



*A Self-guided Tour of the Town of Sunset Beach
By Land or By Sea*

The Town of Sunset Beach invites you to visit and enjoy several points of interest in our beautiful coastal community. This self-guided tour will take you from our mainland to our island, which – we think – is the most beautiful beach in North Carolina. This tour was developed as part of the Town's 50th Anniversary, celebrated on March 26, 2013.

Sunset Beach is unique in that it encompasses both a mainland and an island. With a population of approximately 3,600 full-time residents that increases to approximately 15,000 each summer, it is the southernmost island in North Carolina. Sunset Beach is affectionately known as *the smallest of the Brunswick Islands*.

Our town had its beginnings in 1955 and was first called Bald Beach until it was purchased by Mannon C. Gore. Mr. Gore was so impressed by the beautiful sunsets that he renamed the island Sunset Beach. The North Carolina General Assembly ratified the incorporation of the Town of Sunset Beach in 1963 and Mr. Gore served as the Town's first mayor.

This walking tour includes points of interest on the mainland and the island. Each site is numbered to correspond with the location number on the map found on the back cover. Please note that the sites are an easy walk or a short drive from each other.

After touring our Town, we know you will grow to appreciate its beauty as much as we do.

*Welcome to Sunset Beach!
We're glad you're here!*

The Mainland

1 Town Hall: A good place to begin, Town Hall is located at 700 Sunset Boulevard North. All Town offices, including our Police Department, are located at Town Hall. A visit will provide important information about our Town and informative brochures available to all residents and visitors. For specific information about Sunset Beach, events, and the surrounding area, visit the Town website, www.sunsetbeachnc.gov.

2 Planetarium: A right turn from Town Hall takes you to Ingram Planetarium, a state-of-the-art facility with a 40-foot dome. The planetarium is home to the world's third largest SciDome HD Digital Sky Theater. For additional information and hours of operation, visit www.museumplanetarium.org.



Photo by Dianne Walker



Photo by Dianne Walker



Photo by Town Staff

3 Sunset Beach Park: A short distance from Town Hall is the 5.2 acre town park with 1,200 feet of waterfront. Take time to walk under the many live oak trees as you approach the waterway. “God made this for a park,” said the Brunswick County Parks and Recreation Director when he visited the site. The park is host to many special events throughout the year and an artisanal market all summer long.

4 Boat Ramp: From the park, it is an easy walk to the two-acre boat ramp. Dedicated in 2012 with the goal of providing access for all to our waterways, the Department of Fish and Wildlife joined with the Town to make this a reality. It soon became very popular for residents and visitors to launch a boat, kayak, or canoe.



Photo by June Rundall



Photo by June Rundall

5 Fishing Pier: Beside the boat launch is the fishing pier. From the very young to the seasoned fisherman, this spot is a great place to drop a line or just watch the boats on the waterway. Visit www.ncwildlife.org or www.ncdmf.net for more information.

6 Old Bridge: Continuing on the road and just around the corner on Shoreline Drive is Sunset Beach's most famous icon, the Sunset Beach Pontoon Bridge. The bridge sits in its permanent home under tall trees and welcomes you to *walk across today* as perhaps you drove in the past. Old Bridge Preservation Society (OBPS) volunteers are on site during the summer and many events are held throughout the year. For more information, please visit their website at www.oldbridgepreservationsociety.org.

Photo courtesy of OBPS



7 Fire Stations: Directly across the road from the Old Bridge is Fire Station #1.

Two fire stations are located within the town and both welcome visitors during the day.

The Town's first fire station was located on the same site as Station #1. Prior to the original station, however, the department's pumper, an Army surplus truck with a 1,000 tank donated by Mannon C. Gore, was stored in a shed on what is now the Sunset Beach Park (#3 on the walking tour).



Photo by Dianne Walker

Until the mid 1960's, all firefighters were volunteers.

8 Fire Station #2 was dedicated on April 9, 2012.

Firefighters at both stations, when available, are happy to treat visitors to a tour and children of all ages are invited to take a look at some of the trucks "up close and personal."



Fire Station #2 is located on Old Georgetown Road

Photo by Wendy Barbee

The Island

9 Mannon C. Gore Bridge: Drive across our new bridge (*anyone who has lived in or visited Sunset Beach prior to 2010 will probably always call it the “new” bridge*) and note the spectacular views of the waterway and ocean as you approach our barrier island.

The dedication of the bridge, on October 1, 2010, was celebrated with guests from across the state as well as Town residents. Prior to allowing cars to drive over the bridge, hundreds of people participated in a “walk across the bridge.”

The bridge spans 2,600 feet in length and 65 feet in height. Held up by twenty-two concrete columns, the bridge has two vehicular lanes and two bicycle/walking lanes.



Photo by Irene Dowdy, 1st Place Winner 2010 Sunset at Sunset Photo Contest

10 Public Parking: Once off the bridge, continue on Sunset Blvd. South straight to the public parking and the Gazebo. Additional parking can be found at the pier parking lot (a daily fee is charged) and at designated spots on the island.

11 The Gazebo: Although there are many public walkways, including two with handicap ramps to the beach, the Gazebo with its public parking is the most accessible. Sit for awhile and watch the ocean or continue down the walkway to the beach near the pier. Take a few minutes to become aware of our rules and regulations along with information on safety posted to make your stay an enjoyable experience.



Photo by Mark Head



Photos by Dianne Walker

13 Kindred Spirit Mailbox: No one knows *for sure* who placed the mailbox on Bird Island, but it is the perfect spot for sharing messages from the heart. Spiral notebooks are filled with personal stories, prayers, and more. Take some time to sit on the bench and add your own story as you begin your entry with *Dear Kindred Spirit*. When the notebooks and journals are filled they are kept safe by the *Kindred Spirit*.

12 Bird Island: In the Gazebo lot is a kiosk area with information about our bird sanctuary, Bird Island. Sunset Beach at one time was separate from Bird Island, but the accretion of ocean sand due to hurricane activity and other environmental changes resulted in the islands becoming one. This 1,300 acre State Preserve is connected to Sunset Beach and reachable by walking or biking along the beach.



14 Sea Turtle Watch: Sunset Beach is home to The Sunset Beach Sea Turtle Watch Program (SSBTWP), a private, non-profit program whose volunteers help monitor turtle nesting at the beach. The turtle watch program is staffed by volunteers who walk the beach every morning, sit at nests when the hatchlings are ready to emerge, and conduct informational and educational programs. The informational programs – called “Turtle Time” – are free at 7 p.m. on Sunday evenings beginning in June and running during the nesting months at the Sunset Properties Parking lot – weather permitting. There is also a program on Wednesdays at noon at Ingram Planetarium. Visit their website at www.sunsetbeachturtles.org.

15 Vesta Pier: Located in the center of the island is the southernmost fishing pier in North Carolina. Named for the buried civil war blockade-runner, Vesta, which rests in the sand under the pier, the 900 foot long pier is a favorite for anglers. A walk on the pier offers a self-guided tour providing information about the history of the island. Visit the website at www.sunsetbeachpier.com.



Photo by Mark Head

Another point of interest in Sunset Beach

The Town of Sunset Beach is proud to be included in the North Carolina Birding Trail. The Coastal Plains portion of the state-wide trail includes 102 birding sites organized into sixteen groups east of Interstate 95. A brochure providing a guide to the five (5) birding sites and the variety of birds at each site is available at Town Hall. More information about birding trails in North Carolina can be found at www.ncbirdingtrail.org.



This brochure was created as part of the Town of Sunset Beach's 50th Anniversary celebration. Over the years, Sunset Beach has grown from a little known haven to one of North Carolina's most popular seaside destinations. Through it all, however, we have maintained our small town ambience. We hope that you enjoy the self-guided tour through our Town, that you will visit often, and perhaps decide to make Sunset Beach your home.

50th Anniversary Committee

Edward M. Gore, Sr.

Clarice Holden

Karen Joseph, Town Council Liaison

Ron Klein

Virginia "Bunny" Lauzon

Dian Robbins

Carol Scott, Town Council Liaison

Brenda Snead

Herb Tinger

Lisa Anglin, Staff Contact

*Text provided by Dian Robbins
Design by Karen Joseph*

These numbers correspond to the information inside the booklet.



Atlantic Ocean

March, 2013; Updated September, 2018