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Celebrating St. Patrick's Day in the Carolina's Capital Cities



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By Jason Frye

"Oh, it's a day we're all honorary Irish," says Niall Hanley, owner of Raleigh, North Carolina's Hibernian Hospitality Group. He's excited about St. Patrick's Day (Friday, March 17) and as he talks, he speeds up, and when he speeds up, his charming Irish brogue thickens and becomes somehow more musical. "It's a global celebration of all t'ings unique and beautiful about Ireland and her people. It's a single moment when the upwelling of he friendliness and openness of the Irish people is too much to contain and it spills out into the streets."

St. Patrick's Day is celebrated the entire weekend in many cities — and that's certainly the case in the Carolinas. Here, a pair of celebrations in the North and South Carolina capital cities—Raleigh and Columbia, respectively — bookend the week of St. Patrick's Day. On Saturday, March 11, Hanley will kick off the festivities by inviting thousands of revelers (and honorary Irish) to Raleigh to toast his homeland with a street party; the following Saturday, March 18, St. Pat's in Five Points will see this Columbia, S.C., neighborhood festooned in green to celebrate Ireland's patron saint. So, if you plan accordingly, you can get your fill of Irish luck, Irish whiskey and Irish fun by visiting both cities.

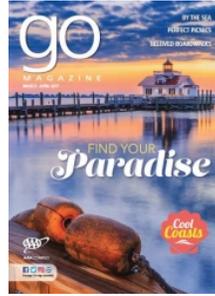
Glenwood South St. Patrick's Festival, Raleigh, N.C.

300 block of Glenwood Avenue at Hibernian Irish Pub (311 Glenwood Ave.) Saturday, March 11, noon-11 p.m.

In Raleigh, N.C., Hanley turns his restaurant, Hibernian Irish Pub, into the centerpiece of this neighborhood's St. Patrick's Day fete. Glenwood Avenue is blocked off and the street is packed with merrymakers, live Irish music, Irish dancers, even bagpipes. Inside, revelers can feast on specialties from Hanley's homeland like his personal favorite, the Irish Breakfast (eggs, bangers, rashers of bacon, toast, mushrooms, and more), or corned beef and cabbage, shepherd's pie, or fish 'n chips. You can also squeeze into the snug (snugs, for the record, are smallish private rooms that are a staple of Irish pubs; the snug at Hibernian is aptly named as it's the size of a phone booth and can get, well, snug with enough people in there) and try to set the Hibernian snug record for most people crammed in there. Or grab a pint of Guinness and watch the revelers in the street below you. Or sip on some Irish whiskey. Since Hibernian has one of the largest selections of Irish whiskey in North Carolina — with 22 bottles at last count — you can go on a glass-by-glass tour of Ireland.

St. Pat's in Five Points, Columbia, S.C.

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FIVE POINTS, COLUMBIA, S.C.
Saturday, March 18, 10 a.m.-late
Tickets \$15 in advance or \$20 at the gate

This celebration—which is quite possibly the largest St. Patrick's Day celebration in the South — started 35 years ago with an impromptu party in an empty parking lot, but in 2017, St. Pat's in Five Points will welcome some 45,000 people to the party. Musical entertainment from St. Paul & The Broken Bones, Michael Ray, Superchunk, Drivin' n Cryin' and 20 other bands will get people dancing. And if that's not enough, there's a silent disco (a fun new party where everyone wears headphones and listens to a DJ's set, it's odd to see and fun to do), a food truck rodeo, a parade, a kid's area and all the usual festival fun. If you feel like you need to earn a beer or two, go ahead and sign up for one of the races, they range from a 1-mile fun run to 5, 10 and 15Ks, but whatever you do, don't miss it.

And this is not just a party, all the proceeds go right back into the Five Points neighborhood and local charities through the organizers, the Five Points Association. Monies from this event have helped improve and beautify this neighborhood and keep it as vibrant, energetic, and eclectic as it can be.

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