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CAROLINA RADAR

Magazine Features, Outdoor & Adventure



FROM CHARLOTTE TO THE OUTER BANKS, NORTH CAROLINA IS A STATE FILLED WITH GREAT EXPERIENCES

Any operator running, or considering tours to North Carolina, knows the Old North State is filled with major attractions, incredible scenery, culinary delights, rich

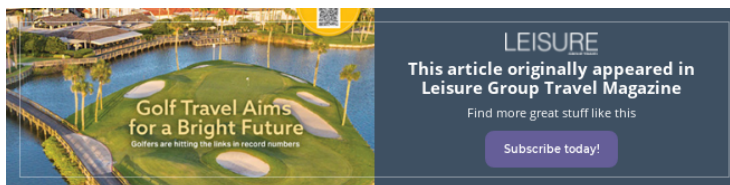
history, and a very hospitable tourism community. Here are just a few great stops.

CHARLOTTE

Charlotte as a tour and travel destination has so much to offer, it's nothing short of amazing. Cultural cravings can be experienced with P.N.C. Broadway Lights at the Blumenthal Arts Center, see Picasso's talent at Levine Center for the Arts, or celebrate at the Juneteenth Festival of the Carolinas. Couple the latter with a Charlotte Black History Tour. Are you a lover of NASCAR? No problem, you'll be covered at the NASCAR Hall of Fame. Spend the day with C-Charlotte Tours learning about Billy Graham and his hometown, culminating with the Billy Graham Library. There are holiday celebrations at the Charlotte Christmas Village, Speedway Christmas at Charlotte Motor Speedway, and Holidays at Daniel Stowe Botanical Gardens.

It might be an understatement to say Charlotte has great food. One spot that needs to be on your radar is the Optimist Hall, originally home to Charlotte's largest textile mill. Twenty food and beverage stalls are a perfect option for lunch on your own.

Charlottetraveltrade.com



WINSTON-SALEM

You're likely familiar with crisp Moravian cookies, after all, there's been a million pounds served. Old Salem Museum & Gardens is where the cookies can be found along with the Miksch heirloom garden and Single Brother's Garden. There are other significant historic gardens at Historic Bathabara Park, the Arboretum and Gardens at Tanglewood Park, Paul J. Ciener Botanical Gardens, and Reynolda Gardens. A tour of the Reynolda House Museum should always be on a Winston-Salem

itinerary. Visual and performing arts are a staple of Winston-Salem tours, including among others the Diggs Gallery, Delta Arts Center, Stevens Center, and Milton Rhodes Center for the Arts.

Looking at Winston-Salem's calendar of events and festivals, it seems there's always something going-on. Here's three to put on your radar: The biennial National Black Theatre Festival took place in August 2022 and in 2024, the festival returns to Winston-Salem. Put Gears & Guitars on your September 2023 itinerary calendar. It's the biggest party on two wheels with world-class racing and a laundry list of live music. This year add a Winston-Salem Holiday Tour with a stop at the 59th Piedmont Craftsmen's Fair on November 19-20, 2022.
visitwinstonsalem.com



Durham is a great place for professionals to gather and share thoughts and ideas.

DURHAM

In the college basketball world, Durham is well-known for the Duke Blue Devils and legendary recently retired Coach K. Trust me, those tickets are hard to come-by, but there are still plenty of reasons to spend a few days and nights in Durham. Along with Duke University, North Carolina Central University (NCCU), and Research Park, Durham has always been an ethnically diverse community. There are more than two dozen African-American Heritage Sites from north Durham to Duke University, downtown, central Durham to NCCU, and

southern Durham. The Carolina Theatre is perfect as an evening entertainment option and well worth a tour.

Put Boxyard RTP on your Durham radar. Turning one-year-old, this is where industrial meets inventive. The result is a palette of unique flavors, local products, sounds, and one-of-a-kind experiences. It's all set against a backdrop of used shipping containers. discoverdurham.com



The Ava Gardner Museum is filled with attractions related to the famous actress.

JOHNSTON COUNTY

On well-traveled I-95, Smithfield has long been a favorite group travel destination. Groups always find time to shop at Carolina Premium Outlets and DeWayne's. History is everywhere beginning with the Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site, the largest battle in North Carolina and the last major Confederate offensive. Tobacco Life Farm Museum and the new-look Ava Gardner Museum. Groups have enjoyed concerts, comedians, and live performances for years at the Ruby Theater.

With all, there is to see and do in Johnston County, put this on your radar: Ava Gardner's 100th birthday is December 24, 2022, and on October 7- 9, 2022, the "Ava 100 Festival" kicks off a year of celebration. In Johnston County's emerging food scene, the first

roadside food hall will open late summer 2022.

Johnstoncountync.org

FAYETTEVILLE

Off I-95, Fayetteville has a well-deserved reputation for honoring our military with 40 sites including battlefields, historical markers, and museums from the Revolutionary War to the Modern Military Era. Airborne and Special Operations Museum is certainly one of the finest and the first stop for many group travelers. The Cape Fear Botanical Gardens is another group favorite with docent-guided tours, workshops, and regular events. Groups are taking advantage of Fayetteville's great culinary, arts and entertainment options to round out multi-day tours.

There's certainly much to like about Fayetteville, but one more you need to put on your radar is Sweet Valley Ranch. You're going to love this place. It's a working farm with more than 350 from five continents, amusement rides, go-kart trails, and five annual seasonal events beginning with Springtime Adventures and concluding with Festival of Lights.

visitfayettevillenc.com

JACKSON COUNTY

Between the Great Smoky Mountain National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway sits Jackson County, one of the most beautiful parts of North Carolina. Regular visitors know walkable downtown Sylva for its shopping, flavorful restaurants, and the most photographed building in North Carolina, the Historic Jackson County Courthouse. Make time for the Blue Ridge Parkway and its fantastic photo ops. Experience the rich Native American history of the Cherokee Nation at numerous attractions. Find authentic Appalachian artwork from more than 100 local artisans at Dogwood Crafters and Front Street shops in Dillsboro. In each of these mountain towns, you'll be amazed at the culinary

delights prepared and presented by outstanding local chefs.

Caleb Sullivan with the Jackson County TDA needs to be on your radar. You may have met Caleb at a trade show, or spoken with him on the phone. When he says, "I am ready to help with your tour," he's serious. Nobody knows Jackson County like Caleb. Born in Cherokee, his family moved to Sylva when he was young. He graduated high school in Sylva and earned a college degree at Western North Carolina University in Sylva. He's been with the Jackson County TDA ever since. Put some extra sizzle in your Jackson County tour. Put Caleb on the bus. Discoverjacksonnc.com



Island Farm is a living history site interpreting daily life on Roanoke Island in the mid-1800s.

OUTER BANKS

As impressive as the natural setting of North Carolina's barrier island is, visitors can enjoy three National Park Service sites, all in close proximity. Wright Brothers National Memorial, Cape Hatteras National Seashore both are designated "first" while the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse is the "tallest" of the brick lighthouses. Fort Raleigh National Historic Site was home to the first English born child Virginia Dare. Elizabethan Gardens and dozens more historic sites including the Lost Colony outdoor drama and Roanoke Island Festival Park and you'll easily fill an itinerary. If your culinary tendencies lean towards seafood, just about all seafood restaurants

buy fresh catch right from the docks. Fresh seafood prepared in family owned and operated small to large restaurants with dinner itself becomes an award-winning attraction for your group.

You can build a nice itinerary around what you know about the Outer Banks, but put this on your radar. There's a new and growing African-American Experience of Northeast North Carolina (AAENENC) program. The Outer Banks Visitors Bureau (Dare county) teamed with Camden, Chowan, Currituck, Pasquotank, and Perquimans Counties Tourism Development Offices. Gates, Martin, and Washington counties will soon be joining the AAENENC. Their mission is to promote individual heritage sites on one website (ncblackheritagetour.com) celebrating the contributions of African Americans and encourage a deeper understanding of the region's rich cultural heritage. Dare County has in place a full day itinerary "Outer Banks: First in Freedom Itinerary." Outerbanks.org

By Dave Bodle



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