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MAVERICKS & MOLD BREAKERS

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MAKE A MOVE: FASHIONABLE LOOKS SET IN MOTION

A GUY'S GUIDE TO RELAXATION—AND A LITTLE PAMPERING

SEAWORTHY: INSIDE UPTOWN'S NEW FIN & FINO

THE **ZIMMERMAN** AGENCY
(continued)

| travel

Coastal Charm

NORTH CAROLINA'S SOUTHERN OUTER BANKS—BETTER KNOWN AS THE CRYSTAL COAST—OFFER EVERYTHING YOU WANT IN A SUMMER GETAWAY: SPARKLING WATERS, PRISTINE SANDY BEACHES, AND PLENTY OF ADVENTURES, BE THEY WALKING DISTANCE OR A SHORT DRIVE AWAY.

BY CAROLINE PORTILLO

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CRYSTAL COAST



The Crystal Coast, nearly 300 miles east of Charlotte, is an 85-mile stretch of coastline that includes the Cape Lookout National Seashore, Bogue Banks, and the mainland anchors of Beaufort and Morehead City. The area is known for everything from a history of pirate escapades to wild horses, resort towns to maritime forests, which boils down to one thing for summer travelers: There's something for everyone.

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STAY

When it comes to unfettered access to sun and sand, we're partial to the large oceanfront houses, known locally as **"Sand Castles."** Many of the stunning houses—with spectacular views of the Atlantic Ocean and Bogue Sound and names like "Camelot by the Sea"—are made for multigenerational pool parties and cookouts, with grills, private pools and hot tubs, ping pong tables and more. Rent a "sand castle" by the week or month through any of the area realty companies, such as Emerald Isle Realty, Bluewater Vacation Rentals, Coldwell Banker, and Atlantic Beach Realty.

But if you prefer a room or two, instead of whole home, the Crystal Coast can certainly accommodate. Want an ocean-view resort? Book a stay at the **DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel Atlantic Beach Oceanfront**, where every guest room has private balconies and sea views. Want a spacious room with easy access to some of the East Coast's best fishing? Check out Morehead City's first downtown hotel, the **Bask Hotel @ Big Rock Landing**. And if you're partial to the bed-and-breakfast vibe, look no further than the quaint cottages in historic Beaufort, such as the **Anchorage House** and the **Inlet Inn**, as seen on NBC's "The Today Show."



The Crystal Coast's housing offerings run the gamut, from stunning beachfront homes for rent (known locally as "Sand Castles") to charming bed and breakfasts, like the Inlet Inn in Beaufort.



Hungry Town Guided Tours in Beaufort, N.C. have options for walking or biking, but we're partial to the rainbow-colored cruisers.



PLAY

Once you've logged some beach time and are ready to explore, there's no better place to start than with one of the **Hungry Town Guided Tours** in downtown Beaufort, N.C. The walking and biking tours (which range from \$20 to \$69 per person) are run by Betsy Cartier and her husband, David, and you've got more than dozen to choose from, whether you're craving local history, a culinary experience, or a "Ride to Remember" inspired by the sites featured in *New York Times*-bestselling author Nicholas Sparks' works. The best part: the rainbow-colored cruisers you'll take on your journey.

If you want some warm-water adventures, go diving in the Crystal Coast waters—a hidden graveyard of more than 2,000 vessels. There's also first-rate fishing off the shores of **Fort Macon State Park** and **Cape Lookout National Seashore**. The latter is only available by boat, but well worth the trip for the view of the 163-foot-tall **Cape Lookout Lighthouse**, painted in the iconic diamond pattern. Plus, nearby is **Shackleford Banks**, part of the protected seashore and home to wild ponies.

Check out some of Atlantic Beach's local flavor by stopping in **Amos Mosquito's Restaurant & Bar** on Thursday nights for karaoke. While the sound-side restaurant has plenty of great coastal food to chow down on, the weekly karaoke sessions are packed and standing-room-only. Whether you want to take the mic or just watch, it's an experience you don't want to miss.



Shackleford Banks has been home to wild ponies for more than 400 years.



The Cape Lookout Lighthouse, built in the 1800s, stands at 163 feet tall.



The Crystal Coast is a diver's dream, as one of two spots in North America where the Gulf Stream's warm waters touch the coast.



Love to fish? You're in luck. The Crystal Coast's warm waters provide idyllic conditions.



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EAT

After a day of exploring, you'll have no doubt worked up an appetite, and the Crystal Coast is practically teeming with locally owned restaurants serving up everything from fresh-caught fish to Southern comfort food. And for many restaurateurs, it's both a livelihood and a legacy. It's common to find that the current owner of a restaurant is the great-great grandchild of the original owner—which means those family recipes have been taste-tested for generations.

In Beaufort, don't miss at one of the region's most renowned spots: **Beaufort Grocery Co.** on Queen Street, where the Carolina Crab Cakes served with spicy remoulade is well worth the hype. In Atlantic Beach, make a reservation for dinner at "gourmet hole-in-the-wall" spot **The Island Grille**, where fine dining comes with a casual oceanside ambiance. And, of course, no trip to Morehead City is complete without a stop at **El's Drive-In**, recognized by "Cooking with Paula Deen" as having one of the best burgers in America. ☑

Downtown Beaufort, N.C. is quaint, idyllic, and the perfect getaway.

