

Sports and Recreation



Charlotte Bobcats.



Carolina Panthers.

PROFESSIONAL AND AMATEUR SPORTS enthusiasts have a lot to cheer about in the Charlotte region. While many area newcomers carry other team allegiances, it doesn't take long for Charlotte's home teams to earn a place in their hearts as well.

NASCAR is the region's oldest professional sport, as the city embraced stock car racing long before it became a national passion. More NASCAR teams are based in the Charlotte area than in any other city. Lowe's Motor Speedway, the largest sports facility in the Southeast, hosts three major races – the Bank of America 500 in October and the Sprint All-Star Race and Coca-Cola 600 in May – as well as numerous other events throughout the year. The zMax Dragway at Concord is the only all-concrete, four-lane drag strip in the country, with its first race held on Sept. 11, 2008.

While Charlotte has been home to NASCAR for decades, fans can now cheer local teams of the NBA and NFL.

Particularly since their 2004 Super Bowl debut, the NFL Carolina Panthers draw fans to Bank of America Stadium to see stars like quarterback Jake Delhomme and wide receiver Steve Smith. In 2007-2008, the Panthers were 8-8, just missing the playoffs. Charlotteans have high hopes for the 2008-2009 season, with Delhomme teaming up once again with Smith and the return of Muhsin Muhammad.

Under the ownership of former Black Entertainment Television founder Robert Johnson, the NBA Charlotte Bobcats played their first season in 2004 at the Charlotte Coliseum and moved to the new Uptown Time Warner Cable Arena in 2005. The Bobcats continue to entertain crowds with stars like Raymond Felton and Sean May –

both from the 2005 NCAA Championship Tar Heels team – 2004 No.2 draft pick Emeka Okafor, and recently signed Jason Richardson.

If hockey's your game, check out the Charlotte Checkers. The Checkers play in the East Coast Hockey League and are affiliated with the NHL's New York Rangers. In 1996, the Checkers won the ECHL Championship and fans' excitement about the team has remained high ever since. The team also plays in the Time Warner Cable Arena.

If golf is more your speed, don't miss the Wachovia Championship in May. Hosted by Quail Hollow Country Club, the tournament had a successful sixth year. In 2008, Anthony Kim finished 16 under par to win five strokes ahead of second-place Ben Curtis. The tournament's purse is one of the largest on tour, which brings many of the greats to Charlotte.

While Charlotte is not a Major League Baseball town, the Charlotte Knights, 1999 International League Champions, are a favorite of all who enjoy the national pastime. As the Chicago White Sox's AAA affiliate, the Knights afford local residents the opportunity to see the sport's rising stars. The team plays at Knights Castle in Fort Mill, just across the S.C. state line off I-77, with plans to relocate to an Uptown stadium.

The region is also home to two single-A baseball clubs – the Hickory Crawdads, affiliated with the Pittsburgh Pirates, and the Kannapolis Intimidators, farm club for the Chicago White Sox. Both teams play in the South Atlantic League.

Additionally, the Charlotte Eagles, who play in the Second Division of the United Soccer Leagues, and the Lady Eagles, who play in the W-League of the United Soccer Leagues, will delight soccer fans. The Eagles have advanced to the championship match for the past three seasons. The Lady Eagles stunned the league when they were national champs in their second season, 2001.

Catching a Charlotte 49ers men's basketball game is a must. Led by head coach Bobby Lutz, the 49ers joined the Atlantic 10 Conference in 2005 and consistently make postseason play.




JEFF SINE/CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

U.S. National Whitewater Center.

Located on Lake Norman, the Davidson Wildcats men's basketball team has revived small-town Davidson and received national attention for the entire Charlotte area. Under the leadership of 20-year head coach Bob McKillop, the Wildcats hope to repeat and further their Elite Eight run with junior All-American Stephen Curry, son of former Charlotte Hornet Dale Curry.

Outdoor sports enthusiasts are excited about the new U.S. National Whitewater Center, a world-class park with controllable rapids that is modeled after the 2000 Olympic site in Australia. Located on the Catawba River near the interchange of I-85 and I-485, the park features rock climbing walls, mountain biking trails and flat water canoeing and kayaking in addition to the rapids.

Whatever your passion, and whatever your budget, as a sports fan you'll be satisfied in Charlotte. 



Wachovia Championship.

Golf Course	Phone	Type
Ballantyne Country Club 11120 Ballantyne Crossing Ave., Charlotte, NC 28277	704.341.3113	private
Birkdale Golf Club 16500 Birkdale Commons Pkwy., Huntersville, NC 28078	704.895.8038	public
Cabarrus Country Club 3247 Weddington Road, Concord, NC 28027	704.786.3104	private
Carmel Country Club 4735 Carmel Road, Charlotte, NC 28226	704.945.9630	private
Carolina Golf Club 2415 Old Steele Creek Road, Charlotte, NC 28208	704.392.6366	private
Cedarwood Country Club 4100 Pineville Matthews Road, Charlotte, NC 28226	704.542.0206	private
Charles T. Myers Golf Course 7817 Harrisburg Road, Charlotte, NC 28215	704.536.1692	public
Charlotte Country Club 2465 Mecklenburg Ave., Charlotte, NC 28205	704.333.9809	private
Charlotte Golf Links 11500 Providence Road, Charlotte, NC 28277	704.846.7990	public
Charlotte National Golf Course 6920 Howey Bottoms Road, Indian Trail, NC 28079	704.882.8282	public
Club at Irish Creek 1196 Fairway Drive, Kannapolis, NC 28082	704.933.2525	private
Crowders Mountain Golf Club 255 Lincoln Academy Road, Kings Mountain, NC 28086	704.739.7681	public
The Divide 6803 Stevens Mill Road, Matthews, NC 28104	704.882.8088	public
Emerald Lake Golf Club 9750 Tournament Drive, Matthews, NC 28104	704.882.7888	public
Firethorne Country Club 1108 Firethorne Club Drive, Marvin, NC 28173	704.843.3111	private
Fort Mill Golf Club 101 Country Club Drive, Fort Mill, SC 29715	803.547.2044	public
Gaston Country Club 3700 Country Club Drive, Gastonia, NC 28056	704.864.3283	private
Gastonia Municipal Golf Course 530 Niblick Drive, Gastonia, NC 28054	704.866.6945	public
The Golf Club at Ballantyne Resort 10000 Ballantyne Commons Pkwy., Charlotte, NC 28277	704.248.4383	public

Golf Course	Phone	Type
Green Meadows Golf Course 957 Kelly Road, Mount Holly, NC 28120	704.827.9264	public
Green Oaks Golf Club 4775 Hamby Branch Road, Concord, NC 28025	704.786.4412	public
Highland Creek Golf Club 7101 Highland Creek Pkwy., Charlotte, NC 28269	704.875.9000	public
Kings Mountain Country Club 110 Country Club Road, Kings Mountain, NC 28086	704.739.5871	semi-private
Larkhaven Golf Club 4801 Camp Stewart Road, Charlotte, NC 28215	704.545.4653	public
Linwood Springs Golf Course 2900 Linwood Road, Gastonia, NC 28052	704.867.1642	public
Mallard Head Country Club 185 Mallard Way, Mooresville, NC 28117	704.664.7031	public
Monroe Country Club Hwy. 601 S., Monroe, NC 28110	704.282.4661	public
Mooresville Country Club W. Wilson Ave., Mooresville, NC 28115	704.663.2539	public
Myers Park Country Club 2415 Roswell Ave., Charlotte, NC 28209	704.376.0745	private
NorthStone Club 15801 Northstone Drive, Huntersville, NC 28078	704.948.4286	private
Oak Hills Golf Course 4008 Oakdale Road, Charlotte, NC 28216	704.394.2834	public
Olde Sycamore Golf Plantation 7500 Olde Sycamore Drive, Charlotte, NC 28227	704.573.1000	public
The Palisades Country Club 13704 Grand Palisades Pkwy., Charlotte, NC 28278	704.504.0099	private
Pebble Creek Golf Course 6207 Independence Blvd., Indian Trail, NC 28079	704.821.7276	public
The Peninsula Club 19101 Peninsula Club Drive, Cornelius, NC 28031	704.439.2919	private
Pine Island Country Club 1701 Stoneyridge Drive, Charlotte, NC 28214	704.394.1011	private
Pine Lake Country Club 5504 Lebanon Road, Charlotte, NC 28227	704.545.5213	private
Pinetuck Golf Course 2578 Tuckaway Road, Rock Hill, SC 29730	803.327.1141	private
Providence Country Club 6001 Providence Country Club Drive, Charlotte, NC 28277	704.846.8475	private

Golf Course	Phone	Type
Quail Hollow Country Club 3700 Glen Eagles Road, Charlotte, NC 28210	704.552.1727	private
Raintree Country Club 8600 Raintree Lane, Charlotte, NC 28277	704.541.8880	private
Regent Park Golf Club 5055 Regent Pkwy., Fort Mill, SC 29715	803.547.1300	public
Renaissance Park Golf Course 1525 W. Tyvola Road., Charlotte, NC 28217	704.357.3375	public
Revolution Park Golf Course 2661 Barringer Drive, Charlotte, NC 28208	704.342.1946	public
River Hills Country Club 1 Country Club Drive, Lake Wylie, SC 29710	803.831.2249	private
River Run Country Club 19125 River Falls Drive, Davidson, NC 28036	704.896.7355	private
Rock Hill Country Club 600 Country Club Drive, Rock Hill, SC 29730	803.327.7790	private
Rocky River Golf Club 6900 Speedway Blvd., Concord, NC 28027	704.455.1200	public
Rolling Hills Country Club 2722 W. Roosevelt Blvd., Monroe, NC 28110	704.283.8201	private
Skybrook Golf Club 14720 Northgreen Drive, Huntersville, NC 28078	704.948.6611	semi-private
Springfield Golf Club 639 Hamby House Lane, Fort Mill, SC 29715	886.304.4653	public
Stonebridge Golf Club 2721 Swilcan Burn Drive, Monroe, NC 28112	888.337.2582	public
Sunset Hills Golf Course 800 Radio Road, Charlotte, NC 28216	704.399.0980	public
Tega Cay Golf Club 1 Molokai Drive, Tega Cay, SC 29708	888.834.2386	public
The Tradition Golf Club 3800 Prosperity Church Road, Charlotte, NC 28269	704.503.7529	public
TPC at Piper Glen 4300 Piper Glen Drive, Charlotte, NC 28277	704.846.1212	private
Waterford Golf Club 1900 Clubhouse Drive, Rock Hill, SC 29730	803.324.0300	private
Westport Golf Club 7494 Golf Course Road S., Denver, NC 28037	704.489.8088	semi-private
Woodbridge Golf Links 1007 New Camp Creek Church Road, Kings Mountain, NC 28086	704.482.0353	public

The Arts



CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

North Carolina
Dance Theatre

CHARLOTTE

Actor's Theatre of Charlotte

Just four years into its new location, Actor's Theatre of Charlotte features a 199-seat intimate Main Street Theatre and 50-seat Black Box Theatre. It also sponsors educational programs for the community. 650 E. Stonewall St., Charlotte. 704.342.2251. www.actorstheatrecharlotte.org.

Afro-American Cultural Center

The center is a regional showcase for art, music, theater, film and cultural education. 401 N. Myers St., Charlotte. 704.374.1565. www.aacc-charlotte.org.

Carolina Actors Studio Theatre

Located in Plaza-Midwood, this intimate theater presents highly acclaimed comedy and drama productions as well as acting classes. 1118 Clement Ave., Charlotte. 704.455.8542. www.nccast.com.

Carolina Voices

Founded as the Charlotte Choral Society in 1953, the Carolina Voices produced the first "Singing Christmas Tree" show in the United States. The volunteer choir also features concerts, workshops, educational programs and special events throughout the year. 1900 Queens Road, Charlotte. 704.374.1564. www.carolnavoices.org.

Carolinas Concert Association

Celebrating 79 years, the Carolinas Concert Association presents symphony orchestras, concerts, dance companies and ensembles, and sponsors educational programs for local schools. 704.527.6680. www.carolinasconcert.org.

Carowinds Paladium

Carowinds' amphitheater hosts some of the hottest acts in the country. 14523 Carowinds Blvd., Charlotte. 704.588.2600. www.carowinds.com.

Central Piedmont Community College Theatre

In its 35th season, CPCC's summer theater program

features plays and musicals at the campus's Halton Theater. 1206 Elizabeth Ave., Charlotte. 704.330.6534. www.cpcc.edu/summer_theatre.

Charlotte Civic Orchestra

This volunteer-based orchestra performs classical music with affordable ticket prices and a family-friendly atmosphere, as well as sponsors educational programs. 704.344.0098. www.charlottecivicorchestra.org.

Charlotte Philharmonic Orchestra

The Charlotte Philharmonic welcomes world-renowned singers and musicians in addition to its holiday concert and Popcorn Pops series for children. 704.543.5551. www.charlottephilharmonic.org.

Charlotte Symphony Orchestra

Each year this professional orchestra provides a season filled with innovative works, the classics and guest conductors and performers. The symphony also performs a free Summer Pops series at Symphony Park in SouthPark. 704.972.2000. www.charlottesymphony.org.

Charlotte Youth Ballet

Youth dancers team up with dance professionals to produce storybook ballets twice a year. 980.322.5522. www.charlotteyouthballet.com.

Children's Theatre of Charlotte

Located in the new ImaginOn Center, Children's Theatre delights the young (and young-at-heart) with plays and musicals just for them. 300 E. Seventh St., Charlotte. 704.973.2828. www.ctcharlotte.org.

Community School of the Arts

This school provides instruction in music, visual arts and drama to interested youth. 345 N. College St., Charlotte. 704.377.4187. www.csarts.org.

Davidson Community Players

This community troupe stages summer shows, din-

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Children's Theatre of Charlotte.

ner theater and children's programs. It is also in the process of building its own theater in Davidson. 704.892.7953. www.davidsoncommunityplayers.org.

The Light Factory

The Light Factory, located in Spirit Square, displays exhibits dedicated to photography and film in addition to educational programs. 345 N. College St., Charlotte. 704.333.9755. www.lightfactory.org.

McColl Center for Visual Art

This former burned-out church is now an artists' colony. 721 N. Tryon St., Charlotte. 704.332.5535. www.mccollcenter.org.

Mint Museum of Art

The Mint holds a permanent collection of American paintings and sculpture; pre-Columbian, African and Spanish Colonial art; costumes; and porcelain and pottery. 2730 Randolph Road, Charlotte. 704.337.2000. www.mintmuseum.org.

Mint Museum of Craft + Design

This museum, which focuses on works in fiber, glass, wood, ceramics and metal, and will move to the new 145,000- square-foot facility on South Tryon upon its completion. The new facility will include a theater, the Bechtler Art Museum, the Afro-American Cultural Center and Wake Forest Graduate School. 220 N. Tryon St., Charlotte. 704.337.2000. www.mintmuseum.org.

North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center

This center, which includes the Belk Theatre and the Booth Playhouse, is home to the Charlotte Symphony, North Carolina Dance Theatre, Opera Carolina, Charlotte Repertory Theatre, Charlotte Choral Society and the Carolinas Concert Association. 130 N. Tryon St.,

Charlotte. 704.372.1000. www.blumenthalcenter.org.

North Carolina Dance Theatre

As the oldest professional ballet company in North Carolina, this group presents classic and contemporary works. 622 E. 28th St., Charlotte. 704.372.0101. www.ncdance.org.

Opera Carolina

This organization stages classic tales of love and hate, intrigue and drama at the North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center. 704.332.7177. www.operacarolina.org.

Ovens Auditorium

This venue was once Charlotte's main auditorium and continues to feature musical and theatrical productions throughout the year. 2700 Independence Blvd., Charlotte. 704.372.3600. www.ovensauditorium.com.

Spirit Square Center for Arts & Education

Spirit Square offers touring performances, art classes and gallery exhibits and has made children's arts education one of its main missions. 345 N. College St., Charlotte. 704.372.1000. www.blumenthalcenter.org.

Time Warner Cable Arena

Beyond basketball, this venue hosts concerts, dance, theater and other special events. 333 E. Trade St., Charlotte. 704.688.9000. www.timewarnercablearena.com.

Theatre Charlotte

Formerly known as The Little Theatre, this group has been entertaining audiences since 1927. 501 Queens Road, Charlotte. 704.376.3777. www.theatrecharlotte.org.

Verizon Wireless Amphitheater - Charlotte

This open-air venue in University City welcomes various genres of music and includes reserved and lawn seating. 707 Pavilion Blvd., Charlotte. 704.549.5555.

CABARRUS COUNTY

Arts Experience

This project encourages youth to participate in per-

formance and educational programs to enhance their appreciation of the arts. 11 Union St. S., Concord. 704.795.2787. www.artsexperience.org.

Cabarrus Art Guild

Cabarrus Art Guild conducts workshops, field trips and exhibits. 65 Union St., Concord. 704.933.3734. www.cabarrusartguild.org.

Cabarrus Arts Council

Cabarrus Arts Council provides art enrichment in the schools and major performances of dance, theater and music for children. 65 Union St., Concord. 704.920. ARTS. www.cabarrusartscouncil.org.

Cabarrus Vocal Ensemble

Cabarrus Vocal Ensemble sings classical and pop. 120 Marsh Ave. NW, Concord. 704.782.6610.

Old Courthouse Theatre

Old Courthouse Theatre is the home for this community theater troupe in its 33rd season. 49 Spring St. SW, Concord. 704.788.2405. www.oldcourhousetheatre.org.

IREDELL COUNTY

Mooresville Artist Guild

Mooresville Artist Guild presents featured artists and sponsors local festivals. 103 W. Center Ave., Mooresville. 704.663.6661. www.mooresvilleartistguild.com.

Mooresville Community Theatre

Comedy and musicals are the fare at this community theater. 704.664.3783.

UNION COUNTY

Rainbow Theatre

This community theater emphasizes youth participation in theater, dance and music. 120 N. Main St., Monroe. 704.283.8917.

Union County Community Arts Council

Union County Community Arts Council coordinates arts celebrations in Weddington, Indian Trail, Waxhaw, Stallings and Wingate. 120 N. Main St., Monroe. 704.283.2784. www.unionarts.org.



CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

Charlotte Symphony.

Union County Players Community Theater

Union County Players Community Theater offers musicals, dramas and special shows. 704.289.7000.

Union Symphony Society

This society consists of the Union Symphony and Union Singers, which performs several concerts each year. 704.282.0028.

YORK COUNTY

Arts Council of Rock Hill and York County

Arts Council provides arts and entertainment for the community and sponsors the Arts Alive summer camp and gallery crawls throughout the year. 121 E. Main St., Rock Hill. 803.328.2787. www.yorkcountyarts.org.

Catawba Cultural Preservation Project

Catawba Cultural Preservation Project displays examples of Catawba Indian traditions. 1536 Tom Steven Road, Rock Hill. 803.328.2427. www.ccpccrafts.com.

Fort Mill Community Playhouse

Fort Mill Community Playhouse produces several shows a year including a dinner theater performance. 615 Banks St., Fort Mill. 803.548.8102. www.fortmillplayhouse.org.

Narroway Productions

Biblical musical dramas are presented by volunteer actors in their new theater. 3346 Hwy. 21, Fort Mill. 803.831.8893. www.narroway.net.

Rock Hill Community Theatre

Rock Hill Community Theatre presents several dramatic productions during the year. 803.324.2578. www.rhcommunitytheatre.org.

Places to Go and Things to Do

Anne Springs Close Greenway

This protected natural area of 2,300 acres includes 35 miles of trails for hiking biking and horseback riding, its own lake, picnic sites and a campground. 1600 U.S. 21 Bypass, Fort Mill. 803.547.1000. www.leroysprings.com/Greenway.html.

Backing Up Classics

History hits the road at this car museum near Lowe's Motor Speedway. 4545 Concord Pkwy. S., Concord. 704.788.9500. www.backingupclassics.com.

704.401.3200. www.billygraham.org/BGLibrary_Index.asp.

Carolina Raptor Center

See bald and golden eagles, owls, hawks and other birds of prey at this center, located at Latta Plantation Park. 6000 Sample Road, Huntersville. 704.875.6521. www.carolinaraptorcenter.org.

Carowinds

Visitors of all ages will enjoy this amusement park that straddles the N.C./S.C. state line. 14523 Carowinds Blvd., Charlotte. 704.588.2600. www.carowinds.com.

Catawba Cultural Center

This center on the Catawba Indian Reservation preserves the culture of the Catawba Nation with an emphasis on literature and crafts. 1536 Tom Steven Road, Rock Hill. 803.328.2427. www.ccppcrafts.com.

Charlotte Museum of History & Hezekiah Alexander Homesite

Discover how earlier Charlotteans lived at this complex, which includes the city's oldest dwelling, dating back to 1774. 3500 Shamrock Drive, Charlotte. 704.568.1774. www.charlottemuseum.org.

Charlotte Nature Museum

Next to Freedom Park, this urban science center exhibits animals and plants of the Piedmont and includes a butterfly garden. 1658 Sterling Road, Charlotte. 704.372.6261. www.discoveryplace.org.

Charlotte Trolley and Trolley Museum

Board the historic trolley at the Atherton Mill complex in South End for a ride. 2104 South Blvd., Charlotte. 704.375.0850. www.charlottetrolley.org.

Cricket Arena

This music venue seats 10,500 and hosts concerts, children's shows, rodeos, the circus and basketball tournaments. 2700 E. Independence Blvd., Charlotte.



Carowinds.

CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

Bank of America Stadium

Particularly after their 2004 Super Bowl debut, the Carolina Panthers' 73,778-seat, black-and-blue stadium dominates its end of Uptown and is worth a trip even without a game scheduled. Tours are conducted each Wednesday and group tours can be scheduled during the week. 800 S. Mint St., Charlotte. 704.358.7407. www.panthers.com/stadium.

Billy Graham Library

Learn about the humble beginnings and fascinating career of the nation's best-known evangelist, Billy Graham, who grew up in Charlotte. This 40,000-square-foot complex includes a dairy barn-styled library with exhibits, the Graham family homeplace, a bookstore and a café. 4330 Westmont Drive, Charlotte.



GARY O'BRIEN/CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden.

704.372.3600. www.cricketarenacharlotte.com.

Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden

Spread out over 110 acres, these gardens feature colorful flowers, distinctive plants, fountains and trails. 6500 S. New Hope Road, Belmont. 704.825.4490. www.dsbg.org.

Discovery Place

Science and technology take center stage at this hands-on museum, which includes discovery halls, an aquarium, the Charlotte Observer IMAX® Dome Theatre, the Challenger Learning Center and KidsPlace toddler room. 301 N. Tryon St., Charlotte. 704.372.6261. www.discoveryplace.org.

EnergyExplorium

Learn about different forms of energy with hands-on exhibits at McGuire Nuclear Station. 13339 Hagers Ferry Road, Huntersville. 704.875.5600. www.duke-energy.com/visitor-centers/energyexplorium.asp.

Hickory Furniture Mart

The nation's leading home furnishings resource. A 100 factory stores, outlets and galleries offering more than a thousand lines, most sold at discount. Complete with a hotel, gourmet café and coffee bar, and a shipping service. 2220 Hwy. 70 SE, Hickory. 800.462.MART. www.hickoryfurniture.com.

Historic Brattonsville

Take a step back in time as costumed performers depict 18th and 19th century life on a Southern planta-

tion. Also of interest is the Revolutionary War battlefield, which played a role in the making of the movie "The Patriot." 1444 Brattonsville Road, McConnells. 803.684.2327. www.chmuseums.org/ourmuseums/hb.

Historic Rosedale

This home and eight acres were once the centerpiece of a 911-acre plantation. 3427 N. Tryon St., Charlotte. 704.335.0325. www.historicrosedale.org.

Jesse Helms Center

This center honors native son Jesse Helms, longtime U.S. senator and nationally known conservative. 3910 U.S. 74 E., Wingate. 704.233.1776. www.jessehelmscenter.org.

Latta Place

Catch a glimpse of backcountry life at this circa-1800 home in Latta Plantation Park. 5225 Sample Road, Huntersville. 704.875.2312. www.lattaplantation.org.

Lowe's Motor Speedway

Visit Charlotte's superspeedway on a tour that includes pit road and the garage area. On days when the track isn't in use, you can also ride around the 1.5-mile oval. 5555 Concord Pwky. S., Concord. 704.455.3200. www.lowesmotorspeedway.com.

McDowell Nature Center

Delight kids with the creepy, crawly insects featured at this education center and the surrounding 1,108-acre McDowell Park on Lake Wylie. 15222 York Road, Charlotte. 704.588.5224. www.charmeck.org.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CAROLINA RAPTOR CENTER

Carolina Raptor Center.

Mooresville Racers' Shops

Nicknamed Race City USA, Mooresville is home to many NASCAR racing teams that welcome fans for shop tours and souvenir shopping. www.racecityusa.org.

Museum of the Alphabet

Learn how man's alphabets and languages developed and how Wycliffe Bible Translators develop written representations of spoken l



CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

U.S. National Whitewater Center.

Museum of York County

Films, planetarium, art galleries, nature trail and exhibits including more than 200 mounted African animals. 4621 Mount Gallant Road, Rock Hill. 803.981.9182. www.chmuseums.org.

N.C. Auto Racing Hall of Fame

Winning Winston Cup and Indy cars park alongside dragsters in this salute to the history and heroes of auto racing. 119 Knob Hill Road, Mooresville. 704.663.5331. www.ncarhof.com.

Ovens Auditorium

This venue was once Charlotte's main auditorium and continues to feature musical and theatrical productions throughout the year. 2700 Independence Blvd., Charlotte. 704.372.3600. www.ovensauditorium.com.

Polk Memorial

This rustic memorial pays tribute to James K. Polk, the nation's 11th president, who was born here in 1795. 12031 Lancaster Hwy., Pineville. 704.889.7145. www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hs/polk/polk.htm.

Queen City Tours

For a close-up look at your new city, try a tour. 3125 Eastway Blvd., Charlotte. 704.566.0104. www.queencitytours.com.

Reed Gold Mine

Cabarrus County was the site of the nation's first authenticated gold find. 9621 Reed Mine Road, Midland. 704.721.GOLD.



CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

Reed Gold Mine.

guages. 6409 Davis Road, Waxhaw. 704.843.6066. www.jaars.org/museum/alphabet.

Museum of the Waxhaws/Andrew Jackson Memorial

President Andrew Jackson, known as "Old Hickory," grew up nearby. 8215 Waxhaw Hwy. (N.C. 75 E.), Waxhaw. 704.843.1832. www.perigee.net/~mwaxhaw.



CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

Charlotte Trolley.

www.ah.dcr.state.nc.us/sections/hs/reed/reed.htm.

Time Warner Cable Arena

The Bobcats' arena hosts musical, dance, theater and other performing arts groups. 333 E. Trade St., Charlotte. 704.688.2295. www.timewarnercablearena.com.

UNC Charlotte Botanical Gardens

Take a break from city life at three green spots: the Van Landingham Glen, a rhododendron garden; the Susie Harwood Garden, with year-round displays; and the McMillan Greenhouse, which includes a rain forest and orchids. UNC Charlotte, 9201 University City Blvd., Charlotte. 704.687.2364. gardens.uncc.edu.

U.S. National Whitewater Center

This premier rafting and kayaking facility offers outdoor fun for spectators and participants alike. The park features a multi-channeled whitewater river as well as trails, a camping area and a climbing center. 820 Hawfield Road, Charlotte. 704.391.3900. www.usnwc.org.

Verizon Wireless Amphitheater – Charlotte

This open-air venue in University City welcomes rock, pop and rap artists and includes reserved and lawn seating. 707 Pavilion Blvd., Charlotte. 704.549.5555.

Wing Haven

A garden and bird sanctuary in Myers Park. 248 Ridgewood Ave., Charlotte. 704.331.0664. www.winghavengardens.com.

Special Events



CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

St. Patrick's Day Parade.

THE CHARLOTTE REGION CELEBRATES with festivals, sports events and activities of all kinds to suit any interest. Here's a brief look at some perennial favorites; keep an eye on local newspapers, radio and TV for others.

Arts festivals are among Charlotte's most popular events. Festival in the Park (www.festivalinthepark.org), an arts and crafts festival around Freedom Park's lake, appears every September.

Several festivals celebrate Charlotte's international and ethnic ties, including the St. Patrick's Day Parade and Irish Festival (www.charlottestpatsday.com) in March, the Loch Norman Highland Games (www.ruralhillfarm.org) near Davidson in April, the Yiasou Greek Festival (www.yiasoufestival.org) in September and UNC Charlotte's International Festival (<http://ifest.uncc.edu>) in September. Novello (www.novelofestival.net), a festival sponsored by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library, draws thousands in October to

hear authors such as John Hart, Sarah Paretsky and Scott Turow.

Rock Hill invites visitors to its 10-day Come-See-Me festival (www.comeseeme.rockhill.net) in April.

Sports events always draw big crowds in and around Charlotte. Here are some of the biggest: the Queens Cup Steeplechase (www.queenscup.org) at Mineral Springs in Union County in April, the Wachovia Championship PGA tournament (www.wachovia-championship.com) in May at Quail Hollow Country Club and the Charlotte Ultraswim (www.justswim-mac.org) in June.

NASCAR races roar twice a year at Lowe's Motor Speedway (www.lowesmotorspeedway.com), including race week with the Nextel All-Star Challenge and Coca-Cola 600 in May and the Bank of America 500 in October. Racing excitement spills from the speedway into Uptown during Speed Week each May. You can enjoy a parade, fireworks, free concerts, food and



CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

Yiasou Greek Festival.

special events leading up to the Coca-Cola 600.

Holidays are prime times for fun. Fireworks and a concert spark the city's Fourth of July festivities. On Thanksgiving, the Carolinas Carrousel Parade (www.carrouselparade.org) salutes princesses chosen from area high schools and opens the Christmas season with Santa's arrival.

Folks who love collecting ideas for their homes will enjoy the many home tours. The Mint Museum (www.mintmuseum.org) sponsors two of the best – the Home and Garden Tour in April and the Antiques Show in October. The Charlotte Symphony Guild (www.symphonyguildcharlotte.org) sponsors the ASID Designer House each September. The Home Builders Association of Charlotte (www.hbacharlotte.com) presents HomeArama each spring. Many neighborhood groups and private companies also sponsor home tours throughout the year, where you can look at renovated older homes or spectacular new ones.

Many organizations sponsor exhibits and trade shows at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart, the Charlotte Convention Center and other sites around town. Southern Shows Inc. (www.southernshows.com) sponsors several Charlotte favorites, including the Southern Spring Show in February-March, the Southern Ideal Home Show in September-October and the Southern Christmas Show in November. 📍



CHARLOTTE OBSERVER FILE PHOTO

UNCC International Festival.