

# Host Committee's Guide to the Charlotte Region



## No matter what kind of adventure you're craving, Charlotte and Mecklenburg County have got you covered.

For decades, Charlotte has had a reputation as a financial and business hub, with entertainment and culture as an afterthought. Those days are long past. While research, banking, health care, energy, and technology still make Charlotte a bustling center of commerce, it is undeniable that the Queen City is no longer the "trifling place" that General Cornwallis once described.

The Charlotte you will experience in 2014 has transformed from the sleepy after-hours city that it was when it last hosted ICMA's Annual Conference in 2003. Banking may have helped this transformation, but new cultural and recreational amenities have played a major role. Amid a growing cityscape, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg County region has become a destination that delivers cultural attractions and distractions, dining and nightlife for every taste.

But rest assured: the past decade of growth has not stripped Charlotte of its warmth and southern charm. This sophisticated city has still managed to retain its small-town feel. Charlotte is a city where Olympic-caliber adventurers rub elbows with financial leaders. A city that appeals to both NASCAR heroes and culture mavens. A city where northern newcomers exchange smiles on the street with Carolina natives.

Charlotte's Center City is easy to navigate, and many uptown destinations are within a walkable distance from the conference hotels. Even if you're looking to explore something off the beaten path, you're in luck: Charlotte has many mass transit options to help you get where you're going, no matter where in town you may be. If a day trip is what you're looking for, multiple attractions await within four hours of Mecklenburg County. Whatever your interests and wherever you are, you're sure to find something to engage, excite, exhilarate, and show you why locals say:

**"Charlotte's got a lot."**

# Here's a checklist of things to see, do, and experience in the Queen City, Mecklenburg County, and beyond.

## ARTS & CULTURE

- Marvel at awe-inspiring works of art at the **Mint Museum Uptown**, showcasing the renowned Craft + Design collection, as well as contemporary, American, and European art.
- Snap a picture in front of the Firebird, the mirrored sculpture outside the **Bechtler Museum of Modern Art**. Inside this terra cotta-tiled structure on South Tryon Street, you'll find an astounding collection of mid-20th-century art, including works by Picasso, Calder, and Warhol.
- Visit the art of the ancient Americas, as well as ceramics and decorative arts, fashion, and European and African art, at the **Mint Museum Randolph** in Myers Park, the location of the first branch of the U.S. Mint.
- Shake hands with and admire the work of an artist in residence at the **McColl Center for Visual Art**, located in a historic, neo-Gothic church in Uptown Charlotte.
- Download the **Arts & Science Council's Public Art Walking Tour** podcast and discover Ben Long's famous frescoes scattered throughout Center City.
- Saddle up to a Civil Rights-era lunch counter at **Levine Museum of the New South** while exploring the award-winning "**Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers**" exhibit.
- Go inside Charlotte's skinniest landmark: the 45-foot-wide **Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture**, a testament to the African-American legacy.
- Climb aboard a replica of a stagecoach at the **Wells Fargo History Museum** in Uptown Charlotte.
- Become a drama queen (or king) by catching a Broadway blockbuster featured in the **Blumenthal Performing Arts' Broadway Lights Series**.

- Quote a scene from one of the many classic productions performed by **Theatre Charlotte**, the oldest arts organization and community theatre in the city, located in historic Myers Park.
- Leap to a **North Carolina Dance Theatre** performance, where high-flying ballerinas are reaching new heights.
- Retrace Christian evangelist Billy Graham's dynamic journey from a North Carolina dairy farm to stadiums across the globe at the **Billy Graham Library**.
- Let your imagination soar at the **Carolinas Aviation Museum**, where you'll find Flight 1549, the US Airways plane named the "Miracle on the Hudson."

## DINING & NIGHTLIFE

- Delight in some southern soul food favorites, such as fried chicken, hushpuppies, and collard greens, from **The King's Kitchen, Mert's Heart and Soul, or Price's Chicken Coop**.
- Jump on the LYNX light rail to hit up **Food Truck Friday** in South End, where Charlotte's best food trucks dish up everything from ice cream to grilled cheese.
- Hop through NoDa or South End to enjoy a crisp, refreshing pint at one of **Charlotte's local micro-breweries**.
- Sample locally grown food at Uptown's **7th Street Public Market**, located at the northern-most end of the light rail, a destination dedicated to celebrating the food culture of the Carolinas.
- Ride the mechanical bull at Dale Earnhardt Jr.'s **Whisky River**, sharing the same address with more than 20 other hotspots at the EpiCentre in Uptown.
- Tantalize your taste buds by sampling some barbecue (locals call it 'cue) at **Mac's Speed Shop** or **Sauceman's** in South End.
- Take a cooking class with a professional chef at **Johnson & Wales University**, one of the top culinary schools in the nation.
- Take a bite out of Charlotte on a food tour with **Feast Food Tours** or **Tour De Food**.
- Navigate through the **NC Music Factory**, home to more than 13 pubs, clubs, restaurants, comedy, and music venues, including **The Fillmore**, where legends like B. B. King have played.
- Sing along to a rockin' show at **Bojangles' Coliseum**, where the hottest acts from Elvis to the Avett Brothers have graced the stage for more than 60 years.





- Awaken your inner musician at an intimate live show at the **Double Door Inn** or the **Visulite Theatre** in the Elizabeth neighborhood.
- Handpick a blues, indie, or other live show for good vibrations at Charlotte's premier music venues, such as **Amos' Southend**, **The Evening Muse**, and **Neighborhood Theatre** in NoDa.
- Award yourself for checking off so many destinations on this list with a bite of an infamous salted caramel brownie from one of the **Amélie's French Bakery** locations in NoDa or Center City.

## FAMILY FUN

- Venture across the daring rope bridge in the rainforest and lie on a bed of nails at **Discovery Place**, an interactive technology and science center. Then watch a movie on the largest screen in the Carolinas at the **IMAX® Dome Theatre**.
- Journey into fairytale lands by checking out the Spangler Children's Library and Studio I, an animation and sound studio for teens at the LEED certified **ImaginOn: The Joe & Joan Martin Center**.
- Walk among the free-flying butterflies in the Butterfly Pavilion at the **Charlotte Nature Museum**.
- Play in the fish fountains at **The Green** in Uptown Charlotte, a kid-friendly, novella-themed park. Then stroll over to **Romare Bearden Park**, where you can listen to live music, take an art class, or relax and listen to the waterfall. Romare Bearden Park is also one of the best locations to take a picture of the Charlotte skyline!
- Beat the heat at **Ray's Splash Planet**, a 29,000-square-foot indoor waterpark and fitness facility. The waterpark is loaded with fun features: a double figure-eight water-slide, water squirters, a lazy river, and tumble buckets.
- Familiarize yourself with the Queen City in new ways, such as a leisurely horse-drawn jaunt through historic Fourth Ward with **Center City Carriage Tours** or a spooky ghost tour with **Carolina History & Haunts**.
- Follow the **Charlotte Liberty Walk**, which visits 15 historical markers throughout Center City that highlight the city's Revolutionary War heritage.
- Meander through the **Little Sugar Creek Greenway**, comprising 19 miles of trails lined with public art, fountains, and green space that connect Center City with major landmarks, such as the **Metropolitan**, **Central Piedmont Community College**, and **Freedom Park**.



## SHOPPING & RELAXATION

- Embark on a luxurious shopping spree for such coveted brands as Burberry, Tory Burch, and Louis Vuitton, along with mainstays such as the Belk flagship store, inside **SouthPark Mall**.
- Enhance your home's design with modern Scandinavian creations at **IKEA's** only location in the Carolinas.
- Indulge in tasty treats at **Bar Cocoa**, located inside the **Ritz-Carlton Charlotte**, which features a Chocolate Afternoon Tea, cooking classes, and delectable all-day dining.
- Unwind with the experts at **Ballantyne Spa & Lodge**, specializing in treatments such as the "Divine Wine Facial" using indigenous North Carolina ingredients.
- Roam **Wing Haven Garden and Bird Sanctuary**, where you'll relax to the soothing natural sounds of chirping birds and water fountains.

## SPORTS & RECREATION

- Tee off from a championship PGA golf course, **The Golf Club at Ballantyne**. For pointers, get help from the experts at the adjoining **Dana Rader Golf School**, globally ranked for instruction by *Golf Magazine*.
- Race over to the **NASCAR Hall of Fame** to compete in the racing simulator and pit crew challenge.
- Zoom through the air with the 1,100-foot Mega Zip Line at the **U.S. National Whitewater Center** before trying other high-flying activities, such as the Canopy Tour and Mega Jump. You can also ride the Class III-IV rapids by raft or kayak on the world's largest man-made whitewater river.
- Sing during the seventh-inning stretch and ask mascot Homer the Dragon for an autograph at a **Charlotte Knights** baseball game at the new **BB&T Ballpark** in Uptown.
- Visit **Bank of America Stadium**, home to NFL football's **Carolina Panthers**.
- Compete on a challenging European-style indoor road course at **Victory Lane Indoor Karting**.

## BEYOND THE QUEEN CITY

- Take the fast track to the **Charlotte Motor Speedway** in Concord, where three highly anticipated races are held each year: the Bank of America 500 in October, and the All-Star Race and Coca-Cola 600, both in May. You can also ride shotgun with a professional driver or train to get behind the wheel with the **Richard Petty Driving Experience** or **NASCAR Racing Experience**.
- Savor North Carolina wines in unexpected settings by climbing into a treehouse at **Treehouse Vineyards** (40 minutes southwest of Charlotte in Monroe), discovering the cascading waterfall at **Childress Vineyards** (60 miles north in Lexington), or enjoying a concert at **Shelton Vineyards** (90 miles north in Dobson).
- Ride the Intimidator—the tallest, fastest, and longest roller coaster in the region—or one of the other 13 roller coasters at **Carowinds**, “the thrill capital of the Southeast.”
- Kids will enjoy cuddling up with Charlie Brown and the Peanuts Gang at **Planet Snoopy**, a kid-friendly play area.
- Journey just west of Charlotte to historic **Belmont**, where you can stroll through the tranquil paths of the Orchid Conservatory at **Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden** before exploring the attraction’s 100 acres of themed gardens.
- Shop ‘til you drop at **Concord Mills**, one of the state’s most visited attractions featuring more than 200 outlets, restaurants, and retailers as well as North Carolina’s only **Bass Pro Shop**.
- Splash the day away in over 80,000 square feet of water-packed excitement, including jaw-dropping slides for thrill seekers or zero-depth entry areas for little ones in the indoor waterpark at **Great Wolf Lodge Concord**. Outside the waterpark, the fun and relaxation continues at **Elements Spa** and **Scoops Kids Spa**.



- Watch an American bald eagle take flight at the **Carolina Raptor Center** or relive the region’s heritage with a guided tour of **Historic Latta Plantation**, an original cotton plantation and living history farm, both located in Huntersville.
- Hop on the back of a trusty steed for a ride at **Latta Plantation Equestrian Center**, with 16 miles of trails through wooded areas along **Lake Norman**.
- Learn about the nation’s 11th president at the **James K. Polk Historic Site** in Pineville, featuring a log house with authentic furnishings and a knowledgeable Visitor Center.
- Feed the animals at **Lazy 5 Ranch**, where you can meet giraffes, buffalos, ostriches, zebras, and more in this drive-through safari park in Mooresville.
- Pan for gold at **Reed Gold Mine** in Midland, the first area in North Carolina to strike it rich during the nation’s first gold rush in the 1800s.
- Set sail, fish, or pursue your favorite water sport on one of Charlotte’s nearby man-made lakes, **Lake Norman** to the north or **Lake Wylie** to the south.
- Drive the impressive wetland-shrouded 15th hole at the **Rocky River Golf Club** in Concord.

