

## Spend some time at one of North Carolina's ocean piers

BY ALAN HODGE  
Special to The Herald

One of the Carolinas' best coastal treats is to spend some time on an ocean pier. Whether your aim is to catch supper, or just stroll along with the surf pounding beneath your feet and the sea breezes in your hair, a walk on a pier means you've really arrived at the beach.

There are over 30 ocean piers scattered along the coasts of North and South Carolina. Some have been rebuilt several times after being damaged by hurricanes. All offer visitors a chance to try their fishing luck and do some serious people-watching while they're at it.

The great thing about pier fishing is you don't need a lot of fancy equipment. A stout rod of some sort with a reel, a few rigs with two-ounce or so lead weights and medium-sized hooks, bait, and a plastic bucket to hold your catch is all it takes.

Bait for basic pier fishing is usually either cut strips or chunks of mullet, blood worms, and shrimp. Piers generally have plenty of bait, and can even rent you a rod and reel outfit for a reasonable fee.

Attire for pier fishing depends on the weather and can range from next to nothing, to heavy coats, wool caps, and gloves. Whatever you do, wear a hat of some sort and sun block on the parts of your body you intend to expose to the sun.

Species that can be caught from a Carolina pier run the gamut of aquatic life. Over the years, folks have snagged everything you can think of out of the water. The most popular species are flounder, spot, croaker, bluefish, sea trout, and King macker-

el. There are 25 piers on the Tar Heel coast. Scattered from Kitty Hawk southward to Sunset Beach, these piers average around 700 feet in length. Rates for a day of fishing are in the \$6 range. Here's a tour of some piers in North Carolina.

The northernmost ocean pier in North Carolina is located at Kitty Hawk. This pier is 757 feet long, originally dated to 1953, and was just rebuilt last winter. Rates for fishing are \$6 for adults and \$4 for kids aged 7-12. The Kitty Hawk Pier also has a snack bar and tackle shop. The phone is 252-261-2772.

A couple of miles south of Kitty Hawk is Avalon Pier. This pier is 696 feet long, has a snack bar, bait shop and video games. Rates range from \$7 for adults to \$3.50 for kids 12 and under. Call 252-441-7494.

The Nags Head Fishing Pier is next along the North Carolina coast. Originally built in 1947, the 762-foot pier has been washed away three times by storms. Like the other piers, Nags Head Pier has restrooms, snacks, and a tackle shop. Fishing rates are the same as Avalon Pier. Dial 252-441-5141.

Also on the Outer Banks, Avon Fishing pier is unique in that it has a miniature golf course as an added attraction. For fishing, Avon Pier charges \$6 for adults and \$5 for kids. The pier is 756 feet long and has a nearby restaurant.

Leaving the Outer Banks, we come to the Triple SW Fishing Pier in Atlantic Beach. This 1,000 foot long pier was recently rebuilt. Triple S has an observation deck, a restaurant, bait shop, and equipment rentals. Cost to fish is \$6 for adults and \$4 for

those 12 and under.

Also at Atlantic Beach, Sportsman's Pier is 1,100 feet long and has the usual amenities. Rates are \$6 for adults and \$3 for kids 12 and under. The Sportsman's Pier also holds weekly Spanish mackerel tournaments. Call 252-726-3176.

Named for a wrecked Civil War ship that lies under the waves nearby, the Iron Steamer Fishing Pier at Pine Knoll Shore has a motel, showers, bait, and equipment rental. Fishing is \$5, and motel guests fish free.

Site of an annual King mackerel tournament, Bogue Inlet Pier at Emerald Island is 1,000 feet long and has campsites. Fishing at the pier is a flat rate of \$6 per person regardless of age. A snack bar and restrooms are also available.

Calling itself a "family pier" where no alcohol is allowed, Seaview Pier and Motel at Sneads Ferry is also 1,000 feet in length. Besides the motel, this pier rents equipment and has a bait shop. Kids 12 and under fish free, adults pay \$5.

Originally constructed in 1948 of steel, Surf City Ocean Pier in Surf City is currently 940 feet long and made of wood. Fishing rates at Surf City are \$6 for adults and free for children age 5 and under. This pier has a grill, bait shop, and equipment rentals.

One of the most unusual piers anywhere is the Jolly Roger Motel and Pier at Topsail Beach. Part of the pier was once used as a missile launch pad by the military. At 800 feet in length, Jolly Roger has the usual pier amenities of grill and equipment rentals.



Photo courtesy of NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development

Cost to fish is a \$9 for adults and \$4.50 for children under 14. Motel guests get a discount.

Long a Wrightsville Beach landmark, Johnnie Mercer's Pier is being rebuilt out of concrete—the first of its type on the coast. The plan is for the new concrete pier to open in August. Call 910-256-3785 to find out more.

Boasting a lounge where bands perform while folks do the Shag, the Carolina Beach Pier stretches 950 feet into the Atlantic. A grill and bar add to the pier's snack bar and bait shop. Cost to fish is \$6 for adults and \$4 for the kids five and under.

Down the coast about two miles from Carolina Beach is the

Kure Beach Pier. Built in 1923, this pier claims to be the oldest on the coast. Fishing is \$5 from the 712 foot length. Near the Kure Beach Pier is a huge block of concrete that marks the spot where the Dow Chemical Co. drew in seawater for its ethyl gasoline additive factory in World War II.

Yapuon Beach Pier on Oak Island is the spot where Charlottean Walter Maxwell landed a state record 1,152 pound tiger shark way back in 1966. Rates to try your own luck are \$6 for adults and \$3 for kids aged nine and under. The pier is 995 feet long.

Getting ready to add a two-story observation deck, Ocean

Crest Pier on Oak Island is 993 feet long and features a grocery store on site. Cost to fish there is \$5 flat rate.

The longest pier on Oak Island at 1,056 feet, Long Beach Pier offers free fishing to kids if they are accompanied by an adult. A grill, motel, bait shop and observation deck are other features.

This list is just a starting place for information on Carolina coast fishing piers. For more facts, Call the North Carolina Department of Tourism at 1-800-VISIT-NC, the South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism at 1-803-734-0122, or the chamber of commerce for the area you want to visit.

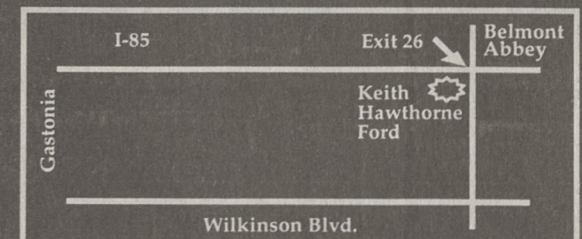
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