

Islands

Three Reasons Why You'll Want to Visit the Crystal Coast this Summer

While Atlantic Beach eyes a makeover, the rest of this beloved North Carolina region still delivers the best for family getaways.



Some of the best beaches in the U.S. can be found on the Crystal Coast. Choosing which to “discover” is the hard part. *The Crystal Coast Tourism Authority*

In the not-so-distant future, a classic American family vacation destination will be getting a makeover. City officials for Atlantic Beach, North Carolina, recently revealed the three finalists for the exciting boardwalk design competition. In the same place where the legendary boardwalk pavilion once existed, a new boardwalk, bathhouse, and multiuse pavilion will soon be erected, breathing new life into this beloved getaway choice for so many families across the East Coast and beyond.

Each of the three final designs is as complex as it is creative, and an outsider's perspective might be that there's no wrong choice*. In addition to the main pavilion, the architecture firms battling for this thrilling honor have included amenities like playgrounds, splash pads, food truck parking, carousels, and more summer snacks and treats than most kids (and kids at heart) can handle.

But before we celebrate renovation and rejuvenation, let's not forget the special things that have made the Crystal Coast such a popular vacation choice for so long. The very same things that make it an ideal destination for this summer's great road trips and quick weekend getaways.

**Although, if we have a vote, it's going to the Lewis Williams Design, because we're suckers for a skate park.*

Those Glorious Beaches



Cape Lookout National Seashore combines a variety of beautiful natural elements, so it's easy to see why it's arguably the most popular destination in the region. *The Crystal Coast Tourism Authority*

Atlantic Beach is only one stop, albeit a huge one, on the 85-mile stretch of awesomeness known formally as the Southern Outer Banks, but more affectionately as the Crystal Coast. When it comes to beaches—arguably the most important aspect of a family's summer vacation—there are more than 25 to choose from, and each caters to various types of travelers. And while they may not get the same love as some of the other Outer Banks beaches to the north, they're all guaranteed to please.

Many visitors might agree that Cape Lookout National Seashore is the crown jewel of the Coast, as it simply offers so much. Travelers can plan entire weekends for this destination alone, as the various beaches offer plenty of rest and relaxation, while the Cape can be explored by foot, bike, and ATV. And kids and history buffs alike will want to ascend the 163-ft. Diamond Lady lighthouse that has been a landmark since it was built in the mid-1800s.

Time to Hit the Town



The homes along the Emerald Isle beaches enhance the vacation experience by offering solitude in one of the region's best locations. *The Crystal Coast Tourism Authority*

Comprised of 11 communities, the Crystal Coast is booming with culture, history, and style. If families can pry themselves away from the sand, they can explore areas like Beaufort and Pine Knoll Shores to discover the best in local dining and shopping—and then hit the beaches again, obviously. In fact, the best way to experience the Emerald Isle is probably by renting a beach cottage, because it adds a dash of privacy and makes this experience the complete package.

Just know this: choosing a cottage isn't as simple as it sounds. The variety available will have all vacation planners wondering if it's time to organize the family reunion, or some exhausted parents might call a weekend sitter and instead make this a romantic, adults-only getaway. The options are vast, and not just for the Emerald Isle. Decisions, decisions.

Get Lost on the Water



There's no doubt this is a boater's paradise. *The Crystal Coast Tourism Authority*

Not literally, of course. But travelers who target Morehead City know to pack a lot of sun screen, because entire days will be spent on boats, whether celebrating life with family and friends or fishing like the pros who gather here each year for the Big Blue Rock Marlin Fishing Tournament. Beginners can make their way to Cape Lookout Fly Shop for lessons from Captain Joe Shute, while more experienced anglers can, well, they've probably been staking out the best spots since the early hours of the morning.

Experienced divers have also long known the underwater beauty offered by the Crystal Coast—because it's right there in the name. The clear waters have made this a haven for explorers, especially since it's also home to the Graveyard of the Atlantic. But if it's a first adventure that must be planned, an excursion to Blackbeard's *Queen Anne's Revenge* will create memories of a lifetime. Or at least enough to hold everyone over until the next trip.