

Good

The Character Of The South

Grit



WANDERLUST
JULY-AUGUST



GET AWAY TO THE
CRYSTAL COAST

Pause for a moment. Read these words a little slower than usual. Take a deep breath. Rest.

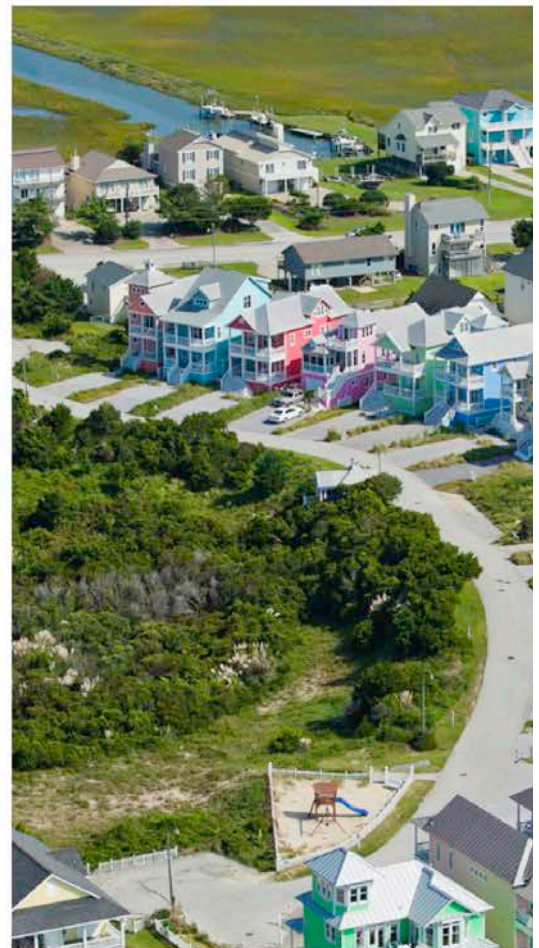
Every now and then you stumble upon a place so refreshing that no reminders are necessary. Somehow the rhythm and cadence of life there is so wonderfully contagious that it simply infects you, and even lingers with you long after you've left. Welcome to North Carolina's Crystal Coast; a place where beaches run headlong toward the Atlantic, couched in pitcher plants, bald cypress and longleaf pines. It's a land of wild horses roaming the outer banks majestically viewed from atop a historic lighthouse. It's a community where locals move at the speed of their own two feet from boat to boutique, then linger at the docks with a glass of wine in hand. The Crystal Coast

is an invitation to relax amidst natural beauty and southern charm woven together so seamlessly that it's not always easy to know where the one ends and the other begins.

Of course, creating such balance comes only with careful thought. It goes without saying that few travel destinations manage to escape the scourge of busyness these days. The interrogation of bright lights and digital signage is enough to render the once tranquil settings of many beachfront communities void of their restorative properties. In contrast, the Crystal Coast showcases the reward of the road less traveled. By committing to the process of conservation on behalf of its earliest inhabitants, they are not only preserving an ecosystem, but a way of life.



The Crystal Coast is an invitation to relax amidst natural beauty and southern charm woven together so seamlessly that it's not always easy to know where the one ends and the other begins.



Opposite many an overzealous developer, the Crystal Coast revels in accentuating what is present in nature, rather than removing it. With over 56 miles of unspoiled shoreline along the National Seashore, respite is offered to a number of endangered species such as the Loggerhead, a marine turtle whose delicate eggs nest in the sand; or the Piping Plover, who feeds exclusively along the shoreline. Most notable among the wild inhabitants are the Banker ponies who settled here almost 500 years ago. As with every good southern tale, there is more mystery than history surrounding the actual means by which these Spanish mustangs arrived. Maybe they are the remnants of a failed sixteenth century colonial settlement. Perhaps they are survivors from an ill-fated shipwreck just off the coast. Whatever their story, they have found a home both in the outer banks, as well as in the hearts of North Carolinians, who made them the official state horse in 2010.

In addition to witnessing the ecological treasures that roam freely across the shoreline, visitors may also take advantage of the outstanding diving and fishing made possible by the warm waters and sparkling clear visibility of the Gulf Stream. Designated a “wreck diver’s dream,” the more than 2,000 vessels which hauntingly comprise the “Graveyard of the Atlantic” lure adventurers into a number of unique and surprising discoveries. Moreover, with the longest fishing season on the Atlantic, the Crystal Coast is nothing short of an anglers paradise.





Once visitors return from a full day of exploration and beach-breezy play, they'll find the local communities of Atlantic Beach, Beaufort, Emerald Isle, Harker's Island, Cape Lookout, and Morehead City eager to greet them with open arms. Though the towns of the Crystal Coast clearly belong to the same family, each bears its own distinct personality. Open-air festivals such as the Beaufort Wine & Food Weekend abound in the warmer months; and the culinary treats of restaurants like Amos Mosquito's, Circa 81, Beaufort Grocery Company, and La Perla Restaurant & Bar will both satisfy and impress.

As the day comes to a close, the spacious porches of the beach houses (known locally as "sand castles") beckon friends and family to gather amidst the soothing sounds of the seaside. These generously appointed homes offer amenities suitable to the preference of each and every guest. Conversations easily tarry into the wee hours of the night; and do so without consequence. Time has all but disappeared. Only morning and the quiet, almost secluded beach right outside your door awaits. No rush hour traffic. No deadlines. Enjoy.

WORDS BY **KRIS BROADHEAD**

PHOTOS COURTESY OF **CRYSTAL COAST**

TOURISM AUTHORITY