



BEERTOWN, U.S.A.: ASHEVILLE

ASHEVILLE IS ONE OF THOSE RARE, ALMOST-UNDISCOVERED CITIES WITH A TWIST: THINK GENTEEL SOUTHERN MEETS BOHEMIAN FLAIR. RECENTLY CROWNED BEER CITY U.S.A. 2010, THE SUDS SCENE HERE IS SO THICK, BEER FLOWS FROM THE TAPS AND INTO LOCAL MUSTARDS, SAUCES AND SWEETS.

BREWERIES

Asheville's first brewing company, **Highland Brewing** (*East Asheville, highlandbrewing.com*), just unveiled an enormous, 12,000-square-foot tasting room. You can hang there, or on Friday nights bring beers like the caramely Gaelic Ale and malty Oatmeal Porter out to the field beside the brewery and catch live tunes. **Pisgah Brewing** (*Black Mountain, pisgahbrewing.com*) also boasts a new outdoor music venue—a simple, downhome space with wooden picnic tables that's an ideal spot for sipping five regular taps and rotating seasonals, all certified organic. Rounding out the brewery/music scene is **French Broad Brewery** (*South Asheville, frenchbroadbrewery.com*), where you can drink in live bands and a gorgeous Belgian stout in the tasting room. The baby on Asheville's scene, **Craggie Brewing** (*Downtown, craggiebrewingco.com*) has already developed a loyal following for pouring selections like Antebellum Ale, crafted from a turn-of-the-century recipe that includes molasses and spruce tips. Nearby, **Green Man Brewing's** (*Downtown, greenmanbrewery.com*) funky tasting room has captivated the town's palates with a Celtic vibe and multiple casks like the ever-popular Green Man IPA. For a quintessential Southern experience sit outside at **Wedge Brewing** (*River Arts District, wedgebrewing.com*) and watch a train roll by while sipping a pint of Iron Rail IPA. Tucked into an old warehouse on a dirt stretch of parking lot, the brewery's odd location makes this tasting room a place for locals who are tapped in or out-of-towners with a good GPS. If you're fixin' for a slice, join the townies at **Asheville Pizza and Brewing** (*North Asheville, ashevillebrewing.com*) to enjoy a pint, a pizza and a \$3 movie. On Thursday nights at the second location downtown, the crew puts a Randall filter to work, creating unusual treats like porter with lavender or Boogie Down Brown Ale with roasted almonds.

BARS

With 71 taps including the likes of Dogfish Head 90 Minute IPA, the hippie-dippy **Mellow Mushroom** (*Downtown, mellowmushroom.com*) is a safe bet for a taste of all nine area breweries and the ideal perch for ogling the eclectic parade that is Asheville. A few blocks away you'll find the **Bier Garden** (*Downtown, ashevillebiergarten.com*), which serves a huge, high-gravity beer list alongside succulent wings with your choice of Thai Peanut Sauce, Soy-Lime Ponzu or Spicy Sriracha. Downtown's **The Thirsty Monk** (*Downtown, monkpub.com*) is stacked with a 150-bottle list plus 14 Belgians on draft. Like its breweries, many of Asheville's bars feature live music, and much of it's totally gratis. The musical focus at **Barley's Taproom** (*Downtown, barleystaproom.com*) is folksy with twangy country and bluegrass a few nights a week. Check out the tavern's monthly featured beers while snacking on its signature sourdough pizza crust. Tuesday Blues Jams at the **Westville Pub** (*West Asheville, westvillepub.com*) start at 9:30 p.m.; bring your pup (the patio is dog-friendly) and eavesdrop on patrons to get the skinny on town politics.

DINE

The farm-to-table movement is alive and well in Asheville with 17 local farmers markets adding their bounty to more than 200 independent restaurants. With a focus on organic produce and locally raised pork and trout, **Ophelia's World Café** (*Downtown, 828.255.8154*) has something for conscientious vegans and carnivores alike. The seafood lover should indulge in the Cornmeal Crusted NC Rainbow Trout and Crab. Another locavore winner is **Corner Kitchen** (*South Asheville, thecornerkitchen.com*): Each of the dining rooms in this converted home presents a pleasing ambience, with breakfast—specifically, local chorizo with cheesy scrambled eggs—on the porch being the ultimate



Clockwise from left: The Thirsty Monk, 12 Bones Smokehouse, Wedge Brewing, Barley's Taproom

treat. To celebrate the Southern fruits of nearby farms, head to **Tupelo Honey Cafe** (*Downtown, tupelohoneycafe.com*), where townsfolk and tourists alike wait in line for regional goodness like fried green tomatoes. On warmer nights, there's a drum circle in the square across the street, pulsing with the beat of this bohemian city. Mixing regional ingredients with imported European cheeses and meats, **Rezaz Restaurant and Enoteca** (*South Asheville, rezaz.com*) is the place to go for traditional antipasti on a budget. Sit on the Enoteca side and savor Taleggio, Prosciutto di Parma and a walnut-pomegranate dip served with generous amounts of soft, flavorful bread for \$10—and save room for gelato. And carnivores would do well to sample the maple-black pepper bacon at the all-organic **Sunny Point Café** (*West Asheville, sunnypointcafe.com*) and President-approved local ribs at **12 Bones Smokehouse** (*River Arts District, 12bones.com*). Obama stopped by twice to test out the ever-changing rib sauce; blueberry chipotle's a standout.

SLEEP

Among Asheville's many quaint B&Bs and luxurious inns, the ultimate pampering experience belongs to the **Grove Park Inn Resort** (*North Asheville, groveparkinn.com*) and its 43,000-square-foot spa. The sports complex includes complimentary fitness classes, and the concierge will arrange everything from picnic lunches to rafting trips. For plush appointments closer to downtown, the **Beaufort House Bed and Breakfast** (*North Asheville, beauforthouse.com*) is in a residential neighborhood only a half-mile from the action. Once home to actor Charlton Heston, the lushly landscaped inn features a wraparound porch, ideal for swinging and watching fireflies flicker late into the evening. To stay within proximity of beer, though, **Hotel Indigo** (*Downtown, hotelindigo.com*) sits next to the popular Grove Arcade and is steps from downtown pubs, shops, galleries and restaurants.

DO

Asheville Food Tours' (*ashevillefoodtours.com*) walking culinary journeys are a tasty way to experience the history of downtown or Biltmore Village. Similarly, the **Asheville Brews Cruise** (*brewscruise.com/asheville*) offers generous samples with behind-the-scenes tours of three local breweries. The tour picks you up and delivers you to your door, no designated driver needed. If you're stuffed with food and drink, walk it off on the **Blue Ridge Parkway** (*blueridgeparkway.org*), which criss-crosses Asheville in several spots and celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. Pack a picnic and head to Craggy Gardens, or bare it all at Skinny Dip Falls; locals hike to Max Patch Bald for dazzling views of the Smokies. When you need an indoor diversion, tour the chateau, gardens and winery of George Vanderbilt's magnificent **Biltmore Estate** (*South Asheville, biltmore.com*) on a weekday to avoid the buzzing weekend crowds. Save time to sample North Carolina wines in the tasting room. ●

HIGH FIDELITY

Whether it's floating in from the Blue Ridge or exploding from the indie scene, music's a large part of Asheville culture. And like any music hotspot, there's always a cornerstone record shop. Since opening in 2004, **Harvest Records** (*415-B Haywood Rd., harvest-records.com*) has quickly established itself as a local force. When owners Matt Schnable and Mark Capon aren't behind the counter selling new and rare albums, they're busy recording bands under Harvest Recordings or staging concerts by artists like Sharon Jones & the Dap Kings and Of Montreal at Asheville's **Grey Eagle** (*185 Clingman Ave., thegreyeagle.com*).

