

ONE-TANK TRIPS



Visitors check out the exhibits in the Nature Research Center at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences. The museum is one of several museums in the city that are readily accessible for a day trip from the Twin Counties.

PHOTO COURTESY VISITRALEIGH.COM

Attractions near Twin Counties yield world of adventure

BY TYLER KES
Staff Writer

Very soon, schools will be out for the summer, and as many parents can confirm, keeping children entertained can be a daily chore.

Luckily for residents, with major cities on one side and the ocean on the other, the Twin Counties are uniquely sited as the starting point for a variety of day trips that can be done on a tank of gas.

One of the cheapest, most entertaining and easiest trips is to a minor league baseball park.

"It is a fun, affordable family trip," said Tim Vangle, assistant general manager for the Greensboro Grasshoppers.

The Grasshoppers are one of four minor league teams within driving distance from Rocky Mount, the others being the Carolina Mudcats, the Durham Bulls and the Burlington Royals.

Watching a game in a minor league park is different from its major league counterpart, Vangle said, because of the different entertainment options.

"At a major league park you



PHOTOS COURTESY OF VISITNC.COM

Memorable day trips near the Twin Counties include the Battleship North Carolina memorial, above, foreground, and the Wilmington historic district, above, rear, and baseball at venues such as Durham Bulls Athletic Park, below.



are watching the game," he said. "At a minor league game you are not just sitting in your seat. We have playgrounds for the kids. We have bars and a walkway. It is totally different entertainment environment."

Most minor league games have a theme each day, Vangle said. For example, Thursday is Thirsty Thursday at NewBridge Bank Park, where the Grasshoppers play, where beer is sold at a discounted price. The team also does fireworks after games Friday and Saturday nights.

Tickets at minor league games can be as low as \$5 for general admission, but prices vary from team to team.

Planning a day trip that satisfies everyone can be difficult, which is why Wilmington makes such an attractive vacation destination for families, said Connie Nelson, communications and PR director for the Wilmington & Beaches Convention and Visitor Bureau.

"We like to say we offer one destination and four unique settings," she said.

Families looking for an educational experience

can explore the 230-block National Register Historical District, which is one of the larger districts in the country, Nelson said.

If history isn't as exciting as shopping, Wilmington also has a large commercial district with 117 shops near the riverfront and more than 40 locally owned restaurants and pubs.

Wilmington also is where several films, such as "Iron Man 3," and TV shows, such as "Sleepy Hollow," are filmed.

"If people come during the week, they will probably see some movie crews," she said.

Travelling around the riverfront won't be an issue, either, Nelson said.

"It is easily walkable, and you can pick from a variety of tours," she said. "We have walking tours, food tours, horse-drawn carriages through the city. You can take a river taxi over to the Battleship North Carolina, a World War II museum with nine open decks."

The battleship is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily until the last Thursday before Memorial Day, after which it will be open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Tickets are \$12 for adults,

See TRIPS, 3D

The Yankees are coming – again

I do watch some sports occasionally on the television; however, I am not an avid sports fan. But I feel like the Atlantic Coast Conference basketball playoffs belong here in North Carolina.

The ACC was born and bred here in North Carolina, thanks to the efforts of Duke, Carolina, State and Wake Forest. Word is out now that Brooklyn, N.Y., will be host sometimes in the



MILTON FIELDS
Life Columnist

future. An article in the local newspaper said because of this there would be great contributions. In other words, it's all a matter of money since Brooklyn, New York is about 200 miles from a campus in the ACC.

There is an engineering firm in Charlotte that was founded by a friend of mine, who is now deceased. I recently called the firm to check on some facts and the lady

I sure would hate to have to drive to Brooklyn to see the Pinetops tractor pull.

answering the phone told me that the firm still retains its name but had been purchased by someone in New York.

When my wife and I were first married we lived in Atlanta several years in the early 1950s. In that time we subscribed to a local paper. A person who wrote an article for the paper stated it still made him feel nervous when he saw a Yankee with a match. I'm beginning to

have those feelings when I see a New Yorker with a wad of money.

There is an event in one of the neighboring towns, which has been successful over the years. The funds raised have supported many projects. I think I will write the people in charge of the event to keep the profits a secret. No need to let the public know if

See FIELDS, 2D

Realization dawns on Undermine Mom

I had never been surrounded by so many skinny, physically fit people in my life.

Not in junk-food loving America, anyway. I recently was at the Boston Marathon Expo with my daughter, who was picking up her participant's information for the big race.

"I've found my people," she said looking around her.

All her life, she's been a girl with a slight build, a Twiggy figure. In the last couple of years, she's discovered that's the perfect body type for a female distance runner. She's found her people and her sport.

Being at the Boston Marathon, seeing the excite-



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Custom leaves marriage proposal to men

BY CONNIE CASS
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Steve Paska waited two weeks for Washington's famously fickle cherry blossoms to emerge, then spent two hours searching for the perfect spot beneath the canopy of fluff. He lured his girlfriend there on the pretext of buying a painting of the blooms. Then he surprised her by dropping to one knee and proposing. She said "yes" so fast he forgot to pull out the ring. Go to any wedding celebration this nuptial season, whether in a ballroom or a backyard or a church basement, and it's a good bet you can trace the big day to a similar start, with different flourishes.



Steven Paska, 26, proposes marriage to his girlfriend, Jessica Deegan, 27, on April 10 at the Tidal Basin in Washington. Deegan said yes to the surprise proposal.

If a man is marrying a woman somewhere in the United States, odds are that he proposed to her.

That might seem obvious, but consider this: Three-fourths of Americans said it would be fine for the woman to do the proposing.

In practice, only about 5 percent of those currently married said the woman proposed, and the figure is no higher among couples wed within the past 10 years. Attitudes actually seem to be trending the other way, a poll by The Associated Press and WE tv shows.

Young adults are more

likely than their elders to consider it "unacceptable" for a woman to do the asking. More than one-third of those under age 30 disapprove.

While Paska, 26, said he believes proposals by women are OK — after all, one of his sisters proposed to her boyfriend — he wanted to declare his love and dedication the traditional way.

"I think if she'd gotten down on one knee and asked me the question," Paska said, "I would have called for a timeout."

In the survey, almost half of single women who hope

to marry someday said they would consider proposing.

Paska and his fiancée, Jessica Deegan, who both live in Arlington, Va., already had decided that they wanted to marry, she said. Still, Deegan was thrilled that he made it official with a grand romantic gesture April 10.

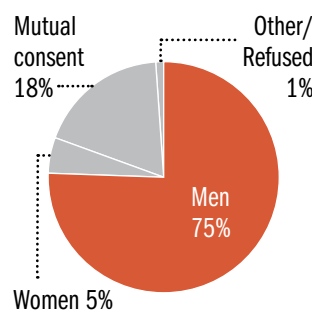
"It's kind of like the moment you imagine your whole life," she said. "I've seen that in movies. I've read that in books. You don't want to miss out on that moment."

That traditional moment has survived radical changes in U.S. marriages over the past half-century. People are marrying older. Brides are more likely to be already supporting themselves. It's become commonplace to live together first, even to have children before marriage. Some men are proposing to men and women to women, now that one-third of U.S. states allow gay marriage.

But the boy-asks-girl proposal still reigns, updated to a public art form in Facebook and YouTube videos that feature flash

Popping the question

Although the public is widely accepting of women proposing to men, most married couples began with a man asking the woman for her hand, according to a poll by The Associated Press and WE tv.



Note: Results based on interviews with 1,060 U.S. adults from Jan. 17 to 21. Margin of error is ± 3.9 percentage points.

Source: GfK Public Affairs & Corporate Communications AP graphic

a woman asking a man — a boyfriend whose proposal she had turned down previously.

"I think it probably takes a woman with a lot of guts to be able to do it," said Pitts, who is newly engaged herself, to a man who did the asking. "At least in my experience with my girlfriends, women tend to be a little more ready to get engaged and move forward than men are, so asking the question before he asks might tend to backfire."

A woman who proposes also risks criticism for her boldness, said Katherine Parkin, an associate professor of history at Monmouth University in New Jersey.

Parkin researched the folk tradition that claimed women could propose only during a leap year. She found that the idea triggered mockery every four years for much of the 20th century. Postcards, ads and articles portrayed women who would propose as desperate, aggressive and unattractive.

The leap year joke has faded, she said, but the stigma lingers.

"I don't see much changing to challenge that notion, to say a regular woman, a good woman, could propose," Parkin said, although she notes that a few celebrities, such as singer Britney Spears, have done so in the public eye.

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\$10 for seniors and military members, \$6 for children age 6 to 11 and free for children younger than 6.

For families looking for something slightly more laid back, Wilmington has three main beaches nearby: Carolina Beach, Kure Beach and Wrightsville Beach, Nelson said.

Kure Beach is the home of the N.C. Aquarium at Fort Fisher, which has been adding new exhibits and expanding old ones, Nelson said.

"They just opened the butterfly house, which is quite extraordinary," she said. "They just added a bald eagle and renovated the sea turtle exhibit. Even if you have been before, there is a lot to see."

Thursday nights there is live music and fireworks on the Carolina Beach Boardwalk, Nelson said, and Saturdays the city puts on free outdoor movies at Carolina

Beach Lake Park.

"I believe the next movie we are showing is 'Frozen,' so they are pretty recent movies," she said.

More information about Wilmington and the surrounding area can be found by visiting the website wilmingtonandbeaches.com.

Not everyone likes having the freedom of picking from so many options. That is what makes Raleigh such an attractive destination spot — not because there aren't a lot of things to do there, because there are — but because of how easy the city makes it to plan a visit.

"We have got everything here, including museums, many of which are free," said Ryan Smith, director of communications for visitraleigh.com. "It is why we are called the Smithsonian of the South. We have more live music here than anywhere else in the state."

The city has divided

its attractions into seven "Destination I.D.s," Smith said, which can be found at visitraleigh.com.

The I.D.s include categories such as "Foodie" or "Music Maniac" and allow visitors to tailor their experience to their interests.

"We have sample itineraries for each I.D.," Smith said. "A lot of people do identify, and we do try to make it easy."

If that sounds a little too structured, there is an app people can use that has all of the information found on the website for easy use on the go, Smith said.

"If you are coming downtown, we have the R-LINE, a free circulator bus that goes around the city in about 20 minutes," she said. "I like to tell people 'If you are not familiar with the city, you can hop on and get a feel for the city.'"

One particularly interesting place is the N.C. Museum of Art, Smith said, which has something for everyone.

"Not only is the Museum of Art a great art museum,

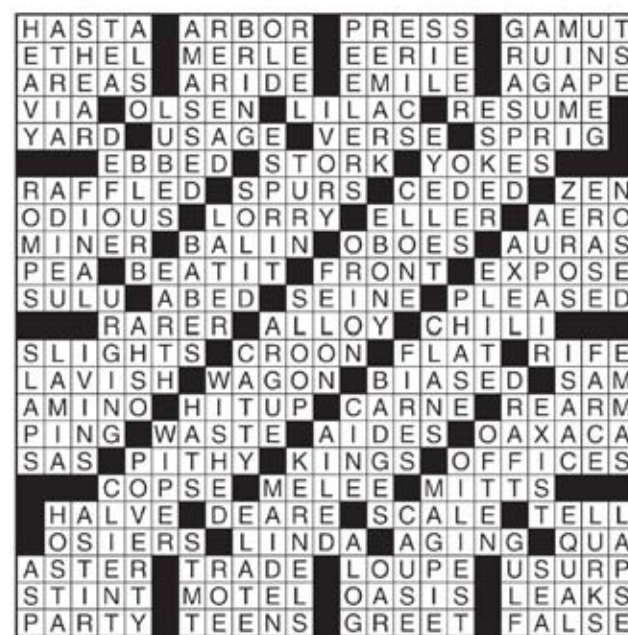
it also has a lot of natural art," she said. "It has got a huge green walkways with tons of outdoor art installations."

Another popular location is the Nature Research Center at the N.C. Museum of Natural Sciences, where visitors have an opportunity to speak with real scientists about what they are working on.

There are plenty of more things to do in Raleigh, Smith said, such as visiting one of the 16 craft breweries in the city.

"It is a great destination and an easy drive from Rocky Mount," Smith said. "I think there is a lot for people to enjoy."

PUZZLE, PAGE 3D



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