

# Currituck County Travel & Tourism Department 2008-2009 Annual Report





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Tourism is Currituck County's most vital industry, **GENERATING OVER \$112,660,000 IN TRAVEL EXPENDITURES** last year. During July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2009, over \$9.2 million in occupancy tax was collected from vacationers staying in Currituck County and over \$7.1 million was collected in local sales tax in 2008. As a result, the County is fiscally sound and citizens enjoy an annual **TAX RELIEF OF NEARLY \$1,511.00** per household.

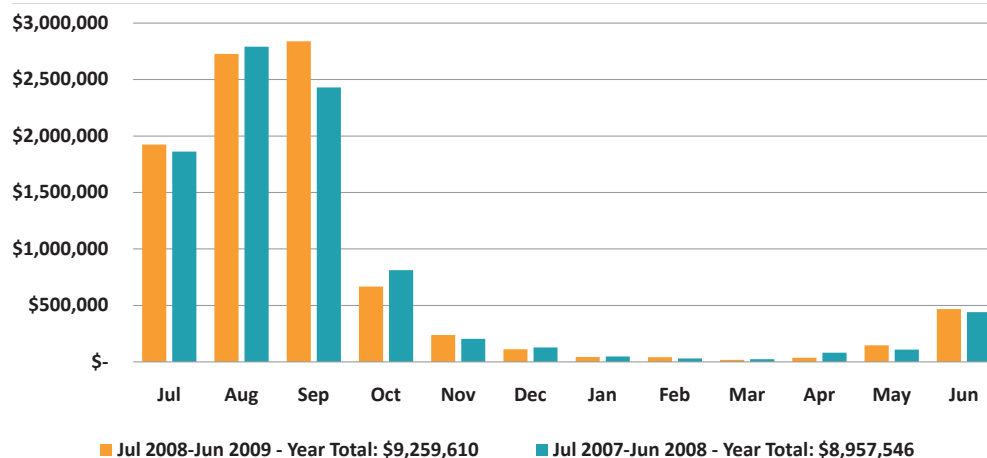
The Tourism Department, Tourism Advisory Board, and Tourism Development Authority are pleased to present this annual report. It highlights the **ECONOMIC IMPACT OF TOURISM IN CURRITUCK COUNTY** during the 2008-09 fiscal year, contains information and data on tax collections and marketing programs, as well as the goals and objectives of the Department for the upcoming year.

The 2008-2009 fiscal year yielded a **RECORD NUMBER OF VISITOR INQUIRES** and an **ALL TIME HIGH FOR OCCUPANCY TAX COLLECTIONS**. The sluggish economy, however, is making it difficult for the County to maintain growth in sales tax and occupancy tax revenues.

The Currituck County Department of Travel & Tourism remains focused on embracing the tourism industry and ensuring visitors continue to choose the Currituck Outer Banks as their vacation destination.

## Tax Collections

### OCCUPANCY TAX COLLECTIONS



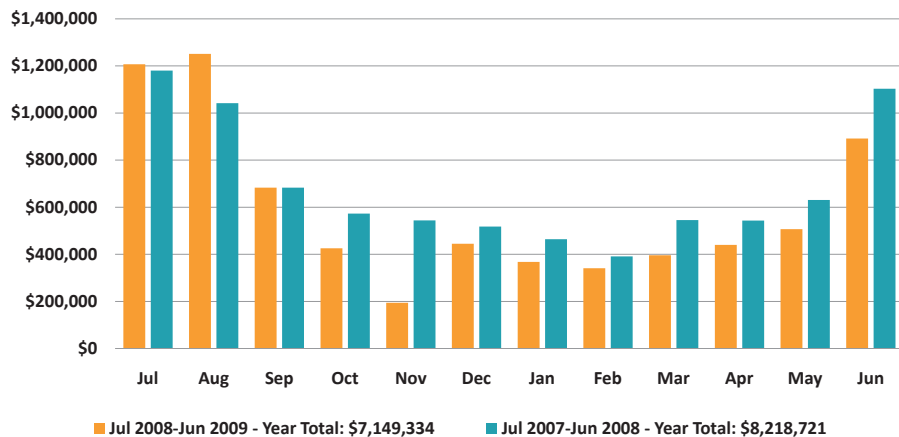
Occupancy tax collections for 2008-2009 INCREASED \$736,254.00 from the previous year.







## SALES TAX COLLECTIONS



Sales tax collections DECREASED \$1,069,387.00 from the 2007-2008 fiscal year.



## TAX RELIEF

Currituck County's average tax relief benefit per household in 2008 was \$1,511.00. This means that due to the tourism industry, each household in Currituck County **SAVED \$1,511.00 IN TAXES FOR 2008**. (Tax relief is the sales tax revenue from state and local taxes divided by the number of households).

Although occupancy tax (the lodging tax paid by visitors) was **UP BY \$736,254.00** from the previous year, visitor spending was down. This is more than likely due to the nation's struggling economy.

Currituck County **RANKED 33RD IN TRAVEL IMPACT** among North Carolina's 100 counties for 2008.



## CURRITUCK COUNTY TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT

Tax Data	2008	2007	2006
Domestic Travel Expenditures	\$112,660,000	\$120,010,000	\$120,250,000
Travel Related Payroll	\$22,390,000	\$23,530,000	\$24,400,000
Number of Travel Related Jobs	1,400	1,520	1,600
State & Local Taxes Paid by Travelers	\$10,430,000	\$11,000,000	\$11,290,000

## STATEWIDE TOURISM ECONOMIC IMPACT

Tourism is one of North Carolina's largest industries. In 2008, domestic travelers spent \$16.9 billion across the state. Domestic tourism expenditures directly supported 190,500 jobs for North Carolina residents. The tourism industry contributed \$4.18 billion to the state's payroll in 2008. Traveler spending generated over \$2.7 billion in tax receipts. **NORTH CAROLINA RANKS SIXTH IN PERSON-TRIP VOLUME BY STATE** behind California, Florida, Texas, New York, and Pennsylvania.

# Promotional Outreach

## Advertising

Print ads have been placed in such publications as USA Weekend, Budget Travel, New York Times, Washington Post, Coastal Living, Southern Living, AAA World, AARP, Oprah Magazine, Red Book, Country Living, and others.

### TOP LEAD GENERATING PUBLICATIONS

Publication	Leads Fulfilled
The Knot	14,185
Family Travel Insert (published in Better Homes & Gardens, Ladies Home Journal and Redbook)	10,952
Great Vacation Getaways (published in various newspapers throughout the northeast)	8,830
Oprah Magazine	6,319
Explore the Southeast (published in various newspapers east of the Mississippi)	5,543

Chart details leads generated July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2009

### WEBSITE STATISTICS

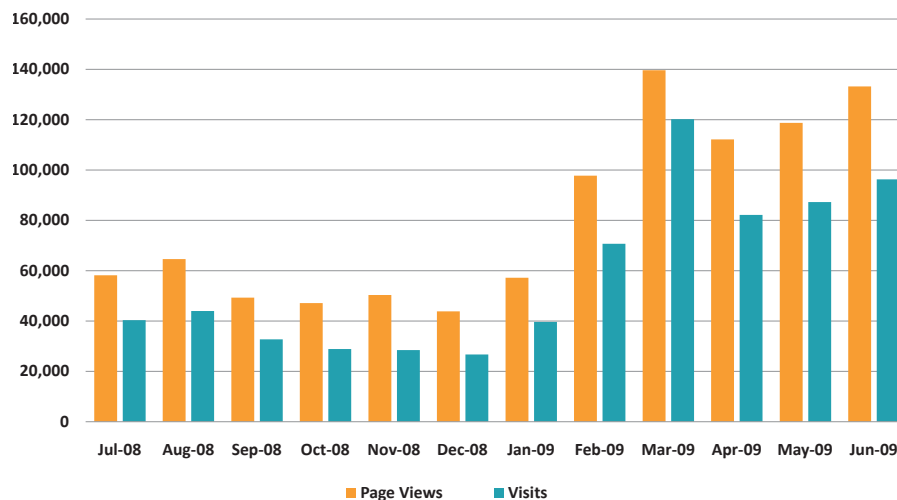


Chart details leads generated July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2009

When comparing statistics for the 2007-2008 vs. 2008-2009 fiscal years, the tourism website saw vast improvements:

Page Views	Increased 87%
Visits	Increased 101%
Hits	Increased 216%

## Public Relations

**PRESS TOURS** - The Tourism Department invited travel writers to tour the county in an effort to obtain travel editorial.

The **FALL PRESS TOUR**, held October 5-8, 2008, was attended by travel writers who write for a wide range of publications, including: New York Times, Washington Times, Crossings Magazine (Ontario, Canada), and Food and Wine Magazine.

The **SPRING PRESS TOUR**, held May 17-20, 2009, was attended by writers from travel publications, such as: Fodor's Travel Guides, Frommer's Travel Guides, The Shield newspaper (Canada), US Airways, The Piedmont Review, The Atlanta Gazette, New York Daily, and Central Florida Magazine.

**OTHER TRAVEL WRITERS** - The Tourism Department hosted a number of individual travel writers from the US and other countries (Germany, Canada, and United Kingdom). These writers cover travel in both print and electronic media. One article was published in the **LONDON TIMES** (circulation of 1,237,755), the UK's largest newspaper.

The Department continued its **PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NC DIVISION OF TOURISM** on an article about the Coast. It featured Currituck along with other coastal destinations and was picked up by many newspapers across the country, including **USA TODAY**. North Carolina's official photographer, Bill Russ, was also hosted in May of 2009.

**FAMILIARIZATION TOURS** - The Department hosted tours with attendance from North Carolina Welcome Centers and the Division of Tourism, Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center and travel trade professionals.

**TRADE SHOWS** - Tourism staff attended one major travel show, the "Adventures in Travel" expo, held in Washington, DC February 20-23, 2009. They also participated in multiple local and regional travel and wedding shows.



FAM Tour, October, 2008



# Promotional Outlets

## CURRITUCK OUTER BANKS VISITOR'S GUIDE -

The Currituck Outer Banks Visitor's Guide includes a listing of accommodations, annual events, historical features and general travel information. This is the main promotional piece produced by the county and is mailed to perspective vacationers when they request information on the website and via the toll-free phone number. A total of 200,000 guides were printed in 2009.

## WEBSITE -

Currituck County tourism businesses and attractions are promoted free of charge online on the Department's travel website, VisitCurrituck.com. This site is updated daily and includes a number of popular pages, including: "Specials & Discounts," "Event Calendar," "Maps," and "Weather." Vacationers can also access an online copy of the Visitor Guide, Shopping & Dining Guide, and the Wedding Planner.

## SHOPPING & DINING GUIDE -

This guide highlights the County's dining and shopping businesses. Each business receives a complimentary listing, including: business name, address, phone number, website and a short description. Business listings also receive a correlating map listing so vacationers can easily find their location.

## E-NEWSLETTERS -

The Travel and Tourism Department sends periodic e-newsletters to businesses in order to keep tourism stakeholders informed and up to date on news and happenings in Currituck County. E-blasts are also sent to perspective visitors to the Currituck Outer Banks. They include special offers, discounts, and announcements of special events.

## WEDDING PLANNER -

The Wedding Planner assists couples with planning a destination wedding in Currituck County. Businesses offering wedding-related services are included free of charge. It is the only publication in which advertising space can be purchased.

## CURRITUCK OUTER BANKS NEWSPAPER -

Highlights key attractions and activities in the area and assists visitors in planning activities once they arrive. Popular features include "Activities for Kids" and "Rainy Day Ideas."

## CURRITUCK MAP -

Displays attractions and activities on the Currituck Outer Banks and is distributed to guests at County Information Centers and at local businesses.

## MEDIA KIT -

The media kit is distributed to various media outlets in an effort to gain editorial coverage and increase public relations for tourism related businesses and attractions.

## OTHER NICHE PUBLICATIONS -

Several other informational pieces are also created and distributed by the Department, including: Knotts Island Day Trip, Farm Market Guide, Vineyard & Brewery Guide, Family Reunion Planner, Beach Safety Guide, and many more. These brochures highlight the unique aspects of Currituck County to those visitors with very specific interests.



## GUIDES DISTRIBUTED

Publication	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006
Visitor's Guide	163,821	121,995	85,341	15,281
Wedding Planner	28,922	33,927	17,604	-
Shopping & Dining Guide	21,150	-	-	-

Numbers above included brochures distributed in Currituck County information centers, online downloads, at trade shows, requests made by phone, at distribution outlets, and via the tourism website. The Shopping & Dining Guide was a new publication in 2009.

## Visitor Information Centers

Visitor Relations Associates provided vacation information to nearly **70,000 GUESTS** from July 1, 2008 - June 30, 2009. Displays and brochures placed in the Currituck County Welcome Center in Moyock and Visitor's Center in Corolla feature businesses, attractions, and activities located throughout Currituck County.

## Special Promotions

With today's tough economic times, the Tourism Department is working hard to promote the Currituck Outer Banks as an affordable family vacation destination. In fact, last December staff requested additional funding from the Tourism Development Authority/Board of Commissioners to increase advertising due to a decrease in vacation rental bookings. Approval was given for an **ADDITIONAL \$300,000** to promote accommodations to potential vacationers. The Department used these funds primarily for online marketing. This initiative resulted in a marked increase in visitation to the tourism web site, VisitCurrituck.com.

## Awards

The Tourism Department received two state awards from the Destination Marketing Association of North Carolina (DMANC). Platinum Awards (First Place) were received for **BEST DESTINATION MARKETING INITIATIVE** (for requested additional marketing funds due to concerns expressed by accommodation providers that bookings were down because of the poor economy) and **BEST VISITOR'S GUIDE**.

Currituck County competed in the "large budget" division, meaning that the Currituck bureau competed against other North Carolina destinations such as Charlotte, Raleigh, and Durham.

# July 2009 - June 2010 Fiscal Year

**THE 2009-2010 BUDGET FOR THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT IS \$2.7 MILLION.** Over \$2 million of that budget is spent directly on marketing the county to potential visitors. The remaining money funds the operation of the Visitor Information Centers, salaries, supplies, etc.

The current fiscal year is already off to a great start. A redesign of the tourism website, enhanced public relations initiatives, and an expanded television commercial campaign are just a few of the new programs that are promoting the Currituck Outer Banks during the July 1, 2009 - June 30, 2010 fiscal year.

## Marketing

**NEW WEBSITE** – The new VisitCurrituck.com website will offer visitors a more interactive experience while online. **UPDATED NAVIGATION WILL IMPROVE USABILITY** and help visitors find what they are looking for with fewer clicks. There will also be a Beach Bag feature that will save user's favorites and help customize itineraries.

**PRINT ADVERTISING** - Print advertisements continue to **BE PLACED IN REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATIONS**, such as USA Weekend, Budget Travel, Oprah Magazine, New York Times, Washington Post, Southern Living and more.

**TELEVISION CAMPAIGN** – Television commercials on the Currituck Outer Banks air throughout the **MID-ATLANTIC REGION**. Prime markets include: Hampton Roads, Raleigh, Charlotte, Baltimore, Richmond and Washington, DC.

**WEB DEVELOPMENT UPDATES** – Updates to the tourism website include the following: creating several mini-sites to promote destination weddings, shopping and dining, and attractions; holding monthly contests via Facebook and the tourism website; and increasing niche marketing of golf, cultural travel, eco-tourism and international visitation. The **INTERNET MARKETING PLAN** has been expanded to reach potential vacationers via in the Internet.

**E-NEWSLETTERS** – The Travel & Tourism Department's email database continues to **GROW AT AN AVERAGE RATE OF 1,000 EMAILS PER MONTH**. Plans are to expand the frequency of e-blasts and create more targeted lists based on visitor preferences.



**EDITORIAL COVERAGE** - Starting July 1, 2009, the Tourism Department began utilizing Vocus, a web-based software used to monitor editorial coverage and distribute press releases. Between July 1, 2009 - October 31, 2009, Currituck has **RECEIVED EDITORIAL VALUED AT OVER \$418,740** (for printed publications only).

**TRAVEL WRITERS** - The Tourism Department hosted multiple travel writers and travel trade professionals since the new fiscal year began on July 1, 2009. Highlights include:

- **SOUTHERN LIVING** - Valerie Luesse, editor and writer, spent five days in Corolla this past September.
- **COASTAL LIVING** - Jeff Book, senior writer and editor, spent two days in Corolla in mid-September working on a story entitled *Coastal Characters*.
- **RICHMOND-TIMES DISPATCH** - Devorah Ben-David, special travel correspondent, visited the Currituck Outer Banks in October for a travel series called "The Sand Box."

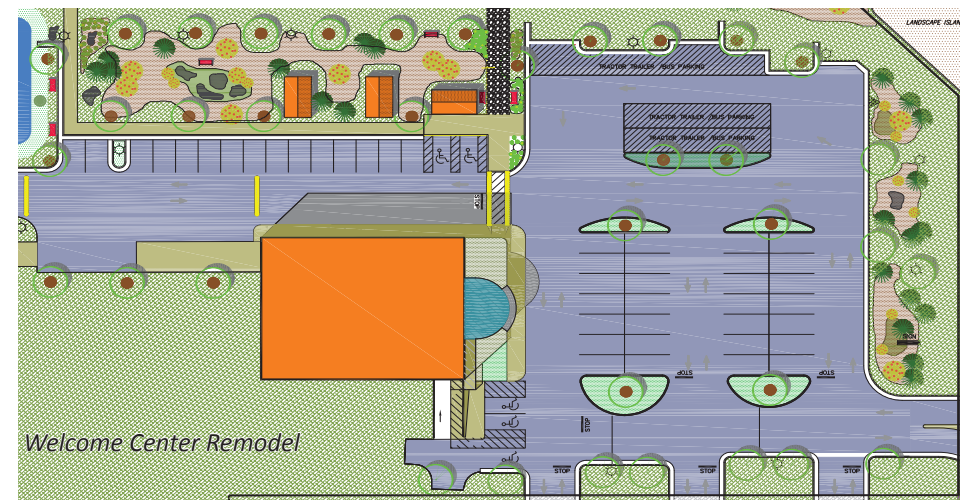


**TRADE SHOWS** - Staff attended the Adventures in Travel Expo in New York City this past October. It was attended by **THOUSANDS OF PERSPECTIVE VACATIONERS AND TRAVEL WRITERS** looking for travel information.

## Moyock Welcome Center Expanded

The Tourism Department recently completed renovations at the Welcome Center in Moyock. The expansion included: replacing excess parking spaces with "green space;" adding picnic pavilions and vending machines; adding more restrooms; and constructing display cases to showcase local businesses.

A warehouse storage area was also added to accommodate the large volume of printed publications and promotional materials needed to operate the center and allow space for the bulk mail operations to be relocated to the Moyock facility.







## Tourism Outlook

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the recession's impact on nationwide travel and tourism spending appears to be easing. While spending declines and discounting will likely continue, the travel industry may finally be poised for a rebound.

According to the Bureau's Travel and Tourism Satellite Accounts report recently released, real spending on overall travel and tourism dropped only 1.4 percent in the second quarter of 2009. This is a substantial deceleration from the 8.9 percent decline previously reported between January and April 2009.

There is some good news on the horizon for Currituck County residents. A report from the Daily Reflector, released on October 23, 2009, stated: **CURRITUCK CONTINUED TO HAVE THE STATE'S LOWEST UNEMPLOYMENT RATE** at 5 percent — down from 5.1 percent in August.

## 2009-2010 Goals & Objectives

The Travel & Tourism Department has identified the following ten main objectives:

1. Increase the number of visitors to Currituck County, thus increasing occupancy tax and sales tax revenues.
2. Continue to promote the attractions, events and tourism-related businesses located throughout the entire County, including the mainland, beaches and Knotts Island.
3. Utilize the County's Welcome Center and Visitor's Center as "sales centers" to promote overnight stays and visitor spending.
4. Redesign the County's website, VisitCurrituck.com, making it more interactive and user friendly.

5. Enhance and aggressively market the tourism website using SEO, pay-per-clicks, directories, and other online marketing strategies.
6. Continue to analyze the effectiveness of print and online ad campaigns.
7. Expand public relations efforts to obtain editorial through local, regional, state, national and international media.
8. Continue to work closely with, and utilize the knowledge of, the industry leaders appointed to the Tourism Advisory Board.
9. Offer Currituck County businesses more cooperative advertising opportunities that will assist them in increasing sales revenues during the current recession.
10. Communicate effectively to residents, businesses, and elected leaders the importance of tourism to the local economy. In addition, encourage locals to thank visitors for choosing to vacation in Currituck County.

## Learn More

For additional information about the Tourism Department's marketing strategies, visit the Business Resources section of VisitCurrituck.com. From there, you can download reports and research, such as the 2009-2010 Marketing Plan, monthly reports, the Randall Travel Marketing Comprehensive Tourism Research & Strategic Plan, and more.





## Tourism Advisory Board

John Wright, Chairman  
Don Cheek  
Petrina Ramey  
Vivian Simpson

Krista Boughy, Vice-Chairman  
Janice Farr  
Cindy Seymour  
Paul Robinson

Ex-officio: Paul O'Neal, Dan Scanlon, Diane Nordstrom, Veronica Brown

## Tourism Development Authority/Board of Commissioners

J. Owen Etheridge, Chairman  
Vance Aydlett  
Barry Nelms  
Janet Taylor

S. Paul O'Neal, Vice-Chairman  
Gene Gregory  
John Rorer

Ex-officio: Diane Nordstrom

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## Currituck County Visitor Information Centers

Currituck County Welcome Center  
106 Caratoke Highway  
Moyock, NC 27958  
252.435.2947 | 877.287.7488

Currituck Outer Banks Visitor's Center  
500 Hunt Club Drive  
Corolla, NC 27927  
252.453.9612

