

CAROLINA COOL

Hendersonville packs a vacation punch with outdoor splendor, top-drawer shopping, popular cideries, and sophisticated dining.

BY MICHAEL J. SOLENDER



If the only thing you know about Hendersonville is that it's a drive-by town on your way from Charlotte to Asheville, you're missing a top Carolina getaway destination in the cradle of the Blue Ridge.

This mountain jewel has outsized amenities and attractions from local cideries and specialty shopping to casual-chic dining and easy access to the spectacular Blue Ridge Parkway.

History buffs geek out over downtown Hendersonville being listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is home to several sites on the local Heritage Trail, an assemblage of 13 historically significant sites defining the region's origins.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CRAIG DISTL; TIFFANY HILL INN; BOLD ROCK; CHRIS SCHENCK



Historic Main Street

Visitors enjoy late 19th- and early 20th-century architecture of the handsomely restored Main Street. Henderson County Courthouse is a fine example of Greek Revival grandeur on full display as massive colonnades and a patinaed copper dome crown the building built in 1905 by Biltmore House architect Richard Sharp Steel. Stop inside and visit to the **Henderson County Heritage Museum**, a small but delightful look back in time.

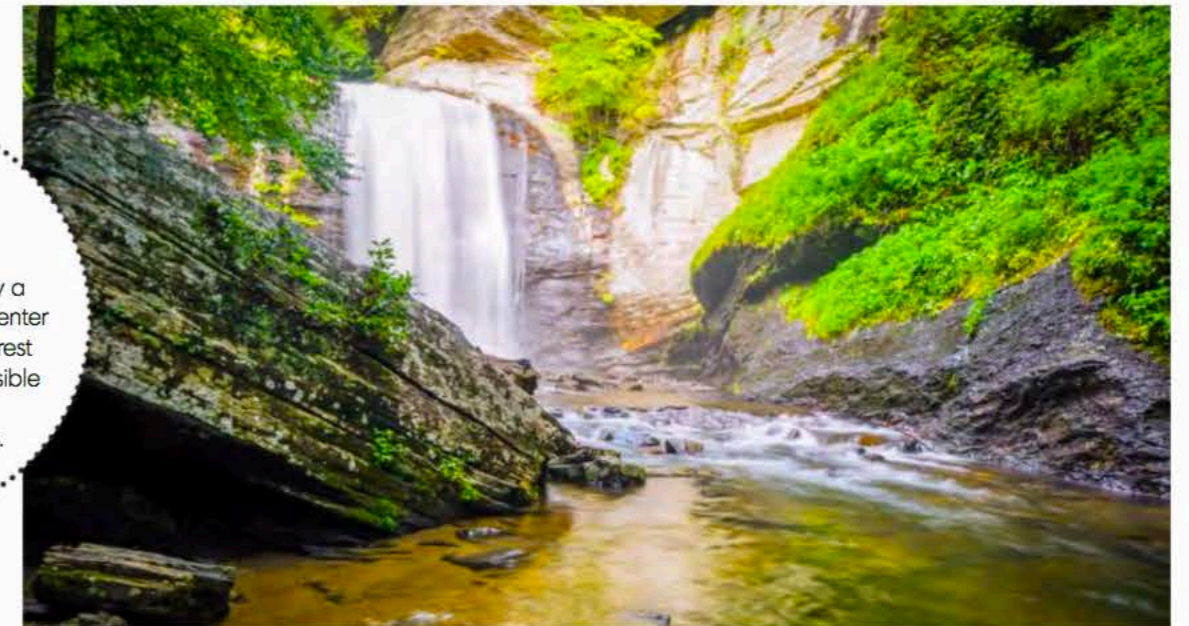
Continue along Main Street to explore the charming retail district studded with casual bistros, coffee houses, one-of-a-kind boutiques. A funky collection of public art bears greet tourists and townies alike on nearly every street corner.

Main Street favorites include **Mast General Store** where the throwback candy counter satisfies a sweet tooth and the vast outdoor gear supply readies the most ardent hikers. **The Carolina Mountain Artist Guild** offers locally handcrafted items from pottery and walking sticks to jewelry and textiles. **Mezzaluna** will help fuel your adventure with wood-fired pizzas and tasty pasta specials. Nearby **Poe House** is a great end-of-the-day stop for local craft beer or hard cider and tasty pub-grub.



CHASING WATERFALLS

Looking Glass Falls is only a five-minute drive from the center of the Pisgah National Forest and one of several accessible waterfalls in the park offering close-up views.

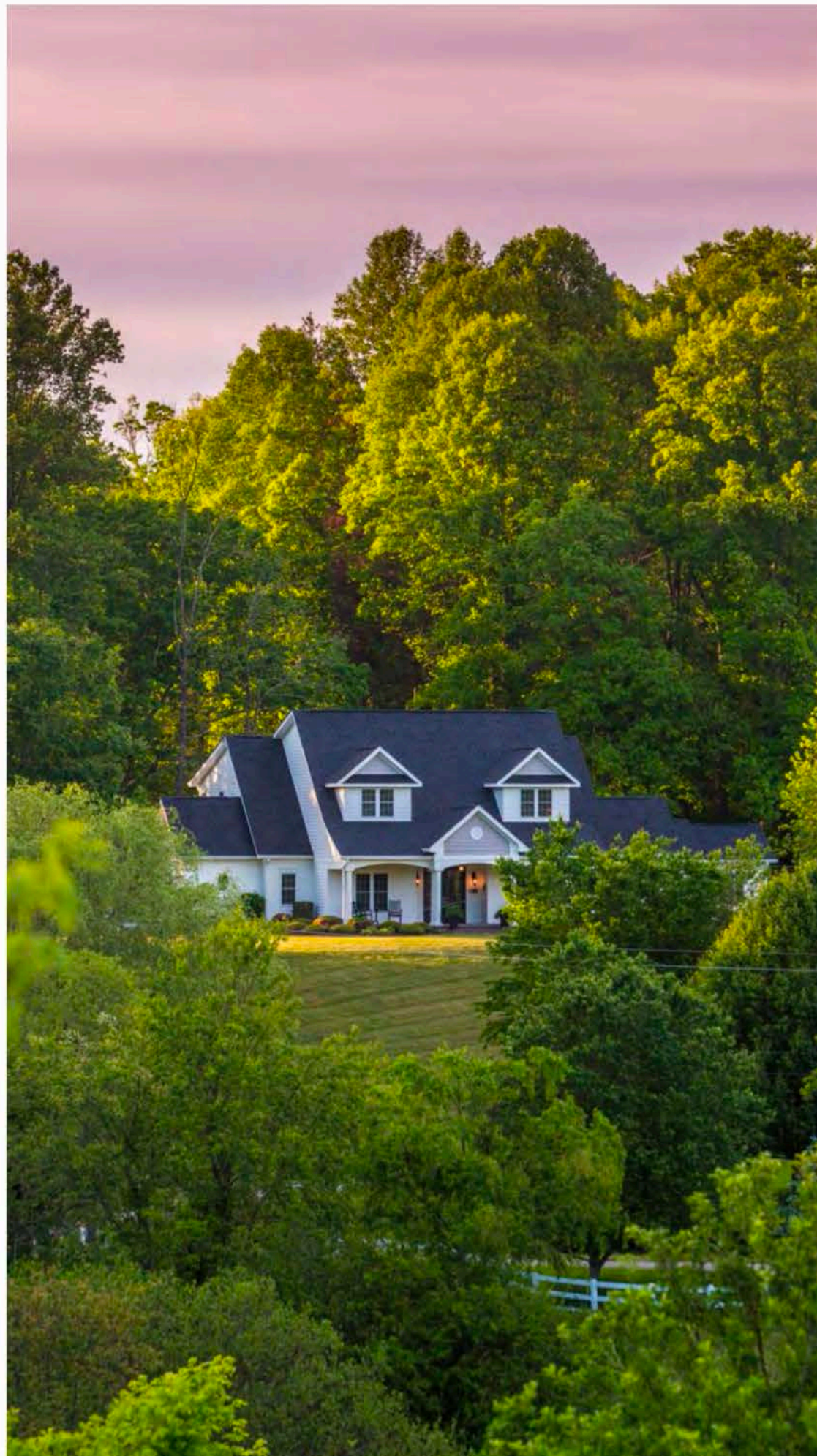


Tiffany Hill Inn

It's hard to beat breakfast at Tiffany's and that is exactly what's in store when you stay at the stylish and ultra-comfy Tiffany Hill Inn in Mills River.

Southern hospitality and casual elegance await visiting guests, who are instantly made to feel at home in this gorgeous ridgetop retreat. The large guest suites are inspired by Southern locales favored by the innkeeper. Breakfast at the Tiffany Hill Inn is a luxurious three-course affair where dessert is always served—the coconut-chess pie is divine—providing a sweet start to the day.

Stroll in the gardens, curl up with a good book, the Sunday paper, or just linger on the porch with a bottle of wine.



Hard Cider

Henderson County is one of the top apple-producing counties in the nation and home to numerous cideries. The annual Apple Country Cider Jam, a food, music, and cider fest will be held on April 22 this year.

A visit to **Bold Rock Cidery** in nearby Mills River introduces you to the subtleties of hard cider with complimentary tastings and a tour of the operations. Bring your own picnic here to enjoy with your cider or get some fine barbecue from the food truck outside.

Flat Rock Cider Works' new tasting room on Main Street is a fun, game-filled environment where sampling the fruit-based hard ciders and meeting new friends is in order. Don't miss its award-winning blackberry cider—it has a nice sweet-tart snap that's refreshing.

A long-favored way to experience the region is traversing the Blue Ridge Parkway, one of the most scenic byways in the country. Connect just outside of Asheville and head north to the **Southern Highland Guild Craft & Folk Art Center**. There you'll find mountain craftwork for sale, as well as one of the finest collections of historic regional textiles, pottery, baskets, and artwork in the country.



TAKE A HIKE

Springtime in Western Carolina is a prime time to explore the Blue Ridge Mountains. Take a short drive to the Pisgah National Forest Visitors Center and chat with the rangers for advice on the perfect hike. There are more than 500,000 acres to explore with mountain biking, fishing, camping, and birding.