



10 Best Beaches in North Carolina for Families



With over 300 miles of shoreline, North Carolina is home to dozens of beaches, so finding the right one for a trip can be a challenge when each beach offers its own charm. For families especially, the decision can be hard because families have more needs to accommodate than individuals.

When you've got a family, you have more than just your own safety and enjoyment to look out for and the last thing you want to do on your getaway is to constantly worry about whether everyone is okay or struggle to keep kids entertained. Fortunately, many family-friendly beaches offer fun and relaxation for everyone.

If you want to know, "What are the 10 best beaches in North Carolina for families," you've come to the right place. You'll discover affordable, safe, and fun locations for exactly the kind of adventures you and your family have been craving.

For all families looking to get away, it's time to discover the best NC beaches for families that are sure to appeal to both your family's oldest and youngest members. Read on to learn more about what beaches are the best for families and how to determine which one is best for your family.

Our Methodology for Selecting the Best Beaches for Families

With so many great beaches in North Carolina, creating a list of just ten of the best family-friendly beaches wasn't easy, so we had to be diligent about ranking beaches based on a range of features. Ten beaches have been chosen to offer valid options for families with a range of interests, needs, and priorities. While what qualifies a family-friendly beach can vary, our methodology included some of the most prominent concerns parents have about beaches, such as safety, affordability, and amenities.

The following are the key categories we used to determine which beaches were best for families.

- **Safety:** Beach and ocean safety is one of the most important factors when it comes to ensuring a safe environment. While learning [beach safety](#) is a discussion that parents must always have with their kids, different beaches offer different levels of safety features. When looking for family beaches, we considered features like visibility, general water conditions, and lifeguards on duty.
- **Beach design:** Each beach was designed differently, and that's mostly due to nature, but how humans built around the beaches also impacts the overall layout of the beaches and how they are better or worse for families. Beaches that tend to be steeper or have rougher waters may be less appealing to families. Some beaches may also be more prone to overcrowding, which can make it harder to look after your kids.
- **Activities:** Each beach will offer different activities, and having activities for kids and other family members can make the difference between an okay trip and a great trip. When determining which beaches would make the list, we looked for beaches that had a balance of activities that can appeal to various members of your family.
- **Nearby Amenities:** If you're planning a beach vacation, you'll spend much of your time on the beach, but most families also want to know that there are eateries and other amenities that will be good for their families, so nearby amenities are a major factor in determining which beaches were better for families.

- **Accommodation:** You need to know you have a good place to stay when you are visiting. Beaches with a variety of accommodation options were prioritized. We made sure that places on the list had hotels, rentals, or other accommodations that would not only work for families but would give families access to extra perks and resources they would need. Some [family-friendly accommodation amenities](#) that families may need include highchairs, strollers, appropriate beds for children, and first aid.
- **Affordability:** The beaches that were selected have a range of price points, but in our research, we knew that affordability matters a lot to families. Even the more expensive beaches on the list have only been added if they offer economic advantages and lifestyle perks that balance out the cost. No beach was chosen based on prestige alone.

Crucially, this list was not created by just subjective measures, and while the nature of such a list means some subjective judgment is involved, the decisions were informed by objective measures, such as demographics, crime rates, cost analysis, water quality and roughness monitoring, and related data. The objective facts were aided by reviews and feedback from real families, which allows the results to be data-driven while still speaking to hard-to-quantify factors that do influence how much a family enjoys or doesn't enjoy an experience.

Family-Friendly Beaches in North Carolina

Beach trips are good for your family, and [research](#) suggests that kids who spend time on beaches or near lakes tend to have better mental health as adults. Thus, beach trips are not only fun but they help your kids learn to decompress and learn vital skills, such as swimming, exploration, and self-discovery. But you want to choose the right beach for you and your family to explore safely.

The following ten beaches give you a good blend of features that are sure to keep your family healthy and happy. Different features may appeal to you more than others, but each beach will offer families a good balance of things they will love.

6. Cape Lookout National Seashore

Cape Lookout National Seashore is known for its black and white striped lighthouse— what's more beachy than that? As part of the National Park Service, you can embrace not just the beach itself but learn about the nature surrounding you.

- **Location:** Cape Lookout is located in Harkers Island. It requires you to take a ferry from Beaufort, NC.
- **Parking and Cost:** There are no paved roads at this location, and you must take a ferry to reach the location. This area is more for those who want a more natural experience.
- **Atmosphere:** Cape Lookout gives you a secluded experience and while it requires some more self-sufficiency, this type of living can be a great adventure for kids and help them learn to respect nature.
- **Amenities:** Amenities like year-round camping, family-friendly hiking trails, and scenic viewpoints will make you want to come year after year.
- **Things to Do:** Cape Lookout helps families get in touch with nature. You can climb the steps to the lighthouse, or park ranger programs and tours are ideal ways to get kids engaged and learning about the natural beach around them.
- **Pet Policy:** Leashed pets are allowed on a [six-foot](#) and as long as they are well-controlled.

You may want a special adventure, and if you do, [beach camping](#) is an experience you won't soon forget. If that's not for you, you can choose from rustic cabins, hotels, or [other lodging](#).

For those looking for a one-of-a-kind experience, Cape Lookout offers one of the best camping experiences you will ever have and is full of potential adventures. From whale watching to lighthouse tours, there's something for everyone.

3. Emerald Isle

If you're looking for a beach that is known for being among the best, Emerald Isle has been [voted](#) as the top North Carolina Beach by the U.S. News & World Report and the USA Today Readers' Choice Awards. It's beloved for its miles of gorgeous beaches and seafood.

- **Location:** Emerald Isle is located on the Crystal Coast on Bogue Banks' western end. It is about a 2 ½ hour drive from Raleigh.
- **Parking and Cost:** Parking costs a maximum of \$16 a day and anywhere from \$2 to \$4 per hour. To learn more, check out the [official parking rates](#).
- **Atmosphere:** Because it is so picturesque, beachgoers love to bring their families to this location to soak up the sun while being close to family-friendly lodging.
- **Amenities:** Emerald Isle has amenities like picnic pavilions, playgrounds, volleyball courts, and boat and kayak launches. You can also access
- **Things to Do:** You can partake in outdoor activities like boating, paddleboarding, hiking, or fishing. There are many natural trails and bike paths not to mention the sandy beaches. Within a family-friendly beach town, there are lots of attractions designed to accommodate families.
- **Pet Policy:** Emerald Isle is known as one of the most dog-friendly beaches because leashed dogs are always allowed on the beach based on [current regulations](#).

Getting a place to stay isn't too hard for families looking for accommodations to match their needs. Check out some of the best [rentals and hotels](#) in the area.

If you want your family beach trip, Emerald Isle has soft sand, perfect for playing and sandcastles. There are also opportunities for flying kites, biking across town, or fishing. If you want your family to taste some of the best East Coast seafood, Emerald Isle is sure to deliver.