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How to Spend a Perfect Weekend in Charlotte, North Carolina

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10–12 minutes

Weekend getaway seekers have Charlotte, [North Carolina](#) on their radar this spring where the escape trifecta of artistic masterwork, soft outdoor adventure and culinary discovery deliver premium vacation ROI — all under the canopy of Carolina’s storied blue skies.

Don’t confuse the Carolinas largest metro and the 15th largest city in the U.S. with its southern “Char-monikered” neighbors of Charlottesville or Charleston, though. Charlotte is a New South city worthy of its very own vacation quest — and there’s never been a better time to visit.

This spring sees the Queen City showcase serious cultural bonafides as Charlotte’s Mint Museum hosts [Picasso Landscapes: Out of Bounds](#), more than 40 paintings spanning Picasso’s full career and exploring his lifelong innovations with landscape. The exhibition is part of the International Picasso Celebration structured to coincide with the 50th anniversary of Picasso’s death, and runs through May 21st.

It’s a terrific anchor for an extended weekend getaway where

whitewater rafting, serious golf, cycling paradise, craft brewers, seriously talented chefs and clubs that jump deliver plenty of holiday diversions.

Here's what to look for on a spring visit:

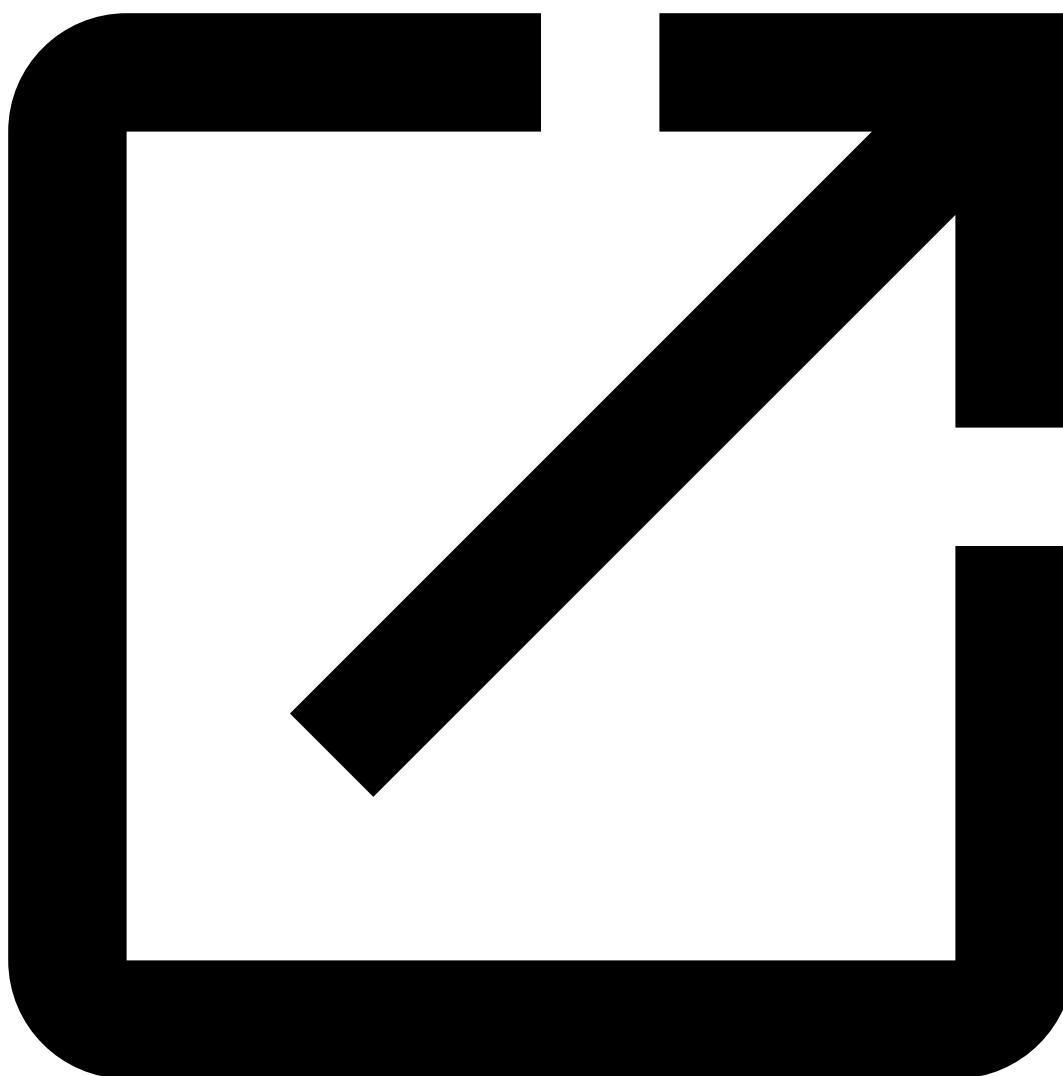


Pablo Picasso's "View of Notre-Dame"

American Federation of Arts

Picasso up close

For the uninitiated, Charlotte's Mint Museum is one of only two U.S. venues showcasing this specially curated Picasso exhibition. It's organized by the American Federation of Arts and curated by Laurence Madeline, chief curator for the French National Heritage.



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While Picasso was known to be prolific (he produced an estimated 13,500 paintings throughout his decades-long career), he painted just 300 or so landscapes. That said, their influence on his creative process was significant. “The importance of the landscape to Picasso, how it influenced his other work, and the rich stories buried in so many of these works reveal new areas of discovery for those even well versed in Picasso,” says Jennifer Sudul Edwards, chief curator, and curator of contemporary art at the Mint Museum.

Picasso's works are shown in chronological order from his earliest 20th century paintings to work done near the time of his death in 1973 and assembled from collections across the globe. His landscapes demonstrate Picasso's interest in capturing the cultural, political, and historical zeitgeist of his time.

One example is Picasso's *View of Cannes at Dusk* (1960): a close look beyond the playful composition of which reveals Picasso's foretelling of the peril looming with industrialization. "The scene of the beautiful landscape view from a tony resort hotel window exposes a darker secret," says Edwards. "We think of Cannes with the luxurious Mediterranean views, but here in the distance is this crane hovering over the verdant foreground, it's an industrial moment Picasso warns is forthcoming."

There's much to enjoy here — from the shimmering multi-colored geometric *Mediterranean Village* (1937) and futuristic earth-toned blocky castles of *The Reservoir, Horta de Ebro* (1909) to the eerie realist stark and shady frosted trees depicted in *Snow Landscape* (1924-1925) — Picasso's landscapes may surprise viewers with a hand that shows more realism and restraint than much of his portraiture. What differentiates this show from other Picasso exhibits is the context Madeline wraps around the artwork. Short films, period photographs, news clippings and topical references link historic and cultural significance to Picasso's landscapes and allow for viewers to more fully appreciate the times Picasso navigated.

Accompanying the show is a companion exhibition, [*Bearden/Picasso: Rhythms and Reverberations*](#). Featured are works of Charlotte-native son Romare Bearden, which highlight

the influence Picasso had him. The Mint drew from their extensive Bearden holdings and brought three additional Picasso works into this exhibit as counterpoints to Bearden works on display.



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Establish a homebase

Uptown Charlotte's [Kimpton Tryon Park](#) makes a comfortable and central base of operations for a Charlotte visit. Guests are just a few blocks away from the Mint Museum and Charlotte's easy to navigate center city is at the doorstep for exploring. Ask for a ballpark view, as the Kimpton overlooks TRUIST field.





Charlotte Motor Speedway

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Explore outdoors

After experiencing the show, take 100 steps across the Levine Center for the Arts Plaza for a mandatory snapshot with Charlotte's most photographed work of public art — Niki de Saint Phalle's *Le Grand Oiseau de Feu sur l'Arche*, aka the Firebird. The colossal 17-foot high mirror-mosaiced creature is affectionally monikered the "Disco Chicken" by locals. It roosts outside the terra-cotta skinned, Mario Botta-designed [Bechtler Museum of Modern Art](#) and is selfie-central for Charlotte visitors and homies

alike.

Outdoor pursuits pull hard in Charlotte and the [U.S. National Whitewater Center](#) makes a big splash with visitors. Situated on more than 1,300 heavily wooded acres alongside the Catawba River, the Center boasts one of the largest manmade recirculating whitewater rivers in the world. It's not only kayakers, canoers, paddle boarders and river-rats that love it here — there's more than 50 miles of developed trails for mountain biking, hiking and exploring, too. Rock climbers and zipline enthusiasts also find plenty of adventure on tap.

Tar Heel country is made for golf and Charlotte visitors find more than 45 public play golf courses within an hour's drive. Sneak over the nearby state line to Ft. Mill, S.C and tee it up at [Springfield Golf Club](#) for some serious play on tree-lined tight fairways and pristine greens. Closer to town is [Olde Sycamore Golf Plantation](#), a walkable favorite designed by award winning course architect, Tom Jackson.

Charlotte is unabashedly NASCAR country and there's no more pulse-pounding experience than hitting the track where the pros drive. Fans get their own racecar, personal spotter and eight minutes of track time at Charlotte Motor Speedway in the [NASCAR Racing Experience](#). For those who want the thrill of banked turns at 140+ mph on the 1.5 mile oval, but prefer to leave the driving to others, ride-alongs are available.

Cyclists get their spin on at the [Rock Hill Velodrome](#). Here a 250-meter concrete track has 42.5 degree corner banks and a 17 degree bank on the front and back straights. The track offers cycling instruction and is anchor to the Rockhill Outdoor Center at

Riverwalk with mountain biking, a canoe and kayak launch and casual dining.

Lastly, March 31 is opening day for the [Charlotte Knights](#), the AAA Major League Baseball farm-club of the Chicago White Sox.

Visitors who catch a home game at TRUIST Field are treated to great sightlines, local brews on tap and one of the most cherished urban parks in the country.



Olde Mecklenburg Brewery

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Dine (and drink) around

Slake the inevitable thirst that accompanies touring at one of nearly 50 craft breweries in and around town. [Olde Mecklenburg Brewery](#) is the O.G. of local brewers and helped spawn Charlotte's burgeoning craft-brew movement. Hearty German fare like brats,

wurst and schnitzel are served up alongside German-style altbiers, helles lagers and hefeweizens on tap in the vast outdoor biergarten. Sour beer, wild ale and kombucha are the specialties at [Lenny Boy Brewing Company](#) where local music, cornhole and beer yoga are regularly on tap.

Find a killer breakfast with Latin flair at [Morazon](#), where the chilaquiles are served all day long with red or green salsa, carne asada or grilled chicken, two fried eggs, handmade tortillas and the best guacamole in the city. [Manolo's](#) is one of the longest operating Latin bakeries in the Carolinas. Pan de Dulce morning pastries come fresh from Manolo's ovens with concha, abanico, bigote and churros among the stars here.

Linger for dinner at [SupperLand](#) in Charlotte's Plaza Midwood neighborhood. They were named one of the "10 Best New Restaurants in America" by Bon Appetit in 2022. Vibes here are a mash-up of a Sunday church pot-luck social and southern brasserie, with a share-menu featuring comfort dishes like wagyu pot roast, roasted poulet rouge and miso mac 'n cheese — all served up in a restored mid-century church.

[Red Salt](#) by noted chef David Burke delivers contemporary American fare with a touch of whimsy. Starters like black pepper maple glazed bacon "hung" on a mini clothesline let diners know the chef doesn't take himself too seriously. The salt-aged beef is seriously tasty and prepared deftly here alongside other standouts such as cavatelli carbonara and southern stalwart, shrimp & grits.

[Mariposa](#), just steps away from the Mint Museum, is a fine choice before or after taking in Picasso serving lunch, brunch and dinner (they're also currently offering a special [Culture and Cuisine](#) date

package that includes Picasso tickets). Mediterranean and globally influenced flavors soar with dazzling mezze plates, chili marinated piri piri chicken and a gullah paella — Carolina gold rice stuffed with flavorful andouille and crustaceans.

Splurge at [Steak 48 Charlotte](#), the only Charlotte restaurant to make Open Table's top 100 restaurants list in 2022. This South Park neighborhood stunner wows with attentive service, hand poured martinis and unusual — and unusually terrific — steaks. Ask for the off-menu Butchers cut — a special cut from the outer edge of a wagyu ribeye, the steak is buttery, rich and the star of a memorable dining experience. Sides not to miss include Steak 48's legendary seafood tower, chicken-fried lobster tails and asparagus fries.

After dinner, have a nightcap at [Merchant & Trade](#), where the city view from rooftop bar is nearly as good as the people watching. [Encore nightclub and XOXO Lounge](#) are ready to party after hours for those who feel like dancing.

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