

# CAROLINA RIDE

*In Beaufort, North Carolina,  
preserving the past is the way of the future.*

Story & photos by Jim Raycroft

Often referred to as the Inner Banks of North Carolina, the Crystal Coast offers an abundance of pleasures for anyone seeking adventure or serenity on, under or simply near the ocean. The broad, sandy beaches stretching out from the dunes are legendary. Surfcasting and offshore fishing are some of the best in the world. With over 2,000 shipwrecks, “the graveyard of the Atlantic” provides scuba divers with warm water and 75 feet of visibility as they explore the depths. A coastline dotted with marinas and marine services of all sorts satisfies the demands of the transient yachtsmen and weekend wave warriors. Moreover, families suffering from vacation desperation may partake in boat tours to Cape Lookout, bike and walking tours, food tours, bus tours, nature and wildlife tours, night tours, air tours, historic and heritage tours, and even ghost and vampire tours. Or they may simply relax and build lifelong memories amidst the peace and serenity of a beach cottage in the dunes.

Tucked behind Cape Lookout and Shackleford Bank with its fabled feral horses, the town of Beaufort is deeply rooted in maritime history and arguably the jewel of this coastal crown. Having grown up in a small New England coastal community, I have a special appreciation in my heart for those unique places that seem to cling to the edge—places that exist on that space between water and Earth, the demarcation line separating the known from the unknown.

Founded in 1709, Beaufort remains a welcoming port of call for modern cruisers churning their way up and down the ICW as well as for bluewater sailors darting into the Beaufort Inlet such as the pirate Edward Teach—better known as Blackbeard—regularly did in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Legend has

it that Blackbeard would run his ship *Queen Ann’s Revenge* up into Taylor Creek adjacent to Front Street and enjoy the various pleasures of the town while his crew was busy with the duties of repair and provision. Blackbeard met his violent end at the nearby island of Ocracoke in 1718, but the maritime industries of Beaufort have continued to flourish while the town itself has evolved into one of the most charming and active historic waterfront communities on the East Coast.

Rooted in a history of boatbuilding and fishing, the neighboring Harkers Island is home to a long, proud legacy of watermen that reaches back to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Ebenezer Harker acquired the island in 1730, and he and his family built a plantation and boatyard, thus planting the seeds of a boatbuilding tradition that continues to this day.

Hundreds of years after at the age of 18, Randy Ramsey became the youngest charter fishing boat captain on the island. Armed with the local knowledge and experience in dealing with the demands of commercial fishing, young Ramsey felt there had to be a better boat design to improve performance and handling in the often rough and treacherous sea conditions. In 1986, he began design and construction on his first boat in a tin shed with fellow captain and islander Jim Luxton. Completed in 1988, the 52-foot plank on-frame sportfish *Sensation* proved a success in delivering and sustaining the now legendary “Carolina ride”. Such were the humble beginnings of Jarrett Bay Boatworks (JBBW).

In 1999, Ramsey moved the company to its Beaufort location on Sensation Weigh, which created the Jarrett Bay Marine Industrial Park. The 175-acre park located on the central coast of North Carolina at ICW MM 198 is about





Above, left to right: The JBBW “cash wrap”, as seen in the JBBW company store on Beaufort’s Front Street—an attention-grabbing solution for the nautical retailer. There is a lot going on in Jarrett Bay Marine Industrial Park. From new builds to re-builds, Moores Marine specializes in interventions and resurrections of the classic wooden boat variety. Bottom, left to right: Professional chefs prepare meals for a number of private residents who open their homes for the event. Lunch at the 25-year-old Beaufort Grocery Company is located within steps of the waterfront. Colorful tour bikes are available at Hungry Town Tours.

halfway between New York and Florida. With an ever-expanding variety of marine specialty service operations and a 220-ton capacity Travellift, the park is capable of handling virtually any repair and refit requirements for yachts, cruisers and commercial fishermen. The marina welcomes vessels ranging from 17-foot center consoles to 130-foot luxury motoryachts and offers transient docking and fuel.

A conversation with JBBW’s vice president Tate Lawrence reveals that JBBW is not content to bask in the sunshine of past glories. The Carolina design has evolved along with the development of vacuum bag construction, stronger and lighter materials and more powerful engines among other

progressions. “Every boat is different—truly custom as is each customer,” says Lawrence. The over 90 custom boats delivered to date is a testament to the JBBW commitment to excellence. The 90-foot project in the shed is about halfway through its 3-year birthing process—handmade all the way and obviously worth the wait.

Given Beaufort’s history and connection to the sea, it’s no wonder that it’s the home for the North Carolina Maritime Museum. The museum is the official repository for all of the artifacts from the wreck of Blackbeard’s *Queen Anne’s Revenge* discovered in 1999 near the Beaufort inlet. There is also a display of more than 5,000 seashell specimens from over 100 countries around the world. Located across the street at the museum’s Watercraft Center, volunteers actively build and restore boats in an effort to preserve the Crystal Coast’s tradition of “backyard boatbuilding” and the annual BoatBuilding Challenge.

The center is also the jumping-off point for the annual Beaufort Wine and Food Weekend, a delightful event where residents open their historic homes and contribute to the combined efforts and generosity of the wine community, winemakers, local eateries, and fabulous guest chefs. All donate their time and talent during the flavorful 5-day event, which culminates with the Grand Reserve Tasting Auction on the waterfront.





Beaufort offers spectacular coastal scenery, significant maritime history, a strong sense of community coupled with great food, and an easy pace of life. 🐦

## CRUISER RESOURCES

### — Dockage —

#### Beaufort Docks

500 Front Street, Beaufort, NC

(252) 728-2503

-Year-round marina in a downtown location offering fuel, repairs and more

#### Jarrett Bay Boatworks/Jarrett Bay Marine Industrial Park

530 Sensation Weigh, Beaufort, NC

[jarrettbay.com](http://jarrettbay.com); (252) 728-2690

-Year-round marina offering fuel, major repairs and re-fit services

#### Town Creek Marina

232 West Beaufort Road, Beaufort, NC

[towncreekmarina.com](http://towncreekmarina.com); (252) 728-6111

-Marina offering fuel and repairs

#### Cape Lookout Bight

34°37'22"N, 76°31'28"W

Lookout Bight, Harkers Island, NC

-Anchoring area



## Jim Moores is a man possessed.

That is to say, he's a man driven to repair and preserve the ever-shrinking fleet of remarkable classic boats placed in his care. Case in point, along with the vintage Chris-Crafts, Moores maintains Mackenzie models and other wooden wonders for his clients; the 83-foot *Trumpy Sea Hammock* vies for his talented attention. Formerly named *Eskimo* in 1961 when built for John Kimberly of Kimberly-Clark, this grand dame is to be placed undercover for protection as she awaits a new benefactor.

Moores moved his boat restoration business from West Palm Beach to a new facility on 17 acres in the Jarrett Bay Marine Industrial Park. He and his employees continue to rescue old wood from the grip of age and decay for restoration projects. When I asked Moores why he chose to relocate in Beaufort, he replied, "Why not? A beautiful town by the sea, extremely friendly people, and great food." He couldn't go wrong.

Some of Moores projects on the endangered species list have included *Innisfail*, formerly *El Presidente*, a 95-foot *Trumpy* built in 1937 that required a new salon and shafting work. The 1930 consolidated 70-foot yacht *Justice* required re-powering and structural work.

By his own accord, Jim Moores' most notable restoration project is the presidential motor yacht *Honey Fitz*. The 92-foot commuter was built in 1931 by Defoe Boat Works as *Lenore II* for the head of Montgomery Ward. According to Moores (who undertook a major restoration project including hull replacement in 2009), "It was a fantastic project, one of the heights of my career. To work on a presidential yacht is really a pinnacle." *Honey Fitz* served as a coastal patrol vessel for five U.S. presidents, including President Roosevelt and President Truman during WWII, and was then repurposed as a presidential yacht. Following wartime, the yacht was converted to a houseboat-style for President Eisenhower at the *Trumpy Yard* in Annapolis, Maryland. John F. Kennedy renamed her *Honey Fitz* after his maternal grandfather and reportedly spent some of his happiest times aboard the yacht as he cruised between Newport, Rhode Island, and Palm Beach, Florida. President Johnson maintained the yacht and its name out of respect for the Kennedy legacy and often used it to entertain dignitaries with cocktail and dinner cruises along the Potomac River. President Nixon renamed the yacht *Patricia* after his daughter in 1969 but put it up for sale soon after.

Just as Moores is driven to preserve the heritage of these wonderful wooden yachts, the people of Beaufort strive to preserve their town's architectural beauty and integrity. Moores sums it up perfectly: "There are a few magical places on this planet. Beaufort is one of them."

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Sea Wife is a 24-foot Core Sounder built locally in 1954 for fishing. It is now owned by the North Carolina Maritime Museum.

### -Provisions-

#### Food Lion Grocery Store

1901 Live Oak Street, Beaufort, NC

foodlion.com; (252) 504-2442

#### Piggly Wiggly Grocery Store

1500 Live Oak Street, Beaufort, NC

pigglywigglystores.com; (252) 728-7262

#### Taylor's Creek Grocery

525 Front Street, Beaufort, NC

taylorscreekgrocery.com; (252) 838-1495

### -Eateries-

#### Beaufort Grocery Company

117 Queen Street, Beaufort, NC

beaufortgrocery.com; 252-728-3899

#### Backstreet Pub

124 Middle Lane, Beaufort, NC

historicbeaufort.com/backstreet\_pub1.htm; (252) 728-7108

#### La Perla

1103 North 20<sup>th</sup> Street, Morehead City, NC

laperlarestaurantmhc.com; (252) 222-3808

-Caribbean cuisine

### -Sites-

#### Cape Lookout National Seashore

1800 Island Road, Harkers Island, NC

nps.gov/calco; (252) 728-2250

-Discover Cape Lookout Lighthouse, spend time camping and fishing and enjoy the Shakelford Banks wild horses.

#### North Carolina Maritime Museums

315 Front Street, Beaufort, NC

ncmaritimemuseums.com/beaufort; (252) 728-7317

-Get a taste of coastal cultures and nautical history.

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