

Chapel Hill, NC: A Top Destination in the 2018 Travel to College Towns Trend

Home to the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill attracts tens of thousands of lifelong learners annually. Here's Why.

CHAPEL HILL, N.C., Jan. 24, 2018 -- There's something special about college towns. Whether it's their abundance of used bookstores and funky cafes, historic buildings and the landscaped quads of their universities -- or simply their undercurrent of youthful energy -- college towns have a unique appeal, even (and maybe especially) to those of us who haven't cracked a textbook in years.



On your visit to Chapel Hill, NC, make sure you stroll the famous Franklin Street known for its award-winning restaurants, bars, shops and boutiques. Franklin Street is adjacent to the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Photo credit - Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau.

It's hard to believe that 225 years have passed since the nation's first public university-- the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—laid the cornerstone of what is called Old East, the institution's first building and the oldest state university building in the entire nation. That's what we'll be celebrating this upcoming University Day in October -- UNC's glorious past and exciting future. But no need to wait until then. The Chapel Hill/Orange County Visitors Bureau encourages you to take some time to explore one of the fastest growing states for leisure travel, North Carolina, and its flagship college town.

Chapel Hill has long had a reputation for being independent, progressive and a little bit quirky. But the quirk doesn't stop there. Neighboring Carrboro, North Carolina's own baby Brooklyn, is justifiably famous for its music scene, both local and national acts, where you can tap your foot and dance to everything from indie rock and country to blue grass and doo wop.

Don't miss a stroll along the main drag, Franklin Street, where you'll find cool restaurants and boutiques, as well as Carolina Square, home to CURRENT, a new performing arts center that

offers performances considered alternative, funky and cutting edge. Then take a 10-minute walk over to the ArtsCenter in Carrboro for music, theater, comedy and festival fun. And then just a little further on you'll come to the heart of Carrboro, Weaver Street, a grocery co-op whose expansive front lawn serves as the heart of this lovely town.

Once you've soaked up the spirit of the town's main drags, check out the University's campus, which offers weekly tours for all, an arboretum, and the Old Well, known for bringing good luck to those who take a drink from its fountain. The University of North Carolina is home to the state's largest Botanical Garden, Ackland Art Museum, a basketball museum and one of the most revered performing arts scenes in the country. Memorial Hall, PlayMakers Repertory Company and the aforementioned CURRENT performance space, together offer performances for a variety of tastes during the academic year.

Just down the road is historic Hillsborough. A sweet drive down Old 86 takes you back in time to a town that feels plucked from the 19th century – until you see its art galleries, its bookstores, and feel its energy as numerous novelists call Hillsborough home. Churton Street is the place to go if you want to shop or dine, but if you're more of an outdoorsy type, hop on its Riverwalk, hike the Eno or stroll the Poets Walk at historic Ayr Mount.

North Carolina is known for its mild climate, all three towns can be enjoyed year-round. But for beauty that will give you an out-of-body experience, come in spring. The dogwoods are in bloom, the sky could not be bluer, and the campus feels like it has come to life again. Spring and summer relax on the front porch of The Carolina Inn, which hosts outdoor music, food trucks and cocktails on its historic hotel lawn.

The county where all this happens, Orange County, NC is home to around 150,000 people -- townies, farmers, techies. There is a little bit of everybody here, and a little bit of everything, from arts to sports to the unforgettable countryside. It's like visiting a city -- without the traffic, the noise, or the price. And the surrounding farms are breathtakingly beautiful. There is literally something here for everybody – including you. Especially you.

What are you waiting for? For more information, check out www.VisitChapelHill.org.

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