

# The Draw of the Mountains

By Barry Silverstein



*"There are few locales I can think of with the right combination of culture, climate and the mystical, magnetic draw of the mountains."*

When the snow reached the height of the mailbox at our Massachusetts home, I thought it might be time to do more than dream about a warmer climate. Armed with the book *The 100 Best Places to Retire*, my wife and I made a list of the attributes we most wanted our new home to have.

Asheville, North Carolina, seemed to be the place that met all the criteria we set. It boasted a temperate climate, a reasonable cost of living (compared with Massachusetts) and the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Over a period of three years, we traveled to Asheville. With each visit, we discovered another wonderful restaurant, a gallery showcasing local talent, a mountain festival or a new hiking trail. We were hooked. When our daughter graduated from high school, we relocated.

Asheville is as eclectic, funky and stimulating as it is laid back, sophisticated and charming. There are no "big box" stores downtown - only small boutiques, galleries, restaurants and one of the finest independent bookstores in the region. The people are friendly, the weather is delightful and the mountains are ever-present.

My wife and I work part-time and, even so, we wish we had more time to enjoy the cultural offerings of the city and surrounding areas. There are a wealth of concerts (many free), festivals, performances and shows, especially during the summer. We take advantage of the Biltmore Estate's immaculately landscaped grounds for walks and picnics. If we ever need to unwind, a ride along the Blue Ridge Parkway greets us with awe-inspiring vistas at every turn. That puts everything in perspective.

There are few locales I can think of with the right combination of culture, climate and the mystical, magnetic draw of the mountains. Asheville, North Carolina, is a very special place.

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