

101 Fun Things to Do



CHARLOTTE

Explore Charlotte

Whether you're looking for unique culinary or brewery experiences, museums, live music, shopping, sports, outdoor adventure or family fun, Charlotte's got it going on.

Check out our ultimate list of fun things to do around town.



History & Tours



1 Retrace Charlotte native and Christian evangelist Billy Graham's dynamic journey from a North Carolina dairy farm to stadiums across the globe at The Billy Graham Library.

2 Learn about the nation's 11th U.S. president on a tour of his birthplace, the President James K. Polk State Historic Site in Pineville.

Experience Gilded Age glam at turn-of-the-century stays such as The Duke Mansion (of James Buchanan Duke fame), The Dunhill Hotel, The Morehead Inn or The VanLandingham Estate.

four

Peek into Charlotte's past at the Levine Museum of the New South, The Charlotte Museum of History (home to the county's oldest-surviving structure, Hezekiah Alexander Homesite) or the Wells Fargo History Museum. Admission is free at the Wells Fargo History Museum and 50 percent off every Sunday at the Levine Museum of the New South.



eight

5 Relive the region's heritage on guided tours of its plantations: Learn about the area's cotton kingdoms at Historic Latta Plantation, see beautiful Federal period architecture at Historic Rosedale Plantation or retrace Revolutionary War roots at Historic Brattonsville.

6 Pan for gold at Reed Gold Mine, the location of the nation's first gold discovery in 1799. Admission and tours are free; panning for gold is \$3.

7 Follow Uptown's Charlotte Liberty Walk, a series of bronze plaques and monuments that detail the city's vital importance during the American Revolution, or the Trail of History on Little Sugar Creek Greenway, which highlights the key people who've contributed to the area's growth. Don't miss the stop for Captain James Jack. Legend has it, he carried the Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence to the 1775 Continental Congress. The city still celebrates every year on May 20, aka Meck Dec Day.

Tour Center City and neighboring historic districts your way: in a horse-drawn carriage with Charlotte Center City Carriage Tours, on a Segway or bike with Charlotte NC Tours, by lantern with Carolina History & Haunts, during Funny Bus Comedy City Tour's BYOB stand-up routine or during a two-hour journey with C-Charlotte Tours or Queen City Rides.

Food & Drink

9 Order popular plates from the kitchens of **James Beard-nominated chefs**, including Joe Kindred of Kindred Restaurant in Davidson, Paul Verica of The Stanley, or Bruce Moffett of Stagioni, Good Food on Montford and Barrington's in Charlotte.

10 Explore the world's flavors at the city's international hot spots. Taste African dishes at Enat Ethiopian Restaurant, Latin American nosh at Machu Picchu Peruvian Cuisine & Bar or Eastern specialties at Grand Asia Market.

11 Enjoy community vibes at 7th Street Public Market or Atherton Mill and Market, where gourmet sandwiches, artisan pizza, craft beer, raw juice, fine wine, sweet confections and locally made gift-able items abound.

12 Feast on Southern classics at longstanding fried chicken joint Price's Chicken Coop, flavor-packed down-home sides and desserts at Mert's Heart and Soul, or savory meat-and-threes at The King's Kitchen.

thirteen

Taste the town through a flavorful food tour with Taste

Carolina Gourmet Food Tours, FEAST Food Tours, Tour De Food or Charlotte NC Tours.



seventeen

Try North Carolina's varied barbecue styles

at institutions like Bar-B-Q King, Bill Spoon's Barbecue, Queen City Q, Midwood Smokehouse, Sauceman's, City Smoke or Mac's Speed Shop.

14 Get a taste of Charlotte as seen on TV. Slurp a milkshake from atop a stool at Pike's Old Fashioned Soda Shop, like characters did in "Shallow Hal," taste innovative cuisine from the kitchen of "Top Chef" contestant Jamie Lynch at 5Church, or order what Food Network's "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives" host Guy Fieri did at spots like JJ's Red Hots, Cabo Fish Taco, The Improper Pig, Pinky's Westside Grill and more.

15 Celebrate a special occasion at a beloved Charlotte treasure like Beef 'N Bottle, McNinch House Restaurant or The Fig Tree Restaurant.

16 Go meatless at the city's creative vegetarian eateries. Living Kitchen plates raw vegan cuisine in South End, while Fern and Bean Vegan Cuisine are local loves.



eighteen

Order fare with flare from one of the city's host of beloved food trucks like Papi Queso, The TIN Kitchen, New Wrap Order, Yummy Banh Mi or The Dumpling Lady.



twenty-two

19 Sharpen your culinary skills while learning from a local chef at Chef Alyssa's Kitchen or Harper's Restaurant Group's Get Cookin' classes at Upstream, Harper's Restaurant or Mimosa Grill.

20 Dine aboard the Catawba Queen Mississippi riverboat or Lady of the Lake luxury yacht on Lake Norman on a dinner cruise with Queen's Landing Sightseeing & Dinner Cruises.

21 Indulge in some of the city's best sweet treats at The Secret Chocolatier, Bar Cocoa at The Ritz-Carlton, Charlotte or Amélie's French Bakery (the salted caramel brownie is a must).

Check out what's on tap at any of the region's 40-plus breweries. Try German varieties at The Olde Mecklenburg Brewery, organic brews at Lenny Boy Brewing Co. or award-winning pours at NoDa Brewing Company. Other breweries like Wooden Robot and Triple C Brewing Company are also local favorites.

23 Savor the creamy goodness of freshly churned ice cream from local favorites like The Percantile and Creamery, Elizabeth Creamery, Mr. K's Soft Ice Cream or La Michoacana.

24 Get in the spirit at a local distillery. Check out Doc Porter's Distillery or Great Wagon Road Distilling Company in LoSo, Dragon Moonshine Company in NoDa, Muddy River Distillery in Belmont or Southern Grace Distilleries in Concord.

twenty-five

Get a jolt of caffeine at a local coffee haunt. Not Just Coffee, Trade and Lore, Smelly Cat Coffee House & Roastery or Parliament Espresso & Coffee Bar offer energy-infused beverages.





twenty-seven

Sip Prohibition-style at speakeasies such as The Cellar at Duckworth's, Dot Dot Dot or The Dock.



28 Hop from brewery to brewery on a tour with Charlotte Brewery Tours, Charlotte Brews Cruise, Trolley Pub or Charlotte NC Tours.

twenty-six

Order a drink from celebrated mixologist Colleen Hughes, the mind behind the bar at NoDa restaurant Haberdish.



thirty

29 Spend a day exploring the Charlotte-area wine country on the Swan Creek Wine Trail, which boasts six vineyards only 5 miles apart, or Childress Vineyards, Shelton Vineyards or Treehouse Vineyards, where you can sip wine in a rented treehouse.

Relax with a refreshing and different kind of adult beverage from one of the city's cideries. Taste real North Carolina apples brewed in Red Clay Ciderworks' varieties, try "heirloom-apple" ciders at GoodRoad CiderWorks or sip fresh-pressed pours at Windy Hill Orchard & Cider Mill.

Nightlife & Entertainment



34 Hang at one of Charlotte's hidden gems of **nightlife**. With a cobblestone walkway as its signature feature, Brevard Court is home to Courtyard Hooligans, The Cotton Room at Belfast Mill, Valhalla Pub & Eatery, French Quarter Restaurant and more.

37 Experience an intimate **concert** at the historic Visulite Theatre in Charlotte's Elizabeth neighborhood. For an art gallery ambiance, try The Evening Muse, which features original artists in a wide variety of genres, or try Neighborhood Theatre for small-scale shows that pack a big punch.



thirty-eight

Attend a nationally touring show at Bojangles' Coliseum or Owens Auditorium, Charlotte landmarks since 1955.

35 Discover the venues that put the "music" in the AvidXchange Music Factory, including The Fillmore Charlotte, The Underground and Charlotte Metro Credit Union Amphitheatre as well as other nightlife hot spots like The Comedy Zone Charlotte, VBGB Beer Hall & Garden, Small Bar, Club One and more.

39 Grab your friends and clubbing attire for a night out in Uptown at popular bars and dance clubs near Trade and Fifth streets like Prohibition, Dandelion Market, Tilt on Trade, Connolly's On 5th, RiRá Irish Pub and Roxybury Nightclub.

36 Trade your briefcase for a jam session at one of Charlotte's outdoor music events. May through September, check out Alive After Five at EpiCentre on Thursday nights or the U.S. National Whitewater Center's River Jam concert series on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. In the spring and fall, spend Thursday nights at Sunset at The Metropolitan. Or catch an open-air concert at PNC Music Pavilion.

40 Relish stunning skyline views at Charlotte's best rooftop restaurants and bars. Nuvole Rooftop TwentyTwo, Fahrenheit and City Lights Rooftop in Uptown, The Peculiar Rabbit and Whiskey Warehouse in Plaza Midwood, and The Gin Mill in South End are all Instagram-worthy options.

31 Hop from breweries, cideries, distilleries and an entertainment house all on the same block in LoSo. Experience Sugar Creek Brewing Company, The Broken Spoke, Queen Park Social, Olde Mecklenburg Brewery, Southern Tier Brewing Company and Victory Brewing.

32 Create your own crawl on **Montford Drive**. Start with bowling at 10 Park Lanes, then enjoy drinks and small plates at Brazwell's Premium Pub, and end the night with karaoke at Jeff's Bucket Shop.

thirty-three

Explore Center City's three-floor entertainment destination, the EpiCentre, which houses uniquely themed bars, nightclubs and restaurants. Ride the mechanical bull at Dale Earnhardt Jr's Whisky River, party at the open-air bar Rooftop 210 and sing along to your favorite tunes at Howl at the Moon.

Outdoors & Adventure

41 **Make a splash.**
Paddleboard, canoe or kayak on the Catawba River (call Catawba River Expeditions), Lake Norman and Lake Wylie. Or take a dip in The Quarry at Carrigan Farms.

42 **Stroll through the tranquil grounds at Charlotte-area gardens** like Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden, McGill Rose Garden, Wing Haven Gardens & Bird Sanctuary or UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens.

43 **Glimpse the Charlotte skyline** from the top of Crowders Mountain State Park. The 25-mile view is your reward for traversing the park's extensive trails.

44 **Take in the city's protected wilderness** at nature centers and preserves like Reedy Creek, McDowell and Latta Plantation. Anne Springs Close Greenway is also a scenic spot to take in the great outdoors.

45 **Rent a four-person paddleboat** from Dave's Paddle Boats at The Shoppes at University Place.



forty-six

Take on the class II-IV rapids by raft or kayak at the U.S. National Whitewater Center, home of the largest man-made whitewater river in the world.



fifty-one

Ride the world's tallest and fastest giga coaster, the 325-foot-tall Fury 325, at Carowinds amusement park.

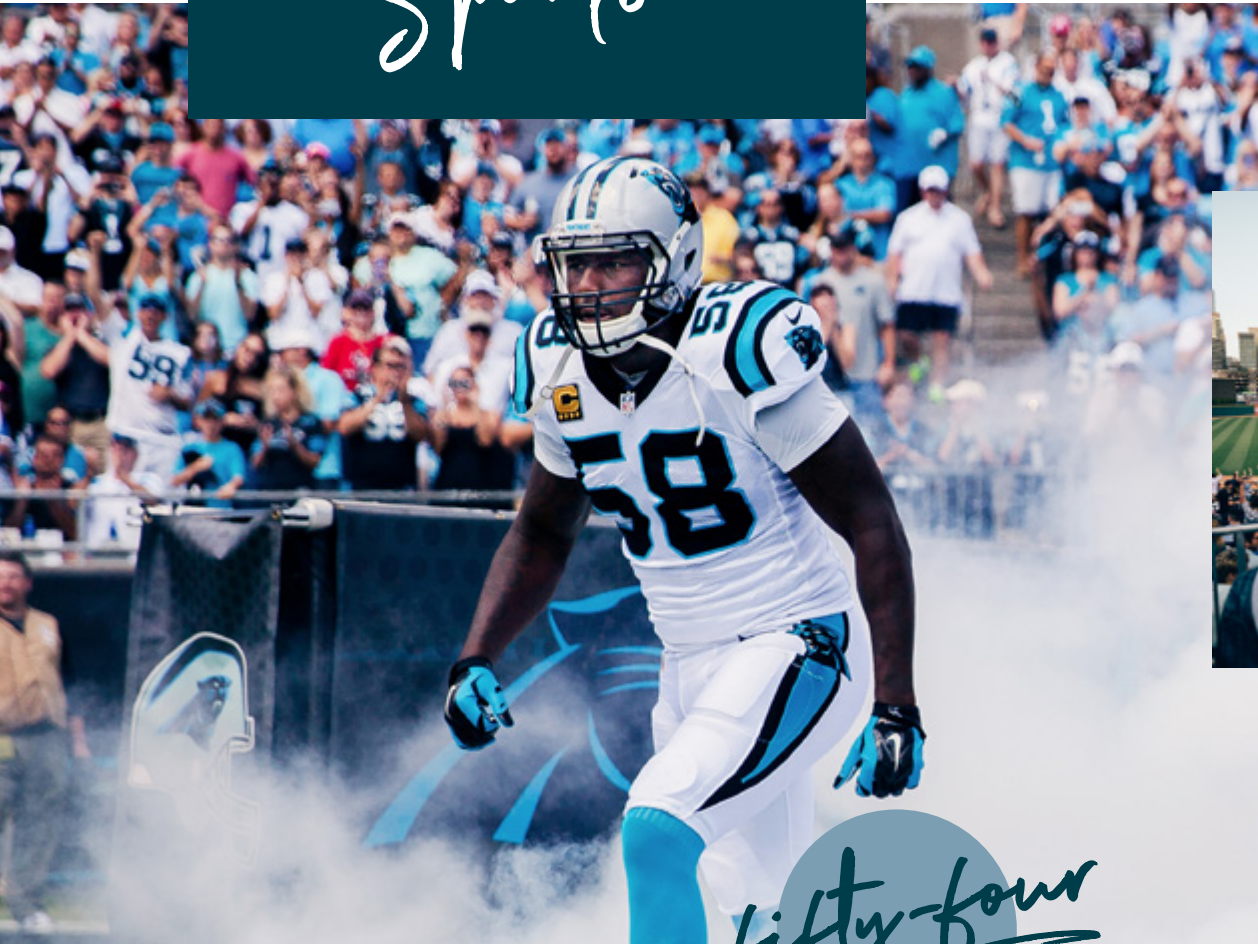
47 **Explore Charlotte's urban parks**—The Green, Romare Bearden Park or First Ward Park. During the warmer months, spend the afternoon playing in the parks' fountains.

48 **Grab a cozy blanket, prepare a yummy lunch and pack up the family for a picnic** at Freedom Park or Park Road Park.

49 **Rent a two-wheeler** from Charlotte B-Cycle, one of the largest urban bike sharing systems in the Southeast, or a "dockless" bike from LimeBike, Spin, or Mobike, and explore Uptown and surrounding neighborhoods.

50 **Roam the Charlotte Rail Trail.** Along the way, cafés, bars, galleries, artists at work, impromptu concerts and more bring the streetscape to life.

Sports



fifty-four

52 **Relive your coed days** at a UNC Charlotte 49ers game at Jerry Richardson Stadium or root for your favorite college teams at the Belk Bowl or ACC Championship at Bank of America Stadium.

53 **Tee off at one of Charlotte's recognized golf courses:** the wetland-shrouded 15th hole of Rocky River Golf Club, the championship course at The Golf Club at Ballantyne or the private Quail Hollow Club (if you have a connection), which has hosted the Wells Fargo Championship and the PGA Championship.

Catch an action-packed major league game. The NFL's Carolina Panthers play in Bank of America Stadium—the season kicks off in August with Carolina Panthers' Fan Fest. The NBA's Charlotte Hornets, owned by basketball legend Michael Jordan, call the Spectrum Center their "Hive." And the MLL Charlotte Hounds offer a family-friendly sporting experience at American Legion Memorial Stadium.

fifty-five

Support the city's minor league teams. The AHL Charlotte Checkers take to the ice at Bojangles' Coliseum, the Charlotte Knights defend the diamond at BB&T Ballpark in Uptown and the USL Charlotte Independence hit the field at The Sportsplex at Matthews.



56 **Improve your golf game** at Ballantyne Golf Academy with Dana Rader, a globally ranked Golf Channel Academy, or keep the game casual and entertaining at Topgolf Charlotte.

57 **Feel the adrenaline rush during high-speed driving experiences** with Richard Petty Driving Experience and NASCAR Racing Experience. On a smaller (though no less thrilling) scale, race go-karts at The SpeedPark at Concord Mills, Victory Lane Karting, K1 Speed or GoPro Motorplex.

58 **Don your seersucker and sundresses for the prestigious Queen's Cup Steeplechase,** the Charlotte area's only horse-racing event, held annually in April.



fifty-nine

Explore the region's auto racing roots at Charlotte Motor Speedway, home of NASCAR's only 600-mile race. In May, the speedway hosts the Monster Energy All-Star Race and Coca-Cola 600, and in October, the Bank of America 500. In Uptown, the NASCAR Hall of Fame clinches the fan experience with racing simulators, pit crew experiences and tributes to NASCAR's legends.

60 **Join in the excitement of the 100-plus-year-old CIAA Men's and Women's Basketball Tournament** held at Bojangles' Coliseum and Spectrum Center every February.

Shopping & Spas



sixty-one

Find some of the most sought-after, luxurious brands around at SouthPark Mall. Anchored by Nordstrom and Neiman Marcus, the mall carries cult favorites like Lululemon, Burberry, Tory Burch and American Girl.



sixty-two

Treat yourself to a day of pampering at the Spa & Wellness Center at The Ritz-Carlton, Charlotte, The Spa at Ballantyne or Spa Botanica at Embassy Suites Charlotte-Concord Golf Resort & Spa.

63 Channel your inner designer in South End, which is becoming the Queen City's prime design spectrum. Whatever your pleasure—used or new, contemporary or traditional—find it at stores like LaDonna Antiques & Interiors, The Furniture Connector and High Cotton Home Company.

64 Shop till you drop at budget-friendly Concord Mills, Charlotte Premium Outlets and Northlake Mall, featuring hundreds of outlet stores with deep discounts.

65 Explore the local shops and designer boutiques. Offerings include Petal, Handpicked, Revolution Clothiers & Co., Vestique, McKenzie Claire, Abode, Paper Skyscraper, CLT Find, Savory Spice Shop and more.

66 Spruce up your digs after a trip to North Carolina's only IKEA, home of modern décor with Swedish ingenuity.

67 Discover vintage wonders and reclaimed relics at area antique and consignment shops. Find consignment goods at Dilworth's Sweet Repeats and J.T. Posh and antiques at South End's Sleepy Poet Antique Mall and Plaza Midwood's Classic Attic.

68 Get some much needed "R & R" at popular day spas in Charlotte like Urbana Wellness Spa or Re Salon and Med Spa or get a fast facial at MudbuM.

Arts & Culture



sixty-nine

Admire the awe-inspiring exhibits that fill the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Mint Museum Uptown and Randolph, and Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture at your leisure with a two-day Levine Center for the Arts access ticket for \$20.

70 Download the Arts & Science Council's Public Art Walking Tour to explore the unique public art in the Queen City, including several frescoes painted by North Carolina native Ben Long.



seventy-one

Snap a picture in front of the phoenix-like Firebird, designed by French-American artist Niki de Saint Phalle, on the plaza at the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art.



seventy-three

Discover the passion of performance when the Charlotte Ballet takes the stage at Knight Theater, Belk Theater or the Patricia McBride & Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux Center for Dance.

72 Catch an award-winning Broadway show during the Blumenthal Performing Art's PNC Broadway Lights Series each year or cheer "Bravo!" at a performance by Opera Carolina, the largest professional opera company in the Carolinas.

seventy-four

Enjoy the melodious sounds of the **Charlotte Symphony**, led by nationally acclaimed conductor Christopher Warren-Green and assistant conductor Christopher James Lees. In the summer, enjoy a picnic-style show during Charlotte Symphony Summer Pops series at Symphony Park at SouthPark Mall.



seventy-seven

Groove to the Ziad Jazz Quartet's mid-century **music** during Jazz at the Bechtler, which takes place at the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art on the first Friday of every month.



eighty

Take a **photography class** at The Light Factory and The Photo Classroom, which offer everything from beginner to intermediate classes.

75 Enjoy a themed dinner and Broadway-style **Christian musical**, featuring live animals and inspiring music, at NarroWay Theater.

76 Quote a scene from one of the many classic productions performed at **Theatre Charlotte**, the state's oldest active community theater.

78 Collect your artistic **earnings** at the original branch of the U.S. Mint at the Mint Museum Randolph.

79 Stroll through Charlotte's **art districts on a gallery crawl**. South End and the historic NoDa Arts District each host a crawl the first Friday of each month. The McColl Center for Art + Innovation also hosts Open Studio Saturday, so you can meet the artists in residence.

Family-Friendly



eighty-four

Take the little ones to play with the **Peanuts gang** at Camp Snoopy, a section of Carowinds that's filled with kid-friendly rides, attractions and animated characters. While at the park, stop by the Carolina Harbor water park, home to the 400,000-gallon Tidal Wave Bay.



eighty-six

81 Beat the heat (or cold) at an **indoor water park**. In Uptown, Ray's Splash Planet invites guests to splash in fun-filled attractions, and in Concord, Great Wolf Lodge features a huge water fort tree house, a 1,000-gallon tipping bucket and more.

82 Journey to fairytale lands during a Children's Theatre of Charlotte production or story time at ImaginOn: The Joe & Joan Martin Center.

eighty-three

Find innovative ways to interact with **science**: Cross a daring rope bridge at Discovery Place Science (home to the largest IMAX Dome Theatre in the Carolinas), try hands-on experiments at Discovery Place Kids-Huntersville and see stars at Discovery Place Nature's planetarium.

85 Let your imagination soar at the Carolinas Aviation Museum, home of Flight 1549, the "Miracle on the Hudson" plane featured in the movie "Sully." Or watch planes take off and land at the Charlotte Douglas International Airport Overlook.

Find exotic animals at Lazy 5 Ranch in Mooresville, Tiger World in Rockwell, Zootastic Park of Lake Norman in Troutman, Carolina Raptor Center in Huntersville or Bird Brain Ostrich Ranch in Sherrills Ford. You'll also find more than 5,000 sea creatures at SEA LIFE Charlotte-Concord Aquarium in Concord.

Festivals & Events

87 Start the year singing “Auld Lang Syne” during CLT New Year’s Eve presented by Ally. The evening culminates with fireworks at Romare Bearden Park.

88 Keep the taps flowing at Charlotte beer festivals held throughout the year, including the Queen City Brewers Festival, Moo and Brew Craft Beer and Burger Festival, and North Carolina Brewers and Music Festival, among others.

89 Experience the revelry of the British Isles during Center City’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade & Charlotte Goes Green Festival in March and Huntersville’s Rural Hill Scottish Festival and Loch Norman Highland Games in April.

90 Relish good music, good art and good times at popular community arts festivals like Kings Drive Art Walk, held along Little Sugar Creek Greenway each May, and Festival in the Park, held at Freedom Park each September.

91 Celebrate Independence Day in Charlotte with a July 4 festival at the U.S. National Whitewater Center, fireworks at BB&T Ballpark, Charlotte Symphony performances and more.

92 Sample Queen City fare at the annual Taste of Charlotte festival in June or Queens Feast: Charlotte Restaurant Week in January and July.

93 Chow down on a giant turkey leg as you explore medieval customs during the Carolina Renaissance Festival each fall.



ninety-four

Watch or participate in signatures like the U.S. National Whitewater Center’s music festival and outdoors competition, Tuck Fest, in April or in the Charlotte Marathon, which takes place every November.

95 Celebrate NASCAR’s May races with stars, cars and guitars at Circle K Speed Street Presented by Coca-Cola. Then in June and July, race to Charlotte Motor Speedway for the weekly Bojangles’ Summer Shootout Series, complete with legends car races, bandolero races, school bus races and more.

96 For knee-slapping fun with a Queen City spin, get a front row seat to see Charlotte Squawks in full comedic force each summer. Picture “Saturday Night Live” meets Broadway.

97 Show your pride for the city’s LGBTQ community during Charlotte Black Gay Pride’s annual summer event or at the Charlotte Pride Festival & Parade, which both draw a diverse lineup of drag, dance, comedy and musical acts to Uptown.

98 Explore the heritage, traditions and cuisine of more than 50 different nations each fall at the UNC Charlotte International Festival or celebrate the various international cultures in Charlotte at festivals throughout the year like the Greater Charlotte Asian Festival and Dragon Boat Festival, Festival of India, Yiasou Greek Festival, Hola Festival, Latin American Festival or Festa Italiana.

99 Add the Novant Health Thanksgiving Day Parade to your Turkey Day traditions. Local dancers, choirs and marching bands have marched down the streets of Uptown since 1947.

100 Join thousands in perusing lifestyle and decor events hosted by Southern Shows: Southern Spring Home & Garden Show in March, Southern Women’s Show in August, Southern Ideal Home Show in September and Southern Christmas Show in November.

101 Have a royal holiday in the Queen City at treasured events like the Fourth Ward Holiday Home Tour, Holidays at the Garden, Speedway Christmas, Christmas at The Library or Christmas Town USA.


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