Visit North Carolina
Guidelines for Inclusion on VisitNC.com

This document contains guidelines for the inclusion of attractions, lodgings, restaurants, shops and other tourism-related businesses & events on VisitNC.com. The listings on VisitNC.com exist to serve potential visitors to North Carolina by connecting them with the best possible collection of information on possible items of interest.

To achieve this goal and to ensure efficiency, we maintain a network of contacts in all 100 NC counties, each tasked with entering and maintaining listings for their county. It is the express responsibility of the property owner or manager to provide their county contact with complete and accurate information of their attraction or accommodation, and to keep this information updated. The following are minimum requirements for all potential listings before submitting them:

- All entities must be a legally operating and tax-paying (if applicable) business or event.
- All listings must be physically located within the borders of the state of North Carolina and have a North Carolina physical address.
- Listings must be reasonably clean and meet NC Department of Health guidelines, if applicable.
- No listing will be approved which promotes nudity, drunkenness, lewd or illegal behavior or activities.
- Businesses, websites and organizations representing third parties are not eligible for inclusion.
- Membership into any organization or association is not required.
- Visit North Carolina reserves the right to exclude or retain any listing it sees fit and to determine what will be included in the description. VisitNC.com listings are discretionary, and receiving a listing once confers no right or title to continued listing on the site.
- Visit North Carolina also reserves the right to change and update these guidelines as needed.

In addition to the above, we offer detailed instructions for what to do (and not to do) when uploading to the database. Questions are always welcome, and our team is happy to assist however we can. Thank you for being part of the Visit North Carolina database and helping inspire and attract visitors to our great state.

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General Guidelines

Listings on VisitNC.com are part of Visit North Carolina's overarching mission to inspire travelers, primarily from out-of-state, to plan visits and travel to NC. As such, only items of regional or wider interest, as opposed to local-only interest, will be considered for approval. Generally, this means that the business or event listed inspires visitors to plan a trip from 50 miles away or further. VisitNC.com is focused on places and events that reflect the best of the area.

Before entering information into the Visit NC database, Visit NC asks local contacts to consider the following questions. Answering negatively to one or more of the below will not necessarily exclude an entry. Rather, these questions outline what makes a good (and strong performing) listing on our site:

1) Is the listing telling the potential visitor something they can't more easily find elsewhere on the internet?
2) What would make a potential visitor take a trip (usually of one hour or more) just for this place or event?
3) Is this something that can be found only in NC? If not, what is the signature appeal or influence to make it special?
4) Would this listing be part of a trip that creates a desire for a return visit?
5) What is the unique back story for this listing?

Using these questions as a guide helps position the listings on VisitNC.com as a "trusted insider" making recommendations, rather than just a competitor to Google or other search functions on the web. Anyone can tell someone where a place is or when an event will take place; we want our site to tell people why they should come, and the specific experiences they'll have when they do. For example, we want to emphasize North Carolina "firsts," such as historical firsts (first flight, first gold strike, etc.) or first-time life experiences (first time seeing the ocean, first time tasting moonshine, first time encountering a waterfall, etc.).

We understand that chambers, CVBs, TDAs and others feel a duty to their members, partners or constituents; however, where VisitNC.com is concerned, please consider that our primary duty is to a potential visitor. By having the best your area has to offer represented on VisitNC.com, if you can inspire a potential visitor to make a trip, many of your partners will likely benefit!

There are a few other considerations that apply to all types of listings:

Style & Quality: You should try to include as much relevant information as possible about the property or event when creating the listing. However, that does not mean repeating information in the description that can be readily found in other parts of the listing. For instance, there's no need to include the title of the event, contact information such as website and phone number(s), location information, or date(s) in the description, because there are other fields for this information. The description should ideally tell a story about the place or event—what is the compelling reason for someone to visit? Why would you recommend this place or event to a friend or family member? The more specific, appealing information made available to a visitor, the more likely they are to plan a trip. This also means little details that only locals know: is there a long walk from the parking lot to the attraction? Is there an off-menu dish or special that a visitor might not otherwise expect? Are permits required for camping or other activities? Preparing the visitor in this way helps them to feel welcome and a sense that someone is looking out for them.

Please try to fill in the specific contact, social media and website fields when available. Note that this information must be in proper format, so phone numbers should include area codes, websites and social pages should be fully spelled out (https://www.facebook.com/yourentityhereforexample), and so forth. Our system will check to make sure a link works, but it is the responsibility of the person entering information to ensure links are up-to-date and working. Finally, in order to preserve a consistent look and tone for the database, please refrain from using all uppercase letters (which is regarded as shouting) or excessive punctuation (e.g. more than one "!") in any field for a listing.

Categories: There is a Primary and Secondary category for a listing. Please select the most appropriate category/ies, then use the Classify tab to specify the type. A site that may have multiple categories onsite and shares the same address gets one listing, not one for each category. For instance, if a hotel also has an onsite golf course, it would all be in one listing: Lodging and Activity: Golf.

Also, information for Lodging, Food & Drink, etc. that wouldn't qualify for an individual listing, but should still be included for visitor info (such as wineries with a handful of cabins, attractions with on-site restaurant, etc.) should be included in the description for the primary listing.

Photos: Up to 10 photos can be submitted per listing. All photos must be of the property or event in question; stock photography is expressly not permitted and will be deleted. No images with overlay text, logos, fliers or promos will be accepted. Images should be a minimum of 1,000 x 1,000 pixels,

72 dpi. Shots can be horizontal, vertical, or square, as long as they meet the minimum size requirement. The site is responsive, which means it'll accommodate a range of aspect ratios by cropping to eliminate empty space. The most important thing is to keep the point of interest in the photo somewhat centered. By submitting a photo for use on VisitNC.com you are certifying that you have the rights to use that image. Any issues with copyright or image usage are the responsibility of the submitting partner to resolve; Visit North Carolina will not be liable for any issues arising from image rights.

Website Links: All website links, including social media links, must be to the specific property/event in question; listings on a local website (CVB, TDA, Chamber of Commerce) will not be accepted, except for those organizations' own listings (see the section below on Resources for more). Additionally, links must be as specific as possible, and refer to the location in question, rather than a larger organization. If the event isn't listed on a website, please do not include the host (whoever's putting on the event) or any other website just to have a website. For example, listing www.carolinaballet.com for a performance of The Nutcracker would not be acceptable. We would accept www.carolinaballet.com/shows/the-nutcracker.

Attractions/Activities

Attractions and Activities form the core of the listings on VisitNC.com; traditionally, more than two-thirds of the most-viewed listings on our site are attractions, which is why we put such an emphasis on having the best possible information for each one. These are the things to see, do, and experience that visitors often use as the basis for an entire trip. As such, any Attraction or Activity listing should reflect an interest that would inspire people from outside the local area (50 miles or more) to plan a trip. These listings represent the best of our state, and embody a welcoming spirit and wide appeal that will lead to visitors coming back for repeat visits.

As an example, a large, regionally-known furniture store that showcases North Carolina's history in the industry, and features custom designs, signature styles, antiques, or things of that nature would be a great listing. A chain mattress store would not qualify, as such places can be found anywhere and would not inspire a visitor to make a trip on their own.

Regarding the difference between the two: Attractions are fixed locations with inherent interest to visitors. For example, historic homes, museums, and state & national parks would all be listed as Attractions. Activities may not have a fixed location, and represent things to do that involve the visitor in some way. For example, whitewater rafting, horseback rides, and film location walking tours would be listed as Activities. When in doubt, use the available classifications as a guide, or feel free to contact us!

We have included examples below (after the Lodging section) of one excellent Attraction listing, and one that would fail to meet our standards, so you can see the differences in approach. These examples would also apply for the Food & Drink and Lodging classifications, as those listing types ("permanent" listings) are all entered and edited similarly.

Food & Drink

This classification combines the previously established Dining listings with several categories previously contained under Attractions. This new category includes restaurants, breweries, wineries, distilleries, farmer's markets--basically, any establishment that makes or serves any sort of food and/or drink would be included.

If someone is searching for a place to eat, instead of VisitNC.com, they're more likely to use Yelp, Google or OpenTable, so it's important to have those food & drink listings that are the "signature" sites for your area: places that can be found only in your area and add to the unique experience found there, with strong descriptions to support. Such places might have a notable reputation for unique dishes, farm-to-table, great chef, have been bringing folks there for decades, or something along those lines.

Two notes: First, chain eateries with more than 10 locations are <u>not</u> accepted. This is to ensure that the database reflects more local flavor and NC-specific food & drink. We found that the 1,500 chain dining listings previously in our database were only driving 0.45% total listing page views. Including things that are more easily and readily found in a Google search (such as the nearest national hamburger chain) clutters up our site and keeps visitors from getting to information about unique places that would inspire visitation. This is an important part of our strategy to "own what Google can't"; it also means not trying to own what Google (or Yelp or any other website) already does own. Our goal is to focus on the places that will inspire travel or be part of a memorable visit.

Second, we ask that you please try to be as specific as possible when selecting classifications. Ideally, each Restaurant will have only 1-2 classifications for Type of Restaurant and 1-2 Cuisines selected. Please resist the urge to try and represent the entire menu—for example, if a pizzeria also has sandwiches, but is primarily known for pizza, it's still a Pizzeria in our classifications. Likewise, an Italian restaurant that has a couple of Seafood dishes isn't necessarily also a Seafood classification. Classifications exist to express the primary theme of the listing, not every possible appeal, in order to inspire and draw the most visitors.

Lodging

Lodging refers to any place an overnight visitor might stay one or more nights. This includes hotels, motels, campgrounds, bed & breakfasts, etc. We also encourage listing the vacation rental companies that offer multiple (10 or more) properties for rent. However, rentals by individual owners are not eligible for listing. VisitNC.com data showed that By Owner rental listings drove very little traffic, as visitors are already going to AirBnB, VRBO, or local DMO listings to find these accommodations. Additionally, any Lodging must offer daily or weekly rates to be eligible for our website. Short-term apartments or any other Lodging with a minimum 30-day stay or that operates on a monthly/yearly basis are not eligible. Where individual vacation rentals by owner are a significant part of a county's inventory, Visit NC offers the option to have a single listing that links to the local DMO website and their respective rental listings. Please inquire with the database team about creating and maintaining such a listing.

While Lodging listings aren't held to the same philosophy as other listings (as in, would a hotel inspire an actual trip on its own), please remember to list *only* those properties that you would want a potential visitor to stay, and where you believe they would leave with a positive impression for your area. A property that's in poor physical condition, is known for criminal activity, or has an extremely low online rating (TripAdvisor, Yelp, Google, etc.) likely shouldn't be listed on VisitNC.com.

An example of a strong listing:

(Attraction)

×

EDPNC Headquarters

Published: Feb 19, 2018 9:24 am

Content

Id	67680
Uuid	c7604df2-132c-11e8-9675-842b2b5d58a5
Workgroup Id	EDPNC + LGA + Outpost (41)
Title	EDPNC Headquarters
Summary	Come and see the economic development and tourism marketing magic happen, live and in person!
Slug	edpnc-headquarters
Shortcode	K3Pe
Live	Feb 16, 2018 10:15 am
Expires	Jan 1, 3000 12:00 am
Description	The Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC) is focused on recruiting new businesses to the state, supporting the needs of existing businesses, connecting exporters with customers ar...
Image	Ribbon cutting speeches.jpg
Hours Of Operation	Monday-Friday 8 am to 5 pm
Season Of Operation	Year-round
Reviewer Email	nick.parker@visitnc.com
Address	15000 Weston Parkway

	City, **Cary** (1217)
State	NC
Zip	27513
Mailing Same As Physical	1
Mailing State	NC
Business Phone	919.447.7777
Business Email	nick.parker@visitnc.com
Business Website	https://edpnc.com *(200 OK)*
Facebook Link	https://www.facebook.com/NCEconomicDevelopment/ *(200 OK)*
Twitter Link	https://twitter.com/edpnc *(200 OK)*
Gallery0	 Ribbon cutting actual.jpg

Trait

Free parking	Yes
Picnic area	Yes
Tours – guided	Yes

Category

1. Area > Piedmont > Raleigh, Durham & the Triangle (2084)
2. Attractions > History & Heritage > Historic Trails & Tours (804)

An example of a listing with several errors in need of attention:

(Attraction)

The Museum of Nonsense

Published: Feb 15, 2018 2:29 pm

Content

Id	67677
Uuid	b6362148-1285-11e8-9675-842b2b5d58a5
Workgroup Id	EDPNC + LGA + Outpost (41)
Title	The Museum of Nonsense
Summary	It's a museum.
Slug	the-museum-of-nonsense
Shortcode	YsdK
Live	Feb 15, 2018 02:30 pm
Expires	Jan 1, 3000 12:00 am
Description	About nonsense.
Image	The Museum of Nonsense.jpg
Hours Of Operation	sometimes
Season Of Operation	occasionally
Reviewer Email	nick.parker@visitnc.com
Address	15000 Weston Parkway
City	

State	NC
Zip	27513
Mailing State	NC
Toll Free Phone Us	919-555-5555
Business Phone	919-555-5555
Business Phone Alt	919-555-5555
Toll Free Phone International	919-555-5555
Fax	919-555-5555
Business Email	thecat@thehat
Booking Email	thecat@thehat
Business Website	www.badurl.brokenlink.net *(200 OK)*
Booking Website	www.badurl.brokenlink.net *(200 OK)*
Meetings Website	www.badurl.brokenlink.net *(200 OK)*
Facebook Link	nonsensemuseum
Twitter Link	@nonsensemuseum
Instagram Link	@nonsensemuseum

Trait

Tours – self-guided	Yes

Category

1. Area > Piedmont > Raleigh, Durham & the Triangle (2084)
2. Attractions > Arts & Entertainment > Museums (770)
3. Attractions > Arts & Entertainment > Museums > Arts & Culture Museums (1986)
4. Attractions > Arts & Entertainment > Museums > Children's Museums (1987)
5. Attractions > Arts & Entertainment > Museums > History & Science Museums (1988)
6. Attractions > Eat & Drink > Food (1993)
7. Attractions > History & Heritage (796)
8. Attractions > History & Heritage > Historic Churches & Cemeteries (802)
9. Attractions > History & Heritage > Historic Sites (803)
10. Attractions > History & Heritage > History Museums (806)
11. Attractions > Outdoor > Parks > Parks - Local (845)
12. Attractions > Outdoor > Parks > Parks - State (846)
13. Attractions > Shopping > Gifts & Collectibles (927)

Events

Events represent any occurrence or gathering that might attract visitors to an area for a specific period of time. This includes, but is not limited to, festivals, concerts, art shows, holiday events, expos & hobby shows, historical events, and many more classifications. All events must list specific dates and have contact information included. An exhibition that lasts more than six weeks (or two months) is not considered an Event, but should be included in the description of the Attraction listing. Instead of simply mentioning the name of the exhibition in the Attraction's description, include a compelling sentence or two, as this adds to the existing description why a visitor would want to make a dedicated trip just to visit that attraction.

Only events which reasonably expect to draw at least 25% of their audience from 50+ miles away are considered for inclusion. Thus, events such as banquets and annual galas, "after hours," dance recitals, charity events such as fundraisers, etc., are not suitable for this website as they tend to primarily draw a local audience. Meetings, conferences, seminars, classes, and workshops also are not included as attendees are there primarily for business. Special/themed retail sales are not considered Events. Hotel packages are not considered Events; while a hotel package may offer a special or themed activity, it would only be available to a staying guest.

When you are selecting classifications for events, please remember to be as accurate as possible. Don't "pad" the event with every category which might apply. For instance, just because a Festival has a kids' area with face painting does not make it a Children's Event. An Air Show which includes music does not also need to be listed under Concerts. As with the Food & Drink classifications, we rely on you to input the most appropriate information for your listings. This ensures when a visitor is searching VisitNC.com, the search returns are the most accurate ones, not listings that may dilute the return.

Regarding dates and times, all Events must have a start time selected. End times are more flexible. Please strive for accuracy and thoroughness in details to ensure the best possible quality of listings on VisitNC.com. We want potential visitors to be able to accurately plan their trips around these events, so arming them with as much correct information as possible is key.

The Date tab also allows you to include multiple date instances, which is a key function for recurring events like Speedway race schedules, multi-day festivals with different start and end times, theater company seasons, seasonal music series, etc. These should be listed with individual date instances rather than a large, non-specific date range selection. A good rule of thumb is that each date range value should not extend beyond 7 consecutive days.

We ask that you enter Events in this fashion because by entering multiple separate listings, you are increasing the amount of information that you need to submit, as well as delaying the approval process. A single “Theater Company Presents” event with multiple dates and the individual performances/start times/admission/etc. broken out within the Date tab's "Notes" field is a much more efficient listing. Having these events as separate listings doesn’t increase the venue or series’ presence or visibility on VisitNC.com; rather it makes the events more fragmented & less relevant, and increases the chances the events are lost among the many other event listings on the site. You will save serious time if you collapse these types of listings in a single listing with a better description of the overall series. Also, for Inactive events, you won’t have to worry about making sure the Active check box is live for each instance. One listing with multiple dates is much easier to maintain and generally of better quality than 50 smaller, lesser quality ones.

It is important to remember that events can be entered as soon as dates are determined. Many visitors plan trips months in advance, so hearing about an event just days or weeks before it occurs may not give enough lead to make arrangements. These listings are also used by our Public Relations and International teams, and both groups need as much lead time as possible to serve their audiences.

Approvals:
Submissions are processed as quickly as possible and in the order in which they are received. Please allow 5 business days for review and approval of any event. Submissions or updates within 5 business days may be possible, but we ask that you contact us directly before making such a change so that we can expedite approval. Remember that the customer for this website is a potential visitor to North Carolina and to your county, so our efforts are always designed to serve that customer as best we can. Please remember that adding an Event close to when the event is actually happening (within a few days) really isn’t helpful to a potential visitor with their trip planning.

We have included examples below of one excellent Event listing, and one that would fail to meet our standards, so you can see the differences in approach.

An example of a properly formatted Event listing:

(Event)

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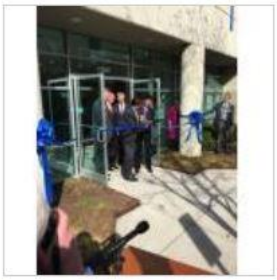
EDPNC Headquarters Grand Opening

Published: Feb 19, 2018 9:27 am

Content

Id	67682
Uuid	5fa3f220-1338-11e8-9675-842b2b5d58a5
Workgroup Id	EDPNC + LGA + Outpost (41)
Title	EDPNC Headquarters Grand Opening
Summary	The new Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina opens its doors with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and guest reception.
Slug	edpnc-headquarters-grand-opening
Shortcode	gNMF
Live	Feb 16, 2018 11:45 am
Expires	Jan 1, 3000 12:00 am
Description	The ceremony will include remarks from EDPNC CEO Christopher Chung, the Secretary of Commerce, and the Governor. Light refreshments will be served afterward at the reception, where guests will have th...
Admission	Free
Image	 Ribbon cutting actual.jpg
Reviewer Email	nick.parker@visitnc.com
Address	15000 Weston Parkway

	City, **Cary** (1217)
Zip	27513
Contact	Nick Parker
Business Phone	919.447.7777
Business Email	nick.parker@visitnc.com
Website	https://edpnc.com *(200 OK)*
Facebook Link	https://www.facebook.com/NCEconomicDevelopment/ *(200 OK)*
Twitter Link	https://twitter.com/edpnc *(200 OK)*

Category

1. Area > Piedmont > Raleigh, Durham & the Triangle (2084)
2. Audience > State (1164)
3. Events & Festivals > Other Events & Festivals (1003)

Date

1. *January 22, 2015 1:00 pm - January 22, 2015 6:00 pm*

Note: Ribbon cutting begins at 2 pm. Refreshments will be served at 4 pm.

2. *January 23, 2015 9:00 am - January 23, 2015 6:00 pm*

Note: Tours available throughout the day.

Location

Location 1

(35.8163319, -78.81406249999998)

Meta

An example of an Event listing with several errors in need of attention:

(Event)

×

Museum of Nonsense Weekly Charity Gala

Published: Feb 16, 2018 11:59 am

Content

Id	67683
Uuid	f380a10e-1339-11e8-9675-842b2b5d58a5
Workgroup Id	EDPNC + LGA + Outpost (41)
Title	Museum of Nonsense Weekly Charity Gala
Summary	It's a weekly charity gala.
Slug	museum-of-nonsense-weekly-charity-gala
Shortcode	TaQN
Live	Feb 16, 2018 12:00 pm
Expires	Jan 1, 3000 12:00 am
Description	With things. And stuff.
Admission	Maybe?
Image	fake event logo.jpg
Reviewer Email	nick.parker@visitnc.com
Address	15000 Weston Parkway

	City, **Cary** (1217)
Zip	27513
Business Phone	919.447.7777
Business Phone Alt	919.447.7777
Toll Free Phone Us	919.447.7777
Toll Free Phone International	919.447.7777
Business Email	dont.email@this
Booking Email	dont.email@this
Website	dumbideas.fakeurls.net *(200 OK)*
Booking Website	dumbideas.fakeurls.net *(200 OK)*
Facebook Link	nonsensemuseum
Twitter Link	@nonsensemuseum

Category

1. Area > Piedmont (1144)
2. Audience > International (1162)
3. Events & Festivals > Animal Events & Shows (981)
4. Events & Festivals > Beer Events (1983)
5. Events & Festivals > Children's Events (986)
6. Events & Festivals > Food Events (993)
7. Events & Festivals > Holiday Events (995)
8. Events & Festivals > Literary Fairs, Lectures & Events (997)
9. Events & Festivals > Other Events & Festivals (1003)
10. Events & Festivals > Wine Events (1010)

Date

1. *February 16, 2018 9:00 am - December 31, 2018 6:00 pm*

Note: Runs every week of the year on alternating Thursdays and Fridays.

Location

Location 1

Visitor Information

This category encompasses all North Carolina destination marketing organizations. The Visitor Information listing should be viewed as the entity to contact for area visitor information to assist a potential visitor in planning a trip. Designated county contacts are responsible for maintaining their own listings with up-to-date contact information.