

A few reasons to visit Greenville, S.C.

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There's a reason The New York Times named Greenville, S.C. as one of their 52 Places to Go in 2017. I was eager to visit, having heard so much about the city, but not knowing what to expect when I arrived.

With a very pedestrian-friendly and small town-oriented epicenter and many other activities to do that are not within the center of the city — Greenville should be on your travel list.

ARTS & CULTURE

With my mom in tow, we drove just a couple hours north (*not a bad drive if you're thinking of visiting*) to Greenville during Mother's Day weekend. If you're ever looking to plan a trip there, that is the prime time. It's when they hold their big **Artisphere** (www.artisphere.org) weekend. The city is chock full of events that anyone can enjoy. We were treated to three days of arts and culture from live music to the big event where 135 artists from 27 states were showcased on a never-ending road to display and sell their wares.

One of the big draws were the “live” art pieces — brave folks who were posed along the way completely dipped in gold paint. I don't know how they were able to hold their poses for such a long time, but their dedication to the craft was admirable.

There were three different stages throughout the grounds for local, regional and national music acts — there was no shortage of entertainment.

Artisphere is not an event you can accomplish in just one day, it requires

multiple return trips. One of the big draws was the **Culinary Arts Cafe**. Several restaurants, including a high school culinary arts program, showcased their best dishes for a small price and judges (I was a lucky one!) picked their favorite. There was everything from Elote, a firecracker slider topped with pimento cheese, buffalo shrimp pizza and more. If anything, its a great chance to stop for lunch or a chance to be your own judge and sample all of the delights.

WHERE TO REST YOUR HEAD

You **HAVE** to stay at the **Aloft Greenville Downtown** (www.aloftgreenvilledowntown.com/). It is the most spectacular hotel. When you first walk in, you're greeted by great music and a colorful decor. A bar, pool tables and lounge area are just a ways down from the door and if you're feeling adventurous it gets very lively at night.

But even with all of that, the **BEST** part about this hotel is not only its pet-friendly policy. It is without a doubt the fact that the hotel offers a dog adoption program. On any given day or weekend — or however long it takes — they have a resident dog or puppy who actually lives on the grounds that's available for hugs and cuddles. I've never heard of a hotel doing such a thing, but it's a great conversation starter and believe me it's very difficult to not go home without a new pet! And if you're just too sad about leaving your pet at home, guests can even volunteer to walk the dogs. I mean what better experience can you ask for?

SO MUCH TO DO, SO LITTLE TIME

Yes, Artisphere is the big draw, but don't forget to explore the rest of Greenville. It's a great city and I can see why many call it home. If you're still in art mode, check out the **Greenville County Museum of Art** (www.gcma.org). Each floor of the museum offers a unique variety of

artwork, plus it was nice to get away to a quiet place in the city (with air conditioning). There's a large collection of Andrew Wyeth works — Wyeth Dynasty — on display showing a multitude of work by Andrew and other members of his family. It's a must-see.

Getting caught up in the artwork in the museum, we didn't make it to the **Greenville Zoo** (www.greenvillezoo.com/) in time. But I suggest stopping by especially if you have kids in tow.

If you're a foodie like me **AND** you love barbecue, then a seat on the **BBQ Trail Tour** is required. Led and created by John Nolan, the \$39 tour took us to three of Greenville's best barbecue spots where we got to not only sample the food, but meet the owners and learn all about the history of their businesses. It's a great immersive experience and it gives you a chance to sample a different kind of barbecue that you might not be used to in Georgia. Not only that, but even riding on John's 14-passenger bus is an experience. He's full of knowledge and even had a handy PowerPoint presentation prepared. Tours are open to the public and held every Saturday. He not only showcases the barbecue scene, John also does several other tours throughout the city, just visit www.greenvillehistorytours.com to find what suits you.

If you stay downtown, just about everything is within walking distance. It just depends on how far you're willing to walk. But be encouraged this is a great walking town, with well-marked signage and is easy to navigate. Even if you don't visit during Artisphere weekend, you'll still have plenty of things to do otherwise from the many great restaurants, to the amazing cultural mainstays. Visitors of all ages will find something just for them in Greenville.