

WASHINGTONIAN

MAY 2006

The Perfect Beach House

Which beaches are least crowded? Most family-friendly? Best for nightlife? There's a good beach for everyone—here's our guide, plus how to still find a nice house to rent.

By Christine Koubek

Looking to sink your toes in at a new beach rental this summer, but still haven't rented a house? Although many prime rentals are taken, you can still find good choices.

Here's an overview of Mid-Atlantic beach towns—and how to find rentals.

OUTER BANKS, NORTH CAROLINA (north beaches)

Best for: Families or groups looking for a castle near the sand.

In Carova, Corolla, Duck, and Southern Shores, you'll find unspoiled and uncrowded beaches, opulent homes, and little commercial development. Rental homes are big, offering an average of five bedrooms plus amenities like home theaters, pool tables, putting greens, and swimming pools.

Where to rent: For remoteness—and proximity to the shore's fabled wild horses—head to Carova, accessible via four-wheel drive. Slightly south is Corolla, where the community of Corolla Light offers oceanfront pools, an indoor lap pool, a putting green, and entertainment from live bands to beach Olympics. Corolla's Pine Island community, across from the Pine Island Audubon Sanctuary, has tennis, basketball, and an oceanfront pool.

If you golf, check out the gated Currituck Club neighborhood, with its Rees Jones course. The Hampton-esque town of



For big houses, big waves, and lots of sand between you and the next person, head to the Outer Banks.



Duck offers fine dining, soundfront water sports, and winding paths that take you by foot or bike to boutiques and restaurants.

Weekly rentals on a five-bedroom range from \$3,495 to more than \$7,000.

Best bets for rentals: **Carolina Designs Realty (800-368-3825; carolindesigns.com)** has an easy-to-navigate Web site that lets you view floor plans and photos for rentals from Corolla to Nags Head. Twiddy & Company (866-457-1190;

twiddy.com) represents more than 700 vacation homes in Duck, Corolla, and Carova. Both provide linens and starter supplies.

Shore things: Climb the Currituck Lighthouse for panoramic views. Pedal the Wright Brothers Bikeway, which stretches from Sanderling to South Nags Head; the path is a mix of wide paved shoulders, bike path, and quiet streets.

Eating out: For sunset views, head to longtime favorite the Blue Point in Duck, scheduled to reopen with more soundside seating on Memorial Day weekend. Meridian 42, in Kitty Hawk, is the place for coastal Mediterranean fare. Celebrate a special occasion with French-inspired food and a great view at the Left Bank, in the Sanderling Resort and Spa in Duck.

For more information: Outer Banks of North Carolina Visitors Bureau, 877-629-4386 or outerbanks.org.