

101

Things to Do in Johnston County

You can find all this and more in the official Johnston County Visitors Guide and on the web site, www.johnstoncountync.org.

Explore and enjoy all there is to do in Johnston County!!!

1. First, get to know the county by visiting the Johnston County Heritage Center to learn about the county's history and its people at the exhibits on the first floor.
2. Spend the day on the restored farmstead at the Tobacco Farm Life Museum and see how Eastern North Carolina farm families lived, worked and played during the depression era.
3. Stop and sip on grapes or buy some jelly as you enjoy the picturesque vineyards and winery at Hinnant Family Vineyards in Pine Level.
4. Check out what's biting, relax and fish on the banks of the Neuse River at the Town Commons in Smithfield, the ponds at Howell Woods or Langdon's Fishing.
5. For 25-65% off national retail brands like Nike, Ralph Lauren Polo, Coach and Liz Claiborne, don't miss a shopping trip to Carolina Premium Outlets in Smithfield with over 80 stores to choose from.
6. Take a 2-hour canoe trip on the river with Neuse Adventures Canoe & Kayak Rentals in Clayton.
7. Ava Gardner - she was a Hollywood legend during the "Golden Age" and she was born in the Brogden Community east of Smithfield - visit the Ava Gardner Museum and learn about her Cinderella story and rise to stardom.
8. Flowers, fountains, concrete planters and an outstanding gift shop are what you will find at DeWayne's Home & Garden Showplace in Selma.
9. Catch the family fun of youth athletics throughout the year for soccer, baseball, football and basketball...check out schedules with your local Parks & Recreation Department.
10. Find out who the Cornbread Man is at Atkinson's Mill and take a tour of the old grist mill still producing outstanding cornmeal products. Where did hush puppies get their name anyway?
11. Find the soldier's uniform from World War I at the Benson Museum of Local History.

12. Sit under the pine trees and enjoy gospel music at the Benson Singing Convention held every June....amazing! Johnston County's oldest festival!
13. Take a trip down a waterslide at Tucker Lake near Benson. Take some sunscreen!
14. Enjoy a play by the Benson Little Theatre group at W.J. Barefoot Auditorium, a restored high school.
15. Looking for somewhere to launch your boat into the Neuse River? You can do so at the boat ramp at Smithfield Town Commons, the Neuse Bait & Tackle on US 301 and Richardson's Bridge Boat Ramp in southern Johnston County.
16. Follow the Carolina's Campaign Civil War Trail in Johnston County that marks the activities of General William T. Sherman as he marched from Atlanta as the war ended in 1865. There are ten markers that begin in the Bentonville community and travel through to Clayton.
17. Enjoy the thrills of motocross tracks at the Motocross Park East in the Archer's Lodge area and the new Comp Park BMX facility in the Cleveland Community.
18. If you love to hunt for deer or would like to try shooting boar (feral pigs), contact Howell Woods for several controlled hunts....you can even rent a cabin for the trip right on the site.
19. Conduct research on your family's genealogical past in Johnston County at the Margaret Lee Reading Room at the Heritage Center.
20. Check out a book or video from one of the eight libraries in the county. (Smithfield, Selma, Benson, Clayton, Cleveland (40/42) Four Oaks, Kenly and Princeton)
21. Do ghost stories intrigue you? Plan on joining the Historical Ghost Walk held in Smithfield each October or read the Ghost Stories of North Carolina book at the library for more stories...including one on Bentonville Battlefield.
22. Taste and compare Holt Lake's, White Swan's, Smithfield's and Stephenson's BBQ.....determine who is the best? Everyone has their favorite!!!!
23. Get to Wilson's Mills Farm Market early and often for delicious locally baked cakes and pies and seasonal fresh produce.
24. Did you know you can find rhododendron in the Flower Hill area, where the piedmont meets the coastal plain in North Carolina....the best time to visit the area is the first couple of weeks in May.
25. If you want to ride bikes in Johnston County, there are many country roads to explore. The Selma Cyclepaths have developed several biking trails; check out their web site, <http://www.selmacyclepaths.org/21376/index.html> for more info.

26. Walk the fields and union earthworks at the Bentonville Battlefield State Historic Site – the largest land battle fought in North Carolina during the Civil War. Also enjoy the museum, Harper House and driving trails of the battlefield.
27. Take a tour of B&B Produce, a sweet potato distribution center in Benson and learn how to cook a sweet potato in the microwave.
28. Buy a blue ribbon award-winning pound cake and other treats at The Pound Cake Company in Benson.
29. Shop for and cut your own Christmas tree at Northlake Christmas Tree Farm in Meadow or Mountain Branch Farm in the Cleveland community.
30. Walk along the new Buffalo Creek Greenway for vistas of the Neuse River and great exercise. You can start at the Neuse River Walk in Downtown Smithfield or the Community Park at Booker Dairy Rd.
31. Honor the farming heritage of Benson and the beast of burden at the annual Benson Mule Days Festival held each September.
32. Treat yourself to a lemonade or orangeade at Warren Drug Co. in Benson or Creech Drug Store in Selma.
33. Admire the many fine miniature horses bred at Banks Miniature Horse Farm near Clayton.
34. Enjoy a performance at the 600-seat performing arts auditorium, The Clayton Center, in the restored Clayton high school.
35. Walk the many trails at Clemmons Educational State Forest and listen to the talking rocks and trees and exhibits explaining the managed forest. Great place for a family picnic!
36. Lace on your skates and take a trip around the rink at Interskate of Clayton.
37. Take your bike and enjoy the thrills and avoid the spills at Legend Park bike course in Clayton.
38. Bowl, play pool or enjoy the arcade games at Rainbow Lanes Family Fun Center in Clayton....a great place for a birthday party!
39. In October, Boyette Farms turns into the Clayton Fear Farm complete with haunted houses, scary hay rides and much more.
40. Return to Boyette Farms at Christmas time for a hayride along the Neuse River for the “Lights on the Neuse”.
41. For kids of all ages, stop by the Pottery Camp and paint a one-of-a-kind gift for someone special.
42. The Flip Side in downtown Clayton offers live entertainment year round.

43. Jone's Lunch or Short's Grill are the places to visit for some famous red skin Carolina Packer Hot Dogs. It's a Johnston County favorite!
44. Tee it up and golf in Clayton with The Neuse Golf Club, Pine Hollow Golf Club and Riverwood Golf & Athletic Club.
45. Take a swing and crack the bat at Sluggers indoor batting cages or Johnston County Sports.
46. Enjoy a sweet treat at the Cleveland Cake & Coffee Co. where homemade goodness awaits! (Now two locations to tempt you!)
47. Pick strawberries April to June at Smith's Strawberry Farm & Nursery at McGee's Crossroads, Wilson's Mills Farm Market, Beasley's Berries or Jan's Strawberries for some fun with the kids!
48. Hike, bike and just explore the trails at Howell Woods Environmental Learning Center off of Devil's Race Track Road...watch out for birds!
49. Stop and shop in one of Johnston County's original hardware stores at Austin General Store in Four Oaks.
50. Experience the auctioneer's fast paced chant as he sales antiques at the Four Oaks Auction Gallery – last Saturday of the month.
51. Explore the unique mud and stick chimney construction and hand-hew planks of the Boyette Slave & Schoolhouse near Kenly.
52. Learn more about the history of Kenly and the lives of local farmers and citizens at the Kenly Area Historical Society.
53. For great Southern cooking and a basket of Atkinson's Mill hushpuppies stop by Parkside Café in Pine Level, or Holt's Lake BBQ in Smithfield.
54. For the largest selection of Hosta and uniquely colored Lilies, head out to Princeton on US Hwy 70 to Powell's Gardens.
55. Tap your foot to the country tunes and gospel music served up with style at the American Music Jubilee in Selma – it's a treat for the whole family!
56. For savings at the box office, the historic Howell Theatre in Downtown Smithfield offers all shows for \$2.50.
57. Walk among the pine trees and trails around the Johnston Community College Arboretum in Smithfield and enjoy local garden plants & trees – check their calendar for special sales and events.
58. For hometown talent, visit the Neuse Little Theatre, which hosts several performances each year at Smithfield Town Commons – Legend Hut.

59. All year round, the Paul A. Johnston Auditorium offers entertainment such as the Performing Arts Concert Series, the Country Music Showcase and Johnston County Chorale – buy your season tickets early for the best seat in the house!
60. Johnston County's new ten-theatre complex offers first run movies with stadium seating – check out the movies at Smithfield Cinemas.
61. Take a stroll along the Neuse River Walk at the Smithfield Town Commons – this one-mile trail begins at the boat ramp on Front Street.
62. Looking to enjoy some art? Try the Frank Creech Art Gallery at Johnston Community College and exhibits at The Clayton Center. For more events for the arts, visit the Johnston County Arts Council site, <http://www.johnstoncountyarts.org>
63. Visit the 1924 restored Selma Union Station where railroad exhibits fill the waiting area and learn about local Selma history. AMTRAK tickets are on sale in the lobby – take a ride and enjoy the rumble of the tracks.
64. Shop, Shop and shop some more for memories gone by at over 15 antique stores in the charming uptown Selma Antique Shopping District.
65. Home to the Carhartt jeans and big man apparel with sizes up to 52, Carolina Apparel in Selma is the place to shop.
66. Have you ever seen so much stuff for sale as they have at JR Discount Outlets, you will be amazed at the selection of household items, books, clothes, cosmetics and fragrances.
67. For great savings, buy direct from the factory store of Soffe Company, and find bargains on t-shirts and shorts.
68. Take a picnic lunch to the Benson Singing Grove with the whole family and enjoy the shelter for the adults and playground for the kids!
69. For that fishing trip, you will find all your supplies at the Castaway Fishing store in Downtown Smithfield – watch out fish!
70. The award winning country hams at Smithfield Ham Shop is only one reason to stop by and shop for unique gifts – also view the “curing room” and learn about this century old method of preserving meats.
71. Enjoy a special and unique treat at The Cakery restaurant and bakery, which features sandwiches and salads, and Oh so yummy baked goods!
72. On a warm day, the Hills of Snow Snowballs on US 301 in Smithfield offers relief from the heat with over 99 flavors.
73. For bluegrass music on Friday nights, visit the Country Music Tonight show at the Historic Ice House Theatre in Selma.

74. For a special child's birthday party, book the Splash Pool at the new Smithfield Recreation & Aquatic Center.
75. Year round living history events are held at Bentonville Battlefield depicting the lives of Civil War soldiers and their families, medical displays and artillery demonstrations.
76. Muscle cars and classic cars line the streets of Selma every April at the Annual Selma Car Classic.
77. The whole community enjoys the day at the Cleveland Strawberry Festival with carnival rides, food, games and of course – fresh picked strawberries and ice cream.
78. Pick up a map of Kenly and cruise the yard sales, car shows and crafts at the Annual Krusin' Kenly event held each year in April.
79. A day of fun is in store for you and the whole family at the Four Oaks Acorn Festival held each May, with a parade, live entertainment, and art exhibits.
80. One of the oldest festivals in Smithfield, the Ham & Yam celebration has grown to include national entertainment, children's activities, BBQ cook-offs and much more. Get there early on Saturday for Ham Biscuits!
81. Celebrate the community's commitment to their agriculture heritage at the Tobacco Farm Life Museum where school groups can play heritage games, milk a "plastic cow" and churn butter. A truly heritage based educational trip!
82. For movie buffs, plan to be in Smithfield in November for the annual Ava Gardner Independent Film Festival for a host of films, shorts and documentaries.
83. Drive through the bright lights of the Meadow community, ride Santa's train and visit the Country Christmas Candy Store for some old-fashion sweet treats. (Plan on dinner at Meadow Village Restaurant before the lights – yum!)
84. Experience how Christmas was celebrated with the Harper House kitchen decorated with authentic Victorian Era Yuletide decorations at Bentonville Battlefield Civil War Site.
85. Celebrate a country-style Christmas at Tobacco Farm Life Museum with old-fashioned decorations and refreshments.
86. The Coats Country Museum rings the bells every 4th of July to celebrate the community. The museum is open on Wednesdays year round.
87. Getting married? There are several unique venues in Johnston County to tie the knot. Preston Woodall House, The Gardens at Landmark, Hinnant Family Vineyard & Winery, The Wagner House and The Clayton Center.
88. The Johnston County Livestock Arena hosts 4H shows and sales each spring – learn more about our farming families and how they care for livestock.

89. Lazy O Farms is dedicated to teaching children about farm life and host several events year round at Easter, summer time and Thanksgiving.
90. For that family reunion or special event, contact SSS Ranch to enjoy the outdoors, fishing, trails, farm and exotic animals.
91. Watch cars race at the Dunn-Benson Dragstrip near Benson every Saturday night – April to October.
92. Orchard House Booksellers offers more than books; also enjoy ice cream and Friday night entertainment.
93. If you are brave enough, rent a Harley for the day at Shelton's Harley-Davidson in Smithfield and hit the country X-roads of Johnston County.
94. Create a family fun craft project collecting your treasures and take them to Memory Lane Frame Studio where Tara will honor your memories with a unique shadowbox.
95. Whistle Stop Quilt Shop offers quilters an abundance of items you will need like patterns, thread, cotton material and how-to books.
96. For golfers traveling I-95, Cardinal Country Club in Pine Level and Reedy Creek near Four Oaks are an easy drive. Drive....get it?
97. Need to find a sports bar for the big game – remember N& N Sports Bar in Smithfield, McKinley's Pub in Clayton and Cleveland Draft House, I-40, Exit 312.
98. Need to refresh and rejuvenate? Try one of the day spas in the area: The Dupree House, Georgia's Salon & Spa, Andrea & Company Day Spa, Botanicals Salon & Spa and My Girlfriend's Place Spa.
99. For a special mother and daughter outing, visit Paint it Red Parties in Clayton followed by a visit to the children's spa – It's all about me!
100. Have you ever eaten in a silver bullet diner – make the trip to the Rockin' Comet Diner in Clayton. Save room for dessert!
101. For the largest southern buffet anywhere, visit Meadow Village Restaurant 7 miles south on Hwy 50 from Benson. It is worth the drive, trust me!

Hope you enjoyed the list!!!

If you are through with the 101 Things to Do List, and you came up with some other fun things we haven't discovered, please contact the Johnston County Visitors Bureau (919) 989-8687 and we will update the list with your creative ideas!