



NC's Crystal Coast Interview on The Amateur Traveler with Chris Christensen

Charming Historical Fishing Villages line the Beautiful Beaches on the Lower Banks of NC

Best time to go: Temperate year 'round (but usually dips to freezing at night in January and February). Spring and fall are less crowded, are not as hot and have discounted prices, but many tours only run during beach season: roughly Memorial day to Labor Day. The ocean actually stays warm into fall for swimming. Pier and shore fishing most popular in the fall. Fall is the prettiest time of year, but hurricanes are possible.

How to get here: Fly into either [Raleigh \(RDU\)](#) and it's a three hour drive to the coast, or into [New Bern \(EWN\)](#) and you are 40 miles to the beach, but will start your adventure in the charming old colonial capital of NC. You go through New Bern from Raleigh on the way to the beach anyway. You will need a car to get around (*Uber is available, but the towns aren't right next to each other so it would get expensive*). To get the best flight, click on the links above and **scroll down** to see which carrier services your chosen airport directly. To get to EWN, you must go through [Charlotte \(CLT\)](#) on Delta or American. Take exit 417B off Hwy 70 E to get directly to historical downtown New Bern.

TIP: When you get to Morehead City, pick up the **free Visitor's Guide** in front of any grocery store or at the Visitor's Center. It has lots of great discount coupons for area activities and restaurants.

TIP: Download the [FREE Uniguide app](#) and allow offline GPS for free tour guides of some popular places in the area and around the US.

Best for: Families, Couples, Friends or Solo. There is something to please everyone here.

Budget: You can tailor your trip to your budget. There are campgrounds, Airbnb, hotels, motels and private rental homes all the way up up to luxury 10 bedroom oceanfront homes.

Safety: There is not much crime in the area, but normal precautions should be made. Do not leave valuables visible in the car.

Accommodations: There are ample accommodations to suit all budgets. I recommend choosing a base town (*I prefer Beaufort*) and making day trips from there, with the possible exception of staying a night in New Bern on the way up or down to avoid duplicate driving. Airbnb is a good choice and many regular chain hotels are in the area. There are also A TON of single family homes at the beach for [rent](#). **There are plenty of options but here are some suggestions:**

New Bern: [Benjamin Ellis House](#) (BnB) - formerly Harmony House) in historic downtown

Morehead City: [Bask Hotel](#) by the waterfront

Beaufort: [The Inn on Turner Street](#) (BnB) two blocks to the water; [Inlet Inn](#) on water

Ocean: [Sea Hawk](#) for a retro beach motel with fabulous views; [Islander Inn](#) (Emerald Isle)

Restaurants (again, a TON of great options, but these are some of my favorites):

New Bern: [Morgan's Tavern](#), [Prohibition](#) or [Chelsea](#)

Morehead City: [Bistro](#), [Circa 81](#), [Ruddy Duck](#), [Parrott's](#), [Floyd's 1921](#), [Banks Grill](#) (Cheap),

Beaufort: [Beaufort Grocery](#), [Aqua](#), [Front Street Grille at Stillwaters and Rhum Bar](#), [La Perla](#)

Emerald Isle: [Rutger Johns](#), [Kathryn's](#), [Caribsea](#), [Big Oak Drive In](#) (Cheap)

THINGS TO DO IN NEW BERN AND ON THE CRYSTAL COAST

Water Things to do:

- **Walk or swim along miles of unspoiled beaches.** Parking at Atlantic Beach circle and at [public access lots](#) along the beach. *If you get caught in a rip tide, swim SIDEWAYS and don't fight it!*
- **Go Deep Sea Fishing.** [Boats](#) along the Morehead City waterfront. Full and half day charters
- **Go fishing inland.** [Lookout Adventures](#) or on the **shore** or **piers** (get a [license](#) - it's cheap)
- **Go Scuba Diving** in the "Graveyard of the Sea" with [Olympus Dive Center](#)
- **Kayak or Stand up Paddleboard** the barrier islands and look for wild ponies and dolphins
 - **Beaufort** [Beaufort Paddle](#)
 - **Emerald isle** [Island Water Sports](#) (Plus offers pontoon boats and more)
 - **Swansboro** [Hammocks Beach](#) Tours available on the Kayak trail
 - **White Oak River [Maysville]** Kayak down the [White Oak](#) with shuttle service available
- **Scenic Cruises and Ferries from Beaufort**
 - [Crystal Coast Lady](#)
 - [Lookout Cruise](#)
 - [Island Express Ferry](#)
 - [Pirate Sunset Cruise](#)
- **Jet skis, pontoon boats, parasailing** [AB Sports](#) [Atlantic Beach](#)

New Bern:

- **Visitor's Center:** pick up free self-guided walking tours
- **Union Park** and walk around downtown, the old churches and cemeteries
- Historic downtown [trolley tour](#)
- **Tryon Palace** - NC's colonial capital and former Governor's mansion (rebuilt after a fire)
- **Fireman's Museum** 1922 Fire burned down 1/3 of the city (largest urban fire ever)
- **New Bern Academy Museum** (free)
- **Ghosts of New Bern** tour (evenings in season)
- **New Bern Battlefield Park** (site of the battle where the Union took the area in 1862)- Free, if self-guided (guided tours available)

Havelock:

- **Visitor's Center** by Hampton Inn has examples of several fighter planes, an exhibit about the fighter planes and also about the Havelock area - Free
- Take the [free \(car\) ferry](#) to Minnesott Beach and visit Oriental (sailing capital of NC)

Beaufort (America's Coolest Small Town):

- **Visitor's Center** and Historical Buildings tour (Uniguide App for free tours)
- [Trolley tour](#) of historic Beaufort

- [Old Burying Ground](#) cemetery : integrated cemetery that also has Union soldiers as well- Free
- [Maritime Museum](#) and [Watercraft Museum](#) - Free, donations suggested
- Walk the historic district with over 300 homes over 100 years old (many from 1700's)
- [Beaufort Ghost Walk](#) tour
- Take a [scenic cruise](#). Sunset and [Pirate Sunset cruises](#) available
- Take the [ferry](#) to Cape Lookout and climb the lighthouse or relax on the beach
- Take the [ferry](#) to Shackelford Banks to look for wild horse and explore this natural area
- Enjoy the harbor front benches, boats, boutiques and restaurants
- [Rent a kayak or SUP](#) to explore Rachel Carson Reserve (Carrot Island and the wild ponies)
- Explore [Harker's Island](#), the [Core Sound Waterfowl Museum](#)
- [Horseback ride](#) in the ocean waves at Cedar island ferry
- Take [Cedar Island ferry](#) to Ocracoke for a day trip

Morehead City:

- [Visitor's Center](#): get map of Promise' Land walking tour (2.5 miles) 1001 Arendel St
- Morehead City [History Museum](#)
- Deep [sea fishing charters](#) Full and half days
- [Scuba dive](#) in the "Graveyard of the Sea"
- Explore the art galleries, boutiques and restaurants along the harbor

The Beach:

- [Fort Macon State Park](#): Explore the park and walk through the maritime forest trail to the beach
- Go fishing or check out the sunset on the [Oceana Pier](#) (Atlantic Beach) or [Bogue Inlet Pier](#) (Emerald Isle)
- Visit the [NC Aquarium](#) to see Nimbus, the white loggerhead and see how the water makes it from the mountains to the sea in NC
- Drive the entire length of the island to Emerald Isle. Park at the far west lot and walk to [The Point](#).
- Enjoy the beautiful beach! Here are the [beach access parking lots](#)

Swansboro:

- [Visitor's Center](#)
- Explore the historical harbor front, shops, restaurants and homes
- *[Walk UNDER the highway]* to the [Riverfront Park](#) on the beautiful White Oak River
- [Hammocks beach State Park](#) - Picnic, take the ferry to Bear Island, or rent a kayak
- Drive to Maysville (up Hwy 58) and [rent a kayak](#) to come down the White Oak River(shuttle available)

Natural Areas for hiking: *(Wear bug spray in summer!)*

- [Flanders Beach](#) (off Hwy 70 between New Bern & Havelock): On the Neuse River and in the forest
- [Neusiok Trail](#) (Past Havelock off Hwy 101): On Neuse River
- [Tidelands Trail](#) at Cedar Point campground: On White Oak River between Morehead and Swansboro
- [Croatan Forest Patsy Pond Trail](#): Stick to blazed trails or bring GPS (lots of hunting trails): Pine forest
- [Emerald Isle trail](#): Short east trail

To see photos and to get more information, visit <http://activetraveladventures.com/coast>. If you have any questions, I'm happy to try to help. I can be reached at Kit@ActiveTravelAdventures.com.

If you are interested in adventure travel, check out my [Active Travel Adventures podcast](#), where I curate multi-day adventures from around the world. **Adventure On!** Kit