

# CHARLOTTE

## Sensational Sports and Recreation

**WITH THE NFL'S CAROLINA PANTHERS** and the NBA's Charlotte Hornets calling Charlotte home, this city is the pinnacle for professional sports as well as recreation and tourism. Whether it is a mountain bike ride along a trail or world-class golf at the Wells Fargo Championship, 50 laps in the pool or 600 laps at Charlotte Motor Speedway, there is something for everyone. Charlotte spectators can cheer the home team in just about any sport and enjoy the city's many beautiful parks, specialized facilities, annual festivals and other community events.

The city's mild climate makes it perfect for outdoor activities and competitive events most of the year. Charlotte hosts many foot races (5K and 10K) annually, and a marathon has been run every year in Charlotte since 1977. For those needing variety in their competitive workouts, Mecklenburg County is home to three major triathlons, which attract more than 1,750 participants each year.

**MORE THAN 72,000  
FANS REGULARLY ATTEND  
PANTHERS HOME GAMES.**

The Catawba River and its system of man-made lakes provide many activities for water lovers. The river is home to the new U.S. National Whitewater Center, which is an official U.S. Olympic Training Site. Located just 30 minutes north of the city, Lake Norman has 520 miles of shoreline and is the state's largest man-made lake. Sailing, wind surfing, boating and fishing are just a few of the activities to be enjoyed on this 34-mile long lake.

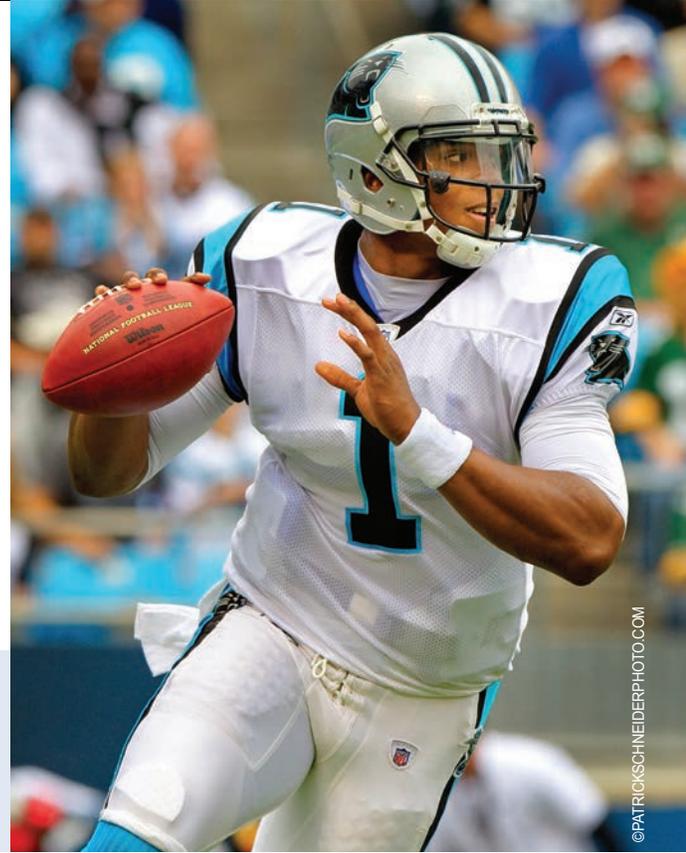
### Spectacular Spectator Sports

Charlotte is a national sports hub, home to NFL, NBA, NASCAR, AAA baseball, MLL (lacrosse), USL (soccer) and an NHL/AHL affiliate.

### NFL — The Carolina Panthers [panthers.com](http://panthers.com)

Bank of America Stadium, in downtown Charlotte, has 73,778 seats and had the eighth highest attendance of all NFL teams for the 2013 season. The \$187 million state-of-the-art facility, designed specifically with football in mind, gives every spectator a clear view of the playing field.

This team began when NFL owners unanimously selected Carolina as the 29th NFL franchise on Oct. 26, 1993. Just 10 years later in 2003, the Panthers played in Super Bowl XXXVIII against the New England Patriots. In 2013, the Panthers finished 12-4 and clinched their third



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NFC South division championship in just 19 seasons as a franchise.

### NASCAR — Stock Car Racing [charlottemotorspeedway.com](http://charlottemotorspeedway.com) [nascarhall.com](http://nascarhall.com)

Charlotte is the "pit stop" for all things NASCAR and was chosen as the home of the new NASCAR Hall of Fame and museum in 2006. The \$195 million facility opened in 2010 and is located in the heart of downtown Charlotte.

Charlotte Motor Speedway is the largest sports facility in the Southeast and is recognized as one of the finest NASCAR facilities in the U.S. It is also used for race team testing and automobile manufacturing research. The Speedway has 140,000 permanent seats and capacity for nearly 40,000 more spectators in the infield of the 1.5-mile super speedway. As one of the busiest sports facilities in the country, Charlotte Motor Speedway hosts three series of racing:

- Sprint Cup Series: NASCAR Sprint All-Star Race, Coca-Cola 600 and Bank of America 500.
- Nationwide Series: Dollar General 300 and History 300.
- Camping World Truck Series: North Carolina Education Lottery 200.

The Coca-Cola 600 has the second-largest attendance of all sporting events in the nation.



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### NBA — The Charlotte Hornets hornets.com

When the Charlotte Hornets relocated from Charlotte to New Orleans, the NBA promised Charlotte a new team. Black Entertainment Television founder Robert Johnson was awarded the franchise in 2004, making him the first majority African-American owner in U.S. professional sports. The Charlotte Bobcats began playing in the Time Warner Cable Arena, a new \$260 million arena built in the center city specifically for the NBA. In 2010, Michael Jordan announced he was buying the majority ownership of the team. In 2014, the team became the Charlotte Hornets again.

The Time Warner Cable Arena is also used for the Charlotte Checkers (NHL/AHL affiliate) as well as for concerts and other major events such as the Democratic National Convention in 2012.

### Baseball — The Charlotte Knights charlotteknight.com

The Charlotte Knights are the Chicago White Sox's AAA affiliate, so watching a game in Charlotte is just one step below major league. The Charlotte Knights made it to the International League Championship Series in their 2012 season. Games are held at BB&T Ballpark in uptown Charlotte, a new \$54 million stadium that brought baseball back to the city of Charlotte. The 10,000-seat facility opened in April 2014 just in time for the 2014 season.

### Lacrosse – Charlotte Hounds charlottehounds.com

Major League Lacrosse expanded into Charlotte for the 2012 season. The Charlotte Hounds are part of an eight-team league and play home games at American Legion Memorial Stadium in uptown Charlotte. In their second season, the Hounds came in second place in the MLL championship game against the Chesapeake Bayhawks.

### Hockey — The Charlotte Checkers gocheckers.com

In 2010, the old ECHL Charlotte Checkers Ice Hockey Team became a member of the Western Conference of the American Hockey League. The team is the AHL affiliate of the Carolina Hurricanes of the NHL. The new Checkers played their first home game in the Time Warner Cable Arena on October 15, 2010, in front of 12,512 spectators. This attendance set a record for a hockey game in Charlotte, and each year the record continues to break with 12,933 fans in 2011 and 13,102 in attendance in 2012.

### Golf — The Wells Fargo Championship wellsfargochampionship.com

Golf lovers are fortunate to have the PGA's Wells Fargo Championship played in Charlotte each year during the first week in May.

The Wells Fargo Championship is one of the top events on the PGA TOUR, where such prestigious players as Tiger Woods, Phil Mickelson, Jim Furyk and Rory McIlroy compete at Charlotte's Quail Hollow Club. The championship has raised more than \$16 million for charity. The Quail Hollow Club will also host the 99th PGA Championship in 2017.

In addition, Augusta National is not too far away for Masters Tournament enthusiasts. Nor is the Verizon Heritage at Harbour Town Links in Hilton Head.

### Soccer — Charlotte Eagles and Lady Eagles charlotteeagles.com

The Charlotte Eagles, a men's soccer team, plays in the Second Division of the United Soccer League (USL).



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It is the second-toughest division and the foundation of professional soccer in the United States.

The Charlotte Lady Eagles play in the W-League of the USL where in their first year of play (2001), they were the W-2 national champions. Both Eagles games can be attended at various soccer fields in the Charlotte area.

### **Roller Derby** [charlotterollergirls.com](http://charlotterollergirls.com)

Charlotte is home to the Women's Flat Track Derby Association's Charlotte Roller Girls (CLTRG). Established in 2006, CLTRG is a skater-owned and operated organization comprised of men and women.

### **Competitive Class Act:** **Collegiate Sports**

#### **College Football — The Belk Bowl** [belkbowl.com](http://belkbowl.com)

The Belk Bowl game pits an ACC team against a Big East team. The first game hosted in Charlotte (Virginia vs. West Virginia) set a record for the largest crowd at 75,535 attendees, making it the second-highest attended inaugural bowl game in NCAA history. The bowl has averaged more than 62,000 attendees per year over its 12-year history.

#### **College Basketball — The CIAA Tournament** [ciaatournament.org](http://ciaatournament.org)

The Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) moved its tournament to Charlotte in 2006. Since then it has called Charlotte home. In 2011, the CIAA Tournament set attendance records by drawing more than 190,000 fans during the week-long event.

The tournament is made up of 10 historically Black colleges situated on the East Coast, and the tournament's goal is to raise money for CIAA scholarship funds. The CIAA is more than a basketball tournament – it also features various entertainment and well-known celebrities.

### **First-Class Tourism Facilities** **U.S. National Whitewater Center** [usnwc.org](http://usnwc.org)

The U.S. National Whitewater Center (USNWC) is an outdoor adventure center along the Catawba River that provides the world's most unique outdoor recreation and environmental learning experience. In 2008 and 2012, it hosted the U.S. Olympic Trials and Canadian Olympic Trials for canoe slalom. The USNWC is just 15 minutes from downtown Charlotte. Since its opening, Olympic-caliber athletes, weekend warriors and casual observers have been able to experience this world class sports and training center. The facility includes hiking and mountain biking trails, eco trekking, a high ropes course, a 57-foot climbing tower, a zip line, and flat and whitewater kayaking.



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**AT CAROWINDS, THE INTIMIDATOR, NAMED FOR DALE EARNHARDT, IS THE TALLEST ROLLERCOASTER AT THE PARK AND COST \$23 MILLION TO BUILD.**

### **Carowinds Amusement Park** [carowinds.com](http://carowinds.com)

Located on the North and South Carolina border, this 122-acre theme park offers more than 100 breathtaking rides, such as the \$23 million Intimidator, the park's tallest rollercoaster, as well as water parks. Carowinds has a variety of shows and attractions at the recently renovated Palladium; kids can enjoy Snoopy's Starlight Spectacular — a million dollar walk-through experience with lights and a stunning fireworks show.

Another amphitheater, Verizon Amphitheatre, opened in 1991. This 19,000-seat facility hosts a variety of entertainment options including rock concerts, Broadway shows and classical programs.

### **Robust Recreational Options**

Charlotte also has a wealth of opportunities for those who want to participate rather than watch. A great place to start is at the area's parks.

## Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department parkandrec.com

Mecklenburg County has more than 210 parks with tennis courts, swimming pools, golf courses, community centers, bowling alleys, picnic areas, ball fields, fitness trails, mountain biking, fishing, soccer fields, disc golf courses, playground equipment, skate parks, a dirt bike track, and an indoor water park, which opened in 2002. Specialized facilities include the Latta Plantation Park with its equestrian center, raptor center and canoeing. Numerous organized sports programs are available to residents of all ages. For information concerning the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Programs, call 704.336.3854. The parks Locator Map can be found at [maps.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/website/parklocator](http://maps.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/website/parklocator).

The Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department also operates the pools and gyms at the Mecklenburg County Aquatic Center. Featuring a 50-meter pool and a 25-yard pool with handicap accessibility, this outstanding facility offers an incredibly wide variety of programs for all ages and abilities. Charlotte also offers other public and private facilities for swimming. Visit [charmeck.org](http://charmeck.org) for further information.

The YMCA of Greater Charlotte is one of the largest YMCA programs in the country with 19 facilities and more than 150,000 members ([ymcacharlotte.org](http://ymcacharlotte.org)). The metro area is also home to a variety of private gyms, indoor rock walls, in-line and ice hockey rinks and many other facilities to stay active all year long.

## Golf

An avid golfer does not have to drive far to find quality golfing in the Charlotte area. Two of Golf Digest's top courses in North Carolina are in Charlotte at Charlotte Country Club and at Quail Hollow Club. Charlotte has 21 private and 80 public and semi-private golf courses.

## Disc "Frisbee" Golf

The Charlotte area has become a haven for disc golf and has 22 disc golf courses for the public to enjoy. The Charlotte region hosts at least two major tournaments a year and currently has the most and finest quality courses of any city in the U.S.

## Mountains or Beach: Only Two Hours Away

There are an unlimited number of attractions within hours of Charlotte. For those who love to stroll amidst natural splendor and view spectacular mountain



scenery, a drive along the Blue Ridge Parkway is less than two hours away. The North Carolina mountains are also home to several ski and snowboarding areas, which offer fun and challenging slopes. Adventure in the mountains continues throughout the year with whitewater rafting hitting its peak season in the spring and rock climbing, backpacking, camping and mountain biking trips possible almost year round.

In addition, the Pinehurst-Southern Pines area, the golf capital of the world, is only a short two-hour trip. Steeped in tradition, the eight courses of Pinehurst proper are renowned for their quality and subtleties. Its premier course, Pinehurst No. 2, is rated as having some of the finest greens in the world.

## Cuisine and Culture is Always on the Calendar

Charlotteans love to socialize and celebrate; as a result, the community calendar is full of events ([charlottesgotalot.com](http://charlottesgotalot.com)). These include Speed Street, a huge outdoor festival held downtown in conjunction with NASCAR's Coca-Cola 600 race. The Carolina Renaissance Festival and the Loch Norman Highland Games are hosted in nearby Huntersville. In the fall the Festival in the Park features arts, crafts, music and entertainment in a setting of full, fall colors. Cultural celebrations occur at different times throughout the year, including Greek, Italian, Indian, Native-American, Latino and Asian festivals. The Taste of Charlotte Festival each year celebrates local cuisine and attracts top celebrity chefs to the area, and the Charlotte Shout Festival also offers a celebration of the arts and culinary exploration.

To receive a free brochure about North Carolina's many exciting and diverse attractions, call 1.800.VISITNC.



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