

The fun of an [Ocracoke](#) getaway starts with the ferry ride, a tranquil trip across the Pamlico Sound or Hatteras Inlet. Count the 75th anniversary of the [N.C. Ferry System](#), the nation's second-largest (after Washington), as a free enhancement.

The system began in 1947 on the northern coast with a route connecting Manns Harbor on the mainland to Roanoke Island. Next came a tug-and-barge service crossing Oregon Inlet to connect the northern Outer Banks and Hatteras Island. Today the system operates seven passenger/vehicle routes plus the passenger-only Ocracoke Express, one of four runs to Ocracoke Island.

For the first time since its launch in 2018, the Ocracoke Express will operate a state-owned catamaran-style ferry instead of a leased vessel. The new ferry will have 96 interior seats, 26 seats on the upper deck, two wheelchair tie-downs, 16 bicycle racks, concessions and wireless internet access.

Here are the options for travelers to Ocracoke:

- **Ocracoke Express.** [Reservations](#) can be made for this passenger ferry from Hatteras to the Silver Lake Harbor terminal at the walkable/bike-friendly [Village of Ocracoke](#), which is also served by free seasonal tram. Trip duration: 70 minutes.
- **Hatteras-Ocracoke.** Boarding is first-come/first-served for this route between Hatteras and the terminal just across Hatteras Inlet (about 14 miles from the village). The trip is free, but travelers should expect a wait in summer. Trip duration: 60 minutes.
- **Cedar Island-Ocracoke.** [Reservations](#) are accepted for this route, which uses the Silver Lake terminal. Trip duration: 2¼ hours.
- **Swan Quarter-Ocracoke.** [Reservations](#) are accepted for this route, which uses the Silver Lake terminal. Trip duration: 2¾ hours.

The other ferry system routes are Currituck-Knotts Island, Aurora-Bayview, Cherry Branch-Minnesott Beach and Fort Fisher-Southport. All are first-come/first-served. Find schedules [here](#).

<https://media.visitnc.com/Take-a-75th-Anniversary-Ferry-Trip-to-Ocracoke>