

Family-Friendly Travel To The Southern Outer Banks

(NAPSA)—Travelers are increasingly finding that vacations—even beach vacations—don't have to break the bank.

For example, visitors to North Carolina's Crystal Coast can experience 85 miles of beach in six locations—from the undeveloped Cape Lookout National Seashore to crowd-pleasing Emerald Isle—for very little cost. Plus, the area offers 15 attractions (many of which are free), from a tour of historic Beaufort to admission into the North Carolina Aquarium.

Beginning at the tip of the island at Fort Macon and ending in Emerald Isle, the beaches of the Crystal Coast's Southern Outer Banks are not overly populated, but visitors enjoy premier sands and scenery. Accommodations range from seaside cottages and massive beach mansions to oceanfront hotel rooms and bed-and-breakfast suites.

The Cape Lookout Ferry gives beachgoers the opportunity to explore the uninhabited beaches along the Cape Lookout National Seashore, before finding a perfect spot to camp under the shadow of the famous diamond-patterned lighthouse. Travelers can also head to Shackleford Banks to view Shackleford horses that swam ashore after Spanish explorers were shipwrecked off the coast and continue to reside on the island since the 1500s.

For buccaneers looking for a respite from the heat, Black-beard's buried treasures excavated from his ship are found at the North Carolina Maritime Museum (there's no admission fee, just a suggested donation). Marine animals and wildlife call



In North Carolina's Crystal Coast, families can enjoy a beach vacation that doesn't break the bank.

the North Carolina Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores home. From touchable stingrays and large sharks to dated fossils and an extensive shell collection, the region's habitat comes to life at the largest aquarium in the state.

For a blast into the past, Beaufort allows history buffs to experience life before America declared independence. Landlubbers board an English double-decker bus and ride through town while listening to tales of a rich past.

Dangling like a delicate strand of pearls off the coast is one of the only remaining natural barrier island systems in the world. The islands take a curious southward curve, blessing the Crystal Coast with beaches that course east and west, making it possible to admire the dazzlingly bright sunrise to greet the day and then slip into the shimmering translucent blue waters in the evening during a spectacular sunset.

For more information on summer activities in the Crystal Coast, call (800) 786-6962 or visit www.crystalcoastnc.org.