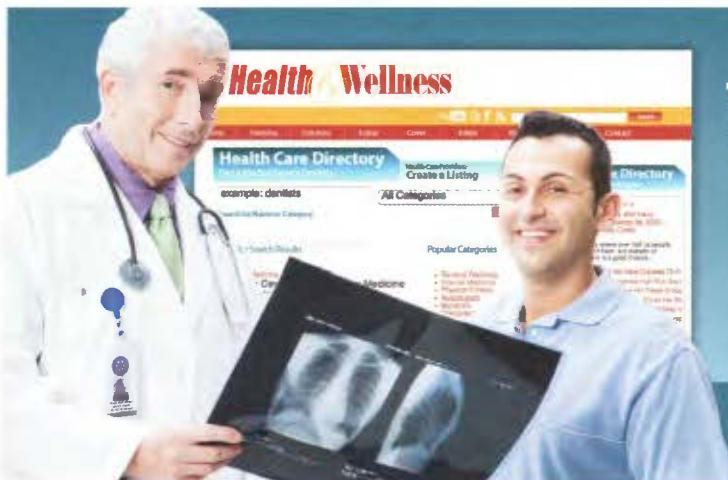


Asheville, North Carolina

Biltmore and biscuits bring you back



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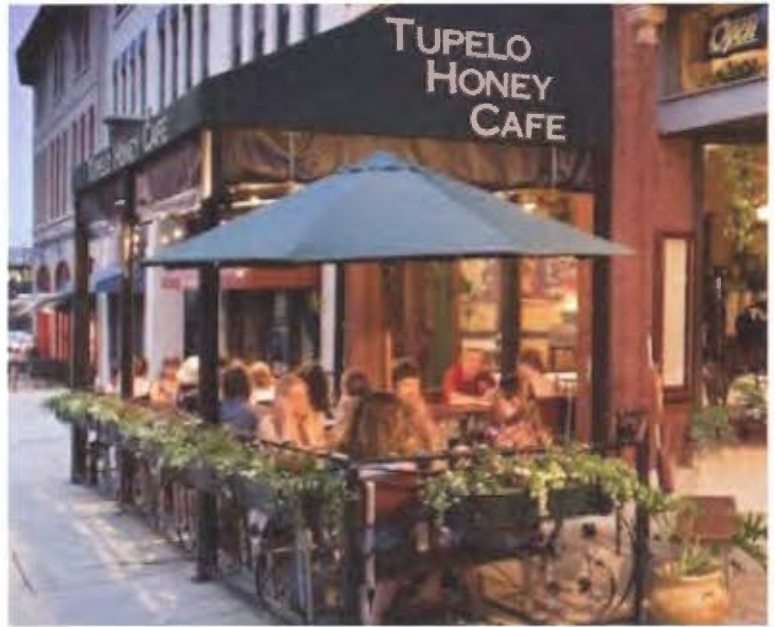


by Jan Ross,
Staff Writer

We didn't plan to visit Asheville, a fascinating little town nestled between the Smoky Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains. It just happened to be halfway between Lexington and Savannah, Ga.

It wasn't until I began to do research that I realized the Biltmore Estate is located in Asheville, and the decision was made. We have always wanted to visit Biltmore because we like mansion tours and garden tours and it offered both.

In Asheville, we stayed at the wonderful, unique Grove Park Inn. We



▲ Have lunch at the famous Tupelo Honey Café. Sit on the patio and soak in downtown Asheville.

both fell in love with this historic, gorgeous place. Opened in 1912, the hotel is built of huge granite stones.

It has an expansive lobby filled with rocking chairs situated before one of the largest fireplaces I have ever seen and a view from the dining terrace that is absolutely incredible. With luxurious amenities such as a Keurig coffeemaker and Bose radios in each room, the Grove Park Inn also has a luxury spa, golf course, both an indoor and outdoor pool and plenty of shopping and dining choices. The quirkiest thing about the hotel is, because it is located on a mountain, you take an elevator down to your room instead of up. Believe me, this took some getting used to.

ated so you would never know you were eating where the Vanderbilt Thoroughbreds used to reside.

The next day, we headed to the Asheville Visitor Center for a trolley tour with Grayline Trolley Tours of Asheville. Tickets are available at the visitor center. The trolleys run every half hour, and your ticket is good for two days of hop on/hop off touring – our favorite way to see a destination. We were amazed to see so many beautiful homes throughout Asheville and to learn all about the history of this wonderful mountain location.

Hop off in town in time to have lunch at the famous Tupelo Honey Café. Sit on the patio and soak in the kitschy, slightly hippie, laidback vibe that is downtown Asheville. Comprised of students from the University of North Carolina at Asheville, tourists, local residents and plenty of friendly dogs (which are welcome everywhere), there's plenty to see from the patio of the café. Everything on the menu is good, but the biscuits are so delicious they might make you plan another trip to Asheville just to eat more of them.

Which is not a bad idea, come to think of it.

We spent our entire first day at the Biltmore Estate. You absolutely cannot go to Asheville without visiting Biltmore. You can purchase your tickets on site or online. They include not only a tour of the mansion but also the gardens and a wine tasting at the estate winery. Biltmore is gorgeous and impressive. It's hard to believe this behemoth was, at one time, a private residence. We enjoyed sandwiches for lunch at the Stable Café, which is located in the original stables – it's set up with booths in the original stalls. Of course, it's been completely reno-



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