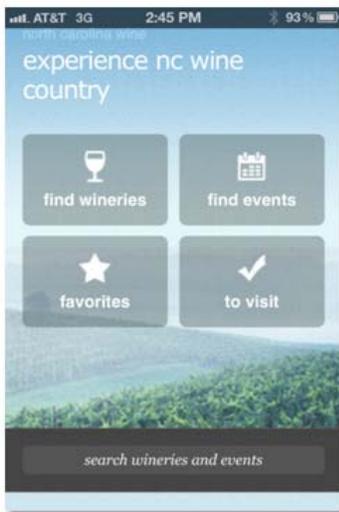


New tools now available to assist wine travelers



Three new tools are now available to help travelers find their way to more than 100 wineries in North Carolina. The Division has produced a new mobile website, winery guide and billboard campaign, all designed to draw attention to wineries as attractive destinations where visitors can connect with North

Carolina traditions in taste and agriculture.

"The wine industry and travel and tourism industry are critical economic drivers for our state," said N.C. Commerce Sec. Keith Crisco. "These new tools will bolster North Carolina's efforts to attract more visitors to their favorite wineries or enable them to find new wine destinations in our state."

"America's viticulture story begins in North Carolina," said Assistant Sec. Lynn Minges. "More than four centuries later, the state has cultivated a \$1.28 billion wine industry that has made North Carolina one of the top states for wine tourism. These new tools will help travelers plan their trips and also encourage those driving through our state to stop and spend time here."

Mobile website – visitncwine.com: With travelers on the move increasingly using their smartphones and other mobile devices to find their way, the Division has introduced a mobile Web application for visitncwine.com. It includes:

Introducing: A new look for NewsLink

Dear NewsLink partners,

This week marks a new beginning for NewsLink. After more than a decade of bringing you important news from the Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development, and the travel industry in general, NewsLink is getting a makeover. This vibrant new design is intended to be more visually appealing, and more connected with our nccommerce.com/tourism website and our various social media outlets, without sacrificing the quality information and updates you have come to expect from the Division. As always, we appreciate your partnership and welcome your feedback about the new NewsLink and about any of our programs and initiatives. We look forward to keeping in touch with you on a regular basis.

Lynn Minges
 Assistant Sec. for Tourism, Marketing &
 Global Branding

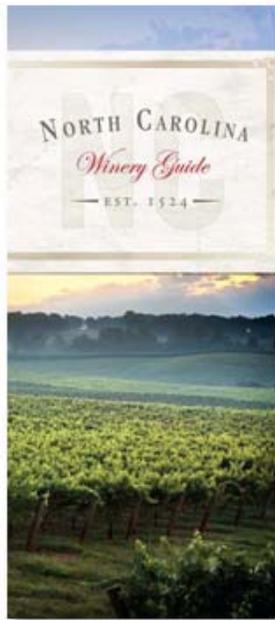


Governor's Conference

- Listings, descriptions, mapping/directions and photos for each of the wineries.
- Ability to search for wineries and winery events.
- Geo-location for proximity searches.
- Filters for regions, amenities and the state's three American Viticultural Areas.
- Opportunity to capture personal lists of "Favorites" and places to "To Visit."
- Access to real-time updates that keep the information current and accurate for travelers.

For a screen grab of the mobile site, go to the wine site [Marketing Tools Website Page](#).

NC Winery Guide – This pocket-size brochure will combine panoramic views of North Carolina wine with close-ups of each winery. Users can learn about the variety, traditions and nuances of North Carolina wines with breakouts on grape species and hybrids, glimpses of history, and color photographs that reflect the scenic backdrops of wine destinations. The 56-page brochure will also provide maps and winery listings that include a brief description, directions, contact information, amenities and grape varieties. The free guide is available at North Carolina's nine Welcome Centers, at wineries across the state and by calling 800-VISITNC. To see images of the guide, go to the wine site [Marketing Tools Borchure page](#). For bulk orders, contact [Justin Furr](#) at (919) 715-3835.



Outdoor advertising – New billboards are providing statewide exposure for wineries and the visitncwine.com website.

features Silent Auction to support scholarships

[Register](#) to attend the [N.C. Governor's Conference on Tourism](#) in Concord March 11-13, and be sure to plan some time to stop by the Tourism Education Foundation's Silent Auction, which is open throughout the conference. The Tourism Education Foundation of North Carolina is a non-profit organization created by the N.C. Travel Industry Association to help the state's tourism industry prepare for a dynamic future. Its objectives are to promote the development of talent, experience and leadership in the industry and to promote education research in tourism in North Carolina by providing financial support, leadership and professional expertise. The silent auction supports undergraduate scholarships for students attending North Carolina colleges or universities in tourism or hospitality management programs.

Visit the [Governor's Conference website](#) to learn more about the entire program, including the three keynote presentations and the unveiling of the Division's new branding and strategic marketing plan. Interactive breakout sessions are planned for Monday afternoon. Topics include [Capitalizing on the Retirement Boom](#); [Research: Effectively Using North Carolina's Research](#); [Going Green without Going Into the Red](#); [Creating Fascinating Social Media Messages](#); [Straight from the Horse's Mouth – Understanding the Needs of Media Today](#); [Policy: Tourism Issues for the Upcoming General Assembly](#); [The Butler Did It – Right: Customer Service Strategies for Tourism](#); [Project Runway: Tailoring Press Materials for the Digital Catwalk](#); [Making the Most of the Opportunity – In Print and Online](#); [Leveraging Partnerships with AAA](#); [Making Exit 49 an Entrance](#); [The Dating Game: Competing for the Attention of Top Media](#); and [Sports 101: A Tourism Engine for Your Community](#).

Outdoor boards are strategically placed on key corridor highways to reach North Carolina residents and out-of-state travelers who may be looking for a stopover destination or activity. They also promote the new mobile website application for visitncwine.com. Images of attractive vineyard landscapes are paired with headlines such as "Wine needs time to breathe. So do you." To see images of the billboards, go to the wine site [Marketing Tools Outdoor Advertising Program page](#).

"Whether travelers prefer red or white, muscadine or Merlot, many develop deep connections to North Carolina as they explore the diverse and beautiful wine regions of our state," Minges said. "The Division's Winery Guide, billboard advertising campaign and mobile website will make sure they find their way to the more than 100 unique wineries in North Carolina."

North Carolina has a long and rich history with wine dating back to Giovanni da Verrazano's discovery of the first cultivated grape in the Cape Fear River Valley in 1524, and the state is home to the Mother Vine, the nation's oldest known cultivated grapevine. Today, North Carolina's thriving wine industry generates an annual economic impact of \$1.28 billion and supports 7,600 jobs across the state. The number of wineries has doubled since 2005 and grown five-fold in the last decade.

In the 2011-2012 session of the North Carolina General Assembly, a legislative change shifted the marketing efforts for the wine industry to the N.C. Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development. This change enabled the wine industry to fully integrate into the Division's comprehensive and innovative tourism marketing programs for both domestic and international audiences.

For hotel reservations, please call (704) 455-8200. To ensure the group rate, identify yourself as a N.C. Governor's Conference on Tourism attendee, or provide the group code (CHT). The cut-off date to secure the \$135 rate is **Feb. 27**.

Cabarrus County tourism partners are rolling out some special discount packages for you to enjoy pre-conference. Check out www.visitcabarrus.com/ncgc and plan to arrive early.

Watch NewsLink or visit the [Governor's Conference website](#) for frequent updates, including a link to online registration, the conference agenda and hotel information. To learn more about becoming a sponsor, contact [Heidi Walters](#) at (919) 715-6702.



Global Entry program to speed customs at CLT

Frequent international travelers will soon have the option of bypassing customs and passport control lines at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, provided they pay \$100 and pass a background check to join the federal government's [Global Entry program](#). Customs and Border Protection officials outlined the plan last week at the Airport Advisory Committee meeting, and said they expect it to be operational by mid-March. Global Entry already has been piloted in 20 airports, and is now being rolled out more widely as part of the National Travel and Tourism Strategy.

Global Entry is a program within the U.S.



New social media sites keep tourism industry up-to-date

To bring the most up-to-date news, photos and videos to its media and industry partners, the Division has launched several new social media sites. Twitter, Facebook and other sites will provide information on the Division's activities, and will complement its current consumer-oriented social media sites. Follow the Division on the following sites:

- [Twitter](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Google+](#)



Film crew outside one soundstage at EUE/Screen Gems Studios in

Dept. of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection that was created as a pilot in 2008 to facilitate expedited clearance for pre-approved, low-risk travelers upon arrival in the United States. Through a final rule, the Administration [will expand and make the Global Entry program permanent](#). Due in part to innovative public-private partnerships, the Global Entry program now has more than 246,000 members, more than one million trusted travelers have Global Entry benefits, and efforts are underway to expand enrollment even further. There are currently 131 Global Entry kiosks at 20 airports and since launching, members have used Global Entry kiosks over 1.7 million times, saving CBP officers over 36,450 inspection hours – staff hours that CBP has then re-allocated to expedite regular passenger queues. This final rule will allow the program to be expanded to an additional 4 airports in Minneapolis, Charlotte, Denver and Phoenix, making the Global Entry program and expedited clearance available in airports that service approximately 97 percent of international travelers.

U.S. News & World Report includes 3 in N.C. among best hotels

According to U.S. News & World Report, a hotel is no longer just a place to lay one's head while traveling. Even the nicest and most luxurious accommodations have to tender something more than an in-house steakhouse and a high thread count in the bed linens – they also have to give their guests an unforgettable experience. With this in mind, the magazine named three hotels in N.C. among its [Best Hotels in the USA 2012](#): The Farrington House Inn in Pittsboro (#37), The Umstead Hotel and Spa in Cary (#41) and the Ritz-Carlton in Charlotte (#133).

Wilmington. (photo courtesy of Wilmington Regional Film Commission)

N.C.-filmed 'Journey 2' hits the big screen on Friday, new productions setup shop

Wilmington's first 3D movie hits the big screen on Friday, but exterior shots won't feature familiar area locations. That's because most of the interior shooting for "Journey 2: The Mysterious Island" took place on sound stages at EUE/Screen Gems Studios a year ago. The movie used Stage 10, the lot's largest, as well as a water tank built by the production specifically for the shoot. "'Journey' was a [big deal for North Carolina](#)," said N.C. Film Office Director Aaron Syrett. "Its scope was huge. It proved to the industry North Carolina can handle large special-effects films. Additionally, it created jobs and a large economic impact into the local community."

In addition, two movies have joined the ranks of [productions shooting in the Wilmington area](#) this year, according to the Wilmington Regional Film Commission. The agency's website is now listing "The Occult" and "Heart of the Country" in preproduction, along with "The Conjuring" and "Caged Heat." (The latter is widely known throughout the industry as the code name for "Iron Man 3.") The news followed word last Friday that the independent film "Writers," starring Greg Kinnear and Jennifer Connelly, would begin shooting in Wilmington next month.



Rhododendrons in bloom along stretch of the Blue Ridge Parkway.



Wild horse strolling along beach in Corolla.

U.S. House agrees: 60 wild horses aren't enough

The U.S. House has unanimously [passed a bill that would allow a bigger herd of free-roaming Corolla horses](#) in Currituck County in an effort to create more genetic diversity in the herd. The Corolla Wild Horses Protection Act sponsored by U.S. Rep. Walter Jones would provide a new management plan that would more than double the maximum number of horses in the Corolla herd, from 60 to 130.

Research shows that at least 110 horses are necessary to ensure that there is enough genetic variation in each generation of offspring to sustain a healthy herd. Jones said his bill aims to ensure the herd in Currituck County never drops below 110 and is capped at 130 to avoid overpopulation. The wild horses at Corolla have endured hurricanes, storms, scorching summers and harsh winters to become the State Horse and the second most popular tourist attraction on the Outer Banks after the beach. Part of the bill's plan is to introduce more genetic diversity into the Corolla herd by bringing in Spanish Mustangs from Shackleford Banks on Cape Lookout National Seashore near Beaufort. The Corolla wild horses are listed on the American Livestock Conservancy's critically endangered list. H.R. 306 will now go to the Senate, where it's hoped to come up in spring.

Blue Ridge Parkway visits up 6 percent in 2011

The Blue Ridge Parkway [saw an increased popularity last year](#), with a 6 percent rise in visitation over 2010. The scenic roadway attracted nearly 15.4 million visitors last year, up from 14.5 million. "I would attribute any increase in visitation to the normal changes from one year to the next. It's hard to put your finger on it," Parkway Superintendent Phil Francis said. Give or take a million visitors, the Parkway, which stretches 469 miles from Cherokee up to Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, is still the most visited of all 397 units of the National Park Service. In addition to the Smokies, which saw a decrease in visitors, and the Parkway, the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site in Flat Rock is also a unit of the National Park Service and also experienced an increased influx of visitors last year. The park had 89,719 visitors in 2011, up from 87,875 in 2010, a 2.1 percent increase. Additionally, October 2011 had a record high of 12,740 visitors to the 264-acre park in Henderson County.

Harrah's Cherokee Casino transforms from gambling stop into full-scale resort

When a \$633 million expansion wraps up later this year, Harrah's Cherokee Casino & Hotel will have a new Ruth's Chris Steakhouse and Brio restaurant, as well as a five-star Mandera Spa and a spectacular rotunda entrance. All are part a new emphasis over the last four years that has [seen the transformation of North Carolina's only casino into a full-scale resort](#). There's new floor space for electronic games in addition to the nearly 500 new hotel rooms that recently opened alongside a 3,000-seat entertainment center that's drawing stars like Diana Ross.

When it first opened 15 years ago, the casino served as a one- or two-day destination that drew from the Atlanta, Charlotte and Asheville markets. When all the work is done, the casino will be "a destination resort that can compete with anyone out there," according to General Manager Brooks Robinson. Even without the new amenities and multimillion dollar investment, it's hard to overstate the casino's impact on the mountain region.



Kayaker at U.S. National Whitewater Center in Charlotte.

Olympic hopefuls compete in N.C. first

Some Olympic hopefuls are coming to North Carolina to qualify for their particular sports before competing at the Olympics in London this summer. [Cary is hosting](#) the 2012 Olympic Table Tennis Trials, which runs Feb. 9-12. In addition, [Charlotte hosts](#) the Modern Pentathlon World Cup and Olympic Qualifier March 8-11, the Olympic Trials for Canoe Slalom April 12-14 at the U.S. National Whitewater Center, and the Charlotte Ultraswim May 10-13.



N.C. Dept. of Commerce Sec. Keith Crisco (third from left), Assistant Sec. Henry McCoy (second from right) and Deputy Sec. Dale Carroll (far right) present the Award of Merit for Best Outdoor Space Improvement to officials from Clayton.

Sec. Crisco announces N.C. Main Street

An economic impact study completed in June noted the evolution from a single bingo operation to a complex resort that is the largest private tourist attraction in North Carolina. About 3.6 million people visit the casino each year, with more than two-thirds of gaming revenues coming from out-of-state visitors. Visitor-generated revenue totaled \$386 million in 2010 after temporarily peaking at \$449 million in 2007. In 2009, the economic impact on Jackson and Swain counties was estimated to be about \$300 million. Capital investments added another \$82 million.



Helen Ruth Almond stands at one of the new Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor signs.

Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor signs unveiled

The new "gateway" signs that will [mark the entrance along major highways](#) to the four-county Yadkin Valley Heritage Corridor area were unveiled last week in a dedication ceremony at the Jonesville Welcome Center. The "Entering the Yadkin Valley" signs are a part of the effort to market the upper Yadkin Valley in Wilkes, Caldwell, Surry and Yadkin counties as a destination for tourists. The signs will be placed on U.S. 421 at the Wilkes-Watauga county line and the Wilkes-Yadkin county line, in Caldwell County near the intersection of U.S. 321 and N.C. 268, and on Interstate 77 at the North Carolina-Virginia line.

program winners

N.C. Dept. of Commerce Secretary J. Keith Crisco [presented 21 awards to participants](#) in the N.C. Main Street Programs last month. Award winners were recognized for excellence in downtown revitalization efforts in categories such as promotion, organization, design and economic restructuring. The [N.C. Main Street Program](#) helps small towns preserve their historic fabric and, using local resources, build on their unique characteristics to create vibrant central business districts. The [N.C. Small Town Main Street Program](#) is designed to provide downtown revitalization assistance to small towns (under 7,500 populations) that are not likely, due to size or resource limitations, to pursue the regular N.C. Main Street program. Admittance into the Small Town Main Street program is through an annual, competitive application process.



N.C. Green Travel: Why certification matters

The [NC GreenTravel Recognition Program](#) provides tourism-related businesses in North Carolina a no-cost, non-regulatory option to be recognized for their adoption of green practices. For many tourism businesses, being recognized by a green recognition program is one way to set their business apart from their competitors. Being recognized by a program such as NC Green Travel as a green hotel, restaurant, or attraction is also a great way to validate their efforts to be green. As more and more tourism businesses claim to be green, participating in a program like NC GreenTravel is a great way to show visitors your property not only talks about being green, but has

NASCAR Hall of Fame offering 'local rate'

The NASCAR Hall of Fame is introducing a [special Local Rate](#) throughout the months of February and March. Guests with a valid N.C. or S.C. photo ID can receive the special price when purchasing at the NASCAR Hall of Fame box office during regular operating hours.



Fishermen who drove to beach area near Cape Hatteras.

Beach driving permits required for Cape Hatteras National Seashore

[New permits required for driving on the beach](#) at the Cape Hatteras National Seashore will cost vacationers and surf-casters \$50 for a week or \$120 for a calendar year, the [National Park Service says](#). Effective Feb. 15, the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) permits can be obtained at any of the three NPS permit offices located at Coquina Beach, the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse Visitor Center (Buxton), and the Ocracoke Visitor Center.

Surveys, Industry, Marketing & Travel Trends

taken action to do so. And as noted by Mandi McKay of Sierra Nevada Brewing Company, during the last [Renewable Energy in Tourism webinar](#), being green is an excellent recruiting tool. The NC GreenTravel program also provides a number of resources and tools to help implement additional sustainable practices. For more information on the NC GreenTravel Initiative or for technical assistance, contact [Tom Rhodes](#) at the N.C. Division of Environmental Assistance and Outreach, or [Alex Naar](#) at (252) 737-1346.



"Kindred Spirit Mailbox" at Bird Island Beach. (photo courtesy of NC Brunswick Islands)

Bird Island among Yahoo's World's Most Unusual Beaches

Bird Island Beach, near Sunset Beach, is among Yahoo's "[World's Most Unusual Beaches](#)." The website spotlights the barrier island's little black mailbox, initially erected for people to write letters to save the island from development. Even after the island achieved state reserve status, letters of fond memories kept showing up. Then a steady stream of wishes, dreams, words of encouragement, and tales of love and love lost arrived from visiting tourists who, still today, sit on the adjacent bench to bare their soul at the Kindred Spirit Mailbox.

Hotels Reach Out to Niche Markets – Hotels across the country are [stepping up efforts to cater to niche markets](#). For instance, when the Residence Inn Chicago Deerfield started noticing an increase in clients from India, they decided they needed to do something to accommodate them. They put together welcome kits with calling cards so guests could check in with family back home. They organized an Indian breakfast, shuttle buses to Indian grocery stores, private dinners to Indian restaurants, and Indian Night events with screenings of Bollywood movies. The result: a \$304,000 annual profit, and about a 10 percent increase in revenue per available room, a key benchmark for hotels.

Daily Deals are Double Whammy – The [paradox in the increasingly popular "daily deals"](#) in the hotel business was underscored by a wide-ranging study that showed few respondents using them for promotion but almost everyone citing them as a source of repeat business. Only 19 percent of respondents participated in "daily deal" website promotions in 2011, but of these respondents, 90 percent cited these deals as sources of repeat business. The DLA 2012 Piper Hospitality Outlook Survey also found TripAdvisor and Expedia as the two most influential websites for travel customers.

Meeting-Goers Getting What They Want: One-Stop – Meeting planners are well-known for their preference for [one-stop convention centers that don't involve lengthy bus rides](#) to sessions. Even short rides can be inconvenient. So one-stop centers are in demand and are growing. A good example is the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention Center Collection, which pairs the Broward County Convention Center with six meeting hotels, all within a mile of the 200,000-square-foot center. Together, the properties can accommodate groups of up to 2,700.

Hotels Cater To Special Diets; Gluten-Free Food Now On Menus – It's no longer enough for hotels to offer vegetarian food options. Now their menus are going [gluten-free, dairy-free and macrobiotic](#) to cater to Americans' diets. For instance, Fairmont Hotels & Resorts last year created a Lifestyle Cuisine Plus Menu for guests with diabetes, heart disease, gluten allergies and unique dietary preferences such as macrobiotic diets. This month, the company introduced a new children's menu with lower-calorie versions of favorites such as chicken fingers and kid-size portions of the Lifestyle menu.

Customer Reviews: Hotels Fight Back -- Hotels have noted the quick rise and growing influence of review sites and are [trying to counter it](#) with some of the largest hotel companies in

Media Lead

Historic Boardrooms– Small Market Meetings Editor Vickie Mitchell seeks information for an upcoming story about boardrooms in which significant, history-making gatherings have been held.

Boardrooms must be part of a facility located in a second-tier or smaller city. Describe the boardroom, its features, its upgrades, as well as the historic occasion(s) that have been held there. *Deadline: Feb. 17.*



'North Carolina Weekend'

For the week of Feb. 9 on UNC-TV's "[North Carolina Weekend](#)," enjoy the Civil War Flags exhibit at the Museum of the Albemarle in Elizabeth City. Learn more about Abraham Lincoln's ties to North Carolina with a trip to the Bostic Lincoln Museum. Relax at The Spa at Ferrington in Pittsboro. Step back in time at Historic Hope Plantation in Windsor. And the "House Special" samples the fare at the Country Squire Restaurant in Kenansville. *(Please note: listings are subject to change.)* "North Carolina Weekend" is exclusively underwritten by the N.C. Division of Tourism. In addition, UNC-TV has made recent editions of "North Carolina Weekend" available online.

the world adding their own website ratings or contracting other companies for help. It's somewhat of a revolution in hotel marketing because some observers say it's far more important these days what consumers say about a brand than what a property says or advertises about itself. The move comes as hoteliers increasingly are recognizing the major and growing impact of all social networks -- including Facebook and Twitter. Four Seasons marketing chief Susan Helstab last year told USA Today that sharing all reviews involved a risk that luxury brands in particular have been reluctant to make. But the company's mindset is that it's less of a risk for its hotels, where on-site staff over the last year have been individually trained to monitor and follow-up with all reviews.

Hotels Can Drive Growth through Sustainability but Consumer Benefits are Critical – MindClick

SGM and Expedia.com announced the results of a study of 5,000 consumers that [measures awareness, expectations and the impact of hotel sustainability efforts](#). The study revealed that consumers applaud such efforts, but need to better understand the tangible impact to their travel lives. Over the past decade, hotels have implemented and promoted sustainability programs including greener operations-energy efficiency, water conservation and recycling, and green building through the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification program. With operational sustainability awareness levels at 80 percent among consumers surveyed, the industry has succeeded in telling at least part of the story. At the same time, the study showed that there is a gap between how the industry communicates its sustainability efforts and the areas of sustainability that consumers see as important.

north carolina
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[Division of Tourism](#) | [NC Travel Guide](#) | [Media Room](#)

Upcoming industry meetings & events

Feb. 16 – Division's TRAC Meeting, Smithfield

Feb. 21 – N.C. Travel & Tourism Board Meeting, Raleigh

Feb. 22 -- 2nd Annual N.C. Conference on Sustainable Viticulture, Marshall

Feb. 24 – NC's Northeast, State of the Region, TBD

March 4-7 – Travel South USA Showcase, Louisville, Ky.

March 6 – N.C. Sports Association Meeting, Winston-Salem

March 9-18 – South by Southwest (SXSW), Austin, Texas)

March 11-13 – N.C. Governor's Conference on Tourism, Concord

March 15-16 – MPI-CC Meeting, Raleigh

March 19-21 – STS Spring Meeting, Tunica, Miss.

Building Location:

301 North Wilmington Street
Raleigh, NC 27601-1058

Mailing Address:

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