



48 HOURS IN

Asherville

SLOW DOWN · STAY AWHILE

WELCOME

Welcome to Asheville.

Asheville owes its character to a strange piece of luck: the city went broke in the Depression and spent five decades paying off the debt instead of tearing anything down. The result is the best-preserved art deco downtown in the Southeast — and a mountain city that filled those old buildings with working artists, James Beard-winning kitchens, and more breweries per capita than any city in America.

What most first-time visitors miss: Asheville is more than the Biltmore Estate. The River Arts District puts two hundred working artists in converted industrial buildings along the French Broad, the South Slope packs a brewery crawl into a few walkable blocks, and the Blue Ridge Parkway — America's most-visited national park unit — runs along the city's edge.

Asheville is well suited to solo travel — bar-counter dining is the norm at its best restaurants, brewery taprooms run on communal tables, downtown is compact and walkable, and the street-music scene means a solo evening stroll comes with a soundtrack.

Day One · Downtown · River Arts District · South Slope

8:30 AM Breakfast: Biscuit Head

417 Biltmore Avenue: cathead biscuits — 'as big as a cat's head' — with fried chicken, gravy flights, and a self-serve jam bar. A local institution with multiple locations. \$10–16, counter ordering.

Insider Tip: Go early on weekends and hit the jam bar properly — a biscuit with three or four jams is the intended experience.

10:00 AM Downtown Art Deco Walk & Grove Arcade

Start at the Grove Arcade, 1 Page Avenue: a 1929 block-long arcade of shops under carved gargoyles, then wander past the S&W Building, City Hall, and the Flatiron. Downtown survived intact because the city spent decades paying Depression-era debt instead of demolishing. Free.

Insider Tip: Follow the pink granite markers of the Urban Trail — a self-guided 1.7-mile loop that strings the architecture and history together at your own pace.

11:30 AM Basilica of Saint Lawrence

97 Haywood Street: a 1905 church by Rafael Guastavino, the Spanish tile master behind Grand Central's vaults, crowned with the largest freestanding elliptical dome in North America. Free, donations welcome.

Insider Tip: Guastavino liked Asheville so much he stayed — he's entombed in the basilica he built. Step inside even if churches aren't usually your stop; the dome is the point.

1:00 PM Lunch: White Duck Taco Shop

1 Roberts Street, River Arts District: inventive tacos — banh mi duck, Korean beef bulgogi, fried chicken — ordered at the counter for \$4–6 apiece.

Insider Tip: Two or three tacos is the right order, and the banh mi duck is the one the shop is known for.

2:00 PM River Arts District

Along the French Broad River, centered on Foundy and Roberts Streets: some 200 working artists in converted mills and warehouses — ceramics, glass, painting, textiles — most with open studios. Free to wander.

Insider Tip: Start at the Marquee, a huge collective under one roof, then follow the murals along Foundation Walls. The artists are working, not performing — but most genuinely welcome conversation, which makes this an easy solo afternoon.

5:30 PM South Slope Brewery Crawl

The blocks south of downtown, centered on Buxton and Collier Avenues: Burial Beer Co., Green Man, and Hi-Wire sit within a few minutes' walk of each other in the city with America's most breweries per capita. \$7–9 per pour.

Insider Tip: Communal taproom tables make this the easiest solo social hour in town — and Burial's scythe-and-skeleton taproom art is worth the stop even before the beer.

7:30 PM Dinner: Cúrate

13 Biltmore Avenue: Katie Button's James Beard-winning Spanish tapas bar, with a long marble counter facing the open kitchen — one of the best solo dinner seats in the South. \$45–75.

Insider Tip: Book a bar seat ahead. Start with jamón, pan con tomate, and a gilda, and let the kitchen counter be the entertainment.

Day Two · Biltmore Estate · Blue Ridge Parkway

9:00 AM Biltmore Estate

1 Lodge Street: George Vanderbilt's 1895 French château — 250 rooms, the largest privately owned home in America — set in gardens and grounds designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. Admission from roughly \$89–120 with timed entry; reserve online in advance.

Insider Tip: Book the first morning slot to walk the house before the crowds build, and take the audio guide — it's genuinely better solo, moving at exactly your pace. Budget three hours minimum with the gardens.

1:00 PM Lunch: Biltmore Village

The Tudor-style village Vanderbilt built at his gates, now shops and restaurants: the Corner Kitchen (3 Boston Way) does refined Southern lunch in an old cottage. \$15–28, bar seating available.

Insider Tip: The Corner Kitchen's small bar is the easy solo seat — or stay on the estate and eat at the Stable Café, in the mansion's actual former stables.

2:30 PM Blue Ridge Parkway — Folk Art Center

Milepost 382, 15 minutes east of downtown: the flagship of the Southern Highland Craft Guild, with galleries of Appalachian craft — woodwork, weaving, pottery — and daily artist demonstrations. Free.

Insider Tip: Catch a live craft demonstration if one's running, then drive a short stretch of the Parkway in either direction — the overlooks start almost immediately.

4:30 PM Botanical Gardens at Asheville

151 W.T. Weaver Boulevard, beside the UNC Asheville campus: ten quiet acres of native Southern Appalachian plants along Reed Creek, laid out in 1960 to preserve the region's flora. Free.

Insider Tip: This is the unhurried hour of the day — creekside paths, benches, and almost no crowd. Every season reads differently here, from spring wildflowers to bare-branch winter light.

7:00 PM Dinner: Chai Pani

22 Battery Park Avenue: Meherwan Irani's Indian street food — chaat, thalis, okra fries — named the country's Outstanding Restaurant at the 2022 James Beard Awards. Loud, bright, and welcoming. \$16–28.

Insider Tip: Walk-in solo diners often seat faster than groups. Order the SPDP and the okra fries whatever else you get.

9:00 PM Live Music: The Orange Peel

101 Biltmore Avenue: one of the Southeast's best rock rooms — a flat-floor, 1,000-capacity venue that pulls nationally touring acts. Tickets vary by show.

Insider Tip: Check the calendar before your trip — and if nothing's on, downtown's buskers and listening rooms mean a solo evening walk finds music anyway.

WHERE TO EAT

Asheville's Table

DOWNTOWN

Cúrate

DOWNTOWN · \$\$\$

James Beard-winning Spanish tapas — the kitchen-facing bar is the solo seat of the city.

Chai Pani

DOWNTOWN · \$\$\$

Indian street food, 2022 James Beard Outstanding Restaurant — loud, fun, solo-friendly.

French Broad Chocolate Lounge

DOWNTOWN · \$

Bean-to-bar chocolate and the famous liquid truffle — the right nightcap without a bar.

S&W Market

DOWNTOWN · \$\$

A food hall inside a 1929 art deco landmark — order anywhere, sit anywhere.

RIVER ARTS & BEYOND

White Duck Taco Shop

RIVER ARTS DISTRICT · \$

Inventive \$4–6 tacos, counter-ordered — the easiest solo lunch in the district.

12 Bones Smokehouse

RIVER ARTS DISTRICT · \$\$

Lunch-only, weekdays-leaning ribs famous enough to have fed presidents — expect a line that moves.

Biscuit Head

BILTMORE AVE & WEST ASHEVILLE · \$

Cathead biscuits and a self-serve jam bar — the local breakfast ritual.

BARS & BREWERIES

Burial Beer Co.

SOUTH SLOPE · \$\$

The anchor of the South Slope crawl — serious beer, communal tables, unforgettable taproom art.

Wicked Weed Brewpub

DOWNTOWN · \$\$

The polished brewpub option, with a full kitchen and a patio over Biltmore Avenue.

Sovereign Remedies

DOWNTOWN · \$\$

Botanical craft cocktails in a corner glass box — a civilized solo bar seat.

GETTING AROUND

Navigating Asheville

MODE	COST	NOTES
Walking	Free	Downtown and the South Slope are compact and walkable — expect hills.
ART bus	\$1/ride	City buses link downtown, West Asheville, and the river district; service thins evenings and Sundays.
Uber / Lyft	Varies	Best for the River Arts District, Biltmore, and getting home after the breweries.
Rental car	\$45–70/day	Needed for the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Arboretum, and any real hiking beyond town.

Biltmore shuttles	Included	Free shuttles move visitors between the house, gardens, and winery inside the estate.
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PRACTICAL INFORMATION

TOPIC	DETAILS
Getting There	Asheville Regional Airport (AVL) is 15 miles south of downtown — Uber (\$25–35); there is no direct rail service.
Best Time	Spring wildflowers and October leaf color are the twin peaks — book lodging months ahead for fall. Summer is lively and green; winter is quiet, cheaper, and occasionally snow-dusted.
Mountain Weather	At 2,134 feet, conditions shift fast and run cooler than the rest of the South — carry a layer year-round, and check Parkway status before driving it in winter.
Solo Dining	Bar and counter seats are the norm at the city’s best restaurants, and brewery communal tables make solo evenings easy.
Reservations	Book Biltmore timed entry and a Cúrate bar seat online ahead of your trip — both routinely sell out.
Useful Apps	Uber, AllTrails, and the NPS Blue Ridge Parkway road-status page for closures and fog.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE: FINAL CHECKLIST

- ☐ Reserve Biltmore Estate timed entry online before your trip
- ☐ Book a bar seat at Cúrate — they go quickly
- ☐ Book lodging months ahead for October leaf season
- ☐ Pack a layer — mountain evenings run cool in every season
- ☐ Check Blue Ridge Parkway road status before driving it
- ☐ Download offline maps — signal drops along the Parkway
- ☐ Carry small bills for buskers and studio purchases

GoingSolo.Life

Your interactive map is one scan away.

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



goingsolo.life/maps/asheville

TRAVEL ALONE. LIVE FULLY.

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