

Carolina Beach • Kure Beach • Wrightsville Beach

Wilmington.C.

River District & Island Beaches

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Wilmington and its island beaches has the best the South has to offer, with history, arts, culture and natural beauty, all of which pair well with outstanding cuisine and tasty craft beer. In recent months, Wilmington has racked up dozens of accolades, including a nod from *U.S. News & World Report* as a "charming under-the-radar Southern city worth exploring" and *Jetsetter.com*'s recognition as one of "America's Coolest Southern Towns."

With a new marina, event pier, arts center, **restaurants**, and hotels in the River District, there's never been a more exciting time to get to know Wilmington - a charming Southern coastal destination that's similar to Charleston and Savannah. Built along the banks of the scenic Cape Fear River, Wilmington's award-winning, walkable River District embodies an eclectic mix of culture in a vibrant, yet historic setting. More than 200 shops, restaurants, attractions, tours and cruises are steps away from an alluring 1.75-mile Riverwalk.

Just minutes from Wilmington's riverfront, three colorful island beaches beckon - each with its own coastal vibe: Carolina Beach, Kure Beach and Wrightsville Beach. The destination's unique geography as a peninsula surrounded by water affords spectacular Atlantic Ocean sunrises, dramatic river sunsets and outdoor recreation. Wilmington and its island beaches provide one destination with four unique settings in a mild climate. It's an easy drive from I-95 via I-40 and US74. Prefer to fly? The Wilmington International Airport (ILM) is only 10 minutes from the downtown riverfront and 20 minutes from the beach. ILM offers flight options through Delta and American Airlines with non-stop flights to U.S. destinations.

SAMPLE STORYLINES

Cool & Quirky

Wilmington and its island Beaches offer well-known attractions such as the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA, Fort Fisher State Historic Site, Airlie Gardens, historic homes and museums, and a state aquarium. In contrast, there's a quirky side. Did you know about the nearly 400 movie and TV credits, ghost and Hollywood location walks, haunted pub crawls, surf and SUP camps, pirate cruises and a serpentarium? There are also places to see carnivorous plants (including the Venus flytrap, which grows in the wild only within a 100-mile radius), endangered sea turtles, sharks, alligators, prehistoric creatures and more. Even Wilmington's history is intriguing. The Cape Fear River was named by early explorers as ships ran aground and sank due to dangerous shifting shoals where the river meets the sea.

Craft Beer & Cocktail Boom

Craftbeer.com included Wilmington in a roundup of "America's Beeriest Beach Towns" and *SmartAsset.com* ranked it as No. 7 among "Best Cities for Beer Drinkers." Wilmington's craft beer scene is booming with a dozen breweries joining Front Street Brewery in recent years: Flytrap Brewing, Broomtail Craft Brewery, Wilmington Brewing Company, Ironclad Brewery, Waterline Brewing Company, The Sour Barn, Bill's Front Porch, New Anthem Beer Project, **Waterman's Brewing**, and Wrightsville Beach Brewery in Wilmington, and Good Hops Brewery in Carolina Beach. More breweries and bottle shops are scheduled to open in 2017/2018. Dozens of craft beer events include spring/fall craft beer weeks. Visitors can board the Port City Brew Bus for a guided tour of the area's breweries and bottle shops, or plan a self-guided tour using the Wilmington Ale Trail and the destination website's Craft Beer page. Creative mixologists make a splash with craft cocktails at Manna, PinPoint, and Surf House restaurants, The Blind Elephant speakeasy, and Whiskey Tango Foxtrot nightclub.



Website: VisitWilmingtonAndBeaches.com | **Facebook:** facebook.com/CapeFearCoastNC | **Twitter:** @WilmingtonCoast

Instagram: @WilmingtonCoast | **Pinterest:** pinterest.com/wilmingtoncoast | **YouTube:** youtube.com/user/wilmingtonandbeaches

Foodie Paradise

A dining Renaissance is underway in Wilmington and its island beaches thanks to outstanding new and established restaurants and notable chefs, many who use locally sourced produce, seafood, meats and cheeses. In mid-December, celebrity chef Vivian Howard (PBS "A Chef's Life") plans to open Benny's Big Time Pizzeria in Wilmington's newly revived South Front neighborhood. *Southern Living* magazine chose PinPoint Restaurant as one of the South's Best New Restaurants in 2016. *Scoutology.com* recommended Manna (AAA 4-Diamond) and Rx as "N.C.'s Top 21 New American Restaurants." BRAVO *Top Chef* contestant Chef Keith Rhodes' offers signature seafood dishes and award winning crab cakes at CATCH Modern Seafood restaurant and CATCH the Food Truck. Standouts at Wrightsville Beach include 22 North, with a fresh-daily chalkboard menu, and EAST at Blockade Runner Beach Resort where "Hell's Kitchen" contestant Jessica Cabo works her culinary magic. At Carolina Beach, Surf House Oyster Bar & Surf Camp chef/owner Craig Love's menus focus on craft cooking using small, local farms and sustainable regional seafood. Wake 'N Bake Donuts won The Cooking Channel's *Donut Showdown*. Bitty & Beau's Coffee, a special shop run by people with intellectual and development disabilities, is the official coffee of the Rachael Ray Show. Visitors can take guided culinary tours or visit during food festivals or spring/fall restaurant weeks.

A Memorable Family Getaway

Clean, family-friendly and lifeguard-protected beaches (Memorial Day through Labor Day) and a historic riverfront welcome all generations. Pre-schoolers love the children's museum, state aquarium and railroad museum. Older kids delight in a WWII battleship, history museum, serpentarium and waterpark. Hard-to-impress teens and tweens enjoy surf camps, tours of movie locations and haunted sites, river cruises, Segway tours, laser tag, paintball and trampoline venues.

Hollywood East

Wilmington's nearly 400 film and TV credits include *Ironman 3*, *A Walk to Remember*, *The Choice*, *We're the Millers* and cult classics such as *Blue Velvet*. More recent productions include TNT's *Good Behavior* starring Michelle Dockery and HISTORY Channel's *SIX*. In 2018, the made-in-Wilmington TV series *One Tree Hill* and *Dawson's Creek* will reach 15- and 20-year milestones, respectively. Visitors can take a guided Hollywood Location Walk of downtown TV and movie locations, or design a self-guided tour using the destination website's Hollywood East online film trail.

Water, Water Everywhere

Scenic vistas and natural beauty abound in the Wilmington area. East-facing beaches offer spectacular sunrises and the Cape Fear River affords breathtaking sunsets. Botanical gardens, state parks, estuarine research reserves, the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway and two N.C. Scenic Urban Byways enhance this coastal paradise.

Ready, Set...Active

Mild winters, wide beaches, a 1.75-mile Riverwalk, a cross-city trail, golf courses, and dozens of parks and outdoor outfitters encourage a year-round fitness culture. Triathlete magazine ranked Wilmington as a "Best Place to Live." Sports events include 5k/10k races, marathons and triathlons, fishing and golf tournaments, standup paddleboarding (SUP), beach volleyball, tennis, soccer, cycling and rowing competitions. Beaches and waterways invite surfing, boating, swimming, kayaking, fishing and SUP. The Loop fitness trail circles the island of Wrightsville Beach. Two state parks in Carolina Beach and Kure Beach offer nature trails and watersports.

Step Back In Time

Nearly three centuries of history are interpreted and brought to life by Wilmington's attractions and tours, including the Cape Fear Museum of History & Science, the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA and Fort Fisher State Historic Site. Guided tours explore Wilmington's 230+ block National Register Historic District. Explore Wilmington's historic district via horse-drawn carriage, Segway tours, a river cruise, walking and trolley tours. Theme tours include ghost walks, culinary, literary, history, craft beer and movie locations.

Coastal Art & Culture

In addition to wide, sandy beaches, Wilmington is known for museums, art galleries and performing arts. Cameron Art Museum is the pinnacle of visual arts in southeastern North Carolina. Year-round festivals, craft fairs and more than 35 galleries feature local art. Monthly Fourth Friday Gallery Night walks in Wilmington's River District are popular with both visitors and locals. A dynamic performing arts scene encompasses music, dance, theatre and film festivals at venues such as historic Thalian Hall and the 1,500-seat Wilson Center, outdoor amphitheaters, event piers, renovated historic buildings and college auditoriums.

Tee Party: Coastal Golf

Thanks to a mild, subtropical climate, golfers can tee-up year-round on Wilmington's coastal links. In addition to private courses, there are four public/semi-private courses in Wilmington, including a rare Donald Ross-designed municipal golf course and more than 50 courses within an hour's drive. At the end of the day, enjoy outstanding dining, entertainment and a variety of lodging choices.