



48 HOURS IN

Raleigh

SLOW DOWN · STAY AWHILE

WELCOME

Welcome to Raleigh.

Raleigh is the most underestimated city in the American South. While Nashville and Charlotte attract the national attention, Raleigh has spent the past two decades quietly building one of the most livable and genuinely interesting mid-size cities in the country. The Research Triangle — Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill, anchored by Duke, UNC, and NC State — has drawn a concentration of universities, biotech, and technology industry that has transformed a conservative state capital into a city with serious museums, a genuine food scene, and a craft beer culture that punches well above its weight.

What Raleigh has that most visitors miss: a compact, walkable downtown core that is genuinely pleasant to navigate on foot; a museum district with free world-class collections that draws primarily locals rather than tour groups; a food scene anchored by chefs who trained in larger cities and chose to return; and the Glenwood South and Five Points neighbourhoods with bar and restaurant concentrations that rival cities twice its size.

Raleigh rewards solo travelers who move slowly. The city is unhurried, friendly in the specific way that mid-size Southern cities can be, and entirely navigable on foot within the downtown core. The museum corridor alone — four free world-class institutions within walking distance — justifies a full afternoon.

DAY ONE

Day One

[Downtown](#) · [Museum District](#) · [Glenwood South](#) · [Food & Drink](#)

Day One covers the compact downtown core, the free museum corridor, and Glenwood South — the city's most concentrated dining and bar district.

MORNING · 8:30 AM - 1:00 PM**8:30 AM**

Morning Coffee: Jubala Coffee

1401 Glenwood Ave: the best independent coffee shop in Raleigh, operating in the Five Points neighbourhood since 2010. Ethiopian single-origin pour-overs, excellent pastries, and a clientele of regulars who treat it as a neighbourhood living room. Arrive early on weekends; the outdoor patio fills by 9am. Under \$8.

9:30 AM

North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences

11 W Jones Street: the largest natural history museum in the Southeast — four buildings connected by skywalks with a permanent collection strong in paleontology (a genuine T. rex skeleton, Acrocanthosaurus), North Carolina ecosystems, and live research labs where visitors watch scientists at work. Free admission. Allow 90 minutes.

Insider Tip The Nature Research Center annex (connected by a skywalk) contains the SECU Daily Planet — a 94-foot globe hanging in a 10-story atrium — and a working genomics lab where scientists process actual research specimens behind glass. The rooftop terrace offers the best elevated view of downtown Raleigh.

11:00 AM

North Carolina Museum of Art

2110 Blue Ridge Road: one of the best regional art museums in the South, with a permanent collection spanning 5,000 years — Egyptian antiquities, European masters (Raphael, Rubens, Monet), and a strong American and contemporary section. The 164-acre museum park outside contains large-scale outdoor installations and is free to walk year-round. \$12 for special exhibitions; permanent collection free.

AFTERNOON · 1:00 PM - 7:00 PM**1:00 PM**

Lunch: Bida Manda

222 S Blount Street: the restaurant that put Raleigh food on the national map — a Laotian restaurant by chef Vansana Nolintha in a restored downtown building with a back patio on Wilmington Street. The larb, the boat noodle soup, and the khao piak are all essential. Reserve online; the bar seats walk-ins. Lunch \$15-25.

3:00 PM

Oakwood Historic District

The Victorian residential neighbourhood immediately northeast of downtown — 20 blocks of late-19th-century houses on shaded streets, largely intact and beautifully maintained. The best neighbourhood walk in Raleigh. Start at Person Street and walk north through the district; allow 45 minutes.

4:30 PM

City Market & Warehouse District

Martin and Blount Streets: the 1914 City Market complex now houses galleries, restaurants, and shops in a preserved brick market building. The surrounding Warehouse District has the best gallery concentration in Raleigh and is most active on First Friday evenings.

EVENING · 7:00 PM - LATE

7:00 PM

Dinner: Death & Taxes

105 W Hargett Street: Vivian Howard's wood-fired restaurant in downtown Raleigh — the most celebrated chef in North Carolina brings the Southern farmhouse cooking of her PBS series Chef's Table into a sleek downtown setting. Wood-fired everything: vegetables, fish, meat. Bar seating for solo diners. Dinner \$55-80. Reserve at exploretock.com.

9:30 PM

Glenwood South Bars

The 10-block stretch of Glenwood Avenue between Peace Street and Wade Avenue is Raleigh's most concentrated nightlife corridor — bars, restaurants, and live music venues open until 2am. Trophy Brewing (827 W Morgan) has the best beer selection; Whiskey Kitchen (201 W Martin) has an excellent bourbon program. The neighbourhood is active and safe on weekend nights.

DAY TWO

Day Two

[Five Points](#) · [Durham Day Trip](#) · [Craft Beer](#) · [Evening Downtown](#)

Day Two moves between Raleigh's neighbourhoods and — optionally — the 20-minute trip to Durham, whose American Tobacco District and Duke campus are among the best in the Triangle.

MORNING · 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

9:00 AM

Five Points Neighbourhood

The intersection of Glenwood Avenue, St. Mary's Street, and Whitaker Mill Road, one mile north of downtown: Raleigh's most pleasant walkable neighbourhood — coffee shops, independent bookstores, boutiques, and restaurants on a human scale. Morning Coffee at Jubala or Isolde Coffee (403 Whitaker Mill Road). The Saturday State Farmers Market (1201 Agriculture Street) is 10 minutes away and worth planning around.

10:30 AM

Durham Day Trip Option

20 minutes west on I-40: the American Tobacco Historic District (318 Blackwell Street) is a 1940s tobacco factory complex converted into offices, restaurants, and the Durham Bulls baseball park. Lunch at Mateo Bar de Tapas (109 W Chapel Hill Street) — the best Spanish restaurant in the Triangle. The Duke Chapel on the Duke campus is free and architecturally extraordinary. Return to Raleigh by 3pm.

Insider Tip The 21c Museum Hotel Durham (111 N Corcoran Street) has a free contemporary art museum on its ground floor — rotating exhibitions of serious quality. Walk-in welcome; no hotel stay required. One of the best small art institutions in the South.

AFTERNOON · 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM

1:00 PM

Lunch: Beasley's Chicken + Honey

237 S Wilmington Street: Ashley Christensen's chicken and waffles restaurant in downtown Raleigh — the best fried chicken in the city, served with local honey and house-made pickles. The bar counter seats walk-ins for lunch. \$15-20.

2:30 PM

NC State Campus & Centennial Campus

The NC State University campus is immediately west of downtown — the free-entry Gregg Museum of Art and Design (Talley Student Union) has an excellent collection of American folk art and studio craft. The Centennial Campus is a pleasant walk through a research university environment that feels like a small town.

4:00 PM

Craft Beer: Burial Beer Co. or Trophy

Burial Beer (40 Collier Court, Asheville-influenced, excellent IPAs and sours) and Trophy Brewing (827 W Morgan Street, the best taproom atmosphere in Raleigh) are both worth an afternoon visit. Raleigh has more than 30 independent breweries; the concentration within 2 miles of downtown is exceptional for a city this size.

EVENING · 7:00 PM - LATE

7:00 PM

Dinner: Poole's Downtown Diner

426 S McDowell Street: Ashley Christensen's flagship — the restaurant that defined modern Raleigh dining. The menu changes daily on a chalkboard above the horseshoe bar. The mac au gratin and the whole roasted chicken are the constants. Bar seating for solo diners; reserve in advance. Dinner \$45-65.

WHERE TO EAT

Raleigh's Table

RESTAURANT	NEIGHBOURHOOD	PRICE
Poole's Downtown Diner	Downtown	\$\$\$
Death & Taxes	Downtown	\$\$\$
Bida Manda	Downtown	\$\$
Beasley's Chicken + Honey	Downtown	\$\$
Jubala Coffee	Five Points	\$
Trophy Brewing	Glenwood South	\$

GETTING AROUND

Navigating Raleigh

MODE	COST	NOTES
Walking	Free	The entire downtown core, museum district, Oakwood, and Warehouse District are walkable. Most Day One sites are within 1 mile of each other.
Rental Car / Uber	Varies	Needed for the NC Museum of Art (2 miles west), the Durham day trip, and Five Points. Uber is reliable; wait times under 5 min downtown.
GoRaleigh Bus	\$1.25/ride	The R-Line circulator is FREE and runs downtown between major attractions on a loop. Useful for the museum corridor. Regular routes cover the rest of the city.
Lime Scooter	\$1+/min	Well-distributed throughout downtown and Five Points. Useful for the Glenwood Ave corridor. Helmet not provided; ride in bike lanes.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Before You Go

TOPIC	DETAILS
Getting There	Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU) is 12 miles from downtown. Uber: \$25-35, 20-25 min. No rail to the airport; rental car counters on-site. Amtrak Carolinian connects Raleigh to Charlotte (3h) and New York (11h) at Union Station (510 W Martin St).
Best Time	April-May and September-October are ideal: 65-78F, low humidity, trees in bloom or turning. June-August is hot and humid (88-95F) but manageable with the museum circuit. December-February is mild for a Southern city (40-55F).
Solo Dining	Raleigh has excellent solo dining culture. Ashley Christensen's restaurants (Poole's, Beasley's, Death & Taxes, Fox Liquor Bar) all have strong bar counters. Bida Manda and Trophy Brewing are welcoming to single diners.
Triangle Day Trips	Durham (20 min west) and Chapel Hill (30 min southwest) are each worth a half-day. Durham has the American Tobacco District, Durham Bulls baseball, and the best restaurant per capita of any Triangle city. Chapel Hill has Franklin Street and the UNC campus.

TOPIC	DETAILS
Useful Apps	Uber, GoRaleigh (bus), Lime (scooters), Resy (restaurant reservations), exploretock.com (Death & Taxes), Google Maps offline.

Raleigh awaits.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE: FINAL CHECKLIST

Reserve Death & Taxes bar seat: exploretock.com

Reserve Poole's Downtown Diner: exploretock.com

Reserve Bida Manda for lunch or dinner: bidamanda.com

NC Museum of Natural Sciences: free, open 10am-5pm Tue-Sat

NC Museum of Art: free permanent collection, \$12 special exhibitions

R-Line circulator bus: free downtown loop, covers museum corridor

Saturday State Farmers Market: 1201 Agriculture Street, 8am-2pm

Durham day trip: allow 4 hours, 20 min each way on I-40

Download Google Maps offline before arriving

Your interactive map is one scan away.

All locations from this guide, colour-coded by day, open on your phone.

goingsolo.life/maps/raleigh