



HELLO GIGGLES

Feminist Passport: Your travel guide to the Crystal Coast, North Carolina



You want to see the world, but sometimes the world is an unfriendly place. That's why HelloGiggles is bringing you Feminist Passport, a guide to all of the most inclusive hotels, restaurants, shops, bars, and sights to visit on your next big adventure. Because travel should be for everyone.

As I packed my bags for the southeast coast of North Carolina—the Crystal Coast, to be exact—I was excited and nervous. Excited for the beauty that is North Carolina (think mountains and beaches, both within driving distance). And nervous I'd find a lack of diversity in the humid abyss of that natural beauty, leaving me with little to report on for you, travelista reader. After all, according to Gallup polling, North Carolina is a

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moderate state with a slight tilt toward the conservative side. Fortunately, I was pleasantly surprised.

The Crystal Coast covers 85 miles of coastline and 11 communities. It is also the home to the town where the quintessential teen rom-com *A Walk to Remember* was filmed. (I can neither confirm nor deny that I may have walked around the town of Beaufort looking for the spot where Jamie tearfully delivers the news to Landon that she is sick.) But I *can* confirm that I found an eclectic and diverse range of women-oriented businesses and experiences for you to visit in your travels.

Here is a to-do list that you'll want to check twice for a feminist getaway to North Carolina's Crystal Coast.

Get active at Camp Krystal Kai



Women are fierce, strong, and fit; this we know. So, upon my arrival to the Crystal Coast, I was excited to find Camp Krystal Kai, an all-female paddle boarding camp built on empowering women through fitness. Led by co-founders Casi Rynkowski and Anna Levesque, the week-long adventure provides women with a mix of luxury, relaxation, and bootcamp in both health and wellness.

Rynkowski describes it as “a supportive environment free of competition.” A typical day at the camp looks like this: Poolside yoga starts at 7 a.m., followed by a simple and healthy breakfast at 8:15 a.m. Next are water adventures at 9:30 a.m., which include paddling in an estuary and in Taylor’s Creek, visiting the wild horse sanctuary, hunting for sand dollars, fishing, heading out to Cape Lookout, and/or doing SUP yoga. There’s downtime at 3 p.m., followed by a catered dinner or dinner on the town at a local spot.



“The biggest fear expressed by women is the fear of holding the group back or being the ‘weakest link,’” Levesque says. “At Camp Crystal Kai, we remove judgment and competitiveness and make it about celebrating wins and cultivating confidence, courage, skill, and fun in a supportive environment.”

Take a Black History tour in the historic town of Beaufort



If the Crystal Coast is the gem of North Carolina, then Beaufort is most certainly the crown jewel. Picture every Nicholas Sparks movie and book ever—that’s Beaufort. The town (which can easily be mistaken for a town with the same spelling but different pronunciation in South Carolina) has 300 years of rich history. It started off as a small town built on the fishing and boating industry and the labor of black slaves. The black and white populations of Beaufort had to learn to coexist in order to survive.

The Beaufort “Union Town” Tour, which covers the area where black residents lived, specifically focuses on the contributions made by African Americans in building the town during its difficult settlement. I had the pleasure of getting to experience the tour

with Hungry Town Tours' hospitality expert David Cartier. A bike ride around the town gives insight into the story of the founding black residents of the town.

“If it was not for its black community, Beaufort would not exist,” says Cartier.

Shop at Calypso Cottage



After my tour, I made a pit stop at the luxury women's clothing store Calypso Cottage. Specializing in high-end coastal wear and decor, the store has all of the beach town vibes you could ever want. When I walked in, I was greeted by a bright, feminine atmosphere—a beach house storefront filled with delicate trinkets, regal dresses, and upscale bags. I also found owner Stacie Meislohn talking with a happy customer.

Meislohn told me about her successful career in fashion that has taken her from Palm Beach to West Hollywood to New York City. Her passion for fashion prompted her to create Calypso Cottage, which specializes in upcoming brands from around the world and unique designs she creates herself. Meislohn specifically features treasures sourced from female artisans and gives back to nonprofits benefiting other female artisans from around the world, including Vietnam, Mexico, and India.

Indulge in the sweetness of HappyCakes Cupcakery

After all that sightseeing, I was in need of a sweet treat. And I was so pleased to find female-owned HappyCakes Cupcakery in neighboring Morehead City. The business is run by the trio of Angela, Kaylee, and Amanda Diaz—a mother, daughter-in-law, and daughter trio. Talk about girl power!

“There’s definitely a stereotype that women tend to be dramatic or emotional, and so some might imagine a business run by all women could get chaotic,” Angela says. “We are all pretty chill, and miraculously, we agree on almost every decision we’ve ever made. There’s never been a pull to see who is the ‘most in charge.’”



Angela runs the Morehead City storefront, Amanda runs the Cary location, and Kaylee is in charge of emails and social media. But at some point, they have all baked, cleaned,

taken inventory, and made deliveries.

The family environment is evident when you walk through the front doors. I was greeted by smiling faces, an all-girl staff, and information about the more than 150 cupcake flavors. The shop introduces a new flavor each month, and some flavors, like Mexican Hot Chocolate or Rocky Road, are only featured a couple times a year. HappyCakes is known for winning Food Network's *Cupcake Wars* in 2013 and for its charitable work in the community.

“There is give-and-take and so much blessing in what we have created together,” Angela says. “We are thankful for every day that HappyCakes has existed, and we hope that in the years to come we are able to continue to grow and give and make a positive impact in our communities.”

Peruse the Carolina Artist Gallery



A co-op founded by a team of women, the Carolina Artist Gallery focuses on providing a professional gallery space for young and emerging artists. Founders Judy Goff, Jean Davis, Freda Kyle, Andy Donahue, and SeaJane McConlogue met in a watercolor class and developed a friendship rooted in the arts. The five women wanted to foster this love of arts in their coastal community, so they pooled their talents and resources.

In 1999, the Carolina Artist Gallery was born. Today, residents and visitors can check out the art hub of the Crystal Coast in Moorehead City. It also offers clay arts classes for adults with special needs at the W.S. King, Parks and Recreation School.

Party the night away with Madame Z's Drag Cabaret



Madame Z's Cabaret

about 3 months ago



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On the way out of the magic that is the Crystal Coast, just before heading to the airport, be sure to check out Madame Z's Drag Cabaret at City Stage in downtown New Bern. The evening is a lively night filled with a drag show, dance party, and good music.

City Stage's vintage aesthetic gives air to the theater's history of culture and its atmosphere of being a place where all are welcome. You can't help but have a good time with all the good vibes and bright lights.