



# A DAY IN CAMDEN COUNTY

**S**tunning nature, pristine waters and a variety of trails and parks create the perfect backdrop to experience and reconnect with history and nature in Camden County. The still mirrored waters of the historic Dismal Swamp Canal provide a glimpse of this waterway's colorful past. Once a refuge to thousands of freedom seekers, today the Dismal Swamp offers many opportunities for remembrance, reflection and recreation. Let's begin your journey!

## MORNING

### **Dismal Swamp State Park & Dismal Swamp Canal**

▶ 2294 US Hwy 17 N, South Mills

The mysteriously and formidably named Great Dismal Swamp straddles the North Carolina-Virginia border and was once a thriving refuge and destination for freedom seekers. In the 19th century, the Swamp was a morass of huge trees towering over dense underbrush and delicate ferns, inhabited by black bears, wildcats and poisonous snakes. The Dismal Swamp Canal, hand dug by hired enslaved labor, opened to navigation in 1805 after 12 years of backbreaking work under highly unfavorable conditions. This 22-mile-long canal allowed

trade between the Chesapeake Bay in VA and the Albemarle Sound in NC. Today, archaeologists believe the Dismal Swamp was home to the largest maroon colony in the United States. The Dismal Swamp State Park, a designation on the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, offers a visitor center and museum, boardwalk, trails, recreational activities and Ranger-Led programs.

The Dismal Swamp State Park is open to the public without charge, year-round. Bike and boat rentals are available for recreational use. Visit [NCParks.gov](http://NCParks.gov) or contact (252) 771-6593 for programs, exhibits and trail information.



INSPIRING EXPLORATION AND APPRECIATION FOR THE AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERIENCE...

The **African American Experience of NENC (AAENENC)** celebrates the contributions of African American and encourages a deeper understanding of the significance of the region's cultural heritage in order to build more inclusive communities.

This project is a collaborative project between six NC counties that include:

- ▶ Camden
- ▶ Chowan
- ▶ Currituck
- ▶ Dare
- ▶ Pasquotank
- ▶ Perquimans

**Learn more online at:**  
[NCBlackHeritageTour.com](http://NCBlackHeritageTour.com)

## **McBride Colored School Highway Marker**

- ▶ 1332 NC Hwy 343 S, South Mills

While traveling down NC Hwy 343 South, visitors will notice the McBride Colored School Highway Marker. This was the site of a Rosenwald School, which opened in 1928 for the education of African Americans in Camden County. Today, the Rosenwald Community Center hosts community events and commemorates the works and vision of those early educators and leaders.

\*Tours unavailable.

## **Sawyer's Creek - Marian Anderson School Highway Marker**

- ▶ 248 Scotland Rd., Camden

Before grabbing brunch in Camden, drive by the former Sawyer's Creek High School. Opening in 1952 for Camden County's African American students, this school was later renamed in honor of Marian Anderson by Principal W. C. Witherspoon. After integration in 1969, Marian Anderson High School became Camden County Middle School.

\*Tours unavailable.

## BRUNCH/LUNCH

Take time to enjoy a delicious brunch and sweet treat at a Camden eatery! Belcross Bake Shoppe serves up homemade sweet potato ham biscuits, sandwiches, pastries, and cookies. Check out Topside Deli or Taylor's Oak for local BBQ and perfectly cooked fried chicken. Take a look, <https://www.visitcamdencountync.com/dining/>,

to find your perfect lunch spot.

## AFTERNOON

- ▶ **Parksville AME Zion Church**  
566 N. Trotman Rd., Camden County

Parksville African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church is the oldest African American church in Camden County. Founded by Andrew Cartwright in 1867, AME Zion church was known as the "freedom church" for its efforts in assisting thousands of enslaved African Americans secure freedom.

\*Tours unavailable.

## **Camden County Heritage Museum & Historic Jail**

- ▶ 117 NC Hwy 343 S, Camden

Hear the remarkable story of Moses Grandy, a man born enslaved in Camden County, who became a skilled waterman along the NC Coast and Dismal Swamp Canal, a prominent abolitionist and author. After securing his freedom in 1827, Captain Grandy traveled to Boston to publish his autobiography. Proceeds from his life story, "Narrative of the Life of Moses Grandy: Late a Slave in the United States," were used to help liberate Grandy's enslaved relatives. The museum also features displays on local African American churches, Rosenwald Schools and important community figures like Samuel Shaw, the first African American County Commissioner.

The museum and historic Jail are open on Saturday from 10am-3pm and at other times by appointment (252) 771-8333. Free Admission.

## SHOPPING & RECREATION

Before grabbing dinner, take some time to roam around town & shop! Poor Boys Produce offers fresh fruits, homemade fudge, beautiful flowers and outdoor décor. Browse the many treasures at the Vintage Lilley or stroll the boardwalk and trails at Treasure Point Park.

## DINNER

Enjoy a stunning view of the local waterway, along with homemade pasta dishes, build your own pizzas and farm-to-table ingredients at Paradiso Roma Ristorante. Track One Restaurant serves up made from scratch Southern classics like chicken pot pie, fried fish and refreshing seasonal salads. Explore your options, <https://www.visitcamdencountync.com/dining/>.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

North River Campground, nestled in the woods of Camden County, offers easy access to the Outer Banks and other northeastern NC locations. This RV Park & lodging facility features numerous amenities. Visit [www.northrivercampground.com](http://www.northrivercampground.com) to learn more and make reservations.