

# WAKE Living

APEX CARY FUQUAY-VARINA GARNER HOLLY SPRINGS KNIGHTDALE MORRISVILLE RALEIGH ROLESVILLE RTP WAKE FOREST WENDELL ZEBULON

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THE **ZIMMERMAN** AGENCY  
(continued)



# Let's Summer at the NORTH CAROLINA COAST

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**F**ew states can match North Carolina's mighty 300 miles of one-of-a-kind coastline that's within a two-and-a-half-hour minimum drive from Wake County. Starting north and heading south, these 300 miles are divided into distinct areas: the Outer Banks and Currituck, the longest stretch of over 200 miles and home to Cape Hatteras; the Crystal Coast, at more than 81 miles and nine distinct regions that includes the Cape Lookout National Seashore; the Topsail area, perfect for fishing, boating, and camping; the Wilmington area, including Carolina, Kure, and Wrightsville Beaches; and the Brunswick Islands, filled with family-friendly beaches and plentiful golfing options.

Let's take a little drive down our state's coastline and make a few stops along the way.

## CRYSTAL COASTIN'

Do you hear the call of the Crystal Coast? Let's clarify the geography: the Crystal Coast begins at the southernmost tip of the Outer Banks, Cape Lookout, and then continues south, stopping at the New River Inlet, which defines North Topsail. A favorite beach destination for Triangle residents, the Crystal Coast offers ecotourism, ocean sunrises and sunsets, and close

proximity to the Gulf Stream. Morehead City and Beaufort offer day-trip getaways for the Atlantic Beach vacationer so you can easily step off the sand and into these restaurant- and shop-lined towns.

## MOREHEAD CITY

Morehead City is home to one of North Carolina's largest ports where you can watch boats come in and out of the harbor along the boardwalk. On chalkboards, boat captains advertise the availability for fishing trips leaving for the Gulf Stream early in the morning and returning close to dusk with a bountiful catch. Don't worry, landlubbers, there's plenty of seafood in Morehead without needing to catch your own. The Sanitary Fish Market, shortened to the Sanitary by locals, offers casual seafood entrees and appetizers along with lots of local history displayed in black and white photographs and newspaper clippings. A true North Carolina establishment, no trip is complete without a visit to this culinary landmark where you can't leave without buying a T-shirt. Morehead City's newest restaurant, Southern Salt Seafood Company and Waterfront Restaurant, is housed in a former seafood house, expanding your fresh and local dining options on the boardwalk.

At the west side of town is Big Rock Landing, the weigh station for Morehead City's 2018 Blue Rock Tournament (June 8 through 16) that is one of the country's oldest and largest fishing tournaments where deep-sea fishermen compete for the 1.6 million dollar prize going to the boat that lands the first blue marlin over 500 pounds.

This two-week event of parties, nail-biting weigh-ins, and nautical drama fills the town with eager spectators. To stay in the heart of this captivating tournament, check in at the nearby Bask Hotel, a luxury studio hotel with breathtaking views. Before leaving, stop by BluSail Golitz Studios Pottery and Carolina Artist Gallery for up-to-date information on art shows and workshops, to get inspired to load up your paint on your palette.

## BEAUFORT

Beaufort rests on Taylor's Creek, nestled behind Carrot Island and Shackelford Banks. The strategic location of Beaufort inspired the pirate Edward Teach, aka Blackbeard, to make the town one of his lairs in the early 18th century. Pirate lore is firmly housed in the historic homes of this fishing village where you can stop by the Beaufort Historic Site for a selection of house and

graveyard tours that also includes a storytelling ride through history on the British, double-decker tour bus.

This harbor town offers entertainment of the simplest kind: boardwalk strolling and people watching. While cruising by land, observe flags from across the world on the handsome windjammers, yachts, and dinghies. Take notice of the boats' sterns and laugh or ponder at the vessels' given names. Stop and unwind with a mocha and fresh-made dessert at CRU Coffee Shop, Wine Shop & Bar and engage in a conversation with a sailor, artist, or a local entrepreneur.

Get to know the history of the town at the North Carolina Maritime Museum where you'll learn Beaufort was called Fish-town in the 1600s when it was just beginning as a small fishing village. Peek inside the Watercraft Center for a glimpse at traditional boat building and check out the new exhibit about North Carolina's surfing legacy.

Right across the street from the Museum the Front Street Grill at Stillwater located in a renovated boathouse on the Beaufort waterfront overlooking Taylor's Creek. Savor the fried calamari and seared shrimp on their umbrella-covered dock, and after lunch, pop into Island Traders, the go-to place for flip-flops and T-shirts that pop. As you most likely will have made reservations for a romantic evening dinner at Aqua, shop at Island Proper Boutique for unique fashion finds.

For an additional adventure, explore Beaufort's beloved barrier islands with a ferry ride from Island Express Ferry Service, the National Park Service ferry that drops you off at either Cape Lookout or Shackleford Banks. See the famous Shackleford Banks horses that are descendants of the Spanish mustangs from the early Spanish explorers to North Carolina's coast. There's so much to do: collect seashells while you hike, fish, and swim, or photograph a swimming sea turtle, or a playful pod of dolphins. But most of all, you'll leave the stress from the mainland behind you.

#### CAROLINA DREAMING

South of the Crystal Coast are Topsail and Wrightsville Beaches, as well as Pleasure

and Bald Head Islands, where you can plot your 2018 southern North Carolina beach expeditions. Set aside one weekend per destination, because each community has their own *je ne sais quoi* charm.

#### TOPSAIL BEACH

Topsail Beach, the sea turtle sanctuary, is a beach-house dotted, 26-mile barrier island, punctuated by a maritime forest. Boating is prized here because of the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW), a 3,000-mile stretch of water from Boston to the southern tip of Florida, that then follows the Gulf Coast to



Big Rock Fountain  
COURTESY OF DOWNTOWN  
MOREHEAD CITY REVITALIZATION

Brownsville, Texas. Parts of the ICW open up to the Atlantic Ocean through a multitude of sinewy marsh-lined cuts, offering great anchoring and fishing spots at low tide.

Rent a house to get the most of your time in Topsail. You might choose sound-side or beachfront and both are well-suited for early beach walks or late-night stargazing. A favorite spot on Topsail begins in Surf City at the Sugar Island Bakery & Supplies, a family-owned bakery offering delectable pies, cookies and cakes, all made from scratch. The café offers a relaxing respite to enjoy your sweets with a specialty coffee. The market has an array of our state's best condiments, pottery by local craftspeople and multitudes of vintage books. Afterwards, stop by the Karen Beasley Sea Turtle Rescue and Rehabilitation Center, whose mission is the conservation and protection of all species of marine turtles both in the water and on the beach.

The Surf City Community Center, near the turtle sanctuary, offers public classes

for fitness and wellness. Their teachers are experienced in yoga, meditation, and singing bowl therapy. Try one of these eastern styles of wellness to Zen out on your next retreat.

The south end of Topsail Island boasts an amazing restaurant, the Beach Shop & Grill, known for its lowcountry seafood, but be warned: they are closed both Monday and Tuesday. To cultivate an appetite for your amazing meal, get on the water with Southend Outfitters' fishing excursions. Call ahead to book a trip or stop by the shop that features high-end coastal brands

like Yeti, Costa, and Gretchen Scott. You are sure to find a souvenir to take home and remind you of that "sand in your toes" feeling. One last tidbit on the south end, you can bring your own kayak. There are public drop sites with parking spots along the ICW. This little island graciously invites you to surrender to islomania, which is an obsession for islands.

#### WRIGHTSVILLE BEACH

Wrightsville Beach is a 4-mile barrier island with two undeveloped nooks of beach at each end, perfect for reflection featuring awe-inspiring sunrises and sunsets. As you head onto the island take a stop at the Wrightsville Beach Museum of History. The Museum is housed in a traditional beach cottage and has an original trolley car from the pre-automobile days when a ticket from downtown Wilmington to the beach included a swimsuit rental. Ask the friendly museum hosts about the Mailbox on the Beach exhibit and set aside some time to