

A new casino, fresh lodging options and first-time events heighten the fall travel experience in North Carolina. As visitors take in mountain vistas framed by brilliant foliage, celebrate the grape harvest in wine country and sample the season's catch on the coast, new avenues for exploring will add rewards to the journey.

"We call it our 'fall of fame,' a true star among the seasons," said Wit Tuttell, executive director of Visit North Carolina. "The foliage show starts in the mountains in September and advances across the state through November. The harvest accents the scenes in the fields and farmers markets and ultimately on the restaurant table. For fishermen, the vivid colors at sunrise and sunset create the perfect setting for bringing in a prime catch."

Popular festivals from the mountains to the coast amplify the season's natural allure and fill the calendar with special reasons to travel from September to December. And new developments (outlined below) enhance the appeal.

For more details and inspiration, foliage and fishing updates, and complete information for planning a "fall of fame" getaway, drop by [VisitNC.com](http://VisitNC.com), which can also direct you to travel deals across the state.

**• Harrah's Cherokee Valley River Casino to Open** Casino lovers will be in luck in Murphy, where Harrah's Cherokee Valley River Casino is on course to open Sept. 28. Set into the landscape with panoramic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains, the casino features a 50,000-square-foot gaming area with 1,050 slot machines, 70 table games and a high-limit area. A seven-story hotel tower will follow with 130 rooms, including 27 deluxe suites. The complex is about an hour southwest of Harrah's Cherokee Casino Resort in the Great Smoky Mountains.

While in the area, wine lovers can uncork varietals and blends at Calaboose Cellars, Nottely River Valley Vineyards, Cherokee Cellars Winery and Fine Art Gallery and Valley River Vineyards & Winery as they celebrate the first anniversary of the Upper Hiwassee Highlands American Viticultural Area.

**• In Raleigh, the International Bluegrass Music Association** returns for the third time for the weeklong World of Bluegrass events Sept. 29-Oct. 3. The weekend Wide Open Bluegrass street festival includes free performances and the North Carolina Whole Hog Barbecue Championship plus headline shows with Alison Krauss & Union Station featuring Jerry Douglas, the Sam Bush Band and the Earls of Leicester as well as North Carolina's Steep Canyon Rangers, Balsam Range and the Kruger Brothers.

**• Swamp Park Raises Spirits with Coastal Adventures** For years eco-minded travelers have thrilled to awesome views from the kaleidoscopic treetops on North Carolina's two dozen canopy tours in the mountains and Piedmont. This fall affords a coastal variation at the new Shalotte River Swamp Park. The 2½-hour canopy tour through century-old cypress includes 10 stations along more than 1¼ miles of zip lines. And that's not all. Shalotte River Swamp Park also offers swamp boat eco-tours, aerial adventures in a park with different skill levels, and a self-guided nature tour for observing plant and animal life.

**• Outer Banks Brewtäg Joins Festival Beerscape** Kitty Hawk Kites unites the love of craft beer with the spirit of flight at the first OBX Brewtäg, taking place Oct. 3 near the site of the Wright Brothers' history-changing takeoff. Inspired by the Red Bull Flugtag, the Outer Banks festival centers on a competition over who can launch and fly an empty keg barrel the farthest. While watching the flying kegs, spectators can sample beer from local breweries: Outer Banks Brewing Station, Weeping Radish Brewery and Full Moon Café and Brewery.

With more than 130 breweries — the most of any state east of Texas and south of Pennsylvania — North Carolina finds ample reason to celebrate craft beer. Travelers can lift a glass at favorite fall events including the Beericana Craft Beer and Music Festival, Sept. 19 in Holly Springs; the Brewgrass Festival, Sept. 19 in Asheville; and World Beer Festival Durham, Oct. 10. And beer meets barbecue Oct. 9-10 in Rocky Mount, where the Eastern Carolina BBQ Throw Down adds its first home brew competition.

**• New Events Join the Lineup** About 20 miles from the Blue Ridge Parkway, Americana fans can follow the mountain music melody to Wilkesboro for the inaugural **Carolina in the Fall Festival** on Sept. 25-26. Hosted by the Wilkes County-based Kruger Brothers, the festival features Rhonda Vincent and the Rage, Balsam Range, the Secret Sisters, Mipso and others — plus a food truck competition. The festival bookends a local music season that started in April with the must-go Merlefest event.

**• Wings Over Water** gives nature lovers two chances to explore all things wild and wonderful on North Carolina's Outer Banks, sounds and estuaries. The core festival takes place Oct. 20-25 at sites throughout the northern coastal region, with participants doing everything from photographing birds and gazing at the night sky to paddling under the moonlight and touring Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge by tram. Six weeks later brings WOW Encore-A Winter Weekend, Dec. 4-6, to squeeze even more activities into fall.

**• Wrightsville Beach Celebrates Surfing Legacy** After the summer vacation rush, surfers stake a bigger claim to the surf from the Outer Banks to the Brunswick Islands. This year, Wrightsville Beach celebrates the dedication of a highway marker recognizing native Burke Haywood Bridgers' role as an East Coast surf pioneer. Surfers, meanwhile, can take to the water in renowned destinations including Nags Head, where the Eastern Surfing Association holds the Easterns Surfing Championships Sept 20-26, and Wrightsville Beach, which landed on National Geographic's list of the world's 20 best surf towns.

**• Boutique Lodging Options Grow** Travelers to North Carolina will find new lodging options. In coastal Morehead City, rooms at bask @ big rock landing will be on the coveted list Oct. 2-4 during the North Carolina Seafood Festival. Bask, part of Choice Hotels' Ascend Hotel Collection, opened in May on the Bogue Sound waterfront near the heart of festival activity.

The new 21c Museum Hotel Durham, the Durham Hotel and Aloft Durham Downtown are welcoming visitors to see the fall colors at Sarah P. Duke Gardens or sip their way through the World Beer Festival Durham. Aloft Raleigh opens Oct. 6 and makes an excellent option for those attending the North Carolina State Fair or another event. And on Nov. 19, Aloft Raleigh-Durham Airport Brier Creek will welcome its first guests.

**• Share the views** Visit North Carolina encourages travelers to share photo and video of their fall experiences in the state with the hashtag #FallofFame. As the season progresses, Visit North Carolina will curate and share images on [VisitNC.com](http://VisitNC.com) as well as on Twitter, Instagram and other social media channels.

About Visit North Carolina: Visit North Carolina is part of the Economic Development partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC). Established in 2014 the EDPNC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation that oversees the state's efforts in business and job recruitment and retention, international trade, and tourism, film and sports development. The mission

of Visit North Carolina is to unify and lead the state in developing North Carolina as a major destination for leisure travel, group tours, meetings and conventions, sports events and film production. For more information on planning your vacation to North Carolina, be sure to go to [VisitNC.com](http://VisitNC.com).

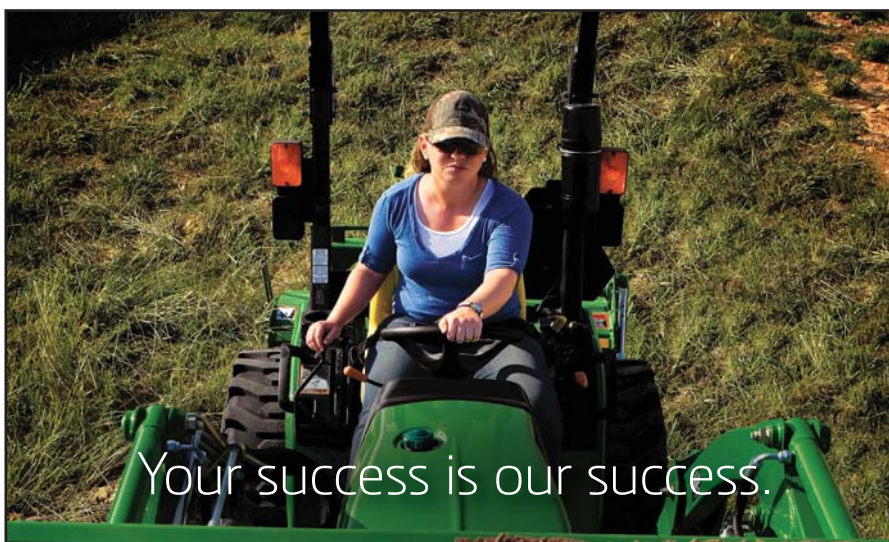
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