

# TRAVEL+ LEISURE

## 25 Best Places to Visit in North Carolina

From the Biltmore Estate to the Great Smoky Mountains, these are our top picks for your next trip to the Tar Heel State.

- Best tourist destination: Great Smoky Mountains National Park
- Underrated hidden gem: Shackleford Banks
- Best for families: Outer Banks
- Best for couples: Pisgah National Forest
- Best for solo travelers: Asheville

From energetic cities and beautiful beaches to mist-covered hills and museums and monuments that mark important moments in history, the Tar Heel State has enough natural scenery and interesting attractions for every type of traveler. To help narrow down your itinerary, here's a look at some of the best places to visit in North Carolina, whether it's your first trip or you're looking to see more of the state.

# Shackleford Banks



Part of the Cape Lookout National Seashore, [Shackleford Banks](#) is one of the only places on the East Coast where wild horses still roam freely. How they got to this remote island, accessible only by boat, centuries ago is still a mystery—a common theory is that their ancestors survived a Spanish shipwreck 400 years ago. Today, you can visit these majestic creatures on a [guided shelling and safari tour](#) or reach the underrated car-free island on your own by catching the passenger ferry from Harkers Island or Beaufort. [Camping is allowed](#) on the beach, too, if you'd like to stick around and be fully immersed in nature on North Carolina's scenic [Crystal Coast](#).