



# Lay of the Land

Your guide to the beach communities of the Crystal Coast

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**M**ore than just a beautiful beach, the Crystal Coast along North Carolina's southern Outer Banks boasts historic fishing villages, thriving seaport towns, and a preserved, natural beauty that sets it apart from other beach communities.

On Bogue Banks, a 21-mile-long barrier island made up of small-town family beaches, visitors see public beach accesses, roadside stands offering fresh seafood, and homes hidden by green maritime forests. The first town is Emerald Isle, a 12-mile stretch that makes up the western half of the island.

"There is something magical when you drive over the bridge to Emerald Isle, even if you do it every day," says Art Schools, the town's mayor.

There is little to mark where one town on Bogue Banks begins and another ends. The two-lane road runs parallel to the beach from Indian Beach to Salter Path to Pine Knoll Shores, and glimpses of the ocean can be seen between dips in the sand dunes.

A high-rise bridge crosses over Bogue Sound into Morehead City, located about 150 miles southeast of Raleigh. A commercial center

for Carteret County, Morehead's population of over 8,300 supports a community college, hospital, and civic center.

Traveling north past the state port, cross the bridge into Beaufort, North Carolina's third oldest town. The pirate Blackbeard spent time here and wrecked his flagship, the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, three miles offshore. Find locally owned inns, restaurants, and shops in this waterfront community.

The area referred to as Down East begins as you cross over the North River Bridge. Harkers Island provides a look at "backyard boat

building," an island tradition of building boats by the eye instead of relying on drawings. Three uninhabited barrier islands three miles offshore are part of the Cape Lookout National Seashore — North Core Banks, South Core Banks, and Shackleford Banks.

Less than an hour from Morehead, New Bern is a commercial hub for Craven County as well as an historical and tourist center. Settled by Swiss and German immigrants in 1710, the town was named after the Swiss capital of Bern and became the first state capital of North Carolina.



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