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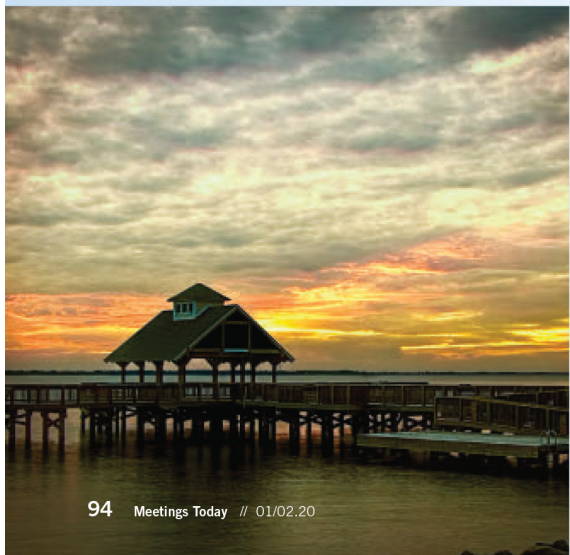


Coastal HOSTS

Outdoor event spaces in Coastal North Carolina and South Carolina welcome groups

BY CAROLYN BLACKBURN

When meeting in the coastal communities of North Carolina and South Carolina, groups will appreciate an outdoor event that allows them time to enjoy the mild weather, sunshine and scenic views.



RICK ELLER

An aquarium, garden settings, an old battleship and waterfront restaurants are a few of the possibilities for memorable receptions and meal functions complete with inspiring views, Instagram-worthy photo ops and even fun add-on activities.

**OUTDOOR VENUES
IN NORTH CAROLINA**
**NC Aquarium on Roanoke Island,
Manteo**
www.ncaquariums.com/roanoke-island

The NC Aquarium has been a popular attraction and special event host on the Outer Banks for four decades. It's the perfect post-conference destination because the evening hours can host group events.

"Dining with the sharks and partying with the otters is a prospect that attracts after-hours events," said Brian Postelle, the aquarium's public relations coordinator.

Interior spaces accommodate sit-down dinners or food stations with time built in to explore the aquarium, and outside function areas include a grassy open field next to the sound and the Soundside Pier.

"We have the added charm of our Soundside Pier, which allows guests to gather and experience waterfront living for themselves both while it is light and then after it has gotten dark," Postelle said. "It is an amazing location to watch the sunset,

which happens just across the sound."

The Riverwalk Landing, Wilmington
www.riverwalklandingnc.com

The Riverwalk Landing is located on the Cape Fear River beside two of downtown Wilmington's popular restaurants, Elijah's and the Pilot House, which are often called on to cater events.

According to Lindsey Miller, the venue's event coordinator, the riverfront deck accommodates more than 200 seated guests and allows drinking.

"One of the best things about our venue is the amazing views," Miller said. "We have the most perfect view of the Cape Fear Memorial Bridge and on the other side you can see the Battleship. These make for amazing group pictures as well."

**Battleship NORTH CAROLINA,
Wilmington**
www.battleshipnc.com

The Battleship NORTH CAROLINA, a restored World War II vessel, is a National Historic Landmark that serves as a museum, memorial and outdoor event venue for up to 300 people.

Stacie Greene Hidek, marketing director for the Battleship, explained the outdoor fantail and the adjacent riverfront park are available for rental.

PHOTOS, TOP TO BOTTOM: BATTLESHIP NORTH CAROLINA, WILMINGTON; MOONRAKERS, BEAUFORT; BROOKGREEN GARDENS, MURRELLS INLET; PIER AT NC AQUARIUM ON ROANOKE ISLAND, MANTEO

"The Battleship and its grounds offer a unique and stunning view of downtown Wilmington, across the Cape Fear River," she said. "The ship itself is a one-of-a-kind venue, where groups can enjoy being surrounded by an authentically restored piece of World War II history with fantastic photo opportunities."

Groups that hold events on the Battleship may also arrange guided tours or educational activities, including in-depth lessons about the ship's history or operation.

"We also host organizations that provide their own training using the Battleship's facilities such as search and rescue groups, and others that offer their own take on the Battleship's history, such as ghost tours," Greene Hidek added.

Moonrakers, Beaufort

<https://moonrakersbeaufort.com>

Moonrakers, located in North Carolina's Crystal Coast, is a seafood restaurant that was designed with group events in mind, according to John Stephens, managing partner.

There are four separate areas that accommodate small and large group gatherings, including a covered deck on the main floor, the Concorde Gallery veranda and the Sky Deck, which overlooks Taylor's Creek and accommodates more than 100 seated guests.

"The Sky Deck is a finished space for rooftop dining and everyone's favorite," Stephens said. "It has its own large full bar, 360-degree views, shade sails overhead, string lighting, live entertainment and arguably one of the best views while dining on the east coast."

The team at Moonrakers will also work with planners to create custom menus using locally sourced ingredients and to arrange fun add-on activities, including scavenger hunts.

OUTDOOR VENUES IN SOUTH CAROLINA

Brookgreen Gardens, Murrells Inlet
www.brookgreen.org

Brookgreen Gardens, located 15 minutes from Myrtle Beach, is a National Historic Site that features the country's largest collection of American figurative sculpture, an award-winning botanical garden, an accredited zoo, and a wildlife, history and nature preserve.

Brookgreen has both indoor meeting spaces and outdoor spaces, including the newly constructed Leonard Pavilion, which overlooks Brookgreen's arboretum. The sculpture *Heron, Grouse and Loon* by Elliot Offner is adjacent to the pavilion, which

is suitable as a dining venue or set up as a classroom space.

"The Holiday Cottage is a stunning venue for an evening cocktail event, a luncheon or a small meeting," added Lauren Joseph, director of marketing at Brookgreen Gardens. "The courtyard can be tented to provide a large private covered event space."

Other outdoor spaces include the White Garden, with a central pool featuring Anna Hyatt Huntington's sculpture, *Diana of the Chase*; and the walled garden with *The Fountain of the Muses* by Carl Milles as the central feature.

"There are many other outdoor gathering spaces available over our 300-plus acres of public area," Joseph said. "Our event coordinator will work with your group to find the perfect spot."

Add-on group activities can include a historical tour of the rice fields and creek on a 48-passenger pontoon boat, and a sculpture garden tour.

Coast, Hilton Head Island

www.coastocceanfrontdining.com

Outdoor events are considered "a strong suit for Hilton Head Island," according to Charlie Clark, vice president, communications, for the Hilton Head Island VCB.

"A place that's still relatively new that's been fantastic for offsite group events is Coast," he said.

The restaurant is located within the Sea Pines Resort, a 5,000-acre enclave with private homes, The Inn & Club Harbour hotel



COAST, HILTON HEAD ISLAND

(rated one of *Travel + Leisure's* Top 10 Best Resorts in the American South in 2018) shops and restaurants.

"Coast overlooks the Atlantic and is perfect for large groups," Clark said. The restaurant serves fresh fare like seafood towers, lobster, shrimp pasta and more.

Middleton Place, Charleston

www.middletonplace.org

Middleton Place, a National Historic Landmark that includes 65 acres of gardens, an



MIDDLETON PLACE, CHARLESTON

inn, a restaurant and an organic farm, has welcomed visitors since it was established in 1741.

One special guest was First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who visited in early 1941 and marveled at what she thought was "one of the most beautifully laid out places I have ever seen."

According to Samantha Wrigglesworth, director of special group services, any type of event can be arranged at Middleton Place.

"From an intimate cocktail party in the gardens to a large-scale reception or banquet in the pavilion, from scavenger hunts in the stable yards to oyster roasts under the live oaks, Middleton Place's magnificent landscape, created in the 18th century to impress its visitors, continues to do so today," she said.

An entertaining add-on group activity can coincide with an event at Middleton Place. Examples include a horse-drawn carriage ride and a wine-tasting stroll through the gardens. [M](#)



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