



Mid-century Marvel: The Mash Up (below left) is a must-eat at all day. Unscripted Durham's eatery and coffee bar. The hotel's retro feels, including the Monaco blue exterior (left), reflect the aesthetic of the original building, The Jack Tar Motor Lodge built in 1962.

Metro Retro

The Unscripted Hotel's modern revitalization draws on Durham, North Carolina's past / by *Ruta Fox*

The Jack Tar Motor Lodge was once a proud jewel of downtown Durham, North Carolina. Built in 1962 with a distinctive Monaco-blue checkered exterior, the motel was a superior example of mid-century architecture. Sadly it fell on hard times, eventually spiraling downward into a home for squatters with caved-in ceilings, peeling paint, and an abandoned pool. In 1998, the verdict came to shut it down. But just three years later, it landed on the "Places in Peril" list from Preservation Durham, an organization working to protect the city's unique heritage and sense of place. After a \$20 million facelift, the lodge was joyously reborn in July into a 74-room, dog-friendly hotel with the moniker Unscripted Durham, the first location for the new boutique brand under New York's stylish Dream Hotel Group.

With a playful spirit aimed at the progressive, creative traveler, the hotel's '60s retro-vibe is evident when pulling underground to park. Unscripted's excellent location means the car stays put, as Durham's dining, drinking, shopping, and exploring can easily happen on foot within a several block radius. This former tobacco town is like a bit of Brooklyn in North Carolina, with distinctive shopping and creative, hyper-local, chef-driven restaurants just steps from the hotel.

There's no stuffy lobby here, but rather a reimagined "rec room" area dubbed The Studio, doing triple duty as a cool bar, listening room, and meeting space. You'll find a mix of locals and guests imbibing custom cocktails like a Negroni Americano or a Mrs. Hendricks. For breakfast, snacks, or dinner, the aptly named all day is the hotel's mixed-use coffee bar, eatery, and sidewalk café. The Mash Up—with avocado, grilled sweet corn, Cotija cheese, and smoked paprika on griddled multigrain bread—is a must. Craft brews flow on-site at Pour Taproom.

Book a room on the third floor, which leads out to a glittering turquoise pool with a South Beach-style bar and

Photographs courtesy of Unscripted Durham

Eat/Drink

Bar Virgile Handcrafted, classic cocktail bar. **Rue Cler** French bistro fare. **Mateo bar de tapas** Lunch, brunch, dinner. **Mothers & Sons Trattoria** Regional Italian, handmade pasta. **Pizzeria Toro** Gourmet wood-fired pizza. **Piedmont Restaurant** Adventurous, seasonal, locally sourced dining. **The Parlour** House-made ice cream with flavors like Spiced Rum (vegan). **Scratch Bakery** Brunch, lunch, and legendary pies.

Shop

Chet Miller Gifts, toys, candles, cards, barware, and men's grooming items. **Vert & Vogue** Stylish boutique for women, with options for men featuring Billy Reid clothing. **Vintage Vault** '50s and '60s one-of-a-kind accessories for the home. **Bungalow** Tabletops, linens, and home décor. **Area Modern Home** Furniture with a mid-century slant.



rooftop pool deck lounge dubbed The Patio. Sip a drink under the nighttime stars on the heated patio, which overlooks Durham's ever-changing skyline. The Patio also serves weekend brunch. Unscripted rooms are sleek and well-designed, with platform beds, bright white walls, and colorful geometric wallpaper. Bathrooms are hidden behind frosted glass and feature designer Jonathan Adler's cheery line of shower amenities. Hit the gym, or settle in for the evening and queue up the smart TV. A basket of late-night nibbles beckons, sourced from local North Carolina brands like Big Spoon Roasters.

Unscripted Durham forms the basis for a perfect weekend getaway. After all, doesn't everyone deserve a second chance? <#> *Unscripted Durham, 202 N Corcoran St, Durham, NC; (984) 329-9500, unscriptedhotels.com*