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Recently named one of the “South’s Best Cities on the Rise” by *Southern Living*, **Wilmington, North Carolina and its island beaches** is a year-round destination that captivates visitors with incomparable coastal experiences and new things to explore. Take a stroll on the scenic Riverwalk or through historic downtown, and you’ll find yourself surrounded by breweries, music, unique eats, local culture and unrivaled adventures around every corner. It’s just a short drive from the award-winning riverfront to the oceanfront through Wilmington’s thriving midtown, where you’ll find parks, gardens, museums, a water park and city amenities. Carolina, Kure and Wrightsville beaches are well known for their beloved coastlines, but there is much more to be discovered there from farm- and sea-to-table dining to nightlife to live music. Wilmington is the perfect place to push past normal – to a place where no two getaways are alike.

**WHAT’S NEW IN WILMINGTON**

**New to the Neighborhoods**

Discover what’s new in downtown Wilmington’s unique and trendy neighborhoods. New to the beer and wine scene in the Cargo District, Bottles offers a curated list of natural, organic wines and eight rotating draft beers to sip and savor, as well as a host of other unique selections to peruse. Coming to Castle Street Arts & Antiques District in spring 2022, Castle Street Kitchen is a casual dining concept that will feature American classics with a new twist. Offering fresh dishes highlighting traditional ingredients of the coastal and low-country Carolinas, Three10 recently opened in Brooklyn Arts District in the restored Allen-Oliver historic home. The family-owned restaurant shines with seafood- and vegetable-centric dishes, tasty bites from its raw bar, seasonal menu items, updated classic cocktails and rotating drafts. The Kitchen Sink, a lunchtime soup and sandwich shop, also recently opened in Brooklyn Arts District. In South Front District, Chef Bobby Zimmerman welcomes you to True Blue Butcher and Barrel, a new restaurant, whiskey bar and butcher shop. Cocktails, fries and beautiful sunsets take center stage at Sauce’d, a new restaurant calling Wilmington’s Riverwalk home.

**Coastal Brews & Bites**

Cheers to beer in Wilmington! Catawba Brewing Co. recently opened its Wilmington taproom featuring 24 craft beers and hard seltzers on tap. Pair your brew with fresh fare from the on-site restaurant, Zombie Fresh Kitchen, enjoyed indoors or on the dog-friendly outdoor patio. Panacea Brewing Company, offering hard and non-alcoholic Kombucha, recently added

beer to its lineup and is expanding with a large multipurpose space. Several breweries have also seen recent renovations, further transforming Wilmington’s already booming craft beer scene. Wilmington Brewing Company debuted its new event space, The Venue, next to its renovated taproom. Wilmington’s first brewery, Front Street Brewery, converted its upstairs event space into a taproom for patrons. Mess Hall is relocating to a larger space on Wrightsville Avenue in 2022 to offer more seating for customers, a full-service bar and a dog park. Sample delicious smash burgers, chicken sandwiches, vegan burgers, loaded tater tots and more while the dog park attendant monitors your four-legged friend playing nearby.

**Art to Explore**

In November 2021, Cameron Art Museum unveiled “Boundless,” a sculpture honoring the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT) who fought for their freedom on the site of the museum’s grounds during the Civil War. The state’s first USCT Park is anticipated to open this fall, with the new sculpture as its focal point. The new park will serve as a quiet space for reflection, healing and learning about the important role the USCT played in the Civil War.

**Aloft Wilmington at Coastline Center**

Historic charm meets modern amenities at the new Aloft Wilmington at Coastline Center, located along the Riverwalk in Historic Downtown Wilmington. Take in the scenery at aView, the hotel’s rooftop bar and bistro, grab a craft cocktail in the WXYZ lounge or fuel up for the day at the on-site coffee shop. The Atlantic Restaurant & Loft, a fine dining restaurant, is slated to open on the ground floor in 2022. The chef-driven restaurant will feature Carolina-inspired dishes with a European flare served alongside an impressive wine selection in the indoor dining room, on the riverfront patio or in the private upstairs Wine Loft.

**Wilmington International Airport**

Wilmington International Airport (ILM) offers non-stop flights to Atlanta, Baltimore, Charlotte, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, New Haven, New York City, Newark, Orlando, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. and Boston (seasonal). A \$68 million airport expansion, scheduled for completion in late 2022 or early 2023, is in its final phase. A new concourse with three additional gates opened recently, with a restaurant, coffee shop and retail space coming soon. Three new public art commissions are included in the project as part of a partnership with the Arts Council of Wilmington.



## SAMPLE STORYLINES

### Fit for a Foodie

Wilmington and its island beaches are in the midst of a dining renaissance with new and unique eateries from river to sea. Make reservations at farm-to-table restaurants that offer unique Southern fare including Rx, PinPoint, manna ave. 123 and Seabird in Wilmington, Salt Fish Restaurant and Tiki Bar in Carolina Beach or EAST Oceanfront and Shark Bar & Kitchen at Wrightsville Beach. In Wilmington, visit Catch restaurant to sample dishes from chef/owner Keith Rhodes of Bravo's "Top Chef" or savor breakfast and lunch favorites at Chef Craig Love's latest restaurant, The Getaway Cafe + Provisions. Indulge in delightful dishes and cocktails at Chef Bobby Zimmerman's True Blue Butcher and Barrel, a restaurant, whiskey bar and butcher shop. On the meat-free spectrum, The Green House offers vegan fine dining using herbs and vegetables from the restaurant's own greenhouse, as well as house-made dairy-free cheeses. Also in the category of fine dining, Wilmington restaurateur Ash Aziz of Circa Restaurant Group recently opened Origins in Wilmington's Autumn Hall neighborhood. Chef Sunny Gerhart, owner of Raleigh's St. Roch Fine Oysters & Bar and 2022 James Beard Foundation semifinalist for "Best Chef Southeast," will open Olivero in downtown Wilmington this year, serving Spanish-influenced New Orleans style cuisine. Another renowned Triangle restaurateur, Giorgios Bakatsias, will open Kipos Hellenic Cuisine this summer in Wilmington's Lumina Station.

### Brew and Spirits

What sets Wilmington's coastal craft cocktail scene apart is its lack of big-city pretension, strong focus on creativity and unique locations, including killer waterfront views. At End of Days Distillery, try the Survivor's Cut series bourbon, the first legal bourbon released in Wilmington since Prohibition, or head to the bourbon bar at Board & Barrel to try the restaurant's private-label "Edgar's Truth" bourbon. Sip on unique takes of classic cocktails at The Blind Elephant, a 1920s Prohibition speakeasy tucked away in a hidden alley. Embark on a tasting tour along the Wilmington Ale Trail featuring local breweries and bottle shops. Indulge in award-winning drinks by mixologists, food and ambiance at manna ave. 123 or soak up the sun and waterfront views at Ocean Grill and Tiki Bar and Oceanic Restaurant at two of Wilmington's nearby beaches.

### Active Adventures and Wellness

It's easy to remain active with a jog along Wilmington's Riverwalk, around Greenfield Lake, through two state parks or on our white sandy beaches. The Gary Shell Cross City Trail is a 15-mile, off-road multi-use trail that runs from Wilmington to the Intracoastal Waterway. Throughout the year there are 5k, 10k, marathon and triathlon races. Day spas, yoga studios, salt caves, health clubs, golf courses, outfitters, skate parks, disc golf, tennis courts and hiking trails provide a variety of fitness options across the area. You'll find surf and standup paddleboard (SUP) schools, sailing, kayaking, parasailing and world tour-qualifying watersport competitions at the nearby beaches.

### Hidden Gems

The Stanley Rehder Carnivorous Plant Garden is tucked away along the Gary Shell Cross City Trail while the whimsical Minnie

Evans Glass Bottle House inspires at Airlie Gardens. Just beyond the "Welcome to Wrightsville Beach" sign is Harbor Way Garden, a serene botanical gem, while Masonboro Island, an undeveloped estuarine reserve accessible only by boat, is located just off the island's shore. The Basin Trail at Fort Fisher State Recreation Area leads to a WWII bunker where the legendary Fort Fisher Hermit once resided, while Carolina Beach State Park's Venus Flytrap Trail is one of the only places in the world the carnivorous plant grows naturally.

### Eco-Adventure, Parks and Gardens

Wilmington and its island beaches claim ten sites on the N.C. Birding Trail. Nature tours and cruises explore maritime ecosystems, waterways, wildlife and flora. Carolina Beach State Park and Fort Fisher State Recreation Area offer nature programs and guided hikes. Airlie Gardens showcases 67 acres of coastal botanical gardens, ponds and the venerable Airlie Oak. Greenfield Park features moss-draped cypress trees, gardens, walking trails, paddle boat and canoe rentals. Oakdale Cemetery is known for funerary art, flowers, shade trees and tours.

### Road Trip to the Coast

Thanks to easy access via numerous interstates, Wilmington and its island beaches make for the perfect quick-trip destination for road trippers from both North Carolina and nearby states. Spend the weekend at a boutique hotel, full-service resort or charming inn. Dine on the area's best cuisine in Wilmington's thriving culinary scene. Stroll through world-class gardens, board an eco-cruise or get in a jog while taking in scenic beauty along a nature trail or the shore. Explore our coastal city's storied past in the 230-block National Register Historic District or visit the iconic Battleship NORTH CAROLINA.

### Arts, Culture and Heritage

Visitors to Wilmington and its island beaches can enjoy an array of festivals, museums, art galleries, craft fairs, performing arts events and historic sites. Wilmington's Fourth Friday Gallery Night is held monthly at local galleries. Nearby stages include historic theatres such as Thalian Hall, university auditoriums, outdoor amphitheaters, renovated churches and The Wilson Center, a 1,500-seat performing arts center. From its timeless Victorian and period architecture to the influential Cape Fear River port, Wilmington has deep, historic roots. Explore Wilmington's African American history by immersing yourself in Gullah Geechee culture, learning about the U.S. Colored Troops who fought in the area during the Civil War or participating in a tour of significant Civil Rights landmarks. Witness a history lesson by land when exploring one of the largest National Register Historic Districts in the Southeast, or by sea at the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA and Fort Fisher State Historic Site.

### Live Music & Events

Catch a riverfront concert at Live Oak Bank Pavilion at Riverfront Park, one of Live Nation's only music venues located by the water. Or, sway to live tunes at one of the area's music festivals, like the popular Carolina Beach Music Festival. Take in the colorful spring blooms and four days of festivities during the world-famous North Carolina Azalea Festival. Celebrate the holidays coastal-style with holiday flotillas and festive light displays. Experience all the events the Wilmington area has to offer.

