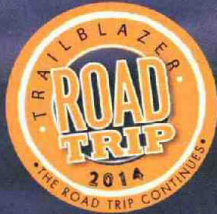


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# Driving the Atlantic Coast

From Maine to the  
Florida Keys  
Along the Ocean

*By Lynn & Cele Seldon*

Portland Head Light in Cape Elizabeth, Maine

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(continued)



# Atlantic

Driving the Atlantic coastline from Maine down to Key West is the dream of many road warriors for good reason. It's right up there with the Pacific Coast Highway, Route 66, and the Skyline Drive and Blue Ridge Parkway. Plus, it's perfect for pursuing various and varied segments or the entire drive of about 2,250 miles.

Passing through 14 states, the drive down America's Atlantic coast is steeped in saltwater, beaches, history, and travel. Though it would be tempting to use faster roads, including I-95 and other

interstates, closer and quieter options like Route 1, Route 13, Route 17, and more await those willing to enjoy the slower lane along the coast.

For much of the drive, historic Route 1 is the closest main north-south road to the Atlantic Ocean. It was originally laid out in the 1920s on what was then called the Atlantic Highway and would go on to generally be paralleled – and sometimes replaced by I-95. At times, like in Virginia, Route 1 diverts inland and another road becomes the better option for staying on the coast.



**Assateague ponies, Assateague Island**  
*Photo courtesy of Maryland Office of Tourism*

want to escape modern Ocean City need look no further than downtown's historic Ocean City Life-Saving Station Museum, which is situated in an original life-saving station.

It's also easy to escape busy Ocean City by simply heading out to Assateague Island, with Assateague State Park and Assateague Island National Seashore to its south. To get to Virginia, coastal drivers will need to head down Route 113 to Route 13 through many small "Delmarva" towns (Delmarva is short for Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia).

 **Virginia**

The Virginia portion of the Eastern Shore is bisected by Route 13, but it's easy to divert to the coastline for out-and-back Old Dominion adventures. The first such diversion comes quickly, with a left-hand turn on Route 175 leading to Chincoteague.

Famed for wild horses and the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, the Chincoteague area features yet another protected area that makes the drive down the Atlantic coast so special. Plus, local blue crabs, oysters, and other fresh seafood mean drivers don't hit the road hungry.

Back on Route 13, historic Onancock on the Chesapeake

Bay is just to the east of the road, where regular ferry service leads out to Tangier Island in the middle of the bay. Further south, small towns are found on both sides of the highway, including quaint Quinby out on the Atlantic coast and the perfectly named town of Oyster.

The Eastern Shore ends abruptly at the 23-mile Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, which was an engineering wonder when it opened in 1964 and is still a stunning drive today. Back on mainland Virginia, coastal drivers have the option of exploring various Hampton Roads-area attractions in Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, and more – or continuing south into North Carolina by joining Route 17.

 **North Carolina**

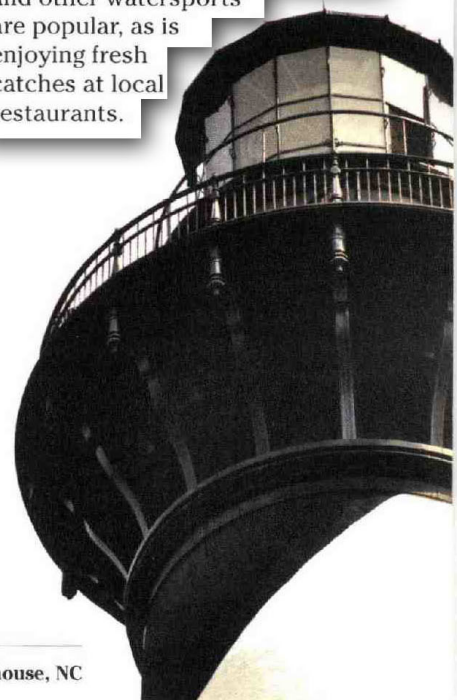
The Tar Heel State's portion of the Atlantic coastline is as varied as it gets, thanks to barrier islands, waterfront towns and cities, fresh seafood, and lots of options for activities. Route 17 serves as the main artery along the coast, with other roads leading directly to the oceanfront.

Made up of four islands stretching 125-plus miles along the northeast coastline of North Carolina, the Outer Banks feature some of the most remote tracts of undeveloped beaches

anywhere in the country – but they're still easily accessible through a network of highways, bridges, and ferries. Outer Banks activities can include sunbathing, nature excursions, kiteboarding, hang gliding, fishing, golf, scuba diving, and much more. There's also the Wright Brothers National Memorial marking the brothers' manned 1903 flight; Cape Hatteras Lighthouse; the popular North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island (one of four along the state's coastline) near charming Manteo; and The Lost Colony, a drama performed outdoors since 1937.

Known as North Carolina's Southern Outer Banks, the Crystal Coast features 85 miles of gleaming beaches stretching from Cape Lookout. Highlights of a visit include the quiet Cape Lookout National Seashore (with its famed ferry, lighthouse, and 56 miles of protected beaches); the wild horses of Shackleford Banks; Fort Macon State Park; the North Carolina Maritime Museum; and the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores.

The gems of the Crystal Coast are Atlantic Beach, Emerald Isle, Harkers Island, Morehead City, and quaint Beaufort. Fishing and other watersports are popular, as is enjoying fresh catches at local restaurants.



Cape Hatteras Lighthouse, NC