

# NewsLink

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**Fuel supply expected to take several days before returning to normal**

Gov. Pat McCrory announced yesterday (Tuesday) that Colonial Pipeline has completed construction and positioning of the bypass pipeline in Alabama, but it will still [take several days for the fuel delivery supply chain to return to normal](#) in North Carolina. While there are pockets of service stations that have experienced temporary shortages, many have received supplies and others have them scheduled.

The Call Center and N.C. Welcome Center staffs are telling people that while some stations have run out of fuel, visitors should be able to find gas throughout the state. In the short term, visitors should plan ahead to stop and re-fuel before getting too low. They should also expect longer lines and higher prices, but there haven't been any reports of entire areas being without gas.

**Visit NC joins Travel South USA China mission**

Last week, Visit North Carolina Executive Director Wit Tuttell and Partner & Industry Relations Director Heidi Walters joined representatives from four other southern states' tourism offices, CVBs and attractions in China. While in Beijing and Shanghai, meetings with media outlets and travel trade representatives introduced the southern USA for potential visitors. Visit NC has travel trade representation in China through a partner program with Travel South USA.



*Tuttell (seated right) meets with attendees*

Chinese visitors are the fastest growing segment of travel to the U.S. In the last five years they have moved from 8th to 5th in inbound visitation. From 2014 to 2015, visitation grew 21 percent and is expected to be 30 percent for this coming year. In North Carolina, China ranks 3rd in overall overseas visitation, but #1 in overseas spending. For more information about Visit North Carolina's international programs, contact [Heidi Walters](#) at (919) 447-7762.



## Visit NC promotes N.C. during U.S.-China Travel Leadership Summit

Wit Tuttell attended the [U.S.-China Travel Leadership Summit](#), a trade show and seminar hosted by Brand USA and the China National Travel Association, that was held Sept. 8-10 in Yinchuan. 2016 is also celebrated as U.S.-China Tourism

Year. The Tourism Year, led by the National Travel & Tourism Office at the U.S. Dept. of Commerce and the China National Tourism Administration, is designed to effectively position the United States and China for increased trade in travel services by focusing on three mutually beneficial areas: Enhanced travel and tourism experiences, enhanced cultural understanding and enhanced appreciation of natural resources.

## Social media takeover in Beaufort encourages "Arrrs!"

As part of #TalkLikeAPirateDay on Sept. 19, the social media team traveled to Beaufort to conduct a "Blackbeard takeover" of the Visit NC social media channels. Aside from being able to tap into conversations around a highly visible and talked about holiday, Visit NC also saw this as a good opportunity to highlight pirate lore and maritime history on the coast. It used a mix of pre-planned content written in pirate-speak to drive to owned stories on VisitNC.com. In addition, Visit NC used real-time video content to engage with people using the hashtag on Twitter and Instagram, including [one with actor Matthew Modine](#) and [another on Instagram](#) that prompted a comment back from the user.



When ya sail me seas we just call the Upside Down capsizin'. [@MatthewModine](#) #StrangerThings



## TRAC coming to Pender County region Oct. 13

On Oct. 13, tourism-related businesses in the Pender County region - including the surrounding counties - will have an opportunity to work with Visit North Carolina staff to learn about its research, development and marketing services, and discuss best practices in reaching travelers, the media and increasing tourism visitation and spending. Visit North Carolina's Tourism Resource Assistance Center (TRAC), a community-based training program designed to help small tourism-related businesses, will be held 10 am - 2 pm at Surf City Town Hall at 214 N. New River Drive in Surf City.



*A previous TRAC in Blowing Rock*

There is no charge to attend, no reservation is required, and there are no PowerPoint presentations. This is a *come-when-you-can/stay-as-long-as-you'd-like* event opportunity for all tourism-related businesses to meet one-on-one with program managers to discuss better ways to promote their property or event. TRAC brings

Visit North Carolina's program managers to local communities to discuss the nuts and bolts of working with the organization. This invaluable program is designed to help tourism-related businesses engage more fully with programs offered by Visit North Carolina and its partners.

Representatives from the EDPNC's BLNC, N.C. Dept. of Commerce, N.C. Dept. of Natural & Cultural Resources and NC GreenTravel will also be on hand to discuss services they can provide businesses, including strategic planning, assisting with identifying funding sources and serving as liaisons with other local, state and federal agencies. For additional information on this session or to learn more about scheduling a TRAC visit to your community, contact [André Nabors](#) at (919) 447-7771.



### Hendersonville highlighted tomorrow as part of "Fall Around America"

To celebrate the first day of fall, the Weather Channel is highlighting "Fall Around America" tomorrow (Thursday) which will feature four cities and explore the beauty and amazement the season brings. *America's Morning Headquarters* co-host Jim

Cantore will be in Hendersonville to showcase the best fall activities in the area. Coverage is scheduled to begin at 7 am.

### Carolina Panthers provided a \$10 million boost to Charlotte hotels last season



The Carolina Panthers' dream season last year carried to Charlotte's hotel industry. During the Panthers' 2015 regular season, hotels citywide saw revenue spike 35 percent to a total of \$6.7 million from eight home games, according to a recent analysis by hotel research firm STR. [Charlotte hotels bumped their average daily rates by 11 percent and sold 22 percent more rooms](#) during that same time span, said an STR spokesman. Not surprisingly, the Panthers' top two games for Charlotte-area hoteliers came after the regular season. The combined hotel revenue for those two playoff games was \$3.4 million.



### Five N.C. restaurants recognized for featuring N.C. products, ingredients

Five N.C. restaurants from Albemarle, Charlotte, Raleigh and Winston-Salem were recognized for featuring locally grown, raised, caught and made products during the second annual [Dig into Local Best Menu NC](#) contest.

The winners were Bonterra, Chef Blake Hartwick in Charlotte; Graze, Chef Richard Miller in Winston-Salem; Heirloom, Chef Clark Barlowe in Charlotte; Off the Square, Chef Justin Mauldin in Albemarle; and Sitti, Chef Donald Guzman in Raleigh. Menus were judged for clearly identifying N.C. agricultural products, farms and manufacturers; highlighting seasonal produce;

identifying items with unique regional connections; offering N.C. wine, beer and spirit selections on the menu; including multiple courses featuring N.C. ingredients; and offering a good balance of N.C. products across protein, grain and produce categories. The Dig into Local Best Menu NC contest is sponsored by the N.C. Dept. of Agriculture & Consumer Services.

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## Raleigh among '18 most underrated cities in the U.S.'

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**Traveler**

CondeNastTraveler.com included Raleigh in its "[18 Most Underrated Cities in the U.S.](#)," noted "for their dining and microbrew scenes, cultural attractions, or just that under-the-radar charm." Of Raleigh, the article noted, "It would take a week of eating out just to check off every Ashley Christensen restaurant in Raleigh. From the retro-modern Poole's Diner to the down-homey Beasley's Chicken + Honey, the chef has put her stamp on the capital food scene like no other. Decent grub isn't the only reason to fall in love with this leg of the Research Triangle. CAM Raleigh puts on fearless contemporary art shows. Craft breweries like Full Steam and Trophy Brewing give Asheville's established suds market a run for its beer dollars. And the shopping in the city is ace: You've got Lumina for rustic-cool menswear, Port of Raleigh for sleek Japanese and Scandinavian housewares, and Raleigh Denim Workshop for perfect-fit jeans, sewn right there in the shop."

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## Surveys, Industry, Marketing & Travel Trends

***The six golden rules of responding to guest reviews*** - Whether scathing or glowing, every guest review is a golden opportunity for your hotel [or attraction, restaurant, shop, etc.] to shine or stumble. Guests trust other guests, and the reviews of past experiences at your hotel are one of the most influential factors that can impact future bookings. You can't afford to ignore bad reviews and hope they disappear. Nor, is it okay to simply write canned responses that lack a genuine concern for your guests. It can be dismaying to read negative reviews about your hotel or your colleagues. However, it's more dismaying to know that one horrible (unanswered) review can stop a potential booking dead in its tracks. Tambourine offers [six ways to deal with negative reviews](#), starting with "Cut the (corporate) crap."

***How to choose the right social media platforms for marketing your site*** - Large hotel companies with the budget to invest big in their social media strategy are likely to see big results, but what about independent hotels or individual franchise properties? With smaller marketing teams - and smaller budgets - individual hotels need to be strategic about where they spend their time and money online. HotelManagement.net says there are four [questions to ask when choosing the right social media platforms](#) for a hotel - suggestions that might also be considered for another type of property such as an attraction or restaurant. For instance, first decide on the audience you want to reach and consider how well the demographics of each social platform's users matches up with the kind of guests you're looking to attract.

***France is banning plastic plates and cutlery*** - France has become the [first country to pass a nationwide ban on plastic cups, plates, and cutlery](#), reports CondeNastTraveler.com. The move comes not long after the French banned single-

use plastic shopping bags as of March and will also extend to a ban on Keurig pods and other disposable products used for drinking coffee. The plastic ban will not fully come into effect until 2020, giving businesses time to get rid of their existing stock and come up with alternative products, such as cutlery made from a form of compostable wood or cups constructed out of corn-based recyclable plastic. In 2015, France's parliament voted in favor of a law that required all new buildings in the country to have roofs made of either plants or solar-energy panels.

**Panel: Think outside the room for new revenue streams** - With worries about the state of the hotel cycle and slowing rooms revenue growth, [hoteliers are looking for new and novel ways to drive revenue and profitability at their properties](#). Speaking during the "Beyond rooms and F&B: Total revenue management practices" panel at the Hotel Data Conference, sources said there are several ways that many hotels are leaving money on the table. One panelist said there are lessons to be learned from how music festivals and amusement parks manage to create tiered experiences based on how much consumers are willing to pay. One panelist said there are lessons to be learned from how music festivals and amusement parks manage to create tiered experiences based on how much consumers are willing to pay. One panelist has been successful leasing out retail space, and another noted Omni has seen solid revenue growth by opting to lease out restaurant spaces instead of keeping F&B operations in house.

**Hilton is piloting more restrictive rates at select properties** - Hilton Worldwide once more is [experimenting with rate types that make canceling hotel rooms more difficult](#), reports BusinessTravelNews.com. Newer rate tiers like Semi-Flex and Prepay Restricted have started to appear online for select properties on Hilton's brand.com websites, with special loyalty member rates also available for each tier. The Semi-Flex rates are refundable up to seven days before check-in but charge a cancellation fee thereafter. The Prepay Restricted rates are nonrefundable and unchangeable. The initiative is not dissimilar from a pilot conducted by Hilton last year in which it charged guests at select hotels a \$50 penalty for canceling any time after booking. Still, if Hilton's initiative sticks and other hoteliers follow suit, it could revolutionize pricing for the hotel industry, aligning it more closely with the airline industry, where flexibility comes at a premium.

**Seattle puts restrictions on restaurant scheduling, hiring** - Large restaurant companies will be required to [finalize Seattle employees' labor schedules at least two weeks in advance](#) and pay penalties for changes afterward under a law unanimously passed Monday by the Seattle City Council. The measure also requires companies with at least 500 employees nationwide to increase the hours of people already on the payroll before new hires are added to the staff. In addition, employees who work the last shift of a restaurant's work day will be required to be given at least 10 hours off before they are expected to report back to work. Work schedules must be set at least two weeks before a shift. If hours are cut between that point and shift time, the employee must be paid half of what he or she would have earned without the change. If hours are increased, the staff member is paid for the hours worked, plus the wages for one additional hour. Employees, however, can request a reduction in hours without penalty. They can also swap shifts. The vote makes Seattle the second city, after San Francisco, to adopt a so-called secure scheduling law. Last week, New York City Mayor Bill De Blasio proposed that his charge become the third. The measures

share many of the same requirements, a reflection of the concerted effort by organized labor to get the scheduling laws on the book.

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### Keeping an air conditioning system efficient

It is no secret that keeping HVAC and Packaged Thermal Air Conditioning (PTAC) units clean is essential for guest comfort and energy savings. Without a scheduled, effective cleaning program for those units, heating and cooling will be diminished over time and can lead to guest discomfort and higher energy bills. Timing the cleaning of equipment is critical and should occur as Summer is winding down and before Winter. This will prevent water from the cleaning from freezing inside the PTAC unit. Cleaning the units with compressed air is not recommended because this only drives dirt deeper into the machine. Using a non-acidic cleaner on both the inside and outside coils is the preferred method of cleaning. A [training video demonstrates](#) how to thoroughly clean a PTAC unit. One study of PTAC cleaning has shown that after cleaning an average unit, there can be 8.5-degree temperature improvement, up to 28 percent increase in airflow and up to 17 percent energy savings. For more information about energy efficiency in the tourism industry, contact [NC GreenTravel](#) Initiative Manager [Tom Rhodes](#) at (919) 707-8140.

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For the week of Sept. 22 on [North Carolina Weekend](#), visit alpacas and more at Apple Hill Farm in Banner Elk. Take a tour and lift a glass at Duplin Winery in Rose Hill. Tempt your taste buds at Hops Burger Bar in Greensboro. Enjoy heritage and music at the Bascom Lamar Lunsford Music Festival in Mars Hill. And the "House Special" samples the fare at El's Drive-In in Morehead City. *(Please note: listings are subject to change.)* North Carolina Weekend is underwritten by Visit North Carolina. In addition, UNC-TV has made recent editions of *North Carolina Weekend* [available online](#).



Five North Carolina counties had more than 10,000 direct tourism employees in 2015 - Mecklenburg (49,870), Wake (21,897), Guilford (13,127), Dare (12,711) and Buncombe (10,637). These aggregated employees represent half (51.2 percent) of all direct tourism employees statewide. For more facts on North Carolina tourism, visit [Tourism Research](#) or contact Tourism Research Director [Marlise Taylor](#) at (919) 447-7748.

## Upcoming Industry Meetings & Events

**Sept. 22-24** - AFCI Cineposium, Atlanta, Ga.

**Sept. 26-29** - [TEAMS Conference & Expo](#), Atlantic City, NJ

**Sept. 27** - Visit NC Regional Listening Session, Manteo

**Sept. 28-29** - NC Tourism Leadership Conference, Winston-Salem

**Oct. 5-6** - Blue Ridge Parkway Association Fall Meeting, Roanoke, Va.

**Oct. 11** - Visit NC Regional Listening Session, Cary

**Oct. 12** - Visit NC Regional Listening Session, Charlotte

**Oct. 13** - Visit NC TRAC, Pender County

**Oct. 20** - NC Coast Host Quarterly Meeting, Swansboro

**Oct. 21-23** - [Agritourism World Summit](#), Columbus, Ohio

**Oct. 24-26** - [Marketing Outlook Forum](#), Fort Lauderdale, Fla.

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NewsLink is a publication of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina  
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