

## **The Freedom Seeker's Trail: Exploring Underground Railroad Sites Around Albemarle Sound**

The Underground Railroad was a vast network of people, black and white, who helped runaway slaves from the Southern states escape to the North and into Canada between 1780 and 1862. On this three-day pilgrimage, you'll find out about the people and places in North Carolina that helped thousands of people gain their freedom. Many of these places have been designated part of the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program by the National Park Service.

### **3-Day Itinerary**

#### **Day 1**

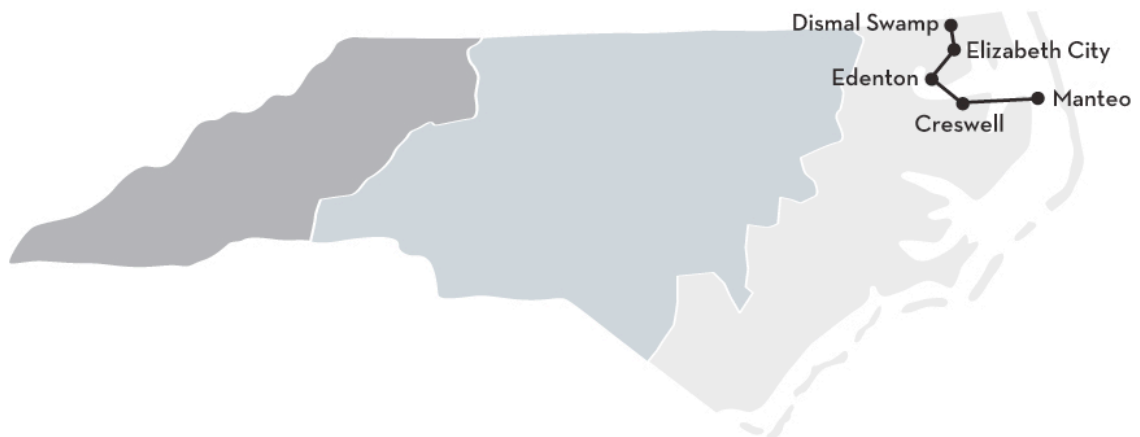
Walk along the Dismal Swamp and Pasquotank River, which became waterways to liberty for many.

#### **Day 2**

Learn about one of the Underground Railroad's more famous escapees from North Carolina, and experience the history of the area with a visit to an antebellum plantation in Creswell.

#### **Day 3**

Visit Roanoke Island, the site of a Freedman's Colony established by Union troops occupying the area during the Civil War.



*With so much to see and do in the area, we recommend the following 3-day itinerary. Enjoy your visit by mixing and matching events to your particular interest. Be sure to check days and hours of operation for each venue.*

### **Day One**

Begin your Freedom Trail in **Elizabeth City**, where you'll get scenic views of the **Pasquotank River** at **Waterfront Park**. During the 1800s, many freedom seekers stowed away on ships and steamers using this waterway or did manual labor for boat owners in exchange for passage north.

Once in Elizabeth City, many runaway slaves sought refuge in the **Great Dismal Swamp**, an enormous tract of forested wetlands that straddles the North Carolina/Virginia state line. Many used the swamp as a stopping place before continuing on the journey north. Some even made a home in the wilderness, living off the land and bartering with local farmers for food and supplies.

Today, you can visit the swamp by car or boat at the **Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center** in **South Mills**, and walk the 4.5 mile **Dismal Swamp Canal Trail**, which extends from the Welcome Center to the village of **South Mills**.

Afterwards, return to **Elizabeth City** and enjoy the picturesque downtown waterfront, stroll through the city's six historic districts, and dine at one of the many local eateries. Before you leave, be sure to visit **The Museum Of The Albemarle**, which interprets the history of thirteen counties in northeastern North Carolina.

### **Day Two**

Today, head south on US 17 to the historic town of **Edenton**, where one of North Carolina's most noted Underground Railroad escapes took place. In 1842, Harriet Jacobs, after seven years in hiding, fled the area with the assistance of local black watermen. Jacobs hid in a vessel bound for Philadelphia and then traveled to New York and Boston. She later described her harrowing enslavement and escape in a book, *Incidents In The Life Of A Slave Girl* (1858). Check in at the **Edenton Visitor's Center** for a self-guided tour brochure on Jacobs' life.

Now, cross over Albemarle Sound and head east on Highway 64 to the town of **Creswell**. Here you can visit **Somerset Place**, a

representative antebellum plantation offering an insightful view of life during the period before the Civil War. During its 80-year existence as an active plantation (1786-1865), it encompassed as many as 100,000 acres and became one of North Carolina's most prosperous rice, corn, and wheat plantations. It was home to more than three hundred enslaved men, women and children of African descent – 80 of whom were brought directly to Somerset from their West African homeland in 1786. Today, visitors can see a realistic view of plantation life by touring the Greek Revival mansion, reproduction slave community, plantation hospital and other buildings.

### **Day Three**

Continue east on US Highway 64 until you reach Roanoke Island and the town of **Manteo**. The island has a unique place on the road to freedom. After Confederate forces were defeated here in 1862, hundreds of freed and runaway slaves flocked to the island. It was well known that if a slave crossed the creek to Roanoke Island they would find 'safe haven'. Federal troops soon set up a Freedman's Colony to accommodate all of the refugees, and at one point, four thousand people lived here. Today, that history is commemorated along the **Freedom Trail** at the **Fort Raleigh National Historic Site**. The 1.25-mile trail winds through the woods to a marker by the shores of the Roanoke Sound.

### **For more information:**

Elizabeth City Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

[www.discoverelizabethcity.com](http://www.discoverelizabethcity.com)

Edenton-Chowan County Tourism Development Authority

[www.visitedenton.com](http://www.visitedenton.com)

Washington County Travel & Tourism

[www.visitwashingtoncountync.com](http://www.visitwashingtoncountync.com)

Outer Banks Visitors Bureau

[www.outerbanks.org](http://www.outerbanks.org)

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