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Fun Facts and History

A History of Hospitality

In the late 1700s, North Carolina legislators traveled to rotating capital cities to meet and conduct the state's official business. So how did an oak-shaded area in Wake County become the permanent state capital?

The official story goes that the Constitutional Convention met in 1788 and decided the capital must be established within 10 miles of Isaac Hunter's tavern and plantation in Wake County. After exploring the area, the commissioners agreed to purchase a parcel of land from Joel Lane, a local Revolutionary War colonel who had hosted General Assembly sessions at his home during the war. In 1792 Lane sold one thousand acres of his Wake County property for 1,378 pounds (\$2,756) to provide a site for North Carolina's permanent capital, Raleigh.

But according to local legend, Lane, who—like Isaac Hunter—operated a tavern and inn out of his house, relied upon a potent fruit and alcohol drink called Cherry Bounce to sway the legislators in favor of buying property from him, rather than Hunter. Cherry Bounce is a concoction made up of mashed cherries, sugar and whiskey or brandy, aged for several weeks. Visitors today are not likely to find Cherry Bounce in Raleigh, but they will find that the tradition of Southern hospitality—inspired by the city's "founding father"—continues.

Fun Facts

Regardless, the city of Raleigh was established in 1792 and named after Sir Walter Raleigh, the explorer who in 1587 founded the first English colony in the New World on North Carolina's Outer Banks. Raleigh is one of only three U.S. capitals that was planned on paper before being built.

Fun Facts

The **State Capitol building**, completed in 1840, is one of the best-preserved examples of a civic building in Greek Revival-style architecture. And as one of the oldest and most prominent structures in Raleigh, the State Capitol building is home to a number of stories and legends. Is there really a ghost of a Confederate soldier who roams the second floor? Did spies use "secret rooms" in the Capitol during the Civil War? Visit this historic building and learn about local legends and stories of strange noises and occurrences reported over the years by State Capitol staff.

The grand Victorian **North Carolina Executive Mansion** was built in 1891 from native North Carolina materials and has been cited as one of America's few splendid examples of Queen Anne cottage-style architecture. The house has 30 rooms, including six bedrooms and 12 bathrooms. The entrance hall features a grand stairway and two cut-crystal chandeliers.

You'll find the freshest fruits and vegetables around at the **State Farmers Market**, plus homemade baked goods, sauces and crafts. This daily market hosts seasonal events, including craft fairs, Blueberry Day, Chili Fest and the North Carolina Battle of the Sauces.

One of Raleigh's oldest parks, **Pullen Park** offers recreational opportunities for all ages. Highlights include the Andy & Opie Statue, a 1911 Gustave A. Dentzel Menagerie Carousel, train ride, paddle boats, playground and picnic shelters.

When the so-called "horn-tootin' bill" was passed by the 1943 General Assembly, North Carolina became the nation's first state to provide continuing financial support for an orchestra: The **North Carolina Symphony**. Today the Symphony, based in Raleigh, performs approximately 185 concerts a year, frequently with international guest artists. Four years later, the **North Carolina Museum of Art** was established in 1947 as the nation's first state-supported art museum.

Raleigh is known as the "**City of Oaks**" and often is described as "a park with a city in it." Trees planted at the city's inception still provide cooling shade for visitors to Moore Square Park, where you'll find the city's signature copper acorn.

As the capital city, Raleigh is home to **three state museums of art, history and natural sciences**. All offer free admission.

- The North Carolina Museum of Art will take you on a voyage through 5,000 years of artistic heritage. Peruse works by American artists as well as collections of African, Oceanic and New World art, Egyptian, Greek and Roman art, 20th-century art and more.
- The North Carolina Museum of History tells the stories of generations of North Carolinians and others who have shaped the state's history. Includes the largest historical flag collection in the United States, a Civil War exhibit, replica of the Wright Brothers' plane and the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame.
- The North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences is home to famous dinosaurs: Willo, the only dinosaur ever discovered with a fossilized heart, and the world's only Acrocanthosaurus, known as the "Terror of the South." It is the largest natural history museum in the Southeast.

Although the area is known for its college basketball rivalries, three professional sports teams call Greater Raleigh home: **Carolina Hurricanes** (NHL hockey), **Carolina Mudcats** (AA baseball) and **Carolina RailHawks** (Professional Soccer)

Greater Raleigh is home to seven major institutions of higher learning, five of which date back to the 19th century: N.C. State University (1887); Peace College (1857); Shaw University (1865); Saint Augustine's College (1868); Meredith College (1891); Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (1956); and Wake Technical Community College.

The "Amistad" outdoor drama tells in song, dance and oratory presentation the famous story of mutiny at sea aboard the famous slave ship. Presented by North Carolina writers, musicians and performers and features native African American art forms of jazz, blues and spiritual songs. Annually in July at the **African American Cultural Complex**.

Excursions

In addition to Raleigh, Wake County is home to 11 other municipalities, each of which offers its own blend of history, culture and attractions. Make sure your itinerary includes an excursion to any of these distinctive Wake County towns.

Apex--Downtown Apex's Salem Street, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is home to the Historic Apex Union Depot (circa 1914).

Cary--Downtown Cary still provides a glimpse into the past with its lunch-counter restaurants and the Page-Walker Arts & History Center, a circa-1868 hotel built to service passengers on the nearby railroad. Today it serves as the cultural center of the town and houses the Cary Heritage Museum.

Fuquay-Varina--At the turn of the last century, tourists flocked to Fuquay Springs because they believed water from the local mineral spring would cure whatever ailed them. The old spring, largely forgotten for many years, was recently turned into a local historic site.

Garner--Locals still gather at the Toot-N-Tell Restaurant for traditional Southern treats and gossip.

Holly Springs--Learn about the beer-making process and sample the finished product at Carolina Brewing Company, a microbrewery that offers Saturday tours.

Knightdale--A local landmark is Knightdale Seafood & Barbecue, which in addition to traditional eastern North Carolina fare, serves up buffalo, elk, rattlesnake, alligator, froglegs, quail, ostrich and kangaroo. Tuesday is "exotic fare" day.

Morrisville--A visit to Prime Outlets, with more than 30 stores, is a must if shopping is on the itinerary.

Rolesville--This small town recently boasted just one stoplight.

Wake Forest--The quaint downtown Wake Forest historic district is dotted with distinctive shops, restaurants and art galleries.

Wendell--For a dose of nostalgia, visit Saunder's Pharmacy, one of the few remaining local pharmacies with an ice cream counter still in use.

Zebulon--Travel to Zebulon's Five County Stadium, home of the Carolina Mudcats, to see this Class AA professional baseball team play.