

# TRAVEL+ LEISURE

This Quaint Town in North Carolina Has a Low Cost of Living, Beach Access, and a Laid-back Atmosphere

Newport, North Carolina, is not just a great place to visit—it's a great place to live.



A couple sits on a dock in Newport, North Carolina.  
Credit: Crystal Coast Tourism

While there are many things North Carolina does well— including golf, barbecue, and beaches — quiet [small towns](#) and relaxing getaways are pretty close to the top of the list. As you drive across the state, from the mountains to the coast, you'll come across all manner of destinations where life moves a bit slower. Newport, population 4,501, is one of these places. Located on the southeastern side of the state, it's considered the "handshake" or the gateway to the [Crystal Coast](#), a stretch of coastline and barrier islands that extends from Cape Lookout to the mouth of the New River.

"Newport, though large on the map of eastern North Carolina, is a quaint small town. Children still ride their bikes down the sidewalk to get ice cream and play basketball at the park. People aren't afraid to talk to one another and help their neighbors," says Amanda Shepherd, co-owner of [Stable Grounds Coffee](#). "Our community continues to grow with the addition of new neighborhoods, but the charm that makes Newport is very much alive and well."

And if you're in the market to [put down roots in the Tar Heel State](#), the Newport area should certainly be on your short list. "Newport isn't a place you rush through. It's a place you settle into," says Tara Powell, broker-in-charge at [Re/Max NC Coastal Team](#), who shares that Newport is "more about living than visiting."

"You won't find rows of souvenir shops or crowded boardwalks here. What you will find are back roads that lead to water, local spots where people remember your name, and easy access to everything that makes the Crystal Coast special without being in the middle of the crowds," she says. "Many people arrive planning a short stay and leave thinking, 'I could live here.'"

# Why Move to Newport



A couple enjoys seats by the water.  
Credit: Crystal Coast Tourism

As you're deciding where to settle down (or start a new chapter), affordability and overall livability are likely some of your top considerations—and Newport checks both boxes. “The real estate market in and around Newport is appealing because it offers a rare balance of value, location, and livability,” says Powell. According to [Best Places](#), the cost of living in Newport is 0.7 percent lower than the national average, and [Zillow](#) estimates the average home value is just north of \$332,000.

Powell also highlights the variety of neighborhoods in Newport, particularly along Highway 24. “Newport has more planned communities than many surrounding towns, some with sidewalks, pools, and shared spaces. For buyers who enjoy the feel of a neighborhood with amenities and a sense of connection, Newport offers great options,” she says.

Another reason to call Newport home? The incredible access to the coast—[Emerald Isle](#) and Atlantic Beach are a short drive away—which Powell notes you get without paying the premiums associated with this type of lifestyle. “Newport sits between the two bridges to the island [Bogue Banks], so you're just a short drive from the beach. Because of that, buyers are often surprised by how much home they can get here for the price. I see it all the time when someone starts their search on the island and then crosses the bridge into Newport,” she explains.

# Best Things to Do



Sailboats off the coast of Newport, North Carolina.  
Credit: Crystal Coast Tourism

## Have a beach day—or go fishing.

The beaches of Emerald Isle and Atlantic Beach are about half an hour away, so spend at least one of your days in Newport lounging, shelling, or swimming. “This area is [also] coined a fisherman’s paradise,” says Shepherd. This reputation mostly stems from the fact that you’re surrounded by water: the Neuse River, Harlowe Creek, lakes within the Croatan National Forest, the Bogue Sound, and the Atlantic Ocean. Whether you’re hoping to land freshwater or saltwater fish, be sure to get your [North Carolina fishing license](#) before casting your line.

## Visit the Newport Historical Museum.

Shepherd also describes the [Newport Historical Museum](#) as “a must.” The small museum is the perfect place to get your bearings and learn a bit more about your vacation spot (or potential new home).

## Walk the Neusiok Trail.

“Check out the [Neusiok Trail](#),” says Shepherd. “It’s a beautiful hike.” The entire 21.5-mile route stretches from a beach on the Neuse River to a salt marsh along the Newport River. Along the way, you’ll spot cypress swamps, longleaf pines, and a plethora of wildlife. This trail is also one of the many that run through the Croatan National Forest, billed as the “[only true coastal forest in the East](#).”



## Stable Grounds Coffee

Mornings in Newport should begin at [Stable Grounds Coffee](#). Along with caffeinated beverages, there are also homemade pastries, breakfast, and lunch—think avocado toast, chicken salad sandwiches, and Caesar salad.

## Fat Fellas BBQ & Grille

“[Fat Fellas BBQ & Grille](#) is a true hometown favorite. It’s the kind of place where you can walk in with your family after a long day and know you’re going to get hearty, comforting food and a warm welcome,” says Powell. “Their barbecue is a staple for locals, and it perfectly reflects the down-to-earth, coastal Carolina feel of the town.”

## El Mexicano Tacos & Tequila

“[El Mexicano](#) is one of those places everyone in town seems to agree on. It’s where you go when you want something easy, flavorful, and familiar. Whether it’s tacos, enchiladas, or a margarita after a long day, it’s dependable in the best way. It’s casual, comfortable, and the kind of spot where you’ll see your neighbors,” says Powell. Shepherd also gives El Mexicano her stamp of approval.

## Shortway Brewing Company

After a day of hiking, swimming, or fishing, snag a seat at [Shortway Brewing Company](#), a family-owned taproom and brewery in Newport. With several unique beers on tap—like [Fluffernutter](#), a peanut butter and marshmallow stout—as well as wine, cider, and six packs to go, you’re sure to find something to stave off any thirst.

## Starfish Grill

When you’re near the Carolina coast, you have to get your fill of seafood. “[Starfish Grill](#) offers a more coastal dining experience right here in Newport. It’s a great spot for fresh seafood and a relaxed sit-down meal without having to leave town. It’s especially popular with both residents and visitors who want a taste of the coast in a comfortable, local setting,” says Powell.

## Best Shopping



### Carolina Home & Garden

If you're going to shop in one place in Newport, let it be [Carolina Home & Garden](#). "It's hard to even describe in a few sentences. It's a garden center, a gathering place, and an experience all in one. Full bar, live bands, weddings, special events, food trucks, and more. Spending time here feels like a mini getaway," says Powell.

### Newport Flea Mall

"One of the most unique places to shop in Newport is the [Newport Flea Mall](#). It's one of those places that feels like an adventure every time you walk in. You never know what you're going to find," says Powell. "From antiques and collectibles to handmade items and local treasures, it's part treasure hunt, part community hub. Locals love it, visitors remember it, and it's the kind of place that reflects the personality of Newport itself: eclectic, friendly, and full of surprises."



“The best time of year to come to Newport is spring to fall. Summer being our peak season,” says Shepherd. Powell is in the same camp, noting that shoulder seasons are ideal as “the weather is beautiful, the crowds are lighter, and everything feels relaxed.” Granted, summer is an especially amazing time to be in this part of North Carolina—you’re right by the beach, after all—but it’s a bit busier.

### How to Get There



Flights to and from New Bern’s Coastal Carolina Regional Airport (EWN), the closest airport to Newport, are limited, so you can also consider Albert J. Ellis Airport (OAJ) in Jacksonville, North Carolina (a little over an hour away), and Wilmington International Airport (ILM) in Wilmington (two hours away). As far as major airports go, Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU) is your best bet, but it’s about a 2.5-hour journey to Newport. Renting a car to cover the final leg of the trip to Newport will be necessary.

## How to Get Around

There are some walkable areas in Newport, but, for the most part, you’ll need a car—especially if you want to explore the [beach towns](#) and barrier islands along the Crystal Coast.