

## **Race Cars, Rafts, and Roller Coasters: The Charlotte Thrill Seeker's Tour**

While many people see Charlotte as a buttoned-down business mecca, but there are plenty of places in and around the Queen City to let loose for fun and adventure. From white knuckles to whitewater, this four-day tour is sure to get your adrenaline pumping!

### **4-Day Itinerary**

#### **Day 1**

Explore the world of NASCAR, from championship race teams to the track that can make or break them. Take your own turn behind the wheel of a real race car, or perhaps just a NASCAR-inspired go kart.

#### **Day 2**

Discover the US National Whitewater Center, with its Olympic-quality rafting and kayaking channels, climbing walls and hiking/biking trails.

#### **Day 3**

Let your inner child run wild at the Carowinds amusement park, with its heart-stopping roller coasters and massive water park.

#### **Day 4**

Scale the cliffs at Crowders Mountain State Park, or simply hike to the top of Kings Pinnacle for a view of the Charlotte city skyline to the east and the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west.



*With so much to see and do in the area, we recommend the following 4-day itinerary. Enjoy your visit by mixing and matching events to your particular interest. Be sure to check days and hours of operation for each venue.*

### **Day One**

Your thrill seeker's tour begins at **Lowe's Motor Speedway**, home of three annual NASCAR races. Take the "Feel The Thrill Tour", which takes you into several areas that are off-limits on race days. Visit the NEXTEL Cup garage, travel down pit road and take a picture in the victory circle. Then, get a feel for the 24-degree banking of the racetrack by riding in a Speedway van.

If you have more need for speed, sign up for the **Richard Petty Driving Experience** or the **Jeff Gordon Racing School** where you can drive or ride in a race car at speeds of up to 180 miles per hour. If that's a little too much of a thrill, head over to the **NASCAR Speedpark** at **Concord Mills**, where you can pilot a NASCAR-inspired go kart around five exciting tracks.

Then take a tour of one of the many race shops located in and around the Concord-Mooresville area. More than 80% of all NEXTEL teams and 70% of Busch teams call this area home, so you're bound to find a favorite here. Most have souvenir shops and viewing rooms where you can catch the crew in action.

Finally, end your racing-themed day with dinner at **Big Daddy's Restaurant and Oyster Bar** in **Mooresville**. It has race cars proudly displayed outside, and great seafood and steaks inside. Who knows? You might even catch a glimpse of your favorite driver here.

### **Day Two**

Today, we take to the water at the **US National Whitewater Center** just west of **Charlotte** on the Catawba River. The center is the world's largest manmade whitewater river, and the home of training and trials for the American Olympic team.

Here, you can learn and participate in whitewater rafting or kayaking, or take a more leisurely paddle in the flatwater of the Catawba. If you want to stay dry, the center also has hiking and mountain bike trails, as well as one of the largest outdoor climbing facilities in the country.

On weekends, the Whitewater Center also has a series of zip lines available, one that actually goes over the river! If it's an outdoor experience you're looking for, you can probably find it here.

Later, you can wind down with food and drinks at the **River's Edge Bar & Grill**, either in air conditioned comfort or on the outdoor deck overlooking the river. On Thursday nights from May through October, the **Subaru River Jam** provides music to go with some of the best sunsets around.

### **Day Three**

Straddling the border between North and South Carolina off of Interstate 77, the **Carowinds** amusement park offers a day's worth of fun all in one spot. The Nighthawk, a roller coaster that takes riders through eight inversions (most of them flying face down) is just one of the many thrill rides here. However, there are also kid-friendly rides, concerts and events, and the 20-acre Boomerang Bay water park to keep everyone happy.

After a full day of fun, find your way into **Pineville** and have dinner at the **Waldhorn Restaurant**. This authentic German-themed restaurant features such classic dishes as Sauerbraten and Spatzle (German spaghetti), and is home to the Charlotte area's most popular Oktoberfest celebration every fall.

### **Day Four**

Today, head south on Interstate 85 into **Gaston County** and spend some time at **Crowders Mountain State Park**, a popular place for city dwellers from Charlotte who want to have a wilderness experience just 45 minutes from home.

The park contains two peaks, Crowders Mountain and Kings Pinnacle, which are remnants of a mighty mountain range that once towered thousands of feet above sea level. Saved from encroaching mining interests in the 1970s, the park quickly became a haven for outdoor enthusiasts of the entire region.

Here, you can try to climb one of the park's challenging rock faces, rent a canoe, fish for bass or bream, or hike one or more of the ten trails. Take the 1.7 mile Pinnacle Trail to the highest point in Gaston County (1,705 feet) and get spectacular views of the distant Charlotte

skyline to the east and the beginnings of the Blue Ridge Mountains to the west.

By the time you've finished your day at Crowders, you'll probably be ready for a big plate of North Carolina Barbecue. Head back into **Charlotte** and belly up to a table at **Mac's Speed Shop**, a former car repair facility on South Boulevard. The barbecue, the classic Southern side dishes, and the 160+ beers from around the world have made this a local favorite, but Mac's also specializes in wings, ribs, and brisket. And don't feel the need to watch your calories... you've done enough activity over the last four days to make up for it!

### **Where to eat:**

Big Daddy's Restaurant & Oyster Bar (Mooresville) – dinner  
River's Edge Bar & Grill (Charlotte) – lunch, dinner  
Waldhorn Restaurant (Pineville) – lunch, dinner  
Mac's Speed Shop (Charlotte) – lunch, dinner

### **For more information:**

Visit Charlotte

[www.visitcharlotte.com](http://www.visitcharlotte.com)

Cabarrus County Convention & Visitor's Bureau

[www.visitcabarrus.com](http://www.visitcabarrus.com)

Gaston County Department Of Tourism

[www.gastontourism.com](http://www.gastontourism.com)

July 2008

north carolina  
visitnc.com 1-800-VISIT NC