

Proud of its commitment to culture, Charlotte's increasingly varied social calendar runs the gamut. Among many events, visitors can choose from opera, art, ballet, theatre, festivals, and more. From marquees touting the latest Broadway smash hit to the sounds of jazz drifting out of the corner martini bar, variety is certainly a key to the city's sophistication. Outstanding museums and attractions tell powerful stories with their history and showcase the city's spirit as well as the world's wonders. Helping to promote arts, the Arts and Science Council of Charlotte-Mecklenburg supports 27 cultural organizations, neighborhood festivals, arts education programs and much more that result in over 65,000 performances and events annually.

# culture

The **Mint Museum of Art** and **Mint Museum of Craft + Design** guide visitors through ever-changing exhibits featuring some of the world's finest collections. The **Mint Museum of Art**, North Carolina's first art museum, is a rich resource with a collection of American art spanning three decades of creativity. The museum makes its home in the Myers Park neighborhood where it once served as the first branch of the United States Mint, coining \$5 million in gold from 1836 to the outbreak of the Civil War. The Mint Museum of Craft + Design, located in vibrant Center City, showcases a dazzling collection that traces North Carolina's historical roots in crafts such as furniture, ceramics, wood-working, and more. Slated for completion by 2009, is a new cultural powerhouse facility in Center City's Third Ward that will better accommodate the Mint Museum of Craft + Design's growing art collections, expand exhibit space for the Mint Museum of Art, and provide a needed wing for traveling exhibitions. [themintmuseum.org](http://themintmuseum.org)

**The Billy Graham Library** consists of exhibits and multimedia displays that celebrate the mission of renowned evangelist, Billy Graham. His life's work touched over 210 million people in 185 countries and this family-friendly complex will now honor his beliefs and share his gospel. Free to the public, visitors will journey through history, from Billy Graham's humble beginnings on the family dairy farm to becoming a beloved worldwide evangelist. The recreated dairy farm environment also features a replica of the original Graham family homestead, a resource center, and an on-site restaurant with a country-kitchen menu. [billygraham.org/library](http://billygraham.org/library)

**The Levine Museum of the New South** exhibits some of the most fascinating collections of post-Civil War Southern history including its award-winning centerpiece exhibit, "Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers." Visitors can explore the New South's major reinventions over the past 150 years that resulted in critical turning points in industry, city planning, civil rights, and more. Dedicated and knowledgeable staff members can provide the most up-to-date Queen City visitor information. [museumofthenewsouth.org](http://museumofthenewsouth.org)



The hottest theatre, musical acts, comedians, ballets, operas, and more grace the playbills at the **North Carolina Blumenthal Performing Arts Center** throughout the year. This cultural destination in Center City includes three separate performance spaces: Belk Theatre, seating 2,100; Booth Playhouse, seating 434; and the Studio Theatre, seating 150. Performing arts organizations including the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, Charlotte Philharmonic, Opera Carolina and the NC Dance Theatre take center stage with cutting-edge, regular programming. Also, the popular Broadway Lights Series draws thousands to the region for an engaging lineup of Broadway productions such as Tony Award winners *Spamalot*, *Wicked*, and Disney's *The Lion King*. Nearby **Spirit Square Center for Arts and Education** is a community center focused on the arts and community theater. It's home to two arts venues: the McGlohan Theatre, accommodating up to 720 people, and the Duke Power Theatre, accommodating up to 150. In addition, Spirit Square's **Light Factory** - a museum of photography and film - is always free to the public. [blumenthalcenter.org](http://blumenthalcenter.org)

From the universe within the body to the depths of the sea, the exhibits at **Discovery Place** offer visitors in-depth and memorable learning experiences. The South's premiere hands-on science and technology center located in Center City, features more than 300 exhibits including a live rain forest. The *Charlotte Observer* IMAX Dome Theatre at Discovery Place features a giant screen surrounding audiences with larger-than-life images. Permanent and traveling science exhibitions such as *Gunther von Hagens' Body Worlds: The Anatomical Exhibition of Real Human Bodies* and *The Dead Sea Scrolls* attract over 650,000 visitors from near and far annually. [discoveryplace.org](http://discoveryplace.org)

**The Charlotte Museum of History** serves as a welcoming center for community education programs and exhibits that tell the story of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area from the 18th to the 20th centuries. The Hezekiah Alexander Homesite also lies on the grounds of the Charlotte Museum of History. Built in 1774, the house is the oldest surviving structure in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Interpretive docents dressed in 18th-Century costume guide visitors throughout the property daily. [charlottemuseum.org](http://charlottemuseum.org)

An innovative, multidisciplinary center, the **Afro-American Cultural Center** rejoices in the triumphant spirit of the African-American experience through performing arts programs, visual arts exhibits, arts education camps, workshops and special events preserving history and culture. Soon to have a prime spot on Center City's cultural corridor – the Wachovia First Street Project – a new facility will quadruple its current space to allow additional room for exhibits, lectures, theatre, and more. The new Center will also include a roof-top terrace for receptions, meetings, and community gatherings. [aacc-charlotte.org](http://aacc-charlotte.org)

The concept for **ImaginOn: The Joe & Joan Martin Center** sprang to life when the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County and the Children's Theatre of Charlotte were facing similar dilemmas of space constraints to meet the growing demands of their services. ImaginOn was the inventive result – a one-of-a-kind center that combines both the library and theatre while fostering an innovative approach to education, learning and the arts. The 160,000 square foot facility includes a 570-seat theater, story-telling area, production studio, and children's library with 40 computers. Through books, technology, classes, productions, and programs, over 1,200 visitors daily explore new ideas, nurture their creative potential and celebrate the diversity of the local community, region, and world. [imaginon.org](http://imaginon.org)

The **McColl Center for Visual Art** is a progressive, not-for-profit organization that was the brainchild of Bank of America founder Hugh McColl. Committed to enhancing and promoting visual arts in the Southeastern United States, the McColl Center seeks to catapult artists to the forefronts of contemporary art. The stunning renovated church facility provides artists with resources while in residence, a challenging and dynamic environment, collaborations among artists and the community, bold exhibitions, and a strong affiliation with arts organizations worldwide. [mccollcenter.org](http://mccollcenter.org)

One of the South's premier arts festivals, **Charlotte Shout** is a month-long celebration dedicated to all things culture – food, music, art, theatre, and more. Among the many festivities taking place each September, celebrity chefs gather at a preview gala to show off their skills in a state-of-the-art, double kitchen stage at the culinary school, Johnson & Wales University. Also not to be missed is the Grand Tasting Event, which showcases some of the best chefs from across the nation and draws in more than 35,000 hungry attendees. Other events ranging from outdoor jazz concerts to gallery crawls to improv comedy shows are just a sampling of the enriching happenings to be experienced during this cultural jubilee. [charlotteshout.com](http://charlotteshout.com)



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