

The Outer Banks

By Cindy Sutton, CTC, Village Travel Shop



species of migratory birds and nesting and wintering waterfowl. Each of these refuges has established a Kuralt site to provide recreational opportunities. The roads are marked to help you find the sites. Nature trails on footpaths and boardwalks and observation platforms overlooking scenic visits make your visit even more enjoyable. There's no real route for the trail since each season offers a different kind of experience. Spring is good for songbird migration and fall brings thousands of ducks, geese and swans around the lakes and sounds.

I just returned from a weekend get-away trip to the Outer Banks. With time to spare as we drove back from Rodanthe through the Cape Hatteras National Seashore, we stopped at the Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge visitor center. The refuge is home to over 400 species of birds, and multitudes of amphibians, reptiles and mammals. Established in 1938 to save the declining snow goose population, the refuge is the winter home to approximately 3000 of them. It is also one of over 500 national wildlife refuges nationwide. Pea Island is also one of eleven national wildlife refuges and a national fish hatchery which together are also known as the Charles Kuralt Trail. All of these wild lands are in the mid-Atlantic coastal plain of North Carolina and Virginia, and are an easy drive from New Bern.

The closest to us is the Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge where fall and winter months bring thousands of waterfowl during migration. There is also Mattamuskeet National Wildlife Refuge overlooking North Carolina's largest natural lake. I've been saying for years that I want to go see the swans there, and someday soon I hope to actually do that. In the winter months, thousands of Tundra Swans, Canada and Snow Geese, pintails, black ducks, and mallards are seen on the lake, as well as less numerous species of waterfowl. Osprey nest in low Cypress trees near the water's edge, and it is not unusual to see a Bald Eagle circling overhead or resting in a tree a safe distance from human traffic. There are more than 200 species of birds around Lake Mattamuskeet for part or all of each year. Near Williamston is the Roanoke River National Wildlife Refuge which includes bottomland hardwood forests, important to other

We finished our "wildlife tour" at the northern tip of the islands past Corolla. The pavement ends on Hwy 12, but you can drive on the beach heading north if you have a 4WD vehicle. In Corolla are several tour companies that provide both jeep tours and SUV tours of this area. On the search for the wild horses of Corolla, we signed on for our tour. Just to be driving along the beach was such an amazing treat... There are petrified tree trunks in one area where the sound used to be located. Then it was off over a dune to see the homes that have been built there. I just can't imagine the labor of building without roads. It's definitely an entirely different world there among the dunes. We finally found two young stallions munching on the tender new marsh grasses near a live oak tree forest. They didn't pay any attention to us at all. We got to see another small family of horses who had found fresh green lawn beside the picnic shelter that's just been added to the area. Our guide said that in the heat of summer, the horses often hide out underneath the homes. It was a truly unique experience, and one that I'll remember for a very long time. Even the drive back down the beach was memorable since we ran out of gas quite close to the waves (with the tide coming in). After a short wait, the island tow truck came and brought us gas...and off we went again over the soft sand. Definitely a "must do" for your next trip to the Outer Banks! More information at cindy@villagetravelshop.com.

Hurricane Season Preparations

Director of Emergency Services Bill Matthias reminds us that it is that time again - to make plans, get prepared and keep an eye on the Weather Channel.

- Locate your re-entry pass. If you can't find it, go to the Public Safety building to obtain one. Renters also need to be mindful of the necessity of a re-entry pass.

- If you will need special assistance during an evacuation, go to the Public Safety building to sign up now.

- Identify where you will go when you have to evacuate.

- Prepare a "grab and go" box with your important papers, insurance policies, house inventory and other documentation in the event your house is damaged.

- Test-run your generator.

- If you have to evacuate, prepare a disaster supply kit for seven days.

- Allow one gallon of drinking water per person per day. Do NOT reuse milk or juice jugs to store water.

- Take your current medications, extra glasses, extra batteries for any devices that you use. If you use oxygen, be sure of an adequate supply.

- Stock up on high-energy, non-perishable food and include a manual can opener.

- Have a portable radio tuned to PKS Community Radio 1610AM and include extra batteries.

- Make up a sanitation kit consisting of toilet paper, alcohol wipes, anti-bacterial hand cleanser, bleach, soap, rubber gloves and trash bags.

- Have blankets or sleeping bags.

- Take your cell phone and charger.

- Identify a person as a contact so that you can communicate your whereabouts and status.

- Secure your home and remove any loose items outdoors that might turn into a projectile in the wind. Turn off or remove and secure the propane tank for the gas grill.

- Fill up your vehicle's gas tank and get cash. The bridges do not close to traffic going OFF the island but travel at your own risk if you do not evacuate when the order is issued.

- Heed the curfew warnings because they are imposed for safety.

If you have pets,

- Have proper identification including immunization and rabies records.

- Use a carrier cage, collar with identification and leash for each animal.

- Take an ample supply of food and water plus dishes and include any medications.

- Take old newspapers, litter box and kitty litter and trash bags for cleanup.

- Since pets are not allowed in public shelters and many hotels and motels do not allow pets, check ahead. A good place to check is www.petswelcome.com

If in doubt whether to stay or go, go. If the town's emergency services announce that they are leaving the island that is a good indication that the storm is bad. Other things to factor into your decision - do you use medical equipment that requires power? Are you in an area that floods? Is the place structurally strong? Do you have hurricane shutters? If you are not comfortable with being isolated without electricity, water or emergency services for several days, then you should leave. Do not attempt to return to your home until the all-clear is issued.

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