

# Self-Guided History Bicycle Tour

## Carolina Beach, Kure Beach & Fort Fisher

### *Closing the Last Lifeline of the Confederacy*

Although not exclusively focusing on the Civil War, much of your self-guided history tour will take you past important Civil War sites here on Pleasure Island. By 1864, Wilmington was the “Gateway of the Confederacy.” Goods were brought into Wilmington via the Cape Fear River by ships known as blockade runners. From Wilmington, most of the goods were loaded on trains that would route through Goldsboro, Weldon, and ultimately, into Virginia to supply the Confederate army. Contrary to popular belief, while the supply routes were in place, the Confederacy was well supplied by trading partners in Europe (via Bermuda, Nassau, Cuba, etc.).

In April 1869, President Abraham Lincoln declared a blockade to stop the supply of goods to the various southern ports. This was a tricky legal issue since the Confederacy was not recognized as a sovereign nation. At the war’s outbreak, the Union had a navy of 90 ships. By wars end, that number increased to 671 vessels. Lincoln gave much of the credit to his secretary of the navy, Gideon Welles who Lincoln referred to as his “Father Neptune.”

### *Beach Landing*

**A** Your tour begins at the north end of the Boardwalk (Harper Ave & Canal Dr). The marina just north of the shop, where the fishing charters launch, used to be a big marsh. On January 13, 1865, at 8:00 am, 200 wooden rowboats brought Union troops from their ships to the beach shore in this general area. Early that day, the breakers were quite large, and many boats capsized, dumping their passengers into the frigid surf (water temperatures hover around 50 degrees at that time of year). The roar of laughter soon replaced the roar of the ocean as the soldiers on the beach watched their comrades get a cold dunking. Crackling fires, roasting oysters, and boiling coffee soon followed. On the other side of the marsh, Confederate soldiers were encamped, wondering if the Union troops were going to head straight to Wilmington or head south to Fort Fisher. The Union troops did head south to the fort, which is the route you will be taking for most of your tour.



### *Carolina Beach Hotel Fire*

**B** Your next stop is at Carolina Beach Elementary School. A hotel opened on this spot in June of 1926. It included a dining room, ballroom, and 100 guest rooms. It was touted as a great new addition to the beach. It stayed open for two seasons and burned to the ground in September of 1928. The owners had to be rescued from the roof. By November, after extensive investigation, they were both arrested and indicted on charges of arson. These arsonists are often used as an example of how difficult it can be to make a living here at the beach.

### *Blockade Runner*

**C** Working blockade runners was a dangerous job, but it could also be lucrative. A boy of 15 or 16 working as a ship’s clerk could make as much as \$25,000 in a year (as much as the president of the Confederacy). A steamer transporting 1,000 bales of cotton could turn a profit of \$250,000 in a single trip. The average steamer made four trips before being captured or destroyed. In one year, when Wilmington was the primary port for the Confederacy, blockade runners brought in 6.2 million lbs of meat, 1.49 million lbs of lead, 1.85 million lbs of salt peter, 420,000 pairs of boots and shoes, 292,000 blankets, 408,000 lbs of coffee, and 137,000 muskets and rifles. No Confederate army ever lost a major battle or campaign for lack of guns, ammo, supplies, or food. If you’re here at low tide, you may see remnants of the General Beauregard blockade runner.

### *Battery Anderson (Kure Beach Post Office)*

**D** The Kure Beach Post office is located just after M Street at 237 N Forth Fisher Blvd. By about 2:00 am on January 14th, 1865, General Alfred H. Terry had led Union troops to approximately this location. They dug in for the night, creating breastworks to defend their position. 800 shovels were passed back and forth for hours. In approximately 6 hours they had dug a trench line that extended all the way from the ocean to the Cape Fear River. The breastworks were bolstered by abatis (sharpened stakes).



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### **E** Fort Fisher Civil War Site

Construction on Fort Fisher began in 1861, to help protect the port of Wilmington 19 miles up the Cape Fear River. By 1864, Wilmington was the last Atlantic port open to trade with the outside world and the role of Fort Fisher in the war became crucial. Two battles were fought at Fort Fisher, in 1864 and 1865. During the second battle that the fort was captured by Union naval and army forces - only three months later, the Civil War was over.

Visit the Fort Fisher State Historic site and tour the grounds where this fateful battle was fought. The accompanying Visitor Center includes a diorama of Fort Fisher in 1865, illustrating the Union Forces attack and the Confederate defense of the fort. You can also view Native American artifacts from the time before the fort existed, including arrowheads and pottery fragments.

Interesting side note: General Benjamin Butler of the U.S. Army proposed one of the first “Weapons of Mass Destruction” in a bold attempt to try and destroy Fort Fisher. His idea was to load the ship *Louisiana* with 430,000 lbs of gunpowder, drive it ashore, detonate the gunpowder and destroy the earthworks. Unfortunately, the fuses did not perform properly, the ship only got within 500 yards, and only a portion of the powder detonated. Other than waking up some of the Confederate soldiers, the explosion was barely noticed inside the Fort.

#### Visitor Center Hours:

Tuesday-Saturday  
9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Closed Sunday, Monday  
and most major holidays



*\*For an excellent history of Civil War activity at Fort Fisher and in the greater Wilmington area, be sure to pick up a copy of “The Wilmington Campaign: Last Rays of Departing Hope,” by Dr. Chris E. Fonvielle Jr. Dr. Fonvielle is a favorite local historian who teaches at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. The gift shop at the Civil War battlefield carries his book.*

### **F** Military Ocean Terminal Sunny Point (MOTSU)

While at the Fort, you can look out across the Cape Fear River and see several large cranes. The cranes support the largest ammunition port in the nation. Encompassing 16,000 acres of land, this unique port is one of only a few “container” ammunition ports where munitions arrive via truck or train. The port was responsible for supplying 90% of munitions used during Operation Desert Storm/Shield – they had to unload over 27,000 rail cars. Due to the sensitive nature of the facility, much of the island is technically in a federally designated “blast zone.”



### **G** North Carolina Ferry at Fort Fisher / Southport

The ferry offers a 35 minute cruise across the Cape Fear River to Southport, NC, a quaint town of antique shops, restaurants, restored homes and historic sites. Be sure to visit the North Carolina Maritime Museum’s Southport branch and the Captain Thompson Home for a glimpse of a Civil War blockade runner’s life.



### **H** The Basin, Zeke’s Island & Battery Buchanan

Beyond the WWII bunker, the Civil War museum, and the beautiful sandy beaches of Fort Fisher, you’ll find another network of islands including Zeke’s Island and a rock jetty known as “The Rocks”. These are part of the North Carolina National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR). This area is home to a variety of habitats including salt marshes, sea forests, tidal flats, sand dunes, beach, and rocks. Threatened and endangered species can be found in this area of Fort Fisher, including Loggerhead sea turtles who build their nests on the beaches.



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I

### Fort Fisher State Park Recreation Area

This area is used for research and education and is also a popular site for recreation – you can walk, boat, swim, fish, or just take in the natural beauty of this most unusual area of the entire North Carolina coast.



J

### The Aquarium at Fort Fisher

More than tripling in size after a two year expansion, the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher has become the Lower Cape Fear's top visitor attraction. The largest of the state's three public aquariums, the 93,000-sq-ft facility celebrates the spectrum of life of the Cape Fear River basin, nearby beaches and estuaries, and open ocean beyond. Each year, new exhibits promise an even more eye-opening "journey from the river to the sea."

If you have the time and are feeling particularly adventuresome, you can hike a trail behind the Fort Fisher Recreation Area taking you to the bunker that the Fort Fisher Hermit, Robert Harrill lived in for 17 years.



K

### Fort Fisher Hermit

The renowned Fort Fisher Hermit (62 year old Robert E. Harrill) lived in this WWII bunker for 17 years, from 1955 until 1972. The "Hermit" lived off the land, eating seafood he could catch and whatever he was able to grow. He also accepted donations from his many visitors over the years. People heard of and came to visit the "Hermit" to listen to his philosophies and imparted wisdom throughout his stay there. Many people have written about the Fort Fisher Hermit and at least one movie has been made about him. He was considered the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest tourist attraction in North Carolina in the late 60's.



L

### Kure Beach Fishing Pier

Kure Beach Pier is the oldest fishing pier on the Atlantic Coast. The current owner's Grandfather, L.C. Kure first built the pier in 1923. His father Hans A. Kure had bought the property the Town of Kure Beach presently encompasses around the turn of the century. His dream, with his son's help, was to build an entertainment complex for the citizens of Wilmington to visit. Although many ideas were tried, including, pavilion, bars, bathhouse, and cottages, the pier was the last idea to be built and the only to remain. For more information about the area, be sure to check out:

[www.VisitCarolinaBeachNC.com](http://www.VisitCarolinaBeachNC.com) or [www.VisitKureBeach.com](http://www.VisitKureBeach.com)



### Fun Restaurants Along the Way

Along the tour you will find some fun, eclectic eateries and beach bars. **Ride with care, all driving rules of the road apply to you on a bicycle; you can be ticketed.**

1

#### Kure Beach Pier Restaurants

Near the pier in Kure beach, you will find Jack Mackerel's Island Grill. Jack Mackerel's offers great Caribbean cuisine in a warm, casual atmosphere. Next to the pier is the Kure Beach Diner, which offers great fare in a diner type atmosphere (if it is an early ride, this is a great stop for breakfast). In between you will find a fine dining experience at Freddie's which offers some of the Island's best Italian meals.

3

#### Carolina Beach Boardwalk Restaurants

Among the fare on the Boardwalk in Carolina Beach, you can find world famous Britt's Donuts, Fentoni's Pizza, fresh coffee at Crush & Grind, Latella's Gelato and Hurrican Alley's restaurant which is an oceanfront bar and grill.

2

#### Ocean Grill and Tiki Bar

On your way to or from Kure Beach, you will pass the Golden Sands Motel, home of the Ocean Grill and Tiki Bar. This little slice of paradise offers casual dining and during the summer, be sure to check out the Tiki Bar – great food and beverages on a pier that overlooks the ocean.

4

#### The Fudgeboat

No bike history tour is complete without a stop at The Fudgeboat. The Fudgeboat offers home made butter and cream fudge, hand dipped ice cream, and many other sweet treats. This is a must stop.

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Map

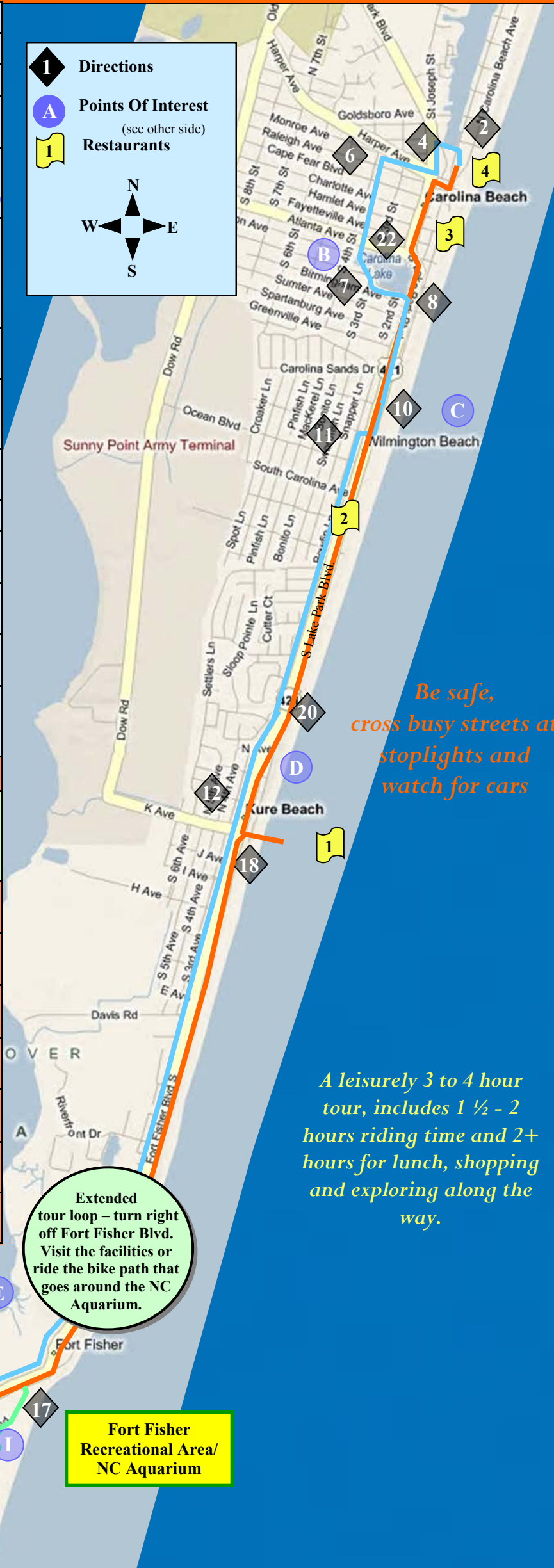
## Carolina Beach, Kure Beach & Fort Fisher

1.	Turn <b>right (north)</b> on to <b>Carolina Beach Ave. N.</b>	
2.	Turn <b>left (west)</b> on to <b>Pelican Lane.</b>	A
3.	Turn <b>left (south)</b> on to <b>Canal Dr.</b>	
4.	Turn <b>right (west)</b> on to <b>Harper Ave.</b> (street that Wheel Fun Rentals is on).	
5.	<b>Cross over Lake Park Blvd.(US 421)</b> and turn <b>left (south)</b> on to <b>4th Ave.</b> Continue to Carolina Beach Elementary School	B
6.	Turn <b>left (east)</b> into entrance of Carolina Beach Lake Park. Take path along the <b>right (south)</b> side of lake. Proceed across both bridges and head straight to <b>Lake Park Blvd.</b> If you're on an eBike, please pedal your bike while on the park path.	
7.	Exit the park path at <b>Lake Park Blvd. (US 421)</b> and turn <b>right (south).</b>	
8.	Turn <b>left (east)</b> on <b>Lake Dr.</b> (just before Laundromat) and <b>ride straight</b> to the end of the street. Use beach access to arrive at the Gazebo.	C
9.	Exit beach access and turn <b>left (south)</b> on <b>Carolina Beach Ave.</b> ride until the street dead-ends into <b>Lake Park Blvd.</b>	
10.	Turn <b>left (south)</b> on <b>Lake Park Blvd.</b>	
11.	<b>Lake Park Blvd.</b> will turn into <b>Fort Fisher Blvd.</b> when you reach Kure Beach.	D
12.	Continue <b>south</b> on <b>Fort Fisher Blvd.</b> to <b>Fort Fisher Battlefield Site</b> on your right side.	E-F
13.	Return to <b>Fort Fisher Blvd.</b> and turn <b>right (south).</b> The ferry entrance will be on your right.	G
14.	Exit the ferry landing and turn <b>right (south)</b> on <b>Fort Fisher Blvd.</b> until you reach the end of the Island (Battery Buchanan Tour Stop).	H
15.	Return <b>north</b> on <b>Fort Fisher Blvd.</b>	
16.	<i>*Optional*</i> Turn <b>right</b> at entrance of Fort Fisher State Park Recreation Area and NC Aquarium ( <b>Loggerhead Rd.</b> ) then, continue <b>north</b> on <b>Fort Fisher Blvd.</b>	I-K
17.	Turn <b>right (east)</b> on <b>K Ave.</b> (the only stop light in Kure Beach).	L
18.	Turn <b>left</b> on <b>Atlantic Ave.</b> and continue <b>north</b> along the boardwalk until the street dead-ends.	
19.	Turn <b>left</b> on <b>N Ave.</b> and then <b>right (north)</b> on <b>Fort Fisher Blvd.</b>	
20.	<b>Fort Fisher Blvd.</b> will turn into <b>Lake Park Blvd.</b> when you reach Carolina Beach.	
21.	<b>Lake Park Blvd.</b> will veer left just after Carolina Beach Lake Park.	
22.	Turn <b>right (east)</b> on <b>Harper Ave.</b> and continue onto <b>Carolina Beach Ave. N.</b>	
23.	Return to the Boardwalk. We hope you enjoyed your tour!	

**1** Directions

**A** Points Of Interest (see other side)

**1** Restaurants



*Be safe, cross busy streets at stoplights and watch for cars*

*A leisurely 3 to 4 hour tour, includes 1 1/2 - 2 hours riding time and 2+ hours for lunch, shopping and exploring along the way.*

Extended tour loop – turn right off Fort Fisher Blvd. Visit the facilities or ride the bike path that goes around the NC Aquarium.

**Fort Fisher Battlefield Site**

**Fort Fisher Recreational Area/ NC Aquarium**