

Ferry Crossing Makes Sure Cure For Spring Fever

BY SUSAN USHER
Have a bad case of spring fever? A refreshing ferry boat trip on the Cape Fear River between Southport and Fort Fisher might just be the cure. Sit back and relax in climate-controlled comfort in the passenger

lounge of the *Gov. Daniel Russell* or the *Sandy Graham*, or join the youngsters in feeding sea gulls from the stern. Either way you're in for a treat, an inexpensive getaway guaranteed to soothe, entertain and educate. Look closely at the panoramic

view and you'll see images that span the history of the Lower Cape Fear region. As you leave the ferry dock near Southport you may spot picturesque Price's Creek Lighthouse. Dating from 1849, it helped guide Confederate blockade runners successfully navigate New Inlet. Today the short brick tower stands alongside the docks of the Archer Daniels Midland plant.

Also visible along the route are two other lighthouses. The tall, three-toned Oak Island Lighthouse continues to cast its high beam for navigation. "Old Baldy," visible on Bald Head Island, is undergoing renovation. It was the second of three lighthouses built on the island and the only one that remains. Its brickwork came for the first tower.

At the tip of Oak Island, near the Oak Island Lighthouse, you'll see the outline of Fort Caswell. The fort changed hands four times without bloodshed during the Civil War period. Later the fort served national military defense needs through World War II. Today the North Carolina Baptist Assembly operates a year-round retreat and conference center there.

The crossing also provides a view of dredge spoil islands and other nesting sites for colonial

SUMMER SCHEDULE

Leaves Southport	Leaves Ft. Fisher
8:00 AM.....	8:50 AM
8:50 AM.....	9:40 AM
9:40 AM.....	10:30 AM
10:30 AM.....	11:20 AM
11:20 AM.....	12:10 PM
12:10 PM.....	1:00 PM
1:00 PM.....	1:50 PM
1:50 PM.....	2:40 PM
2:40 PM.....	3:30 PM
3:30 PM.....	4:20 PM
4:20 PM.....	5:10 PM
5:10 PM.....	6:00 PM
6:00 PM.....	6:50 PM

shore birds such as the brown pelican and the least tern.

Also seen are the intake canal screens that lead to Carolina Power & Light Co.'s Nuclear Power Plant. Closer to the Fort Fisher ferry landing, tall yellow cranes come into view on the left at the Military Ocean Terminal at Sunny Point, the free world's largest distribution point for military hardware.

The ferry also figures prominently in the Cape Fear River Circle Tour, serving as alternative route linking several popular historic and recreational spots.

On the Brunswick County side

of the river these include Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site, Orton Plantation, the CP&L Visitors Center with its displays on Southport history and the power generation industry, and more. On the New Hanover County side of the river, popular destinations on U.S. 421 at Kure Beach are the state-operated North Carolina Aquarium the Fort Fisher State Historic Site and the *USS North Carolina* Battleship Memorial near the Cape Fear River Bridge.

This year the Southport-Fort Fisher crossing is moving to its summer operating schedule a month earlier than in the past, with no changes scheduled again until Nov. 1.

"With Easter falling in April and the N.C. Azalea Festival and the weather getting better, we think it warrants lengthening the summer schedule," said Earl Miller.

To reach the ferry crossing at Southport from the South Brunswick Islands, take U.S. 17 to Supply. Follow N.C. 211 (which becomes Howe Street) into Southport and turn left onto Moore Street. Follow it several miles to Ferry Road. Since the ferry doesn't take reservations, arrive well in advance of boarding.

To double-check on the schedule or to find out about accommodations and fees for larger vehicles, contact the ferry office at 1-919-457-6942.

The Southport-Fort Fisher Ferry accommodates cars, bicyclists and pedestrians. One-way fare is \$3 for a car or other vehicle 20 feet in length or less; \$6 for a vehicle or combination of vehicles from 20 feet up to and including 32 feet in length; \$1 for a bicyclist; and 50 cents for a pedestrian.



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