



EXPLORING THE OUTER BANKS – AMERICA'S FIRST BEACH

Text by Patti Morrow

With over 100 miles of pristine blue beaches that fringe the North Carolina coast, the Outer Banks is a popular vacation destination. Four narrow barrier islands stand between the North Carolina mainland and the Atlantic Ocean, each with its own unique vibe – from chill to action-filled.

The Outer Banks lays claim as “America’s First Beach.”

Cape Hatteras National Seashore is the site of the USA’s first National Seashore as well as the site of the first English colony and the Wright Brothers’ first flight.

The numerous beaches along the Cape Hatteras National Seashore are perhaps the best known. Wave action in some sections makes it a favorite for families, while the dunes in

other parts of this coast stretch down to calmer water for a more relaxed experience.

Nags Head was one of the first spots on the Outer Banks to become a beach community. There are many access points throughout the town, and a 12-mile beach nourishment program has just been completed, creating a wider sandy beach and making it

less crowded. The pier is lots of fun, with a totally different perspective from on the top boardwalk than underneath with the pilings.

Avon, a small town in the center of Hatteras Island offers fishing from a pier that juts out into the inviting blue-green water. Those who don’t want to fish can also enjoy the pier by taking a stroll to the end for



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a fantastic view of the shoreline and town.

For a different kind of beach experience, head west to Pamlico Sound. Tranquil waters here lend themselves to excellent kayaking and SUP (stand up paddle board) opportunities. It's also here that you'll find those blazing, Instagram-worthy sunsets.

The best way to stay in the Outer Banks is through the large supply of vacation

rentals. We stayed at a magnificent, brand new beach home in the heart of Nags Head called **The Sunfish Sanctuary.**

With six colorful beachy-decorated bedrooms and six bathrooms, there was plenty of room for our party of seven. On the third floor was an open-plan living space where we socialized in the large lounging area on a cozy sectional sofa convenient to the upscale

kitchen, and dining area. Floor-to-ceiling windows looked out to the beach. Other amenities included a private pool and four-person hot tub, arcade and pool table game room, washer/dryer, gas grill, and even an elevator. They thought of everything!

The location could not have been better. With my morning coffee in hand, I walked the short 160-yard path from the home which led to a gazebo

overlooking the beach. On the boardwalk next to the gazebo were steps which led directly down to the beach. Starting the day just doesn't get any better than that!

With such a central Nags Head location, we were also close to many of the Outer Banks restaurants, shops, art galleries, and attractions like Jockey's Ridge, the Wright Brothers' Monument, and Nag's Head Fishing Pier.



Beyond the Beaches in the Outer Banks

Article and photos by Patti Morrow



While the crystal-clean beaches are the biggest draw to the Outer Banks, there are plenty of other things to do during a stay.

History

Wright Brothers National Memorial at Kill Devil Hill near the seafront town of Kitty Hawk commemorates the spot where the famous brothers experimented and then executed the first flight in a controlled, powered aircraft.

Gather up your stamina and climb the 257 steps up to the

top of the black-and-white striped **Cape Hatteras Lighthouse**, the tallest brick lighthouse in America.

Adventure

Take a charter boat with **OBX Crabbing**, to try your luck at catching the sought-after crustaceans. The Outer Banks is known for its delicious species of blue crabs.

Jockey's Ridge State Park

contains the tallest living sand dunes along the East Coast. Frolic in the dunes, fly a kite at the windy summit,

try sandboarding, or take a hang gliding lesson where you can launch yourself unaccompanied.

For the adrenaline junkies, how about **hang gliding** one mile up, over the Outer Banks coast? A tandem hang glider is towed up by a small plane, released, and then you're soaring through the air like a bird!

Culture

Spend an afternoon strolling around the postcard-perfect seaside town of Manteo on

Roanoke Island. The harbor front hosts a charmingly tiny lighthouse and there are several eateries, shops and galleries in the historic downtown.

Outer Banks Distillery offers tours and rum tastings of their locally-made spirits. Make sure to sample the craft rum made with pecans and honey.

At the **Seaside Art Gallery** you'll find both large and miniature paintings with diverse styles and talents from local and global artists.



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