



HOSPITALITY
HEROES

HOW MAY WE HELP YOU?



Become a Hero!

Welcome to Johnston County's tourism industry! We hope you will learn valuable tools for your job, learn more about Johnston County as a destination, and customer service tips on working in the tourism industry...all from this custom-built hospitality course.

Johnston County is the tourism "product" we all sell, so when a visitor asks you "what is there to do around here?", "where can we find a great restaurant?" or "how do I get to the outlets?" you will have an answer, and...

YOU will be their Hospitality Hero!

HELLO!

Welcome to the JCVB Hospitality Heroes Program.

If you have any questions, please contact us

-- [CLICK HERE](#).

A golfer in a purple shirt and khaki shorts is captured mid-swing on a green. The background is filled with lush green trees and a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A semi-transparent dark grey rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text. To the left, a white building and a golf cart are partially visible.

1

What is Tourism?

Let's start with the first section
of the course.

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In this section you will learn what makes up the tourism industry at the national level, understand what the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (VisitNC) team does to benefit NC's tourism industry, and become familiar with the Johnston County Visitors Bureau as your local resource to the tourism industry.

There are several links throughout this module, please feel free to explore these websites.



US Travel & Tourism

Definition: A Visitor is a traveler taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose). Visitors can be overnight visitors or same-day visitors (excursionists).

The Eight Segments of the Tourism Industry are: Attractions, Transportation, Outdoor Recreation, Arts & Entertainment, Accommodations, Shopping, Meetings and Conferences, and Food Services.

Check out the [U.S. Travel and Tourism Industry Fact Sheets](#).



U.S. TRAVEL INDUSTRY IMPACT

Travel is essential to driving economic growth and job creation in states, destinations and communities across America, and it is indispensable to our nation's global competitiveness. **In 2023, travelers in the United States directly spent \$1.3 trillion, which produced an economic footprint of \$2.8 trillion and supported more than 15 million American jobs.**

(Source: U.S. Travel Association, all data 2023 unless indicated otherwise)

COVID-19 IMPACT



Prior to the pandemic, the U.S. travel industry experienced 10 straight years of growth due to the strength of the domestic leisure travel, domestic business travel and international inbound travel segments. Travel was a significant economic driver in every region of the country, representing 1 in 10 jobs and generating a travel trade surplus.

Have we recovered?

Most Americans don't know the tourism industry has not fully recovered from COVID, especially in the workforce. As of early 2024, there were 1 MILLION job openings.

By travel segments, leisure travel has recovered 100%, transient business travel by 83%, business meetings and events by 79%, and international inbound by 73%.

Source: Tourism Economics, US Travel Association and US Department of Commerce

A woman with long brown hair, wearing sunglasses and a striped tank top, is kayaking on a body of green water. She is in a red kayak, and a black paddle is visible. The water is bright green with white foam from the kayak's movement. The scene is captured from a side profile, showing the woman looking towards the right.

2

Economic Development Partnership of NC

The state's Destination
Marketing Organization!



In 2023, North Carolina was the 5th most visited state in the U.S.

The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, VisitNC team offers comprehensive marketing and promotional programs to bolster the travel, wine, film, meetings, and sports industries and maintain the state's ranking as one of the Top 10 most visited states in the country.



Visitors to North Carolina

In 2023, nearly 43 million visitors from across the United States, visited North Carolina, ranking the state No. 5 behind California, Florida, Texas, and New York in domestic visitation.

North Carolina also had nearly 700,000 international travelers with spending increasing 9.5% to \$997 million.

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The VisitNC team helps the state's tourism industry businesses promote their services to attract visitors to North Carolina with: Effective marketing strategies, Research resources, Community development programs, and Visitor Center facilities.

The JCVB team interacts, partners, and participates with many VisitNC programs to take advantage of their over-arching reach with national advertisers, media, and outreach missions.

Watch more videos [HERE](#).



Understand more about visitors to North Carolina

The following links are research studies provided by the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina: [North Carolina Fast Facts](#), [Economic Impact](#), [North Carolina Visitation Research](#), and [Travel Segments](#).

For more information on partner programs with VisitNC, please [click here](#).

Visit the official website for visitors to North Carolina – www.visitnc.com

3

Johnston County Visitors Bureau

Who are we? And how do we
market the county?





JCVB Mission Statement

The mission of the Johnston County Visitors Bureau is the marketing and development of the destination's brand experiences to targeted visitor markets for economic growth and quality of place.

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The Visitors Bureau is funded by a 3% County Wide Hotel Room Tax paid by visitors to the county. This tax generated about \$2.6 million to fund the Visitors Bureau in 2024.

In addition to the county tax, the towns of Kenly, Benson, Selma Clayton, and Smithfield have a 2% City Hotel Room tax dedicated to marketing their tourism assets. This additional tax generated about \$570,000 in revenues in 2024.



\$298,950,000 million

2023 Visitor Spending in Johnston County
Whoa! That's a big number, are you surprised?



Visitors Spending in JoCo

In Johnston County, visitors spent **\$298.95** million in 2023, which is an 4.9% increase over 2022 spending. This places the county 28th in the state in total spending and 32nd in spending growth rate.

In the Triangle Region, Johnston County is ranked third in total visitor spending behind Wake (\$2,951.56m) and Durham (\$1,018.33m), and ahead of Orange County (\$236.29m) which is fourth.

What does \$284.93 million in visitor spending mean for the county?

- Visitors to Johnston County spend **\$819,041** a day at local businesses such as hotels, retail and outlet shopping, attractions, dining, and travel services.
- **\$12.4m** in state tax and **\$9.2m** in local tax receipts which provide county services and reduce the tax burden on every household in the county by almost **\$145**.



Marketing Plan Components

Advertising

Billboards

Print Magazine

Digital Online &
Social Media
Campaigns

Newspaper & Travel
Publications

Radio, Cable &
Television
Broadcast

Publicity

Press Releases

Hosting Travel
Writers

Media Press
Conferences

Event Interviews
and Promotions

Submitting Event
Info to Area Media
Outlets

[JCVB Marketing Plan](#) link – click to read more.



Direct Selling Activities

Tradeshows & Sales Missions

Motor Coach Marketplaces

Professional Meeting Planner Shows

AAA Leisure Shows & Sales Missions

Retire NC Shows

Visits to Welcome Centers & 1-800-
VisitNC Call Center



Digital and Website Marketing

Click and view the many websites the JCVB maintains to promote the county.

johnstoncountync.org

visitsmithfield.org

visitselma.org

visitclayton.org

visitbenson.org

visitfouroaks.org

visitkenly.org

301endlessyardsale.com

beerwineshinetrail.com

jocogrows.org



Social Media Marketing

Click and view the many social media pages the JCVB maintains to promote the county.

Follow Us – we want to connect with you!

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter \(now X\)](#)

[Blog](#)

[Pinterest](#)

[YouTube](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Linkedin](#)



Research

Please read the Visitor Profile Study, [Partnership with ECU Reveals Insight into Johnston County Visitors.](#)

[Click here for more information](#) about working with the Johnston County Visitors Bureau, staff and programs, research & statistics, helpful articles & links, JCTA Board of Directors, Sports Council, Hospitality Association, and Annual Reports.



What would you promote to visitors that is unique to Johnston County?

By far, the number one driver of visitation to Johnston County is Carolina Premium Outlets. One of the ways the JCVB markets to this segment is the [Girls Weekend](#) hotel package. Learn more about the top attractions in the county in the next module, entitled "Know Your Local Destination".

What festival brings the most visitors to the county – the photo is a clue!!!



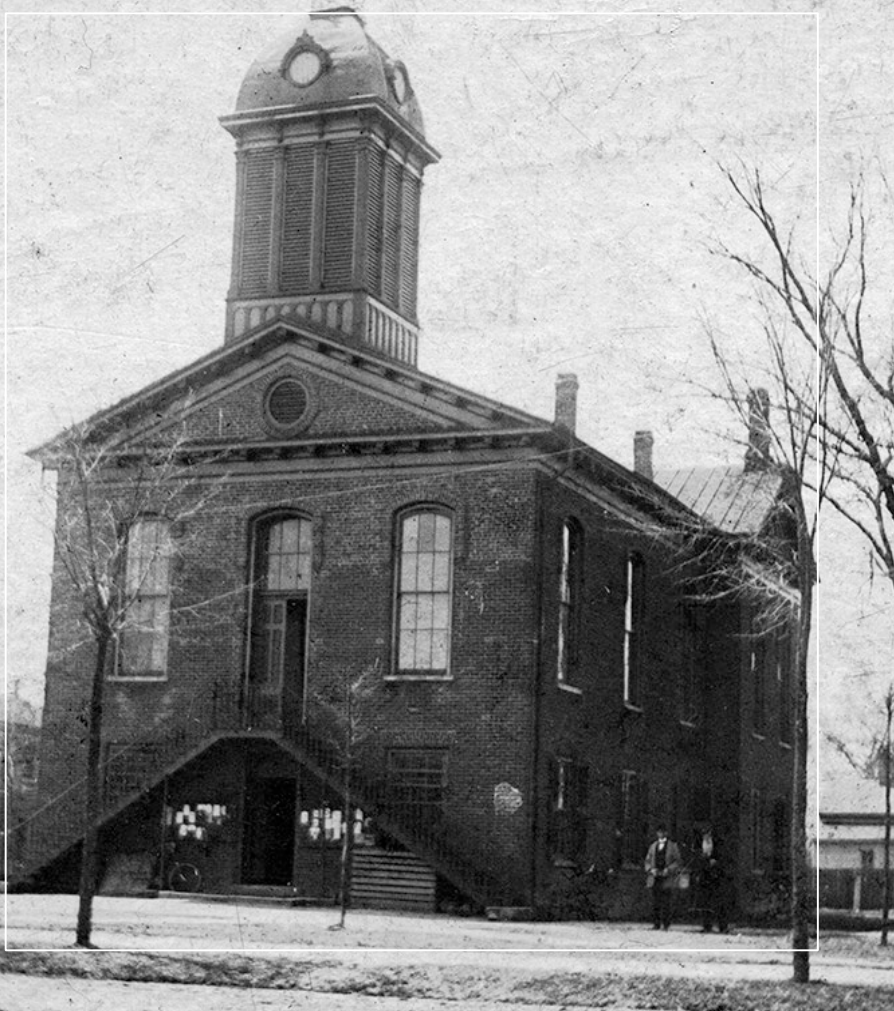
4

Know Your Local Destination

As tourism ambassadors, the product we sell is our county's tourism assets.

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In this section you will learn about what Johnston County has to offer visitors! You are now an ambassador for your destination. You will read a snapshot of Johnston County's history and understand where visitors can eat, sleep, shop, attend events, and visit local attractions.



Johnston County History

Johnston County was created from Craven County on June 28, 1746, and named in honor of Gabriel Johnston, North Carolina's colonial governor.

From colonial times to the 21st Century – learn more about the county.

[CLICK HERE.](#)



Things to Do

Visitor attractions in Johnston County include several [heritage museums](#) and historic sites, outstanding [agritourism sites](#), [arts/entertainment](#), the [Beer, Wine, and Shine Trail](#), [motor sports](#), and [outdoor recreation](#).

Please click on each highlighted section to see what visitors seek to explore in our county.





Places to Stay

Johnston County has 42 lodging properties with over 2,400 rooms county-wide. This includes bed and breakfast inns, locally owned motels, national chain hotels, RV campgrounds and camping. The majority of hotel rooms are located in the Smithfield-Selma area off I-95, exits 95 and 97 with more than 1,200 rooms at these two exits. Visitors are often seeking the closest accommodations to the outlets at Carolina Premium Outlet center.

[CLICK HERE.](#)



Festivals and Events

Johnston County has over 400 events annually. Festivals and performing art shows attract visitors from surrounding counties as well as from around the state. Some annual festivals like Benson Mule Days, Bentonville Battlefield Living History Programs, and the Ava Gardner Festival bring visitors from outside of NC and even international visitors to the county.

[CLICK HERE.](#)



Shopping

Outlet shopping at Carolina Premium Outlets in Smithfield is the number one attraction or reason people choose to visit Johnston County.

Our official [Visitors Guide](#) has a wealth of information on local Downtown shopping, unique Johnston County products, farmer's markets, antique shopping, specialty shops and more. The more time visitors explore and shop the more likely they will plan a return trip or spend the night!

[CLICK HERE.](#)





Dining & Local Food Products

Johnston County is home to eastern NC style barbecue, featuring a vinegar-base sauce, which is popular with visitors throughout the county. We stay out of the debate on who has the best BBQ in the county -- we love it all!

The county has over 360 restaurants, local food products, and unique [sweet eateries](#) such as Hills of Snow Snowballs, and you have to know what a [Red Hot Dog](#) is in JoCo!

[CLICK HERE.](#)





Local Food & Craft Beverage Products

Many visitors are interested in local culture, foods, farms, and the people behind the products. The Johnston County Visitors Bureau categorizes these attractions/shops as [Johnston County Products](#) and promotes [Farms/Markets/Produce](#).

And to share a small taste our of Southern love for foods, we have provided [some local recipes](#) from our heart!

Click through to all the highlighted sections.





Meetings and Wedding Venues

People meet for business, parties, weddings, sports tournaments and family reunions. Johnston County is an emerging destination for [meetings](#) with several venues opening in the county in the last five years. [Weddings](#) are big business and Johnston County offers many historic homes, farms, and unique venues for brides.

Click the highlighted sections to check out what meeting planners and brides seek!



Transportation Services

While the vast majority of visitors arrive by car, on occasion visitors may ask about or need additional travel information or car repairs. The list of services provided for visitors includes taxis, limos, airport info, buses, car rental, AMTRAK, travel agents, and repair services.

Interesting Fact: JoCo is home to the largest Truck Stop on the East Coast in Kenly, with a 1/3 scale Cape Hatteras Lighthouse...you can't miss it!

[CLICK HERE.](#)



4

License to Serve

A short overview and tips on
customer service in the tourism
industry.

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In this section you will receive *License to Serve* training which was created by the [Destinations International](#) (DI) and licensed to the Visitors Bureau to use with this custom hospitality training program.

We will discuss greeting visitors, listening to visitors, and how to handle visitor problems



4-Part Course

Please read each PowerPoint presentation developed from ***License to Serve***, a program designed to boost your confidence as you serve the wide-ranging needs of visitors to your destination.

Click through quizzes are part of each PowerPoint.

[License to Serve Overview](#)

[Greeting Visitors](#)

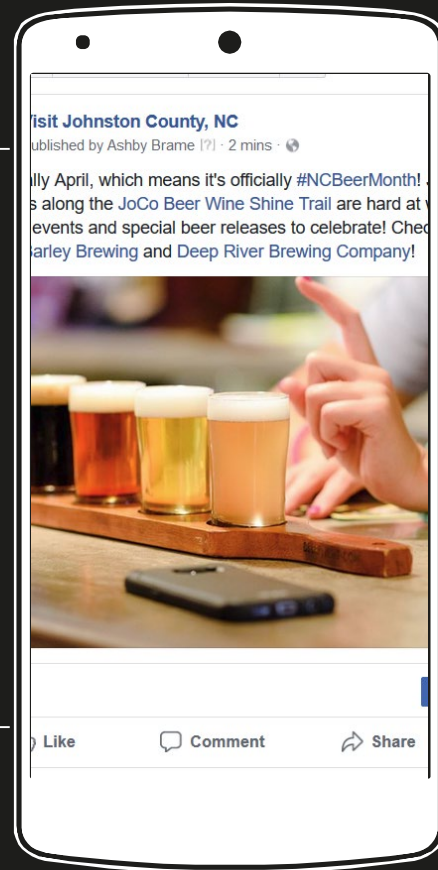
[Listening to Visitors](#)

[Handling Visitor Problems](#)

Follow Us!

To keep up with what's happening with tourism in the county – please follow our official [Facebook page](#).

Don't forget to use our hashtag –
#VisitJoCo



Do you have an interest in an undergraduate degree in Tourism Management? There are several state programs you could pursue – check links below. Some courses may be online as well.

[NC State University](#) – Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism

[UNC Wilmington](#) - Recreation, Sport Leadership & Tourism Management

[UNC Greensboro](#) – Marketing, Entrepreneurship, Hospitality and Tourism

[Western Carolina University](#) – Hospitality and Tourism



THANKS!

On completion of the Hospitality Hero Quiz, your gift bag and certificate will be mailed to you!

[CLICK HERE](#) to begin Quiz!