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*Escape to  
the Coast*  
OUTER BANKS TO FLORIDA

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**Northwest Island** - A big, beautiful, sun-drenched, drought and fire-free island. From highlights to history and culture of Northwest Island.

**Auto Events** - Get up close with big game on an African safari.

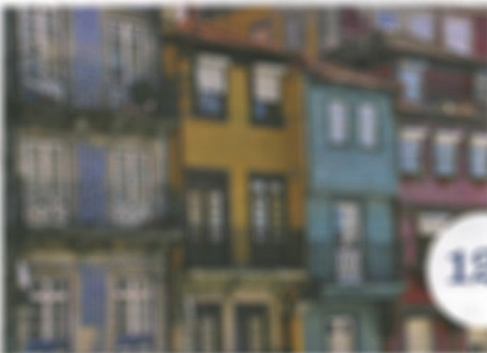
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**On the Cover** Wild horses of Shackleford Banks. Photo courtesy of the Crystal Coast Tourism Authority.



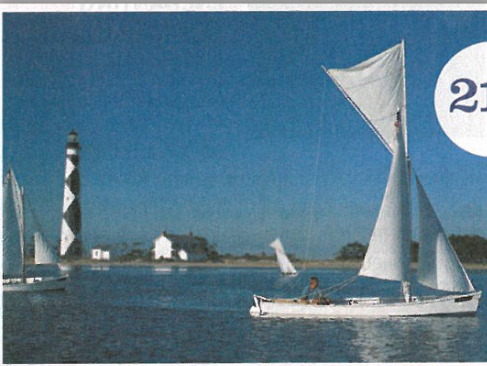
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## COASTAL SECTION



CRYSTAL COAST TOURISM AUTHORITY

**SAVE**

AAA members **save 10% at Beaufort Inn**, as well as **\$1 off** general admission at the **Beaufort Historic Site**. For an expanded story and video tour of the Crystal Coast, visit **AAA.com/Go**.

**Above:** Cape Lookout Lighthouse.

# Crystal Coast

## EXPLORE THE PRISTINE BEACHES OF THE SOUTHERN OUTER BANKS

BY SAM BOYKIN

One of North Carolina's most pristine and cherished destinations, the Outer Banks is an unspoiled, 200-mile stretch of barrier islands. The expansive coastal region offers a variety of fun activities for everyone from history buffs to nature lovers to foodies to adrenaline junkies. But with so much to see and do, it can be a challenge deciding where to start your adventure. A great option is the Crystal Coast, situated along the southern end of the Outer Banks.

Whether you're looking for a cozy cottage for a romantic getaway or an expansive beachfront house for a big family vacation, the Crystal Coast has a wide variety of accommodations. Smaller parties may want to opt to stay at one of area's convenient hotels or inns. If a spacious private home better suits your needs, there are several companies that can help you find the right place, including grand oceanfront homes with luxurious amenities.

### ATLANTIC BEACH

The Crystal Coast boasts several charming beach towns, each with its own distinct and quirky appeal. Atlantic Beach, situated just across the bridge that traverses Bogue Sound, is noted for Fort Macon State Park. In addition to miles of pristine beaches and scenic nature trails, the 389-acre park features a restored de-

fensive fort that was built in the early 1800s and was the site of a Civil War battle. Today, the five-sided, brick and stone fort is a fascinating and popular historic landmark with exhibits and restorations, including soldiers' quarters, cannons and a bake oven.

After a day of soaking the area's natural beauty and well-preserved heritage, head to Amos Mosquito's Restaurant and Bar, a great place for dinner and drinks. The family-owned restaurant offers fresh seafood, pork chops, steaks and sushi, and is the area's go-to place for a little rowdy karaoke.

Atlantic Beach has several bustling attractions, including the "Circle" with an expansive boardwalk, shops and a children's play area.

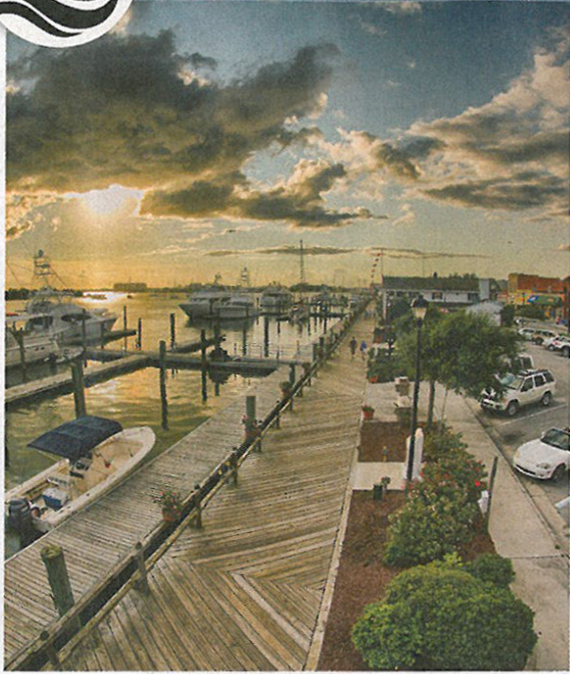
### PINE KNOLL SHORES

Next to Atlantic Beach is Pine Knoll Shores. The quiet beach community has little in the way of commercial development – which is a big part of its appeal. Visitors here can enjoy sandy beaches, golf and tennis at the semi-private Country Club of Crystal Coast, or get an up-close look at the region's wildlife at the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, which has dozens of exhibits showcasing everything from otters and sharks to sea turtles.

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## COASTAL SECTION



CRYSTAL COAST TOURISM AUTHORITY

**Left:** The waterfront in Beaufort at sunset.  
**Above:** The wild horses on Shackleford Banks.

### EMERALD ISLE

About 10 miles from Pine Knoll Shores is Emerald Isle, located on the western end of Bogue Banks. This small town is ideal for nature lovers, with lush greenery and secluded beaches. A great way to explore the wilder side of Emerald Isle is Hot Wax Surf Shop. The retailer offers surfing and stand-up paddleboard rentals and lessons, as well as guided kayak eco-tours of the sound, including sections of the 40-mile White Oak River, which runs through hardwood forests and salt marshes teeming with wildlife. Afterwards, grab a bite to eat at The Village Market, a charming little restaurant and shop with delicious sandwiches, salads, and a full wine and beer list, along with funky locally made artwork and gifts.

### BEAUFORT

Another not-to-be-missed town is Beaufort—pronounced “Bowfort,” which Travel Budget magazine named recently as the coolest small town in America. The postcard-perfect downtown area has a waterfront boardwalk, oak-lined streets, beautifully preserved historic homes, and lively clusters of shops, boutiques and restaurants. The North Carolina Maritime Museum is also located downtown. Here you can explore the state’s coastal environment and natural history with hundreds of exhibits, including one showcasing pirate Blackbeard’s flagship, Queen Anne’s Revenge, which ran aground here in 1718.

A fun way to explore downtown Beaufort and get a little exercise is with a Hungry Town Bike Tour, during which you can

pedal along the town’s historic streets and visit the many of the area’s restaurants for food and wine tastings. Beaufort is also a great home base for exploring the area’s wonderful natural resources. You can catch a ferry across the street from the maritime museum to unforgettable destinations like Shackleford Banks, Carrot or Sand Dollar islands, both of which are great for enjoying some rustic sun in the fun (look for dolphins along the way). Finally, along the southern tip of the 56-mile Cape Lookout National Seashore, climb to the top of the iconic, 163-foot Cape Lookout Lighthouse for grand and unspoiled views of the Core Banks.

### SHACKLEFORD BANKS

As the southernmost barrier island in Cape Lookout National Seashore, Shackleford Banks is home to more than a hundred wild horses that still run free. Stretching nine miles long and averaging less than a mile wide, the island contains a variety of habitats that support the horses, including marsh island grass and sea oats.

Ancestors of the horses swam ashore after shipwrecks about 400 years ago. Since then, the wild horses have inhabited the island, similar to those found on the northern Outer Banks.

The island is accessible only by private boat or public ferry, and there are no public vehicles, so be prepared to walk to find the horses.

Visitors are advised to stay a safe distance away – at least 30 feet – and to avoid getting between them. For this reason, binoculars are recommended. ♡