at the festival have roots in the lives of Welsh, Irish, Scottish and English pioneers who settled this area.
- Rolling Stone named Asheville to its Best Music City list in the 2025 Rolling Stone Travel Awards, citing a music scene that returned to breweries' beer gardens and traditional venues across town.
- The Asheville area has produced a number of legends and Grammy-winning musicians. Giants like Luke Combs, Roberta Flack, Nina Simone, Warren Haynes, The Steep Canyon Rangers, David Holt and Doc Watson all have roots in the region.



AUGUST 2026



PGA TOUR RETURNS TO ASHEVILLE

The Biltmore Championship Asheville brings the PGA TOUR back to the Blue Ridge Mountains for the first time in more than 80 years. Competition runs September 17 to 20, 2026, at The Cliffs at Walnut Cove, with tournament week beginning September 14. The last TOUR event in the area was the Asheville Land of the Sky Open, where World Golf Hall of Famer Ben Hogan won three consecutive titles from 1940 to 1942.

Designed by Jack Nicklaus, The Cliffs at Walnut Cove is a private facility, just minutes from Asheville Regional Airport and a short drive from downtown Asheville. Ranked among the top courses in the state, the 7,167-yard venue sits in a valley bordering Pisgah National Forest and the Blue Ridge Parkway.

The tournament is part of the PGA TOUR's FedExCup Fall, carrying a \$5 million purse and 500 FedExCup points. More than 100 players will compete, and the event will be broadcast on Golf Channel along with three properties produced from PGA TOUR Studios: PGA TOUR LIVE on ESPN+, SiriusXM and the World Feed.

Biltmore Estate and Explore Asheville serve as co-title sponsors under a four-year agreement with the PGA TOUR.

Check out more of the latest Asheville news at ExploreAsheville.com

ExploreAsheville.com | [@VisitAsheville](https://twitter.com/VisitAsheville) | Media@ExploreAsheville.com