7 Affordable Beach Towns In The Carolinas

Places like Hilton Head may break the bank, but these small towns on the Atlantic Coast of the Carolinas offer a more affordable seaside vacation.

BY **ARIANNA WINSLOW** PUBLISHED 2 DAYS AGO

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Bodie Island Lighthouse, a top-rated attraction in South Nags Head, North Carolina

SUMMARY

- **Folly Beach in SC offers stunning beach access points without breaking the bank on activities.**
- **Appreciate the historic charm of Swansboro, NC, with 18th-century buildings and affordable hotel pricing.**
- **The affordable Carolina beach town of Isle of Palms, SC, has 7 miles of beachfront and exceptional golfing opportunities.**

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For travelers from the colder parts of the country, a vacation on the coasts of the balmy Carolinas seems like the perfect spring getaway. With aquamarine water, white sands, and grassy shorelines, the Carolinas have some of the most beautiful beaches on the East Coast.

While a warm vacation during the spring and summer months can seem expensive, savvy travelers to the Carolinas will know that there are plenty of stunning beach spots to visit for an affordable price. In this list, tourists will discover some of the affordable beach towns to visit in the Carolinas, comprising lovely and wallet-friendly coastal spots in both North and South Carolina.

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7 Folly Beach

Atlantic beaches and riverside parks make this South Carolina town the perfect vacation spot

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For the perfect South Carolina beach getaway, tourists should head to Folly Beach. Located on Folly Island south of Charleston, this town is situated between two waterways and biomes: the Atlantic and the Folly River. Tourists will have both the charms of the salty ocean and the marshy river to enjoy! Along both of these waterways are free or cheap access points, meaning that tourists won't have to break the bank on activities.

With six miles of beach, visitors are almost guaranteed to find the perfect ocean-side spot for their vacation. All six miles are considered to be part of Folly Beach, and there are plenty of public access points for tourists to enjoy.

> **Tip**
>
> Two great access points for Folly Beach are at Folly Beach Pier and Folly Beach County Park. Folly Beach Pier is free to walk into, but parking fees are between $5-15 depending on the time of year .

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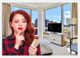

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For tourists who want to explore the river, Folly River Park and Karen Stringer Recreational Pier are wonderful free recreation options. On both the Atlantic and the Folly River, tourists will have fishing and kayaking opportunities, making this a great location for watersports.

Whether people are looking for a place to stay for the duration of their vacation or are taking road trips through scenic South Carolina, Folly Beach is a great place to visit.

Beaches:	Folly Beach: Folly Beach Pier (free access point for walk-ins, parking is $5-15)
Activities:	**Folly River Park and Karen Stringer Recreational Pier** (free), kayaking on the ocean and river, fishing
Population:	**2,084**

Note

Fishing in South Carolina requires a fishing permit .

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6 Swansboro

A charming town with historic 18th-century buildings awaits tourists to North Carolina

Perhaps one of the best places in North Carolina for an affordable vacation is the small town of Swansboro, located just outside Jacksonville.

This town has a great downtown area, plenty of playgrounds for tourists with children or grandchildren, and is famous for its 18th-century historical buildings. Walking around the town looking for these historic buildings is a great, free activity.

Beachgoers will be delighted by the local coastal areas, notably Hammocks Beach State Park and Emerald Isle Beach. What makes this town so affordable are the hotel prices; a decent hotel here is between $114-140 per night.

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Beaches:	Hammocks Beach State Park and Emerald Isle Beach
Activities:	Seeing historic buildings (free), antiquing, playgrounds for families
Population:	4,045

5 Isle Of Palms

Home to 7 miles of beachfront and amazing golfing opportunities in South Carolina

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Isle of Palms is one of South Carolina's most beautiful waterfront towns, with miles of sandy beaches, a cerulean sparkling ocean, and bright sun. It's considered a part of greater Charleston, an area known for its lovely beaches.

Tourists here will fall in love with the 7-mile-long Isle of Palms Beach, where swimming, shelling, kayaking, parasailing, and jet skiing are all popular activities.

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Beach access is free for walk-ins, which makes this beach a great spot for tourists who want to save money on activities. Hotels here can even cost as low as $169 per night!

This island is also famous for its golfing opportunities. Known as the best place for golf in the entire state of South Carolina, Isle of Palms is a golfer's delight. Whether one is a professional or is only interested in golf as a hobby, tourists should stop at Wild Dunes Resort for a round of golf.

Tip

A round of golf here costs $129.00 for 1-4 players , which isn't too steep when split between a group.

Beaches:	Isle of Palms Beach (free entry)
Activities:	Kayaking, parasailing, jet skiing, golfing at Wild Dunes Resort
Population:	4,357

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4 Manteo

Visit historic Roanoke Island for a historical, maritime vacation in North Carolina

Manteo, North Carolina, is a historic, affordable vacation getaway on Roanoke Island. Tourists who visit will get windswept coastal views, delicious seafood, and the charming feel of a southern town, all on a budget.

Historically, Roanoke County is famous for the 16th-century English colony that mysteriously disappeared in 1590, so the island as a whole is a great place to connect with history. Local museums for tourists to learn about the unique history of the island and to see local art include the Outer Banks History Center,Dare Arts, and Island Farm Museum ($10 admission).

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Another great location to visit on the island is the Elizabethan Gardens, which features blooming flowers in every season of the year. With an entry fee of $12, this park is an affordable activity for tourists. They even have butterfly releases in the spring!

Local beaches on the island include Pineapple Beach and Old Swimming Hole Park. For tourists interested in learning more about marine life in the Carolinas, North Carolina

Aquarium: Roanoke Island is a great place to visit! Plus, budget-savvy tourists will love the hotel prices; hotels average around $100 per night here!

Beaches:	Pineapple Beach, Old Swimming Hole Park
Activities:	Outer Banks History Center, Dare Arts, Island Farm Museum ($10 admission), Elizabethan Gardens **($12 admission)**, North Carolina Aquarium: Roanoke Island
Population:	**1,607**

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3 Duck

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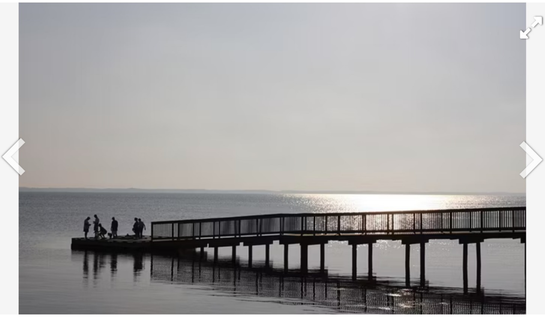

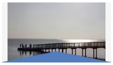

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North Carolina is home to so many hidden gems, and one of the most unknown is the tiny town of Duck. Unsurprisingly, the town's name is an homage to the cutest of waterfowl, the duck, which was popular among North Carolina hunters of this region during the 20th century and prized for its glistening, green feathers.

With a beautiful, curved boardwalk and a fishing pier, this town is a great place to enjoy Atlantic views and to view local marine wildlife. The town is full of local shops to explore, like the bookstore of Duck's Cottage, and the SeaDragon & Yellowhouse Art Gallery.

For tourists looking to relax, Duck, North Carolina, is a great spot to do so, as it is famous for its spas and local yoga studio, Village Yoga. Yoga lovers will have a blast doing yoga on the beach! While the main beach at Duck is limited to residents and renters, the local public beaches include the Regional Beach at Kitty Hawk (free walk-ins), Currituck Banks Reserve (free to enter), and Corolla Beach, which has several free access points.

Travelers on a budget who want to spend some time in Duck, North Carolina, are in luck because hotel prices here range from $59 to $200 per night.

Beaches:	Regional Beach at Kitty Hawk (free walk-ins), Currituck Banks Reserve (free to enter), and Corolla Beach (public access)
Activities:	Yoga, spas, Duck's Cottage, SeaDragon & Yellowhouse Art Gallery
Population:	748

2 Pawleys Island

The tiny town of Pawleys Island is rich in culture, history, and activities

South of Myrtle Beach lies one of South Carolina's best hidden gems: Pawleys Island. This tiny town is full of beautiful ocean views, swaths of nature in its parks, historic churches, and local art.

For an introduction to the natural world of South Carolina, a stop at Brookgreen Gardens or Huntington Beach State Park is a must. However, if history is what one wants, the Pawleys Island Chapel is a great place to visit. For the artistically minded, the Island Art Gallery is an excellent place to go.

The local beach, Pawleys Island Beach, is free and open to the public with 9 different entry points and parking lots. Tourists will love swimming, shelling, and kayaking along these Atlantic shores! Also, hotel prices here cost between $74 and $173 per night, making Pawleys Island a relatively affordable beach destination.

Beaches:	Pawleys Island Beach (free), Huntington Beach State Park
Activities:	Brookgreen Gardens, Huntington Beach State Park, Pawleys Island Chapel, Island Art Gallery
Population:	**133 people**

1 Nags Head

This beachside North Carolina town is a great place for sports, hiking, and sand dunes

Located on North Carolina's Outer Banks, the town of Nags Head is a great vacation spot for tourists who love beaches, hiking, and historic lighthouses. While in Nags Head, one of the most charming towns on the Outer Banks for a summer vacation, tourists *have* to stop at Bodie Island Lighthouse. Built in 1872, it is one of the best attractions on the Roanoke Sound.

Another great place here is the Nags Head Woods Preserve, where visitors can walk the Roanoke Trail. This free and open-to-the-public forest is a great place to spot North Carolina's fauna like river otters, learn about history through an audio tour of the Roanoke Trail, and go birding.

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One of the best free things to do here is to visit Jockey's Ridge State Park. Here, tourists will find the tallest sand dune system on the Atlantic coast and will find excellent access to the Roanoke Sound. Visitors can hike, hang glide, paddle, swim, and windsurf.

For those interested in fishing, Nags Head has two distinct fishing piers: Jennette's Pier and Nags Head Pier. The beach of Nags Head is publicly accessible for free from multiple locations, including the piers, making it the perfect beach stop for tourists on a budget. Moreover, hotels here are inexpensive, with nightly prices ranging from $90 to $162.

Tip

To fish in North Carolina, a fishing license is required .

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Beaches:	Jockey's Ridge State Park (free), Nags Head Beach (free access)
Activities:	Nags Head Woods Preserve (free), Bodie Island Lighthouse
Population:	3,163

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With so many small beach towns to visit in the Carolinas for an affordable price, tourists on a budget can have the time of their lives planning and living out their southern vacation. Warm sands and ocean vistas await, all at a budget-friendly price tag in these affordable Carolina beach towns!