



36 Miles from Asheville: **Hot Springs**

Spend a day soaking up the charms of this small town (population 635!) that's been drawing visitors for more than two centuries



Hot Springs offers scenic views and soothing waters.

Established around 1800, this charming mountain town was named for the mineral springs that bubble up from the earth between 100 and 104 degrees. By the late 1800s a series of hotels and inns catered to travelers visiting the mountains to take in the curative waters. And that's still a pretty good reason to spend a day or two in Hot Springs, which also offers just about everything you'd want from a vacation—charming local shops, luxurious spas, a cozy restaurant nestled in a turn-of-the-century hotel, and a stunning spot to rest your no-longer-so-weary head. Here's how to make the most of your trip.

Enjoy a post-soak massage.

Many folks who live in this corner between Asheville and the Tennessee border make the trip to the Hot Springs Resort and Spa for a soak (with a view of a scenic creek or river) several times a year. The spa offers massage therapy, including some fantastic deep-tissue treatments (\$70 for 60 minutes) and hot stone massages, as well as herbal body wraps, making the trek even more enticing.

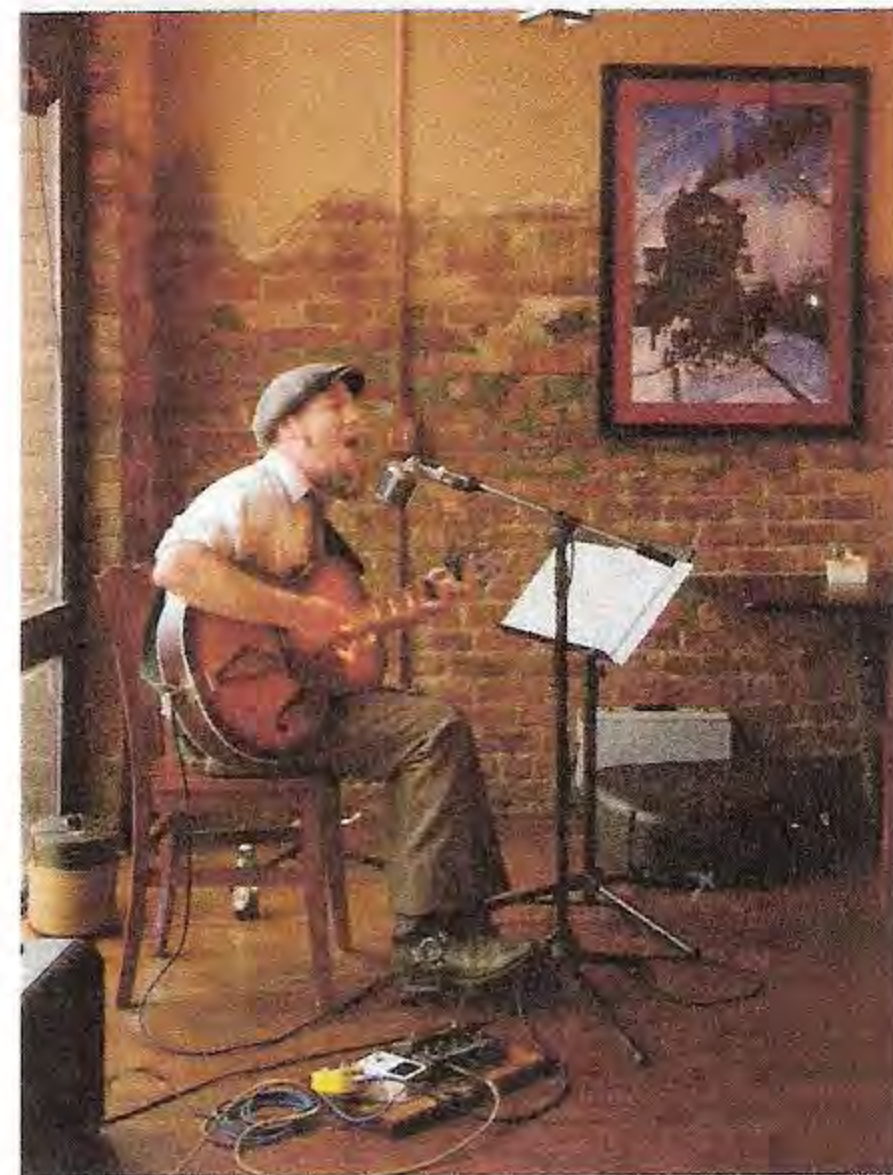
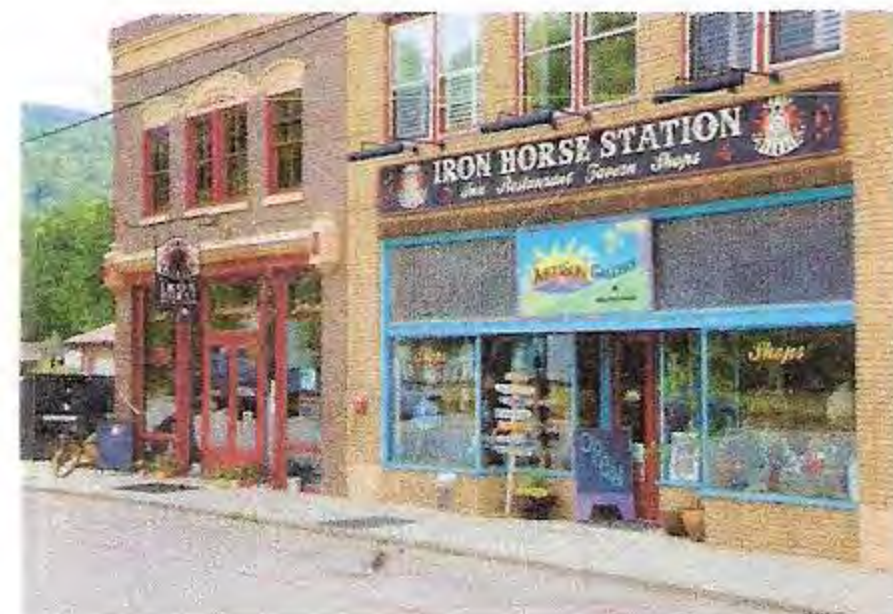
Hot Springs Resort and Spa, 315 Bridge Street; 828/622-7676. The resort offers tent and RV sites (\$20 and up), cabin rentals (\$45 and up), and suites (\$145 and up).

Peruse local artists' wares.

Sunny Riggs started visiting Hot Springs in 2002. The artist was so taken with the slow pace and the close community that she eventually moved here and recently opened a spacious gallery in a restored downtown



CLOCKWISE: The Mountain Magnolia Inn occupies an 1868 Victorian home; The Iron Horse Station offers food, drink, lodging, and music.



building. Now artists and craftspeople from the area maintain booths of wares in the gallery, selling everything from homemade beeswax-based body creams to hand-hammered silver earrings and stone jewelry. Where else can you find arts, crafts, antiques, and edibles ranging from quirky decorative birdhouses to bottles of Portuguese vinho verde? There's also a coffee bar that serves up baked muffins and granola.

ArtiSun Gallery & Marketplace,
16 South Andrews Avenue;
artisungallery.com
or 828/622-3573

Grab a burger and a pint.

Made up of three restored buildings, The Iron Horse Station features a restaurant housed in a 1860s structure (said to be one of the oldest in

the county) that first operated as a haberdashery and later as a movie theater. It now attracts families and friendly groups huddled at tables over fat, juicy burgers (have one with a pint of Highland Gaelic Ale or Kashmir IPA, both made in Asheville) or wickedly creamy mac and cheese. The restaurant and tavern are adorned with dark wood flooring, raw brick walls, and a soaring pressed tin ceiling that often reverberates with music from the local bands sometimes playing there in the evenings. Having too much fun to leave? The Station includes a turn-of-the-century hotel with rooms off one main hallway, transom-topped doors, and a common foyer seating area.

The Iron Horse Station, 24 South Andrews Avenue; 866/402-9377. Iron Horse 8-oz. Burger, \$13.99; Best Ever Mac & Cheese, \$2.99; Rooms begin at \$65/night.

Sleep in a stately Victorian home.

If you're looking for some honest-to-goodness, old-fashioned tranquility, then head over to the Mountain Magnolia Inn, within a sprawling 1868 Victorian home that Peter and Karen Nagle resurrected from oblivion more than a dozen years ago. The couple added a second story and a restaurant that serves five-course meals four days a week. The house was built by Col. James H. Rumbough, who then owned and operated the Mountain Park Hotel, where the Hot Springs Resort and Spa is now located—a perfect metaphor for the confluence of old and new in a town that has become a restorative escape for hikers and Sunday day-trippers alike. Mountain Magnolia Inn, 204 Lawson Street; 800/914-9306. Rooms begin at \$100/night. 