

to Showcase the Beauty of the Mountains, Piedmont & Coast

Travelers can enter sweepstakes to win weekend getaway prizes

For the first time, the "Official North Carolina Travel Guide" uses three different covers to reflect the diverse natural beauty found in the state's mountain, Piedmont and coastal regions. Each cover of the 2017 Travel Guide represents a sweepstakes offering a weekend getaway as the prize.

The coastal cover captures Hayes Bridge, a wooden structure that crosses Queen Anne Creek to a historic plantation on the Edenton waterfront. From the Piedmont, the cover depicts mountain bikers on a winding trail at Lake Norman State Park near Mooresville. The mountain cover shows Looking Glass Rock, a Brevard-area destination for hikers and rock climbers.

"The use of multiple covers conveys the diversity of North Carolina landscapes that can transport travelers to a whole new state of mind," said Wit Tutttell, executive director of Visit North Carolina. "We want people to get lost in the moment and find connections to places that inspire serenity, a sense of adventure or an urge to discover more of the experiences our state offers."

Inside the 164-page guide, a "For the Love of Nature" article amplifies the beauty of the cover concept with vibrant photos and text blocks about state and natural parks. Cityscapes come to life in features about urban escapes. An Outer Banks piece taps the appeals of a storied coast. "Trail Mix" sends travelers off to sample music, wine and cheese. Hands-on history, mountain adventures, golf and signature foods are also covered. And the guide directs readers to Project 543, an online collection of postcard-style posts on one-of-a-kind finds.

Travel planners will find assistance from one of the guide's new features: a two-page map with major roads, bodies of water, parks, and cities and towns. Regional directories list accommodations and attractions in hundreds of destinations.

The "Official 2017 North Carolina Travel Guide" is free. The print edition is available at the state's nine Welcome Centers; it can also be ordered at VisitNC.com and 800-847-4862 (800-VISITNC). Beginning Dec. 16, readers can link to a digital magazine version from VisitNC.com. The digital version, which includes all three covers, is enhanced by information pop-ups, a social media share feature, search functions and clickable URLs. Responsive design technology automatically adapts the digital guide to desktop, mobile and tablet devices for a seamless, user-friendly experience, no matter how readers access it.

To celebrate the arrival of the 2017 guide, the destinations on the covers have created travel packages as sweepstakes prizes. Entry is open until Jan. 31 for these getaways:

- Edenton: Two nights at the Cotton Gin Inn (breakfast included), dinner for two at the 51 House, two passes for trolley and walking tours through Edenton's Historic District, and a \$500 Visa gift card to help the winner get there.
- Mooresville: Two nights at the Hampton Inn & Suites Mooresville, four passes to Cliff Hangers climbing facility, four passes for kayaking at Lake Norman State Park, and a \$500 Visa gift card to help the winner get there.
- Brevard (Transylvania County): Two nights at The Sunset Motel, two passes for the Waterfalls & Wine Tasting Experience at the Pisgah Field School, two passes for a Brevard Bites Food Tour, dinner for two at the Square Root Restaurant, and a \$500 Visa gift card to help the winner get there.

The 2017 Travel Guide, the official guide for North Carolina's state tourism office, was produced by Meredith Travel Marketing. It was financed by private industry support with more than \$750,000 in advertising in the 500,000 printed copies and digital editions. Listings for the 900 attractions and 3,200 accommodations and campgrounds were provided for free. The self-mailer format for printed copies reinforces the green initiatives of Visit North Carolina, which is part of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.

Tourism remains one of the state's most vital industries with economic activity and employment generated in each of the state's 100 counties. In 2015, domestic travelers to North Carolina spent \$21.9 billion, which accounts for 211,500 jobs for North Carolinians. State and local tax revenues, as a result of the visitor spending, totaled more than \$1.8 billion in 2015. Tourism spending creates \$477 in annual household savings. North Carolina ranks sixth in total person-trip volume by state behind California, Florida, Texas, New York, and Pennsylvania.



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SPCC Gingerbread House Contest

South Piedmont Community College held a Gingerbread House contest as part of the administration, faculty and staff holiday activities. Judges for the event were Judy Kennedy, who serves on the SPCC Foundation Board, and Pat Kahle, President of the Union County Chamber of Commerce.

First Place was awarded to April Watkins and Shana Payne (lower left photo) for their rendition of the Lockhart-Taylor Center in Wadesboro. Second

Place went to Kateryna Decker and Sonya Blanchard (lower right photo) with IT, and Third Place was presented to Janice Crot and Dana Glauner (pictured at left) with Library Services.

Everyone at SPCC wishes Happy Holidays to all. SPCC observes Winter Break from December 19 through January 2.



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Sherry Hinson Couch Named Dare County Principal of the Year



Cape Hatteras Elementary School Principal Sherry Couch is Dare County Schools Principal of the Year for 2016-2017. Under Couch's leadership, students and staff have achieved very impressive academic growth.

For the fourth consecutive year Cape Hatteras Elementary School has been honored by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction as a Title I Reward School for sustained student achievement. This is also the third year that CHES has been recognized by the state as a Green Ribbon school for its continued implementation of Positive Behavior Intervention and Support.

Couch remarked, "As we learn from and build on our successes, CHES continues to use school improvement goals to challenge our students." Proud of the performance of the CHES Battle of the Books team, she says that over 80% of the schools' students compete at the school level, with the minimum requirement being four books. "For us, Battle of the Books is not about winning, it's about reading. We would rather have over 100 students reading than to have 10 winning a competition."

Couch earned her undergraduate degree at Wingate University and her master's in English Education from UNC-Pembroke. She earned her certification in Education Supervision and Administration from Winthrop University in 2000. She also has licensure as a Curriculum Instructional Specialist

Her teaching experience began at Anson Senior High School. She was appointed as Principal of Cape Hatteras Elementary in 2010.

Couch resides in Buxton with her husband Danny and her three children, Rae, Gideon and Griffin.

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