



# The South

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ The Optimist (p395)
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- ➔ Boucherie (p441)
- ➔ Octopus Bar (p396)

## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Crash Pad (p377)
- ➔ La Belle Esplanade (p437)
- ➔ 21c Museum Hotel (p382)
- ➔ Lodge on Little St Simons (p407)
- ➔ Capital Hotel (p422)

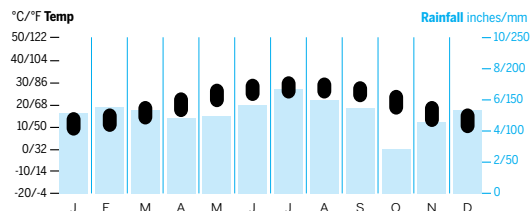
## Why Go?

Beneath its hospitable exterior, the South has a feisty streak. It's a unique combination of 'Hey y'all' and 'Don't tell me what to do.' This dissonance makes the region a bit of a conundrum to outsiders, as well as a compelling place to visit. Well, that and the lyrical dialect, complicated political history and exuberant food. Nurtured by deep roots yet shaped by hardship, the South has a rich legacy in politics and culture. Icons like Martin Luther King Jr, Rosa Parks and Bill Clinton, and novelists like William Faulkner, Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor are all Southern-born. So are barbecue and grits, bourbon and Coca-Cola, and bluegrass and the blues.

The cities are some of the country's most fascinating, from antebellum beauties like New Orleans and Savannah to New South powerhouses like Atlanta and Nashville. Natural treasures include golden beaches and forested mountain ranges. Tying it all together? That Southern hospitality.

## When to Go

### New Orleans



**Nov–Feb** Winter is generally mild here, and Christmas is a capital-E Event.

**Apr–Jun** Spring is lush and warm, abloom with fragrant jasmine, gardenia and tuberose.

**Jul–Sep** Summer is steamy, often unpleasantly so, and locals hit the beaches.

## NORTH CAROLINA

The conservative Old South and the liberal New South are jostling for political dominance in the fast-growing Tar Heel State, home to hipsters, hog farmers, hi-tech wunderkinds and an increasing number of craft brewers. For the most part, though, from the ancient mountains in the west to the sandy barrier islands of the Atlantic, the various cultures and communities here coexist.

Agriculture is an important economic force, and there are 52,200 farms across the state. North Carolina leads the nation in tobacco production and is the second-largest producer of pigs. But new technologies also drive the economy, and more than 190 businesses operate in Research Triangle Park alone. Other important industries include finance, nanotechnology and Christmas trees. Craft brewers have contributed nearly \$800 million to the economy.

Though the bulk of North Carolinians live in the business-oriented urban centers of the central Piedmont region, most travelers stick to the scenic routes along the coast and through the Appalachian Mountains.

So come on down, grab a platter of barbecue and watch the Duke Blue Devils battle the Carolina Tar Heels on the basketball court. College hoops rival Jesus for Carolinians' souls.

### History

Native Americans have inhabited North Carolina for more than 10,000 years. Major tribes included the Cherokee in the mountains, the Catawba in the Piedmont and the Waccamaw in the Coastal Plain.

North Carolina was the second territory to be colonized by the British, named in memory of King Charles I (Carolus in Latin), but the first colony to vote for independence from the Crown. Several important Revolutionary War battles were fought here.

The state was a sleepy agricultural backwater through the 19th century, earning it the nickname the 'Rip Van Winkle State.' Divided on slavery (most residents were too poor to own slaves), North Carolina was the last state to secede during the Civil War, but went on to provide more Confederate soldiers than any other state.

North Carolina was a civil rights hotbed in the mid-20th century, with highly publicized lunch-counter sit-ins in Greensboro and the formation of the influential Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

(SNCC) in Raleigh. The latter part of the century brought finance to Charlotte, and technology and medicine to the Raleigh-Durham area, driving a huge population boom and widening cultural diversity.

### i Information

**North Carolina Division of Tourism** (☎919-733-8372; [www.visitnc.com](http://www.visitnc.com); 301 N Wilmington St, Raleigh; ☀8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Sends out good maps and information, including its annual *Official Travel Guide*.

**North Carolina State Parks** ([www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov)) Offers info on North Carolina's 41 state parks and recreation areas, many of which have camping (campsite fees range from \$10 to \$45).

## North Carolina Coast

The coastline of North Carolina stretches just over 300 miles. Remarkably, it remains underdeveloped and the beach is often visible from coastal roads. Yes, the wall of cottages stretching south from Corolla to Kitty Hawk can seem endless, but for the most part the state's shores remain free of flashy, highly commercialized resort areas. Instead you'll find rugged, windswept barrier islands, Colonial villages once frequented by pirates and laid-back beach towns full of locally owned ice-cream shops and mom-and-pop motels. Even the most touristy beaches have a small-town vibe.

For solitude, head to the isolated Outer Banks (OBX), where fishermen still make their living hauling in shrimp and the older locals speak in an archaic British-tinged brogue. The Hwy 158 bypass from Kitty Hawk to Nags Head gets congested in summer, but the beaches themselves still feel uncrowded. Further south, Wilmington is known as a center of film and TV production, and its surrounding beaches are popular with local spring breakers and tourists.

### Outer Banks

These fragile ribbons of sand trace the coastline for 100 miles, cut off from the mainland by various sounds and waterways. From north to south, the barrier islands of Bodie (pronounced 'Body'), Roanoke, Hatteras and Ocracoke, essentially large sandbars, are linked by bridges and ferries. The far-northern communities of **Corolla** (pronounced *kur-all-ah*, not like the car), **Duck** and **Southern Shores** are former duck-hunting