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# Bachelorette Beach Party Weekend

For my weekend-long bachelorette party, I knew I wanted three things: a fun beach town, a location within driving distance, and a house that my best girl friends and I could make our home for the weekend. The Crystal Coast, North Carolina, the romantic setting to several Nicholas Sparks novels, immediately came to mind. Could the paradise he describes in his books be a real place?



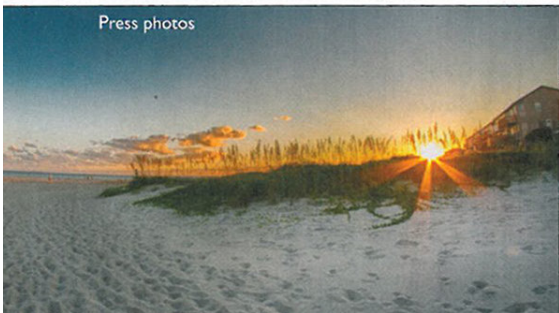
We book my bachelorette party weekend in The Crystal Coast and begin our road trip.

We gasp when we open the door to our beachfront mansion, locally known as "The Sandcastle." Our **Blue Water Vacation Rentals** home has nine master suites, two private balconies, an oceanfront pool and hot tub, a game room, a theatre room, and a gourmet kitchen! We feel like royalty!

With our copies of "The Notebook" in hand, we walk out to the beach behind our new weekend home. Walking on the sand, we see dogs trotting in the ocean, families sitting on beach chairs, friends laughing, and couples walking hand in hand. We sip our margaritas and talk about our own Ryan Goslings, fantasy mansions, and future children's names.

At sunset, we go to **Barnacle Bar on the Oceanana Pier** for a few drinks. We meet Trace Cooper, the restaurant owner and mayor of the town, and he walks us down the boardwalk that leads to the circular bar at the end, 1,000 feet into the Atlantic Ocean. We notice a wonderful melting pot of fishermen, tourists, and locals who all came together for this beautiful sunset. It is a true community.

Trace later takes us to his new restaurant, **Pescara Wood Oven Kitchen**, for the first food cooked in their kitchen! The hardwood floors and sleek furniture give the place a trendy ambience. While we look over the menu, Trace tells us how he and



Press photos

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the chefs created their vision of a unique mix of Italian and seafood cuisine. When the chefs bring out each course, they explain the inspiration for each

dish and all its ingredients. Our favorite is the seafood spaghetti with little neck clams, plus Carolina shrimp, wood-charred octopus, and pancetta lardons, inspired by the diversity of people who come together at the Atlantic Beach Circle.

The next morning, we head to **Hot Wax Surf Shop** to kayak and paddle-board through the Croatan National Forest. The owner of the shop and our instructor, Mike Crews, makes us feel comfortable immediately and we are all better at the sport after just a few hours with him. There is a true sense of peace as you glide along the water with the sun shining on your skin, that is, until one of us falls in the water! We all laugh and help her back onto her paddle-board. It is truly intimate having only our group out on the water with the beautiful forest surrounding us.

The girls talk me into going on the Beaufort Culinary Tour with **Hungry Town Tours**. It's a two to four hour bicycle tour through delicious eateries, scenic waterfront views, unique shops, and historic sites in Beaufort. (I have to admit, I am nervous to ride a bike because I have not ridden one since I was a child.) We are greeted by Dave and Betsy Cartier, a sweet married couple who own the company and do the tours. Before I even ask, they show us "Skeeter," their scooter option for the tour. It has a big wheel on the back and a name plate like the other bikes do, so it fits right in. It was perfect for me!



We taste delicious samples of everything from fudge to crab-cakes at various restaurants, like FINZ Grill, Beaufort Grocery, and The Spouter Inn. As we ride through the neighborhood, we learn about several of Beaufort's restored historic homes and churches, many of which are on the National Historic Register. The joyful energy of Dave and Betsy radiates onto our group. Their Ride with the Bride tour allows bridal parties to customize their event with the places they want to go. The bride-to-be can wear a white T-shirt saying "Bride," while the bridesmaids can wear another color T-shirt saying "Bridesmaid."

We drive back home on Sunday, feeling closer to each other and ready to get back to wedding planning. Adventurous yet relaxing, busy yet intimate, and city chic yet quaint, The Crystal Coast was the perfect place to have my bachelorette party. Now I want to take my fiancé there too! — Rejena Carmichael

**The Crystal Coast**

252.726.8148, [www.crystalcoastnc.org](http://www.crystalcoastnc.org)

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