

Southern Living®

The 8 Most Beautiful Places On The North Carolina Coast

With 300 miles of sandy shoreline, North Carolina claims seventh on a list of states with the most coastline and number two when you winnow that list down to just the east coast. Beaches on the [Outer Banks](#) and in the [Wilmington](#) area get plenty of attention, but they're far from the only place in the state to spend time on the water. From the tranquil Topsail area to the impressive Crystal Coast, North Carolina's seashore is a treasure trove of beautiful places. Stunning [sunset views](#), wild horses galloping through the salty spray, and majestic sand dunes rising into the clear blue sky—every scene is more spectacular than the last. Here are eight of the most beautiful places on North Carolina's unforgettable coast.

Shackleford Banks



PHOTO: COURTESY OF NORTH CAROLINA'S CRYSTAL COAST

This barrier island is part of the Cape Lookout National Seashore, a protected piece of land that encompasses 28,000 acres of land and water along the North Carolina coast. While the entire National Seashore is known for its pristine, undeveloped beaches, Shackleford Banks is famous because of its only residents, the Shackleford Horses, a herd of wild Spanish horses that roam freely on the island. Accessible only by boat, take the Island Express Ferry to spend time at this incredibly scenic spot.

The Point at Emerald Isle



PHOTO: COURTESY OF NORTH CAROLINA'S CRYSTAL COAST

North Carolina's Crystal Coast is sometimes called the Southern Outer Banks since it trails for 85 more miles past the Outer Banks termination point. [Emerald Isle](#), located on the western end of Bogue Banks, is one of its most magnificent communities. The crown jewel of Emerald Isle is a spot known simply as The Point. This tailed-off sandbar on Emerald Isle's southern tip is a popular spot for shelling and sunset walks that offer panoramic views of the Atlantic Ocean, Bogue Sound, Bogue Inlet, and Bear Island—all at one time.