

FOOD&WINE

TRAVEL

North Carolina's 'Triangle' Is the Perfect Destination for a Weekend of Eating

Spend a few days eating and drinking your way through Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill.

By [Alexandra Domrongchai](#)



PHOTO: CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF CORPSE REVIVER; COURTESY OF DISCOVER DURHAM; ANDREW ALBRIGHT WITH ALBRIGHT STUDIO; COURTESY OF M SUSHI

The Triangle, shorthand for Research Triangle, includes the North Carolina cities of Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill, all of which are within a 30-minute radius of one another. The region is home to a thriving (and growing) culinary scene, with a wide variety of dining options ranging from food trucks and barbecue joints to fine dining restaurants. The Triangle area is the perfect destination for a weekend of eating because each city offers something special.

Often overlooked as a conglomerate of college towns hosting the University of North Carolina, Duke University, and North Carolina State University, the Triangle offers much more than just college stadiums and breweries. Visitors can sample farm-fresh cuisine from award-winning chefs, go to a host of distilleries and breweries, or explore outdoor art galleries.

From smothered biscuits to shopping galore, the Triangle has something for everyone making it the perfect place to spend your weekend exploring regional delicacies and enjoying some of North Carolina's best dining.

Day 1: Durham

Out of the three cities, Durham is arguably the coolest, with funky restaurants and a vibrant nightlife. If you're flying (or driving) into Raleigh-Durham International Airport in the afternoon, why not start your trip with James Beard Award-winning seafood from chef Ricky Moore? Hit up [Saltbox Seafood joint](#) for some spectacular local, fresh seafood, and in my humble opinion, the greatest honey hushpuppies to ever grace this earth.



COURTESY OF M SUSHI

What to Eat

As for other stellar dining standouts, you can't miss [M Sushi](#), which is an unsuspecting omakase restaurant that was the only NC spot to make OpenTable's top 100 restaurants in 2021. If you're in the mood for some amazing crepes, check out [Press Coffee](#). It's a European-style coffeehouse with all sorts of delicious food and drinks. Or, stop by [Queeny's](#) and grab a bite while cruising their bookstore and soundproof communal podcast studio.



COURTESY OF DISCOVER DURHAM

Where to Drink

As for stand-out bars, there's Kingfisher, a spot that makes deeply inventive cocktails; their Fromage Pomme is Hennessy sous-vide with karst cave-aged cheese and acidified Granny Smith apple juice. Also, if you're in the mood for a nice glass of wine, [Killer Queen Wine Bar](#) is located in a killer-homey space and has a wonderful, extensive wine program.

Durham Distillery is making a name for itself with its award-winning gins, being the highest awarded gin distillery in the country. Plus, co-founders Melissa and Lee Katrincic are the fourth and fifth distillers ever inducted into the Gin Guild.

If you're just looking for a drink, check out their accompanying bar, [Corpse Reviver Bar & Lounge](#), which serves classic cocktails

in a former coffin shop. In other distilling goodness, visit [Mystic Farm & Distillery](#), the largest solar-powered bourbon distillery in the world. They use local grains with a zero-waste production process.

Where to Stay

[The Durham Hotel](#), originally built in 1968, is a boutique hotel in downtown Durham that has become a cultural and community center. Hotel Durham is the only locally owned, independently operated hotel in downtown Durham with a restaurant, coffee bar, and rooftop lounge.

What to Do

As for exploring the arts and nature, you can bike through the [Eno River State Park](#), or take a leisurely stroll through the [Sarah P. Duke Gardens](#).

Day 2: Raleigh

Raleigh has that big(er) city feel. As a metropolitan space with a robust dining and cultural scene, Raleigh has no shortage of things to do, see, and eat. The city is known for its many green spaces, its dynamic cuisine, and its vibrant nightlife. The city offers a variety of attractions, from historic sites to world-class art galleries and museums.

What to Eat

[Rainbow Luncheonette](#) has a classic diner feel, with a colorful twist. The stools are the best seats in the house, hovering over a vibrant rainbow striped floor. Don't miss the corned beef hash and biscuits and gravy.

You can't go to North Carolina and not get [barbecue](#), so we've got three incredible options for you. If you're a barbecue purist, check out [The Pit](#) for all of the [pulled pork](#) and [cornbread](#) your heart desires, or head to [Longleaf Swine](#) which is a market-style barbecue shop by day, with lines of diners ordering smoked brisket and whole hog by the pound. For barbecue with a twist, head straight to [Lichen Latin BBQ Joint](#) for crispy, tender roasted pork. If barbecue isn't your jam, the [St. Roch Oyster Bar](#) serves some of the most flavorful Carolina oysters and New Orleans inspired plates.

For innovative cocktail creations and craft beer, head to [Burial Beer Co. Raleigh Taproom + Bottle Shop](#), which is located in a century-old revived coach house.



COURTESY OF VISIT RALEIGH

Where to Stay

[The Parlor at Heights House](#) is a small, inviting lounge inside Heights House Hotel with an Italian-inspired craft cocktails menu, wine list, and even local beers – all to reflect and honor the Italianate style of this 1858 historic estate.

To live your best, most over-the-top life, stay at the [Umstead Hotel and Spa](#) the state's highest rated hotel. It's the epitome of luxury with gorgeous interiors accentuated with privately curated fine art, world-class cuisine at its signature restaurant, [Herons](#), a fantastic spa, and kind staff all in a dreamy woodland setting.



COURTESY OF VISIT RALEIGH

What to Do

Check out the shops at [Fenton](#), a mixed-use development in the heart of Cary (neighbor to Raleigh). Fenton has interactive public art, outdoor communal spaces for relaxing or group workouts, exciting restaurants, and plenty of shopping.

In Raleigh, you can also explore the beautiful [William B. Umstead State Park](#), or take a kayak out on the peaceful Falls Lake. Or, you can visit the [North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences](#), the [North Carolina Museum of Art](#), or catch a Carolina Hurricanes hockey game at [PNC Arena](#).

Day 3: Chapel Hill

If Durham is cool, and Raleigh is modern, Chapel Hill is where I go to take it easy – and eat all of the Southern treats your heart desires.

What to Eat

Go to [Mama Dip's](#) for their classic gravy-smothered pork chops and eggs. Or, check out [Coco, Espresso, Bistro & Bar](#), an expanded plant-based restaurant, bar, coffee and pastry café. In a rush? For a quick, satisfying bite, visit [Sunrise Biscuit Kitchen](#), which is a drive-through only restaurant that offers fluffy, buttery biscuits filled with salty country ham, as well as the sweetest iced tea.



COURTESY OF THE CAROLINA INN

Where to Stay

For more than 95 years, [The Carolina Inn](#) has been an iconic inn at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill campus. With plenty of dining options including an [Afternoon Tea](#), this charming and beautifully decorated hotel is a must-see. It's also a short walk from the Tar Heels' football stadium, basketball arena, and the charming food-driven and shopping-focused Franklin Street.

What to Do

And in Chapel Hill, you can visit the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, one of the oldest public universities in the country, or take a walk through the beautiful [North Carolina Botanical Garden](#).