



Vicki Payne
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dedicated to showcasing charlotte's distinctive homes

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- Mary Cheatham King,
Keller Williams



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Carefree on the crystal coast

Wide, sandy beaches, crystal clear water and towns as rich in history as they are in personality await you on North Carolina's coastline

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A True Reading NOOK

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Photo courtesy of Crystal Coast Tourism Authority



Photo courtesy of Crystal Coast Tourism Authority

crystal coast

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Where to eat, play and explore along the Crystal Coast

EAT Sanitary Fish Market & Restaurant

Grab a bite to eat at this legendary spot in Morehead City, heralded as a famous "must stop" on the Intercoastal Waterway for serving the freshest seafood since 1938.

www.sanitaryfishmarket.com



PLAY Hungry Town Tours

Hungry Town Tours gives you a taste of all that Beaufort and the Crystal Coast have to offer with their food and wine bike tours.

www.hungrytowntours.com



EXPLORE North Carolina Maritime Museum

Check out artifacts from Blackbeard's ship, the Queen Anne's Revenge, for a glimpse into the Crystal Coast's infamous pirate history.

www.ncmaritimemuseums.com



by Julie Cooper

Spanning 85 miles of wide, uncrowded beaches with warm, clear waters from the Gulf Stream current, this seaside paradise aptly named the Crystal Coast is one of North Carolina's best kept secrets. Dotted with unique communities and a wealth of things to do, this stretch of coastline extending south of the Outer Banks may be a little harder to get to, but once you arrive, you'll never want to leave.

Driving to the Crystal Coast from up-town Charlotte takes about five hours — just a hop, skip and jump away along I-40 East to US-70 East. Consider a pit-stop in New Bern on the way to stretch your legs and stroll through the birthplace of Pepsi, or maybe even stay a little longer at one of the town's numerous B&Bs. Crunched for time? Simply catch a direct flight from Charlotte to New Bern and cut travel time by more than half.

"I've got friends from Charlotte who have houses in Atlantic Beach, and they just fly in every week. They go to the Charlotte airport, get on the commuter flight and go straight into New Bern. It's about 45 minutes to the beach. You leave the airport and take

a right. That's it," says Jim Bailey with Bluewater Real Estate.

Regardless how you get there, the Crystal Coast will definitely beckon you to stay with its abundant offerings. From the wild horses of Shackleford Banks to the "Diamond Lady" lighthouse at Cape Lookout and the annual pirate invasion in Beaufort, this is one area where you will be relaxed, but never bored. "There's more to do down here than you have hours in the day. But, the real draw is the beaches and the boating. The golf, museums, festivals, the restaurants — well, they're all bonuses," says Bailey.

And welcome bonuses they are. Brimming with coastal flavor, literally, where each town offers something a little different, and if you have the appetite for it, just a short drive up and down the coastline will give you a taste of it all. "We have fantastic restaurants that are both on the mainland and on the island, and they're all really easily accessible. So, even if you're staying in Emerald Isle, which is the far western end, you can get to Beaufort, the far eastern

end, in 20-30 minutes and just enjoy something totally different. We have great local seafood and really wonderful upscale dining," says Mary Cheatham King, Luxury Designated Broker at Mary Cheatham King Real Estate with Keller Williams.

If you can't imagine ever leaving this breathtaking coastline where it's possible to view both the sunrise and sunset from the same spot thanks to its sprawling beaches coursing east and west, then consider staying. "The market is doing great for second homes. Our market has recovered more slowly than some of the larger markets, but we are still in a buyer's market, and it's a great time to buy," says King.

Whether you're looking for an escape from reality or a more permanent vacation home, the Crystal Coast is a great place to be. "That's really who it's for. There's a common theme here. Those people who want to come down here and just be — be their weekend selves, their summer selves or their retired selves," says Sam Sellars with Eddy Myers Real Estate. "There's just no better place."