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HOTEL REVIEWS

# This Rad, New Boutique Hotel Channels the Creative Spirit of Asheville's River Arts District



Most people know about Asheville because of its brewery, food, and music scenes. It's also a creative hub with art studios and galleries galore. The place to go for mind-blowing glass masterpieces and ceramics, the River Arts District is also home to the city's buzziest new boutique hotel.



Housed in a formally derelict building that served as a breakfast cereal factory in the 1920s, a bomb shelter, and almost certainly a haven for illegal raves during the many years it sat abandoned, **The Radical**, a collaboration between Hatteras Sky and Lark Hotels, channels the creativity and grittiness of its graffiti-clad hood.



The overall vibe is perhaps best summed up as eclectic, industrial chic meets the rebellious zeal of the fall of the Berlin Wall-era youth. But even with such varied influences, it still feels like an extension of Asheville itself. The Suomi Design Works team — which includes Wes Anderson's set designer, Kris Moran — worked to create spaces that are fearless and full of personality but still have deep roots.



Street art murals — some pre-dating the refurbishment of the structure, others commissioned especially for the hotel itself — cover the walls. Were many of the furnishings and decorative items pulled from the loft of an artsy, third-generation trust fund kid whose dad squandered away a large chunk of his inheritance on Gatsby-level revelry? Probably not, since basically everything is bespoke. However, a lot of the stuff sure looks like it.



The stylish-squatter-with-generational-wealth aesthetic really comes into focus in the lobby. Raw concrete pillars and exposed ductwork mingle with sofas configured for conversations, rich velvet curtains, and a giant custom-made chandelier to resemble something plucked from a swanky 1900s ballroom.



The bold, audacious design carries through the hallways and into the rooms. Not surprisingly, hand-painted murals decorate the exposed brick walls. Floor-to-ceiling windows flood in natural light. Don't worry, you'll still be able to sleep (and even nap) thanks to heavy drapes in the same printed fabric as the headboards and bed canopies that bring the drama. Slightly unexpected — though certainly welcome — are the modern, sophisticated bathrooms with marble tile, gilded fixtures, and Grown Alchemist toiletries.

The property also boasts F&B concepts in partnership with acclaimed local chef Jacob Sessoms. These include a flagship chophouse restaurant called Golden Hour that's replete with a race car centerpiece bar decked out in acrylic gold chains as well as an exuberant rooftop for craft cocktails, socializing, and sunset vistas and a forthcoming cafe that will transform into an after-dark lounge.

# Top Takeaways

**Location:** Asheville, North Carolina

**Rating:** Three-Star

**The Vibe:** Talented Asheville-based artist with a late 80s Berlin fetish inherits a dilapidated riverside building and brings it back to life.

**Food + Drink:** The main restaurant, Golden Hour, is a masterclass in the culinary art of wood-fired meats, fish, and vegetables, plus slurpable sauces. Nibble on light bites, sip expertly mixed tipples, and soak in the views by the fire pits on the rooftop. Breakfast, coffee, and cocktails will soon be available at Afterglow, a double-duty all-day cafe and lounge.

**Amenities:** restaurant; rooftop bar; coffee bar/all-day cafe/cocktail lounge; Grown Alchemist toiletries; Drybar hair dryers; valet parking

**Our Favorite Thing About the Hotel:** Asheville needed an excellent rooftop bar — and now it has one.

**What's Nearby?** You're down the street from the North Carolina Glass Center, Wedge Brewing Company, and The Grey Eagle for live music. The Asheville Pinball Museum is within walking distance.

**Any Personal Neighborhood Recs?** Fuel up with a latte and muffin you'll swear couldn't possibly be vegan at **Ultra Coffeebar**. Then, spend a few hours bopping around the River Arts District.

**Rooms:** 70 rooms and suites

**Pricing:** Rooms start at \$239/night

**Closest Airport:** Asheville Regional Airport