

Carolina country *Adventures*



Carolina Country Adventures



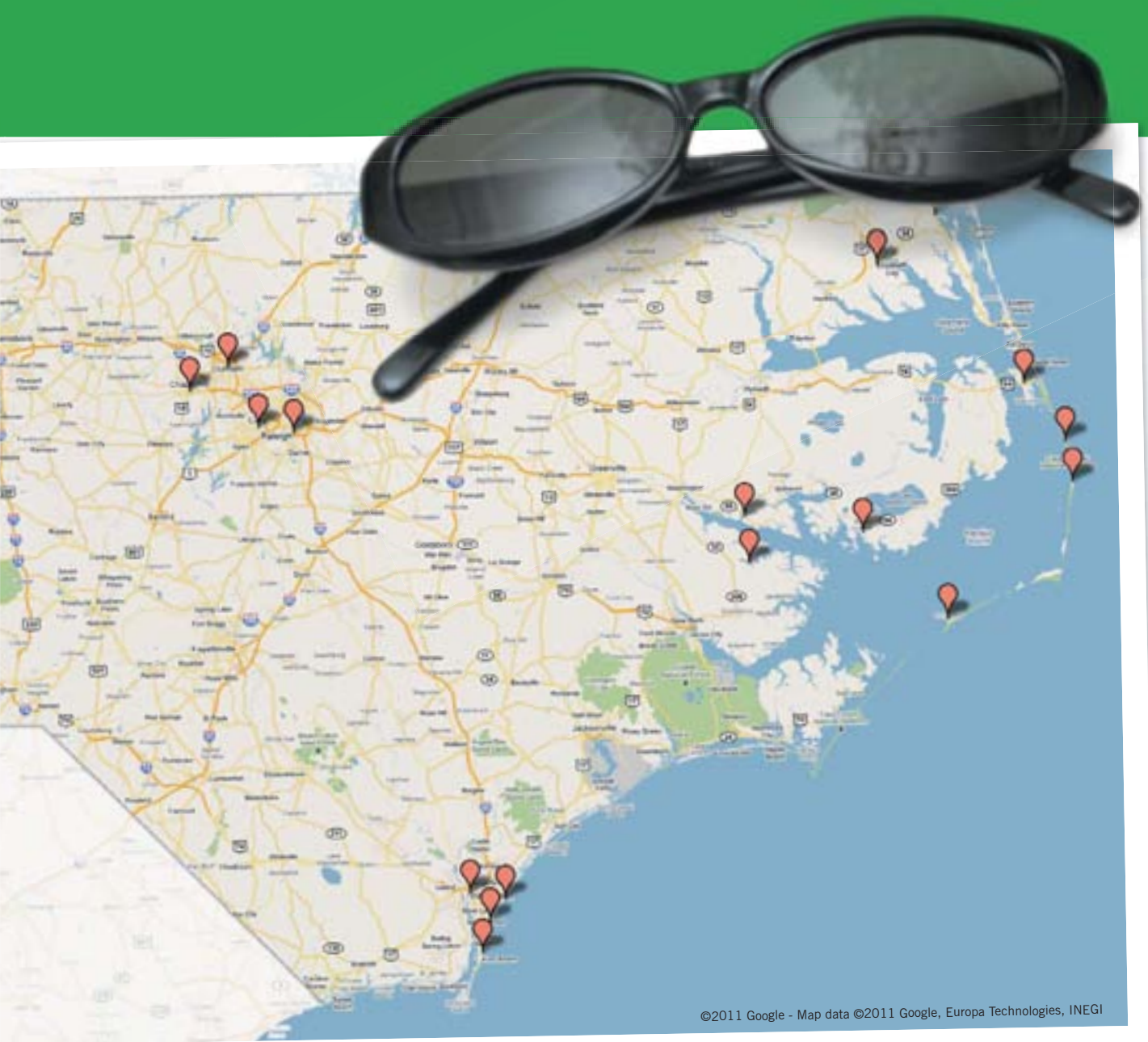
From one end to the other, North Carolina is about as diverse as any state in the nation. We've got hard gemstones in the west, soft crabs on the coast and red clay in the middle. The tobacco we grow in the mountains is different than what we grow in the east. What we live in, how we drive, what we eat and how we talk varies from one region to another.

Our annual Touchstone Energy Travel Guide encourages you to experience this variety firsthand.

This year, we offer you six great travel stories about interesting areas in the mountains, Piedmont and coast. We've also updated the primary sources of general information about regions in our resource listings. The adventures we offer may be familiar to you, or they may not. In any case, each holds the promise for a lot of travel fun.

As you make your way through this guide and through the countryside, you can be assured that a Touchstone Energy cooperative is nearby.

Thanks to everyone who helped us compile this guide, and to our sponsors: the cooperatives and the advertisers on pages 36 to 38.



©2011 Google - Map data ©2011 Google, Europa Technologies, INEGI

Writers

Renee C. Gannon
 Michael E.C. Gery
 Karen Olson House
 Tara Verna

Designers

Warren Kessler
 Tara Verna
 Linda Van de Zande

Advertising

Jennifer Boedart Hoey
 Jenny Lloyd

Travel Advertising..... 36

Great Smoky Mountain Railroad..... 40

Land of the Sky 42

Gaston County..... 44

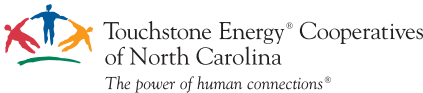
Food Tours in The Triangle 46

Marc's District: The great northeast..... 48

Port City Adventures 50

N.C. Travel Resources 52

This supplement to Carolina Country is brought to you by North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives, serving nearly 2 million people in 93 North Carolina counties. We bring the power of human connections to all regions of North Carolina. Touchstone Energy cooperatives nationwide are committed to integrity, accountability, innovation and community involvement. Send comments and corrections to editor@carolinacountry.com



Carolina Country Adventures

By Michael E.C. Gery



Marc's District: The great northeast

It would be hard to find a more diverse region than N.C. Senate District No. 1. Everything from alligators to yellowlegs, Algonquian to Latinos, and orange trees to redbay trees thrive here. After the first English colony got “lost” on Roanoke Island in 1587, adventurers from the Virginia Tidewater tromped through the dismal swamp to hide here from oppressors. These “renegades” included escaped slaves, Quakers, criminals on the run and visionary pioneers. They got along well with the local Indians for a good 50 years. Meantime, such adventurers as shipwrecked sailors turned up on the Outer Banks. At the beginning of the Civil War, newly freed slaves came to the first Freedman’s Colony on Roanoke Island. In short, the area has more or less accepted anyone who wanders in.

These adventures are all an easy drive from the Outer Banks beach resorts. So if you’re on vacation at the beach, take a day or two to see some of this.

Where to start

The place to start is the Museum of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City. Recently opened in its beautiful new building on the waterfront, the MOA gives the best overview of the region’s culture. Elizabeth City itself is going through a renaissance on the Pasquotank.

Natural areas

You can’t get more natural than the expansive wildlife

refuges here—from Mackay’s Island in Currituck down through Pea Island on Hatteras, then on the mainland to Alligator River and Pocosin Lakes (a Roanoke Island visitor center is under construction), Mattamuskeet and Swan Quarter. The birds are amazing. A new wildlife education center is open near Whalehead Club in Corolla. Partnership for the Sounds (partnershipforthesounds.org) offers information and programs for attractions in Beaufort, Hyde and Tyrrell counties.

Attractions

Seven lighthouses in this region welcome visitors. Four are near the beach: Currituck, Bodie Island (under repair), Cape Hatteras and Ocracoke. Three “river lights” are inland: Roanoke Marshes in Manteo, Roanoke River in Plymouth, and Roanoke River in Edenton (under restoration).

The National Park Service manages Outer Banks historic sites and beaches: The Wright Brothers Memorial, Fort Raleigh (home of “The Lost Colony”), and Cape Hatteras National Seashore.

Chicamacomico Lifesaving Station in Rodanthe on Hatteras—privately managed—is great fun for kids. So is the state-maintained Elizabeth II 16th century replica ship in Manteo.

A grand opening is scheduled this summer at the rebuilt historic landmark Jennette’s Pier in Nags Head, destroyed by a hurricane in 2003. More than a fishing pier, it contains super educational exhibits and much more.

Off the beaten path

Many places here are as delightful to get to as they are to see and experience. The N.C. Historic Site of Somerset Place near Creswell shows authentic 19th century plantation life. Nearby is Lake Phelps and Pettigrew State Park.

Lake Landing historic district leading to Lake Mattamuskeet in Hyde County takes you through serenely beautiful agricultural and fishing areas.

After a visit to Historic Bath (the state’s oldest town), take the ferry over to Aurora and check out the fossil museum. Kids love it.

The little-known Palmetto-Peartree Preserve in northern Tyrrell County offers as good a wilderness experience as you can get.

Good food

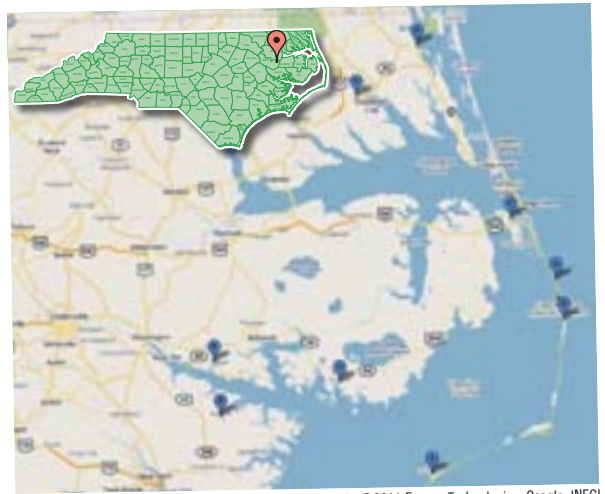
Basnight’s Lone Cedar Café: Dinner nightly at 4:30 and Sunday brunch 10 a.m.–3 p.m. overlooking Roanoke Sound on the Nags Head Causeway. You’ll get all local seafood and a chance to greet Marc Basnight. (252) 441-5405.

Back Bay Café/Words & Wine: Tucked quietly near the Belhaven waterfront is the Back Bay Café, with seasonal and unusual specials plus gourmet wines, beers and cheeses, and lots of books. Thursday 11:30 a.m.–4 p.m., Friday and Saturday 11:30 a.m.–8:30 p.m., Sunday 11:30 a.m.–3 p.m. (252) 944-2870.

Cypress Creek Grill: On the Elizabeth City waterfront and close to everything. Local seafood, Creole, Tex-Mex. Lunch and dinner Monday–Friday, dinner Saturday. (252) 334-9915.



For more information see *Northern Coastland travel resources* starting on page 56.



©2011 Google - Map data ©2011 Europa Technologies, Google, INEGI

Marc Basnight country

By the time he retired from the N.C. Senate soon after his re-election in 2010, “Marc” (as everyone here knows him) made an indelible mark of his own in his district. He represented this area for 26 years, 17 of them as president pro tem of the senate, a record in that top job. He was by most accounts the most powerful and effective politician in the state.

You can’t go far here without seeing Marc’s marks. The main reason he could get so much done was that his constituents loved and respected him almost as much as he loved and respected them. The region today resembles the one where Marc grew up only because he and allies tried to preserve its natural surroundings, its historical places and its traditional culture. Otherwise, anyone who might have left here when Marc was first elected in 1984, and who might return today, would be utterly amazed at the development that has taken place.

Marc’s district comprises about 3,300 square miles of land, and about the same area of water. Year-round population is about 159,000. The eight counties include some of the state’s lowest in population (Camden, Hyde, Tyrrell, Washington) and some of the highest in household income (Camden again, Currituck, Dare), and two smack in the middle ranks (Beaufort, Pasquotank).

The 4-hour drive Marc made to Raleigh in the early years has been cut to 3 hours, thanks largely to his work. But travelers may still take the slower route along old sections of Hwy. 64, Hwy. 264, Hwy. 17 and Hwy. 12 to see much of what Marc adores about his native country.