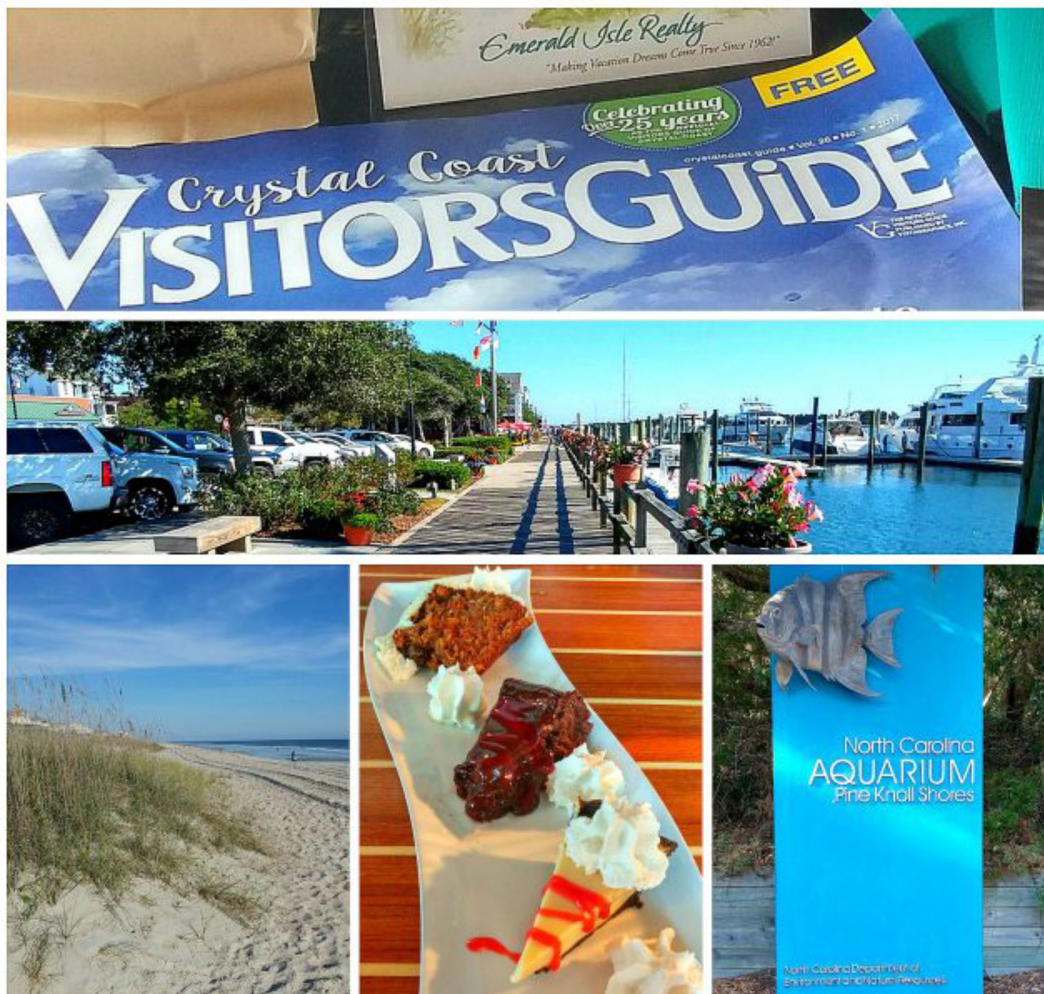




The Beautiful Crystal Coast of North Carolina

This post is brought to you by The Crystal Coast ~ The beautiful Crystal Coast of North Carolina is a favorite vacation destination for families to enjoy and mine is no exception. The rich history and beautiful beaches have made it a haven of outdoor activities and fun for entire families for generations. Some of our favorite things to do include the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores and the Fort Macon State Park located on Bogue Banks near Atlantic Beach. There's no shortage of water activities, historic tours, mini golf and shopping to be done in quaint locally owned businesses and a plethora of mouthwatering food options to enjoy. The North Carolina coast is home to wild horses that have long roamed the barrier islands and they're a fascinating sight to see. With so many family friendly things to do and an abundance of casual and fine dining options it's a can't miss travel destination. My most recent visit to the Crystal Coast was all about the food and where to eat.





I was invited by **The Crystal Coast** to visit this awesome part of North Carolina and explore some of the magnificent dining options available to visitors. I was incredibly excited to talk with local Chefs and sample what they have cooking in their busy kitchens. Read on for a breakdown of the places I visited and the Chefs behind all the great food! I *highly* recommend that you add them to your plans for your visit to the magical **Crystal Coast of North Carolina**.

Where To Eat When Visiting The Beautiful Crystal Coast of North Carolina

Pescara



Pescara in Atlantic Beach features casual Italian dining reminiscent of an Italian seaside cafe using locally sourced ingredients from area farms and fisherman. The appetizing menu offers wood-fired pizzas and flatbreads, pasta, lamb, veal, chicken and fresh seafood. The vibe is relaxed and the interior lends itself to intimate conversation with friends. Pescara also boasts a bit of local history. The cottage itself is one of the oldest in Atlantic Beach and was moved to it's current location within recent years and then modified to be the working kitchen and restaurant it is today. Chef Creighton McNeill, takes great pride in what he serves and he's passionate about providing a quality dining experience for guests. He sources most of his ingredients from local farmers, makes fresh pasta daily and creates a variety of Chef's specials based on what's in season. I recommend starting with the artichoke frites as an appetizer and for your entree consider the tender braised beef short ribs served over creamy polenta that's smothered with a luxurious fig demi-glace that takes it over the top. The kale and farro bean salad is a perfect accompaniment but, make sure you leave room for dessert. The dreamy vanilla bean creme brulée is worth the drive alone. Learn more about **Pescara and plan your visit [here](#)**.

Beaufort Grocery Co



Beaufort Grocery Co is a quaint little place in the heart of Beaufort North Carolina. It's subtle grace and charm is reminiscent of a French country Bistro. It offers both cozy outdoor and indoor seating and has ample indoor space for parties of all sizes. It's the sort of place you want to spend an entire afternoon chatting with friends enjoying the casual atmosphere and spectacular food. The fun menu features Chef Charles Park's unique take on Southern inspired appetizers such as the Beaufort cheese and fruit platter. It comes with two types of in-house made pimiento cheese, a sweet-tart Granny Smith apple slaw and candied pecans served with lavosh crackers. *Simply divine*. Executive Chef Charles Park's wife Wendy, manages the front of the house and doubles as Pastry Chef. The Pecan Pie and chocolate "Bumpy Cake" are two desserts you simply have to try. When the Chef churns out sandwiches with quirky names such as *Fuhgeddaboutit* and *Charles's Cranky Crab Sandwich* you know you're in for something special. And, it is. Read more about **[Beaufort Grocery Co here](#)**.

Amos Mosquitos Restaurant and Bar

Conde Nast Traveler presents the most breathtaking stained glass windows in the world. The Chapel of the Rosary has stained glass by Henri Matisse. St. Vitus Cathedral has designs by Alphonse...



Amos Mosquitos Restaurant and Bar in Atlantic Beach is well worth visiting. You'll be greeted at the door by General Manager Sandy Howard, who Co-Owns Amos Mosquitos with his CIA trained Chef and wife, Hallock. Hands on Head Chef Luke manages the kitchen, and the love that he and his team put into the dishes they serve really shows. The fun and festive atmosphere is only rivaled by Chef Luke's phenomenal menu featuring dreamy Baked Oysters, Bang Bang Shrimp and Warm Cheesy Lobster Dip for starters. Specials include Sea Scallops served over Forbidden Rice and Parmesan Crusted Trigger Fish served with a side of Snow Crab Mac and Cheese. For the carnivores, entrees like the Roasted Garlic Black Pepper Rubbed Ribeye and half pound Prime Burgers will ensure that everyone in your dining party will leave satisfied. Sweet endings such as the fun table top s'mores for the kids or perhaps consider sharing one of the gigantic ice cream sandwiches stacked high with vanilla ice cream tucked between 2 fudgy brownies dripping with hot fudge. If that doesn't satisfy your sweets craving nothing will. Read more about **Amos Mosquitos here.**

Black Sheep Beaufort



Plan to take a stroll down Front Street while you're in Beaufort and enjoy the variety of shops and eateries you're sure to see. Take time to stop in for a bite to eat on the water at **Black Sheep Beaufort** restaurant. At Black Sheep Beaufort you'll enjoy outdoor dining that overlooks the boating activity on the Intercoastal Waterway. Black Sheep has the feel of a Spanish sea front bistro serving their famous brick oven pizzas, sandwiches and freshly made starters. The Shrimp Salad Crostini topped with creamy Manchego cheese and The Bishop Pizza were outstanding as was the Black Sheep BPT which comes with thick cut bacon, house made pimiento cheese and sliced tomato piled high on toasted ciabatta. All were worth the short walk on the Boardwalk to discover. The occasional dolphin play and wild horse sightings at the island across the way are the cherry on top. I highly recommend stopping in to meet hands on Owner-Manger Jeff Adams and his warm and friendly team. Read more about **Black Sheep Beaufort here.**

Circa 81 Tapas and Cocktaieria



If you love small plates and sampling various dishes at one sitting then **Circa 81 Tapas and Cocktaieria** in Morehead City is the place to go. Chef and Owner Clarke Merrell prides himself on serving robust flavor combinations and sourcing ingredients from local farms and artisans in North Carolina but, he is willing to go further to get the pristine ingredients that he and his team turn into small plate wonders. I recommend the Chefs Tour Charcuterie for starters and then move onto the smoky-sweet Medjool Dates wrapped in bacon and stuffed with chevre and an almond. The Fried Truffle Mac & Cheese and the Sage Brined Pork Tenderloin served with oven roasted potatoes, asparagus, sweet corn puree and cooked apples are just a few of the menu items guaranteed to tantalize your taste buds. Don't miss Chef Clarke's take on shrimp and grits which comes served over a crispy fried grit cake, chorizo sautéed shrimp topped with a cajun cream sauce. The incredibly knowledgeable servers walk you through the menu offerings with ease. Leave room for one of Circa's signature desserts and end with creamy Blueberry Yum Yum. Sharing dessert is completely up to you. Read more about **Circa 81 here.**

The Island Grille



The **Island Grille** in Atlantic Beach is a go-to hot spot for Sunday brunch. They refer to themselves as a “gourmet hole-in-the-wall” and Chef Josh and his dedicated team knock dishes like the crab and goat cheese stuffed Island Grille Signature Omelet out of the park. The French toast served up with with peaches, pecans and a sweet bourbon sauce is so scrumptious it deserves it’s own food group. I savored each bite of the Maryland Crab Cake Eggs Benedict that’s presented on a toasted English muffin and smothered in a rich and buttery hollandaise sauce. Not-to-be-missed the hearty Surf & Turf Benedict featuring filet mignon as well as a Maryland style crab cake. Side dishes like cheesy cheddar grits, fresh fruit, hash browns, sausage and thick cut slab bacon round out every plate. Don’t stop there, be sure to ask the server about the daily dessert offerings, too. The Pastry Chef is a wonder serving her own recipe for cream cheese frosted carrot cake that’s sure to rival Grandma’s. We also enjoyed a melt in your mouth flourless chocolate torte and key lime pie made with a chocolate Oreo cookie crust. This isn’t just a brunch place, they cater special events, weddings and receptions in their nearby beach front **Celebration Cottage** and have an amazing dinner menu, too. Read more about **The Island Grille** [here](#).

Additional Mentions:

A heartfelt “thank you” to **Emerald Isle Realty** for providing beautiful accommodations for my stay. Check-in was seamless and the beautifully decorated house we stayed in called *The Boathouse* offered scenic views of wild life and the Intercoastal Waterway from it’s huge screened in deck. Emerald Isle Realty offers a variety of accommodation choices to suit your vacation needs. Read more about **Emerald Isle Realty** and to book your stay on the **Crystal Coast** [here](#).



I'm obsessed with General stores and seek them out on all of my travels. **The Beaufort General Store** on Front Street in Beaufort is a gem. Family owned and operated the now second generation Manager Sandra Bray serves up 32 different flavors of velvety in-house made fudge and hand dipped ice cream. The eclectic mix of items range from beach apparel to colorful coffee mugs, fun magnets, toys, plushies, jewelry, novelty items and of course, salt water taffy. Stop in and order an ice cream cone to savor while you stroll the Boardwalk, the smiles and friendly chatter with the associates are free. Read more about **The Beaufort General Store here.**

