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## The Frugal Joys of Car Tripping: Asheville, North Carolina

by TFB EDITORS on SEPTEMBER 25, 2012

by Jan Ross

We visited [Asheville](#) by accident. We didn't plan to take a car trip to this lovely, kitschy, fascinating little town nestled between the Smoky Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains. I was looking at a map of our road trip from Lexington, Kentucky, to Savannah, Georgia, where we were headed to participate in the [Tall Ships Challenge](#) and found a place about halfway there to stop. It turned out to be Asheville.

It wasn't until I began to do research about whether or not this would be a good place to stay that I realized the [Biltmore Estate](#) is in Asheville. That was it. I have *always* wanted to visit the Biltmore Estate, even though, at that point, I had a pretty vague idea about what it was. A big house? But we like mansion tours and garden tours and it sounded mildly interesting, so Asheville became a firm fixture in the itinerary for the Tall Ships Challenge.

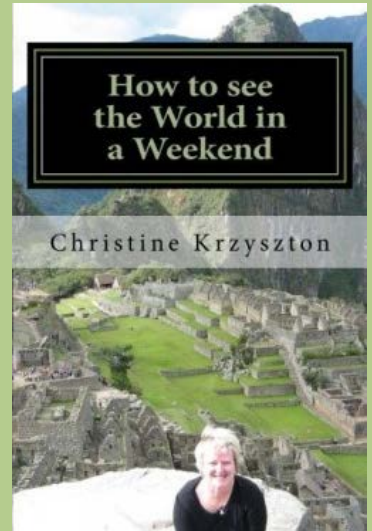


*The Biltmore Estate*

This trip ended up being a two-week journey looping all around the East Coast, but Asheville was definitely one of our favorite stops. The first afternoon, we pulled into the parking garage of the [Hilton Biltmore Park](#), unloaded our luggage, and checked into our contemporary and very comfortable room. The hotel has a fitness center, indoor pool, complimentary Internet access, and a wonderful restaurant called [Roux](#), where we had an incomparable dinner one night. They're open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner and use as many fresh, local products on their menu as possible. The menu changes often based on what is available seasonally, but if you go be sure to try the local, artisanal cheeses. You will be very pleased.



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*A section of the Biltmore Gardens*

The Hilton is located in the middle of Biltmore Park Town Square, a modern little area with plenty of shops and restaurants just a few steps from the hotel's entrance. A movie theater is located right beside the hotel. It's also just a short distance from the scenic Blue Ridge Parkway, downtown Asheville, and the Biltmore Estate. [Sensibilities Day Spa](#) is also located in the hotel and I spent a truly fabulous day there enjoying a facial and massage, then just relaxing in the spa, which is a lovely place.

The first day we spent our entire day at the [Biltmore Estate](#). You absolutely cannot go to Asheville without doing this. You can purchase your tickets there or online and they include not only a tour of the mansion, but also the gardens and a tour and wine tasting at the [Winery](#).



*Stable Cafe*

This huge estate is absolutely gorgeous and extremely impressive. It's hard to believe this behemoth was, at one time, a completely private residence. There's an area with little shops and restaurants and we enjoyed sandwiches at the [Stable Café](#), which is — you guessed it — located in the original stables. It's even set up with booths in the original stalls! Of course, it's been completely renovated and you would never know you were eating where the Vanderbilt thoroughbreds used to reside.

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Grove Park Inn  
Grove Park Inn

After a couple of days at our first hotel, we headed over to the wonderful and truly unique [Grove Park Inn](#), where we both fell in love with this beautiful, historic place. Opened in 1912, the hotel is built of huge granite stones with 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. Along with truly luxurious amenities, like 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. Because the Inn is situated on a mountain, you take an elevator down to your room instead of up. This took some getting used to!

We decided it was time to see more of Asheville, so we headed to the [Asheville Visitor Center](#) for a trolley tour with [Grayline Trolley Tours of Asheville](#). Tickets are available at the visitors 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.



*There's always something going on in funky downtown Asheville!*

If you go, be sure you hop off in town in time to have lunch at the famous [Tupelo Honey Café](#). They have two locations but the one in town is the best place for sitting on the patio and soaking in the kitschy, slightly hippie, laid-back vibe that is downtown Asheville. Comprised of students from UNC Asheville, tourists, local residents, and many of friendly dogs (which are welcome everywhere), there's plenty right from the patio of the café. Everything on the menu was good but the biscuits were so good they might make me plan another trip to Asheville just for them.

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

**What about you? Have you been to Asheville, NC? What did you particularly enjoy? Tell us in the Comments section.**

Tagged as: Asheville NC, Biltmore Estate, Biltmore Winery, car trip, Grove Park Inn, Hilton, road trip

{ 2 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }

**Denise L** September 25, 2012 at 9:16 am



I had no idea there is so much to see in Asheville. And I thought the only draw was the Biltmore Estate!  
Thanks for the great details and tips.

REPLY

**TFB Editors** September 25, 2012 at 9:43 am



Denise — We just love your comments! Thanks so much. And as a North Carolinian myself, I wanted to note that, yes, Asheville is one cool, beautiful town. The scenery is breath-taking and the people are super-friendly. For a fall getaway, you'll never go wrong with a trip to our Asheville. ~ Kim

REPLY

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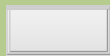
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