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**ALERT** **TOP STORY** **EDITOR'S PICK**

# **Oh, the places you can go (in Greensboro) this Labor Day weekend!**

**Nancy McLaughlin**

Aug 30, 2024

**C**ome on over, says Glenn Dobrogosz of the **Greensboro Science Center**, and watch sharks from the other side of 6 inches of Plexiglass.

Get an eyes-view of American history at the **International Civil Rights Center & Museum**, with exhibits that include a section of the original lunch counter and seats from sit-ins that the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said revived the civil rights movement across the South.

Or grab a beach towel and spend the day at **Wet'n Wild Emerald Pointe**, one of the largest water parks in the state with more than 40 attractions and things to do.

All are open on Labor Day.

It's the unofficial last weekend of summer. If company is coming to town, the family is staying put or those of you from out of town are up for a weekend adventure in Greensboro, there's lots to do over the Labor Day weekend.

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And it's not just bragging. The annual "Economic Impact of Travel on North Carolina counties," prepared for Visit North Carolina by Tourism Economics, shows Guilford County fifth behind Mecklenburg, Wake, Buncombe, and Dare counties in raking in tourism dollars.

Why Greensboro?

“It’s a draw for so many reasons,” Henri Fourrier, president and CEO of the **Greensboro Area Convention & Visitors Bureau**, said of local tourism.

It’s an eclectic mix, for one, he said.

Lots of it, free or low cost. Some of the sites, such as the Greensboro Science Center, offer discount to SNAP recipients who receive federal food assistance and have their cards.

Here’s a sampling of what’s available, although the convention bureau has **hundreds of events and sites** listed. Go to the websites for tips, such as reserving times at some of the high-volume sites.

## Experience history

**Guilford Courthouse National Military Park**, less than a 20-minute drive from downtown is the home of what’s considered the largest, most hotly-contested battle of the Revolutionary War’s Southern campaign. Re-enactments take place at various times during the year.

Some visitors pack a lunch, and it’s open on Labor Day.

Other history lovers might want to do a walking tour of the grounds of historic buildings, especially within a few blocks downtown. The rarest of features can be found in the buildings of local houses of worship and others. **Preservation Greensboro** lists places on its website and many have been **written about**.

“I came away concluding that Greensboro has, for its size, one of the finest collections of historic churches and synagogues in the country,” Robert Jaeger, co-founder of the nonprofit Philadelphia-based Partners for Sacred Places, said a few years ago while working on a proposed project with Preservation Greensboro to save the community’s historic and architectural treasures.

Among them: Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church on West Market Street, with its hand-carved imported pink granite exterior and period sculpture, is considered one of the last great churches built anywhere in this country.

The churches aren't open for architectural tours, but they are outdoor marvels.

When First Presbyterian Church moved from Summit Avenue in the 1920, four prominent women purchased the church's old brick buildings — portions built as early as 1892 — for a community center that eventually housed the public library as well as the **Greensboro Historical Museum**.

In 1964, the museum, which has permanent and changing exhibits, became the only tenant. Among the features that remained is a large window of the congregation's original stained glass, featuring a rendition of Jesus surrounded by children. It is never open on Mondays but will be open on Friday and Saturday.

West Market Street United Methodist Church on West Market Street, with windows recycled from the German pavilion at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, the year it was built, is often overlooked by drivers maneuvering through the city's main downtown streets.

The campus is built around a main massive tower surrounded by lots of smaller towers, stained glass, carved stone, rounded arches and gables.

Greensboro is a city of history, including stories involving the Quakers and the Underground Railroad, which ran through a thicket of trees on Guilford College called **New Garden Woods**. The trail connected runaway slaves to a route that eventually took them through Indiana. The site has an online map for self-guided tours and an observatory for resting where footprints would have been made.

Still largely in its primitive condition, this piece of history sits insulated two blocks north of Friendly Avenue in one direction, and a quarter of a mile to Jefferson Road in another. Like Deep River in High Point and the Mendenhall Homeplace in

Jamestown, Guilford County geography helps to tell the story of a time when the nation was divided by slavery.

The journey after here would have then taken about six weeks of walking to get slaves to a popular route through Indiana while traveling largely by night, not well clothed and foraging for food.

Just a few miles away on the other side of downtown is the **Blandwood Mansion**. Parts of the mansion predate the founding of Greensboro in 1808. In 1795, a farmer named Charles Bland built a four-room Federal-style house on the site. In 1822, local businessman Henry Humphreys expanded the house to six rooms.

John Motley Morehead, a lawyer and politician, bought the house in 1827. After Morehead became governor of North Carolina in the early 1840s, he hired noted New York architect Alexander Jackson Davis, the co-designer of the state capitol, to draw up an expansion for Blandwood.

Davis introduced a new style of architecture in the United States, called Italianate. Blandwood is the oldest surviving example of the style in the country, according to Preservation Greensboro.

The site is not open on Mondays but throughout the rest of the weekend.

“Blandwood stands among the most important (houses) in the nation as a turning point in American design,” according to Benjamin Briggs, president and CEO of Preservation Greensboro.

For the second year in a row the **Historic Magnolia Hotel**, a living museum and fully-restored 1949 bed and breakfast from the Jim Crow Era, ranked in the Top 10 in a national poll by travelers.

Ike and Tina Turner, Ray Charles, the Five Blind Boys of Alabama and baseball greats Jackie Robinson and Satchel Paige slept there as they traveled the segregated East Coast.

Neighbors swore that the Godfather of Soul, James Brown, sometimes joined neighborhood children playing baseball in the streets.

The Magnolia is mentioned on Page 44 of the 1955 edition of the “Negro Traveler’s Green Book” — or “The Green Book” — a state-by-state annual listing of the places relatively friendly to black people.

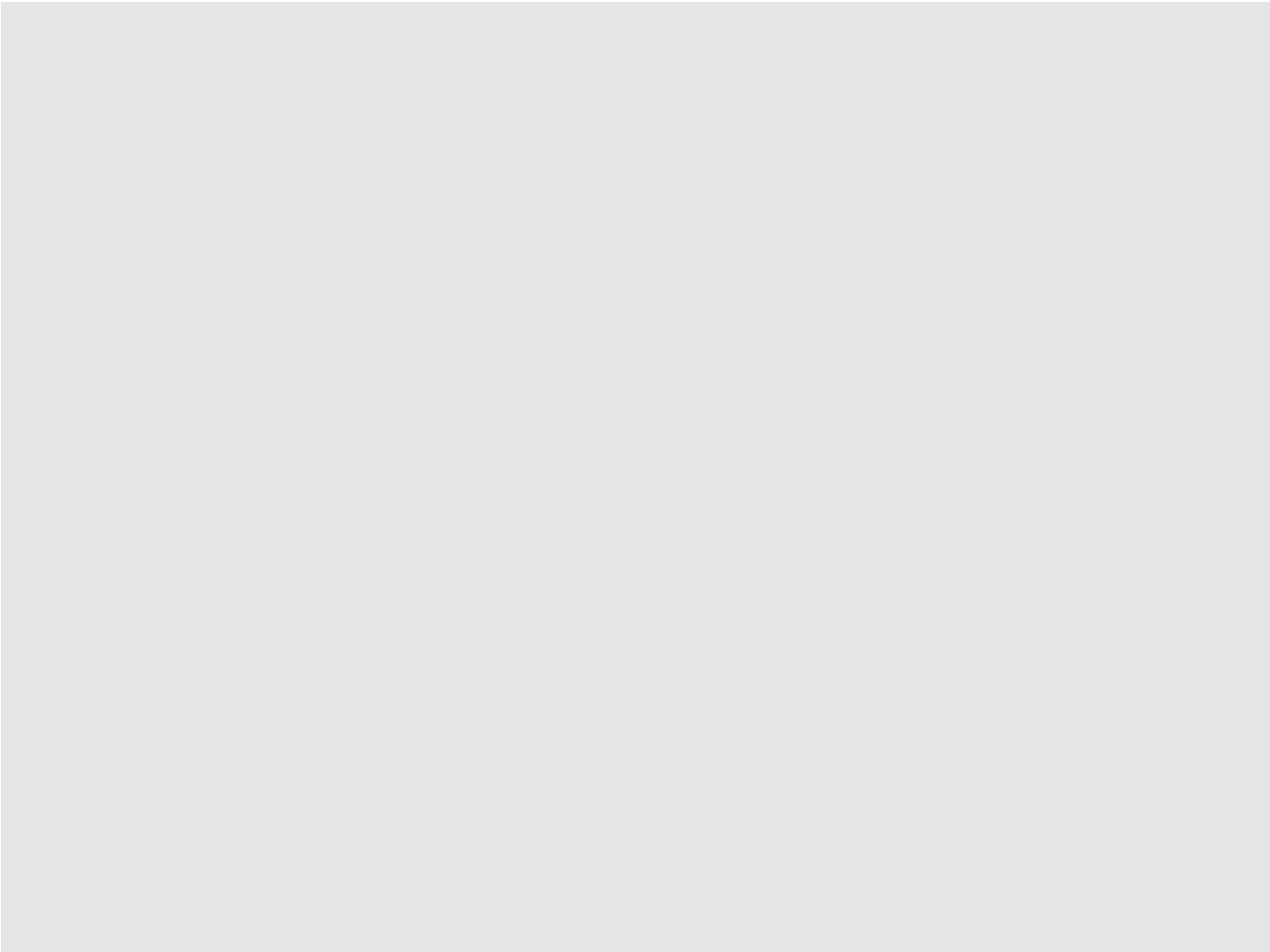
Tours are by appointment, but the hotel also has a walk-in menu for lunch and dinner on some days. Check the website for hours.

Occupying the kids

The **Greensboro Science Center**, which hosts the tiniest kids to grandparents, is actually an aquarium, museum and zoo all in one location — with a domed indoor theater that gives an under-the-sea, explore the universe and fly all over the world experience. Then there’s the rare red pandas, penguins and a zip line.

**Kersey Valley** in Archdale offers outdoor laser tags and other events but reservations must be made in advance, while Celebration Station off Interstate 40 at Wendover Avenue provides outdoor go-karts and boats.

**Greensboro’s Aquatics Center**, which hosts pre-Olympic team trials, offers open swim, and also family time and adult swim but it requires registration. It is closed on Labor Day but open on Saturday. It is not open to the public on Sundays.



Jamaria Teague, 10, plays in the sprayground at Barber Park in 2019. The Barber Park and Keeley Park spraygrounds will operate through Labor Day and they're free for individuals.

Woody Marshall/News & Record

The City of Greensboro offers more opportunities for water fun. Barber Park and Keeley Park spraygrounds will operate through Labor Day and they're free for individuals.

Occupy hours of time with the children at the **Miriam P. Brenner Greensboro Children's Museum**, which is designed to inspire learning through play in a fun, energetic and safe environment for children up to 10 years of age. Hands-on exhibits include a post office, grocery store, theater and an outdoor Edible Schoolyard.

It will be open Saturday and Sunday but closed on Monday for the holiday. It will also close Sept. 2 for several weeks of construction.

High Point has a similar complex for children, the **Nido and Mariana Qubein Children's Museum** , with two floors of hands-on exhibits, an outdoor adventure area and a double-decker carousel. It is closed on Mondays but will be open Saturday and Sunday.

Greensboro also has a **variety of parks**, including Keeley Park, built with special needs children in mind, and Barber Park. Both have spray grounds. Barber Park is also home to the Simkins Indoor Sports Pavilion, which houses eight plexi-court tennis courts and four combination basketball/volleyball courts, all open for play year round.

“It’s just a great time to be in Greensboro,” Fourrier said.

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