

# COMPLEX CITY GUIDE

## Urban Agenda: The Coolest Things to Do on the Crystal Coast



A trip to the beach is more than a vacation, it's a necessity. For New Yorkers, Coney Island and the Rockaways don't always cut it. Sometimes you need a *real* beach. I'm talking about the type of beach a **doctor would have prescribed** for tuberculosis or leprosy. That's exactly the kind of beach you'll find on the Crystal Coast in North Carolina's Southern Outer Banks. The moment you hear waves without car horns blaring behind you or stroll down the beach without Maroon 5 blasting out of a cell phone, your blood pressure begins to drop. This little slice of heaven is an amazing 85-mile stretch of coastline surrounded by quaint little towns like Beaufort, which was recently named one of *Travel and Leisure's* **Favorite Small Towns**. It has **nationally recognized chefs**, a booming craft-beer scene, and spectacular, timeless beaches. So, slow your roll and enjoy the view.



Image via The Zimmerman Agency

## Beach Mansion Rentals

**Good for:** Living large, pool parties, music videos

**Website:** [emeraldslrealty.com](http://emeraldslrealty.com)

The best thing about the Crystal Coast is its secluded beach, still unspoiled by the mass of hotels that shadow over many beach towns. With only one oceanfront chain hotel, most visitors rent cottages or stay at B&Bs. But to do it right you need to splurge on one of the mammoth beach houses on the coastline. Weekly rentals are affordable if you split them with a large group, meaning you can vacation like a millionaire without actually having the millions. Your private beach house is the perfect spot to throw a sick pool party, chill out on the deck, grill some food, or slip into the hot tub. All the while you are only steps away from the beach.



## Hungry Town Bike Tours

**Good for:** Unique perspectives, exploring, tastings

**Website:** [hungrytownbiketours.com](http://hungrytownbiketours.com)

If New York followed this awesome idea, Citibikes might not be going bankrupt. Hungry Town Bike Tours lets you cruise the streets of Beaufort like you were a kid again. It also stops at some of the best restaurants in town, providing samples of amazing food. You can pedal your way through the "Culinary" tour and enjoy classy seafood and wine tastings, or get a little toasty with some Bloody Marys on the "Bike, Brunch, and Bubbles" tour. The best part is you don't have to worry about getting left behind because, as they say, "It's the South, we're in no hurry."



Image via The Zimmerman Agency

## Boating & Fishing

**Good for:** Seafood lovers, action, sun

**Website:** [crystalcoastnc.org](http://crystalcoastnc.org)

You can't properly enjoy the Crystal Coast without getting out onto the water. Depending on your style, you can spend the day reeling 'em in from a fishing boat, or get wet zigzagging on a tube from the back of a boat. If you're in the mood for a little luxury, take a chauffeured private boat ride and do some island hopping. Best part is that it's BYOB.



Image via The Zimmerman Agency

## Emerald Isle Beach

**Good for:** Scenic views, swimming, water sports

**Website:** [crystalcoastnc.org](http://crystalcoastnc.org)

The early bird gets the worm, or in this case, the best view in town. If you're willing to wake up for it, you should head over to the Emerald Isle to watch the sun rise over the Atlantic. If you don't end up liking it, at least you'll have the best #beach picture on Instagram. Spend the rest of the day swimming, surfing, or just digging your toes into the soft, white sand of Emerald Isle's secluded beaches.



Image via The Zimmerman Agency

## Croatan National Forest

**Good for:** Sight seeing, nature, adventure

**Website:** [hotwaxsurfshop.com](http://hotwaxsurfshop.com)

Best way to get into the flow of vacation is to glide through the Croatan National Forest breathing in the fresh, salty air of the coast. If you're feeling like a pro, you can try stand-up paddle boarding. If you're the more laid back type, you can hop in a kayak and make your way between the tall reeds and twisted, gnarly trees that line the trail. Either way you'll be seeing a side of the Crystal Coast the remains unspoiled by you and your fellow city-dwelling humans.



Image via The Zimmerman Agency

## Fort Macon

**Good for:** History, scenic views, ghost stories

**Website:** [ncparks.gov](http://ncparks.gov)

As you enter a sign reads, "Caution: Fort Macon was made for war, not safety. Be careful." This place has towering walls, steep drops, and live cannon fire. (Really, they still shoot cannons.) Built almost 200 years ago, Fort Macon is standing strong, not letting anyone forget its place in the Civil War or its haunting years as a prison on the coast.



Image via The Zimmerman Agency

## Beaufort Wine and Food Festival

**Good for:** Wine, craft beer, contemporary southern cuisine

**Website:** [beaufortwineandfood.com](http://beaufortwineandfood.com)

The annual festival invites the best local and guest chefs to showcase their culinary skills throughout a weekend of tasting events. Located on the Historic Wine Walkabout, guests are able to see inside Beaufort's beautiful, often creepy, century-old homes, while tasting the best wines from around the world. You can enjoy a bite of **Chef Mike's** pork belly over sweet potato puree from the breezy front porch of the 1903 Potter House. Or in a backyard garden, sip Chilean Pinot Grigio and taste the incredible creations of French master baker **Lionel Vatinet**, like his white chocolate baguette. Finally, cap off the night at the Beer, Bubbles, & BBQ event, where you'll enjoy (or at least attempt to) a sampling of over 30 craft beers, BBQ favorites from N.C.'s best pit masters, and live music.



Image via The Zimmerman Agency

## Cape Lookout

**Good for:** Outdoorsy types, relaxing, sunsets

**Website:** [nps.gov](http://nps.gov)

There's no better way to wake up than to the sound of crashing waves from inside a sun-drenched tent. For a primitive, remote camping experience, you can take a ferry to the barrier island of Cape Lookout and set up your tent anywhere along its 56 miles of wide, bare beaches. Keep an eye out for the wild horses that live on the neighboring Shackleford Island and schools of dolphins in the bay. Although you can do everything from fishing to surfing, beach camping is best spent relaxing in the sand next to a driftwood fire.



Image via The Zimmerman Agency

## Arendell Room

**Good for:** Craft cocktails, impressing dates, live music

**Website:** [arendellroom.com](http://arendellroom.com)

The locals call it a "New York City bar." As strange of a concept as that might be, the Arendell Room is actually a bit of NYC on the Crystal Coast. Their expert bartenders serve classic cocktails, from the Moscow Mule to the Carolina Dirty (a Southern take on a dirty martini, made of gin, pickle juice, and garnished with a cornichon pickle). The elaborate concoctions, exposed brick walls, and railroad-style layout will make any homesick New Yorker feel like they're back in the City.



Image via The Zimmerman Agency

## Scuba Diving

**Good for:** Adventure, history, wreck diving

**Website:** [crystalcoastnc.org](http://crystalcoastnc.org)

*Scuba Diving* magazine named the Crystal Coast one of the best wreck diving destinations along the East Coast. The Gulf Stream creates warm, clear, luminous waters—the trifecta for perfect diving conditions. The water temperatures reach up to 80 degrees and visibility peaks at 100 feet. Beginners have many professional dive companies and instructors to choose from. They will take you on underwater tours of German subs that sunk during WWII or the remains of Blackbeard's ship, Queen Anne's Revenge, allegedly abandoned in 1718. Just don't forget which way is up.



Image via The Zimmerman Agency

## Amos Mosquitos

**Good for:** Karaoke, seafood & sushi, lively atmosphere

**Website:** [amosmosquitos.com](http://amosmosquitos.com)

This place captures the mysterious, bayou style to a T. Moss drapes from the branch-lined ceiling and mosquito paraphernalia can be spotted throughout the restaurant and bar. Their menu, which includes incredible house fried potato chips with homemade blue cheese and ranch dressings, nails that Deep South home-cooked goodness everyone loves. Best of all, every Thursday night an infamous karaoke party rocks the bar.