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LIVING

MAY/JUNE 2021

A WESTERN WAKE LIFESTYLE

TRIANGLE LAKE ESCAPES

**+ RELAXED STYLES FOR
A DAY ON THE WATER**

NC BEACH BUCKET LIST

CAMPING ADVENTURES

+

**FACES OF
WESTERN WAKE**

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A NORTH CAROLINA
BEACH BUCKET LIST
40
COASTAL ATTRACTIONS
&
EXPERIENCES

BY MANDY HOWARD

From Corolla to Sunset, North Carolina boasts 322 miles of beautiful beaches. Within those miles are 25-plus distinct beach towns with their own personalities and attractions.

NORTHERN OUTER BANKS

COROLLA: Wild Spanish mustangs have made our Outer Banks their home since the 1500s when they arrived with Spanish explorers. Book a Jeep tour from Wild Horse Adventure Tours for up-close views. These feral creatures, which landed here with Spanish explorers in the 1500s, are very tolerant of visitors and have starred in many videos and photographs.

DUCK: Have an original Duck Donut! Russel DiGilio created Duck Donuts in 2007 in Duck, his family's favorite place to vacation. Now Duck Donuts is a national chain. Locally, check out Duck Donuts at 8323 Creedmoor Road in Raleigh or 100 Wrenn Drive in Cary.

NAGS HEAD/KITTY HAWK/JOCKEY'S RIDGE:

Make it a three-in-one bucket list day. Start at the Wright Brothers National Memorial, then head to Jockey's Ridge State Park for kite-flying and an incredible sunset. End with dinner at Basnight's Lone Cedar Cafe, where you can enjoy locally caught seafood with a stunning view of the Roanoke Sound.

MANTEO: Watch "The Lost Colony." It's the second-longest-running outdoor historical drama in the U.S. While you're there, visit the Elizabethan Gardens, a TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Winner listed in the top 10% of attractions worldwide.



Currituck Travel & Tourism

Duck Donuts

Currituck Travel & Tourism

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While there is no way to highlight every beach—and we are too smart to join the debate on which beach is best—here are some coastal sights and opportunities every North Carolinian should experience—at least once.

RODANTHE: Read “Nights in Rodanthe” by Nicholas Sparks on the beach in Rodanthe, then watch the movie “Nights in Rodanthe” (2008) at the Inn at Rodanthe, which was featured in the movie. The actual property is a private home rental opportunity offering six bedrooms.

CAPE HATTERAS: Go deep-sea fishing. The Outer Banks is home to the National Geographic TV series “Wicked Tuna” (now streaming on Disney+) and boasts some of the best deep-sea fishing opportunities anywhere. Check out the Miss Hatteras, an ocean vessel boasting half-day trips, full-day trips and sunset cruises.

OCRACOKE ISLAND: Dive into pirate lore by exploring the favorite hideout of Edward Teach, aka Blackbeard. View the waters in which Blackbeard met his demise off the coast of Ocracoke Village, then explore Springer’s Point, a peaceful nature preserve that was once home to infamous pirate parties.

OBX BONUS: Buy a beach house! More like a dream than a bucket list item? That’s OK. We all need goals. But if you visit Corolla and Cape Hatteras, keep in mind that they are two of the 25 best places to buy a beach home in the U.S., according to Vacasa, a vacation home property management company. (Take that, Pacific Coast!)



Crystal Coast TDA



Crystal Coast TDA



Crystal Coast TDA



Mitch Summers

CRYSTAL COAST

SHACKLEFORD BANKS:

Take a ferry daytrip. Whether you enjoy birding, collecting seashells or watching a wild pony wander by, this uninhabited island calls out to nature lovers.

ATLANTIC BEACH:

Attend the annual Atlantic Beach Music Festival, currently scheduled for May 15. (While the situation is still being monitored for a 2021 festival, this tradition will live on.) A palatable alternative bucket list item is dinner at Amos Mosquito's—we recommend starting with the crabcakes!

PINE KNOLL SHORES:

Visit the North Carolina Aquarium, which, in addition to locations at Fort Fisher, Roanoke Island and Nags Head, is also located at Pine Knoll Shores.

EMERALD ISLE:

Save the turtles! The Emerald Isle Sea Turtle Patrol offers volunteer training and programs to help visitors understand how to become advocates for sea turtles.

BEAR ISLAND:

Reserve a campsite on Bear Island's beaches—one of the state's most beautiful coastal destinations—for about \$10 per night.



WILMINGTON AREA/SOUTHERN BEACHES

TOPSAIL BEACH:

Another three-in-one experience! First, learn how to pronounce "Topsail." Don't say, "sail." It's TOPs'l, like you're tripping over the end. Once you've mastered that, visit Quarter Moon Books & Gifts in Hampstead, which also offers a wine and coffee bar. Between the coffee and wine, go roller skating nearby at Topsail Beach Skating Rink.

WRIGHTSVILLE

BEACH: Learn to surf! Surfer magazine rated Wrightsville a top-10 surfing town in America. WB Surf Camp offers private, group and corporate lessons, in addition to camps. If surfing's not your sport, start your holiday season with the Jingle Bell Run, the most Christmassy race on the coast.

WILMINGTON: Walk the Riverwalk. Voted the No. 2 best riverwalk in a *USA Today* travel contest, this 1.75-mile scenic trek boasts 200-plus restaurants and attractions. Just a short drive away, dine with Bravo TV's "Top Chef" star Chef Keith Rhodes at Catch.

CAROLINA BEACH:

Whether it's morning, noon or night, stand in line for a donut from Britt's Donut Shop. Walk it off on the Carolina Beach Boardwalk, where you must take photos with the moon and shark, of course. Then, have the Cape Fear Boil Company bring a shrimp boil to you—including the propane burner! How did no one think of this before?

KURE BEACH/ FORT FISHER: A perfect daytrip from the Triangle, this coastal destination offers lifeguards who tend the beach, relatively low-stress parking and public restroom facilities. While you're there, check out the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher.

BALD HEAD ISLAND: Walk with ghosts and hunt for treasure. Returning this summer, Riverside Adventure Co. will offer themed walking tours for the brave, and unforgettable adventures for the young.

BRUNSWICK ISLANDS (OAK ISLAND/HOLDEN BEACH/OCEAN ISLE):

These beaches offer the rare distinction of running east-west and parallel to the shore. That means beginning in late fall, you can watch a sunrise and sunset from the same beach chair. Those who are

loyal to the islands credit their serenity to the fact that there are few hotels. Splurge for an oceanfront home to witness these seasonal sunrises and sunsets over the water.

SUNSET BEACH/ BIRD ISLAND: Mail your dreams to the universe. The Kindred Spirit Mailbox is positioned next to a secluded bench 1 mile south of Sunset Beach, inviting visitors to share their hopes and dreams. No wishes are guaranteed to be granted, and no hurts are promised to be healed, but after a moment of unadulterated honesty and commune with nature, who knows—maybe you'll walk back to Sunset Beach with a renewed spirit.



FOLLOW THE LIGHT

Check North Carolina's enviable collection of lighthouses off your bucket list one by one, or take an ultimate tour of the coastline using lighthouse locations as your compass. From north to south, here's a quick guide:

CURRITUCK BEACH LIGHTHOUSE

in Corolla is an active, red brick lighthouse. At 162 feet tall, the lighthouse's first-order Fresnel lens (the largest size available for American lighthouses) can be seen for 18 nautical miles as the light rotates in 20-second increments.

BODIE (PRONOUNCED 'BODY') ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

in Nags Head features black and white horizontal stripes and is a popular tourist destination with an attached museum and bookshop.

CAPE HATTERAS LIGHTHOUSE

in Buxton is the tallest and most recognizable of North Carolina's lighthouses, with black and white diagonal stripes. It stands 208 feet tall and beams light 20 miles out across the ocean.

OCRACOKE LIGHTHOUSE

in Ocracoke stands 75 feet tall and is the state's oldest operating lighthouse. You can't miss its huge whitewashed base.

CAPE LOOKOUT LIGHTHOUSE

towers over Harkers Island at 163 feet in height and features a black-and-white diamond pattern. Climbing its 207 steps to the top is not for the faint of heart, and has been compared to climbing a 12-story building.

OAK ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

on Caswell Beach has a three-toned pattern of dark brown, white and tan coloring. Due to recent power fluctuations, its lighting was recently upgraded to newer LED technology.

OLD BALDY LIGHTHOUSE

on Bald Head Island was built in 1817 and presents a patchwork appearance. It's the state's southernmost and oldest-standing lighthouse, and marks the mouth of the historic Cape Fear River. 🏠