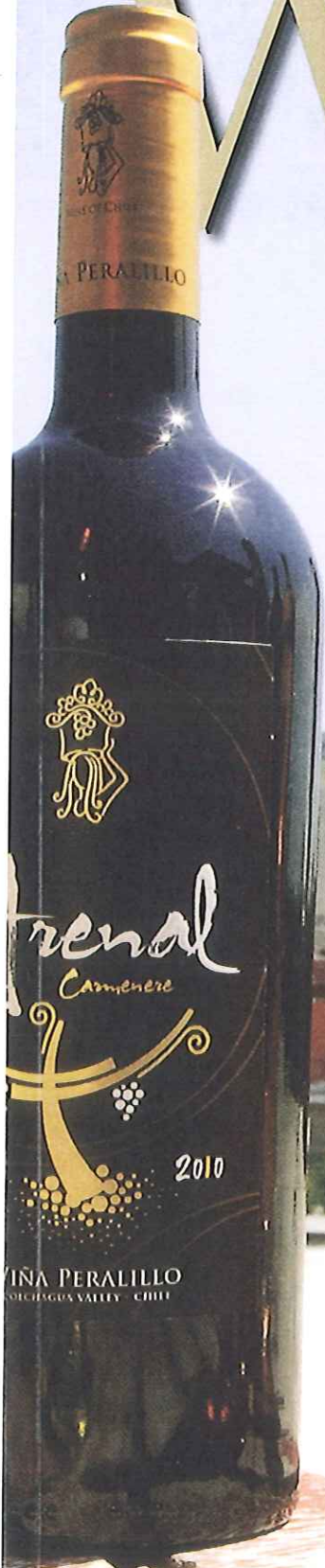


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Turtle time

Relax and explore nature
at Bald Head Island this summer

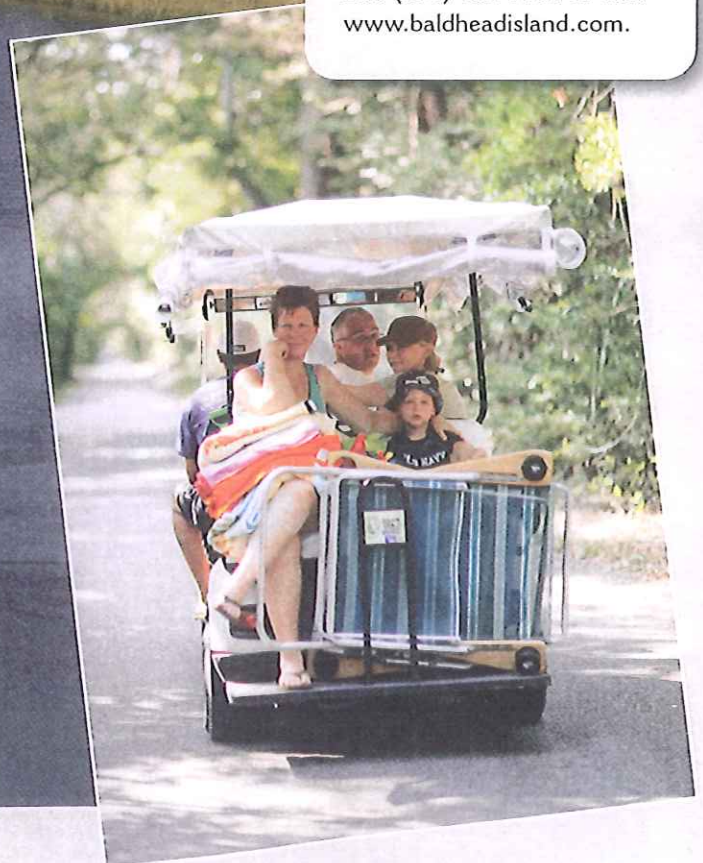
by Dakota Jacobi

photos: Bald Head Island Limited

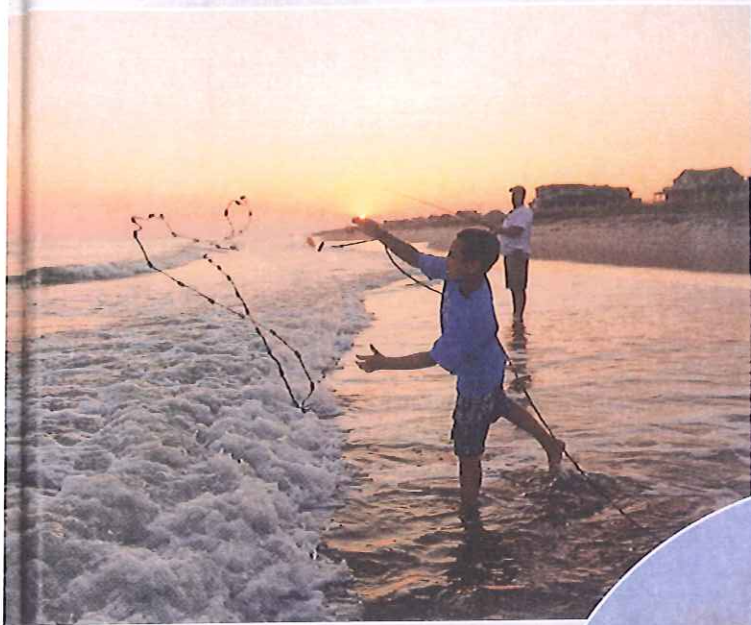


If you go

The ferry to Bald Head Island leaves from Deep Point Marina in Southport. For more information or to book a vacation, call toll-free (800) 432-7368 or visit www.baldheadisland.com.



Bald Head Island, a 20-minute ferry ride from Southport, N.C., provides a wonderful respite from the hustle and bustle of city life.



Where do you go when you want to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life? Last year, more than 110,000 vacationers went to Bald Head Island to do just that. Each year, visitors to this North Carolina coastal community get to experience the maritime forest that Lauren Frye, marketing specialist for the island, calls "the largest and most prized example of its kind on the East Coast."

Whether it is Old Baldy Lighthouse or Cape Fear Point, there is plenty to see and do on Bald Head Island. The journey toward relaxation starts with a two-mile ferry ride from Deep Point Marina in Southport. Once the ferry pulls into the marina at Bald Head Island, visitors can experience what Frye and other islanders call turtle time.

Vacationers can rent a home along the island's pristine beaches.



Old Baldy Lighthouse, one of three that were built on the island, is the only one that remains today.

"It's hard not to slow down and relax," she says.

One way the island achieves this is through its lack of cars. Locals and visitors alike drive golf carts to get where they need to go. And as they do, they get to see the preserved landscape that makes the island so unique. From the golf cart, vacationers can see cedars, dogwoods, junipers, live oaks, sabal palms, wax myrtles and yaupons, among other types of vegetation. Of the 12,000 acres encompassing Bald Head Island, almost 10,000 of them have been permanently dedicated to preservation.

According to Frye, Bald Head Island gets its name from early river pilots who were eager to offer their navigational services to ships approaching the entrance to the Cape Fear River.

"The headland was worn bare of vegetation, making it stand out in contrast to the forest behind it," she says. "This bald headland served as a reference point for ships entering the river, and the name Bald Head Island endured."

Plenty to do

During the day, visitors can take the challenge of climbing the 108 steps up Old Baldy Lighthouse to catch a breathtaking panoramic view of the island. According to Frye, Old Baldy was the second of three lighthouses that were built on Bald Head Island, and it is the only one remaining. The lighthouse, which was built in 1817, was decommissioned in 1903 and since then has acted as a landmark and symbol of the island.

"Old Baldy is one of the places that people must see when coming to the island," Frye says.

Visitors also can enjoy fishing, kayaking, paddle boarding, sailing, surfing and swimming during their time on the island. There also are several hiking and walking trails that wind their way through Bald Head Island, and many vacationers often will take a bicycle ride down its many tree-lined roads. The island also has an 18-hole golf course at the Bald Head Island Club that recently was named one of the five best renovations by Links magazine.

After a long day of activities, islanders can dine at one of the eight restaurants that are located on the island. From fresh seafood to meat dishes, there are plenty of options available.

Islanders often visit MoJo's on the Harbor to enjoy a relaxed, low-key dining experience overlooking the marina. For a quick bite, the Maritime Market Café — located within the Maritime Market grocery store — offers everything from sandwiches to grilled shrimp to arugula salad.

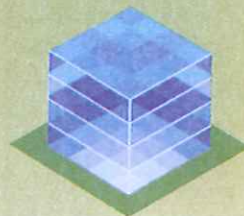
Accommodations

Only 220 people are full-time residents of Bald Head Island; the rest are in town for only a short while. Luckily, there are many more homes than residents, and many of these homes are available for rent.

"You can rent a house in the harbor, in the maritime forest, facing the creek and marsh, or facing the ocean," Frye says. "All of the environments are great."

Another option for vacationers is the Marsh Harbour Inn, the island's only bed and breakfast. The 10,000-square-foot

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property overlooks the marina and offers ample space to sit back and relax.

Summer time

Summer is always an active time at Bald Head Island.

"The island is bustling with vacationers, and there is so much going on," Frye says.

Annual events like the Fourth of July celebration and Golf Cart Parade and the Labor Day Beach Music Extravaganza are highlights for the summer season at Bald Head Island.

Summer also brings loggerhead turtles, which nest on the shore this time of year. The Bald Head Island Conservancy offers turtle walks that allow visitors to view turtle nestings and hatchlings with a staff of environmental educators.

"Fall also is beautiful because the weather has cooled off a bit, the ocean is still warm and the island is quiet," Frye says. "Each season is special in its own way." **WV**

Dakota Jacobi is an editorial intern with Wake Living and Triad Living magazines.

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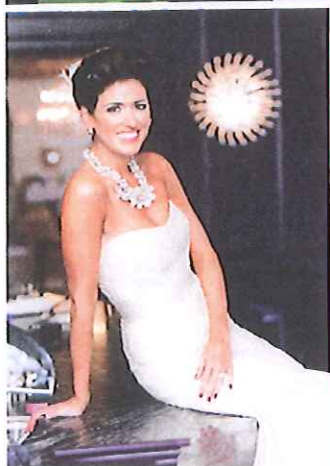
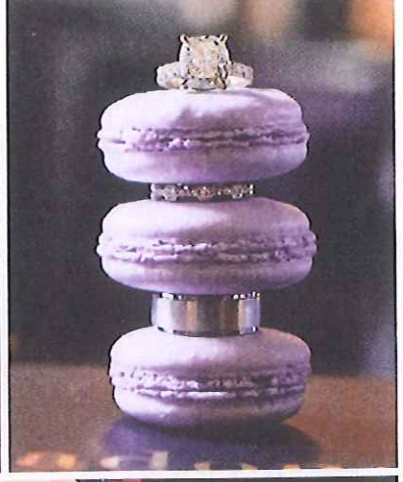
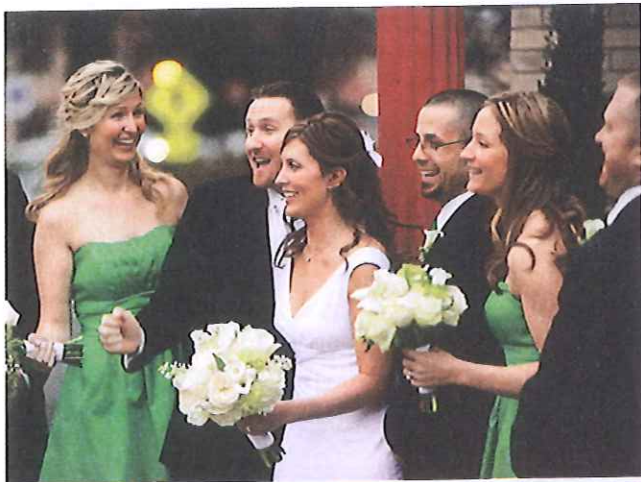
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