

10 less-crowded beach destinations to get away from it all

Travel experts share their picks for quieter seaside getaways from the West Coast to the white sands of the Caribbean.

Some travel is life-changing. Some is recharging. And if you're feeling as burned out as we are these days, you're probably more keen on booking the latter.

You wouldn't be alone.

José Antonio Cruz, owner of Snow & Sand Vacations, said that lately his clients "are looking to relax," and just hit the beach.

Royal Ahmadi, senior vice president and general manager of the Vacation Group, is also seeing an uptick in traveler requests for destinations that feel "more relaxed and less commercial." It's been a "real shift," he said.

"People aren't just asking for the usual hot spots anymore," Ahmadi continued. "They want somewhere a little quieter, a little more tucked away ... places where they can actually enjoy the water and scenery without feeling like they're in the middle of a crowd."

Cape Lookout National Seashore, North Carolina



The National Park Service seashore comes with a built-in crowd filter: It is accessible only by boat. Visitors can catch a ferry — 20 minutes to an hour one way, depending on the route — or pilot their own watercraft to the barrier islands on North Carolina's Crystal Coast. Though beach driving is allowed in certain areas with a permit, the 56-mile coastland does not have any roads or buildings besides a small visitor center that sells snacks and souvenirs. There are, however, several historical structures you can explore, such as Portsmouth Village, a deserted fishing community, and the harlequin-patterned Cape Lookout Lighthouse and its Keeper's House, which contains a museum.

To find a sandy patch of your own, Karen Gould, executive director of the Crystal Coast Tourism Authority, said to follow the boardwalk from the sound side, where the ferries operate, to the Atlantic. For even more seclusion, hike to the hooked spit of land that resembles a crab claw. At Shackleford Banks, you may have to share the beach — and ocean — with some island residents, a herd of wild horses called the Banker ponies