

passion passport

The Front Porch Lifestyle

It was already dark when I arrived in New Bern, tired after a full day of traveling from the West Coast. My driver was a soft-spoken man who waved furiously and shouted my name when I walked out of the airport. I'm good at many things, but small talk isn't on that list, so the 45-minute drive to Atlantic Beach — where I'd spend the rest of the weekend — was quiet.



In between our spurts of conversation, I studied my surroundings. Something felt familiar about the place I was in, even in the dark.

The non-descript area we drove through was a welcome change from the heavy traffic of Los Angeles I'd grown used to in the last few months. For long stretches, we traveled along a nearly-empty, dark road, nothing on either side except the black outlines of trees. The small towns we drove through were exactly like my hometown in Ohio.

Growing up, my family often took daylong drives into the middle of nowhere. We just drove, with no real destination in mind at all. We'd talk, stop for picnics around lunchtime, and comment on the houses and views we saw.



I distinctly remember how my mom fixated on other people's front porches. We loved our house, and my grandparents' house, but neither had a *real* front porch. We'd set chairs up right outside the garage, hang out on the swing in the yard, or sit out back by the pool. But we longed for a front porch.

The "front porch" became an ideal for us — a goal, really, something to aspire to. We still talk about it. One day, we'd love to have a really big, wraparound front porch. With a swing or a rocking chair. Maybe both.

The streets of Beaufort, North Carolina, are lined with gorgeous old houses with perfect front porches.

While on a tour of Beaufort, our guide told us all about Blackbeard, the downtown area, the history, and nearby attractions, but I just kept snapping photos of those homes.





I learned a few other things during my weekend on the Crystal Coast.



Kayaking is just as fun if you take it slow.

Sometimes trusting the chef is the best idea.

If you try to find wild horses on an island, it's quite possible that you'll end up aimlessly wandering through brush and following anything that sounds remotely like a pony.

Bourbon peach french toast tastes as good as it sounds.



Mornings on the beach are always worth it, even if the wind ruins your hair and the rain stings your cheeks.



And there are a lot of rocking chairs in North Carolina.



They line the halls and the moving walkways of the airport in Charlotte. You can find them on front porches and at restaurants, lazily inviting someone to take a seat.

I think rocking chairs epitomize the Crystal Coast lifestyle — a lifestyle I was familiar with, but didn't have a name for until I spent time in North Carolina.

It's laid-back and easygoing. It's filled with beautiful sunsets, cool breezes off the water, friendly people, and plenty of time to just sit and enjoy the view.

It's the front porch lifestyle.

Coming to North Carolina felt a lot like coming home.

