

**RALEIGH, N.C.** — Songbirds and sunshine return as spring is here! It's time to get outside and take part in [Parks and Trails for Health](#) (PATH), an online program of the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to encourage activity in parks, trails, greenways, and other outdoor spaces. As you plan spring break and Easter outings, add some history and culture and make a visit to a site historic site that also has a trail. Trails range from a quarter-mile to eight miles. Most sites are open Tuesday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and are free. Social distancing and masks are required.

#### **SOMERSET PLACE**

Somerset Place at Creswell offers a comprehensive view of life on a large 19th-century plantation. Originally it included more than 100,000 densely wooded and mainly swampy acres bordering Lake Phelps and Pettigrew State Park. The isolated site was a self-contained community with a boarding school, hospital, gristmill sawmill, and other buildings. It was home to 300 enslaved workers. There have been two Somerset Reunions, as descendants of the enslaved and the owners gathered at the site. On your way to the Outer Banks stop by to see the daffodils and hike one of the trails through the site.

#### **FORT FISHER**

Fort Fisher at Kure Beach was the last port to provide supplies to Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. The fort near Wilmington fell after the largest amphibious attack by the U.S. military until World War II. It was composed of earthworks rather than buildings, sheltering a couple of soldiers inside. Incoming shells were absorbed by domes of sand. There is a quarter-mile loop around the site, and it adjoins Fort Fisher State Park and a beautiful beach.

#### **BRUNSWICK TOWN/FORT ANDERSON**

Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson at Winnabow was both a colonial and Civil War site. A hotbed of patriotic activity, it was razed by the British and never rebuilt. Civil War Fort Anderson later was built on the site to help defend Wilmington. Excavations reveal three colonial taverns, one of which doubtless was very popular for receiving the rare mail delivery by sea. Colonial foundations dot the trail tour of less than a mile that crosses the earthworks of the Confederate fort. See remnants of an Anglican church that has been filmed for TV shows and movies, and on the trail see beautiful riverfront vistas from a high bluff.

#### **HISTORIC HALIFAX**

Historic Halifax, located on the Roanoke River, was a colonial commercial and political center at the time of the American Revolution. In fact, the Fourth Provincial Congress met there April 12, 1776 and called for separation from England months before July 4. Today restored buildings from 1760 to 1835 portray life in a significant Federal-era town. There is ample walking space which includes Magazine Spring, a water source still sacred to the Haliwa-Saponi tribe, and a quarter-mile Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Trail leading to the Roanoke River, a route to freedom for the enslaved.

#### **BENTONVILLE BATTLEFIELD**

Bentonville Battlefield at Four Oaks was the site of the largest battle fought in North Carolina that engaged 60,000 Union troops, 20,000 Confederates and covered 6,000 acres. The March 19-21, 1865 battle was the Confederacy's last significant attempt to defeat the Union Gen. William Sherman's army. The battle included 1,200-1,500 Junior Reserves, Confederate boy soldiers aged 17 years. There is a marker for them at the end of the 4.5-mile trail. The site also has a 14-mile driving trail with informative markers. Just an hour from Raleigh, go by also to experience this section of the Mountains to Sea Trail.

## **BENNETT PLACE**

Bennett Place at Durham was the site of the largest Confederate surrender of the Civil War, involving the armies of North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, and 89,270 soldiers. The April 26 agreement effectively ended the Civil War. Confederate Gen. Joseph Johnston and Union Gen. William Sherman met at the humble farm home of James and Nancy Bennett. The family lost a son and son-in-law to the war. Currently, a half-mile trail loop through the wooded portion of the site offers natural vegetation and pine, oak and dogwood trees.

## **HISTORIC STAGVILLE**

Historic Stagville at Durham includes remnants of one of North Carolina's largest plantations of 30,000 acres and 900 enslaved workers. Stagville today is 165 acres and includes usual two-story slave quarters, a Great Barn built by enslaved craftsmen, and the Bennehan family home. A nearby trailhead provides access to eight miles of trails that are part of the Triangle Land Conservancy's Horton Grove Nature Preserve. Plan your hike with a stop at the Horton Grove quarters and listen to an audio tour about the African American experience at Stagville and view enslaved people's fingerprints in the chimney bricks. Download the tour at <https://apple.co/3qGcjSE>

## **TOWN CREEK INDIAN MOUND**

Town Creek Indian Mound at Mount Gilead is the state's only site dedicated to American Indians. The site was a ceremonial center of the Mississippian tradition and was archaeologically researched from 1937 to 1987. The homes were huts made of "wattle and daub," a wooden woven matrix covered in clay and watertight thatched grass roofs. The site was akin to a state capitol and hosted political events, religious activities, commercial trading, and was home to a thriving arts community. A half-mile nature trail provides information on the local wildlife and dendrochronology and trout lilies now are in bloom.

## **ALAMANCE BATTLEGROUND**

Alamance Battleground at Burlington was the site of a 1771 battle in which backcountry farmers revolted against Royal Governor William Tryon, embezzlement of tax money and misdeeds by public officials. The farmers were defeated, but resulting shockwaves fed tensions leading to the Revolutionary War. The John and Rachel Allen family home there shows how the family lived. He was a teacher and she an herbalist physician and they ran a small store from a back room. The half-mile walking route highlights the site and a third of a mile nature trail is across the street and soon a half-mile trail will go through a forested part of the battlefield.

## **HORNE CREEK HISTORICAL FARM**

Horne Creek Historical Farm at Pinnacle was once the Hauser family farm and the original house, circa 1900, still stands. The site features a corn crib, tobacco barn fields under cultivation, and a friendly mule. Horne Creek is home to an heirloom apple orchard containing 850 trees of 400 varieties of heirloom apples. The site hosts an annual corn shucking frolic with chicken stew cooked in a copper pot and fried apples that were dried in a dryhouse. A quarter-mile trail runs through the historic area past a cemetery, along Horne Creek to a beautiful ridge. The apple trees bloom in late March or April.

## **FORT DOBBS**

Fort Dobbs at Statesville is the state's only historic site dedicated to the French and Indian War. Constructed in 1756, the walls of the three-story fort are the building itself, made of oak logs 16-inches thick on the ground floor. Self-contained, it included a cooking area having a massive fireplace, supply and storage for 50 soldiers, and windows with shutters but no glass. Muskets were fired from the smaller lower windows and small cannons from the upper windows. A three-quarter mile trail begins at the site and leads through a loop walk and meadow. Soon the azaleas will be blooming.

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