



Chetola Resort & Conference Center is a top spot for Charlotte companies to gather for business events.

CORPORATE TRAVEL AND MEETING GUIDE

TARGETED MARKETS

Meetings and conventions are a key piece of North Carolina's tourism puzzle.

When Bryan Moore and his colleagues at Chetola Resort & Conference Center in Blowing Rock think about marketing their property, they keep two things in mind.

"We've realized that for the success of our resort, group business is important to us," Moore says. "We also recognize that our bread is buttered in Charlotte."

Those two points guide the efforts of Moore, director of marketing, meetings and events at Chetola.

Moore isn't alone when it comes to recognizing the importance of corporate meetings to the travel business. From the mountains to the coast, the state's meetings and conventions business is thriving.

Nearly 10% of trips taken within the state in 2017 were for business or meetings, according to Visit North Carolina. In the Piedmont region, which includes Charlotte, the Triangle and the Triad, 13% of visitors were traveling for business.

Those numbers increase, though, when you consider some individual markets.

"It's pretty much the No. 1 room driver for us," says Marcheta Cole Keefer, director of marketing and communications at Visit Winston-Salem. A study by Randall Travel Marketing shows that 25.7% of travelers in 2017 came to the city for conventions and meetings, while another 25.2% were there for business.

Those numbers are likely to climb through the end of this year, thanks to a decision by Winston-Salem officials to invest in their infrastructure for conventions and meetings.

"The convention and meeting business is obviously important for us and the foundation from which we build," says Richard Geiger, the group's president.

A \$20 million renovation of the M.C. Benton Jr. Convention and Civic Center in downtown Winston-Salem was completed in the summer of 2017. The center now includes 105,000 square feet.

"The renovation of the Benton Convention Center has obviously put us in a good position," Geiger says. "We went into this fiscal year with 10,000 more hotel rooms on the books" than in the previous fiscal year, he says. "We're seeing an uptick, definitely,



Pinehurst Resort is one of the top draws in the state for meetings as well as tourists.

because of the renovation of the convention center."

The convention-center project is only part of an overall revamping of Winston-Salem that makes the city attractive for business travelers and meeting planners.

"It really is a holistic redevelopment and reinvention of all of Winston," Geiger says. "Our downtown continues to grow and continues to see both public and private investment, which is helping tremendously."

New locally owned restaurants and shops and the rebirth of downtown as a residential area contribute to Winston-Salem's appeal. The city also has seen a jump in the number of hotels being built or renovated, including the opening

last year of a 174-room Kimpton Hotel and the planned opening of a Hotel Indigo this year. A Hampton Inn and Courtyard by Marriott are also on the way to the downtown core of Winston-Salem.

"The downtown is really our greatest asset," Geiger says.

While Winston-Salem continues to grow as a Piedmont meeting and convention spot, Greenville has solidified its spot as a down east business destination.

The growth of Vidant Medical Center and East Carolina University, the presence of businesses such as the Americas headquarters for Hyster-Yale Materials Handling and the region's location in the middle of eastern North Carolina have added



At least 500 new hotel rooms recently opened or are planned for downtown Wilmington. They will help support the city's 107,000-square-foot convention center.

to Greenville's attractiveness as a meeting destination.

"You've got a pretty well-rounded situation," says Andrew Schmidt, executive director of the Greenville Convention and Visitors Bureau. He adds that, with \$650 million in development underway, the city is about to hit a population of 100,000. "We want to showcase what we've got."

With a full-service Hilton, a newly renovated Holiday Inn and a Hampton Inn on the Greenville Convention Center campus, the city has become a popular locale for association and religious conventions. Those types of conventions, Schmidt says, often become repeat customers, as has been the case with the United Methodist Conference.

Cities such as Winston-Salem and Greenville draw their meeting business from broad areas. But a private entity such as Chetola takes



Greenville's growth includes a booming meeting business, thanks to its convention center.

a targeted approach. Nestled in the mountains less than two hours from Charlotte, the resort actively recruits meeting and convention business from the Carolinas' largest city.

The resort has set its sights squarely on the Queen City, to the point of hosting dinners with meeting planners from that region. Whether those planners

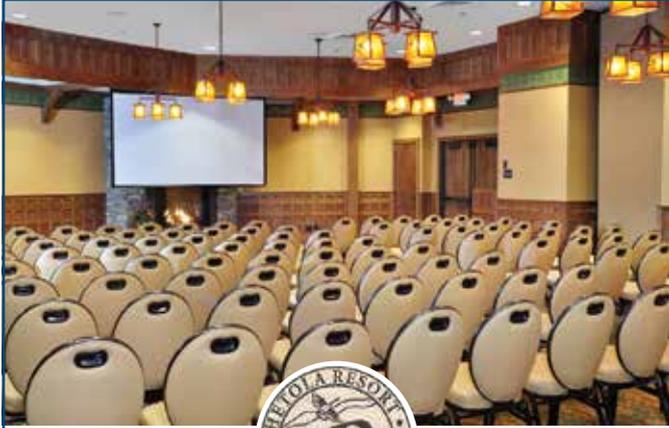


Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem is fresh off a \$20 million renovation.

come from large companies or small ones, they learn the benefits of bringing their meetings to the mountains.

"We are an hour and a half away, but we need to come to Charlotte to visit with those customers," he says. "We've elevated our game to a high level."

— Kent Bernhard Jr.



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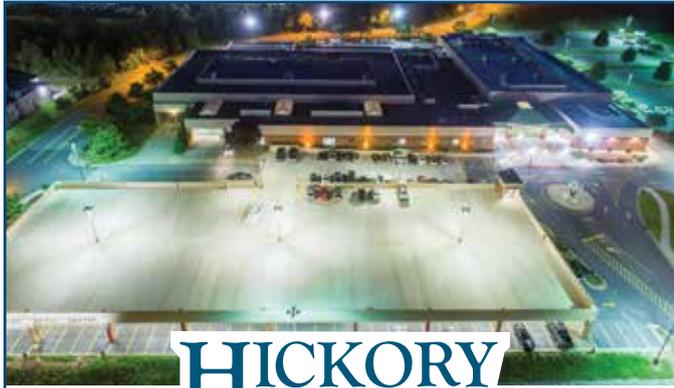
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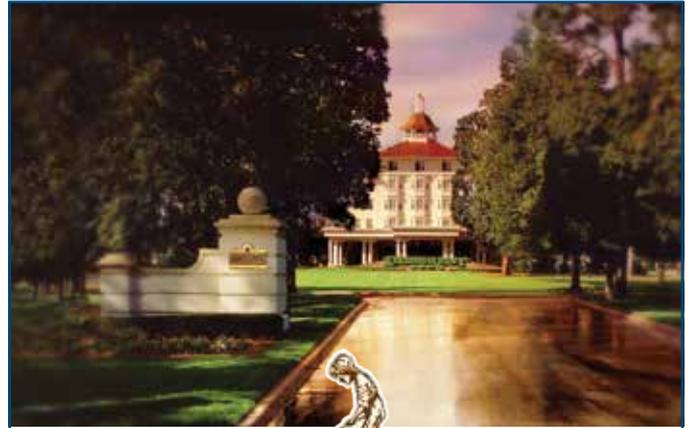
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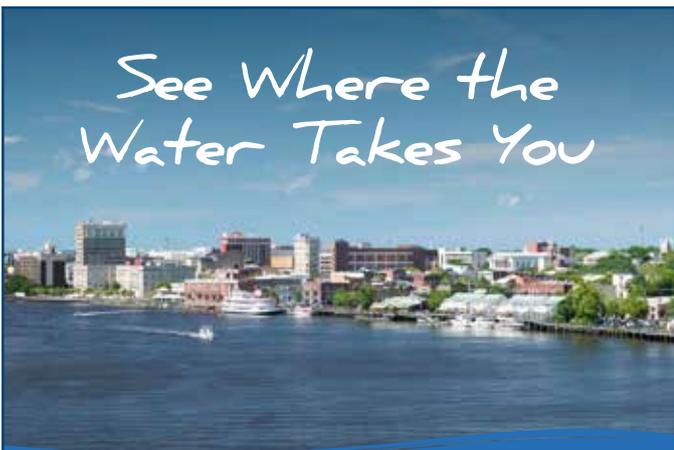
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Richard Brooks | Director of Sales & Marketing
 460 North Cherry Street, Winston-Salem, NC 27101
 336-721-2263 | marriott.com/Winston-Salem

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See Where the
Water Takes You

Located riverfront and within the city's walkable River District, Wilmington's Convention District is home to the new Embassy Suites, located adjacent to the Wilmington Convention Center, and the newly renovated Hotel Ballast. The Convention District also features several new restaurants, a marina and an event pier. A transformation of Wilmington's riverfront is underway, with more developments to come.

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Christian Schroeder, Director of Sales and Services
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