

# WESTERN NEW YORK Family

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FREE!

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## School's Out!

SINGLE PARENTING  
.....  
**Can Co-Parents  
Be Too Friendly?**

Encourage  
Your Kids to



**Unplug**

This Summer

- ◆ Summer Travel
- ◆ Backyard Adventures

Last Chance for  
**SUMMER  
CAMPS**

**INSIDE:** Healthy Child, Healthy Family - Pull Out and Save!



## FAMILY TRAVEL

— by Deborah Williams



## Just The Right Size For A Family Vacation

Wilmington is a North Carolina city that has it all: a remarkable history, a booming riverwalk along the Cape Fear River, expansive ocean beaches, a Serpentarium with 100 species of snakes, a Museum of the Bizarre, and Venus fly trap plants growing in the wild.

If the area looks vaguely familiar it is because more than 400 film and television productions have taken place in the area. Everything is served with a perfect dash of southern hospitality.

The city is often overshadowed by the more famous coastal cities to the south: Charleston and Savannah, or sprawling Myrtle Beach, but Wilmington is just the right size for a family vacation with plenty to see and do for everyone.

Start your visit along the river once known as a superhighway for goods. Across the water from the almost two-mile-long riverwalk is the looming USS North Carolina, once known as the world's greatest sea weapon. There is water taxi service to the battleship.

Walking the decks, listening to the oral histories, and seeing the photographs and mementoes, it is possible to envision the fierce combat the crew faced in the Pacific during World War II. Kids can get hands-on by steering the ship, starting her engines, or even firing the guns. In April everyone was invited to help celebrate the battleship's 75th anniversary of her 1941 commissioning.

During the war, the ship participated in every major sea battle in the Pacific, earned 15 battle stars and traveled more than 300,000 miles. In 1958 the announcement of her impending scrapping led to a statewide campaign by the citizens of North Carolina to save her and bring her back to the state. School children launched a vigorous campaign collecting pennies and other coins to save the ship. She was dedicated on April 29, 1962 as the state's memorial to its World War II veterans.

As we cruised leisurely along the river with Wilmington Water Tours, we learned about the 37 sunken ships that

are on the National Register of Historic Places and the rice plantation on Eagles Island that was abandoned after the Civil War.

Although the river is 30 miles from the ocean, salt water makes up half of the river, bringing in saltwater fish as well as dolphins and alligators.

Capt. Wendy Hart tells us about the major role women played in shipbuilding along the river during World War II.

"Women were excellent welders and at the height of ship building for the war effort a new 600 foot long ship was launched every 45 days," Hart said. "Over four years, 243 ships were built right here. The government gave the women surplus boy scout uniforms to use as work clothes since women at the time did not commonly wear pants."

Back on land, check out one of the waterfront dining establishments along the riverwalk that *USA Today* rated America's Best Riverfront in the 10 Best Readers' Choice contest.

Just beyond the riverwalk is the 230-block National Register Historic District filled with 18th and 19th century homes and buildings. A good way to get an overview of the area is via a slow-paced horse drawn carriage ride. Our driver was John Pucci and his six-year-old horse was Prince, one of his many rescue horses who work about one week out of every month for the exercise.

The Bellamy Mansion is one of the city's standout historic homes open for tours. This most spectacular 10,000-square foot antebellum home





was built for physician and planter John Dillard Bellamy, his wife Eliza and their nine children on the eve of the Civil War.

Today the mansion offers daily tours of the lovingly restored house that underwent several decades of transformation. Visit the meticulously recreated gardens and the restored Slave Quarters, one of the country's very few preserved urban slave quarters.

During the Civil War, Wilmington was the access point for blockade-runners transporting Confederate supplies. Fort Fisher State Historic Site preserves the history of the fort that was the last Confederate fort to fall to Federal troops. Its fall represented a fatal blow to the South.

Like the National Parks, North Carolina State Parks are celebrating their 100th birthday this year. Carolina Beach State Park south of Wilmington is one of the few protected places in the world where the rare Venus flytrap grows wild. The insect eating plant attracts visitors from around the world who come to experience the Venus flytrap trail, a lovely beach, sand dunes, and other natural habitats. New cabins have opened in time for the summer season for visitors who wish to stay overnight in the park. There are also facilities for campers and tents.

"We conduct carnivorous hikes on weekends," explained Chris Helmes, superintendent of the park. "The Venus flytrap actually traps ants, spiders, beetles, and other bugs and then deploys an enzyme that digests the bugs."

Wilmington is surrounded by water and there are a host of watersports activities complete with rentals and lessons. Try one of the fastest growing sports with a standup paddleboard. Take a kayak trip through the Cape Fear River. Catch a wave and learn how to hang ten with a surf lesson for the whole family. Challenge the family to a fishing competition with a fishing charter adventure or surf fishing lesson on the beach.

Other kid friendly activities include the Wilmington Railroad Museum complete with a full size caboose, boxcar,



and a 100-year old steam locomotive. The Children's Museum offers an array of hands-on exhibits for the younger set. The Cape Fear Museum of History and Science has a number of hands-on exhibits including the Michael Jordan Discovery Gallery and a 20-foot tall giant ground sloth.

This is a beach lover's paradise with three distinct beach towns. Carolina Beach is a family friendly beach town with a fun personality, a state park, many special events and festivals, world-class fishing, and miles of expansive beaches. Kure Beach is best known for its unspoiled beauty. Wrightsville Beach was named one of the world's "best surf towns by *National Geographic*" and is known for its watersports.

There is a wide range of accommodations in the area. Wrightsville Beach boasts one of the most kid friendly resorts — the Blockade Runner Beach Resort, a family operated resort that has been welcoming parents and children since 1964. *USA Today* readers named the resort's Sandcamper's Kid's Club tops for 2014. There are a variety of special kids activities, a Friday night Kids Night In with dinner and a movie so parents can enjoy a night out, and weekly animal encounters with live animals from the Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher.

Based at the resort, Capt. Joe Ab-



bate, a Yankee from New York, offers regular cruises on the Intracoastal Waterway aboard the *Shamrock*, an 18-person catamaran. There are a couple of cruises with special appeal to families. The Plundering Pirate Cruise involves buried treasure and the chance to explore nearby uninhabited islands. Capt. Joe also hosts regular close-by family fishing charters.


The Carolina Aquarium offers a fun and educational journey into the area's watery world. Travel down the Cape Fear River to coastline habitats, reefs and the open ocean. Meet a rare albino alligator named Luna; get up close with a loggerhead turtle; dig for fossils, play in the outside Adventure Reef area; and touch sea stars, horseshoe crabs, and sharks.

Special programs available on a rotating basis are designed to add a special

*continued on page 50*



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**FAMILY TRAVEL** *continued...*

touch to the aquarium experience. They include a surf fishing workshop on the beach, extended behind the scenes tours, canoeing the salt marsh and a fins and family tour for the younger set.

Garden lovers should not miss Airlie Gardens with 67 acres of historical gardens. The showpiece of the property is surely the Airlie Oak tree that dates back to 1545. The property known as Airlie was part of the 640-acre land grant from King George II to the Ogden brothers in 1736. Sarah and Pembroke Jones, wealthy industrialists, developed the gardens. They were noted for their lavish entertaining and the genesis of the popular saying, “keeping up with the Joneses.” They even once hosted a dinner party in the spectacular trees.

From 1948 to 1974 Minnie Evans was the gatekeeper of Arlie and an artist who painted vibrant, colorful and intricate paintings that she sold at the property. Following her death, local artists created a memorial sculpture garden in her honor. Bottle Chapel made entirely of bottles is a central feature of the gardens. During the summer there are regular concerts in the gardens.

**Travel Tip of the Month:** For more information on Wilmington visit [www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com](http://www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com) or call 800-222-4757. For Blockade Runner Beach Resort visit [www.blockade-runner.com](http://www.blockade-runner.com) or call 800-541-1161.

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