



Change in Motion

As Raleigh, North Carolina, transforms into a hub for tech and tourism, three innovative hotels are leading the charge.
By Betsy Andrews

RALEIGH IS BOOMING. I experienced this firsthand on a trip last summer, eating and drinking my way around the city, a new business on seemingly every corner. This vibrancy is largely down to two things: a blossoming tech industry—Apple announced its plan last year for a \$1 billion Raleigh campus, scheduled to open in 2023—and the young transplants and visitors who have followed.

As a result, new hotels are popping up to accommodate both business travelers and vacationers. Rather than look outside the city, many are tapping homegrown talent to build,

design, and furnish these sophisticated spaces. Each one is a self-contained community that shows off a decidedly contemporary vision of Raleigh, and each has its own take on this constantly evolving destination.

ORIGIN HOTEL RALEIGH

Two dramatic pieces of art anchor the lobby of this 126-room high-rise in the nightlife-forward neighborhood of Glenwood South: a giant white statue of a squirrel—a symbol of Raleigh, the City of Oaks—and a mural of a raffish Sir Walter Raleigh, the city's namesake. Walk through the common spaces, and you can't help noticing other artistic nods to the area, like a vintage neon sign for Krispy Kreme, which is based in North Carolina, or a photograph of a wolf, North Carolina State University's mascot.

I ran into the pipe-smoking Sir Walter again on my room's Do Not Disturb sign: "Sir Walter Raleigh is tired. Please come back later." Perhaps, if he were a guest at Origin today, he would have felt as calmed as I did by the sea and earth tones of the décor, and as buoyed by the polka-dot curtains and plaid armchairs. He

▲ The drawing room of Heights House, designed by Raleigh native Bryan Costello.

NATASHA JOHNSON/COURTESY OF HEIGHTS HOUSE



FROM TOP: FORREST MASON/COURTESY OF HEIGHTS HOUSE; JENNIFER COLE RODRIGUEZ/COURTESY OF HEIGHTS HOUSE; COURTESY OF ORIGIN HOTEL

might also have enjoyed the bathroom's barn door and its handsome combo of azulejo and subway tiles. And in between sending emails at the solid oak workstation—a built-in desk that spanned the entire room—he could have ordered up a pint of Red Oak Amber Lager, made in the nearby town of Whitsett, and a side of truffle fries for sustenance from Good Day Good Night, the property's restaurant, which uses regional ingredients in dishes like pad thai and carne asada tacos. originhotel.com; doubles from \$179.

HEIGHTS HOUSE

Sarah and Jeff Shepherd used to walk by a beautiful, but dilapidated, old building on strolls through their leafy Boylan Heights neighborhood. Thirtysomethings in the tech world, the couple were so taken by the abandoned mansion—which was originally constructed in 1858—that they wound up buying the place to fulfill their dream of moonlighting as hoteliers.

The sense of architectural history permeates the building, from its Neoclassical-revival façade to its foyer rotunda, which rises up to a stained-glass roof. Local interior designer Bryan Costello

chose a charcoal-and-white palette and a mix of modern Italian and vintage furnishings for the communal spaces. "I didn't want to take away from the architecture of something so beautiful with tons of pieces," Shepherd told me.

There are nine individually designed rooms, each with its own personality. Warmed by lime-wash textured walls and a candelabra-like chandelier, my soothing space lulled me to sleep at night. In the morning, before a breakfast of pastries from A Place at the Table Café, a beloved local bakery, I washed up at my bathroom's solid-stone trough sink. The sweetest touch? The claw-foot tub, set in a little raised nook. heightshouse.com; doubles from \$229.

LONGLEAF HOTEL

A converted motor lodge, the 57-room Longleaf Hotel is steeped in nostalgia, and the Prairie-style stone lattice makes it look straight out of the 1960s. My room had a similar feeling, with its wooden headboard-nightstand combo, analog bedside clock, and decorative accents made by local artisans, like illustrator Claire Craven's abstract wallpaper and Rise & Ramble's shibori tie-dyed pillows. At night, guests can help themselves to board games in the common room.

But it's not all kitsch here. Bookending the big, busy patio, a pair of mammoth steel cisterns lend architectural cool to the hotel's exterior. Their purpose is to catch rain from the roof to water the property's longleaf pines, North Carolina's endangered state tree. Like the other new hotels in Raleigh, the Longleaf aims to be a good citizen in a city that's ready to grow. thelongleafhotel.com; doubles from \$104. 🌍

▲ From top: Heights House features nine spacious guest rooms; the hotel hosts a wine and cheese hour each night.

▼ The Origin Hotel's Good Day Good Night restaurant has an open kitchen and an airy, modern dining room.

