

Southern Living®

The 10 Most Underrated Summer Vacation Destinations In The South

Crystal Coast, North Carolina



PHOTO: PETER FRANK EDWARDS

The Outer Banks may be first to come to mind when daydreaming about a North Carolina beach trip, but the [Crystal Coast](#) has all the same natural beauty and laidback beach town swagger with far fewer crowds. Also known as the Southern Outer Banks, this 85-mile stretch of shoreline starts at Cape Lookout and Harkers Island in the east and traverses across the barrier island and mainland until reaching its terminus at Cape Carteret in the west. Consisting of 11 distinct communities, travelers will have their pick of places to plan a trip around. The historic fishing village of [Beaufort](#) is a great spot for those who love a charming downtown, easy access to the water, and cozy inns. Meanwhile, [Emerald Isle](#) is exactly the type of uncommercialized beach town that inspires nostalgia. There are 12 miles of public beaches, plentiful bicycle trails, and oceanfront houses in all sizes waiting to host your crew