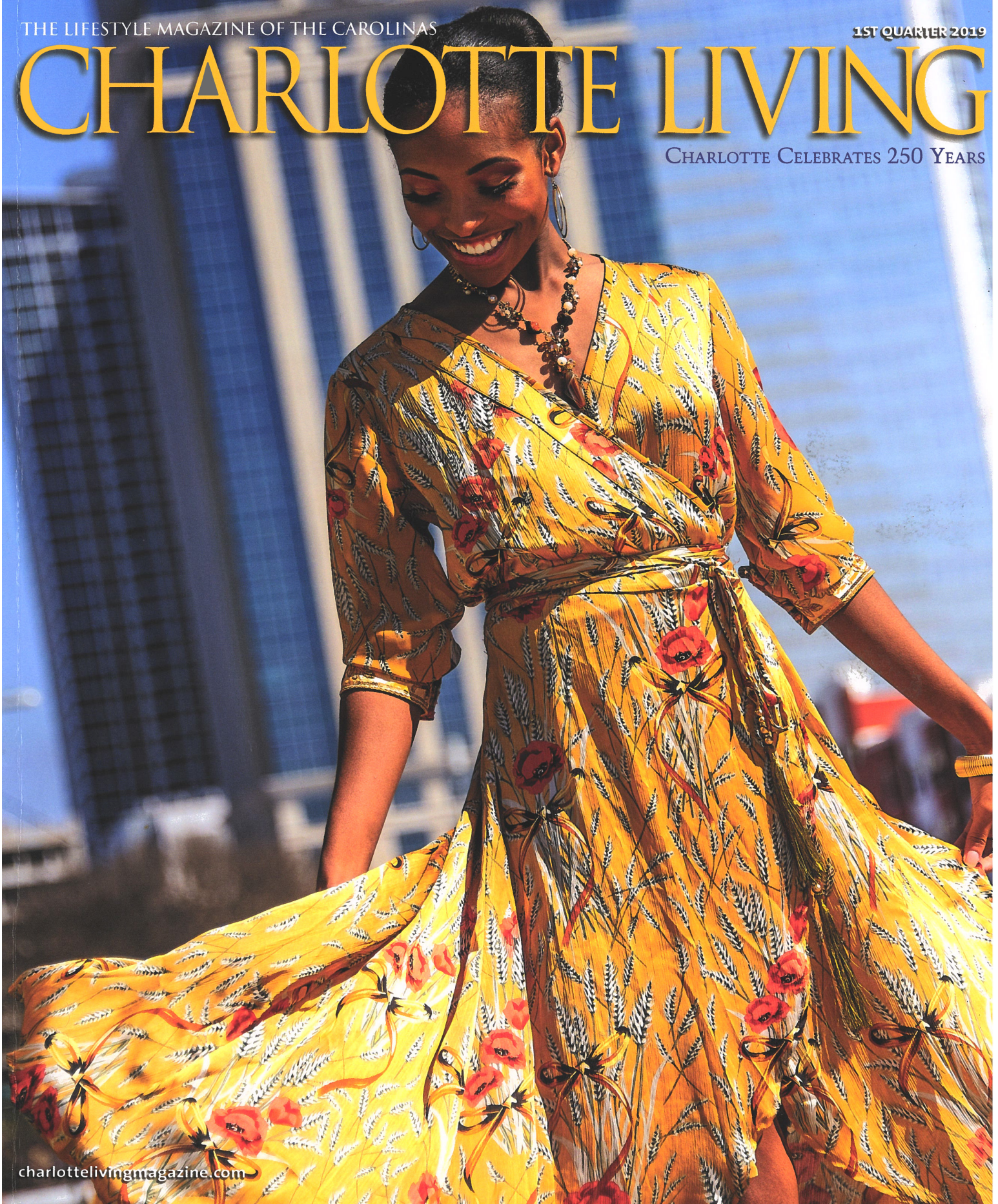


THE LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE OF THE CAROLINAS

1ST QUARTER 2019

# CHARLOTTE LIVING

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**THE ZIMMERMAN AGENCY**

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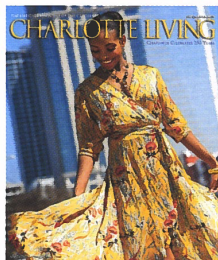
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# *RUNNING WITH THE WIND: The Horses of Shackleford Banks*



TEXT BY JESSICA ANNUNZIATA

I have always had a distinct but distant fascination with horses despite my minimal exposure. There has always been a healthy dose of fear that loomed just under surface; which I can say positively exhilarated me. Being completely mystified by their beauty I was magnetically drawn to them and somewhat repelled by my own fear.

My fondness began with Laura Ingles' and her dexterity whenever she was on a horse. I was mesmerized by Liz Taylor's agility with her horse Pie in National Velvet. The ability to train a spirited one seemed to be such a mysterious feat—an endeavor so grand that, once accomplished, there hardly seemed to be any other bond between man and beast that is so eternal. Growing up as an only child, I romanticized that notion and secretly yearned for that particular kind of kinship.

Fast forward, I've been instructed to not get too close to the wild horses we are about to encounter. I had taken a few hours drive from Charlotte and had gotten on a ferry, then a pontoon boat and here I am.

Shackleford Banks is an enigmatic place with nothing but shoreline and dunes in every direction. As a New Yorker, to be standing on a desolate island in the US on a crisp spring morning my thoughts are running wild with scenarios and unanswered questions. Who had walked this beach centuries ago? Why aren't there more places like this that are protected under sanctuary status?

Precaution presents itself and the anticipation builds. We are in the pursuit of wild horses and I feel brave out of character. Typical? Not exactly. Will they get too close? Will they hate my accent? Is this really a good idea for someone like me, to be doing something like this?

A few minutes of walking past cacti and wild grasses I am aware of my own meandering contemplations which are punctuated by the sound of crashing waves. I am present enough to notice the sweet salty air and I make a conscious effort to truly witness the pristine beauty that surrounds me. As I pan the horizon; I spot them with a jolt. This is the

purpose of today's outing but my heart begins to race and I am surprised by their presence.

I felt honored to be here and that this moment is pertinent to the very juncture I find myself in. I believe I was experiencing what I know to be a "kairos moment." It is an Ancient Greek term for an instant when the universe is speaking to you directly. It is a calling to recognize exactly how the past has prepared you for how you are being ushered into what is just beyond the now.

Being only a few feet away from these beautiful creatures in the flesh made my heart soar and I wait s truly in awe. As we approached, I noticed four horses all in seated positions. They were a four-point compass in perfect formation. Each transfixed in their perspective directions. I felt we were interrupting something ceremonial and sacred.

Their musculature was clearly defined under shiny coats of varying hues of golden brown and deep mahogany. I am also struck by how docile they seem to be.

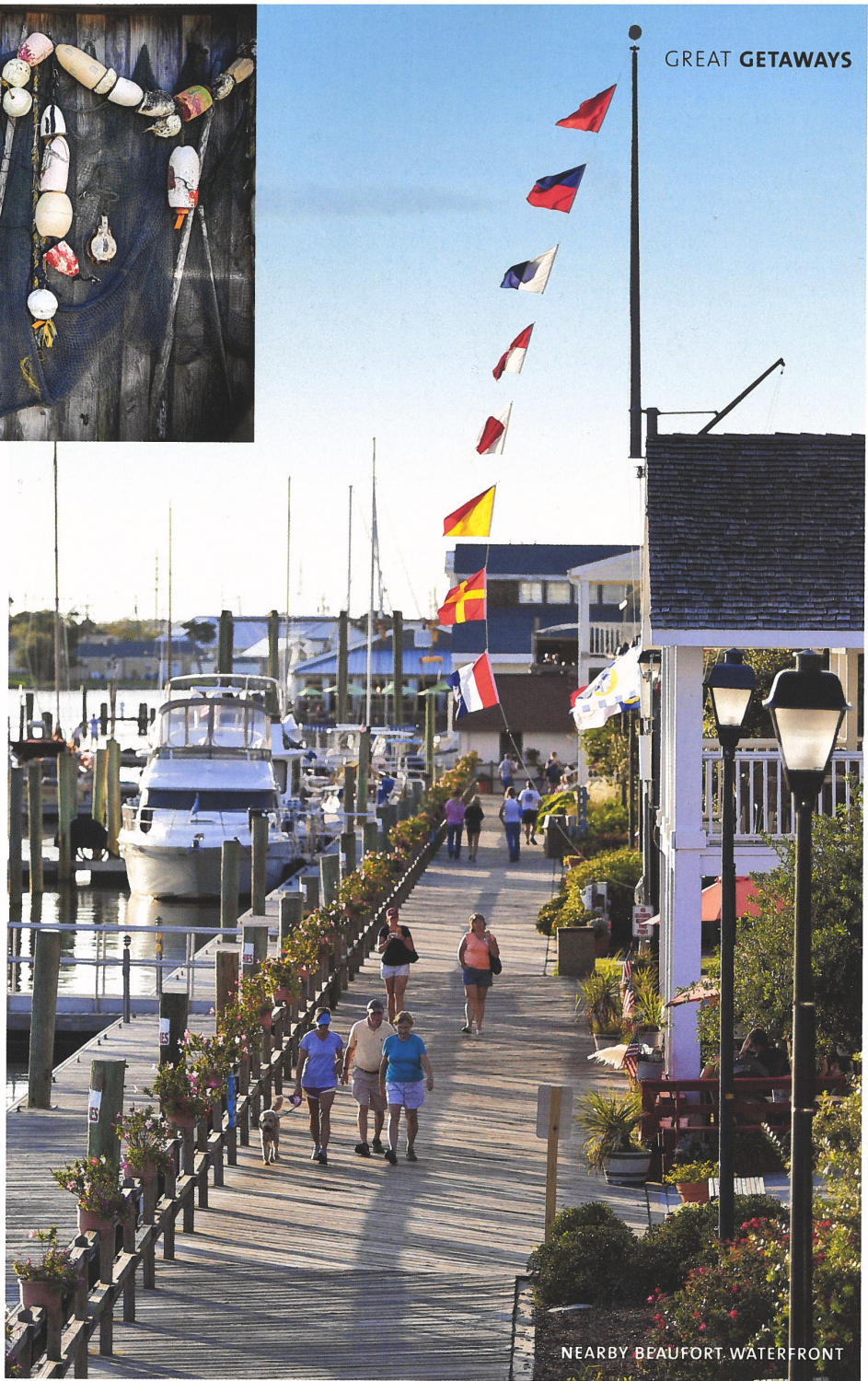


NEARBY BEAUFORT WATERFRONT

control by means of darting, there has no outside interference. Isolated on a nine-mile barrier island between Beaufort Inlet and Cape Lookout, NC, they have been on Shackleford Banks which is part of the Crystal Coast, for hundreds of years.

The history of the island begins in the late 1800s. It was home to a small group of roughly 500 residents and was a settlement that became known as Diamond City. It was short-lived and in 1899 a massive hurricane devastated the island which caused its then residents to seek refuge and vacate the town. The final dwellers left by 1902. In 1933, another major hurricane took siege and opened the inlet on the eastern edge of Shackleford Banks, forever separating it from the Core Banks and the Cape Lookout Lighthouse. The National Park Service acquired the island in the 1960s as part of the newly formed Cape Lookout National Seashore. That year the horses became protected under government legislation.





NEARBY BEAUFORT WATERFRONT

There is other wildlife also present on the island. A whole slew of interesting creatures calls Shackleford Banks home, including ghost crabs, gray foxes, otters, dolphins, sharks, blue crabs, and migratory birds. Information aimed at maintaining and protecting these incredible creatures is vital to limiting human interference. A wonderful 501(c)(3) educational and scientific non-for-profit called The

Foundation for Shackleford Horses whose aim is to protect and preserve their place on the island. You can find more information about the organization here: <http://equinenonprofits.com/directory/foundation-for-shackleford-horses>. They believe in preserving "History on Hooves" as a significant asset to the culture of Carteret County, as well as our as our nation as a whole. Once you see wild horses you

will never forget them. I urge you to seek out opportunities and situations where you are enchanted. The ancient Greek Philosopher Seneca once said, "As is a tale so is life. It is not how long it is but how rich it is that matters." Fill yours with richness at every turn. ■