

JUNE 2019
VOLUME 35 • NUMBER 11

Convention South

Married To The South For 30 Years & Still In Love.

Get Ready
For Rendezvous
South
(pg. 7)

Foodie FEVER!

Bringing
Culinary
Adventures
To The Table

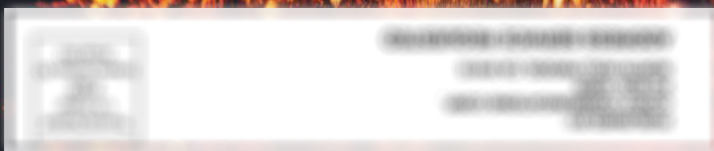


Event
Planner's
Guides To
Arkansas &
North Carolina

INSIDE:

CONFERENCE CENTERS:
Meeting Rooms
of the Future

Government &
Educational
Meetings



THE ZIMMERMAN AGENCY

(continued)

ARTIVITY ON THE GREEN

An art-themed park located in downtown Winston-Salem, "ARTivity On The Green," which opened in 2015, expanded the city's Art District and connected it to the Innovation Quarter. The project brought energy back to a section of downtown that had been forgotten, with features intended to inspire visitors visually and physically. The park features central water misting towers, a bandstand, a mural wall, and rolling grassy hills. All of this is lit at night, and the lights on the towers and bandstand change colors.

EVENT PLANNER'S GUIDE TO

NC

North Carolina

BY T. WAYNE WATERS



Stunning Scenery and Sophisticated Meeting Sites

Visit North Carolina urges people to "Experience Firsts That Last" when they travel to The Tarheel State. This includes settings that range from scenic mountain ranges with stunning waterfalls and fast-moving rivers to technically-sophisticated cities and charming small towns to sunny Atlantic Ocean beaches. Each of the state's three geographical regions – the Great Smoky Mountains on the western edge, the cities of the central Piedmont area and the coastal beach communities – offer excellent meeting facilities, great outdoor spots for recreation and team building and unique areas for special events.

Winston-Salem

Winston-Salem is a vibrant city with a rich history and a diverse population. It is home to several major universities, including Wake Forest University and North Carolina State University. The city is also known for its art scene, with the ARTivity On The Green park being a prime example. The city offers a variety of meeting and event spaces, from modern hotels to historic venues. The city is also a great location for team building and recreation, with many parks and outdoor activities available. The city is a great choice for any event, from a small meeting to a large conference.

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Wilmington and its island beaches also claim nine sites on the N.C. Birding Trail. Nature tours and cruises explore maritime eco-systems, 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 Lake 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. (For more information, see Breakout Spotlight on page 57.)

Wilmington and Beaches Venues

- **Wilmington Convention Center:** 30,000 square feet of exhibit space; 12,000-square-foot ballroom; 15,000 square feet of pre-function space; 12,000-square-foot outdoor event lawn
- **Embassy Suites Wilmington Riverfront Hotel:** 6,600 square feet of meeting space; 186 guest rooms
- **Hotel Ballast, Tapestry Collection by Hilton:** 20,000 square feet of meeting space; 272 guest rooms
- **Cape Fear Community College:** The Wilson

- Center – 10,000 square feet of meeting space; 1,600-seat theater; and CFCC Union Station Conference Center – 8,000 square feet of meeting space
- **Coastline Conference & Event Center – Best Western Plus Coastline Inn:** 10,000 square feet of meeting space; 53 guest rooms
- **Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts:** restored 546-seat 1858 theater; ballroom for up to 200

BREAKOUT SPOTLIGHT:
New Bern Riverfront Convention Center

Located in the heart of the city’s downtown area, the New Bern Riverfront Convention Center holds a great deal of appeal for convention and meeting groups, according to Director Mary McGee. It’s situated on the scenic Trent River with a waterfront veranda that provides sweeping views. Additionally, there are more than 400 hotel rooms, as well as many of the city’s attractions, within walking distance.

Heritage Walking Tours offer a glimpse into the history of Downtown New Bern, highlighting historic homes, churches and cemeteries, African American History, Civil War Times, Revolutionary War Times, and Architecture. The Walk to Remember tour features locations mentioned in novels written by local resident and popular author, Nicholas Sparks. Additionally, the New Bern Trolley Tour takes guests on a 90-minute exploration of the historic downtown, with professional guides recounting the fascinating historical and architectural details of this former royal capital of North Carolina. As McGee points out, meeting-goers are able to leave their cars parked for the duration of a convention or special event and



still explore the 300-year-old city.

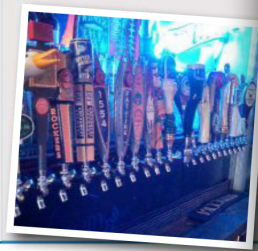
The Craven County Convention & Visitors Center offers maps, brochures and other helpful information about the area attractions, including Tryon Palace, where guests can participate in a living history, the New Bern Firemen’s Museum, where horse-drawn steam engines are brought back to life and the Bank Of The Arts, a circa-1913 former bank building that is now the headquarters of the Craven Arts Council and Gallery. ■

Contact: www.visitnewbern.com

Beer Lover’s Paradise

Those who enjoy craft beers will appreciate several restaurants and brewpubs in the city. Bear Town Market & Beer Garden has 38 beers on tap, Beer Army Burger Company covers 7,000 square feet and houses the largest selection of beer in New Bern, and Brewery 99 offers a selection of micro-brewed ales and lagers at downtown New Bern’s first one-barrel brew pub.

Foodie Fun!



Crystal Coast

The Crystal Coast represents Carteret County, lying along North Carolina’s Central Shore, with its southernmost flank situated approximately 75 miles north of Wilmington. The area’s largest community is Morehead City, sitting along the Intracoastal Waterway. The Crystal Coast also encompasses Atlantic Beach, Beaufort, Emerald Isle, Harker’s Island and Cape Lookout, with its well-known lighthouse and its 56 miles of shoreline federally protected as the Cape Lookout National Seashore.

The Crystal Coast certainly has its seashore treasures. Carrot Island off the coast near Beaufort has a herd of wild horses, as does Shackelford Banks on Harkers Island. Ferries from several locations take visitors to both locations. It’s just a few miles out from Shackelford Banks that the wreckage of the Queen Anne’s Revenge, ship of the legendary pirate Blackbeard, rests on the sandy floor of the Beaufort Inlet.

The North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores is the largest saltwater aquarium in the state, with more than 3,000 specimens of North Carolina’s most colorful aquatic life. It sits amidst the Roosevelt Maritime Forest between Indian Beach and Atlantic Beach. Across the sound and inland just a bit, Croatan National Forest is 159,000 acres of estuary, forest and wildlife with great outdoor recreation.

Meeting and event planners should know that the Crystal Coast offers good options for smaller meetings, including a civic center with 13,500 square feet of meeting/event space and a new upscale hotel with an additional 10,000. The county has 1,647 hotel rooms, as well as numerous rentable vacation properties.

The biggest news on this front is the new Beaufort Hotel, which opened this spring. The 133-room boutique hotel sits alongside Taylor’s Creek, just across from Carrot Island where the wild horses roam. The property’s Outdoor Pavilion makes the most of that fortunate setting and

can accommodate up to 110 for a reception or 90 seated. Indoors, the Rachel Carson Ballroom can accommodate up to 400 banquet or 228 classroom-style. Altogether the new Beaufort Hotel has over 10,000 square feet of event space.

Crystal Coast Venues

- **Crystal Coast Civic Center:** 13,500 square feet of flexible meeting space
- **Beaufort Hotel:** 10,000 square feet of meeting/event space; 133 guest rooms
- **DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Atlantic Beach Oceanfront:** 10,000 square feet of meeting space; 200 guest rooms
- **Merrell Estate & Gardens:** 18,000-square-foot house; Grand Foyer accommodates 100 seated; Merrell Ballroom, 200 seated

New Bern/Craven County

New Bern is a modestly sized deeply-historical Craven County city on North Carolina's coast. Historic buildings in this centuries-old city are everywhere. New Bern was North Carolina's first state capital. Tryon Palace, originally built in 1770, served as the state's first capitol building. It can be visited today and on its grounds are several other historic buildings, the North Carolina History Center and gardens. A historical interpreter can lead groups on a guided tour. Indeed, the city itself can be explored via horse and carriage, trolley or on foot.

The county's primary meeting facility is the New Bern Riverfront Convention Center. It has 30,000 square feet of meeting space and 475 hotel guest rooms within walking distance. One adjacent hotel has considerable meeting space, and there are several smaller hotels and event venues in the area with limited space. (For more information, see Breakout Spotlight on page 56.)

New Bern Venues

- **New Bern Riverfront Convention Center:** 45,000-square-foot facility; 30,000 square feet of meeting space
- **DoubleTree by Hilton New Bern - Riverfront:** 15,000 square feet of meeting space; 171 guest rooms
- **Tryon Palace:** 4,200-square-foot Mat-tocks Hall; 192-seat performance hall; 3,500-square-foot outdoor courtyard
- **Copper Ridge on the Neuse:** space for up to 300 guests; outdoor spot on a 20-foot bluff overlooking the Neuse River ■

BREAKOUT SPOTLIGHT: Wilmington & Beaches

Wilmington Riverfront



In addition to boasting the largest convention center on the North Carolina Coast, Wilmington offers a transformed, walkable riverfront that connects sophisticated meeting facilities with scenic water views and historic attractions.

The city's multiuse Convention District, which integrates the Wilmington Convention Center with the city and its businesses, experts and academic resources, is within the River District and all these facilities are connected by a nearly two-mile scenic Riverwalk that makes it easy for attendees to get around. Currently home to multiple hotels, restaurants and retail, plus an event pier, marina and riverfront park, the area continues to add more venues.

Two projects just beginning to be realized are a 125-room Aloft Coastline Hotel, which broke ground in January and is slated to open in mid-2020, and North Waterfront Park, which will feature an outdoor live-performance space to be managed by Live Nation!, with construction due to begin later this year. The new Aloft Coastline

Hotel, located along the Cape Fear River, will have seven stories and 125 rooms, a full-service restaurant, ground level bar, rooftop bar, meeting rooms, banquet rooms, guest services, outdoor terraces, a fitness center, service kitchen and an outdoor pool, as well as a 7,000-square-foot ballroom.

The hotel will be adjacent to the 100-year-old historic Coastline Conference & Event Center, which will be renovated as part of the project.

An urban greenspace, North Waterfront Park will provide an outdoor performance space for events and concerts near the convention center. The Convention District is also home to Embassy Suites and the Hotel Ballast, Tapestry Collection by Hilton.

In addition to walking along the riverfront, groups can tour the River District via narrated trolley, horse-drawn carriage or Segway tours, or hop aboard a brew bus or river cruise. ■

Contact: nccoastalmeetingsouth.com

Foodie
Fun!

Contemporary Cuisine on the Cape Fear River

In downtown Wilmington, floating on a barge along the Riverwalk, Anne Bonny's Bar & Grill specializes in calabash-style seafood, shareable appetizers, and classic burgers and sandwiches. Opened in May, the pet-friendly bar and restaurant serves lunch and dinner with a casual, open-air waterfront atmosphere. Locals and tourists alike can enjoy live music, spectacular sunsets and delicious seafood.

