

## Newest NC Tourism Figures Show Dare County Growth

Newly available 2013 county-level visitor expenditures data, presented by the NC Division of Tourism show that Dare County grew last year in tourism-related spending, job growth and payroll, and taxes generated for state budgets. Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Executive Director Lee Nettles explains what these latest figures suggest for our local community and future business in his report.

*The Executive Director's Report begins on Page 3.*

### In 2013, Visitor Spending Supported:

- ✓ **\$953 Million Into Local Economy**
- ✓ **11,750 Jobs**
- ✓ **\$191 Million Payroll**
- ✓ **#4 Rank Out Of 100 NC Counties**
- ✓ **\$ 2,484 Tax Savings Per Dare Resident**
- ✓ **87.4 Million In State & Local Taxes**

## "Best List" Love For The Outer Banks

The Outer Banks have enjoyed the editorial spotlight this season, placing high among some of the travel community's "best of" lists. From Yahoo! Travel's top five "Most Sought Wedding Destinations" to Dr. Beach's "Top 10 Best US Beaches" ranking for Cape Hatteras, the lists started being published by media brands in early spring and should continue through fall. Most Scenic. Most Romantic. Best Drives. Best Beaches. The Outer Banks Visitors Bureau staff has a productive public relations campaign in place to seek out and strive to influence opportunities for the OBX or its partner industry businesses and attractions to appear in such high viewership outlets.

*Best Lists continues on Page 5*



*The Outer Banks off-roading experience has been featured in the pages of the Wall Street Journal this year, while the Cape Hatteras National Seashore has been suggested as a place for beautiful drives and best beaches among media brands with national reach.*

### WHAT'S IN THIS ISSUE

New County Tourism Expenditures Data • A Letter from the Tourism Board Chair • Executive Director's Report  
Occupancy And Meals Numbers • Media Accolades and "Best Of" Lists • Event Grants

## VISION STATEMENT

The Board envisions a premier travel destination and year-round tourism economy that enhances the quality of life for visitors and residents while celebrating and sustaining the Outer Banks' vibrant natural, historic, and cultural offerings.

### ABOUT THE BUREAU

The Outer Banks Visitors Bureau is the lead marketing and promotional agency for the destination and is funded by 1% of the occupancy tax and 1% of the prepared meals tax collected in Dare County.

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## Letter from the Board Chair



*Monica Thibodeau, Chairwoman  
Dare County Tourism Board*

Despite a blow from a very early, fast-moving hurricane, this year got off to a very strong start. In preparation for the season, we kicked things off with our 2nd Annual OBX Tourism Summit which was well-attended and informative, bringing tourism professionals together in a local forum on NC Tourism Day, May 8th. That same day, Governor McCrory came to put his toes in the sand at the foot of the Bonner Bridge. He underscored the importance of tourism to our local and state economy and expressed the need to keep our infrastructure intact to support visitors and residents alike.

Recent studies show that economic support from tourism in Dare County translates to a tax savings of \$2,484 per resident, and that Hatteras Island's contribution is at least one third of the overall \$100 million Outer Banks brand. In order to keep our data current, we are now conducting a year-long survey of Outer Banks visitors. This information will update our visitor profile, which currently reflects 2006 data, so businesses can maintain an accurate pulse on what drives tourism in our area.

With support from the Visitors Bureau, Dare County hosted the first International Sailing Federation event June 9-14 in the Roanoke Sound at Manns Harbor and Manteo. We welcomed over 50 participants and introduced our winds and waters to an entirely new group of outdoor enthusiasts. These types of events, supported by the Visitors Bureau and local volunteers, continue to draw many diverse groups and enhance the Outer Banks experience. This spring we awarded over \$160,000 in Event Grant funds to 23 recipients and look forward to awarding more grants during the next cycle this month. From sporting and music events to festivals, we welcome everyone to enjoy all that we have to offer. Please keep the 3rd Annual Outer Banks Seafood Festival on your radar and mark you calendars for October 18th. Celebrating our seafood industry and heritage in Dare County; it's something we all can enjoy and take pride in.

Plans to develop the Outer Banks Event Site are well underway, and visible progress will begin this fall when we implement Phase I of our four-phase plan. We'll see the site take shape with the addition of fill, a well-defined entrance to the property and some initial parking improvements. Subsequent phases will add an open-air covered gathering area, additional parking, restrooms, pathways and a

*Chairwoman's Letter continues on Page 4*

# The Executive Director's Report

I'm pleased to share with you the 2013 tourism economic impact figures for Dare County. This annual report is prepared by the US Travel Association in conjunction with the NC Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development. It details the relative size and importance of tourism within each of the state's 100 counties. Dare County maintained its #4 ranking in the state, a particularly impressive ranking considering that Dare does not have the convention and meetings business found in practically every other large NC tourism market. The report confirms what we on the Outer Banks have known – tourism is big business and a big supplier of employment. Aside from the \$953 million in tourism expenditures and 11,750 tourism-related jobs in Dare County, though, our visitors also paid over \$87 million in state and local taxes while here, and because visitors paid those taxes for us in 2013, each Dare County resident enjoyed tax relief of \$2,484.

Every year presents challenges and 2014 is no exception; an especially bad winter in the northeast that delayed the end of school and the start of summer vacations to an early hurricane leading into July 4th weekend. And yet, local tourism has grown. Gross occupancy collections, January-June, are up almost 8% when compared to the same period year prior; gross meals collections show a gain of nearly 5% during the same time-period.

In terms of marketing the destination, the Visitors Bureau is innovating tried-and-true vehicles like the

Social Media Audience YTD Growth			
Channel	June 2014	June 2013	% Growth
Facebook	555,513	401,344	38%
Twitter	18,606	14,380	29%
Instagram	3,237	804	303%
Pinterest	12,804	6,995	83%
Email List	369,011	252,625	46%

*The Outer Banks Visitors Bureau social media program has seen ambitious growth year after year. This chart sums up year end growth for the fiscal year beginning July 1 and ending June 30. Monthly community numbers are depicted on page 8.*

Outer Banks Travel Guide and the outerbanks.org website, while also making the most of opportunities presented by social media. Effectiveness is now measured by more than just visits to the website, but also how well we are engaging with prospective visitors. For instance, a few months ago, the Outer Banks Facebook site crested a milestone of 500,000 fans. When combined with tremendous growth in other online communities, like Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram and our email database, we're interacting with an audience of almost 1 million people on a regular basis. Importantly, we're providing places for them to share their passion for the Outer Banks with friends and family.



*Lee Nettles, Executive Director  
Outer Banks Visitors Bureau*

In terms of advertising, we're once again placing fairly heavy television buys in the Norfolk/Portsmouth, Raleigh, Greenville/New Bern and Richmond markets this fall and in the spring of 2015. We'll complement that with a spring cable TV buy in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Washington DC. Primary print vehicles for the Visitors Bureau include: Oprah, Our State, Readers Digest, Southern Living and National Geo Traveler, but ads will appear in several other print titles as well. The ad creative is building off of the Outer Banks Soul campaign launched earlier this year.

Our online ad buy includes paid search, ad networks like Rocketfuel and Spongecell, lead generation programs with Orbitz and Opt-Intelligence, and display placements on sites such as TripAdvisor, Facebook and Fodors among others. We've reinforcing the outerbanks.org website with enhanced search engine optimization. We've developed an online co-op program, which you should be hearing more about very shortly. These co-op programs are a great way to stretch your ad

*The Executive Director's Report continues on Page 8*

soundfront boardwalk and pier. The foundation of the site will have an underground infrastructure to support electrical needs and set up for events. Ultimately, the design will preserve the panoramic water views and retain a park-like setting while offering an expansive, elevated platform for a variety of events and public gathering.

As I write this, it's important for me to also express my gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the Dare County Tourism Board and to direct our local Outer Banks Visitors Bureau. Our board has representatives from each town, Hatteras Island and Dare County, as well as the Chamber of Commerce, REALTORS and the Restaurant and Hotel/Motel Associations, all who come together with the common purpose of encouraging visitation to our area and enhancing the experience for visitors and locals alike. It's an amazing collaboration that offers diverse perspectives and talents to assist our capable staff in carrying out our mission.

This board provides us all with the chance to meet, interact and collaborate. My first years on this board were under the chairmanship of Sterling Webster, an experienced, knowledgeable and extremely kind and generous man who devoted much time and talent to improving our community. I am very grateful for the opportunity to have worked with Sterling and know all of us will miss his wisdom and quiet strength. His long standing vision of enriching lives will live on through all of us.

Sincerely,  
Monica Thibodeau

## 2014 School Schedules

District	School Start	Winter Holiday
Alexandria, VA	September 2	December 20 - January 4
Arlington, VA	September 2	December 24 - January 4
Baltimore, MD	August 25	December 24 - January 4
Chesapeake, VA	September 2	December 24 - January 4
Chevy Chase, MD	August 25	December 24 - January 4
Columbus, OH	August 20	December 20 - January 4
Durham, NC	August 25	TBA
Fairfax, VA	September 2	December 20 - January 4
Hampton, VA	September 2	December 20 - January 4
Newark, NJ	September 4	December 24 - January 4
Norfolk, VA	September 2	December 20 - January 4
Philadelphia, PA	September 8	December 24 - January 4
Pittsburgh, PA	August 25	December 24 - January 1
Portsmouth, VA	September 2	December 20 - January 4
Raleigh, NC	August 25	December 20 - January 4
Richmond, VA	September 2	December 20 - January 4
Trenton, NJ	September 3	December 20 - January 5
VA Beach, VA	September 2	December 20 - January 4
Washington, DC	August 25	TBA

**Outer Banks  
Event Site  
Calendar**

**September 3, 2014**  
Public Hearing ~ Phase 1 Site  
Development Plan

**September 29 -  
October 4, 2014**  
American Kitefliers  
Convention

**October 18, 2014**  
Outer Banks Seafood Festival

**December 2014**  
Phase 1 Construction Begins

**March 2014**  
Phase 1 Construction Ends

We work with editors and writers for household names like USA Today, Travel + Leisure, Travel Channel, Coastal Living and Southern Living, and many more, including what is becoming “the new normal” of online influencers and social media travel authorities. Usually, we’ll host a big media tour in spring, and again in the fall, working with both short and long lead publications to constantly and consistently “till, reap and sow” from the proverbial soil (or sand in our case). We welcome and truly rely upon partner businesses to help us represent the classic destination experience and eventually bring it to life for audiences of blogs of travel outlets. As alluded to, this can take anywhere from weeks to months for a

story to fully cycle from conception to publication.

We like to share these accolades with our tourism industry, because some of them are hard earned, but more than that, we can all cite them

to help a potential traveler to make that investment of their leisure dollars into an unforgettable OBX vacation. For an updated list of this year’s best travel articles so far, use this link: <http://bit.ly/OBX-PressRoom>



*The Outer Banks Visitors Bureau has a public relations program that inspires writers to come visit and review the area’s accommodations, restaurants and activities for an audience of potential travel customers. The reviews can appear in magazines, travel websites, television and newspaper outlets, and are often the result of a partnership between the Bureau and local businesses. The visiting journalist shown here are clockwise from above: Renee Sklarew, Pittsburgh-Post Gazette; Susan Barnes, Twitter #girlstravel chat host @Travlin\_girl; Kathy Buckworth, Canada’s Metro magazine; Beth D’Addono, USA Today; Deborah Holt Noel, WUNC TV “NC Weekend.”*

**outerbanks.org Internet Activity**

Inquiry Fulfillment		Unique Visitors (Absolute)			Visits (User Sessions)			Page Views				
MONTH	13/14	12/13	11/12	13/14	12/13	11/12	13/14	12/13	11/12	13/14	12/13	11/12
July	19,892	16,602	18,794	307,323	284,587	275,413	406,628	372,907	355,681	1,597,795	1,459,121	1,748,978
August	21,804	22,331	15,170	237,740	226,865	270,772	312,143	295,402	361,053	1,161,623	1,102,670	1,659,596
September	18,491	17,898	19,822	152,115	152,310	129,637	197,187	193,547	172,573	679,491	636,980	664,951
October	15,621	13,198	31,990	133,358	109,098	100,058	165,559	137,103	128,230	472,575	421,186	489,522
November	7,988	14,235	30,746	88,352	85,450	81,530	106,689	103,992	102,040	329,735	312,871	351,630
December	12,094	16,915	13,329	96,119	103,534	78,458	115,398	123,639	98,287	349,191	340,257	368,850
January	23,239	27,169	17,225	176,374	169,425	133,256	220,084	216,013	170,694	775,619	776,099	651,221
February	20,956	20,260	28,919	169,070	169,481	137,965	210,641	214,111	172,558	743,265	758,601	638,470
March	32,176	47,596	39,558	208,568	233,202	165,699	258,173	294,614	212,236	920,785	1,053,524	760,107
April	32,438	42,775	44,573	166,319	224,184	176,197	209,087	284,161	228,928	784,107	1,027,311	819,646
May	46,723	39,638	54,320	185,272	231,750	241,332	231,945	303,181	311,940	916,979	1,168,889	1,201,926
June	38,098	35,110	38,072	248,969	298,017	275,536	319,982	393,123	359,260	1,231,304	1,549,124	1,404,280
Year to Date	289,520	313,727	357,349	2,169,629	2,287,903	2,065,853	2,753,156	2,931,793	2,673,480	9,962,469	10,606,633	10,759,177
<b>Total</b>	<b>289,520</b>	<b>313,727</b>	<b>357,349</b>	<b>2,169,629</b>	<b>2,287,903</b>	<b>2,065,853</b>	<b>2,753,156</b>	<b>2,931,793</b>	<b>2,673,480</b>	<b>9,962,469</b>	<b>10,606,633</b>	<b>10,759,177</b>

**Gross Occupancy by Class**

MONTH	Vacation Rental Homes			Hotel/Motel			Cottage Courts		
	2014	2013	2012	2014	2013	2012	2014	2013	2012
January	3,588,501	3,980,546	3,024,434	914,561	921,382	1,131,377	80,505	66,436	76,078
February	1,686,386	1,830,830	1,910,908	1,077,869	982,956	1,131,307	74,865	71,376	73,574
March	2,655,590	3,696,150	2,826,596	2,185,706	2,109,403	2,247,260	149,929	161,047	171,375
April	8,935,368	6,842,114	8,703,332	4,179,035	3,351,015	4,334,738	305,769	240,900	288,356
May	19,337,752	15,679,076	16,630,269	6,602,686	6,004,479	5,823,106	590,191	535,847	515,312
June	65,241,275	62,120,730	59,324,183	10,131,851	9,409,980	9,185,928	1,045,006	1,151,854	1,066,304
July		95,332,506	95,883,352		11,946,295	11,845,553		1,528,338	1,527,797
August		85,227,031	75,396,648		11,580,026	9,884,242		1,330,505	1,288,837
September		29,837,002	31,422,894		6,749,257	6,878,120		567,754	616,445
October		10,828,618	11,657,939		3,863,027	3,687,069		390,053	331,938
November		4,131,755	4,536,251		1,673,632	1,282,951		145,902	152,646
December		3,099,999	1,932,497		1,155,835	988,027		137,133	77,430
Year to Date	101,444,872	94,149,446	92,419,722	25,091,708	22,779,215	23,853,716	2,246,265	2,227,460	2,190,999
<b>Totals</b>	<b>101,444,872</b>	<b>322,606,357</b>	<b>313,249,303</b>	<b>25,091,708</b>	<b>59,747,287</b>	<b>58,419,678</b>	<b>2,246,265</b>	<b>6,327,145</b>	<b>6,186,092</b>

# iPhoneography IOI



This has unofficially been the year of the smartphone for the Outer Banks Visitors Bureau. During the OBX Tourism Summit in May 2014, iPhone photography advocate and influencer Jack Hollingsworth (front row, left) was a key presenter. Seen here are local marketing professionals who enlisted in one of Jack's mobile device photography clinics as part of the OBX Tourism Summit.

## Outer Banks Visitors Bureau Gross Meals Summary

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
January	6,423,044	5,737,827	5,908,401	5,149,079	4,946,077	5,553,193
February	6,280,032	5,873,076	6,001,197	5,600,305	5,306,714	5,878,828
March	9,481,493	10,153,689	9,324,697	8,342,477	7,944,634	7,371,099
April	14,781,867	13,161,426	15,272,146	13,937,220	12,643,388	12,570,914
May	22,196,739	20,503,341	20,033,102	17,884,885	17,420,030	17,237,550
June	31,198,217	30,968,797	30,676,562	28,170,717	25,929,735	25,850,095
July		37,227,457	36,914,627	36,454,367	35,295,259	32,687,202
August		36,725,099	33,521,889	27,024,599	31,515,361	31,285,408
September		23,168,505	22,057,864	19,239,630	18,678,839	19,444,780
October		14,278,541	13,282,164	13,084,800	13,295,890	12,630,255
November		9,161,206	8,637,935	8,587,922	8,822,724	8,298,475
December		6,839,007	7,025,072	7,391,106	5,983,306	6,123,554
Year to Date	90,361,392	86,398,156	87,216,105	79,084,683	74,190,578	74,461,679
<b>Total</b>	<b>90,361,392</b>	<b>213,797,971</b>	<b>208,655,656</b>	<b>190,867,107</b>	<b>187,781,957</b>	<b>184,931,353</b>

## Gross Occupancy by Class

MO	Bed and Breakfasts			Campgrounds			Time Shares			Totals		
	2014	2013	2012	2014	2013	2012	2014	2013	2012	2014	2013	2012
Jan	15,197	25,775	25,893	25,666	31,394	22,069	13,817	11,879	9,383	4,638,247	5,037,412	4,289,234
Feb	55,978	33,008	55,881	32,048	29,264	29,432	18,886	20,675	12,721	2,946,032	2,968,109	3,213,823
Mar	56,698	194,229	76,104	83,572	125,483	106,917	27,508	52,255	22,429	5,159,003	6,338,567	5,450,681
Apr	140,757	154,437	203,144	245,079	196,626	212,212	62,043	73,599	51,725	13,868,051	10,858,691	13,793,507
May	284,340	253,771	263,884	559,156	513,893	475,510	67,371	64,766	40,888	27,441,496	23,051,832	23,748,969
June	305,524	308,318	324,477	1,030,907	918,892	903,870	110,779	123,822	109,216	77,865,332	74,033,596	70,913,978
July		391,328	400,639		1,255,506	1,251,002		206,691	182,723		110,660,664	111,091,066
Aug		373,478	390,578		1,607,144	864,730		177,322	128,858		99,775,506	87,953,893
Sept		256,363	194,298		383,297	395,134		78,934	61,302		37,881,607	39,568,193
Oct		160,581	148,653		282,945	211,070		48,227	25,885		15,573,451	16,062,554
Nov		81,558	36,066		58,740	8,086		26,476	22,976		6,118,063	6,038,976
Dec		21,718	39,742		11,002	10,561		21,144	9,465		4,446,831	3,057,722
YTD	858,484	969,538	949,383	1,976,428	1,815,552	1,750,010	300,404	346,996	246,362	131,918,161	122,288,207	121,410,192
<b>Totals</b>	<b>858,484</b>	<b>2,263,564</b>	<b>2,159,359</b>	<b>1,976,428</b>	<b>4,874,186</b>	<b>4,490,593</b>	<b>300,404</b>	<b>905,790</b>	<b>677,571</b>	<b>131,918,161</b>	<b>396,724,329</b>	<b>385,182,596</b>

dollars while partnering with the Visitors Bureau. Similarly, we'll soon have advertising details for you on the [outerbanks.org](http://outerbanks.org) Featured Listings, a program we tested in July and August. Featured Listings allow your business to increase its visibility on [outerbanks.org](http://outerbanks.org) by locking in top positions on the web page.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to promote this incredible place and to work alongside such talented people both within the Visitors Bureau and in our community. Thank you for your support. Please let me know how we can help your business.

Best regards,

Lee Nettles  
Executive Director



	Outer Banks Visitors Bureau SOCIAL MEDIA GROWTH									
	Facebook		Twitter		Instagram		Pinterest		Email List	
MONTH	13/14	12/13	13/14	12/13	13/14	12/13	13/14	12/13	13/14	12/13
July	414,038	302,124	14,812	10,394	1,350	N/A	8,724	N/A	252,452	73,457
August	429,857	303,450	15,256	10,660	1,560	N/A	9,147	1,949	259,352	142,827
September	442,088	305,619	15,461	10,857	1,885	N/A	9,645	2,399	268,561	160,427
October	455,873	318,318	15,700	11,214	2,114	N/A	10,040	2,646	266,723	160,784
November	470,344	327,677	15,841	11,504	2,233	N/A	10,267	2,917	259,309	174,472
December	482,087	341,588	15,984	11,816	2,283	N/A	10,397	3,322	265,105	179,884
January	493,277	350,032	16,300	12,112	2,445	108	10,894	4,185	274,873	185,081
February	501,205	357,196	16,600	12,608	2,618	238	11,218	4,470	284,277	191,694
March	518,162	362,558	17,000	13,071	2,754	396	11,700	4,969	296,979	204,939
April	528,024	375,143	17,300	13,421	2,838	547	11,912	5,249	316,560	222,474
May	542,060	389,156	17,700	13,838	3,019	767	12,312	5,951	354,194	240,889
June	555,513	401,344	18,606	14,380	3,237	804	12,804	6,995	369,011	252,625

The numbers in the chart above show the audience size of each social media channel at the end of that particular month. We have only shown the past two years in the data set for ease of use on the reader. The Outer Banks Visitors Bureau began its social media program in July 2009.