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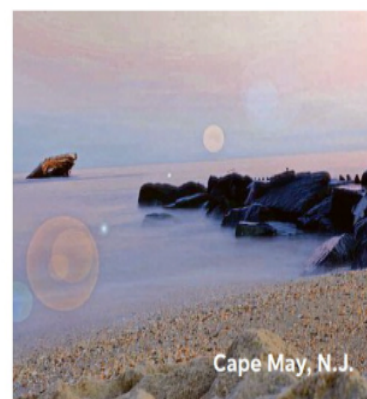


ON SALE THROUGH 5/12



Ocean City, Md.

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Cape May, N.J.

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THE BEACHES OF MARYLAND

Just a few hours south of the Jersey Shore, Maryland offers diverse beaches, according to Connie Spindler, a spokesperson for the Maryland Office of Tourism. For beach purists, she recommends Ocean City, celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. Like many of your favorite Shore destinations, it has a lively boardwalk with shops and amusements.

For smaller crowds, Spindler suggests staying in nearby Berlin. From there, you have access to Ocean City and Assateague Island National Seashore, where you can hunt for seashells and watch wild ponies roam.

If you're not married to the ocean, visit the Chesapeake Bay. On the Eastern Shore, check out historic Kent Island, with two bayside beaches and miles of trails.

Western Maryland has beaches, too. "For a completely different vacation, head to the mountains," Spindler says, suggesting Rocky Gap State Park, whose Lake Habeeb has two beaches, including one for lakeside camping.

FOR THE JERSEY FAITHFUL

If you want to escape the Shore but not Jersey, head to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, with three beaches for swimming in the Delaware River.

And for a quieter Shore experience? Try Sunset Beach on the southern tip of Cape May Peninsula, says Emel Crawford of the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism. While crowded at dusk for its famous sunsets, during the day it's typically a welcome respite from busier beaches elsewhere on the Shore.

Center, with 1,400 acres of wetlands and shoreline bluffs ideal for wildlife viewing.

"Fair Haven on Lake Ontario offers a breathtaking blend of natural beauty and local charm," says Karen Kuhl, executive director of the Cayuga County Office of Tourism. "Pair it with a visit to the local wineries and cideries, and you have the perfect recipe for relaxation and discovery."

SOUTH COUNTY, R.I.

This southernmost region of Rhode Island hugs the Atlantic Ocean in a way that marries sandy beaches with bucolic farms and pine forests.

For yacht-filled docks, nautical shopping and oyster shacks, visit Watch Hill in Westerly. Along with the Watch Hill Lighthouse, it's home to the historic Flying Horse Carousel, considered to be one of the oldest continuously operating carousels in the United States.

Elsewhere in South County, beaches abound. Favorites include Watch Hill's Napatree Point Conservation



Watch Hill, R.I.

GETTY IMAGES

Area, where shorebirds frolic; East Matunuck State Beach, with strong surf and the Matunuck Oyster Bar; Misquamicut State Beach, one of Rhode Island's largest; and Narragansett Town Beach, popular for surfing. "Rhode Island offers a perfect bal-

ance of peaceful charm and vibrant energy," says Anika Kimble-Huntley, chief marketing officer at the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation. "With nearly 400 miles of coastline, visitors can enjoy the beauty of New England summer without the crowds."