



JUST OFF
I-95
— YET —

into the wild

Annual Report
2019-2020



Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau
260 Premier Blvd | Roanoke Rapids, NC 27870

VISITHALIFAX.COM

ABOUT US

The Halifax County Tourism Development Authority does business as the Halifax County Convention and Visitors Bureau



Lori R. Medlin, CDME
President/CEO

(HCCVB) and is the Destination Marketing Organization for Halifax County, NC. The HCCVB is dedicated to promoting Halifax County as a visitor destination. We also represent and support the interests of the local tourism industry and promote public awareness of the importance of tourism.

Our funding is primarily provided by a 5% room tax paid by visitors while staying overnight in accommodations. No local tax dollars are used in our efforts.

In addition to the county-wide 5% occupancy tax, the City of Roanoke Rapids adopted a 1% tax that is dedicated to the marketing and tourism development of that city. These funds are administered by the HCCVB.

The HCCVB is managed by a 12 member Board of Directors appointed by the Halifax County Commissioners. The Halifax County Tourism Development Authority



Susan C. Wilhelm
Executive Assistant

was formed in 1987 by enabling legislation that created the room tax.

We hope you will agree that the HCCVB team and board have a strong belief in the power of the tourism industry to be a driving economic force for Halifax County.

We invite you to engage with the HCCVB staff. We are always at the ready to build our community

through tourism. Visitor dollars support jobs, drive demand for commercial development and improve the quality of life in Halifax County.



Rich Lithgow
Director of Technology

OUR MISSION

To promote the growth of tourism in Halifax County

Board of Directors

We thank our board for their support.

Percilla West, Chairperson
Jay Carlisle, Vice Chairman
Tina Gregory, Secretary
Yvonne Thompson, Treasurer
Sandra Bryant
Curtis Wynn

Jessica Hedgepeth
Brent Lubbock
Cathy Scott, Ex-Officio
Arthur Whitehead, Ex-Officio
Mary Duncan, Ex-Officio
Ginny Lewis, Ex-Officio

2019 VISITOR IMPACT FOR HALIFAX COUNTY

County Spending by Domestic Visitors Increases by 5% Percent to \$106.51 Million

Visitors to and within Halifax County spent **\$106.52** million in 2019, an increase of 5% from 2018. The data comes from an annual study commissioned by Visit North Carolina, a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina.

Tourism impact highlights for 2019:

- The travel and tourism industry directly employees more than 580 and indirectly employees over 1,000 people in Halifax County, NC.
- Total payroll generated by the tourism industry in 2019 was over **\$20 million**.
- Employment in the Tourism Sector was up 2% in 2019
- State tax revenue generated in Halifax County totaled **\$6.5 million** through state sales and excise taxes, and taxes on personal and corporate income. Approximately **\$2.58 million** in local taxes were generated from sales and property tax revenue from travel-generated and travel-supported businesses.
- Visitor Spending, in Halifax County, saved each taxpayer **\$177.44** in taxes in 2019!

These statistics are from the “Economic Impact of

Travel on North Carolina Counties 2019,” which can be accessed at partners.visitnc.com/economic-impact-studies. The study was prepared for Visit North Carolina by the U.S. Travel Association.



“We are delighted to report that 2019 was a record-breaking year for Tourism Spending in Halifax County!” Realizing the potential of the tourism industry in Halifax County is our goal. Our community depends on these dollars, and we are committed to growing their impact!” – Lori Medlin, President & CEO of Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau

MESSAGE FROM CEO & CHAIRPERSON

Our goal at the Halifax County Convention & Visitors Bureau is to realize the potential of our tourism industry and the community that depends on it. Delivering the marketing message that Halifax County is an excellent stopover point for travelers along the I-95 corridor is something we do every day. We also tell our story and make the case that Halifax County is the perfect destination for a long weekend getaway from the triangle area or anywhere along the Mid-Atlantic. We are an unforgettable vacation destination!

2020 began with an upswing in spending, and we were prepared to welcome a record number of visitors to our county.

March 2020 stopped us in our tracks! COVID-19 has caused an unprecedented crisis for the tourism industry. Tourist arrivals in North Carolina are projected to plunge by 60 to 80 percent in 2020, and tourism spending is not likely to return to pre-crisis levels until 2024.

North Carolina's tourism sector has severely declined since the COVID-19 pandemic sent the nation and state economies into a tailspin. Marlise Taylor, the director of tourism research for Visit North Carolina reports that "it is estimated that North Carolina has suffered a loss of about \$6.8 billion in travel spending from the beginning of the pandemic. The \$6.8 billion loss is a 57.9% decline in travel spending between March 1 and August 1 of 2020 compared to March 1 and August 1 of 2019. Local, state, and federal tax collections from travel spending are down \$871 million, Taylor said. Weekly travel spending rebounded

some during the summer, but as of August 1, it was still 42% below last year's numbers".

Halifax County has fared somewhat better than the state average. The HCCVB estimates that our hotel's revenues are down 36.25% March through August 2020. Actual Halifax County occupancy tax collections are down 25.2% March through August 2020. The losses in our hotels were offset by Lake Gaston rental revenues that has risen to an above-average rate. Vacation rental property is one sector of North Carolina's battered tourism industry that is racing back.

While many American travelers have felt positive emotions around the reopening of the economy, anxiety and frustration remain present.

Surveys have been conducted to measure consumer sentiment around travel to North Carolina. A survey of 1,201 people conducted Aug. 7 - 9 found 46.5% have no plans for leisure travel the rest of the year. This was down from more than 50% saying that the prior week. Among people that have decided not to travel because of the coronavirus, 70.5% said discounts and price cuts wouldn't change their minds.

The Halifax County CVB has left no stone unturned in an effort to mitigate the extreme effects of COVID 19 on our tourism industry.



COVID-19

We met the crisis head-on by reaching out to our partners in the hotel, restaurant, and attraction industry and sharing any and all assistance resources with them. We created videos and digital content to encourage businesses to stay open and conform to the new COVID regulations.

The HCCVB began managing our message and expenses immediately upon learning of the expected shutdowns and limits on travel. We moved our ad buys and canceled where possible. We have been able to keep our staff intact and postponed the hiring of a new staff member that had been budgeted before the crisis. All travel was canceled and the season of Zoom meetings and endless webinars on occupancy levels, travel sentiment, and forecasts for travel from many of our research partners began.

We partnered with the Halifax County Economic Development Commission to contract with The Retail Coach to watch traffic patterns into our community. Hotels, dine in restaurants, and drive-through restaurants and retail establishments were monitored weekly.

Percilla West & Lori Medlin



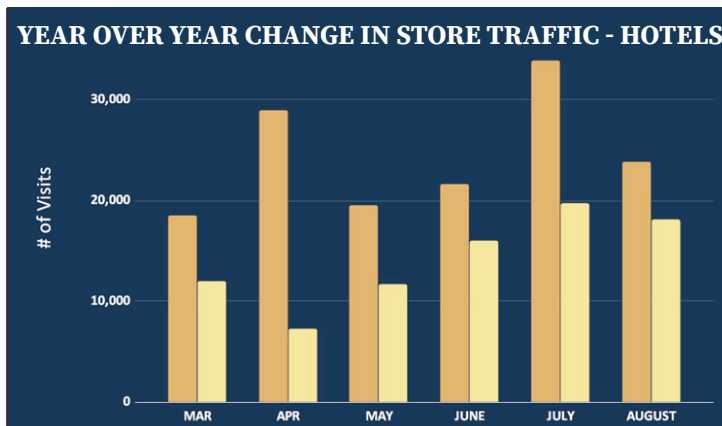
Digital



Print



Video



Month	Year		% Change
	2019	2020	
March	18,523	11,943	-36%
April	28,965	7,205	-75%
May	19,508	11,704	-40%
June	21,582	15,979	-26%
July	33,874	19,677	-42%
August	23,779	18,131	-24%

COUNT ON ME NC & BEYOND

We launched "Count On Me NC" in Halifax County. This initiative provides training and certification to businesses to help train their employees on conducting operations with the coronavirus threat. Customers can look up these certified businesses at CountOnMeNC.org.

Beyond immediate measures to support the tourism sector, we are also shifting to develop recovery measures. These include monitoring the lift of travel restrictions, restoring traveler confidence, and rethinking the tourism sector for the future. All billboards under contract will stay in the budget. Our marketing messages will target travel on the I-95 corridor and within a 90-mile radius for day trips for shopping, weekend trips, and exploring our rural landscapes and recreation attractions. We have increased our promotion of Lake Gaston rental opportunities in Halifax County, and this market is on the rise. We have been awarded \$72,000.00 in marketing credit grant dollars from VisitNC and are already in the storyboard phase

of creating a new Visit Halifax County video! We were awarded \$12,000.00 in grants from Our State Magazine for additional advertising presence in print and digital. We have contracted for new research on travel to Halifax County. Through these grants we have placed numerous print and digital ads to make sure we capture every tourism dollar available for Halifax County.

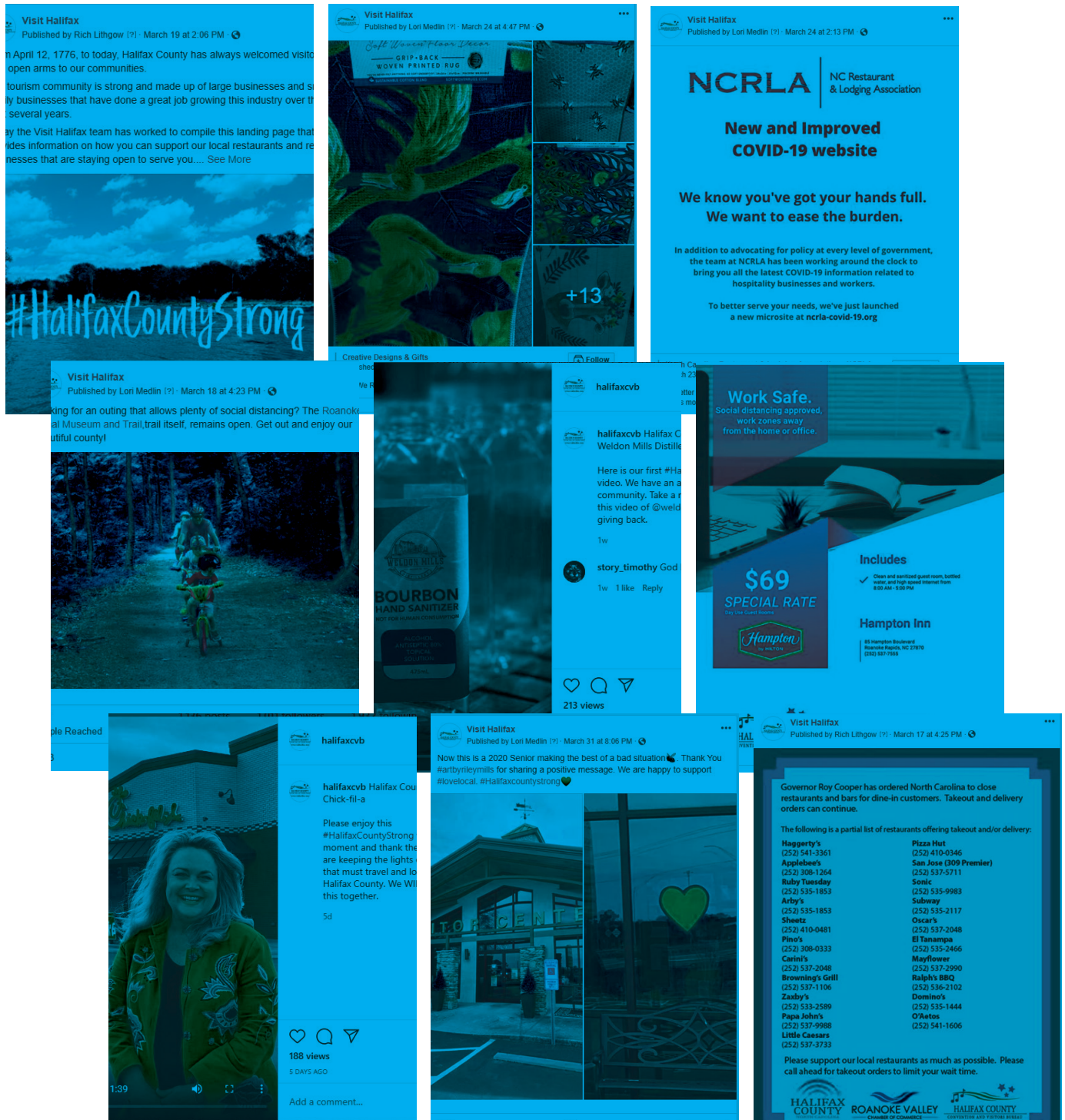
It's complicated, and planning a marketing message as we re-open Halifax County -- is very challenging. We are also ready to pull back and adjust our sails if needed. More testing equals more positive results; The public's willingness to wear masks or practice social distancing and the destination feeling positive about welcoming visitors who may bring COVID-19 to their doors continues to affect tourism.

We know this recovery will take years, but we are hopeful that with our location as a drive market and our attributes of being a rural area, we will weather the crisis and come back stronger than ever. After all, we are #HalifaxCountyStrong!



VISITHALIFAX NEVER WENT DARK ON SOCIAL

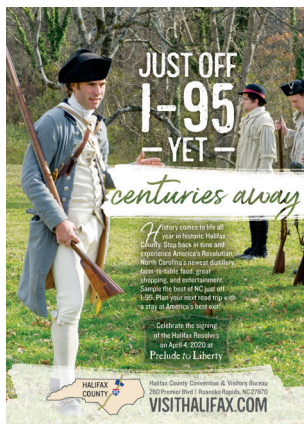
From promoting what is "open" to creating a #HalifaxCountyStrong series on Instagram TV.



DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATION

Social media continues to be a priority in marketing our destination. Being able to share engaging Halifax County experiences with our 12,772 followers daily provides an exponential value. We answer the question, "What's happening in Halifax County?" by sharing user-generated and in-house photos, videos,

events, links, and more. In addition to Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, and Twitter, we maintain a Youtube channel to highlight videos from the area in playlists which added 8,215 impressions to our reach. As video becomes increasingly popular across all social channels, we are increasing the number of clips we share and create.

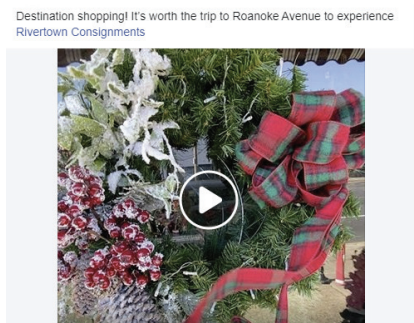


Our State Magazine Series



HuntFishNC.com Website Refresh

	65,841 engagements
	31.3% new followers
	22,303 average impressions
	125,997 tweet impressions



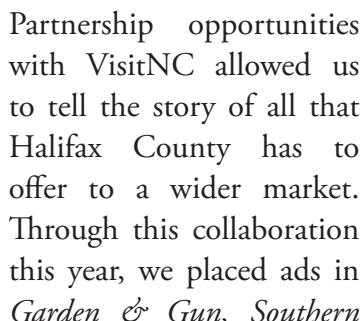


★ Count ON ME NC ★

EXITS 171 & 173

WWW.VISITHALIFAX.COM

LAMAR



Fisheries Guide, North Carolina Field Trips and NC Heritage Guide continue to offer a productive way to reach new visitors.



The HCCVB Print Promotions reached over 9,630,948 Combined Readers

VISITHALIFAX.COM

 Please call ahead before attending our events as they may be affected due to governor and NCDHHS's recommendation regarding COVID-19

#halifaxcountystrong



As Halifax County and the nation battle the COVID-19 pandemic we have compiled resources to help our partners through this difficult time.

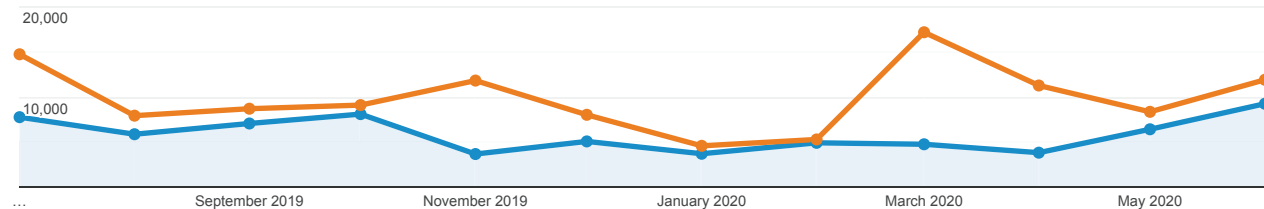
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[Click for COVID-19 Current Information](#)

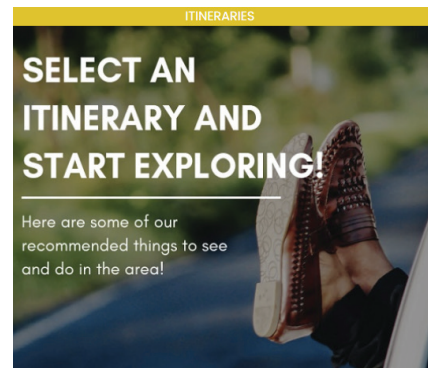
Jul 1, 2019 - Jun 30, 2020:  Users 67,931
Jul 1, 2018 - Jun 30, 2019:  Users 116,481



Napoleon Hill Murals Tour
visithalifax.com/murals

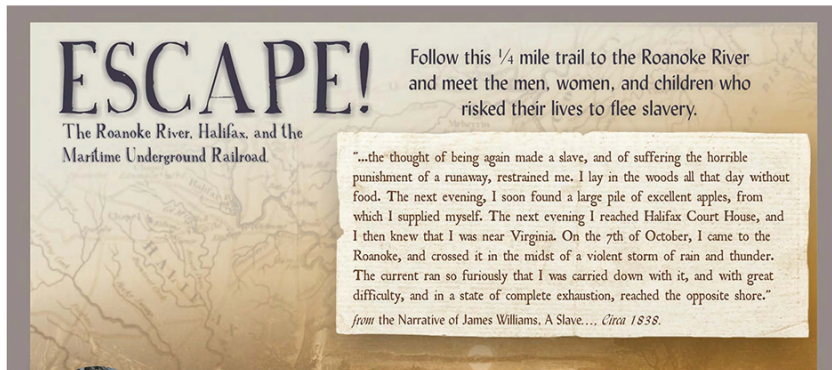


Roanoke Valley Rocks Tour
visithalifax.com/rocks



Discover Halifax County Communities Itineraries
visithalifax.com/discover

PARTNERSHIPS



Halifax Underground RR
@HalifaxUndergroundRR · Nonprofit Organization

The Halifax County Underground RR project was handed to the official non-profit organization this year. They are a strong organization committed to keeping the story alive.



The Spirit of Hospitality Award is given periodically to members of the tourism industry exhibiting excellent customer service.



Halifax 2026 - We began the planning process of welcoming the Nation to Halifax in 2026 with the historic site's support groups.

Attraction Visitation

Medoc Mountain State Park	127,600
Sylvan Heights Bird Park	36,559
Roanoke Canal Museum & Trail	42,440
Historic Halifax	18,840



Dog Run: 35,811 - 98 daily average
Visitor Center: 21,098 - 58 daily average

The City of Roanoke Rapids levies a 1% occupancy tax in addition to the 5% countywide tax in Halifax County. The HCCVB administers these funds separately for the City of Roanoke Rapids. This year we were able to install a new wayfinding sign package for the Roanoke Canal Trail and contribute to funding museum operations and trail maintenance. We contributed to the rebuilding of the tennis courts at the T J Davis Recreation Center and funded an enhanced security presence at our hotels. All this, along with an impressive digital, print, and outdoor ad campaign serves to increase visitor spending in Roanoke Rapids.



Roanoke Canal Trail Signage Additions



Carolina Playbook - Roanoke Rapids Sporting Venues

Our State Magazine



Outdoor Advertising Campaign



Certified Retirement Community

CITY OF ROANOKE RAPIDS

2019-2020 OCCUPANCY TAX EXPENDITURES

Roanoke Canal Museum - **\$8,000**
 Roanoke Canal Trail Maintenance - **\$15,000**
 Roanoke Avenue Promotions - **\$1,003**
 Roanoke Rapids Marketing - **\$49,000**
 Interstate Lighting + Admin - **\$15,135**
 Roanoke Rapids Hotel Logo Billboards - **\$27,000**
 TJ Davis Tennis Courts - **\$20,000**
 Hotel Security - **\$18,824**

Hotel Coupon Books



TJ Davis Tennis Courts



Interstate 95 Exchange Lighting



USA Today Travel Guide

Hotel Logo Billboards

SPECIAL PROJECTS



Sponsored banner program for Scotland Neck to embrace Sylvan Heights as a resource to drive visitors.



Weldon tourism development plan.



Partnered with Halifax Economic Development Commission, County of Halifax and Town of Weldon towards securing an Amtrak passenger station in Weldon.



Partnered with North Carolina Wildlife to approve a canoe outtake by the Highway 301 bridge in Weldon



Continued the Roanoke Valley Rocks Program with the planned launch of 12 more "fish," bringing the grand total to 62 throughout Halifax County.



Improved signage on the Roanoke Canal Trail

TOURS FOR EACH HALIFAX COUNTY COMMUNITY

visithalifax.com/discover

SELECT AN ITINERARY AND START EXPLORING!

Here are some of our recommended things to see and do in the area!



City of Roanoke Rapids

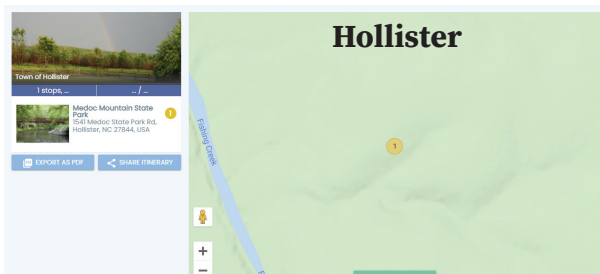
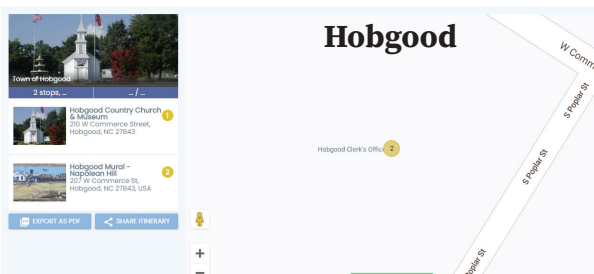
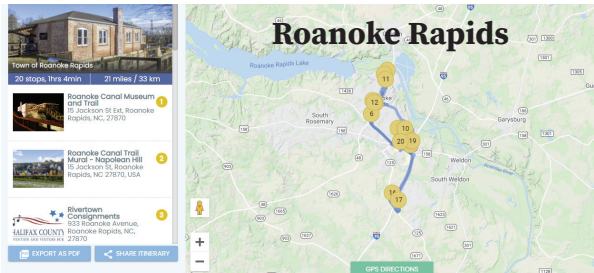
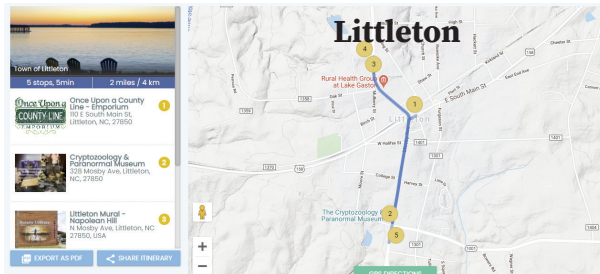
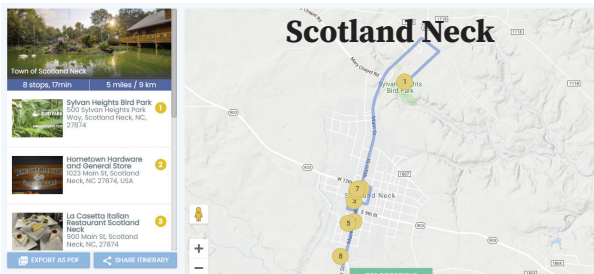
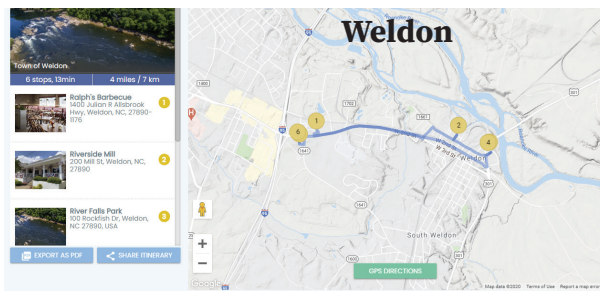


Town of Enfield



Town of Hobgood

We continue to work with each of our small towns to market their assets and to develop new tourism-related product.





Weldon Mills Distillery



Visitor Center Dog Run

JUST OFF
I-95
—YET—

*centuries
always*

Welcome to North Carolina! Roanoke Rapids & Weldon have everything you need to experience southern hospitality at its finest. The first major Exit off I-95 as you enter NC from VA, offering 1200 hotel rooms, mouth-watering dining, and rich history. Recharge, refuel, and refresh at America's Best Exit!



Local Eats



Roanoke Canal Museum & Trail

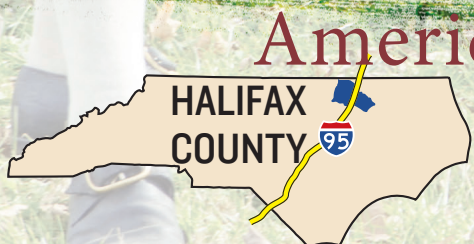


1200 Hotel Rooms



Roanoke Rapids Theatre

Historic Halifax



America's Best Exit

ROANOKE RAPIDS / WELDON
WWW.EXIT173.COM