

**RALEIGH, N.C. (Oct. 4, 2022)** — A five-minute narrative about a beach trip that led to a music career emerged as the winner in the [Firsts That Last Film Series Competition](#), [Visit North Carolina](#) announced today. With 17,480 votes, “[Jacob’s First Mandolin](#)” triumphed over 11 other entries in a first-of-a kind tourism campaign informed by the power of memory to bind travelers to time and place.

The film by Taylor Sharp recounts a bet made on a family vacation at Emerald Isle: If father Will could get a pair of fish to bite on the day’s final cast from Bogue Inlet Pier, son Jacob could get a mandolin. Two fish nibbled, and the rest is history, with Jacob going on to cofound the Chapel Hill-based band [Mipso](#). Sharp plans to donate part of the \$30,000 prize to [Casting for Hope](#), a nonprofit he cofounded to assist women living with gynecological cancers, and also to put funds toward producing a film about his mother, who died of ovarian cancer in 2010.

“The story embodies so many aspects of the North Carolina travel experience,” said Wit Tuttell, executive director of Visit NC. “It took place in one of the countless settings that reward travelers with a sense of closeness and completeness, of infinite possibility. Such moments are life-enriching if not always life-changing, and the Sharps would surely treasure the memory even without the bonus music lovers have enjoyed with Mipso’s recordings and the band’s live shows.”

The “Firsts That Last” films continue to roll on [VisitNC.com](#), where the series launched in April to showcase shorts based on travels across the state. Visit NC, the state’s tourism marketing organization, commissioned the films based on proposed storylines that celebrate the enduring value of North Carolina travel experiences. Along with inspiration from entries that span the state, the website offers ideas and information for trip planners plotting journeys of their own.

Sharp, who grew up in Morganton, said a number of compelling stories came to mind when he learned about the competition and its focus. He quickly settled on “Jacob’s First Mandolin.”

“I recognized that there was no story I knew better,” he said. Its meaning became more resonant while making the film, especially as he reflected on his father’s willingness to scratch Jacob’s creative itch and on the moment’s significance to his brother’s journey. “While interviewing my dad and brother, I realized how much of an impact that mandolin had on the rest of our lives.”

The series’ other 11 films further illuminate the transformative power of travel. Here's the lineup on the digital marquee with “[Jacob’s First Mandolin](#)”:

- “[Ain’t No Mountain High Enough](#),” directed by Eternal Polk. Polk has watched so many of his daughter’s firsts take place in North Carolina, but a hiking trip to Stone Mountain is one he will never forget.
- “[City Center!](#)” directed by Trey Edwards. For Edwards, one weekend enjoying craft beer, local food and art in Charlotte left such a memorable first impression he ended up moving there.
- “[A Homecoming](#),” directed by Rick Bryson. In Bryson’s childhood home, an old photograph of the last living elk in NC shaped his future — a future that included helping reintroduce elk to Cataloochee Valley.
- “[In the Rearview](#),” directed by Meagan Massa. As two siblings look back on a road trip with their father 20 years ago, they discover their memories have faded. But the feelings they share when returning to these mountains remain the same.
- “[Making Waves](#),” directed by Pilar Timpane. Areli Barrera and Leon Grodski Barrera arrived in Durham and turned a bicycle cart into three thriving cafés and an award-winning microroaster. At

the heart of it all? Community.

- “[Next Generation](#),” directed by Jonathan Applebaum. A childhood vacation to the North Carolina coast always stood out to Applebaum as magical. Today, he returns with his family and watches a new generation fall in love with the same coast that shaped him years ago.
- “[Queen of Pisgah](#),” directed by Curren Sheldon. In her first pro bike race in Pisgah National Forest, Kaysee Armstrong is humbled by the terrain. Four years later and fierce with determination, Armstrong returns for redemption.
- “[The Road to North Carolina](#),” directed by Luke Gloeckner. After a time of uncertainty in his life, Gloeckner was looking for a new place to call home. Thanks to a cross-country road trip, he found a new playground in North Carolina with its inspiring people, places and possibilities.
- “[Seagrove](#),” directed by Josh Sliffe. For the visually impaired, art has its limitations. But pottery is a special art form for which the sense of touch makes all the difference in the world.
- “[So Far](#),” directed by Bryan Rierson. North Carolina’s Mountains-to-Sea Trail comprises 1,175 miles. And in 2018, Jeff and Debra Rezeli found more than just stunning scenery on the life-altering trek.
- “[Waverider](#),” directed by Bryan Harvey. While growing up, Harvey’s greatest joy was surfing on the Outer Banks. Today, he knows there’s only one thing that’s better: teaching his daughter that same passion.

The campaign, dubbed Firsts That Last 2.0, extends the vision of Visit NC’s earlier Firsts That Last, an [award-winning](#) collection of shorts documenting first-time trips to the state by travelers pursuing personal firsts: [glimpsing the ocean](#), [tasting moonshine](#) and [seeing a waterfall](#). The film series takes the concept beyond the original campaign’s live-in-the-moment quality to underscore deeper meaning for everyone from resident North Carolinians to out-of-state visitors, from first-timers to vacation regulars.

“These talented filmmakers and their subjects reach remarkable heights in exploring and re-creating life-changing moments,” Tuttell said. “Journeys unfold in places you’d expect and some you wouldn’t. These stories will inspire people to make every trip count as they immerse themselves in North Carolina’s natural wonders, its cities and culture, and add meaning and memories to their lives.”

#### **Contacts and connections:**

- Click [here](#) for a map of film locations and stills from “Jacob’s First Mandolin.”
- To request an interview, contact [media@VisitNC.com](mailto:media@VisitNC.com).

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<https://media.visitnc.com/Mandolin-Wins-Visit-NCs-Firsts-That-Last-Film-Competition>