GARDEN&GUN

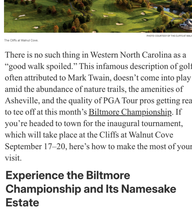
TRAVEL

A Golf Lover's Guide to Asheville

Make the most of your trip to this month's inaugural Biltmore Championship

BY CRAI BOWER

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The Cliffs at Walnut Cove. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CLIFFS AT WALNUT COVE

There is no such thing in Western North Carolina as a "good walk spoiled." This infamous description of golf, often attributed to Mark Twain, doesn't come into play amid the abundance of nature trails, the amenities of Asheville, and the quality of PGA Tour pros getting ready to tee off at this month's Biltmore Championship. If you're headed to town for the inaugural tournament, which will take place at the Cliffs at Walnut Cove September 17–20, here's how to make the most of your visit.

Experience the Biltmore Championship and Its Namesake Estate

The last PGA Tour event held in Asheville was won by Ben Hogan in 1942; his third consecutive win in the mountain city inspired him to cancel his retirement plans. Over eighty years later, the Jack Nicklaus–designed Cliffs at Walnut Cove will host the Biltmore Championship for at least the next four years.

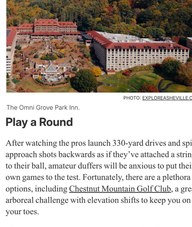


PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE CLIFFS AT WALNUT COVE

A fire pit overlooking the Cliffs at Walnut Cove.

Whether you're a golfer, a gardener, or just curious about America's largest home, no trip to greater Asheville is complete without a visit to Biltmore. The connection between the 1895-built estate and this year's tournament is more than shared nomenclature; George, Edith, and Cornelia Vanderbilt were all avid golfers, and the property's original layout included a nine-hole course. In 1922, Cornelia hit the inaugural drive to open the Biltmore Forest Country Club, the Donald Ross–designed course that, over a century later, remains the benchmark of Western North Carolina golf architecture.

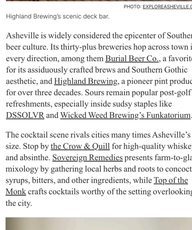


PHOTO: EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

The Omni Grove Park Inn.

Play a Round

After watching the pros launch 330-yard drives and spin approach shots backwards as if they've attached a string to their ball, amateur duffers will be anxious to put their own games to the test. Fortunately, there are a plethora of options, including Chestnut Mountain Golf Club, a great arboreal challenge with elevation shifts to keep you on your toes.

"The Asheville region is home to more than forty championship golf courses, with unique mountain-terrain characteristics like tight tree-lined fairways and elevation changes," says Vic Isley, president and CEO of Explore Asheville, a co-sponsor (with Biltmore) of the Biltmore Championship. "The Omni Grove Park Inn Golf Course, designed by Donald Ross in 1925, is one of the most historic tracks in the South."

Order a Round

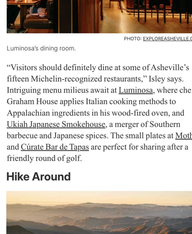


PHOTO: EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

Highland Brewing's scenic deck bar.

Asheville is widely considered the epicenter of Southern beer culture. Its thirty-plus breweries hop across town in every direction, among them Burial Beer Co., a favorite for its assiduously crafted brews and Southern Gothic aesthetic, and Highland Brewing, a pioneer pint producer for over three decades. Sours remain popular post-golf refreshments, especially inside sudsy staples like DSSOLVR and Wicked Weed Brewing's Funkatorium.

The cocktail scene rivals cities many times Asheville's size. Stop by the Crow & Quill for high-quality whiskey and absinthe. Sovereign Remedies presents farm-to-glass mixology by gathering local herbs and roots to concoct syrups, bitters, and other ingredients, while Top of the Monk crafts cocktails worthy of the setting overlooking the city.



PHOTO: EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

A pour from Burial Beer Co.

Dine Around

PHOTO: EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

Luminosa's dining room.

"Visitors should definitely dine at some of Asheville's fifteen Michelin-recognized restaurants," Isley says. Intriguing menu milieus await at Luminosa, where chef Graham House applies Italian cooking methods to Appalachian ingredients in his wood-fired oven, and Ukiah Japanese Smokehouse, a merger of Southern barbecue and Japanese spices. The small plates at Mother and Cúrate Bar de Tapas are perfect for sharing after a friendly round of golf.

Hike Around

PHOTO: EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

A view from Craggy Pinnacle.

Access to wilderness, waterfalls, and trails routinely casts Asheville at or near the top of annual "Best Mountain Towns" lists. The Craggy Pinnacle Trail presents panoramic vistas after just over a mile of moderate hiking. The Graveyard Fields walk unveils picturesque Second Falls after only one-third of a mile; another half mile leads to the two-tiered Upper Falls. "I encourage visitors to check out the Blue Ridge Parkway, which is fully open in Buncombe County," Isley says. "It runs just past the Cliffs [golf club] and offers a variety of trails, waterfalls, and scenic overlooks." The Biltmore Championship is conveniently timed to catch the first glints of fall color along the parkway.

PHOTO: EXPLOREASHEVILLE.COM

Fall colors at Graveyard Fields.