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SOUTHBOUND  
FALL + WINTER 2014

# ASHEVILLE'S INDIE SPIRIT

Some compare it to Paris for its art deco buildings, others to Portland for its strong sense of community. But if you ask the entrepreneurs responsible for Asheville's rebirth over the last two decades, they will tell you their city is simply incomparable.

BY BRET LOVE



COURTESY OF ASHEVILLE CVB





River Arts District



Pack Square



Pack Square

## If you want to understand the essence of Asheville,

head to the Pack Square Cultural District in the bustling heart of the city. There you'll find urbanites dressed in all-black, aging boomers, bearded hipsters, stroller-pushing Earth mamas, red-robed Buddhist monks, dreadlocked hikers just off the Appalachian Trail, and tattooed cowboys busking for spare change—all within a span of ten minutes on a weekday afternoon. The people-watching is extraordinary, but to discover the city's true independent spirit, you have to look beyond the characters and check out the businesses lining the streets.

### ► EAT

#### 12 BONES SMOKEHOUSE

President Barack Obama once said, "There's two things I love about Asheville—the people and 12 Bones." They're only open for lunch, so get there early for a taste of smoked Southern heaven. [12bones.com](http://12bones.com)

#### ALL SOULS PIZZA

Owned by the folks behind Farm & Sparrow Bakery, this wood-fired pizza kitchen in the River Arts District mills its own flour and uses fresh, locally sourced ingredients. [allsoulspizza.com](http://allsoulspizza.com)

#### CORNER KITCHEN

Located in a renovated century-old Victorian home in Biltmore Village, this laid-back hotspot offers a contemporary, upscale twist on Southern cuisine. Reservations recommended. [thecornerkitchen.com](http://thecornerkitchen.com)

#### CÚRATE

Cúrate means "cure yourself" in Spanish. From croquetas de pollo to jamon Iberico, owner and chef Katie Button's lauded take on Spanish cuisine allows diners to do just that. [curate-tapasbar.com](http://curate-tapasbar.com)

#### GREEN SAGE COFFEEHOUSE & CAFE

One of seven four-star rated Green Restaurants in the U.S., this cafe's sustainable approach includes composting food scraps, converting used oil to biofuel, and using all-organic ingredients. [thegreensage.net](http://thegreensage.net)

## ► EAT

### LAUGHING SEED CAFE

Asheville's iconic vegetarian restaurant specializes in non-GMO organic ingredients, with vegan and gluten-free options so packed with flavor, you won't miss what's missing. [laughingseed.com](http://laughingseed.com)

### LEX 18 SUPPER CLUB

Set in a historic building that once housed a Prohibition-era speakeasy, this critically acclaimed brunch and supper club offers moonshine, music, and Chef Edwin Bloodworth's New Appalachian Cuisine. [lex18avl.com](http://lex18avl.com)

### PLANT

Chef Jason Seller's use of locally farmed and foraged ingredients in his vegan cuisine earned recognition from *Food & Wine*, which named it one of the Top 20 Vegetarian Restaurants in the U.S. [plantisfood.com](http://plantisfood.com)

### POSANA CAFE

A leader in the city's renowned Green Restaurant movement, Chef Peter Pollay's farm-to-table restaurant features a seasonal menu sourced from more than thirty farms in the Asheville area. [posanacafe.com](http://posanacafe.com)

### TUPELO HONEY CAFE

Chef Brian Sonoskus's fun twist on traditional Southern menu items, from fried chicken to sweet potatoes, benefits from working with local farms and agriculture projects. [tupelohoney-cafe.com](http://tupelohoney-cafe.com)



Biltmore

There's Malaprop's Bookstore, an expansive indie favorite, known for its great food and coffee and almost daily author events. Then there's Karmasonics Records, Asheville's longest-standing independent record store. You'll find locally owned clothing boutiques offering a range of styles, from hip (Bellagio Art to Wear) to hippie-fied (Indo Apparel), and fabled craft brewpubs like The Bier Garden and Thirsty Monk. Chef-driven restaurants such as Posana Cafe and Cúrate are critical darlings, and independent live music venue The Orange Peel, voted one of *Rolling Stone's* Top 5 Rock Clubs in the U.S., has hosted music acts ranging from Bob Dylan and Beastie Boys to Arcade Fire and Skrillex.

The real Asheville is far richer and more complex than its characterization as the Southeastern capital of drum circles and dreamcatchers. In truth, the city is a collective of strong, visionary entrepreneurs and smart small-business owners, a community of creatives and craftspeople, all of them drawn to this small city nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of western North Carolina.

### THE RISE AND FALL OF ASHEVILLE

Fall is an incredible time to visit Asheville, as a palette of autumnal hues paints the surrounding hills and a crisp coolness charges the air. The city's current buzz as the Southeast's answer to Portland (another mountain town famous for its

## THE REAL ASHEVILLE IS FAR RICHER AND MORE COMPLEX THAN ITS CHARACTERIZATION AS THE SOUTHEASTERN CAPITAL OF DRUM CIRCLES AND DREAMCATCHERS.

natural surroundings, cultural scene, and environmental consciousness) is all the more impressive when you consider that much of downtown verged on the cusp of demolition just twenty-five years ago.

Asheville began the twentieth century with a bang, with George Washington Vanderbilt II completing his 250-room Biltmore Estate in 1895. At more than 135,000 square feet, it remains the largest privately owned home in the United States. The New York-based multi-millionaire invested much of his fortune in Biltmore's Châteauesque-style architecture, antique furniture, landscaped gardens, forestry management programs, and agricultural initiatives.

The 125,000-acre retreat became a getaway for his famous friends, including novelist Henry James, inventors Henry Ford and Thomas Edison, and presidents William McKinley,





Katie Button, owner and chef, Cúrate



Patty Torno, owner, CURVE Studios

Teddy Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson. (Today, Biltmore continues to lure visitors to the area, welcoming more than a million of them annually.) With the wealth that followed the arrival of Vanderbilt and his well-heeled friends came the many art deco-style buildings that define the downtown business district today. Asheville's nickname became "the Paris of the South" and the town prospered for decades, at one point becoming North Carolina's third-largest city.

But the bottom fell out with the stock market crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression. Asheville's residents shouldered a crippling per capita debt greater than any other city in America

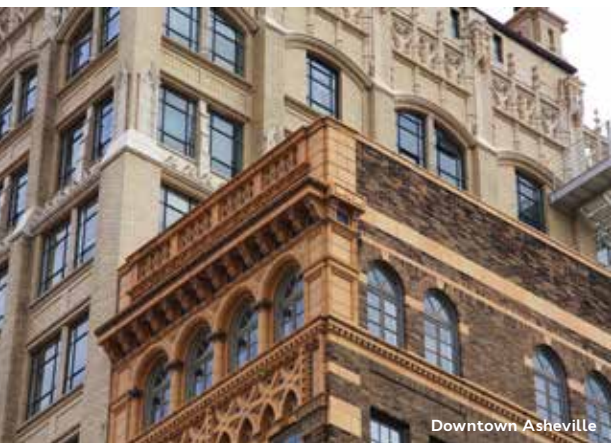
due to all the infrastructure improvements that had been made since the turn of the century. All but one of the local banks closed. But Asheville's public leaders refused to file bankruptcy, resolving to pay back every cent. It would take more than fifty years for the city to recover.

### THE PIONEERS

Between 1960 and 1980, Asheville's population declined by ten percent as residents left in droves; eventually, it became a ghost town. Many of the historic buildings were boarded up, and the city's economy was so awful, they couldn't even afford demolition to build anything new. But where some saw a city in serious decline, others spotted opportunity.

Like Vanderbilt before her, Patty Torno is a native New Yorker who was drawn to Asheville by its quality of life. A rock-climbing hobbyist, Torno appreciated the city's natural beauty, while the numerous knitting mills nearby made it possible for her to continue her career as a clothing designer. Thanks to the bad economy, she scored a 3,000-square-foot loft for \$300 a month when she moved here in 1984. She was one of only 1,000 people who lived downtown, part of a group of entrepreneurial transplants known as "the Asheville 1,000."

Though small in number, Torno and her friends had a large impact on the city's growth.



Downtown Asheville

### ► SEE

#### BILTMORE

George W. Vanderbilt's 250-room chateau has expanded over the years to include the four-star Inn on Biltmore Estate, Antler Hill Village, and an award-winning winery—the most-visited in the nation. [biltmore.com](http://biltmore.com)

#### BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS

Easily accessible from Asheville, portions of this famed mountain range can be explored by foot on the Appalachian Trail or by car on the Blue Ridge Parkway. [appalachiantrail.org](http://appalachiantrail.org), [blueridgeparkway.org](http://blueridgeparkway.org)

#### CURVE STUDIOS

A cornerstone of the River Arts District, this collection of artist studios offers a wide selection of visual arts and crafts, as well as a peaceful garden. [curvestudiosnc.com](http://curvestudiosnc.com)

#### THE ORANGE PEEL

This standing-room-only club has welcomed the likes of Joan Jett, yet it still brings new talent to the stage. The downstairs bar, PULP, offers a live feed of shows taking place on the main stage. [theorangepeel.net](http://theorangepeel.net)

#### PACK PLACE

The centerpiece of downtown Asheville, this bustling cultural complex includes the Asheville Art Museum, Colburn Earth Science Museum, Diana Wortham Theatre, and the YMI Cultural Center. [packplace.org](http://packplace.org)

## ► DRINK

### ASHEVILLE BREWING COMPANY

Opened in 1995, this brewery develops unique "Brewer Series" varietals such as the jalapeño-infused Fire Escape and the Mardi Gras-inspired Bier de Garde. [asheville-brewing.com](http://asheville-brewing.com)

### THE BIER GARDEN

Boasting the largest beer selection in western North Carolina, this upscale brewpub in the downtown business district appeals to the theater and symphony crowd with its New American cuisine menu. [asheville-biergarden.com](http://asheville-biergarden.com)

### BLUE KUDZU SAKE CO.

Asheville's first sake brewery offers flights of its namesake drink in its newly opened tasting room. Meanwhile, Chef Mitch Fortune crafts creative Pan Asian dishes such as handmade pork gyoza and kimchi Reubens. [bluekudzusake.com](http://bluekudzusake.com)

### HIGHLAND BREWING COMPANY

Tour and taste at Asheville's first craft brewery, whose Scotch-Irish influence is evidenced by year-round brews such as Gaelic Ale and seasonal varietals like Clawhammer Oktoberfest. [highlandbrewing.com](http://highlandbrewing.com)

### THIRSTY MONK

Voted the number-two beer bar in the South by craftbeer.com, Thirsty Monk features twenty rotating beers on tap and is renowned for its selection of unusual beers. Pay the extra dollar for the "private club" on the top floor. [monkpub.com](http://monkpub.com)



River Arts District

Perhaps their most important move was stopping a plan to replace eleven blocks of historic buildings with a shopping mall. These forward-thinking entrepreneurs were helped mightily when two accomplished businessmen, Roger McGuire and Julian Price, added to their efforts to revitalize the city and create an infrastructure to bring tourists to town.

Roger McGuire, a former *Southern Living* executive who moved to Asheville in 1980, invested huge sums of cash (and raised millions more) to fund Pack Place, which houses the Asheville Art Museum, Colburn Earth Science Museum, Diana Wortham Theatre, and YMI Cultural Center. He also founded the nonprofit group Asheville-Buncombe Discovery, which was dedicated to the revitalization of the downtown business district.

Julian Price, heir to the Jefferson-Pilot Life Insurance fortune, established Public Interest Projects (PIP) to fund independent businesses and provide an entrepreneurial model for sustainable community growth. PIP invested in many of the small companies that have become Asheville institutions, including the Laughing Seed Cafe, French Broad Food Co-Op, Malaprop's Bookstore, and The Orange Peel.

Between 1990 and 2000, Asheville's downtown business district reported 65 percent growth due in large part to the efforts of these

**"YOU DON'T CHOOSE ASHEVILLE," SAYS PETER WHITE, CO-OWNER OF THE BLACK WALNUT BED AND BREAKFAST INN. "ASHEVILLE CHOOSES YOU."**

two mavericks and independent business owners. Tourism has been on the climb ever since, with new indie retail outlets, restaurants, and brewpubs popping up all over town.

Torno herself opened CURVE Studios in 1990; it was one of the first art studios in the city's River Arts District. Today, under her leadership, this thriving community is home to more than 170 artists with studios in twenty-two former industrial buildings along the French Broad River. "We're starting to have a much more vibrant arts scene in Asheville," Torno says.

### ASHEVILLE'S NEW WAVE

In the last decade, a new generation of transplants has arrived in Asheville, many bearing the same independent spirit of those who came before them. They've opened inns, redefined the



culinary landscape, and brewed some of the best beer in the country.

"You don't choose Asheville," says Peter White, co-owner of The Black Walnut Bed and Breakfast Inn. "Asheville chooses you."

The Whites—baby boomers who became entrepreneurs because they didn't want to work for anyone else—relocated to Asheville after twenty-nine years running the Old Stone Bakery in Martha's Vineyard. Attracted by the weather

and vibrant cultural community, they bought a historic home in the Montford neighborhood in 2004, invested their life savings to fix it up, and turned it into a B&B that has been featured in *Travel + Leisure* and *1000 Places to See Before You Die*.

Built in 1899 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Black Walnut's blend of historic charm and sophisticated luxury sits in direct contrast to the notion of Asheville as a grungy, granola hippie haven. There are landscaped gardens, guest rooms filled with an array of antiques, a newly renovated carriage house, and an elegant dining room.

Like the Whites, Chef Peter Pollay also came to Asheville to go his own way. Owner of Posana Cafe and president of Asheville Independent Restaurants, he's a central figure in the town's booming culinary scene. He credits the city's friendly vibe for drawing a stable of chefs so good they've wowed *Bon Appetit* and *Food & Wine*. "We have great chefs coming to live in



The Black Walnut Bed and Breakfast Inn

## ► SHOP

### BELLAGIO ART TO WEAR

Located in historic Biltmore Village, this sophisticated boutique sells clothes, accessories, and jewelry. [bellagio-arttowear.com](http://bellagio-arttowear.com)

### FRENCH BROAD FOOD CO-OP

A foodie favorite, this Wednesday afternoon market features local produce and flowers, fresh-baked breads, desserts, meats, and cheeses. [frenchbroad-food.coop](http://frenchbroad-food.coop)

### INDO APPAREL & GIFTS

The quintessential bohemian store offers tie-dyed T-shirts, patchwork skirts, Grateful Dead gear, incense, and anything else the hippie in your life could need. [indocrafts.com](http://indocrafts.com)

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## ► SHOP

### KARMASONICS RECORDS

If you're looking for music by Asheville's best recording artists, you'll find it at this independent store. [karmasonics.wix.com/karmasonics-website](http://karmasonics.wix.com/karmasonics-website)

### MALAPROP'S BOOKSTORE

A meeting place, cafe, and bookstore in one, this Asheville institution specializes in regional books. [malaprops.com](http://malaprops.com)

### MAST GENERAL STORE

Open since the 1940s, this Asheville staple sells everything from traditional housewares and toys to old-fashioned candies. There's also a huge selection of outdoor recreation gear. [mastgeneralstore.com](http://mastgeneralstore.com)

the mountains in a diverse, open, and welcoming community, and more people are coming to visit Asheville as a result," says Pollay, a Chicago native.

What they're finding is a community with a palate for boundary-pushing dishes. It's hard to get a reservation at The Admiral, where Chef Ivan Candido makes edible paper out of cilantro and tamales out of beets and goat cheese. At Cúrate, owner and chef Katie Button has earned national acclaim for her creative take on traditional Spanish tapas. Her background as a scientist is evident in dishes like smoked lardo made from acorn-fed Iberian pigs, sliced thin and served on toast with sea salt and Spanish paprika. Then there's Chef Edwin Bloodworth, who moved to the Lex 18 Supper Club in June and is earning rave reviews for his New Appalachian Cuisine, which features locally sourced sustainable ingredients to showcase his Native American, European, African, and Southern influences.

And it's not just what happens tableside that's making news. Pollay is an influential leader in Asheville's green restaurant revolution, known for his in-house water filtration system and hand soap made from leftover kitchen grease. He points to the owners of hotspots such as the



Biltmore Avenue

Green Sage Cafe and Biltmore Village's Corner Kitchen as instrumental in the movement that recently led the Green Restaurant Association to name Asheville "America's Greenest Dining Destination."

As Asheville's buzz as a budding culinary capitol continues to build, its credibility as a

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# DARIEN

## 2014 Schedule of Events

**Oct. 18:** Sapelo Island Annual Cultural Day  
[www.SICARS.com](http://www.SICARS.com)

**Nov. 1:** Darien Fall Fest  
[www.DarienFallFest.com](http://www.DarienFallFest.com)

**Nov. 7-8:** Fort King George Encampment  
<http://gastateparks.org/FortKingGeorge>

**Dec. 2014:** Holiday at the Reynolds Mansion on Sapelo Island  
[www.gastateparks.org/ReynoldsMansion-HolidayCelebration](http://www.gastateparks.org/ReynoldsMansion-HolidayCelebration)

## 2015 Schedule of Events

**March 21:** Friends of Shellman Bluff's St. Patrick's Day Parade/Celebration  
[www.TheFriendsofShellmanBluff.org](http://www.TheFriendsofShellmanBluff.org)



**April 17-19:** Blessing of the Fleet  
[www.BlessingOfTheFleet.com](http://www.BlessingOfTheFleet.com)

**June 13:** Darien Heritage Festival

**[www.VisitDarien.com](http://www.VisitDarien.com)  
for Additional Events**

**OF THE TOURISTS WHO EAT AND DRINK THEIR WAY THROUGH ASHEVILLE, A GROWING PERCENTAGE DECIDE TO STAY. ASHEVILLE'S POPULATION HAS GROWN 25 PERCENT SINCE 2000.**

haven for craft brewers (and the imbibers who love them) is also growing exponentially. The Asheville Brewing Company prides itself as the most kid-friendly brewery west of the United Kingdom, offering the largest covered outdoor patio in town and award-winning pizza. The Bier Garden is known for its extensive beer offerings, which include more than 200 imports from around the world and the best the local microbreweries have to offer. The Highland Brewing Company is one of the city's largest brewers, with a 35,000-square-foot facility churning out more than 40,000 barrels a year, while Thirsty Monk has been ranked among the nation's best beer bars by *Paste*, *Garden & Gun*, and numerous others. And, for those seeking something completely different, the Blue

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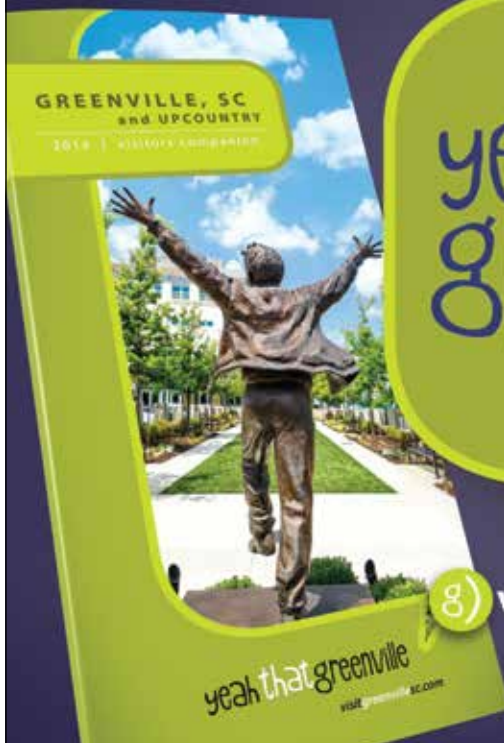
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Kudzu Sake Co. is an "Appal-Asian" restaurant offering Asheville's first locally micro-brewed sake.

Of the tourists who eat and drink their way through Asheville, a growing percentage decide to stay. Despite the economic downturn, Asheville's population has grown 25 percent since 2000, from 69,000 to more than 85,000 in 2012. (Rumor has it the Obamas have already begun searching for a post-presidency home here.) There are so many newbies in town that, if you've been in the city for five years or more, residents consider you "old school."

### THE FUTURE OF ASHEVILLE

In the last century, Asheville was built, and rebuilt, by forward-thinking pioneers with a strong independent streak. It is their art deco buildings that visitors admire, their inns that lure repeat guests, and their craft brews that earned Asheville the nickname "Beer City USA." They provided the momentum, and the city is now on a roll. Sierra Nevada and New Belgium are slated to open breweries in the resurgent River Arts District within the next year, and eight to ten hotels are on the drawing board for downtown. In a city that lures dreadlocked hikers and culinary daredevils, stroller-pushing Earth mamas and determined entrepreneurs, independence and indomitability go hand in hand. ▲

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