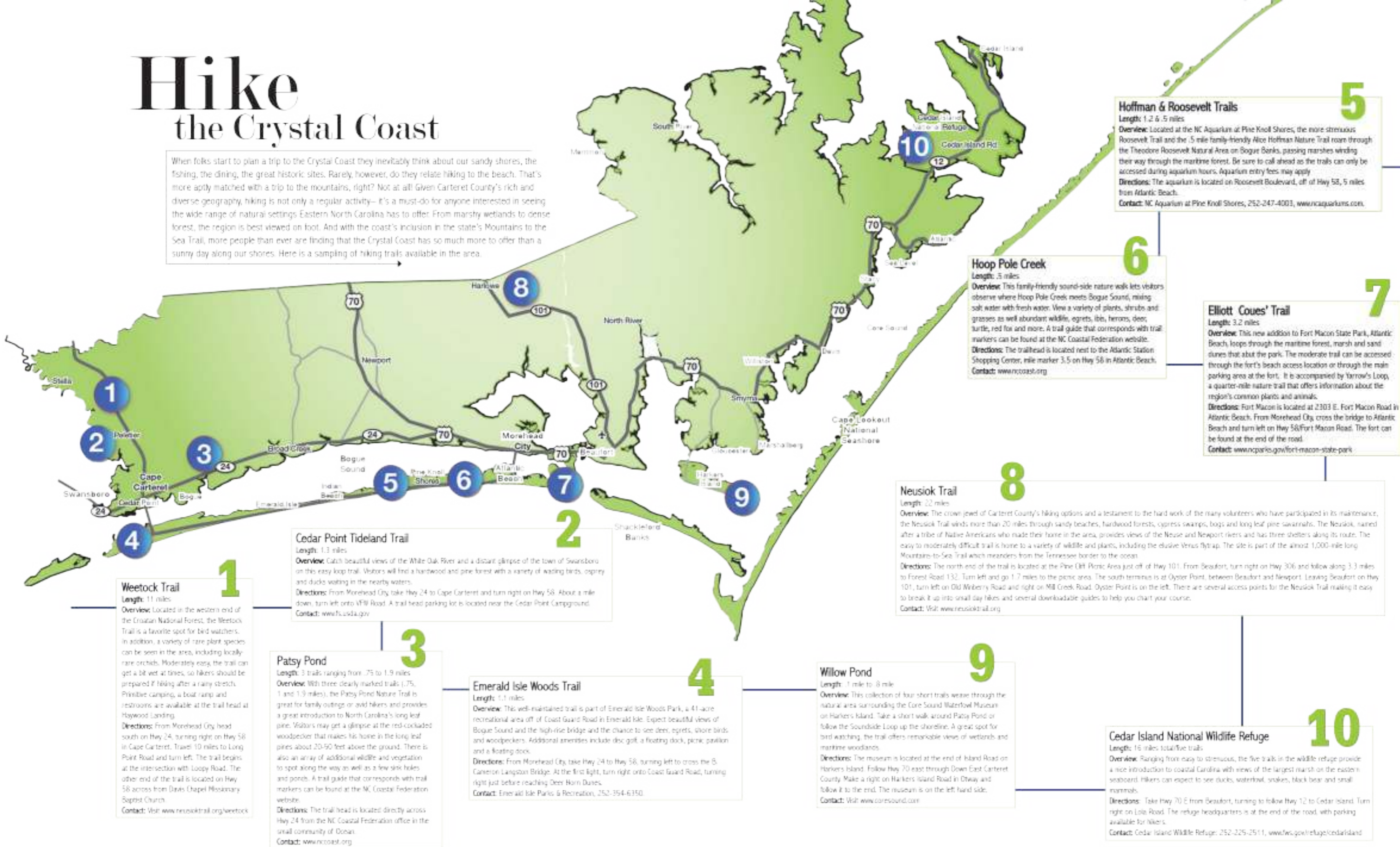


Hike the Crystal Coast

When folks start to plan a trip to the Crystal Coast they inevitably think about our sandy shores, the fishing, the dining, the great historic sites. Rarely, however, do they relate hiking to the beach. That's more aptly matched with a trip to the mountains, right? Not at all! Given Carteret County's rich and diverse geography, hiking is not only a regular activity—it's a must-do for anyone interested in seeing the wide range of natural settings Eastern North Carolina has to offer. From marshy wetlands to dense forest, the region is best viewed on foot. And with the coast's inclusion in the state's Mountains to the Sea Trail, more people than ever are finding that the Crystal Coast has so much more to offer than a sunny day along our shores. Here is a sampling of hiking trails available in the area.



1 Weetock Trail
Length: 11 miles
Overview: Located in the western end of the Croatan National Forest, the Weetock Trail is a favorite spot for bird watchers. In addition, a variety of rare plant species can be seen in the area, including locally rare orchids. Moderately easy, the trail can get a bit wet at times, so hikers should be prepared if hiking after a rainy stretch. Primitive camping, a boat ramp and restrooms are available at the trail head at Haywood Landing.
Directions: From Morehead City head south on Hwy 24, turning right on Hwy 58 in Cape Carteret. Travel 10 miles to Long Point Road and turn left. The trail begins at the intersection with Loopy Road. The other end of the trail is located on Hwy 58 across from Davis Chapel Missionary Baptist Church.
Contact: Visit www.neusioktrail.org/weetock

2 Cedar Point Tideland Trail
Length: 1.3 miles
Overview: Catch beautiful views of the White Oak River and a distant glimpse of the town of Swansboro on this easy loop trail. Visitors will find a hardwood and pine forest with a variety of wading birds, osprey and ducks waiting in the nearby waters.
Directions: From Morehead City take Hwy 24 to Cape Carteret and turn right on Hwy 58. About a mile down, turn left onto NFR Road. A trail head parking lot is located near the Cedar Point Campground.
Contact: www.f.usda.gov

3 Patsy Pond
Length: 3 trails ranging from .75 to 1.9 miles
Overview: With three clearly marked trails (.75, 1 and 1.9 miles), the Patsy Pond Nature Trail is great for family outings or avid hikers and provides a great introduction to North Carolina's long leaf pine. Visitors may get a glimpse at the red-cockaded woodpecker that makes his home in the long leaf pines about 20-50 feet above the ground. There is also an array of additional wildlife and vegetation to spot along the way as well as a few sink holes and ponds. A trail guide that corresponds with trail markers can be found at the NC Coastal Federation website.
Directions: The trail head is located directly across Hwy 24 from the NC Coastal Federation office in the small community of Ocean.
Contact: www.nccoast.org

4 Emerald Isle Woods Trail
Length: 1.1 miles
Overview: This well-maintained trail is part of Emerald Isle Woods Park, a 41-acre recreational area off of Coast Guard Road in Emerald Isle. Expect beautiful views of Bogue Sound and the high-rise bridge and the chance to see deer, egrets, shore birds and woodpeckers. Additional amenities include disc golf, a floating dock, picnic pavilion and a floating dock.
Directions: From Morehead City, take Hwy 24 to Hwy 58, turning left to cross the B. Cameron Langston Bridge. At the first light, turn right onto Coast Guard Road, turning right just before reaching Deer Horn Dunes.
Contact: Emerald Isle Parks & Recreation, 252-354-6350.

9 Willow Pond
Length: 1 mile to 8 mile
Overview: This collection of four short trails weaves through the rural area surrounding the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum on Harkers Island. Take a short walk around Patsy Pond or follow the Soundside Loop up the shoreline. A great spot for bird watching, the trail offers remarkable views of wetlands and maritime woodlands.
Directions: The museum is located at the end of Island Road on Harkers Island. Follow Hwy 70 east through Down East Carteret County. Make a right on Harkers Island Road in Dtway and follow it to the end. The museum is on the left hand side.
Contact: Visit www.coresound.com

8 Neusiok Trail
Length: 22 miles
Overview: The crown jewel of Carteret County's hiking options and a testament to the hard work of the many volunteers who have participated in its maintenance, the Neusiok Trail winds more than 20 miles through sandy beaches, hardwood forests, cypress swamps, bogs and long leaf pine swamps. The Neusiok, named after a tribe of Native Americans who made their home in the area, provides views of the Neuse and Newport rivers and has three shelters along its route. The easy to moderately difficult trail is home to a variety of wildlife and plants, including the elusive Venus flytrap. The site is part of the almost 1,000-mile long Mountains-to-Sea Trail which meanders from the Tennessee border to the ocean.
Directions: The north end of the trail is located at the Pine Cliff Picnic Area just off of Hwy 101. From Beaufort, turn right on Hwy 306 and follow along 3.3 miles to Forest Road 132. Turn left and go 1.7 miles to the picnic area. The south terminus is at Oyster Point, between Beaufort and Newport. Leaving Beaufort on Hwy 101, turn left on Old Winberry Road and right on Mill Creek Road. Oyster Point is on the left. There are several access points for the Neusiok Trail making it easy to break it up into small day hikes and several downloadable guides to help you chart your course.
Contact: Visit www.neusioktrail.org

10 Cedar Island National Wildlife Refuge
Length: 16 miles total/five trails
Overview: Ranging from easy to strenuous, the five trails in the wildlife refuge provide a nice introduction to coastal Carolina with views of the largest marsh on the eastern seaboard. Hikers can expect to see ducks, waterfowl, snakes, black bear and small mammals.
Directions: Take Hwy 70 E from Beaufort, turning to follow Hwy 12 to Cedar Island. Turn right on Lolo Road. The refuge headquarters is at the end of the road, with parking available for hikers.
Contact: Cedar Island Wildlife Refuge: 252-225-2511, www.fws.gov/refuge/cedarisland

6 Hoop Pole Creek
Length: .5 miles
Overview: This family-friendly sound-side nature walk lets visitors observe where Hoop Pole Creek meets Bogue Sound, mixing salt water with fresh water. View a variety of plants, shrubs and grasses as well abundant wildlife, egrets, ibis, herons, deer, turtle, red fox and more. A trail guide that corresponds with trail markers can be found at the NC Coastal Federation website.
Directions: The trailhead is located next to the Atlantic Station Shopping Center, mile marker 3.5 on Hwy 58 in Atlantic Beach.
Contact: www.nccoast.org

7 Elliott Coues' Trail
Length: 3.2 miles
Overview: This new addition to Fort Macon State Park, Atlantic Beach, loops through the maritime forest, marsh and sand dunes that abut the park. The moderate trail can be accessed through the fort's beach access location or through the main parking area at the fort. It is accompanied by Yarrow's Loop, a quarter-mile nature trail that offers information about the region's common plants and animals.
Directions: Fort Macon is located at 2303 E. Fort Macon Road in Atlantic Beach. From Morehead City, cross the bridge to Atlantic Beach and turn left on Hwy 58/Fort Macon Road. The fort can be found at the end of the road.
Contact: www.ncparks.gov/fort-macon-state-park

5 Hoffman & Roosevelt Trails
Length: 1.2 & .5 miles
Overview: Located at the NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, the more strenuous Roosevelt Trail and the .5 mile family-friendly Alice Hoffman Nature Trail roam through the Theodore Roosevelt Natural Area on Bogue Banks, passing marshes winding their way through the maritime forest. Be sure to call ahead as the trails can only be accessed during aquarium hours. Aquarium entry fees may apply.
Directions: The aquarium is located on Roosevelt Boulevard, off of Hwy 58, 5 miles from Atlantic Beach.
Contact: NC Aquarium at Pine Knoll Shores, 252-247-4003, www.ncaquariums.com.

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