

Southern Living®

The 50 Best Beach Towns In The South 2025

Discover our readers' favorite beach towns, from peaceful islands to fun-filled vacation spots.

35. Emerald Isle, North Carolina



PHOTO: PETER FRANK EDWARDS

Taking the scenic route is inevitable in this easygoing community, where white sands and blue-green waters reign (hence the name). Perched on the 85-mile-long collection of barrier islands known as the Crystal Coast, this under-the-radar place encourages slow living and quality time by the ocean. Sunbathing and water sports like paddleboarding can be enjoyed in any season due to the mild weather.

[EXPLORE EMERALD ISLAND](#)

38. Beaufort, North Carolina



PHOTO: CEDRIC ANGELES

This fishing village with century-old homes, idyllic marinas, and pristine beaches could be plucked from a vintage postcard. You can learn more about the area's seafaring history with a kayak trek across Taylor Creek or a ferry ride to Shackleford Banks, a barrier island that's home to wild horses believed to have descended from those that survived Spanish shipwrecks over 500 years ago.

[EXPLORE BEAUFORT](#)