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March

48 HOURS IN...

48 Hours In Raleigh

North Carolina's capital is a city of history and culture -- most of it shaded by towering oaks.

By Neha Shah

Raleigh, N.C., offers country cooking, sweet tea, deep Southern accents, laid-back attitudes and more. The City of Oaks' unofficial motto -- Trees, Tees and Ph.Ds -- appropriately mentions Raleigh's landscape and golfing opportunities plus the education level at Research Triangle Park.

Two days in Raleigh offer a fun and relaxing sampling of what the city holds.

DAY ONE: MANSIONS AND MUSEUMS

This trip is guilt-free: You can eat and later walk; you can learn and later play. A walking tour in downtown Raleigh is pleasant anytime due to the impressive architecture and beautifully landscaped areas. In the fall, the city is even more appealing, with rich autumnal hues.

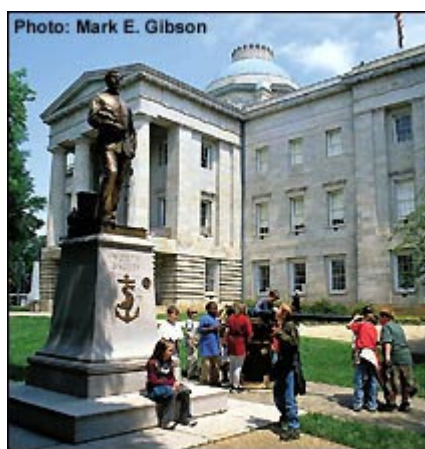


Photo: Mark E. Gibson
 A statue of Worth Bagley graces the grounds of Raleigh's State Capitol. Bagley was the first American naval officer killed in the Spanish-American War.

Begin the day at the Capital Area Visitor Center, and pick up maps for a self-guided walking tour. Since this tour encompasses more than 60 old buildings, it would be wise to select a few highlights before setting out.

Paces away, take in some of the Southern hospitality that abounds in Raleigh at the executive mansion, which is seasonally open to the public. The stately Victorian home was built from native materials and is an excellent example of Queen Anne cottage-style architecture. The bricks in the sidewalk around the mansion were made by prison labor. At the end of each day, the bricks were stacked and prisoners' names scratched in the top one so guards could track the work. Many bricks,

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especially those in the sidewalk, still bear inscribed names.

The State Capitol Building, a Greek Revival structure completed in 1840, comes with a staff that regales guests with numerous stories, including those about the ghost of a Confederate soldier and the spies who used secret rooms in the building during the Civil War. Contact the visitor center to make arrangements for a guided tour.

Continuing the history lesson, the North Carolina Museum of History offers a broad selection of exhibits including those on agriculture and industry, costume and textiles, furnishings and decorative arts, military history and more.

Practically next door to the museum is the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, the Southeast's largest natural history museum and home to Willo, a dinosaur skeleton found with a fossilized heart, as well as the only acrocanthosaurus skeleton displayed in the world.

Historical trolley tours are available every Saturday, March through December, and Historic Tours of Raleigh offers a walking tour of downtown every Sunday, March through November.

All the morning's activity deserves a good lunch. Try Cafe Carolina for sandwiches and salads and Caffé Luna, featuring light Italian fare in a contemporary setting.



The Historic Oakwood District is the only intact 19th-century neighborhood in the city.

After lunch, take in the charming Victorian neighborhood of Historic Oakwood, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Visit in December to see the annual Candlelight Tour, when the homes are elegantly decorated for the holidays and holiday melodies fill the air. Visitors may drive or walk the 20-block area.

For dinner, head to the Southend Brewery & Smokehouse for tasty American food and beers brewed on site. The restaurant is housed in the old Carolina Power and Light Building in Raleigh's newest entertainment district, Powerhouse Square. Another tempting option is Ri-Ra, The Irish Pub, where authentic imported pieces add to the atmosphere. Irish and British brews and traditional Irish fare can be ordered.

DAY TWO: UPTOWN AND DOWNTOWN

Start the glorious day in Raleigh with breakfast at Big Ed's in City Market. Ed Watkins is burly, but not surly by any means. He serves country ham with red-eye gravy, huge hotcakes and other hearty country fare.

Only walking and shopping can top such a breakfast, so explore historic City Market, home to art galleries, restaurants and specialty

shops. The expansive area has its original cobblestoned streets and lamps reminiscent of the 19th century.

Saunter over to Moore Square, north of City Market and home to Raleigh's biggest nut, a half-ton copper acorn created to commemorate the city's bicentennial in 1992. On New Year's Eve, Raleigh locals gather to watch it fall a la the Times Square ball drop.

The afternoon can easily be spent in West Raleigh at The North Carolina Museum of Art. Its permanent collection contains work from ancient Egypt to the present. A special exhibition featuring works by John James Audubon runs through Dec. 1.


The close of a great 48 hours should be an elegant evening with dinner and a performance at the world-class BTI Center for the Performing Arts.

Neha Shah, a freelance writer, lives near Raleigh, N.C.

BEFORE YOU GO: For information, contact the Raleigh CVB at (800) 849-8499 or www.raleighcvb.org. AAA Travel can make arrangements for a trip to the area.

WITH A LITTLE MORE TIME:

- **Durham and Chapel Hill:** These neighboring Triangle cities have their own distinct personalities and offerings.
- **The JC Raulston Arboretum:** It features eight acres of horticultural gardens and collections. (919) 515-3132 or www.ncsu.edu/jcraulstonarboretum.

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