

TOWN

Adventure Rising

GREENVILLE DADS
TRANSFORM INTO
BONAFIDE DAREDEVILS



Risk & Reward

D.I.Y. OPTIONS TO
CHALLENGE AND CHARM
YOU THIS SUMMER

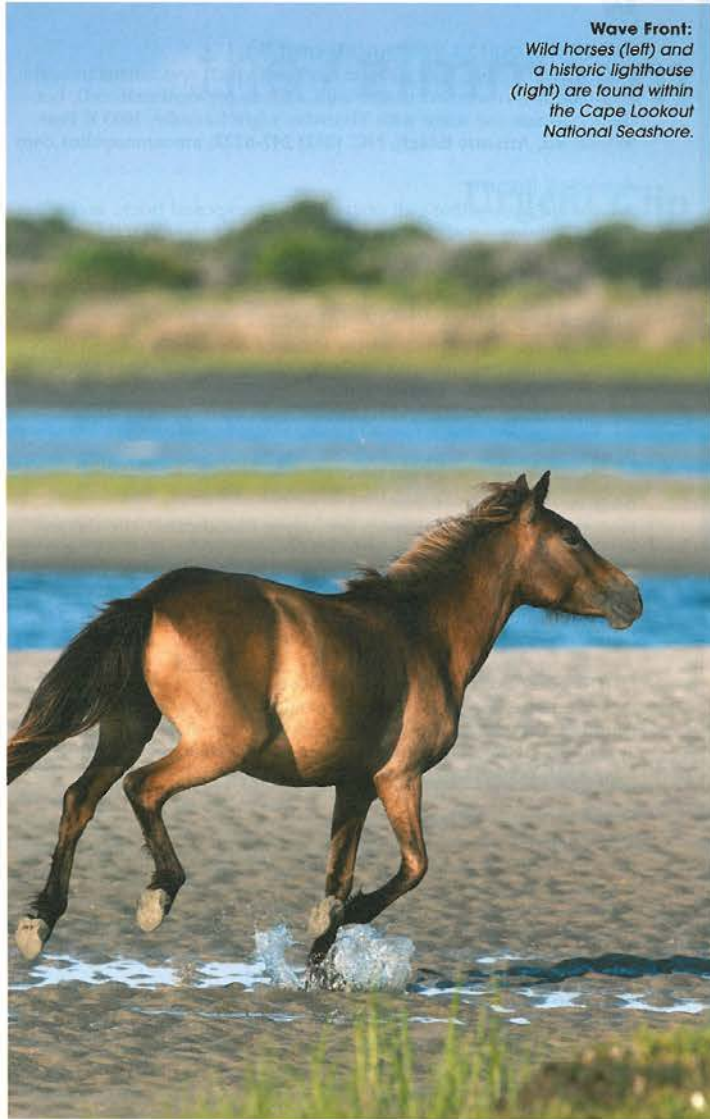
Rock the Boat

TAKE TO WATER IN A
FOLDING KAYAK

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(continued)



Wave Front:
Wild horses (left) and
a historic lighthouse
(right) are found within
the Cape Lookout
National Seashore.



Most of the time, balance is an abstract concept for me: work-life balance, a balanced diet, a balanced checkbook. But standing atop a paddleboard in the middle of coastal marsh, balance suddenly becomes much more literal. Not that I'm in any mortal danger—this section of marsh is only three feet deep—but I'd rather not add to the layer of pluff mud on my legs. I've already fallen in once, and I'm not keen to repeat the experience.

Balance, with which I'm now overly concerned, is also a convenient metaphor for where I am: the Crystal Coast of North Carolina, so dubbed for its incredibly clear waters. This 85-mile stretch of the southern Outer Banks is about two hours north of Wilmington, North Carolina, and exists solely because of balance. The barrier islands, interior waterways, and coastline that make up the Crystal Coast are the byproduct of a delicate equilibrium between tides, waves, sediment, and, more recently, human development. Out of this balance, the Crystal Coast derives a unique blend of leisure and adventure, opportunities that make this a suitable destination for nearly all appetites.

Much of the coastline has the feel of pristine, barely-touched wilderness, aided in large part by Croatan National Forest's 160,000 acres of pine forests and coastal wetlands. While trails and campsites crisscross and dot the Croatan's interior, there's also the opportunity to explore this wetland habitat from the water. Michael Crews, owner and operator of Emerald Isle's Hot Wax Surf Shop and Paddle Sports, offers surfboard and paddleboard rentals, instructional camps, and even guided tours through the Croatan and its neighboring

Shore Patrol

There's plenty to discover
on North Carolina's
pristine Crystal Coast



Coast Is Clear:
(clockwise, from top left) Shrimp & grits at Amos Mosquito's Restaurant; surfing on the Crystal Coast; inshore fishing; a diver in the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores' display tank; the brick casemates at Fort Macon.

EAT

Amos Mosquito's Restaurant and Bar

Chef Luke Maguire may run the kitchen (which specializes in sushi and modern American cuisine with a focus on local seafood), but the locals run the stage with Thursday night karaoke. **1603 E Fort Macon Rd, Atlantic Beach, NC. (252) 247-6222, amosmosquitos.com**

Arendell Room

A retro speakeasy that's all craft cocktails, exposed brick, and Edison lighting—a slick urban counterpoint to the Crystal Coast's laidback beach atmosphere. **715 Arendell St, Morehead City, NC. (252) 240-2753, arendellroom.com**

Village Market

Gourmet sandwiches may be the focus of this locally owned deli's menu, but the key lime pie steals the spotlight. Find other local foods in the grocery section of the shop. **7802 Emerald Dr, Emerald Isle, NC. (252) 354-6592, villagemarketofei.com**

PLAY

Beaufort Historic Tours

Historically a target for pirates (including Blackbeard), the danger to life and property has thankfully subsided, although the charm of this maritime village remains. Tours of the town's historic buildings and burial grounds are available, as are double-decker bus tours of the historic district. **100 Turner St, Beaufort, NC. (252) 728-5225, beauforthistoricsite.org**

Cape Lookout National Seashore

Protected beaches make Cape Lookout prime for secluded seaside camping. Ferries to the islands depart from the main visitors center at Harkers Island, as well as Beaufort and Morehead City. **1800 Island Rd, Harkers Island, NC. (252) 728-2250, nps.gov/cal**

Fort Macon

A key defensive installation against pirates and in the Civil War, the fort overlooks the Atlantic, Bogue Sound, and Beaufort Inlet. Demonstrations of the fort's cannons are hard to ignore. **2303 E Fort Macon Rd, Atlantic Beach, NC. (252) 726-3775, ncparks.gov/visit/parks/foma/main.php**

Hot Wax Surf Shop and Paddle Sports

The shop offers rental equipment that runs the gamut: long boards, short boards, body boards, stand-up paddleboards, and kayaks. Get in the water yourself, or take a few cues from Hot Wax's surf camp instructors. **200 Mallard Dr, Emerald Isle, NC. (252) 354-6466, hotwaxsurf.com**

NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores

One of three North Carolina aquariums, this location recreates local aquatic environments, including scale models of shipwrecks in the area. **1 Roosevelt Dr, Pine Knoll Shores, NC. (252) 247-4003, ncaquariums.com/pine-knoll-shores**

Olympus Dive Center

Wreck diving, shark diving, technical diving—whatever your interest, or if you're just learning, there's plenty to see off the Crystal Coast. Half, full, and extended day charters are available, as well as twilight dives. **713 Shepard St, Morehead City, NC. (252) 726-9432, olympusdiving.com**

STAY

Ann Street Inn

Booking one of the 16 individually decorated rooms in the 1872 Carriage House Inn lands you smack in the middle of all the downtown action. **707 Ann St, Beaufort, NC. (877) 266-7814, annstreetinn.com**

Emerald Isle Realty

Something for everyone isn't hyperbole for Emerald Isle Realty. The company manages more than 700 rental homes, cottages, and condos, including luxury oceanfront "sand castles." **(866) 586-6980, emeraldiserealty.com**

waterways via stand-up paddleboard—which is more or less how I've found myself immersed in the Croatan's waterways.

Of course, there's more summer fun to be had the closer you are to the ocean. To the east of Croatan National Forest, pristine natural conditions take on a distinctly coastal feel at Cape Lookout National Seashore, which covers 56 miles of protected beaches across three main islands. The islands, accessible only by boat, remain mostly untouched although the historic Cape Lookout Light Station is one exception. The station is comprised of a 163-foot-tall lighthouse built in 1859 and additional support buildings. Naturally, it behooves to go on one of the self-guided tours of the station, which culminates in a 207-step climb to the top of the lighthouse. The unimpeded view is well worth the effort. For an even more off-the-grid experience, Cape Lookout National Seashore also allows camping on the islands, including Shackleford Banks, home to a population of wild Spanish horses.

But if you truly want to get wet, then scuba diving is what you're after. Drop by the Olympus Dive Center for an impressive program of scuba diving charters, from spearfishing and shark diving. Then there are the 19 shipwrecks Olympus frequents—ships sunk as a mixture of artificial reefs and casualties of World War II—including the German submarine *U-352*, discovered in part by Olympus founder George Purifoy. The Gulf Stream's nearby flow keeps underwater conditions warm and clear, with visibility topping 75 feet and water temperatures hovering between 70°F–80°F in the summer.

But we can't all stay at sea or remain in the wilderness forever. Exploring and adventuring can be exhausting, and, besides, it would be an incredible oversight to leave the Crystal Coast's beaches unenjoyed. Bogue Banks, a 21-mile long barrier island separating Bogue Sound and the mainland from the Atlantic Ocean, has beaches on the sound-side as well as the ocean-side. Although private and rental homes occupy most of the beachfront real estate in Bogue Banks's communities of Emerald Isle, Pine Knoll Shores, and Atlantic Beach, there are public access points to nearly all the beaches. Finding a stretch of sand to call your own is just a matter of walking a bit, even in the high season. Another bonus? The beaches on Bogue Banks are oriented east-to-west, which makes it possible to view the sunrise and sunset from the same place.

Intoxicated by sun, waves, the pure exhilaration of adventuring, it's difficult to find motivation to shake off the sand and roll up the beach towels—or, in my case, scrape off mud. Unfortunately, getting away is not the same as running away. **T**

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