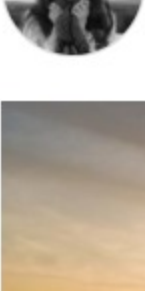
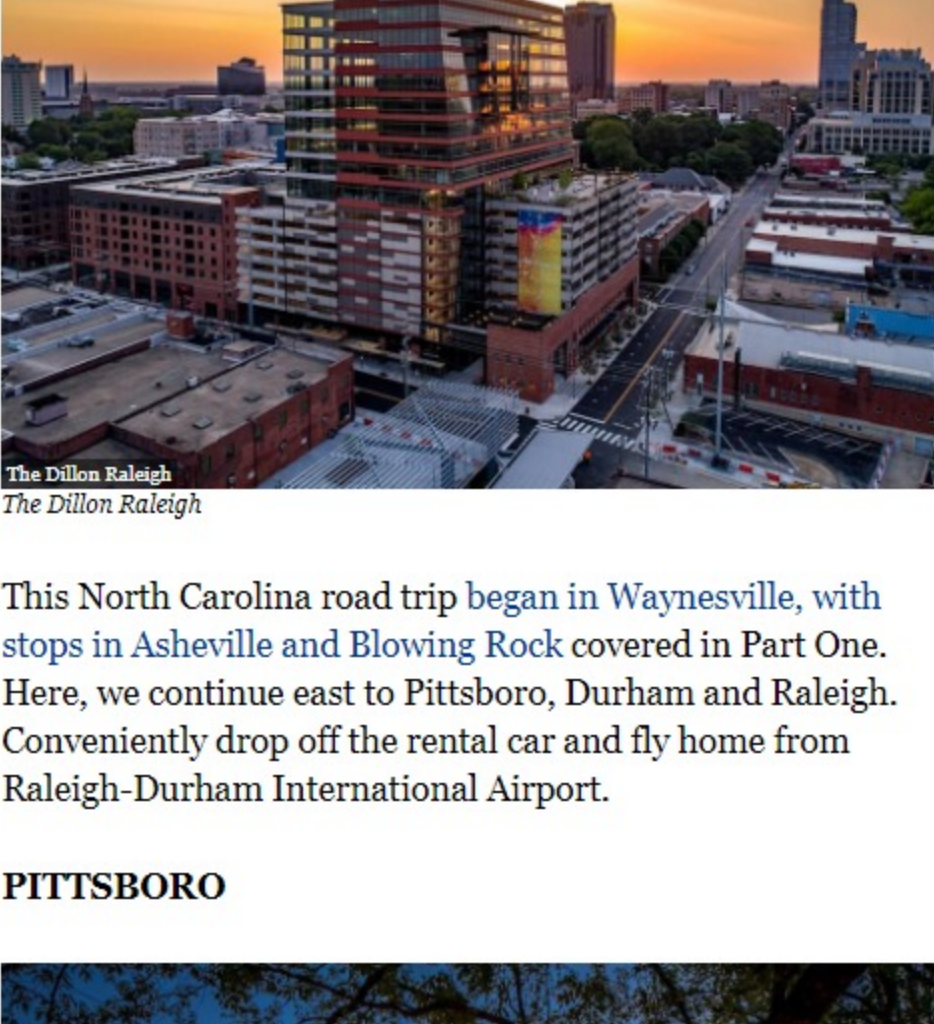


A North Carolina Road Trip (Part Two) -- Pittsboro to Raleigh



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I write about luxury travel, food and wine. [FULL BIO](#) ✓
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The Dillon Raleigh
The Dillon Raleigh

This North Carolina road trip began in Waynesville, with stops in Asheville and Blowing Rock covered in Part One. Here, we continue east to Pittsboro, Durham and Raleigh. Conveniently drop off the rental car and fly home from Raleigh-Durham International Airport.

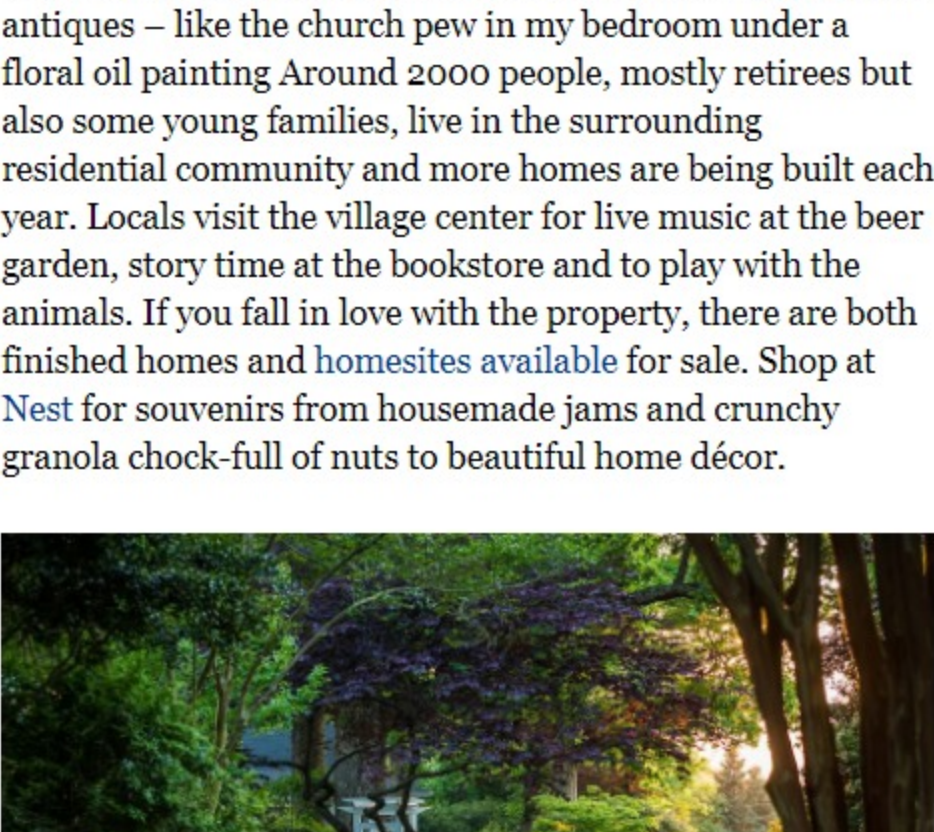
PITTSBORO



Farrington House
The Farrington House Inn

From one Relais & Chateaux resort to another, head three hours east to The Farrington House Inn in Pittsboro. Built to resemble an English country village, the 32-room inn reaches levels of luxury with an ease and grace as never before seen in North Carolina. The idyllic community is still a working farm, home to iconic Belted Galloway Scottish cows, fondly called “Belties”, along with goats, donkeys and chickens who provide all the eggs for the all-inclusive breakfast.

This is one of the oldest Relais resorts in the United States, and in fact developer R.B. Fitch built Farrington specifically with the goal of becoming a member of Relais & Chateaux, inspired by The Point in the Adirondacks. They’ve been members for 30 years now and the longevity of the staff from the general manager to the executive chef is a testament to Farrington’s magic.



Farrington House
Farrington House White Garden

R.B. Fitch still lives on property, as does his daughter Keebe who runs McIntyre’s Books, the independent bookstore in the village center. Six grand suites include a separate jetted tub, fireplace and balcony and every room has unique found antiques – like the church pew in my bedroom under a floral oil painting. Around 2000 people, mostly retirees but also some young families, live in the surrounding residential community and more homes are being built each year. Locals visit the village center for live music at the beer garden, story time at the bookstore and to play with the animals. If you fall in love with the property, there are both finished homes and homesites available for sale. Shop at Nest for souvenirs from housemade jams and crunchy granola chock-full of nuts to beautiful home décor.



Farrington House
Farrington House Inn Spring

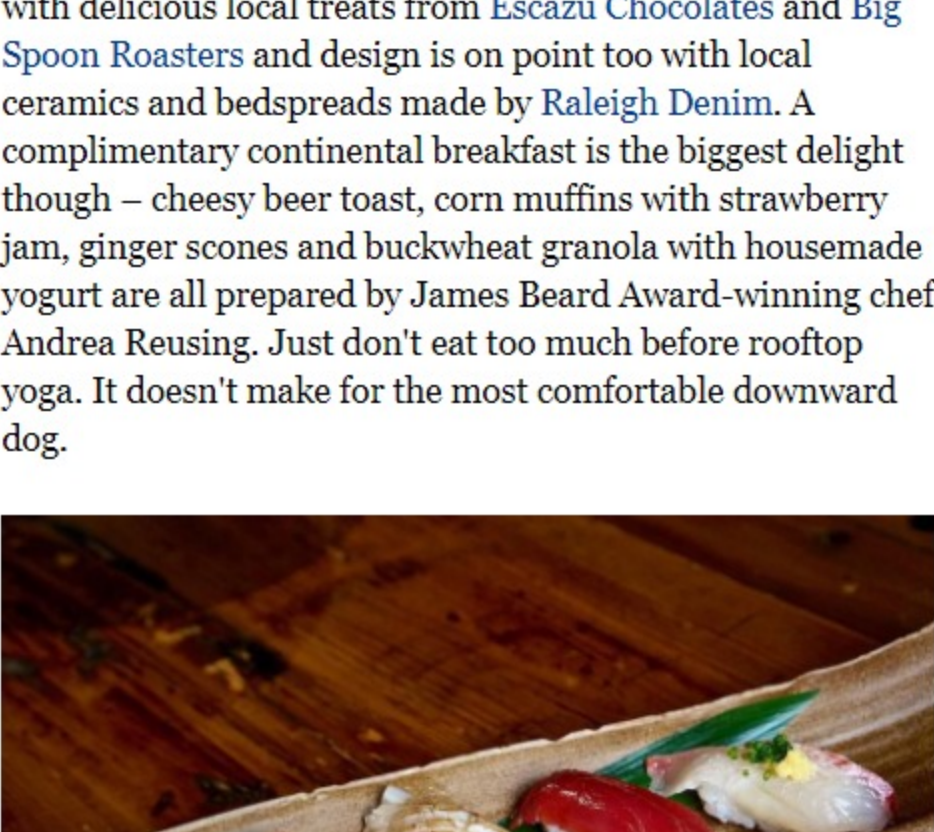
Within the village, there’s a full-service spa housed in a converted inn building with three ensuite treatment rooms. Dinner at Farrington House Restaurant is as delicious as it is romantic. Trickling fountains and glowing grapevine lanterns line the path to a multi-course feast. The vegetarian tasting is equally as enticing as the omnivorous version, with small bites and surprises along the way. Eight beehives and Farrington’s expanded organic vegetable and herb garden supplement a menu that relies on small organic farms in Chatham County. Chef Colin Bedford still goes to the farmer’s market weekly and his pastry background is apparent with the intricately plated desserts and buttery croissants for breakfast.

DURHAM



Edlin Hatis
American Tobacco Campus, Durham

On the way to Durham, pass through Chapel Hill and take a tour of TOPO Distillery. All of their spirits are USDA-certified organic and their Piedmont gin is a personal favorite. State law prevents them from serving alcohol at the distillery, but you can purchase five bottles per person per year, so stock up since they aren’t distributed nationally yet. TOPO only produces 3,000 cases a year but you can try their gin, vodka, spiced rum and whiskey in cocktails at Piedmont and Harvest 18 in Durham.



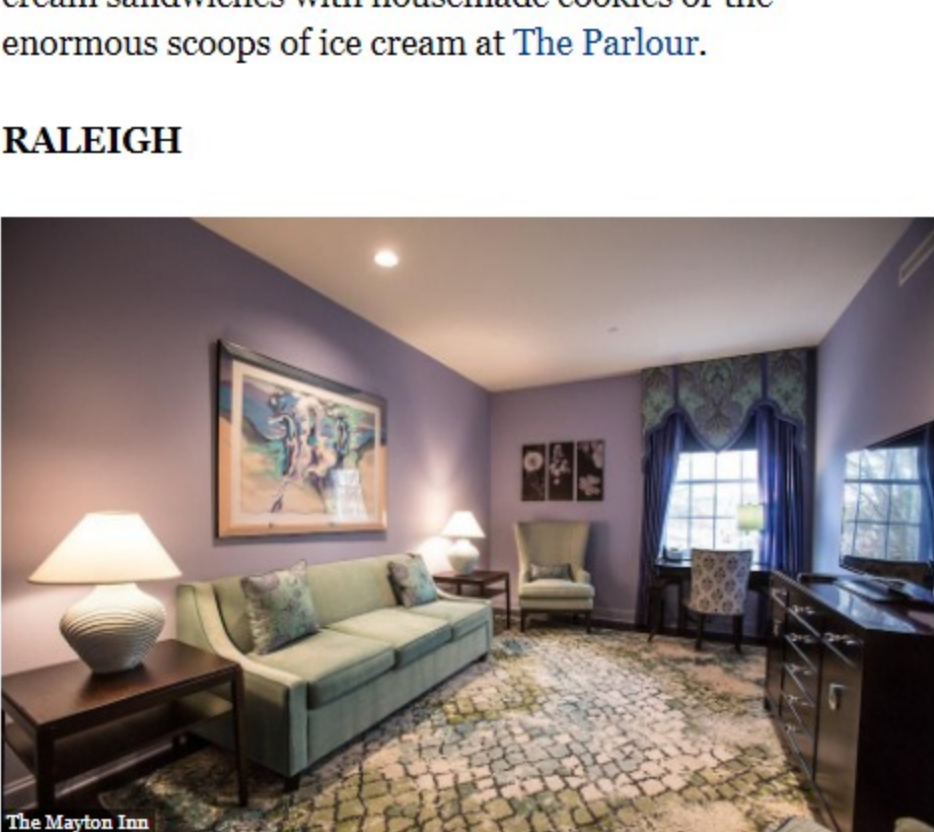
TOPO Distillery
TOPO Distillery Wheat Whiskey

Durham Distillery is another excellent local distiller, best known for their gin along with chocolate and coffee liqueurs. Founders Melissa and Lee Katrinic were just inducted into The Gin Guild in London in May and have a tonic with their housemade tonic and cucumber vodka soda.



The Durham Hotel
The Durham Hotel

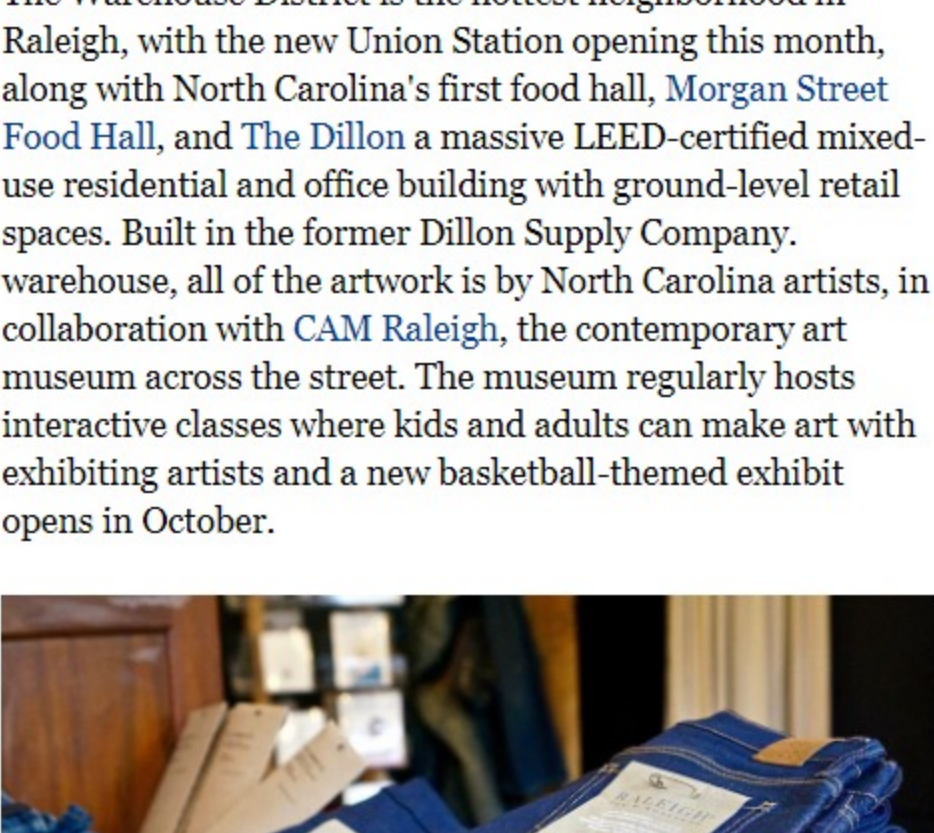
Check into The Durham Hotel, a mid-century modern boutique hotel with a prime downtown location within walking distance of some of the best eating and drinking in town. The 53-room property has the hottest rooftop bar in town and is beloved among locals. Minibars are stocked with delicious local treats from Escazu Chocolates and Big Spoon Roasters and design is on point too with local ceramics and bedspreads made by Raleigh Denim. A complimentary continental breakfast is the biggest delight though – cheesy beer toast, corn muffins with strawberry jam, ginger scones and buckwheat granola with housemade yogurt are all prepared by James Beard Award-winning chef Andrea Reusing. Just don’t eat too much before rooftop yoga. It doesn’t make for the most comfortable downward dog.



Amber Gibson
M Sushi Nigiri

Around the corner is M Sushi, a dark and surprisingly chic sushi bar. I was skeptical about sushi in North Carolina too, but sit at the African bubinga wood sushi bar and order the omakase menu. Chef Mike Lee is the real deal, using only real wasabi and preparing the freshest fish he can get his hands on, often straight from Japan. He’s starting a mini restaurant empire in Durham with unique Asian concepts. M Kokko next door serves ramen and Korean fried chicken, and he’s opening a tempura restaurant followed by two more spots specializing in Korean BBQ and mandu dumplings.

For more local fish, head to Saint James Seafood, Chef Matt Kelly’s newest venture. Tender North Carolina mahi mahi over crushed spring peas and diced beets was the biggest hit of the evening, and the mixed calabash platters could feed an NFL linebacker.



Amber Gibson
Rose's passion fruit strawberry ice cream sandwich, toasted coconut cookies

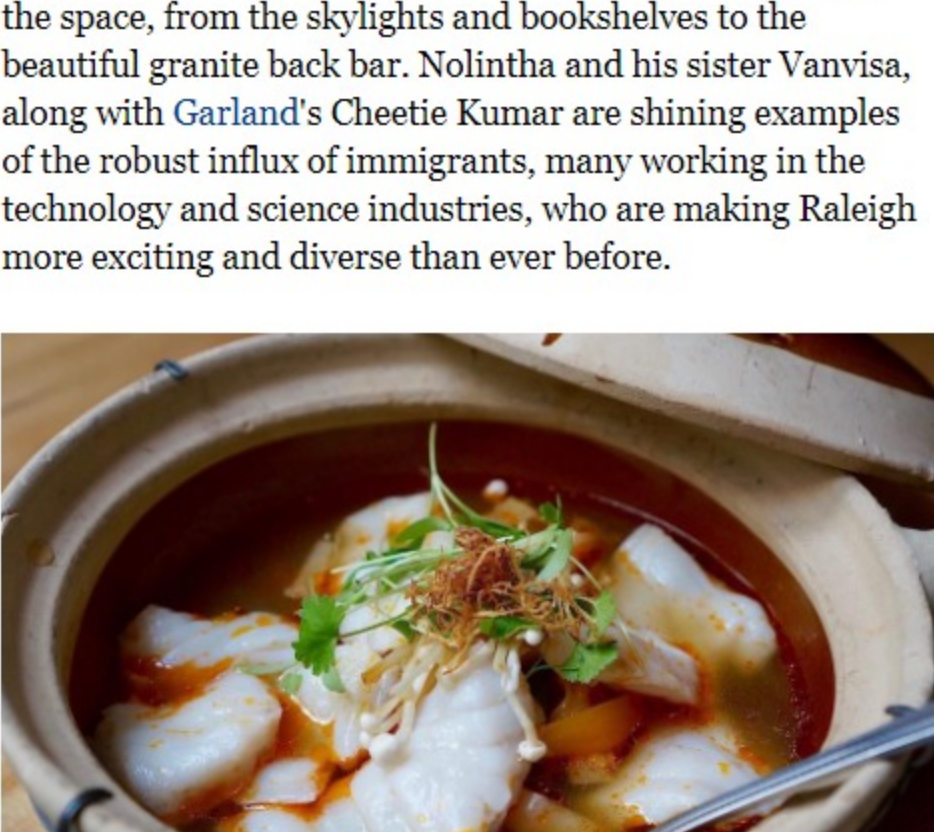
Drop by Bar Brunello afterwards for a glass of wine. Esteban Brunello has single-handedly made orange wine a trend in Durham (they were sold out of the flight when I stopped in) with 139 different bottles to choose from. He has many other wines from small producers on the list too, with a focus on esoteric Italian varietals. For dessert, Rose’s Noodles, Dumplings & Sweets has a case full of some of the best treats in town. I can’t decide whether I prefer their ice cream sandwiches with housemade cookies or the enormous scoops of ice cream at The Parlor.

RALEIGH



The Mayton Inn
The Mayton Inn

Neighboring Raleigh has a great food, drink and art scene too, but the hotels downtown are still pretty plain. The best options are in Cary at The Umstead and newer Mayton Inn that opened in February 2016. Mayton Inn is decorated in a colorful Georgian-style with just 45 rooms. Each room and suite has a different color scheme, from purples and blues to hot pink or mustard yellow.



Kerstin Haidman
CAM Raleigh

The Warehouse District is the hottest neighborhood in Raleigh, with the new Union Station opening this month, along with North Carolina’s first food hall, Morgan Street Food Hall, and The Dillon a massive LEED-certified mixed-use residential and office building with ground-level retail spaces. Built in the former Dillon Supply Company warehouse, all of the artwork is by North Carolina artists, in collaboration with CAM Raleigh, the contemporary art museum across the street. The museum regularly hosts interactive classes where kids and adults can make art with exhibiting artists and a new basketball-themed exhibit opens in October.

Amber Gibson
Raleigh Denim Workshop

Videri Chocolate and Raleigh Denim are two more examples of the neighborhood’s artisan spirit, making chocolate and jeans with painstaking care. Walk through the self-guided factory tour at Videri before cooling off with a frozen hot chocolate. Then visit the workshop at Raleigh Denim for a behind-the-scenes tour from pattern-making to final fitting. It takes 50 sewing machines to make each pair of jeans, and the inside pockets are signed by the person who stitched them.

Raleigh Denim also makes the aprons for the servers at Crawford and Son one of Raleigh’s most popular restaurants. The menu instructs you to save room for dessert and for good reason. Pastry chef Krystle Swenson can do no wrong with sophisticated creations like lemon balm panna cotta with blueberries, pistachio and sorrel granita that layer textures and flavors in a truly unique way.

Amber Gibson
Brewery Bhavana Shanghai-style mooncake

Beer lovers should visit Brewery Bhavana, a hybrid restaurant and brewery and star example of Raleigh’s booming craft beer community. They serve 20 of their Belgian-inspired beers on tap along with Chinese dim sum, fried rice and an exquisite poached grouper done in Sichuan style with chili oil, peppercorns and julienned vegetables. The space also houses a flower shop and bookstore, creating this warm all-day cafe concept that you never want to leave. Owner Vansana Nolintha studied art and design at North Carolina State and it’s obvious in the thoughtful layout of the space, from the skylights and bookshelves to the beautiful granite back bar. Nolintha and his sister Vanvisa, along with Garland’s Cheetie Kumar are shining examples of the robust influx of immigrants, many working in the technology and science industries, who are making Raleigh more exciting and diverse than ever before.

Amber Gibson
Brewery Bhavana Sichuan fish -- North Carolina grouper, julienned vegetables.

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