



You Can Get There From Here (maybe)

stories of your trips off the beaten path

Some of the most memorable trips or vacations can be to places that people may call "in the middle of nowhere." Once we find them we hope no one else will, or we hope that at least they will remain as they were when we found them.

But we know that every place changes. Places that are out of the mainstream may change more gradually than the popular destinations. And we have chosen to protect some places as parks and reserves.

We are lucky in North Carolina to have many places that are off the beaten path. Tourists haven't even seen some of them. I can think of a few that I especially enjoy (but I'm not telling where they are).

Plenty of our readers were willing to tell us about their favorite out-of-the-way vacations. Following are a few stories that were selected for publication. You can find more and submit your own on our new Web site (www.carolinacountry.com) on the "Stories & How-To's" pages. Thanks to everyone who submitted stories for this month.

Go to page 15 for information about sending more stories for publication. You can submit them through the Web site now, too.

— Michael E.C. Gery, editor

Along the Cape Fear Run

As an avid bicycle-touring fan, I felt the Department of Transportation's Cape Fear Run bicycle route would be a perfect avenue to explore rural North Carolina. My friend Tally and I left Fayetteville with full panniers and high expectations. We had tediously explored the mapped route to Wilmington, calculating the distance to be traveled each day. In an attempt to reduce the weight of what we carried,

we decided to leave the tent behind and find a hotel at our planned stopping point.

As night began to fall and mosquitoes swarmed, we arrived to find that the town at our stopping point—near Kelly, I believe—consisted of one gas station/convenience store. The store owner didn't hesitate to come to our rescue. He offered his home for the night, because they would be away, with instructions to "leave the key above the door when you leave."



Left: Tally and Karen at the end of the Cape Fear Run bicycle route.

Above: Home sweet home for a night thanks to the kindness of strangers

The home we found was a castle to us. A real log home with chinking inside and out. A beautiful loft with handsome rustic furniture. As we sat on the porch that evening, reveling in the adventure and beauty of the unexpected, we were treated to yet another surprise. A neighbor down the road dropped by to share a watermelon with us. As we munched and spit seeds out into the dark, we exchanged many tales and experiences.

We will always remember the kindness and generosity of these North Carolinians.

*Karen Stansell
Burgaw
Four County EMC*

White Lake and Elizabethtown

My favorite place is White Lake near Elizabethtown. It is such a quaint area. We have an old cabin with no hot water and an outdoor shower, like many others there. My daughter and I have shared so many special summers there. It is a clear lake with a shallow area near our pier. It has never become commercialized and has only one main grocery store, campgrounds, an amusement park with a restaurant, and several convenience stores.

Elizabethtown is such a neat place to shop. And you can have a famous Melvin's burger, which has cost only 69 cents for years.

There's the famous FFA Camp nearby, and the cement garden ornament business up the road. We especially enjoyed the White Lake Festival and the famous parade that was right out of "Steel Magnolias" with all the beauty queens.

We could sit on the pier at night and hear the music coming from the campground dance or watch fireworks on July 4th. My daughter actually got her first kiss on that very pier!

My only unpleasant memories are of the biting yellow flies and a couple of lizards who intruded on our vacation.

White Lake is a great, safe place to vacation with children and share special stages of their lives.

*Stacy Conrad
Lexington
EnergyUnited*

The mountains around Plumtree

On Feb. 7, 2003, my church youth group started out for the little town of Plumtree (Avery County), located in the mountains of North Carolina, for a fun-filled weekend of skiing and snowboarding. It had been so long since I had been to the mountains, I practically forgot how they looked. Living on the Crystal Coast, there aren't many hills. It's like a parking lot at Wal-Mart: flat!

I had no idea that when we arrived it would be snowing. Everything was covered in beautiful white snow. It looked as if someone had taken an eraser to the landscape and erased all of the color.

When it snows in the mountains, there are many entertainment opportunities. One is to share the fun on the slopes with your friends and family.

The mountains are beautiful. And don't forget the Dramamine for the roller coaster ride up.

*Noah Simpson
Newport
Carteret-Craven Electric*

Green River Cove

When we started going to Green River Cove, near Saluda, it was still a small, curvy, gravel road running along a rocky river, then 15 miles up a mountain to a small campground along a river cove. Going tubing there was a must each summer.

Our summer vacation was always filled with kids. Many of our friends spend the week of July 4th with their families. Our campsite always looks like a small village. We have a pop-up camper, and the kids all put their tents up. We string tarps

overhead, because it always seems to rain when we go camping. Our cooking area is a big, screened room.

The food always tastes great cooked on the grill. And I never have to cook breakfast, because my husband does it. We look for wood along the river for our campfire at night. Instead of cutting down trees, we get limbs and twigs that have fallen during the winter months.

Trout fishing is good. We usually bake trout one or two times during the week.

Our kids can be free—swimming, fishing, tubing and country camping. Everyone watches each other's children. We don't have to spend a lot of money to have a good vacation.

*Barbara Davis
Kings Mountain
Rutherford EMC*



You don't have to spend much money to have a good vacation at Green River Cove.

The Haliwa-Saponi pow-wow

Nothing could be finer than being in North Carolina on vacation with the Haliwa-Saponi Indians.

In 1965, the Haliwa-Saponi Indians received state recognition. This recognition is celebrated with an annual pow-wow, which is the oldest and largest in the state. This three-day outside event is held each year during the third weekend in April. There is a large camping area available for those who like the great outdoors, and a host of hotels nearby to accommodate all others. There are arts and crafts and lots of good food.



The Haliwa-Saponi annual pow-wow is the oldest and largest in the state.

This celebration is a way to express culture and heritage, and it showcases the community. The pow-wow is a celebration of the Indian community's survival and a chance for Indians and non-Indians to come together to renew old friendships and create new ones. This event takes place on the grounds of the Haliwa-Saponi Tribal School, which is nestled in the small community of Bethlehem, located approximately 25 miles from I-85 and I-95.

To learn more about the Haliwa-Saponi Indians or their annual event you may contact them at (252) 586-4017.

*Sunshine Richardson
Haliwa-Saponi member
Warrenton
Halifax EMC*

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With the turtles on Bald Head Island

Having visited many beautiful locales in our great state and throughout the nation, I particularly recall a visit to North Carolina's Bald Head Island to observe the nesting of endangered loggerhead turtles. Full-time ocean residents, these reptiles measure up to four feet long, weigh 300 pounds and can live for nearly a century. The females come ashore only to nest, generally returning to the same beach where they hatched.

Protected by federal law, the turtles and nests are monitored by the Bald Head Island Conservancy to prevent damage or predation.

During two nights in mid-July, I accompanied the "turtle patrol." The full moon and high tides created ideal nesting conditions; however, we saw no turtles until late the second night. When we received a radioed report of a turtle preparing to nest, we hurried onto ATVs and arrived to watch her deposit nearly 100 golf ball-sized leathery eggs into a foot-deep cavity. With her rear flippers she covered and concealed the nest with sand. Then she laboriously lunged down the beach to the water's edge where she slid gracefully into the waves, leaving her nest and future hatchlings to fend for themselves.

As I watched her disappear into the moonlit ocean, I felt privileged and awed at having witnessed this ritual.

*Douglas Butler
Crumpler
Blue Ridge EMC*



Observing the nesting of endangered loggerhead turtles on North Carolina's Bald Head Island.



Nantahala National Forest

Whether you're the adventurous type or just looking for a nice place to wind down, Nantahala's got it all.

Thrill seekers can raft or kayak down the Nantahala River. Although it's not an extremely tough river, it does have some rough spots and is great for beginners.

The Nantahala is set in the middle of some of the most beautiful scenery in North Carolina, with mountains on all sides. The weather is wonderfully comfortable in nearly all seasons, so you can sit on your porch sipping coffee or mountain bike in the woods all while enjoying its natural beauty.

I have taken several vacations with my family to the Nantahala and have thoroughly enjoyed myself every time. This is definitely a spot worth checking out next time you take a vacation close to home.

*Courtney Skibbe
Charlotte*



High Falls in Moore County has rolling green hills, 100-year-old barns and the Deep River.

Swansboro

Peaceful, private and preserved is our vacation destination. Located on the Intracoastal Waterway, the old historic town of Swansboro is where we make our summer complete. My husband and I recently purchased a small place in this quaint, friendly fishing community. We had traveled here for years and loved the serenity and quiet. For us, this was and still is a non-commercialized and not-very-crowded place.

For people who love to fish and have a small boat, this area is the best. Each morning we prepare our Carolina Skiff for the day's adventure on a secluded island that has inlets on one side and the ocean on the other. Once we are in the boat, the distance is approximately 30 minutes to the island. Nature shows us a variety of picturesque scenes. We are

captivated watching baitfish scatter along the water and seeing a white egret or blue heron wait patiently for food in the marsh.

Arriving on the island we see that we are the only humans in sight. Splendid! Our dogs run freely, and we set up for several hours of pure pleasure. We talk, walk, fish, read and rest.

*Martie Hartley-Maudlin
Salisbury
EnergyUnited*

High Falls farm

I grew up in South Carolina, which is a beautiful state. But when I met my husband, he took me to visit his family farm in High Falls, N.C. (Moore County).

I could not believe how beautiful everything was. The farm had rolling green hills, barns that are 100 years old and Deep River flowing by. We would spend weekends that we had free on the screened-in porch of the farmhouse.

We decided after we got married that we wanted to make a move of some sort, so we moved to the farm. Now I get to enjoy the beauty every day. But the farm is still used as vacation, because now our family from South Carolina comes up to camp, fish and relax every chance they get.

*Candy Cheek
Robbins
Randolph EMC*

Send us your best Earn \$50

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

JUNE 2003

"The Finest Food in North Carolina"

If you had to pick one North Carolina specialty, what would it be and why?
Deadline: April 15

JULY 2003

"Why I Went Back to School"

What was your most meaningful adult education experience?
Deadline: May 15

AUGUST 2003

"The Funniest Story I Ever Heard"

True, or not so true.
Deadline: June 15

SEPTEMBER 2003

"My Favorite Photo"

Our annual photo gallery of North Carolina people and places.
Deadline: July 15

OCTOBER 2003

"Why I Like My Electric Cooperative"

Is a cooperative different than other utilities?
Deadline: August 15

NOVEMBER 2003

"The Finest Neighbor I Ever Knew"

Tell us why and send a photo.
Deadline: Sept. 15

DECEMBER 2003

"How to Live a Long and Happy Life"

Do you know an older person who sets a good example for staying healthy and happy? Send a photo, too.
Deadline: Oct. 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mail or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, electric co-op, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616. Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com. Or through the Web: www.carolinacountry.com

Ocracoke Island

For our one-year anniversary, my wife and I ventured to the Outer Banks where we visited one of North Carolina's greatest treasures, Ocracoke Island.



One of North Carolina's greatest treasures: Ocracoke Island.

The only access to the island is by ferry or private boat or plane. Among the features that make Ocracoke special are the banker ponies, the history of Blackbeard the Pirate, the harbor and the Ocracoke Lighthouse. But the best feature of all has to be the miles and miles of undeveloped beaches.

Along Highway 12 there are small pathways winding through the sand dunes drawing you to the serene, almost desolate beaches. However, within a few minutes you can be among the hustle and bustle of the quaint shops located around the harbor. This close-knit community exudes a relaxed lifestyle that easily soothes visitors. Ocracoke offers the best of both worlds: a small town atmosphere and pristine beaches. If you are looking to really get away, I highly recommend Ocracoke Island.

Eric McPherson
Asheboro
Randolph EMC

Cape Lookout National Seashore

This past summer, I was finally able to visit the most isolated of the North Carolina lighthouses—Cape Lookout.

I knew that the lighthouse was in the middle of nowhere, but I had no idea how far away it really is. I also knew that I would have to take a ferry, but I had in mind one of the large ferries in our state system. But the ferry wasn't much of a ferry—it was a speed boat. Nonetheless, it just added to the charm of the trip.

The 169-foot lighthouse that had eluded me for so long did not disappoint.

As we sped across the sound, with the lighthouse getting nearer and nearer, my heart began to pound.

I expected there to be people swarming all over the place, but I found the opposite. I just couldn't believe that there weren't more people taking in this bliss. I was selfishly glad that there weren't.

In North Carolina, as tourism becomes more and more popular, it is difficult to find places that are off the beaten path. Thankfully, Cape Lookout has not succumbed to the tourist trap disease.

Wendy Sink
Winston-Salem

Calabash

My family believes the best vacation spot in North Carolina has to be the Calabash area. It has so much to offer for a young family, and it has fewer crowds than other beach areas. Our favorite place to stay is a condo on one of the beautiful golf courses off Highway 17, close to the beaches, town and grocery stores.

Most mornings, we head off to Ocean Isle or Sunset Beach. It is always a hard decision, as both are beautiful, clean and wide. Our daughter, Sarah, loves the beach and plays until she drops. We usually take a picnic lunch and enjoy it by the ocean. Later, we'll head back and stop off at the docks in Calabash to buy shrimp fresh off the boat for dinner. Later that evening, my husband will boil the shrimp and make a wonderful meal. When we eat dinner out, our favorite place is Twin Lakes Seafood, located beside the swing bridge linking Sunset Beach. You can eat dinner upstairs, and if you are lucky you see the bridge in action as the sun sets over the island.

Kim Young
Statesville
EnergyUnited



The Calabash area has much to offer a young family.