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ASHEVILLE FACT SHEET

- Asheville is the largest city in Western North Carolina, with more than 83,000 city residents, and more than 230,000 residents in Buncombe County combined.
- More art deco architecture built in the late 1920s and early 1930s can be found in downtown Asheville than in any other southeastern city outside Miami.
- Mount Mitchell is the highest point east of the Mississippi River at 6,684 feet, located about 20 miles northwest of Asheville. The state park is about five miles west of Blue Ridge Parkway milepost 365.
- More motorists exit and enter the nation's most popular scenic highway, the Blue Ridge Parkway, in Asheville than at any other point along the road's 470 miles linking Shenandoah National Park in Virginia with Great Smoky Mountains National Park in North Carolina.
- The largest private residence in North America, Biltmore, is located in Asheville. This 250-room mansion, built by George W. Vanderbilt and completed in 1895, is modeled after the 16th century chateaux Blois, Chenonceaux and Chambord in France's Loire Valley. Architect Richard Morris Hunt designed the house and Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New York's Central Park, landscaped the estate.
- George Vanderbilt was instrumental in founding the first forestry school in America when he hired Carl Schenck to succeed Gifford Pinchot as manager of Vanderbilt's 100,000-acre forest. Known today as the Cradle of Forestry in America, this national historic site operated by the U.S. Forest Service is located about 20 miles southwest of Asheville off U.S Highway 276 in Pisgah National Forest.

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- From Mediterranean to vegetarian, four-star restaurant to down-home diner, Asheville boasts a variety of eateries that go well beyond its Southern cooking and barbecue roots. Dining in Asheville can be an adventure with menu choices that range from ostrich to sushi, Island quesadillas with Caribbean pumpkin to black-eyed peacakes, Carolina brook trout to grilled portabella mushroom sandwiches. Many restaurants also feature live music from jazz to bluegrass.
- The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the country's largest private, non-profit preservation organization, named Asheville one of America's *Dozen Distinctive Destinations*, an annual list of the best preserved and unique communities in the United States. In recognizing Asheville, the National Trust singled out the city's winning components: well-managed growth, dynamic downtown, commitment to historic preservation, interesting and attractive architecture, cultural diversity, an economic base of locally owned businesses, activities for families with children and walking access for residents and visitors.
- Downtown Asheville is the site of Western North Carolina's center for education, arts and science: Pack Place. The Asheville Art Museum, Colburn Gem and Mineral Museum, and the Diana Wortham Theatre make their home at Pack Place, with the affiliated YMI Cultural Center located across the street at the corner of Eagle and Market streets.
- One of the Southeast's best examples of a restored early 19th century farm, Vance Birthplace, traces the early life of North Carolina's Civil War-era governor Zebulon B. Vance. The state historic site is located minutes from Asheville in Weaverville.
- The Basilica of Saint Lawrence, a National Historic Site, contains the largest unsupported tile dome in the U.S. With only 35 basilicas nationwide, architect Rafael Guastavino constructed the structure from 1905 to 1909. There are no beams of wood or steel in the entire structure; all walls, floors, ceilings and pillars are made of tile or other masonry materials.
- Asheville is home to the Southern Highland Craft Guild, the second oldest of its kind in the nation, located at the Folk Art Center off the scenic Blue Ridge Parkway, just 15 minutes from downtown. The "Craft Heritage Trails of Western North Carolina," produced by HandMade in America, is also a nifty guide that pinpoints artisan studios, galleries and other worthwhile stopping points throughout the entire mountain region of Western North Carolina including Asheville.
- The largest entertainment hall in the area is the U.S. Cellular Center, with more than 60,000 square feet in the arena and exhibition hall and theater-style seating capacity for more than 7,600 people. The Thomas Wolfe Auditorium adjacent to the Civic Center seats more than 2,300 people.

- The North Carolina Arboretum consists of 426 acres of public garden within the Pisgah National Forest. The Arboretum was established in 1986 by the N.C. General Assembly creating a home to more than 3,000 indigenous plants.
- One of America's most esteemed authors, Thomas Wolfe, was born and raised in Asheville. Wolfe spent his boyhood years at his mother's boardinghouse, the Old Kentucky Home, which he later used as the setting of his most famous novel "Look Homeward, Angel." Although many of the rooms and furnishings were damaged by a fire that ravaged the house in July 1998, the house has been completely restored and offers tours daily. Located on Market Street and directly behind the house, the memorial and visitor center is open to the public.
- The world's largest collection of furniture and lighting fixtures from the Arts & Crafts era can be found at The Grove Park Inn. Elbert Hubbard's Roycrofters custom made 700 pieces of furniture and 600 hand-hammered copper lighting fixtures originally for the Grove Park and much of it remains there today. E.W. Grove, who made his fortune in patent medicines, opened the 510-room Grove Park Inn (listed on the National Register of Historic Places) in 1913. The resort, a Mobil Four-Star and AAA Four-Diamond award winner, features The Spa at the Grove Park Inn, which has been ranked 13th in the world by *Travel & Leisure*.
- The Mountain Dance and Folk Festival, held in August in downtown Asheville, is the oldest of its kind in the nation. Celebrating music indigenous to the Blue Ridge and Great Smoky mountains, some of the region's best musicians entertain capacity crowds and compete for prize money. The mountain music and clog dancing performed at the festival have evolved over 200 years, with their roots in the lives of Welsh, Irish, Scotch and English pioneers who settled this part of the country.
- Historic Montford boasts the highest concentration of bed & breakfasts in Asheville. The neighborhood mirrors in subtle ways Asheville's cosmopolitan character at the turn of the century. Artistic influences in the town include details from national architectural trendsetters like Bruce Price, Bernard Maybeck and Frank Lloyd Wright. It is also where Zelda Fitzgerald, wife of F. Scott Fitzgerald, died in the Old Highland Hospital formerly located at the north end of Montford.
- Asheville is home to Grammy winning musicians including David Holt, best known for his work in traditional folk, music and storytelling, and Marc Pruett, well-known for bluegrass combinations.
- Asheville Regional Airport is Western North Carolina's largest and is serviced by Continental, US Airways, Northwest Airlines and Delta through its carriers – Atlantic Southeast Airlines and Comair. Asheville Regional Airport has non-stop service to Chicago, Orlando and Tampa, Fla., Houston, Texas, New York, Atlanta, Charlotte, Detroit, and Philadelphia.

- The Blue Ridge Mountains surrounding Asheville make it the premier southeastern destination for autumn leaf watchers. The fall color season extends from late September through early November, with trees turning first at the highest elevations of 6,000 feet, and moving downward through October to Asheville at 2,500 feet and then to Chimney Rock at 1,300 feet. This significant variance in elevation means there is no "peak week" for viewing fall color, and the fall display can be enjoyed for six weeks or more, depending at which elevation it is viewed.
- An outstanding engineering accomplishment, the Linn Cove Viaduct extends one quarter mile around Grandfather Mountain and was part of the last seven and one-half miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway completed in 1987. The viaduct was adapted to the contours of Grandfather Mountain, one of the oldest peaks on Earth, and was built with minimum disturbance to the surrounding environment. Constructed with 153 segments of pre-cast concrete, the viaduct is supported with seven vertical piers at spans of 180 feet.
- Nine of North Carolina's 11 major waterfalls are located in the western part of the state, including the eastern United State's highest, Whitewater Falls at 411 feet. Bridal Veil Falls, Cullasaja Falls, High Falls, Rainbow Falls and Whitewater Falls are all on or just off U.S. Highway 64. Connetsee Falls, Looking Glass Falls and Maiden Hair Falls can be found along U.S. Highway 276. Sliding Rock, a natural waterslide, is also just off U.S. 276.
- Great Smoky Mountains National Park, located about 50 miles southwest of Asheville, is the country's most popular national park with more than 514,000 acres and an estimated population of 1,500 black bears.
- One of the world's longest par-six fairways can be found at Black Mountain Golf Club, located 15 miles east of Asheville. At 747 yards, only a par-seven hole in Australia is longer than Black Mountain's 17th.

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