

# THE STATE OF DARE COUNTY TOURISM

2024/2025

## THE PROMISE OF TOURISM

At the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau, we are committed to a future where tourism works in harmony with our community's values. We want to ensure the area remains an incredible place to live and visit. As such, our focus on responsible growth views the work of the Visitors Bureau through a lens that considers both the positive and negative impacts of tourism. This commitment is embodied by the Long-Range Tourism Management Plan and by one of its early outputs - The Outer Banks Promise. This destination pledge fosters more conscientious behavior and a deepening respect and appreciation for the uniqueness of our community. If you haven't already, we encourage you to make The Promise today. Small but impactful steps, when taken together, help to preserve and protect the Outer Banks for future generations.

**-Lee Nettles, Executive Director, Outer Banks Visitors Bureau**

## TOURISM SNAPSHOT

Visitor Spending

**\$2.15 Billion**

State Rank

**#4**

1. Mecklenburg, 2. Wake, 3. Buncombe

Tourism-Related Jobs

**12,564**

45.5% of Dare County Jobs

State Tax Revenue from Tourism

**\$70.4 Million**

Local Tax Revenue from Tourism

**\$77.9 Million**

Tax Savings per Resident

**\$3,891**

Highest savings of any NC county

*\* Sources: Tourism Economics, U.S. Travel Association, Visit North Carolina*



# ABOUT US



## WELCOME CENTERS

### AYCOCK BROWN WELCOME CENTER

5230 N Croatan Hwy, Kitty Hawk, NC 27949. (252) 261-4644

### SARAH OWENS WELCOME CENTER

One Visitors Center Circle, Manteo, NC 27954. (252) 473-2138

### WHALEBONE WELCOME CENTER

Cape Hatteras National Park Rd, Nags Head, NC 27959. (252) 441-6644

### U.S. WEATHER BUREAU STATION/HATTERAS WELCOME CENTER

57190 Kohler Road, Hatteras Village, NC 27943. (252) 986-2203

## DARE COUNTY TOURISM BOARD

The Dare County Tourism Board (DCTB), doing business as the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau, is a 13-member governing board with the mission to increase overnight visitation of leisure, business, and other travel to Dare County's Outer Banks in the less-than-peak months. Tourism Board members represent various constituent groups throughout Dare County as set forth by the enabling legislation. Members are appointed by the Dare County Commissioners and serve two-year terms and are eligible for a 2nd two-year term.

### Members

**DENNIS ROBINSON**, Chair, Hatteras Island at Large

**DAVID HINES**, Vice Chair, Town of Kitty Hawk

**TONIA COHEN**, Secretary, Outer Banks Hotel/Motel Association

**TOD CLISSOLD**, Treasurer, Town of Manteo

**JOHN HEAD**, Asst. Treasurer, OBAR

**MIKE SIERS**, Personnel Committee Chair, Town of Nags Head

**WALLY OVERMAN**, Dare County Commissioners

**TERRY GRAY**, Town of Kill Devil Hills

**MARK BALLOG**, Outer Banks Restaurant Association

**MARK BATENIC**, Town of Southern Shores

**BRENDA CHASEN**, Town of Duck

**RICHARD HESS**, Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce

**TESS JUDGE**, Member at Large

The Dare County Tourism Board typically meets the 3rd Thursday of each month at 9:00 a.m. in the Curtis H. Creech Memorial Boardroom at the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Administrative Offices in Manteo. For meeting schedules, agendas, minutes and recaps, visit [outerbanks.org/about-us/board-of-directors](https://outerbanks.org/about-us/board-of-directors).

## THE OUTER BANKS VISITORS BUREAU

The Outer Banks Visitors Bureau (OBVB) is the official Destination Marketing Organization for Dare County's Outer Banks. The OBVB is funded by a 1% tax on overnight accommodations and a 1% prepared meals tax. While the largest portion of the Bureau's annual budget goes toward marketing the destination, 25% of the funds received are dedicated to supporting programs and services needed due to the impact of tourism. These dollars have funded numerous projects throughout the County, including multi-use paths, beach accesses and improvements to key cultural and historic attractions.

### Staff

**LEE NETTLES**, Executive Director

**DIANE BOGNICH**, Director of Administration

**AARON TUELL**, Public Relations Manager

**LORRIE LOVE**, Tourism Sales & Events Manager

**JEFF SCHWARTZENBERG**, Community Engagement Manager

**CHERYL HANNANT**, Welcome Center Manager

**AMY WOOD**, Administrative Specialist & Board Clerk

**MATT DUBEC**, IT Manager

**ALLISON WYANT**, Website & Database Manager

**STEPHANIE HALL**, Media Manager

**JARROD RABATIN**, Tourism Services Coordinator

### Social Media

**Facebook:** [theouterbanks](https://www.facebook.com/theouterbanks)

**Pinterest:** [theouterbanks](https://www.pinterest.com/theouterbanks)

**Instagram:** [@theouterbanksnc](https://www.instagram.com/theouterbanksnc)

**X:** [theouterbanks](https://twitter.com/theouterbanks)

**TikTok:** [@theouterbanksnc](https://www.tiktok.com/@theouterbanksnc)

**Youtube:** [TheOuterBanksNC](https://www.youtube.com/TheOuterBanksNC)

**Vimeo:** [Theouterbanksnc](https://vimeo.com/theouterbanksnc)

**Blog:** [outerbanks.org/blog](https://outerbanks.org/blog)



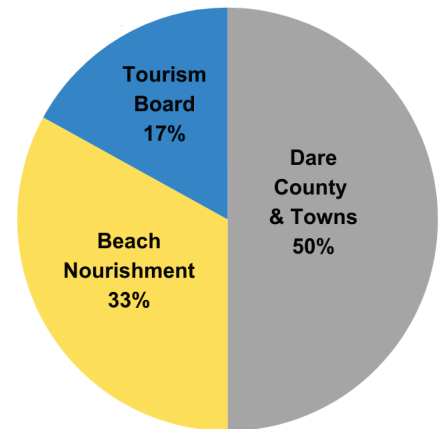
# ECONOMIC IMPACT

Outer Banks visitors and their economic impact on the community remain critical to the vitality of our area. In 2023, Dare County retained its #4 position out of North Carolina's 100 counties in total visitor spending (trailing only Mecklenburg, Wake and Buncombe), establishing an all-time high of \$2.15 billion, an 8.8% increase over 2022 spending levels.

## HOW WE'RE FUNDED

A 6% Occupancy Tax is collected when visitors rent short-term lodging in Dare County and is shared between the county and six municipalities, the Beach Nourishment Fund and the Dare County Tourism Board. In addition, the Tourism Board receives a 1% prepared meals tax. As directed by North Carolina law, 75% of these collections must be used to promote tourism and for the cost of administration. The remaining 25% is to be used for programs or services needed due to the impact of tourism, including Tourism Impact Grants and Long-Term Unappropriated Fund Grants for non-profits and governmental entities. Projects may include, but are not limited to, beach accesses, walkways and multi-use paths and attraction capital projects.

## Occupancy Tax Distribution

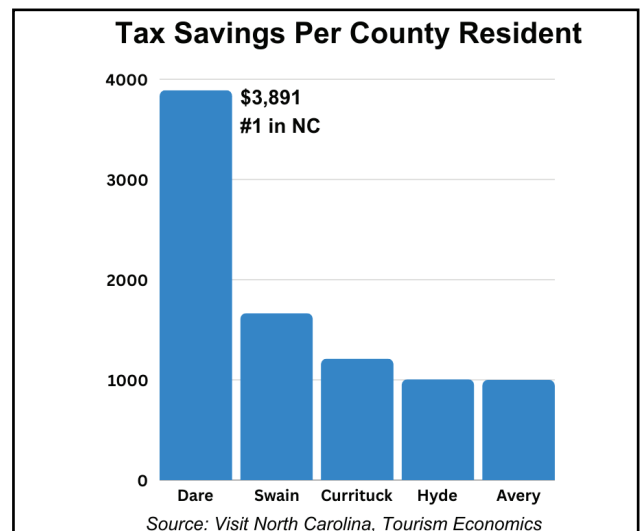
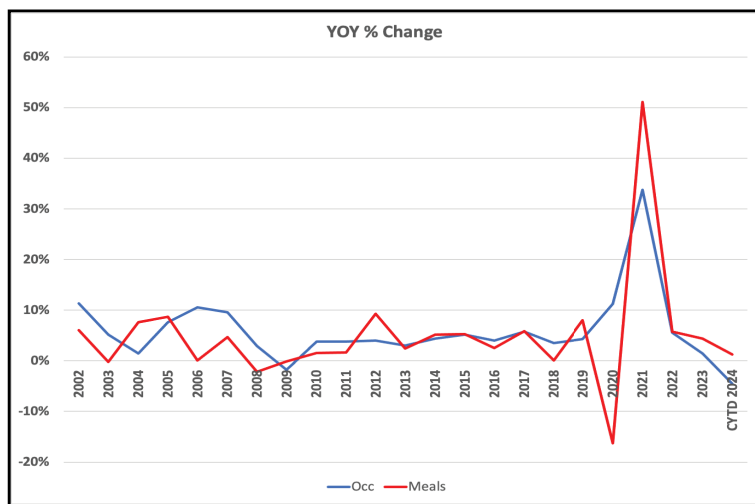
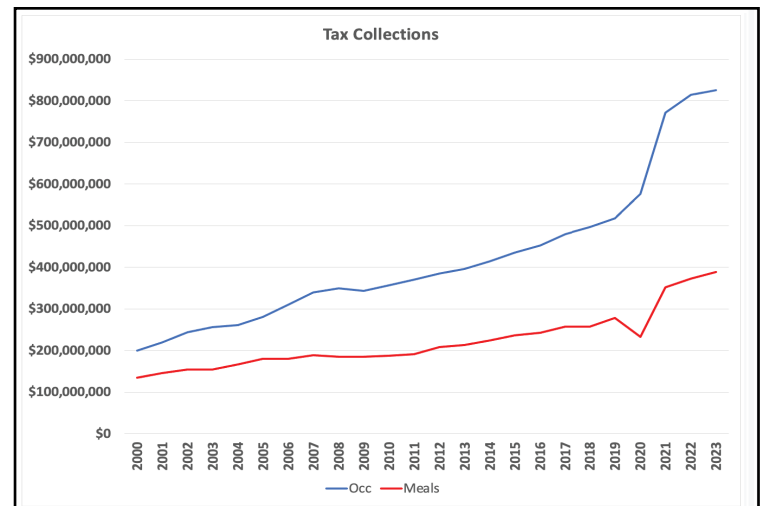


## STATE & LOCAL IMPACT

Visitors to Dare County paid nearly \$148 million in state and local taxes. This spending offsets \$3,891 in taxes per resident that would otherwise need to be collected to support the government services residents have available.

## TOURISM & HOSPITALITY JOBS

In 2023, Dare County jobs in the leisure and hospitality sector reached 12,564, accounting for nearly half of all jobs in the county (45.5%) and marking the highest level since 2019 (13,880). Jobs include positions at establishments in accommodations, arts and entertainment, food service, recreation, retail and transportation.



# IN THE COMMUNITY

## GRANTS AT WORK

The Dare County Tourism Board sponsors several grant opportunities each year to help fund and support various Outer Banks projects and events organized by non-profits and government entities. Event Grants are designed to support events that drive overnight visitation to Dare County during less-than-peak months (September 7 to June 15). In addition, the Board offers other funding opportunities through its Restricted Fund Grants, including Tourism Impact Grants and Long-Term Unappropriated Grants, supporting programs or services needed due to the impact of tourism. For guidelines, applications and a list of past grant awards, please visit [outerbanks.org/grants](https://outerbanks.org/grants).



### Getting Closer to Nature

"The Tourism Impact Grant to remodel our nature trail classroom enables us to greatly expand program options. The life-size forest murals create an "outdoor" atmosphere that helps visitors feel closer to nature as they explore various topics — from feather painting to Native American dance. It was a pleasure to share our dedication ceremony in which our building became an extension of nature and a place to acknowledge and honor the original inhabitants of our land."

- *Joyce Bornfriend, Founder, Frisco Native American Museum*

### Improving Coastal Resiliency & Mobility in Duck

In May 2024, the Town of Duck completed its Living Shoreline and Coastal Resiliency Project, which included the construction of offshore sills, restoration of coastal marsh, elevation of the adjoining NC Highway 12 roadway, installation of bike lanes and sidewalks and innovative stormwater management improvements. The Dare County Tourism Board is proud to have supported these efforts with a Tourism Impact Grant to assist with funding for the project, which was recognized in October 2024 by the North Carolina Chapter of the American Planning Association with an award in the Sustainability & Resilience category.



### Riding the Wave of Generosity

"The Which Craft Surf Gathering began as a local surf contest to raise awareness for those in our community who find themselves in a difficult situation due to an unforeseen event. In five years, it has quickly grown to be a favorite weekend for a tight-knit surfing community. The Event Grant provided us with the financial means to expand our reach outside the local community so that visitors can see what the Outer Banks has to offer."

- *Erik Linnekin, Organizer, Which Craft Surf Gathering*

## SUPPORTING NPOS & GOVERNMENT ENTITIES SINCE 1991

**\$24M**

in grant funding

**750+**

grants awarded

**150+**

grant recipients



## Enhancing Mobility and Sustainability at our National Parks

"Tourism Impact Grants have assisted with funding for important and tangible projects that contribute to enhancing mobility, access and environmental sustainability at our National Parks, as well as the economic growth of our area."

- *Trip Forman, President, Board of Directors, Outer Banks Forever*



# IN THE COMMUNITY



## Connecting Visitors With Our Non-Profits

The Visitors Bureau launched its voluntourism initiative in 2023 to help make visitors more aware of, and connected to, the important work that non-profit organizations are doing within our community. By getting involved with local organizations, visitors come away with a deeper appreciation for the area and a greater sense of responsibility. In close collaboration with the Outer Banks Community Foundation, a non-profit section of the Visitors Bureau website – [outerbanks.org/voluntourism](https://outerbanks.org/voluntourism) – was launched, providing visitors exposure to non-profit profiles, a calendar of upcoming events that support these groups and the opportunity to volunteer for an organization or an event.

## Our State, OBVB Host Voluntourism Event at Elizabethan Gardens

On May 18, 2024, the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau partnered with *Our State* Magazine to host a voluntourism event at Elizabethan Gardens in celebration of the magazine's special issue, North Carolina Outdoors! Attendees traveled from Fayetteville, Greensboro, Raleigh and other areas of the state to participate and spent two hours tending to the grounds and working in the Greenhouse Nursery area.



## The Voluntourism Experience Video Series

North Carolina producer Caleb Owolabi recently visited the Outer Banks to learn more about the meaningful work being done by local non-profits, as well as participate in some of the voluntourism opportunities that are available with each organization. The result is a video series that spotlights Chicamacomico U.S. Life-Saving Station, Beach Food Pantry, Outer Banks SPCA, Elizabethan Gardens, Friends of Jockey's Ridge State Park, Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum, Outer Banks Community Foundation and the Town of Duck.



## Mission Mixer and Knowledge Series Workshop Invites Collaboration

The Outer Banks Visitors Bureau and Outer Banks Community Foundation co-hosted the 2nd Annual Non-Profit Mission Mixer in April 2024 and the 2nd Annual Knowledge Series Workshop in September 2024, with the goal of bringing local non-profit professionals together in the spirit of social and educational collaboration. Future sessions will be announced soon.



# MARKETING THE OUTER BANKS

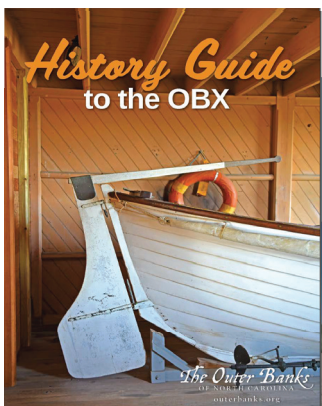
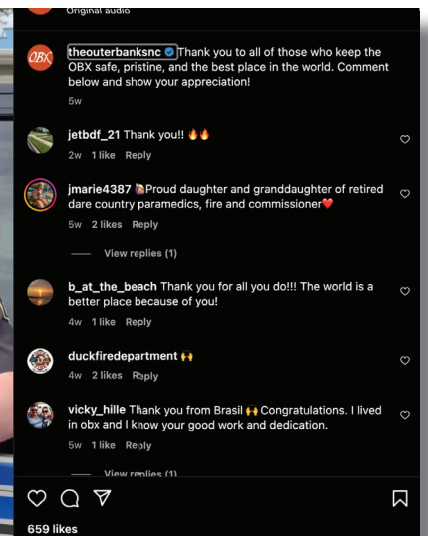
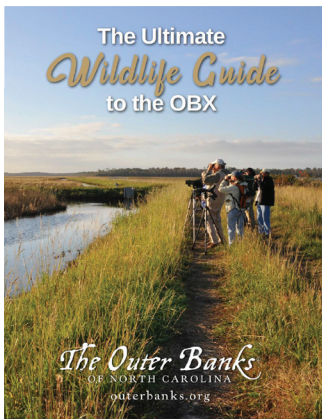
## THE OUTER EDGE YOUTUBE SERIES

As part of our goal to bring people deeper into the local culture and make them feel emotionally tied to this place, the Visitors Bureau created its first ever long-form YouTube Series, The Outer Edge. These stories are, in essence, an invitation to outsiders to be part of our local cadre. They encourage visitors to be more committed to keeping the Outer Banks in its natural – and most human – state. Comprised of six episodes, each ranging between 8-10 minutes, they feature dozens of OBX locals and celebrate their stories. The episodes launched in early January 2025 and can be viewed at [outerbanks.org/edge](https://outerbanks.org/edge).



## SOCIAL IMPACT

By spotlighting the fine work that local community organizations are engaged in via our social media channels, we are elevating the importance of protecting and preserving our area, benefitting local businesses, enhancing resident and visitor engagement and promoting responsible stewardship on the Outer Banks. Each of the programs and initiatives are directed at using the power of tourism to do more good in our community. The Dare County Tourism Board and Outer Banks Visitors Bureau are committed to these efforts and welcome your involvement and input.



### Ways to Get Involved in the Community During Your OBX Vacation

By Megan Nichols on Sep. 16, 2024

The Outer Banks is one of the most famous vacation destinations in the country thanks to its wild beauty. Visitors to the barrier islands will find a careful blend of civilization with untamed nature...

[Read More →](#)



# MARKETING THE OUTER BANKS

## PUBLIC RELATIONS

Throughout the year, the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau hosts many journalists to the area, providing them with an opportunity to explore the natural, historical, culinary, and experiential wonders that are unique to our area, with the goal of inspiring travel to Dare County. See what they're saying about the Outer Banks.

### TRAVEL +LEISURE

***Most Affordable Vacation Destination in the U.S.  
15 Best Places to Travel in July  
25 Best Babymoon Destinations Around the World***

### Forbes

***12 Best Summer Vacation Destinations For  
Families In The U.S.***

### AFAR

***The Best Weekend Getaways in the  
U.S. for Families***

### CBS NEWS

***Dining Off the Beaten Path***



### The Hampton Roads Show

The Outer Banks was spotlighted regularly on WAVY-TV's daytime program, The Hampton Roads Show, throughout 2024, with special guests from the community sharing tips, travel ideas and events with the core Virginia drive market audience.

## TOURISM SALES - TRADE SHOWS

The Outer Banks is a perfect setting for group tours and outings, corporate meetings, sporting events and family reunions. In addition to hosting numerous in-market FAM tours throughout the year, below is a list of 2024-25 domestic trade shows that Visitors Bureau staff will be attending to keep informed of industry dynamics, cultivate and grow partnerships and enhance opportunities to drive visitation to Dare County.

- **August 27-30, 2024** – NC, SC, VA Motorcoach Associations Regional Meeting; Williamsburg, VA
- **October 14-17, 2024** – S.P.O.R.T.S. Marketplace; Wichita, KS
- **November 7, 2024** – 10th Annual OBX Tourism Summit; Manteo, NC
- **November 17-20, 2024** – National Tour Association, Travel Exchange Annual Conference; Huntsville, AL
- **December 2-5, 2024** – Travel South International Showcase; Atlanta, GA
- **December 11-12, 2024** – Association Executives of North Carolina Annual Trade Show; Raleigh, NC
- **February 1-4, 2025** – American Bus Association Annual Marketplace; Philadelphia, PA
- **April 6-8, 2025** – Visit NC Tourism Conference; Hickory, NC
- **June 14-18, 2025** – U.S. Travel Association IPW; Chicago, IL



# LONG-RANGE TOURISM MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Outer Banks Long-Range Tourism Management Plan (LRTMP), published in May 2023, provides a 10-year roadmap for the future to ensure that tourism preserves – and even benefits – quality of life for residents, the environment and culture, while enhancing visitor experiences. Explore the plan at [outerbanks.org/lrtmp](https://outerbanks.org/lrtmp).

**Goal 1** – Strengthen resident and visitor engagement

**Goal 2** – Adopt an integrated approach to improving environmental stewardship

**Goal 3** – Support infrastructure development that supports the vitality of the community for residents and visitors

**Goal 4** – Collaborate to advocate for an increase in residential housing diversity



## DARE COUNTY TOURISM BOARD SPECIAL COMMITTEE

In November 2023, the Dare County Tourism Board approved the selection of 22 community members for appointment to the LRTMP Special Committee. Comprised of Dare County leaders, local professionals across industries and interests and concerned residents, this group meets regularly to evaluate strategic goals outlined in the plan, make recommendations to the Tourism Board for action and further implement adopted recommendations.

## MAKE A PROMISE, PROTECT THE PLACE

In June 2024, the Special Committee introduced The Outer Banks Promise, a destination pledge aimed at inspiring responsible behavior, enhancing stewardship and deepening respect for our local culture and natural environment. By showcasing the unique and special qualities of the Outer Banks, we hope to encourage visitors and residents to take small but impactful steps to protect this area for future generations. Make your promise at [obxpromise.com](https://obxpromise.com)!

The Outer Banks is an amazing natural wonder that has been the source of historic achievements and supported a special way of life for generations. Let's keep it that way and do our part. Look out for one another, be aware and prepared for any situation and work together to protect this place that we love. So let's promise to:

1. Discover this land of history and inspiration with a spirit of kindness and appreciation.
2. Turn "what ifs" into "let's prepare."
3. Pack it in, pack it out. Leave no trace.
4. Wander with wonder, sticking to roads and paths.
5. Love the beach, respect the ocean.
6. Be a wildlife star, observing animals safely from afar.
7. Support local. Small acts have big impacts.



*The Outer Banks®*  
VISITORS BUREAU  
[outerbanks.org](https://outerbanks.org)



**MAKE YOUR  
OBX PROMISE**