

Hendersonville, N.C., celebrates the apple

MARIA SONNENBERG, FOR FLORIDA TODAY 9:56 a.m. ET April 6, 2017



(Photo: Photo provided by Sam Dean photography)

Should there be some truth to the old saying about the apple a day distancing the eater from visits to medical facilities, then the folks at Hendersonville, North Carolina, must be the healthiest people on the planet — this place is Apple Central, the largest apple-producing county in North Carolina.

Toodle around the winding roads of this pretty little town 22 miles from artsy Asheville and you will soon get into the groove of watching the apple orchards, in the summer laden with the beautiful fruit, in the winter stylized sculptures.



Bold Rock is one of the many tasty hard ciders you can find in Hendersonville, North Carolina. (Photo: Sam Dean Photography)

In this part of town, apples are made to be eaten ... and drunk. The area is fast gaining a reputation for cideries such as Bold Rock and Flat Rock Ciderworks. Hard cider makers across the Tar Heel State depend on Hendersonville apples, so it stands to reason the local cideries have a home court advantage. On Saturday, April 22, they will prove it when Hendersonville goes wild for hard cider with its Apple Country Cider Jam.

The apples make a presence in the local wineries. Saint Paul Mountain Vineyards offers in its portfolio Wallace Hard Cider, sweet as the nature of its namesake, the owner's Jack Russell terrier. Burntshirt Vineyards, also in Hendersonville, offers an apple wine you can suitably enjoy on the trellised deck overlooking the vineyards and the rolling Blue Ridge Mountains beyond.

[Romance in historic Williamsburg](http://www.floridatoday.com/story/life/style/2017/01/19/romance-historic-williamsburg/96777750/)

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To round out the day between visits to cideries and wineries, Hendersonville provides a winning combination of good restaurants, great views and a wide range of activities. Cradled by the Blue Ridge Mountains on a scenic plateau 2,200 feet above sea level, Hendersonville boasts moderate summers and winters, yet the seasons remain distinct. Apples love the climate, and so do people.

Restaurants, most with outdoor seating, line Main Street, home to quirky shops and to a branch of the legendary Mast General Store. Just outside town is Bullington Gardens, a public — and free — botanical garden. Jump Off Rock, a favorite with painters and photographers, offers a clear view of the Blue Ridge and Pisgah mountains. On a clear day, you can see as far as the Biltmore Estate in Asheville. Hiking trails will take care of your exercise for that day.



Connemara was famed writer Carl Sandburg's home. (Photo: Provided by Henderson County Tourism)

The village of Flat Rock, nicknamed the “Little Charleston of the Mountain” by the South Carolina gentry that built their summer estates there, is just around the corner and here you will find Flat Rock Playhouse, state theater of North Carolina, as well as just across the street from the Playhouse, Connemara, the Carl Sandburg home and the 80 acres where his wife raised a world-famous goat herd while the author continued “dirtying paper,” as he called his writing efforts. Visitors can tour the Civil War-era house the Sandburgs loved and stroll the property, stopping at the barns to say hello to the descendants of Mrs. Sandburg's goats.



Hubba Hubba Smokehouse is one of Hendersonville, North Carolina's, best eateries. (Photo: Provided by Sam Dean Photography)

Within walking distance of Connemara is Rainbow Row, home to Hubba Hubba Smokehouse, perfect stop for lunch on a mild day, for this is an al fresco establishment. The authentic wood-fired smokehouse specializes in a Carolina low and slow barbecue of painstakingly cooked and hand-pulled meats and made from scratch sauces and sides. Chow down on the goodness and take in the resident roosters and cats, who cohabit peacefully in this sprawling temple to barbecue.



Tiffany Hill Bed & Breakfast is a great place to rest your weary head in Hendersonville, North Carolina. (Photo: Provided by Bed & Breakfast at Tiffany Hill)

Although the area includes many of the hotel chains, there can be no better place to rest your head than at Bed & Breakfast on Tiffany Hill at nearby Mills River. Florida native Selena Einwechter wanted to open a B&B when she grew up and left her career orchestrating lottery systems around the world. She didn't want just any old inn, however, so she engineered a stunning complex so artfully designed and decorated that it has been featured in Southern Living. Not only is the place gorgeous, but it is minutes away from the impressive Sierra Nevada Brewery, which offers free tours with tastings, a café specializing in locally sourced dishes and beautiful grounds to explore.

Apple Country Cider Jam in April provides a great reason to take in this pretty part of the country during the prettiest of seasons, but you really don't need an excuse to enjoy the civilized country charms of Hendersonville.

[Yorktown, Jamestown renew American pride](http://www.floridatoday.com/story/life/style/2016/11/25/yorktown-jamestown-renew-american-pride/94301194/)

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If you go..

What: Apple Country Cider Jam

When: 1 to 6 p.m., Saturday, April 22

Where: South Main Street, downtown Hendersonville

Highlights: Ticketed tasting event, cidery tours, food, music

Information: 800-828-4244 or visithendersonvillenc.org/ciderjam

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