



MAKE IT YOUR NATURE

What's better than enjoying North Carolina's 300 miles of barrier-island beaches, remote marshes, scenic sounds and recreational rivers? Knowing that by following these tips while you do, you're preserving these stunning coastal ecosystems for future generations to explore.

PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

- Be attentive to weather conditions. Weather at the coast can change rapidly. Summer storms roll in quickly – if you see dark clouds, assume there is lightning and leave the water.
- Know the tide schedules, check the rip current reports and learn to identify them, be mindful of shorebreak, and watch for flags at the beach signifying water conditions (red flags mean no swimming).
- Always swim near a lifeguard, if possible. Pack food, water and the right clothes to protect you from the elements.
- Remember to park only in designated parking areas. If that area is full, drive to another one.

BE CAREFUL WITH FIRE

- If you choose to have a fire at the beach, check on regulations, secure a permit if needed, dig a 3' x 3' x 2' hole and keep the fire small. If allowed, gather wood from the ground instead of breaking branches from trees. Buy firewood locally to avoid bringing in invasive species.
- Burn all wood to ash. Before leaving, check that the fire is completely out, ashes are cold and holes are filled in.

LEAVE IT AS YOU FIND IT

- Our rivers, sounds and ocean are home to many sensitive habitats for wildlife and plants, some of which are endangered. Instead of gathering plants, moving rocks, and taking shells and sand dollars – take a picture instead.
- Leave rocks and shells as you find them to protect critters' sensitive habitats, prevent erosion and avoid other ecological impacts.
- Fill in sand holes and keep flashlights and outdoor house lights off so they are not a hazard to nesting sea turtles.

BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHERS AND SHARE THE OUTDOORS

- People have a range of skill levels and different ideas about how to enjoy the outdoors. Respect others so NC's natural spaces will be welcoming and relaxing for all.
- Be mindful of your noise level so others can listen to nature. Remember sound travels better over water and winds can carry your sounds in other directions.

STICK TO TRAILS AND OVERNIGHT RIGHT

- Stick to designated trails to and from the beach or water, and durable surfaces on the beach such as sand, gravel and bare rock. Coastal grasses are fragile and can easily be impacted by visitors traveling across them.
- In coastal ecosystems, there can be entire marine microbiomes beneath your feet! Avoid rocks covered in barnacles, seaweed and other sensitive areas as much as possible.
- Camp only in designated areas.

TRASH YOUR TRASH

- Trash can appear in many ways. We can all do our part by picking up our trash and food scraps and taking them with us, but also consider taking an extra bag to pick up anything along the way. It is helpful for everyone, especially the animals that often ingest trash after mistaking it for food.
- Don't forget to pack out your pet's waste, as it contains harmful bacteria that can get into water sources and cause other animals, or even humans, to be sick.
- Pack it in and pack it out. Take your umbrellas, tents, chairs and other personal items off the beach at night for both the safety of wildlife and so they don't wash into the ocean.

KEEP WILDLIFE WILD

- The NC coast is full of wildlife from black bears, wild mustang horses, and different species of birds and marine life. All wildlife should be treated with respect and observed from a distance so you don't cause undue stress and harm.
- Never feed wild animals, including seagulls. It alters their natural behavior and puts them, and you, at risk. When in bear country, always be sure to properly store food, trash and any smellables (like lip balm and deodorant) to prevent unwanted encounters.
- When fishing, remember to clean up all lines, hooks and bait so wildlife doesn't get hurt or tangled in it.



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