



ELIZABETH CITY AREA CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

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Elizabeth City Travel Backgrounder

Discover the Good Life Daily in Elizabeth City, N.C.

(Elizabeth City, N.C., 2008) -- Halfway between Norfolk, Va., and North Carolina's Outer Banks is a charmer of a town. Drive through Elizabeth City, N.C., and it's not unusual to see boaters gathered for an impromptu dock party, a horse-and-carriage driver with guests in tow or a gallery opening in full swing along the city's authentic Mayberry-esque Main Street.

Instead of passing through, why not stay awhile?

Like the poet Robert Frost, who followed the road less traveled to Elizabeth City in 1894, today's visitors will find an accommodating harbor with a pleasing charm.

The Great Outdoors

Bounded by the Dismal Swamp to the north and the Pasquotank River to the southeast, Elizabeth City is first and foremost a waterfront town. Founded in 1793, it was once a major seaport where four-masted sailing ships carried goods along the eastern seaboard. That same year, construction began on the Dismal Swamp Canal, providing an important commercial trade route linking Virginia with relatively isolated Northeastern North Carolina.

Today, Elizabeth City's location on the Intracoastal Waterway makes it a popular stop for recreational boaters from around the world. On arrival, they may take advantage of the city's generous 48-hour free dockage and are feted by the

"Rose Buddies," waterfront ambassadors who greet visiting boaters with a rose and wine and cheese at **Mariners' Wharf**.

For a different waterfront experience, the Dismal Swamp beckons paddlers, hikers, bikers and birders.

Nearly 125,000 acres comprise the Dismal Swamp, one of North America's great wetland forests that straddle the North Carolina/Virginia border. One of the best places to gain access is at the **Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center** and **Dismal Swamp State Park** in neighboring Camden County.

Located on the canal, the Welcome Center is the only such facility in the country to welcome visitors by car and by a historic waterway. Drop in to talk to the friendly staff, get your bearings and gather information for your travels.

Two trails are located just outside the Welcome Center. The quarter-mile Nature Trail is great for stretching your legs. For a longer hike, take the 4.5-mile Dismal Swamp Canal Trail, part of the new North Carolina Birding Trail and East Coast Greenway, which extends from the Welcome Center to the village of South Mills.

Visitors can walk from the Welcome Center across a swing-span bridge to the new visitor center at the **Dismal Swamp State Park**. With interior exhibits that interpret the history and biological make up of the swamp, it's a wonderful resource for learning more about the region's rich habitat. After visitors have a chance to tour inside, they can explore outdoors via a raised boardwalk or go for a longer hike among the 16.7 miles of hiking and mountain-biking trails into the park's interior. Paddlers can use the state park to launch canoes and kayaks for excursions along the Dismal Swamp Canal.

History, Museums and More!

Did you know that North Carolina's first school started in Elizabeth City-Pasquotank County in 1705? Or that Wilbur and Orville Wright stayed over in Elizabeth City while they made plans for the first powered flight at nearby Kill Devil Hills?

These facts and more of the region's history are brought to life at the **Museum of the Albemarle**, located along the Pasquotank River in Elizabeth City. The northeastern regional branch of the North Carolina Museum of History, the museum interprets the history of 13 counties in northeastern North Carolina, considered by many to be the birthplace of English America.

The new, permanent exhibition, "Our Story" showcases more than 750 artifacts and displays that tell the story of the region's watermen, farming, the Wright brothers, the lifesaving operations of the Coast Guard and the Civil War, as well as the region's rich African-American and Native American history.

In a walk through the gallery, you'll discover such finds as the cannon recovered from the ship purported to be Blackbeard's *Queen Anne's Revenge*; the smokestack from the *C.S.S. Albemarle*; a miniature replica of the James Adams Floating Theatre, the inspiration for author Edna Ferber's popular novel, "Show Boat"; a horse-drawn "steam pumper" fire engine; and a 1954 Moth Boat, a small sail boat that was developed in Elizabeth City.

Visitors can walk into the Jackson House, a 1755 farmhouse that spanned both the Colonial and Federal time periods. The farmhouse and nearby ca. 1840 smokehouse are original structures from the area.

For an even closer look at Elizabeth City history, pick up the **Elizabeth City's Historic Walking Tour** guide at the Convention and Visitors Bureau – and start strolling! There are six historic districts in Elizabeth City, and therefore, many opportunities for seeing historic homes, tree-lined streets and stately government structures.

To cap off a day of historical touring, enjoy an old-fashioned horse-drawn carriage ride along the waterfront and downtown area. On evenings and weekends, **Carolina Carriages** offers a variety of touring options, including a historic guided tour.

Education, Science and the Military

Elizabeth City has three higher education institutions, is home to TCOM, L.P, a pioneer in the advancement of tethered aerostat systems, and is the headquarters of the nation's largest U.S. Coast Guard base.

All of these play a significant role in the visitor's experience.

At the **Elizabeth City State University Planetarium** visitors can get a sky full of information about the planetary sciences when they attend one of the themed star and laser shows that are held throughout the year. The Planetarium features a 30-foot hemispherical dome, which arcs above a comfortable seating area of 60 chairs. The free programs are by reservation only for groups of 20 or more.

Families can explore and interact with the science around them at **Port Discover Hands-On Science Center**, which offers free hands-on science and health programs for children in Kindergarten through fifth grade. Kids can fly an airplane, observe sea life, examine rocks and minerals and take part in a host of special programs that bring science to life. Special attention is given to what's unique about North Carolina's Albemarle region.

Elizabeth City was once home to a U.S. Naval Air Station featuring blimp surveillance operations off the Atlantic coastline. Today, it is not uncommon to see Monster.com, Sanyo, Fuji Film, and brand-name blimps flying high above the city as they make their way to **TCOM, L.P.**, the only company in the world with a facility devoted to aerostat and airship manufacture, assembly, flight test and training. Visitors wishing to tour the facility will get the opportunity to learn about the Navy's lighter-than-air history in Elizabeth City as well as view the company's plant. Call ahead to arrange for a tour.

Tour **Air Station Elizabeth City** and meet actual search and rescue aviators and divers like those depicted in the motion picture "The Guardian." Visitors also have the opportunity to climb aboard a Coast Guard rescue copter. Coast Guard Elizabeth City opened in 1940 and is the largest Coast Guard installation in the country. Search-and-rescue missions are among its chief

responsibilities, and it is home to the Aviation Training Center. Tours are available by request.

The Arts in Elizabeth City

Whether you wish to take in a concert or play, or find a treasure to remind you of your trip, Elizabeth City has an array of offerings in the arts.

A great place to browse is **Arts of the Albemarle**, which represents more than 200 artists and craftsmen. Elizabeth City families take advantage of the Arts Council's resident School of the Arts, which offers lessons in visual and performing arts. During the summer months, residents and visitors alike flock to the downtown waterfront for the "Harbor Nights Music Series," featuring great music by Albemarle-area musicians, singers and performers in a street-fair setting.

In 2009, Arts of the Albemarle will relocate to an expanded, three-story building across the street from its current Main Street location. With five times the space, the new facility will feature a 10,000 square-foot gallery, meeting and banquet space, a catering kitchen, classrooms and a small theatre.

If for you the play's the thing, reserve tickets at the intimate **Main Street Stage** for a presentation by the Encore Players. A long-time Elizabeth City-based theatre company, the group offers three productions annually in varied programs of comedies, dramas and musicals. Located in a loft along Main Street, the aptly named Main Street Stage seats 130 and is reminiscent of an Off-Broadway house.

For additional theatre offerings and live concerts, check the annual "Albemarle Nights" performing series offered by **College of the Albemarle**. Past seasons have featured performances by Kathy Mattea, the Glen Miller Orchestra, USAF Heritage of America Band, Elton John and Tim Rice's "Aida" and "A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline," among others.

An Accommodating Harbor and Meeting Site

Featured in the book *The 100 Best Small Towns in America* by Norman Crampton, Elizabeth City has all of the charm and hospitality you'd expect in a genuine southern town. **Accommodations** range from a variety of cozy B&Bs and small inns to recognized hotel chains and locally-owned and operated motels.

Whether you're looking for fine dining or a fun feast, Elizabeth City's **restaurants** create the atmosphere for you. Take your meal in an old train station, cozy up to your table in a movie theatre, hang out with locals in their meeting place or grab a bite at a bar and restaurant with nightly entertainment.

Shopping? Elizabeth City has that covered too. Be sure to explore downtown's cluster of one-of-a-kind shops, antique stores and department stores.

As the largest city in Northeast North Carolina, Elizabeth City is **an ideal meeting site**, offering a beautiful waterfront and convenient, centralized location. The city offers 670 hotel room and more than 30 venues throughout the community to accommodate groups, business conferences and events for 10 to 450 people that include society, military, education, religious and fraternal organizational meetings.

For travel information and suggested itineraries, call the Elizabeth City Area Convention & Visitors Bureau at 1-866-ECity-4U (1-866-324-8948) or (252) 335-5330 or go to www.DiscoverElizabethCity.com

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