



Where History Meets the Waterfront

Set at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent rivers, New Bern pairs 300 years of American history with a lively riverfront, a buzzing food and drink scene, and a walkable downtown made for exploring.

Founded in 1710, New Bern was North Carolina's first colonial capital and the birthplace of Pepsi-Cola. Today, the town wears its history well. Tree-lined streets lead to boutique hotels, craft cocktail bars and art galleries set inside restored 18th- and 19th-century buildings, with something new to discover around every corner. Out on the water, paddleboards, kayaks and sunset cruises glide along the same rivers that shaped the town's past. New Bern helped write America's story, and it's still adding new chapters, one walkable block at a time.



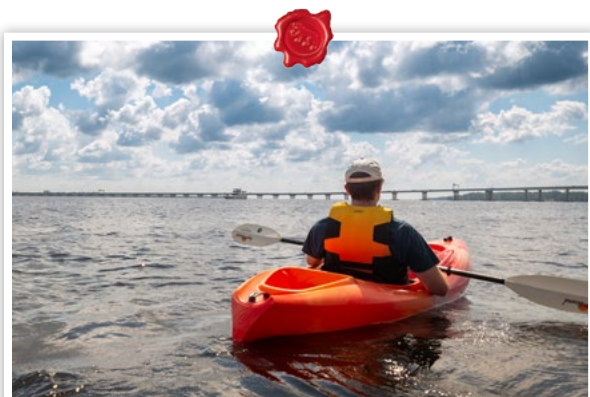
QUICK FACTS

- Founded in 1710 and named for Bern, Switzerland (keep an eye out for the colorful bear sculptures around town)
- North Carolina's first colonial capital and home of Tryon Palace
- Birthplace of Pepsi-Cola, first mixed as "Brad's Drink" in 1893
- Longtime home of bestselling author Nicholas Sparks and the setting of several of his novels
- Ten self-guided walking tours, including the African American Heritage Trail
- A year-round events calendar celebrating coastal cuisine, local makers, art, culture, history and everything in between

HISTORY MEETS THE PRESENT

America's 250th in North Carolina's First Capital

Few places bring America's founding story to life like New Bern, the riverfront town that served as North Carolina's first colonial capital. At [Tryon Palace](#), costumed interpreters and formal gardens set the scene, while hands-on galleries at the [North Carolina History Center](#) make the past feel personal for all ages. Beyond the palace gates, ten self-guided walking tours, including the African American Heritage Trail, pass Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival and Victorian landmarks on streets laid out more than 300 years ago. It's history on your own schedule, with no crowds, no long lines and plenty of photo-worthy stops along the way.



LIFE ON THE RIVERS

Paddle, Pedal, Unwind

The rivers that made New Bern a colonial port now make it a waterfront playground. Rent a paddleboard or kayak and see the historic waterfront from the water, then swap the paddle for a golden-hour cruise as the sun sets over the Neuse. Just outside town, Croatan National Forest offers hiking trails, birding and quiet creeks to explore, while the East Coast Greenway brings cyclists straight into the historic district. Everything is close, easy and unhurried, which is exactly the point.



OLD BUILDINGS, NEW TABLES

From the Original Pepsi to Craft Cocktails

Start with an ice-cold Pepsi at the soda counter where Caleb Bradham first mixed “Brad’s Drink,” then let downtown’s food and drink scene set the rest of the itinerary. Cocktail bars such as The James Drinkery and The Pour House 222 shake up craft drinks in buildings dating to around 1900, and Compass Rose at the Tryon Riverfront Inn serves dinner with river views. With patios, chef-driven plates and late-night spots all within a few blocks, New Bern proves history tastes even better with a modern twist.

STAY STEPS FROM EVERYTHING

Check Into History

In New Bern, some of the most memorable places to stay come with a backstory. [The Harvey](#), a restored 1700s riverfront landmark, earned a North Carolina Main Street Award of Merit for Best Adaptive Reuse for turning a historic building into a place to gather, dine and stay. The [Tryon Riverfront Inn](#), part of the Tapestry Collection by Hilton, puts guests right on the water and steps from downtown, while historic bed-and-breakfasts and local marinas welcome travelers arriving by car or by boat. Park once, and the whole town is within walking distance.



PULLED FROM THE PAGES

A Real-Life Storybook Setting

Bestselling author Nicholas Sparks has long called New Bern home, and fans can trace the real places behind his novels on a [self-guided walking tour of downtown](#). The route works as a ready-made date-night itinerary, with riverfront dinners, historic inns and evening strolls beneath centuries-old oaks. It’s a storybook weekend with no plot twists required.

MAKE ROOM ON YOUR CALENDAR

There’s Always Something Happening

From the street-fair buzz of MumFest in October to Arts in April and the monthly ArtWalk, when galleries and shops stay open late, New Bern gives visitors a reason to come back every season. Festivals, performances and community celebrations keep the calendar full between the signature events. For current happenings, visit the events page [online](#).



Melissa Riggle, Executive Director of Visit New Bern, is available for interviews on New Bern’s history, riverfront lifestyle, dining scene and visitor trends. Visit New Bern can help with hosted media visits and itinerary planning, and it offers high-resolution photos and video through the online [press room](#).

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