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# 14 Reasons The Outer Banks Should Be Your Next Vacation Destination



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Travel

*I cover adventure, luxury and family travel.*

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Sunrise over the sand dunes at Corolla Beach in the Outer Banks, NC. GETTY

The [Outer Banks](#), located in North Carolina, is a chain of barrier islands known for their undeveloped and starkly beautiful coastlines. In fact, the region is recognized as having one of the largest tracts of undeveloped

beaches on the East Coast. Known as OBX by locals and repeat visitors, this region is made of four islands, six towns and 12 coastal villages. It's also home to several state and national parks, which makes it a great place to visit with kids. Here are 14 reasons the Outer Banks should be on the list for your family's next vacation.

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## **Wright Brothers National Memorial**

Visit the place where aviation history was made. In December of 1903 Wilbur and Orville Wright flew their airplane, the Wright Flyer, over the sands of the Outer Banks for 12 seconds changing air travel forever. The museum includes both indoor and outdoor components.

## **Jockey's Ridge State Park**





Jockey's Ridge State Park [OUTER BANKS VB/OUTERBANKS.ORG](https://www.outerbanks.org)

A visit to the Outer Banks is not complete without a visit here. This 426-acre state park is home to the tallest and largest natural sand dune system in the eastern United States. Hike across the dunes to reach the water (it's a workout for sure) or for those adventure seekers, book a hang gliding lesson. People also come here to fly kites, have picnics and watch the sunset.

## Bodie Island Lighthouse



Bodie Lighthouse [OUTER BANKS VB/OUTERBANKS.ORG](https://www.outerbanks.org)

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This 156-foot tall horizontally-striped lighthouse is well worth a trip to the top (it boasts impressive views of the ocean and bay). Tickets are required and go on sale at 7am daily (go online early as tickets are often sold out before 7:30). They limit the number of people per 30-minute slot to just eight people, which creates a really intimate and relaxing experience.

## The Boardwalk in Duck

This mile-long wooden [boardwalk](#) located in the town of Duck goes past restaurants, ice cream shops, boutiques and of course the Currituck Sound. Watch families out crabbing, couples enjoying drinks at sunset and kids playing. The town of Duck is buzzing with vacationers shopping, eating and exploring. The ideal time to walk the boardwalk is after dinner, with an ice cream in hand.



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## Culinary Delights

Whether it's consuming crab cakes at [Jolly Rogers](#) (also known for their amazing breakfast), eating frog legs (or a fabulous burger) at [Froggy Dog](#) or getting a crab-topped pizza at Tavern on 12, there are no shortages of places to eat in the Outer Banks. Whether you're looking for freshly-caught seafood or some Carolina BBQ, there is no shortage of dining options. Be sure to leave room for homemade ice cream. Also, no visit to the Outer Banks is complete without a stop at Duck donuts.

## Cape Hatteras National Seashore

Be sure to allow for plenty of time to explore this national seashore. There are wildlife refuge trails to explore, nesting grounds for sea turtles, camping near the Atlantic Ocean (there are four campgrounds with some of the prettiest views to be had) and plenty of outlooks with Instagram-worthy views. The Cape Hatteras Lighthouse is currently closed for climbing, but still worth a visit. It's one of the tallest lighthouses in the world standing at over 210 feet.

## Horseback Riding Along the Beach



Horseback riding in Cape Hatteras is always a popular excursion. [OUTER BANKS VB/OUTERBANKS.ORG](#)

One of the best ways of exploring the south end of Cape Hatteras is on a horse. [Equine Adventures](#) offers rides through the forest of Frisco and then along the beach. On the beach, riders can experience a leisurely walkalong the sand, or canter on the coastline. Rides are available at 7am and 5pm (when the weather is cooler) and last about two hours.

## Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge Kayak Tour



Kayaking is a great way to experience the wildlife of the Outer Banks. [OUTER BANKS VB/OUTERBANKS.ORG](#)

A great way to explore nature and get a chance to see alligators up close is through a [kayak tour](#) to Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge. There's more than 154,000 acres of wetland habitats and a wide variety of wildlife, including alligators and black bears (plus, turtles and a wide variety of birds). The scenery is stunning with Atlantic white cedar, bald cypress, wildflowers and shrubs. The kayak guide has a plethora of information on the flora and fauna in the area.

## Parasailing in Manteo

Manteo, North Carolina is an adorable small town reminiscent of the fictional Mayberry (in fact Andy Griffith once lived nearby on Roanoke Island). The town is very walkable and has plenty of little shops and waterfront dining, plus there are small lighthouses dotting the shores. A great activity to do while here is to go [parasailing](#). Not only is it something unique, but it offers great views of both the bay and the ocean. Be sure to get dipped in the water while enjoying your ride. Another good activity to do while in town, is seeing the play *The Lost Colony*, which is an interesting perspective of the history of the area. Manteo has an artsy and slow-paced vibe and is a really unique town.

## Wild horses in Corolla

Book an off-road safari tour to see the wild mustangs that are descendants of horses brought over by the Spanish more than 500 years ago. These creatures are beautiful to see in the wild. Officially North Carolina's state horse, visitors come from all over the country to visit Corolla in the northern Outer Banks and catch a glimpse of these rare wild animals.

## North Carolina Aquarium on Roanoke Island

This aquarium is well worth a visit especially if you are on vacation with kids. It's all about the history and exploration of the waters of the Outer Banks, including sea turtles, alligators, river otters and more. It's a smaller aquarium so you can tackle it in a morning or an afternoon with time still left to head to the beach.

## Beaches and Water Sports

You can't go to the Outer Banks without spending time at the beaches. Each town has varying degrees of public access (some rental properties have private beach access points). Of course there are plenty of water sports if you're looking for some adventure. Jet skiing is a good option if you're

looking for some speed. Kitty Hawk Kites has a variety of water options including surfing, sailing, fishing charters, kiteboarding and SUP rentals.

## Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge

If you're a birder, this is definitely a place to stop. From egrets and oystercatchers, to herons, osprey and falcons, it's easy to spend a whole afternoon here. Even non-birders will find the scenery captivating.

## Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum

This is one of the most unique museums and a real find. Admission is free (you can give a donation if you'd like). More than 1,500 shipwrecks can be found along the coast of North Carolina giving it the moniker the Graveyard of the Atlantic. This museum looks at maritime history and culture of the Outer Banks including piracy, war, ghost ships and scuba diving in the area around the shipwrecks. Be sure to check out the artifacts from the USS Monitor, which sank 16 miles off Cape Hatteras coast.

*Check out my [website](#).*



**Judy Koutsky**

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