

on the 10

Travel Guide: North Carolina's Mesmerizing Crystal Coast



(<https://i0.wp.com/on-the-10.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/RNI-Films-IMG-0B35EBA1-82F0-4745-BCB6-BD29A80DEB21.jpg>)

I have found in recent years that the more and more I travel the less it seems that I'm traveling to new places in my own country. Unacceptable is probably what some of you are thinking and you would be right. As much as I travel there are absolutely breathtaking destinations practically in my backyard! So when I was invited down to North Carolina's Crystal Coast (<http://www.crystalcoastnc.org/>) I knew I needed to go, I had not only heard incredible things about the beachside towns and friendly people but I knew I needed a short escape from NYC and what better way to get that than hopping on a quick flight down to NC. When they told me that the Crystal Coast (<http://www.crystalcoastnc.org/>) is both a place and a state of mind representing a departure from the ordinary and arrival at the extraordinary – and that it is.



Why visit?

There are beaches and a lot of them, there is Southern food that will blow your mind, there are activities literally for every kind of vacationer, there are beautiful beaches, there are glassy waters (and dolphins everywhere) and more than all of that there are the people who love this area – there are incredibly kind, sweet people everywhere you go.



Even more than that there are Islands consist of 85 miles of silken coastline along North Carolina's Central Shore — 56 miles of which are in the protected Cape Lookout National Seashore. The “gems” of The Crystal Coast include Atlantic Beach, Beaufort, Emerald Isle, Harker's Island, Cape Lookout and Morehead City, each one as distinct and precious as the next.



When to go and for how long?

As someone who comes with a disclaimer on not being a fan of big crowds I have grown to love shoulder season travel!! Honestly it is the best time to go – there are inevitably fewer crowds, the beaches are always going to be calmer, restaurants and bars are not impossible to get into and prices are just a bit more pocket friendly so that you can stay even longer! Not that there is ever a truly horrible time to visit the Crystal Coast (<http://www.crystalcoastnc.org/>), though hurricane season wouldn't be at the top of my booking! But we went in late September, beaches were still gorgeous, I did runs along the water every morning, we went kayaking, sat outside and only needed a denim jacket at night. It was HEAVEN.



I went for three and a half days, it was great but I could have stayed for a whole week! If you're looking for a quick escape then you can definitely do this trip but I'd recommend doing a full week if you can to truly relax, kick back, enjoy your beautiful Emerald Isle beach rental (https://www.emeraldislerealty.com/?NCK=eir_branded_terms_ag&gclid=Cj0KCQiA2ITuBRDkARIsAMK9Q7MCUi9fVy3H5oSxwxCZjxEXcau-Sq2UVC07_0iQrNQwNbM1fvmDhUwaApKZEALw_wcB) and CHILLLLL.

What to do?

For a beach town that is smaller than Williamsburg this destination has EVERYTHING, literally there is something for everyone!

1. Go on a bike tour of the town with Hungry Town Tours (<https://hungrytowntours.com/>). We did this on Friday morning and it was the perfect way to explore historic Beaufort, get a few history lessons in not to mention some needed exercise! We did the Ride to Romance tour that takes you around to all of the Nicholas Sparks spots that he's either gained inspiration from or has set parts of his movie at like the famed Beaufort-set romance novel "A Walk to Remember." The couple who own HTT (<https://hungrytowntours.com/>), were so interesting, they are former New Yorkers who decided to leave the hectic city (literally ditched their jobs!) to pursue their dream, check out their story here (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jerylbrunner/2019/08/22/they-ditched-their-jobs-to-live-in-their-dream-destination/>).



2. Kayaking and paddle boarding with Beaufort Paddle (<http://www.beaufortpaddle.com/>) was such a blast! We were on the water for about two hours, during our kayak trip we saw dolphins playing, the exotic wild horses grazing (though we'd hoped to see them run this was equally as an incredible of a sight!) and even got to see the baby that was born in July! They reside on Rachel Carson Reserve (<https://www.beaufort-nc.com/rachel-carson-reserve.html>), nicknamed "Carrot Island" by the locals! These horses have roamed the same shores for centuries, pretty amazing right?



3. Antique shopping. No surprise here that I found myself perusing the shops in Beaufort. I stumbled upon Beaufort Antiques

([https://www.google.com/maps/place/Beaufort+Antiques/@34.7172011,-76.6660571,19z/data=76.6665802!3m4!1s0x89a890eadc4c2585:0x68df4223904d713e!8m2!3d34.7176107!4d-76.66657506](https://www.google.com/maps/place/Beaufort+Antiques/@34.7172011,-76.6660571,19z/data=!3m4!1s0x89a890eadc4c2585:0x68df4223904d713e!8m2!3d34.7176107!4d-76.6665802!3m4!1s0x89a890eadc4c2585:0x68df4223904d713e!8m2!3d34.7176107!4d-76.66657506)), right off of Front Street and one of the best antique shops I've come across on my travels. I scored all of these beauties for under \$100. Needless to say I'd like to go back on a bigger shopping trip!



4. We were lucky enough to be in town for the 4th Annual Beaufort Wine & Food Craft Beer Festival (<https://beaufortwineandfood.org/events/beauforts-brewin-beer-festival/>)– Beaufort's Brewin' which was a really fun beer dinner at Beaufort Grocery Co

(<http://www.beaufortgrocery.com/>). They paired local brews from all over North Carolina with the delicious food from Beaufort Grocery and the setting was lovely, we enjoyed the evening outside on a big backyard with long family style tables, lots of lights and lots of delicious beer.



5. There is so much more the Crystal Coast (<http://www.crystalcoastnc.org/>) has to offer that we didn't get a chance to do (guess that just means I'll have to go back!) like unbelievable diving. The area is called as "wreck diver's dream" with near-perfect conditions for an experience unlike anywhere else in the world. Guess you can understand why it's known as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic" and the No. 1 Dive Destination in North America. There are more than 2,000 vessels that have made their watery graves along the North Carolina coast. During WWII, German U- boats frequently targeted merchant vessels sending them to their final resting places 100 feet

beneath the sea, viewable by divers thanks to the stunningly clear, warm waters with average temperatures around 80° F and more than 100 feet of visibility. How incredible is that?!

Where to eat?

We did not stop eating. This is by far the one thing I will always say, southerners know how to eat and they eat well! We enjoyed breakfast at our houses each morning, which honestly was so relaxing I wish I could do that every day as I'd wake up, make coffee and a bit of breakfast then walk out on our private dock to the water and spend a bit of time with myself before the day got started.



You must do dinner at La Perla (<https://www.laperlabeaufort.com/>), this Spanish/Latin inspired restaurant comes rolling in with that duo and adds some southern influences in too. Every dish here was a unique take on a Spanish dish that I've loved. You can't go wrong with one thing on the menu so I suggest going with an empty stomach and trying a bit of everything. This chocolate cake was OUT OF THIS WORLD amazing.



Moonrakers Beaufort (<https://moonrakersbeaufort.com/>) was an awesome spot on the water in Beaufort. The food was delicious but what I loved even more than their whipped feta dip was the rooftop here. We spotted dolphins playing in the water while watching the boats come in. Perfect afternoon spot!



Circa 81 (<https://www.circa-81.com/>)- this was a great spot for our first dinner, an outstanding tapas spot - definitely go with the impressive charcuterie board that is comprised of local meats and cheeses.



Where to stay?

While there are hotels in the area we had the chance to stay at one of Emerald Isle's (<https://www.emeraldislerealty.com/?>

NCK=eir_branded_terms_ag&gclid=Cj0KCQiA2ITuBRDkARIsAMK9Q7MCUi9fVy3H5oSxwxCZjxEXcau-Sq2UVC07_0iQrNQwNbM1fvmDhUwaApKZEALw_wcB)spectacular beachside homes (more like mansions!) that are available for rent all year long. Our house, Breezy Oak Cottage (<https://www.emeraldislerealty.com/blog/featured-property-of-the-week-breezy-oak-cottage>) was anything but a typical cottage. The house was absolutely massive not to mention beautiful, being from New York I have such an appreciation when I travel for places that are spacious and feel like home.



Our four story, five bedroom house came with a hot tub, an elevator (hallelujah because I didn't want to carry my suitcase up four stories!), three massive porches and decks plus the whole house is energy efficient. Added bonus? We had a private dock to the sound which was downright lovely!



One of my favorite things about staying in a house on trips is that I can get up, make coffee and breakfast so that I can start my day in a calm, relaxing way as opposed to being hurried out the door to make a breakfast reservation. I highly recommend renting a house whether you're going with your family or for a girls' trip!



Needless to say, I'll be back to the Crystal Coast!