

The Queen City offers something for everyone, easily accessible

Crystal Allen
Focus Editor

Yearning for a big city full of tall buildings? Hop on Interstate 85 and head to Charlotte.

The "Queen City" is located about two hours away and is home to more than 1.5 million people, making it the sixth largest urban center in the nation.

It is also the nation's second largest financial center, following New York City.

No matter what you are looking for, Charlotte provides a perfect escape for Elon students craving an urban atmosphere.

What to see...

Start off your day in Charlotte by touring the Discovery Place, located on North Tryon Street.

Watch a movie in the Morphis Movie Ride Theatre, a space-age motion simulator, or walk through the world's largest eyeball. Admission is \$7.50 for adults.

Tour the Levine Museum of the



Crystal Allen/ Photographer

Uptown Charlotte offers a plethora of activities, from museums to restaurants.

New South, located on North College Street.

The museum chronicles the growth of Charlotte from a mostly textile-dominated city to the bustling metropolis it is today.

Where to eat...

When you get hungry, stop by Rock Bottom Brewery for lunch. It

offers a diverse menu at a reasonable price. It also provides a much-needed break for your feet, after walking around all day.

For dinner, go to the top-rated sushi bar in Charlotte. Ru-San's Sushi and Seafood is located on Park Road and serves about 60 varieties of nigiri, maki and temaki

sold by the piece.

They also have a large menu full of Japanese dishes.

Shopping...

If you are tired of Colonial Mall, Charlotte offers several upscale malls and shopping districts.

Southpark Mall is located in South Charlotte and touts itself as "the shopping district of the Carolinas."

It is home to bebe, Brooks Brothers and J. Crew, as well as Belk, Hecht's, Sears and Dillards.

In Concord, just minutes from the city, Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World is heaven for nature lovers.

It is the nation's premier supplier of fishing, hunting and camping gear. Each weekend has a different theme for sportsmen, with events ranging from turkey-calling competitions to corn festivals.

Sports...

For sport fans, Charlotte is a mecca. It is home to the NBA's Charlotte Hornets, the NFL's Carolina Panthers, WNBA's Charlotte STING and the Charlotte Knights,

an AAA baseball team.

Tickets for most major events are available from Ticketmaster and vary greatly in costs.

Charlotte provides the perfect getaway for sports fans, no matter the season.

Racing fanatics love Charlotte for Lowe's Motor Speedway, home of the Coca-Cola 600 and other Winston Cup races.

When the sun sets...

Those tired of Burlington night life will be pleasantly surprised by Charlotte's uptown area, full of bars, restaurants and nightclubs.

Tremont Music Hall, located on West Tremont Avenue, is a popular venue for underground and up-and-coming bands.

Their schedule is available at www.tremontmusicall.com.

Charlotte was named one of "America's Most Livable Cities" by Partners for Livable Communities, and it is easy to see why.

For those of us who are only visiting, Charlotte is a great place to spend a day.

For a great hiking experience, head for the Great Smoky Mountains

Michael Marlier
Reporter

Break in your boots. Shiny new boots, no matter what the ad says, need about 50 miles before they are trail-ready.

I learned this at sunset, as I peeled a large flap of skin back from my heel, after my friend Scott Staruch and I completed our seven-mile hike to our campsite.

"Welcome to Great Smoky Mountain National Park," the trailhead read.

Instead, it should have said, "Trails not for suckers!"

While North Carolina offers hundreds of parks to explore on a day trip, few are as extensive and convoluted as the Great Smoky Mountain National Park.

About an hour outside Asheville, along the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Smokies offer hiking, camping, fishing and horseback riding for the adventurous, outdoorsy-type of person.

The undulating terrain and well-defined trails allow hikers to experience the biodiversity of North Carolina's richest national park.

A \$1 permit provides campers access to 11 camping areas (3-12 campsites per area), for an evening or weekend, along the 900 miles of trails, rivers and ridges accenting the park.

We found directions to the park using an Internet map search and planned our route.

We then decided on equipment we needed and began our search.

Campus recreation offers tents, backpacks and sleeping bags at student-friendly prices.

We rented a wind-proof, two-man North Face tent for \$10, and it comfortably sheltered our gear and sleeping heads.

Staruch, the amateur meteorologist, checked the weather reports, which called for inclement weather and torrential rains.

We made sure to include tarps,

rain jackets and water-resistant, breathable polypropylene underwear.

According to Staruch, the other camping essentials consisted of socks with a silk/wool blend (found at an outdoor or ski store), food and a cumbersome lantern.

Because this was our first excursion to the Smokies and we lacked sufficient information about the degree of rainfall in western North Carolina, we forgot to bring our own wood.

"You need to be in contact with local professionals of your destination," Staruch said.

Luckily, we purchased sterno fuel, which looks like little tin canisters of pink napalm, at the Wal-Mart in Asheville, and generated a little heat for cooking.

Strauch said Campbell's Chunky Soup helped provide adequate nutrition and a hot meal after a long day of hiking.

"It's heavy, but easy to prepare

with limited heating sources," he said.

We also survived on wheat bread, peanut butter and oatmeal bars, which are more affordable than Power Bars.

All we lacked was simple kindling and a bear bag. But we got through.

Staruch said tenderfoot hikers should wear old sneakers instead of new boots.

"Take two pairs depending on wet conditions, and a pair of sandals for relaxing your feet at the campsite," he said.

As for passing the time without a campfire, bring a bottle of your favorite drink.

"Old Number Seven provided the impetus for conversation of past stories that one often forgets in the complexities of day-to-day city life," Staruch said.

For more information, visit www.greatsmokies.com or www.visitsmokies.org.

FOCUS
on this....

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