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**21 Places in North Carolina to Take Your Kids Before They Grow Up**

Kids grow up fast, and the memories they hold dear are often from family trips. Here's a list of things to do they'll never forget.

What's your most memorable childhood vacation? Was it when your toes first touched the ocean? Eating a sundae the size of your head? Going on your first upside-down roller coaster?

The things that bind these experiences are the thrills and joys that come with doing something new. In that spirit, here are 21 awe-inspiring North Carolina destinations and experiences where you can create lasting memories with your kids, whether they're elementary-school age or home for summer or holiday break from college.

**1 Wild Horses at Shackleford Banks** Take the exuberant reaction your kids have to visiting a zoo and multiply it several times over – that's what you get when your little ones see animals in the wild. The adventure begins with the ferry ride to the Crystal Coast island of Shackleford Banks, the southernmost barrier island in Cape Lookout National Seashore. More than 100 wild horses roam free here, just as they have for the 500 years.

Best when kids are: any age. tel:(252) 728-2250

**2 82nd Airborne Division War Memorial Museum** Visits to museums have long been ways for kids to learn history outside of the classroom and textbooks. Plus, at this museum in Fort Bragg, there are some really cool planes spread throughout the grounds for them to ooh and ahh over. It's also the only museum in America to showcase the history from World War I to the present of the 82nd Airborne Division, and it's all free.

Best when kids are: preschool and up. tel:(910) 432-3443

[www.82ndairbornedivisionmuseum.com](http://www.82ndairbornedivisionmuseum.com)

**3 Tweetsie Railroad** The popularity of trains among kids has lasted through generations of toy trends. In Blowing Rock, parents can bring the fantasy to life aboard the 3-mile Tweetsie Railroad ride. To get your kids all aboard for a visit to Tweetsie, check out the "Kidz Zone" on the park's website, which features games, a 3-D printout train and an animal gallery.

Best when kids are: toddlers to elementary age. tel:(828) 264-9061 [tweetsie.com](http://tweetsie.com)

**4 Canoeing in the Dismal Swamp** Being on the water is a thrill regardless of age or vehicle, so a kayak outing is sure to deliver smiles and a sense of accomplishment, too. Kayak and canoe rentals are available from the park, or you can opt for a guided tour with companies like Kayak Nature Tours. Located in South Mills, NC.

Best when kids are: tween and up. tel:(252) 771-6593 [ncparks.gov/dismal-swamp-state-park](http://ncparks.gov/dismal-swamp-state-park)

**5 Museum of Life + Science** Although some of us grow out of loving science as we age, when we're kids, science is undeniably fascinating. The museum's more than 80 acres include an outdoor playground, animal exhibits and interactive stations where kids can build flying objects, conduct lab experiments or play astronaut. Located in Durham.

Best when kids are: any age. tel:(919) 220-5429 [lifeandscience.org](http://lifeandscience.org)

**6 Sliding Rock and the Land of Waterfalls** If you think kids love plastic slip-and-slides, wait until you see their faces light up as they slide down an all-natural one – and you'll get to feel like a kid again, too. Of course, kids will want to wear their swimsuits, but shorts and sneakers are recommended for a ride down this 60-foot waterfalls into the 7-feet-deep swimming hole (lifeguards are on duty). Located near Cashiers, NC.

Best when kids are: elementary age and up. tel:(828) 884-8900

[explorebrevard.com/blog/nine-iconic-brevard-experiences](http://explorebrevard.com/blog/nine-iconic-brevard-experiences)

**7 Cape Hatteras Lighthouse** Lighthouses scream adventure for kids because these landmarks are tied to the sea, which is the home of explorers they've learned about in school and the pirates they've wanted to be (or defeat) on TV. This monument also happens to be the world's tallest brick lighthouse, which means you should only attempt to climb with your kids once they can handle going up 257 steps on their own. Make a day of it by packing lunches and adding a stop to the Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum, which features information and artifacts from shipwrecks.

Best when kids are: preschool and up. tel:(252) 995-4474

[nps.gov/caha/planyourvisit/lighthouseclimbs.htm](http://nps.gov/caha/planyourvisit/lighthouseclimbs.htm)

**8 North Carolina Zoo** A trip to the zoo as a child is a prerequisite for adulthood. Developing an awareness and appreciation for nature in your own cubs encourages them to be more compassionate and concerned for wildlife as adults. The North Carolina Zoo, the largest natural habitat zoo in the country, is divided into three parts: Africa, Aviary and North America. Plus, it includes plenty of other attractions such as a Giraffe Deck, Dino World and The Prairie Geysers. Located in Asheboro, NC.

Best when kids are: any age. tel:(336) 879-7000 [nczoo.org](http://nczoo.org)

**9 Unto These Hills** On paper, this outdoor drama is a history lesson. But in reality, the chance to see and hear from Native Americans will bring to life stories your kids have likely read in textbooks or watched in movies. Enjoy performances six nights a week (in season, which runs from late May to mid-August), and parents can feel good knowing they're sharing an important part of American history in a fun, unique way with their youngsters. Performances run about 2 hours, and since temperatures from day to night vary in the mountains, bring jackets or blankets just in case. Located in Cherokee, NC.

Best when kids are: preschool and up. tel:(866) 554-4557

[cherokeesmokies.com/unto\\_these\\_hills.html](http://cherokeesmokies.com/unto_these_hills.html)

**10 Battleship North Carolina** Be sure to add a visit to Wilmington on your vacation plans to step aboard this massive vessel. Let your kids play captain by steering the ship and firing guns. While you're in the area, why not visit The Little Dipper, named by OpenTable as one of the top 100 restaurants in the USA. Your family will have a blast dipping fondue and deciding between dessert options like milk and cookies, s'mores and fluffernutter. Adults can enjoy the optional beer or wine pairings with each course.

Best when kids are: preschooler and up. tel:(910) 251-5797 [battleshipnc.com](http://battleshipnc.com)

**11 Uwharrie National Forest** Here in one of the oldest mountain ranges in North America, you'll find horseback riding, camping, boating and swimming, plus lake, pond, river and stream fishing, which means families can make a day, weekend or week out of their visit. A Boy Scout even created a QR-coded trail that unlocks information about the forest's history along the way.

Best when kids are: any age. tel:(910) 576-6391 [fs.usda.gov/recrea/nfsnc](http://fs.usda.gov/recrea/nfsnc)

**12 Linville Caverns, Linville Falls & Gorge, and Grandfather Mountain** Visiting a cavern for the first time will astonish your little ones, who may have never realized such natural beauty existed underground. Experiences such as this are what often lead to kids proclaiming they want to be an archaeologist when they grow up. Your trip here can also include exploring Linville Gorge and crossing the Mile High Swinging Bridge at Grandfather Mountain. Located at Linville, NC.

Best when kids are: preschool and up. tel:(828) 733-4337 [grandfather.com](http://grandfather.com)

**13 Bike Ride from Duck to the Sanderling** There's something about a family bike ride that makes time stand still. And your children will love the feeling of independently transporting themselves while you get to unplug and just enjoy the moment. This bike-friendly path is only 5 miles long and provides views of beautiful Currituck Sound. Get up early and hit Duck Donuts first, rated the best food in Duck, with your choice of coatings and toppings.

Best when kids are: elementary age and up.

**14 North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences** Yes, the rumors are true: General admission is free to this natural sciences museum, which is the largest of its kind in the Southeast. Your family will enjoy unlocking some of the mysteries of the universe – no to mention that dinosaurs are just, well, awesome. And your kids will be wowed beginning with the walk from the parking lot, as they approach the massive, 3-story world globe, known as the Daily Planet. It's the centerpiece of the Nature Research Center, an 80,000-square-foot wing of the museum that opened in 2012 with the goal of inspiring a new generation of young scientists. Located in Raleigh.

Best when kids are: preschool and up. tel:(919) 707-9800 [naturalsciences.org](http://naturalsciences.org)

**15 Chimney Rock State Park** The 360-degree view at the top of Chimney Rock makes each step worth it. Your kids will feel as if they're flying high above the treetops when standing atop this 1,200-foot monolith, and you'll be the one to thank for giving them this superpower. The 0.6-mile Great Woodland Adventure Trail was designed for kids, with 12 discovery stations and oversized animal sculptures along the way.

Note: strollers are not recommended for this trail. Located in Chimney Rock, NC.

Best when kids are: elementary age and up. tel:(828) 625-9611 [chimneyrockpark.com](http://chimneyrockpark.com)

**16 Whitewater Rafting on the French Broad River** For the family that likes a bit of an adrenaline rush, there's nothing like whitewater rafting, and the teamwork aspect bonds parents and children in a special way. Nantahala Outdoor Center and other local outfitters offer a half-day excursion, plus snack or a full-day trip with lunch. After conquering the river, head to Asheville Brewing Company for kid-friendly pizza, movies and games alongside adult-friendly beverages and grown-up choices like gourmet pizzas and spinach burgers. Located near Asheville.

Best when kids are: tweens and up. tel:(828) 649-9480 [noc.com](http://noc.com)

**17 Fishing at Lake Mattamuskeet** Fishing for many families is a rite of passage. Baiting your first hook and reeling in your first catch makes you walk a little taller with the knowledge that you can, in fact, fend for yourself (even if it's just a momentary illusion). This lake doubles as a national wildlife refuge, and it's the largest lake in North Carolina. Parents can also relax since fast boats and jet skis aren't permitted, guaranteeing a peaceful day on the water. Located at Swan Quarter, NC.

Best when kids are: any age. tel:(252) 926-4021 [fws.gov/refuge/mattamuskeet](http://fws.gov/refuge/mattamuskeet)

**18 ACC Hall of Champions** Your budding athlete – or enthusiastic fan – will get a kick out of walking the hall dedicated to this perennial powerhouse college sports conference. You can all pledge your allegiance to the Blue Devils, Demon Deacons, Tar Heels, Wolfpack and others (or realize there's an in-family rivalry), and share stories with your kids of how you watched some of these legendary ACC games and players live. Located in the Greensboro Coliseum.

Best when kids are: elementary and up. tel:(336) 315-8411 [acchallofchampions.net](http://acchallofchampions.net)

**19 Camping at Mount Mitchell State Park** Not just any mountain, Mount Mitchell is the tallest peak in the East, and that fact will make your kids feel like young kings and queens of the world. Nine tent-only campsites are available here, each equipped with a grill and picnic table. Don't forget supplies for the unofficial dessert of childhood: s'mores. Located near Burnsville, NC.

Best when kids are: any age. tel:(828) 675-4611

[ncparks.gov/mount-mitchell-state-park](http://ncparks.gov/mount-mitchell-state-park)


**20 Wright Brothers National Memorial** You know how dads often throw their kids in the air, while moms hold their breath? Perhaps those tosses are to blame for our fascination with flying, but whatever the reason, defying gravity is a national pastime. So, learning about the legendary Wright Brothers will give your kids a thrill and perhaps spark their own desire to soar to new heights as they learn about the first successful powered flights that happened in the town of Kitty Hawk. Kite-building and flying also take place on the grounds.

Best when kids are: preschool and up. tel:(252) 441-7430

[nps.gov/wrbr/index.htm](http://nps.gov/wrbr/index.htm)

**21 Carowinds** Amusement parks were designed for kids, but the adrenaline rush that comes with a roller coaster ride doesn't discriminate by age. And the pride that comes with "surviving" a ride rewards the courage it took your child to go on it – a great recipe for future acts of bravery. Chances are, your kids have heard about the record-breaking Fury 325 coaster. Also new for 2015, Carowinds revamped its food menu to serve more authentic Carolina fare that's a step above the typical amusement park grub.

Best when kids are: preschool-age and up. tel:(704) 588-2600 [carowinds.com](http://carowinds.com)



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Paid for by Campaign to Elect Bill Thacker

**October Mobile Food Pantry Information**

Margot Barnes, Director of Anson Crisis Ministry has released statistics from the October Mobile Food Pantry which was held on Wednesday, October 2 at Peachland United Methodist Church.

Barnes said, "Thank you to the 37 volunteers!"

- Total Families: 140 • New Families: 14
- Total of 316 people provided with food
- Children & Youth up to Age 18: 108 • Youth & Adults Ages 19-64: 143
- Adults Over Age 65: 65

"Anson Crisis Ministry received 1,242 pounds of undistributed food," added Barnes. "Thank you! A great deal of food was distributed!"

The next Mobile Food Pantry and Atrium Health Bus visit will be held on Wednesday, November 6 at Austin Grove Baptist Church, located at 5919 Austin Grove Church Road in Marshville.

Anson Crisis Ministry is located at 117 North Rutherford Street in Wadesboro. The telephone number is 704-694-2445, email is [ansoncrisisministry@windstream.net](mailto:ansoncrisisministry@windstream.net) and the website is [www.ansoncrisisministry.org](http://www.ansoncrisisministry.org).

**Partnership for Children Board Meeting**

The Anson County Partnership for Children will host their Board of Directors meeting and NC Pre-K Task Force on Thursday, October 24. The meeting is open to the public. It will begin at 9 a.m. at the Partnership, located at 117 South Greene Street in uptown Wadesboro.

For more information contact Caroline Goins at 704-694-4036 or [caroline.goins@ansonchildren.com](mailto:caroline.goins@ansonchildren.com).

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