

00:19

A farmer in the deep South,
a boat lover on the coast,
a marine biologist who studies sharks,
an artist who paints his home town,
a wreck-diver,
a scientist researching storms
and a singing cook.

00:55

They all live and work on the East coast of the American South.

01:14

In the town of Allenhurst, in the very South of Georgia, where the summers are hot and humid,
Hosley Hall has his farm.

01:28

Farming has always played an important part in Hosley's life.

01:33 O-Ton Hosley Hall

My father was a farmer. And...but I was too small to do any work. But I was able to comprehend everything just at a small age.

01:43

Hosley works his fields all by himself – assisted by his ancient tractor. That way he's very flexible in organizing his days.

01:57

He loves his traditional southern crops.

02:01 O-Ton Hosley Hall

This first row here is the Speckled Butterbean. These two rows here is, are Red Ripper Pea. The four here are Spanish Peanut. And one is a large Green Balling Peanut. But real tasty for eating. And to the left over there eight other rows are Sweet Potatoes. Red Ruby. Georgia Red Sweet Potatoes.

02:25

In Georgia, one out of every seven people work in agriculture. It has always been the strongest sector of the state's economy. The most important products are peanuts, pecans, peaches, cotton and tobacco. The rich soil and the subtropical climate are ideal.

There is only one drawback:

02:43 O-Ton Hosley Hall

The bugs eat you up. It's dusty, my allergies are bad, I take shots but for some reason, I don't know, I think it's just all dirt and the mud. Just walking through the mud, through the cane field.

02:56

As late as the 19th century, Afro-Americans worked as slaves on the rice- and cotton-plantations of wealthy white farmers. It was not until after the American Civil War, in 1965, that slavery was abolished in the Southern States as well.

03:15

O-Ton Hosley Hall

It goes back into history, you know that the African Americans that were brought here were slaves. They weren't originally from here but they was brought over here, abused and they was promised things. And with the cost and everything, for some reason the African-Americans you know, really don't, you know, care too much about the outsides of the farm. But that's, that's very few.

03:40

Hosley is a proud Georgia farmer. But he has other interests, too. For example vintage cars.

03:49

His Chevy is almost 60 years old. Given how well Hosley takes care of it, it may easily reach 100.

04:00 O-Ton Hosley Hall

I bought it from friends, about three or four miles in the same area. It was basically from the junk yard. And I restored it. Back to 100% original. I was dumbfounded. I did the wrong thing, It was too costic. But I just wanted a piece of history.

04:20

What makes Hosley's car stand out is its color, the color of a classic American line of tractors.

O-Ton Hosley Hall

I like green. John Deere Green as you can see. And I just had a vision of a John Deere Green truck. And to me it's a lot of beauty. As well as other people really like it.

04:41

Hosley is known in the area - as a music teacher, singer and songwriter.

05:46

Georgia is famous for its splendid mansions. Many of them were built by wealthy plantation-owners before the Civil War started in 1861.

05:58

The way north leads past the Golden Isles. People like to go there for the wildlife, but also for luxury resorts such as the Jekyll Island hotel.

06:16

80 miles further to the North is Savannah. It was the first town the English colonists founded in Georgia – with the consent of the local Indian chief. The beautiful homes and churches were built with the money earned from cotton.

06:38

Just North of Savannah is the state line of South Carolina.

06:46

Hilton Head Island.

At the Hilton Head yacht club, Lara Neece and her partner Brian are restoring their new boat.

Sailing is their biggest passion.

Before they can set out to the sea, the boat has to be completely overhauled. Lara and Brian are taking their time. The climate being so hot and humid in the American South, people don't like to be hurried.

07:21 O-Ton Lara Neece

We enjoy working on the boat. Of course, this is a huge project. But it's very rewarding. When you get to the end and you have done the work yourself, then you can look at it and you can be proud of what you've done and how far you've travelled on it. So it's a little bit about working with your hands. By it would be very expensive to pay someone to do all of the work that we need to do. So... We pay people to help us sometimes. On little things. But usually we are in charge of the projects and do most of the work.

07:54

Once the boat is finished they want to fulfill a dream.

08:00 O-Ton Lara Neece

Well we're planning on leaving here and we want to travel down to the Bahamas again and then carry on into the Caribbean. We want to make it down to the US Virgin Islands and possibly stay there for a little while. But the long term goal is to sail to New Zealand eventually, so we will take our time getting there, but that is the long term goal.

08:23

Laura's artwork helps to pay for the project. She shows it at exhibitions and runs her own distribution company.

She paints, draws on wood and designs t-shirts. Lara was born and raised on the coast, and this environment is a constant inspiration for her art.

08:48 O-Ton Lara Neece

It's connected to anything that's natural. So the ocean, the creatures that live in it, the plants and animals. Mostly I focus on the South-East because that's where I live, but when we travel I try to take photographs and take my sketchbook around and draw things that I see.

09:08

As long as the sailboat remains on land, Lara and Brian use the kayak. They always pay attention to the weather. On the East Coast the weather can change very suddenly.

09:20 O-Ton Lara Neece

Well, we were in a bad electrical storm off the coast of the Cape Fear. And the lightning got very bad and a front came in from three different sides. So it's called the Cape Fear for a reason. So it was very scary because the lightning was so close that it caused us to be blind for a few minutes whenever it struck.

09:45

There are about seventy miles from Hilton Head Island to Charleston – famous for the decommissioned aircraft carrier in its harbor and its historic mansions.

The citizens of Charleston had made their fortunes on the back of the slaves who worked on their plantations.

In the middle of the 19th century the southern states still refused to abolish slavery and decided to break away from the United States of America.

It was the Southern states who started the American Civil War in 1861 by attacking Fort Sumter, just off the coast of Charleston.

10:25

Most fishermen associate the South Carolina coast with something entirely different: It's one of the best fishing grounds on the Atlantic coast. In order to ensure sustainable fishery, the "Marine Resources Research Institute" monitors the condition of all major fishery species.

10:40

Marine biologist Erin Levesque is going to catch sharks in order to tag and examine them.

10 :53 O-Ton Erin Levesque

We use mullet most of the time for bait; it's a fish that stays on the hooks really well. So we're actually catching the mullet at different times when we sample. And we'll freeze them, we have lots of bait when we go out.

11:08

The captain and his crew always head out towards the large ships just off the coast. This is where the sharks like to be.

The scientists collect data to find out how many sharks and which shark species regularly come to this area.

11:27 O-Ton Erin Levesque

Sharks make, make very large movements. They make very large migrations. So, some species that we find, blacknose for instance. Those sharks will move maybe all the way down to Florida. And then they'll move back up here. The same thing with finetooth sharks. So depending on the season, in the winter time, they're going to move to Florida, they'll move to warmer waters where they can find food sources.

11:52

The scientists catch some sharks to examine them and to tag them.

Although the procedure may appear rough, nearly all the fish make it through unharmed.

12:07

Erin Levesque is also interested in how certain fishing methods affect the sharks. Some sharks are caught and released again, because they are too young or because they are by-catch. But they may still suffer and die as a result.

12:25

A blood sample is taken to examine stress levels. And every shark is measured and examined.

12:37

The collected data are noted down next to the numbers of the tags.

12:42 O-Ton Erin Levesque

The shark tags we use are actually the tags that are used on cattle, on sheep or cows, they're just plastic tags that we can clip through their fins. And they're, they're very heavy plastic, so they last a long time.

13:02

If the scientists find that one particular species is being overfished, they can declare it as a threatened species. Then the catching of these fish can be banned. Not all professional fishermen are happy about this.

13:16

In order to evaluate the condition of the different species, the scientists have to determine the age of the fish.

13:26 O-Ton Erin Levesque

The other thing that we got that's very valuable are the otoliths. And the otoliths are kind of like earbones, that's the best way I can describe them. And once you take a little section, a very small thin section of that otolith, you can determine the age of the fish.

13:44

Erin exchanges her research findings with colleagues in neighboring states. So they can also monitor species which migrate from one area to another.

14:00

Measuring, evaluating, and thus ensuring that the fish stay healthy is a dream job for Erin.

14:11 O-Ton Erin Levesque

I was always investigating and very curious. And so I just kind of grew up with that natural love and knew that that's what, that's where I wanted to be. And that was my, my real passion.

14:23

These dolphins also appreciate it when the fish along the coast are healthy.

14:32

The journey continues north. 100 miles from Charleston there is Myrtle Beach, followed by over 60 beaches – a perfect place for anyone who enjoys a bit of animation.

14:58

The properties sitting right on the seashore are very popular. But each hurricane puts them in danger.

15:20

Another 70 miles to the North-East lies Wilmington, North Carolina. A small town known for its historic mansions.

15:33

Chris Wilson likes to paint what is around him.

15:36 O-Ton Chris Wilson

I'm looking for extraordinary landscapes. Things that are extraordinary in terms of visual interest and it will make a really good painting. And so, I'm not really seeking out the, the best-known tourist sights in North Carolina and then going, trying to do those. Because it's not the sight that I'm after it's the composition and the design that I'm after. So, so that's what interests me. Sometimes I might move a tree or move a cloud, because it makes a better composition. But things which are not transitory are things always have to stay where they are in relation to themselves.

16:16

Chris Wilson teaches art at a nearby college. He loves 19th century architecture, particularly the neoclassic Antebellum-style, which was popular before the American Civil War.

His own mansion was built in 1854 by a German immigrant. It has 21 rooms.

Each object in the house has been carefully selected.

The basement is where he paints.

16:46 O-Ton Chris Wilson

I am primarily a studio painter. And it simply is impossible to take a sixteen foot canvas outside in the wind and think that it's not going to take off like a sail.

17:00

Chris has taken on a huge project: one hundred paintings of places along Highway 64, which runs across all of North Carolina.

17:11

However it's the coast he loves most.

17:13 O-Ton Chris Wilson

My connection to the sea and the ocean is actually from childhood onwards. Many times during the year, my father's family had houses on the coast, my mother's family lived full time on the coast. And so the happiest days really of my youth were really spent on the coastal islands.

17:37

100 miles northeast of Wilmington lies Morehead City. The small seaside town is a top destination for American wreck divers.

17:47

Nema Triplett is a passionate wreck-diver. She also organizes tours.

17:53 O-Ton Nema Triplett

This area, it's got a lot of really amazing ship wrecks that attract marine life through the Gulf Stream that's just incredible.

I've been diving to a lot of places in the world and I've never seen so much,, such a concentration of marine life. And so, it's just, it's just incredible, every time you go diving here.

18:12

The divers on this tour have come from New York, California and Canada.

After three hours on the Atlantic ocean they reach their first diving-site. They want to see the German submarine that was sunk here in World War II. They'll go down 100 feet beneath the sea.

18:39 O-Ton Nema Triplett

The submarines are actually one of the most popular shipwrecks in the world, the one we have U352. It was sunk in World War II actually on May 9th 1942, the US coastguard cutter Icarus located it and did a depth charge and disabled it. And when that happened, the captain of the submarine surfaced and so the majority of his crew were able to get out, escaped from the submarine. Seven sailors did not and they're still inside the submarine at depth.

19:15

Nema Triplett has often been down at the submarine, but she still loves it there.

19:22 O-Ton Nema Triplett

It just feels really peaceful. Just because you are on a place that never had people have chance to go to. And so it's just to me it's really a peaceful feeling to be under water and just breathe and

just concentrating on breathing and being mutually buoyant. And so it's just always been this really really peaceful thing to me.

19:41

The day's second stop lies a good hour away.

19:49

Nema and her fellow divers want to see the USS *Aeolus*.

19:56

This ship had been used to repair submarine telecommunication cables on the bottom of the Atlantic ocean. It was sunk in 1988 to form an artificial reef.

20:09

As usual there are sharks here. Today Nema meets a sand tiger shark.

20:21 O-Ton Nema Triplett

There is always the element of danger with scuba diving, but in my head there is an imaginary fence that the mean sharks don't enter around the ship wrecks in my head. You don't touch the marine life at all. Sometimes it's really, really tempting. We dove with a sand tiger shark that had a hook in it and it was easy, easy, easy within reach and I wanted to help it. But you don't, you don't touch the marine life.

20:51

100 miles further to the North, on the Outer Banks, there is the small town of Duck.

This is the LARC5.

21:01

Short for Light Amphibious Reconnaissance Craft, a former army vehicle.

21:11 O-Ton Jesse McNinch

It's an amphibious vessel. It allows us to get into the surf zone when the waves are breaking and you know, you can see it's a pretty treacherous area to work, and we're able to get into the surf zone and consistently, you know, put gear in or measure, make observations from that and then drive out.

21:29

Today a measuring device has to be collected. It has broken loose in a storm and was drifting off. It will have to be repaired before being set back in place.

21:41

The scientists of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science focus on coastal protection. They want to better understand the activity of the ocean.

The results of their research are significant for most shorelines on the planet.

22:04

In his self-designed sand drilling vehicle Dr. Jesse McNinch drives to the beach. He is going to take some samples.

22:14 O-Ton Jesse McNinch

We've measured storms and waves and tides and things like that for thirty years, now we know we can see, we have an actual thirty year record of sea level rise. We have a thirty year record of

storms. We have a thirty year record of, of how the shore line is changing. And so it improves, we're able to look at climate change because we were persistent in measurement. You can't do that with one year of data or two years of data.

22:34

This beach is a closed military site. So Jesse can carry out his experiments undisturbed.

Scientific drillings help to answer questions such as: How do storms hit the shore?

What kind of damage can they cause?

How high do tidal waves get, and how can people protect themselves?

The answers can be found in the sand.

23:10 O-Ton Jesse McNinch

There is a real story in history in the sand grains. And by taking these cores, digging holes by driving the sediment up into this barrel we can open it up and look at the record of the sediment, of the sand grains that preserved down below the beach. And most importantly what we really want to do is almost treat them like tree rings. Because the sediment records the passing storms. And what we just recorded a meter or so of sediment might preserve the last say ten or fifteen years of storms.

23:42

The East Coast of the United States is frequently hit by storms. Hurricanes often devastate whole stretches of the coastline.

Within minutes the weather can change dramatically.

23:58 O-Ton Jesse McNinch

Yeah, that was just a little girls' version. That was just a play version. I get excited during hurricane season and when hurricanes come. In part because of the research that we do, we need storms to make advances, to do the observations. But it's exciting, you see the community really come together during the storms. From cleaning, helping each other clean the trees out of yards and, and you know cleaning furniture that's been or houses that have been flooded.

24:30

The final part of the journey takes us to the state of Virginia.

Norfolk is home to America's largest naval base. It houses 134 aircraft and 75 ships.

Flights go out every six minutes.

25:00

On the far side of Chesapeake Bay lies Onancock, a quiet waterfront town of 1500 inhabitants. It is about 350 years old and has a protected yacht harbor.

25:16

The cook and musician Johnny Mo likes to entertain the guests at his restaurant. He sings about the beauty of the coast.

25:52 O-Ton Johnny Mo

Both started around the same time. About 13 years old I started getting a real love for the kitchen. My godfather owned a restaurant and I worked with him and he kind of taught me the ropes growing up and at the same time I was starting to like girls and I realized that the girls liked it

when you played a little guitar, so I started playing guitar, started singing. I got better at cooking, I got better at playing guitar and they both kind of grew into each other at the same time.

26:14

Before Johnny came to Onancock, there was not much gourmet food to be found here. So Johnny Mo's original restaurant became very popular.

26:30

There's always fresh fish. But the menu varies day by day, depending on what Johnny feels like cooking.

26:46 O-Ton Johnny Mo

I made a name for myself; I was taking some of the original food that's from this area. Such as crab cakes and simple seafood dishes - and added my own flavor, my own style to it. And I think that was a welcome addition to the area because as people were evolving down here and their pouts were evolving as well, they wanted something a little different than just the standard food and I was able to bring that here and was very welcomed with open arms.

27:11

When Johnny is in the kitchen, the rhythms get hot.

27:31 O-Ton Johnny Mo

There is always music in the kitchen for me. Every time around me. When I look up, when I hear the sizzling of something in a pan or the crackling or tapping the knife on a cutting board. There is always music around. So it inspires me. The right music and just have music around me as well.

27:46

Onancock is off the beaten track. Some guests at the restaurant come here just for Johnny Mo.

28:05

In the mornings Johnny heads out on Chesapeake Bay in his boat. The bay is the largest estuary in North America: It is 200 miles long and protected from the ocean waves.

28:16

What Johnny likes about Onancock is that there's absolutely nothing happening here.

28:31 O-Ton Johnny Mo

I've been everywhere from Maine down to Florida on the coast and this is special to me because of the fact that it's pretty much the last underdeveloped part of the whole entire East Coast. If you go up and down the coast there's not many little charming towns like this, little areas. It's usually overdeveloped or, you know, chains and big business.

And then I found this beautiful spot on the coast and now I will never ever leave it. It is a piece of me now and you know when I die they're going to cremate me and put me in the ocean, they put me in the bay here. Cause that's where I want to be.