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WEEKEND WITH THE KIDS



North Carolina's Triangle: Nature, Culture and Barbecue



Jenny Warburg for The New York Times

Exploring the Eno River State Park.

By JOANNA KAKISSIS
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THE Mayberry-meets-M.I.T. appeal of the [Raleigh, Durham](#) and [Chapel Hill](#) region of [North Carolina](#) blooms in spring and summer, when families can bask in the region's generous outdoor spaces, its culture and its barbecue.

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Jenny Warburg for The New York Times

The dinosaur exhibit at the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences.

Families also fill the Triangle's bucolic bike trails, like the ones at William Umstead State Park (www.ils.unc.edu/parkproject/visit/wium/home), a 5,577-acre expanse of farmland-turned-quiet forest between Raleigh and Durham. You can rent a bike for \$35 a day through the Bicycle Chain (www.thebicyclechain.com), which has stores in Raleigh, Durham, Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

Near Durham, Eno River State Park (www.enoriver.org), some 3,900 acres of river-sculptured wilderness, has 16 hiking trails totalling 25 miles, as well as places to camp and picnic.

You can also paddle along parts of the Eno in a canoe. There are guide services like Frog Hollow Outdoors (919-949-4315, www.froghollowoutdoors.com), which charges \$90 to

[Music](#) and [art](#) festivals occupy river-cut parks and lush town squares, the Durham Bulls are running around the baseball diamond, hikers and cyclists fill the miles of greenway trails, and water skiers and paddle-boaters cleave the area's many lakes. Just don't forget the sunscreen; the sun smiles fiercely in these parts, even in May.

It's easy and cheap enough to get to Raleigh-Durham International Airport from New York, but beyond there, you will need a car; public transportation is inconvenient at best. A drive through rolling hills of tree-lined lanes, brightened by the color burst of blossoms, has been known to enchant even the most restless of young souls.

The Great Outdoors

The Triangle, as this area is known, with a city at each corner, is a haven for athletic techie transplants, many of whom work at Research Triangle Park. When it gets warm, these folks often spend their weekends in parks and on greenway trails, [hiking](#) or [biking](#) for hours.

Raleigh, the state's capital and its second-largest city, has at least 19 greenways, covering more than 54 miles. Some sections hug lakes, like Shelley and Johnson, both of which offer paddle boating and [canoeing](#).



2

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\$160 a day for a family of four.

No, the Triangle's sports fans do not go into hibernation when the college basketball season ends. The Durham Bulls, founded in 1912 and the inspiration for the 1988 film "Bull Durham," play in the Class AAA International League. Games at the 10,000-seat Durham Bulls Athletic Park are fun, nostalgic and flushed with gung-ho fans. Tickets, \$6 to \$8, can be purchased through www.dbulls.com or by calling 919-956-2855.

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Festivals

In Raleigh, the annual Artsposure festival will be at Moore Square downtown on May 19 and 20 (www.artsposure.org, 919-832-8699). It generally attracts 70,000 people and features art for sale as well as jazz and other concerts (Dumpstaphunk, Ivan Neville's group, and Groove Collective are scheduled to perform). There will be street performers and Kidsposure, which offers painting and drawing as well as endearingly goofy theater.

The annual Festival for the Eno, scheduled for July 4, 7 and 8, is like a giant backyard barbecue for the creative class: it's homey and raucous, full of music, dancing, crafts and sweaty kids slurping giant glasses of lemonade. The festival features arts, storytelling, boating, dance and concerts (the folk singer Peggy Seeger and the Apple Chill Cloggers, an Appalachia-inspired dance troupe, are scheduled). Kids can dig for fossils, watch sand sculptors at work, dance at the Chimney Corner stage, cool off at the Rain Tent and go on scavenger hunts (winners get a fake tattoo of a crawdad).

If you are under 12 or at least 65 you get in free; everyone else pays \$10 a day or \$25 for a three-day pass in advance, or \$13 a day at the gate. More information: (919) 477-4549; www.enoriver.org/festival.

Museums

Raleigh's headliner art institution, the [North Carolina Museum of Art](#), has an adjacent 164-acre park that combines woodlands, streams and nature trails with giant pieces of environmental art. Nice stretches include the Woodland Trail, which has a mulched path for walkers and features the British artist Chris Drury's "Cloud Chamber for the Trees and Sky" (a room-size camera obscura project) and the House Creek Greenway, which crosses the creek and then runs over Interstate 440 on a pedestrian bridge.

The museum (2110 Blue Ridge Road; 919-839-6262; www.ncartmuseum.org) also has the Collection Connection, where children can explore the art in the museum's permanent collection through multimedia programs, visits and projects. General admission is free.

The [North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences](#) (11 West Jones Street, Raleigh; 919-733-7450; www.naturalsciences.org) is a haven for dinosaur lovers, where you can see both Willo, a dinosaur with a fossilized heart, and a skeleton of an Acrocanthosaurus, known as the Terror of the South. Admission is free.

In Durham, the Museum of Life and Science (433 Murray Avenue; 919-220-5429; www.ncmls.org) features the Magic Wings Butterfly House, where hundreds of butterflies flit amid rain forest trees, flowers and a stream; a section for Carolina wildlife; and an exhibit where kids can play in a 15-foot-high simulated tornado. Admission is \$9.50, or \$7.50 for ages 3 through 12.

And in Chapel Hill, don't miss the Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, at the north end of the [University of North Carolina](#) campus (919-962-1236; www.moreheadplanetarium.org). The planetarium has a 68-foot, domed Star Theater that features shows on exploring the night sky and the solar system, and on how astronauts prepare for space missions. There is also a 90-seat, surround-sound digital video theater, which has kid-friendly documentaries. Planetarium shows cost \$5.25 and \$4.25 for ages 3 to 12.

Where to Eat

In Raleigh, Lilly's Pizza (1813 Glenwood Avenue; 919-833-0226; www.lillyspizza.com) is one of the most popular hangouts for both students and families. Lilly's, which has seating inside and outside, offers a variety of fresh, thick-crust pizzas with organic toppings, as well as calzones, salads and desserts. Try the Dante's Inferno (with barbecued chicken and mozzarella, \$15.70 for a medium pie) or create your own. Teenagers might love the headbanging music inside, but if you don't, you can always try convincing them to sit outside. (You can still hear the music.)

In Durham, don't miss an excellent lunch at Foster's Market (2694 Durham-Chapel Hill Boulevard; 919-489-3944; www.fostersmarket.com), where the staff, led by the owner, Sarah Foster (a former chef with [Martha Stewart](#)), serves sandwiches on fresh bread (the Jammin' Turkey Breast, \$6.50, has the restaurant's signature seven-pepper jelly), soups, salads and a mouth-watering selection of peach pie, giant peanut butter cookies and coconut macaroons.

In Chapel Hill, [Mama Dip's](#) (408 West Rosemary Street; 919-942-5837; www.mamadips.com) serves traditional Southern cuisine like chicken and dumplings and warm sweet-potato biscuits.

For dinner, [Crook's Corner](#) (610 West Franklin Street, Chapel Hill; 919-929-7643;

www.crookscorner.com), has an excellent Carolina sampler (hickory-smoked barbecued pork, hoppin' John, collard greens and black-pepper cornbread, for \$15.75) and what could be the Triangle's best shrimp and grits (\$18.25). Kids will likely linger over Crook's desserts, which include a creamy-dreamy banana pudding (\$5.50).

In neighboring Carrboro, don't miss a Sunday brunch at Weaver Street Market (101 East Weaver Street; 919-929-0010; www.weaverstreetmarket.com), the community cooperative of locally grown organic produce and products. Eat fresh pastries, pancakes, eggs and home fries on the picnic tables outside.

Where to Sleep

In Raleigh, the [Raleigh Marriott Crabtree Valley](http://www.marriott.com) (4500 Marriott Drive; 919-781-7000; www.marriott.com; \$209 a night) is near both a greenway and the Crabtree Valley [shopping](#) mall.

In Durham, the Doubletree Guest Suites (2515 Meridian Parkway; 919.361.4660; doubletree.hilton.com; from about \$109 a night), is a resortlike hotel with a pool, a restaurant and large rooms, and is close to the Streets of Southpoint mall.

For all-out elegance and a blend of antebellum and neo-Classical [architecture](#), there is Chapel Hill's historic [Carolina Inn](http://www.carolinainn.com) (211 Pittsboro Street; www.carolinainn.com; 800-962-8519; from \$159 a night). From 5 to 7 p.m. today through September, the inn holds Fridays on the Front Porch, outdoor bluegrass concerts where visitors can sip wine or soft drinks on blankets and watch the kids dance in the Triangle's summer wreath of sun and fragrant blossoms.

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