

OCRACOKE ISLAND · NORTH CAROLINA

You don't have to go very far to feel very far away.

Welcome to Ocracoke

Ocracoke is the Outer Banks island you have to make an effort to reach—there is no bridge, only ferry, boat or small plane. That isolation is part of what has kept it different. The village sits beside miles of protected Cape Hatteras National Seashore, with a working waterfront, locally owned businesses and generations of maritime tradition still shaping daily life. It is where Blackbeard met his end, where North Carolina's oldest operating lighthouse still stands, and where the Ocracoke Banker Ponies remain part of the island's story. For journalists, the angles go well beyond the beach: ferry culture, foodways and oysters, dark skies, coastal conservation, maritime history, outdoor adventure, island characters and what it really takes to live at the end of the road.

BY THE NUMBERS

2×

America's #1 beach, per Dr. Beach (2007, 2022)

1823

North Carolina's oldest operating lighthouse

18,786

Ocracoke Express riders in 2025, up 13%

0

Stoplights in the village

STORIES WORTH THE FERRY RIDE

The Jolly Roger comes home

For six years after Hurricane Dorian flooded it in 2019, one of Silver Lake's best-loved corners sat closed. In June, Greenville's ABC Family reopened the Jolly Roger in a new two-story building. When it reopened, the kitchen sold out of food.

Eastern NC · Storm recovery · Food

An old inn becomes the island's front porch

The Ocracoke Preservation Society bought the Island Inn in 2018 to save it. This fall, the restored inn and its garden are scheduled to open as the Ocracoke Commons Visitor & Cultural Center, a gathering place for islanders and visitors alike.

Historic preservation · Community · Culture

The watermen who bought their fish house

When the island's last fish house went up for sale in 2006, about two dozen watermen organized to keep it. It still takes in the local catch, including O'Cock Oysters farmed in the Pamlico Sound. The October Working Watermen's Festival and winter oyster roasts are the time to meet them.

Foodways · Coastal economy · People

Where it's still "hoi toide"

O'cockers and dingbatters, mommuck and meehonkey. NC State linguists have studied the Ocracoke Brogue for decades, and Walt Wolfram says it could fade within a generation or two. The speakers are still here to hear it from.

NC culture · Language · Radio and podcast

16 miles nobody could build on

The beach sits inside Cape Hatteras National Seashore with no houses in sight. Shelling, surf fishing and kayaking, and Portsmouth's abandoned village a boat ride across the inlet.

Public lands · Outdoors · Photography



What's New in 2026

Jolly Roger Pub & Marina

Reopened in June in a new two-story building with two bars, a pet-friendly patio and dock-and-dine service. Open daily, year-round.

Ocracoke Commons Visitor & Cultural Center

Scheduled to open this fall at the restored Island Inn, with a public garden.

Dingbatters Smokehouse

A new smokehouse in the former Plum Pointe Kitchen.

New food trucks

El Mariachi and Fire It Up BBQ are new this year, and Hart's Hot Dog Hut has moved to a truck beside Island Ragpicker.

Silver Lake Motel & Inn

Being renovated by the owners of the Jolly Roger.

Ocracoke Express

The passenger ferry's eighth summer. It carried 18,786 riders in 2025, its best year since 2022.

WHERE ISLANDERS EAT

Pony Island Restaurant, breakfast since 1959 · Howard's Pub, known for oysters · The Flying Melon, Southern and Creole · The Back Porch · Dajio · S'MacNally's on Silver Lake · Ocracoke Oyster Company · 1718 Brewing, named for the year Blackbeard died

GETTING HERE

Hatteras (vehicle)	About an hour · Free · First come, first served
Ocracoke Express	70 min into the village · \$15 round trip · Mid-May to early Sept.
Cedar Island	2 hr 15 min · \$15 per vehicle
Swan Quarter	2 hr 30 min · \$15 per vehicle

Reservations recommended on toll routes and the Express: 1-800-BY-FERRY

Key Dates

FALL 2026

Oct 10	Working Watermen's Festival
Oct 30–31	Blackbeard's Pirate Jamboree
Early Nov	Latino Festival de Ocracoke
Nov 27	Parade of Boats
Late Nov–Dec	Oyster roasts at the Fish House

2027

April	Waterfowl & Decoy Festival
May	British Cemetery Ceremony
Early June	Ocracoke Fig Festival
July 4	Parade and fireworks over the harbor
Aug 6	Ocracoke Fig Festival
Early Sept	Ocracoke Seafood Festival

2027 dates follow past years; organizers confirm them during the year.

MORE ANGLES

Dark skies · WWII on the Outer Banks · The 1950s mounted Scout troop · The island microgrid

MEDIA CONTACT

I can set up hosted visits, introduce you to watermen, innkeepers and longtime islanders, and help with photos, B-roll and ferry logistics.

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