

CRYSTAL COAST

Relocation Guide

A guide to communities across Onslow, Carteret,
Craven, and surrounding counties



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HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Relocating to coastal eastern North Carolina involves more than choosing a home — it often means selecting the community that best fits your lifestyle, commute needs, and long-term goals.

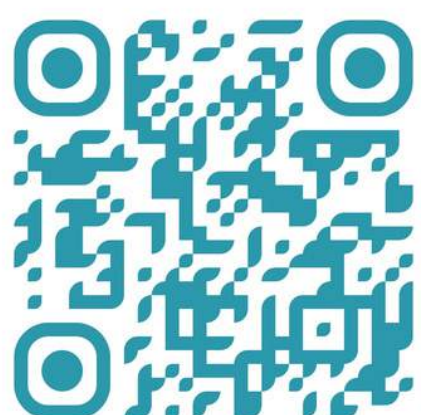
This guide provides a structured overview of towns and communities across Onslow, Carteret, Craven, Jones, Pender, and New Hanover counties. Each town section includes:

- A brief community overview
- A snapshot of practical information such as commute times, medical access, and municipal structure
- Links to independent public resources for school and safety research

The town pages are designed to help you understand the character and function of each area. At the end of this guide, you will find a summary comparison table to help you quickly review population, county location, and geographic characteristics across communities.

Because data and development patterns change over time, readers are encouraged to verify specific details directly with official public sources and local providers.

This guide is intended to support informed decision-making and provide a starting point for further exploration.



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Jacksonville

Onslow County

Regional hub with everyday
convenience and base access



Jacksonville is the region's main service and employment hub, closely tied to Camp Lejeune. In recent years, the downtown waterfront corridor has seen visible improvements, including roadway upgrades, refreshed public spaces, and revitalized buildings that support quaint shops and local restaurants. Alongside these updates, Jacksonville continues to offer the widest mix of housing choices, shopping, dining, and everyday conveniences in the area—making it a practical home base for many relocations.

It's a strong fit if you want shorter drives, plenty of services nearby, and options across multiple price points. Neighborhood feel varies widely by area, so the "right" Jacksonville experience is usually about choosing the right pocket for your lifestyle (commute, schools, flood comfort, and yard/lot preferences).



Jacksonville's culture reflects its role as a military hub, with a steady rhythm shaped by training cycles, school schedules, and family life. Community events, youth sports, parks, and waterfront access provide year-round activity, while dining and entertainment options continue to expand. Many residents also take advantage of Jacksonville's central location for easy day trips to coastal towns, historic areas, and regional festivals.

Jacksonville

Details

Population	~72,000
County	Onslow
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Inland regional hub
Development Pattern	Established and expanding
Schools	<u>Onslow County</u> Active duty may be able to send their children to on-base schools under the “Expanded Eligibility” program.
Nearest Hospital	Onslow Memorial
Regional Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville
Major Highway Access	US-17, NC-24
Nearest Regional Airport	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ)
Nearest Beach Access	North Topsail & Emerald Isle Onslow Beach - With Camp Lejeune Access

Havelock

Craven County

Aviation-centered community with base access and coastal proximity



Havelock is closely tied to MCAS Cherry Point and plays a key role in the region's aviation and defense landscape. The town offers a practical mix of housing, everyday services, and direct access to major employers, making it a common choice for those working on or near the air station. Its location also places residents within reasonable reach of New Bern, the Crystal Coast, and surrounding inland communities.

Havelock is a strong fit for those who value shorter commutes, straightforward neighborhoods, and a quieter pace compared to larger hubs. Ongoing transportation improvements, including the development of Interstate 42, are intended to improve regional connectivity and help streamline travel between inland communities and the coast. Housing options range from established neighborhoods to newer developments, with prices that often remain more accessible than nearby coastal towns, making convenience and proximity to work a priority for many residents.



Daily life in Havelock reflects its military and aviation roots, with a steady rhythm shaped by base schedules and family routines. Community events, local parks, and nearby access to outdoor spaces—including the Croatan National Forest—add balance to everyday life. Residents also take advantage of the town's central location for easy trips to waterfront areas, historic downtowns, and regional attractions.

Havelock

Details

Population	~20,000
County	Craven
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Riverfront + inland near Neuse River
Development Pattern	Established residential
Schools	Craven County Cherry Point does not have on-base DoD schools
Nearest Hospital	CarolinaEast Medical Ctr (New Bern)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	US-70/I-42
Nearest Airport	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) New Bern
Nearest Beach Access	Atlantic Beach

New Bern

Craven County

Historic riverfront city with healthcare,
arts, and refined coastal living



New Bern is a historic riverfront city in Craven County, located at the confluence of the Neuse and Trent Rivers. It serves as a major regional center for medical care, including a full-service hospital and specialty providers that draw residents from surrounding counties. With a preserved historic core and a larger city footprint than nearby towns, New Bern functions as both a healthcare hub and a cultural anchor for eastern North Carolina.

New Bern appeals to those seeking a more established city environment with character and amenities beyond basic services. Housing options range from historic homes near the downtown waterfront to planned communities, golf-oriented neighborhoods, and suburban developments surrounding the city. Home prices vary by location and setting, offering choices for those prioritizing river views, neighborhood structure, or proximity to medical and commercial centers.



Daily life in New Bern reflects a blend of history, arts, and outdoor recreation. A quaint downtown supports galleries, local shops, and restaurants, while an active arts scene contributes to events and cultural programming throughout the year. Boating along the rivers, access to golf courses, and nearby equestrian facilities add to the lifestyle mix, making New Bern especially attractive to those who value culture, scenery, and recreational variety alongside city-level services.

New Bern

Details

Population	~31,000
County	Craven
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Riverfront City at the Neuse and Trent Rivers
Development Pattern	Established + planned communities
Schools	Craven County
Nearest Hospital	CarolinaEast Medical Ctr (New Bern)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	US-70, US-17
Nearest Airport	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) New Bern
Nearest Beach Access	Atlantic Beach

Morehead City

Carteret County

Coastal service center with port access,
healthcare, and waterfront living



Morehead City serves as a key coastal hub for Carteret County, combining port activity, healthcare services, and everyday commerce with direct access to the waterfront. Home to major medical facilities, the Port of Morehead City, and a range of employers tied to maritime and service industries, it functions as both a working town and a gateway to the Crystal Coast.

Morehead City appeals to those who want coastal proximity without fully committing to island living. Housing options range from historic neighborhoods and established subdivisions to newer developments, with a mix of year-round residents and seasonal activity. Many buyers are drawn to its balance of practicality, amenities, and access to water, dining, and services within a relatively compact area.



Daily life in Morehead City reflects its working waterfront roots, with a blend of maritime culture, healthcare activity, and tourism. Residents enjoy waterfront parks, local events, and a growing dining scene, along with easy access to nearby beaches, Beaufort, and barrier islands. The town's walkable areas and central coastal location make it a frequent base for both everyday living and coastal exploration.

Morehead City

Details

Population	~9,500
County	Carteret
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Coastal mainland/waterfront
Development Pattern	Established + coastal residential infill
Schools	Carteret County
Nearest Hospital	Carteret Health Care (Morehead City)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	US-70
Nearest Airport	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) New Bern
Nearest Beach Access	Atlantic Beach

Richlands

Onslow County

Small-town living with space, value, and access to Jacksonville



Richlands sits inland from Jacksonville and functions as a quieter residential alternative for those working in and around Camp Lejeune. The town offers convenient access to major roadways, everyday services, and nearby employment centers, including Albert J. Ellis Airport (OAJ) in Jacksonville, which provides regional commercial air service. Its location appeals to buyers who want separation from busier hubs while remaining well connected.

Richlands is well suited for those seeking more space, lower density, and a slower pace of daily life. Housing options include established neighborhoods, newer subdivisions, and homes on larger lots, often at price points that remain more accessible than areas closer to the coast. Many residents choose Richlands to balance commute times with privacy, predictability, and long-term affordability.



Life in Richlands is shaped by community routines, schools, and local events rather than tourism or seasonal activity. Outdoor recreation, nearby farmland, and open space contribute to a quieter lifestyle, while Jacksonville's shopping, dining, medical services, and transportation options remain a short drive away. The town's understated character appeals to those who value simplicity and room to grow over a more urban or coastal setting.

Richlands

Details

Population	~2,000
County	Onslow
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Inland rural
Development Pattern	Expanding suburban residential + retail growth
Schools	Onslow County
Nearest Hospital	Onslow Memorial (Jacksonville)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	NC-24
Nearest Airport	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ) Richlands
Nearest Beach Access	North Topsail

Hubert

Onslow County

Unincorporated coastal area offering space, privacy, and rural character



Hubert is an unincorporated area of Onslow County located between Jacksonville and the Crystal Coast, with close ties to Camp Lejeune and nearby military facilities. Rather than a defined town center, Hubert is characterized by residential neighborhoods, rural roads, and pockets of commercial services spread throughout the area. Its location provides convenient access to employment hubs while maintaining a distinctly less developed feel.

Hubert appeals to those seeking more space, fewer municipal constraints, and a quieter setting compared to incorporated towns. Housing options range from established subdivisions to homes on larger parcels, with fewer zoning layers and no municipal government. Many buyers choose Hubert for its balance of privacy, flexibility, and reasonable commute times to Jacksonville, Swansboro, and surrounding coastal areas.



Daily life in Hubert is shaped by residential routines, outdoor activity, and proximity to water rather than a centralized downtown or event calendar. Residents often take advantage of nearby creeks, boating access, and coastal recreation, while relying on Jacksonville and Swansboro for shopping, dining, and services. The area's low-profile character and unincorporated structure appeal to those who value independence and a less regulated living environment.

Hubert

Details

Population	~15,000
County	Onslow
Municipal Status	Unincorporated
Setting	Coastal mainland (marsh & creek)
Development Pattern	Established and expanding residential
Schools	Onslow County
Nearest Hospital	Onslow Memorial (Jacksonville)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	NC-172, NC-24
Nearest Airport	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ) Richlands
Nearest Beach Access	Emerald Isle

Maysville

Onslow & Jones Counties

Small-town setting with rural space and convenient highway access



Maysville is a small incorporated town in Jones County, with a broader address area that extends into surrounding parts of Jones and Onslow counties. The town itself has a compact footprint and a modest downtown, while much of the surrounding area is rural in nature. Its location along U.S. Highway 17 provides convenient north–south access, connecting residents to Jacksonville, New Bern, and coastal communities.

Maysville appeals to those who prioritize space, simplicity, and a lower-density environment over amenities concentrated in a town center. Housing in the area includes established homes, newer construction, and properties on larger parcels, often at price points that remain more accessible than coastal or higher-growth locations. Many buyers choose Maysville for its balance of rural living and practical commuting options.



Daily life in and around Maysville is quiet and residential, shaped more by individual routines than by a defined event calendar or commercial core. Outdoor space, farmland, and nearby waterways contribute to a slower pace, while nearby towns provide access to shopping, dining, schools, and services. The area’s understated character and highway convenience make it a fit for those seeking flexibility and room to spread out without feeling isolated.

Maysville

Details

Population	~1,000 (intown)
County	Jones & Onslow
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Inland small town
Development Pattern	Limited town core + rural residential growth
Schools	Jones + Onslow Counties
Nearest Hospital	Onslow Memorial (Jacksonville)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	US-17
Nearest Airport	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ) Richlands
Nearest Beach Access	Emerald Isle

Trenton

Jones County

County seat community with river access
and small-town character



Trenton is the county seat of Jones County and serves as a quiet administrative and residential center along the Trent River. The town has a compact footprint, with local government functions and a small downtown area that reflects its role rather than commercial growth. Its setting along the river and inland location place it within reach of New Bern, Jacksonville, and surrounding rural communities.

Trenton appeals to those seeking a simple, small-town environment with a strong sense of place and minimal development pressure. Housing in and around town includes established homes, modest neighborhoods, and properties with more land, often at price points that remain accessible compared to coastal areas. Many residents choose Trenton for its quiet pace, familiarity, and separation from busier corridors.



Daily life in Trenton is shaped by local routines, courthouse activity, and the presence of the Trent River, which adds a natural backdrop to the town's slower rhythm. Outdoor spaces, river views, and nearby countryside contribute to a relaxed lifestyle, while larger towns provide access to shopping, dining, and medical services. Trenton's understated character suits those who value calm surroundings and a traditional county-seat setting.

Trenton

Details

Population	~300
County	Jones
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Inland riverfront (Trent River)
Development Pattern	Established small-town
Schools	Jones County
Nearest Hospital	CarolinaEast Medical Ctr (New Bern)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	NC-58
Nearest Airport	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) New Bern
Nearest Beach Access	Emerald Isle

River Bend

Craven County

Planned residential community with golf course living near New Bern



River Bend is a planned residential community located along the Trent River just outside of New Bern in Craven County. Developed around a golf course and marina-oriented setting, it functions primarily as a residential area rather than a traditional town center. Its location offers convenient access to New Bern's medical facilities, shopping, and historic downtown while maintaining a more contained, neighborhood-focused environment.

River Bend appeals to those seeking an organized, low-traffic residential setting with a strong emphasis on home ownership and community layout. Housing consists largely of single-family homes within a structured neighborhood design, with an emphasis on consistency and shared amenities. Many residents are drawn to River Bend for its predictable environment, proximity to New Bern, and separation from busier commercial corridors.



Daily life in River Bend centers on neighborhood routines, outdoor activity, and the presence of the river and golf course rather than a commercial downtown or event calendar. Residents often take advantage of walking areas, waterfront views, and nearby recreational options, while relying on New Bern for dining, healthcare, and cultural activities. The community's calm pace and defined structure suit those who value order, scenery, and access to services without living directly in a city center.

River Bend

Details

Population	~3,000
County	Craven
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Inland river-adjacent (Trent River)
Development Pattern	Planned residential community
Schools	Craven County
Nearest Hospital	CarolinaEast Medical Ctr (New Bern)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	US-17
Nearest Airport	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) New Bern
Nearest Beach Access	Atlantic Beach

Newport / Bogue

Carteret County

Central Carteret communities offering inland space and waterway living



Newport and Bogue are neighboring communities in central Carteret County that together form a practical link between inland areas and the Crystal Coast. Newport covers a wide geographic area that stretches from neighborhoods near the Intracoastal Waterway to the town center located several miles inland. Bogue, by contrast, is more compact and closely aligned with the Intracoastal Waterway. Both communities offer convenient access to U.S. Highway 70, connecting residents to Morehead City, Beaufort, and nearby barrier islands.

These areas appeal to those who want coastal proximity without committing to island or resort living.

Newport's broader footprint provides a range of settings, from water-adjacent homes to more inland residential neighborhoods, while Bogue tends to offer a quieter, waterway-oriented feel. Housing options include established neighborhoods, newer development, and homes on larger lots, often at more accessible price points than nearby waterfront or island communities.



Daily life in Newport and Bogue is shaped by residential routines and regional access rather than a concentrated downtown or tourism-driven activity. Residents rely on surrounding towns for dining, healthcare, and cultural offerings, while enjoying easy day trips to beaches, historic waterfronts, and coastal recreation. The combination of inland flexibility and waterway access makes these communities a practical choice for year-round living with coastal convenience.

Newport/Bogue

Details

Population	~6,300
County	Carteret
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Mainland coastal (ICW)
Development Pattern	Established + expanding residential
Schools	Carteret County
Nearest Hospital	Carteret Health Care (Morehead City)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	US-70
Nearest Airport	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) New Bern
Nearest Beach Access	Atlantic Beach or Emerald Isle

Swansboro

Onslow County

Historic waterfront town with walkable downtown and coastal access



Swansboro is a historic waterfront town in Onslow County, known for its compact downtown concentrated along the White Oak River and its role as a gateway to the Crystal Coast. The waterfront setting supports a working harbor feel alongside public spaces, with day docking available for boaters visiting downtown. Its close proximity to shops, restaurants, and waterfront areas creates a defined town center, while its location between Jacksonville and nearby coastal communities makes Swansboro both a destination and a practical place to live.

Swansboro appeals to those who value character, close proximity to the water, and a more concentrated town center without the scale or density of larger coastal hubs. Residential areas extend beyond the historic core into established neighborhoods and newer developments, offering a range of housing options. Many residents are drawn to Swansboro for its small-town atmosphere, access to fishing and boating, and everyday convenience.



Daily life in Swansboro is closely tied to its waterfront setting and active downtown. Popular festivals and community events draw both residents and visitors throughout the year, while fishing piers, river access, and nearby coastal waters support an outdoor-oriented lifestyle. Quaint shops, local restaurants, and walkable streets contribute to a lively yet approachable atmosphere that balances tourism with year-round living.

Swansboro

Details

Population	~3,500
County	Onslow
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Waterfront town (White Oak River)
Development Pattern	Established historic core + residential growth
Schools	Onslow County
Nearest Hospital	Onslow Memorial (Jacksonville)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	NC-24
Nearest Airport	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ) Richlands
Nearest Beach Access	Emerald Isle

Cape Carteret

Carteret County

Historic waterfront town with walkable downtown and coastal access



Cape Carteret is a coastal mainland town in western Carteret County, situated near the Intracoastal Waterway and just inland from Bogue Banks. The town developed primarily as a residential community, with a layout shaped by waterways, golf course areas, and established neighborhoods rather than a traditional downtown core. Its location provides convenient access to Emerald Isle, Swansboro, and nearby coastal amenities while remaining outside barrier island settings.

Cape Carteret appeals to those seeking coastal proximity with a quieter, more residential feel.

Housing options include long-established neighborhoods, homes near golf course areas, and properties with varying levels of water access, often at price points more approachable than island communities. Many residents are drawn to the town for its stability, lower density, and balance between everyday living and coastal recreation.



Daily life in Cape Carteret is shaped by neighborhood routines, outdoor activity, and access to nearby waterways rather than tourism-driven activity. Residents frequently enjoy boating, fishing, and golf, while relying on surrounding towns for dining, shopping, and entertainment. The town's calm pace and coastal setting make it well suited for year-round living with close ties to the water.

Cape Carteret

Details

County	Carteret
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Mainland coastal (ICW, Bogue Sound, White Oak River)
Development Pattern	Established + coastal residential infill
Schools	Carteret County
Nearest Hospital	Carteret Health Care (Morehead City)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	NC-24
Nearest Airport	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) New Bern
Nearest Beach Access	Emerald Isle

Cedar Point

Carteret County

Quiet coastal town with waterway access
and small-town scale



Cedar Point is a small incorporated town in western Carteret County, located along the Intracoastal Waterway and just inland from Bogue Banks. With a compact footprint and a limited commercial core, the town functions primarily as a residential coastal community rather than a regional destination. Its location provides convenient access to nearby mainland towns, barrier islands, and major travel corridors while maintaining a distinctly low-key profile.

Cedar Point appeals to those seeking coastal proximity in a quieter, more contained setting. Housing options include established neighborhoods, newer construction, and homes with varying degrees of water access, often at price points that differ from nearby island or resort-oriented areas. Many residents choose Cedar Point for its manageable size, residential focus, and proximity to both everyday services and coastal recreation.



Daily life in Cedar Point is shaped by neighborhood routines, outdoor activity, and access to nearby waterways rather than tourism or a bustling downtown scene. Boating, fishing, and time spent outdoors are common, while shopping, dining, and medical services are typically accessed in surrounding communities. The town's quiet pace and waterfront setting make it well suited for year-round living with a coastal backdrop.

Cedar Point

Details

Population	~1800
County	Carteret
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Mainland coastal (ICW)
Development Pattern	Established + limited new development + water-related commercial
Schools	Carteret County
Nearest Hospital	Carteret Health Care (Morehead City)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	NC-24
Nearest Airport	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) New Bern
Nearest Beach Access	Emerald Isle

Sneads Ferry

Onslow County

Historic fishing village with coastal growth and convenient base proximity



Sneads Ferry is a historic fishing village located in Onslow County along the New River and near the Intracoastal Waterway. Long tied to commercial fishing and maritime activity, the area has evolved into a growing coastal community while retaining its working waterfront roots. Its location near the back gate of Camp Lejeune provides practical access for those working on the base, while also connecting residents to nearby coastal and inland destinations.

Sneads Ferry appeals to those seeking coastal living with a mix of established neighborhoods and newer residential development. Housing options range from long-standing homes tied to the area's fishing heritage to newer subdivisions responding to growth and demand. Many buyers are drawn to Sneads Ferry for its balance of water access, relative affordability compared to island communities, and proximity to employment centers.



Daily life in Sneads Ferry reflects its maritime background, with boating, fishing, and waterfront activity remaining central to the area's identity. Local businesses, seafood markets, and community gatherings contribute to a lived-in coastal atmosphere, while nearby beaches and outdoor recreation expand day-to-day options. As the community continues to grow, Sneads Ferry maintains a blend of tradition and transition that appeals to both long-term residents and newcomers.

Sneads Ferry

Details

Population	~3,000
County	Onslow
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Coastal mainland/fishing village (ICW, New River)
Development Pattern	Established + expanding residential
Schools	Onslow County
Nearest Hospital	Onslow Memorial (Jacksonville)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	NC-172, NC-210
Nearest Airport	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ) Richlands
Nearest Beach Access	North Topsail Beach Onslow Beach - With Camp Lejeune Access

Beaufort

Carteret County

Historic coastal town known for sailing culture and wild horses



Beaufort is a historic coastal town in Carteret County, situated along Taylor's Creek and directly across from the Rachel Carson Reserve. As one of North Carolina's oldest towns, Beaufort combines a preserved historic core with an active working waterfront. Its location provides direct access to nearby barrier islands via ferry service, while also maintaining close ties to Morehead City and other Crystal Coast communities.

Beaufort appeals to those drawn to historic character, coastal scenery, and a more established town environment. Housing options include historic homes, cottages, and residential neighborhoods beyond the downtown area, with a mix of year-round residents and second-home ownership. Many buyers choose Beaufort as an alternative to barrier island living, valuing its coastal setting with a more grounded, small-town feel.



Daily life in Beaufort reflects its maritime history and cultural focus, with museums, waterfront spaces, and community traditions playing a central role. The downtown area supports local shops, restaurants, and public waterfront access, while boating, fishing, and ferry trips to nearby islands are common activities. Beaufort's blend of history, coastal access, and steady pace creates an environment that feels both timeless and livable.

Beaufort

Details

Population	~4,500
County	Carteret
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Waterfront historic coastal town (Taylor's Creek)
Development Pattern	Established historic + limited infill + water-related commercial
Schools	Carteret County
Nearest Hospital	Carteret Health Care (Morehead City)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	US-70
Nearest Airport	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) New Bern
Nearest Beach Access	Atlantic Beach

Boque Banks Island

Carteret County

Includes:

Atlantic Beach Indian Beach
Pine Knoll Shores Emerald Isle

Barrier island living with beaches,
distinct towns, and seasonal energy

Commonly referred to as “Emerald Isle”.



Bogue Banks is a barrier island stretching along Carteret County’s coastline and home to several distinct communities, including Atlantic Beach, Pine Knoll Shores, Indian Beach, and Emerald Isle. The island is connected to the mainland by multiple bridges and is defined by oceanfront beaches on one side and the Intracoastal Waterway on the other. While each town has its own character, they share a common island setting shaped by coastal geography and beach-oriented living.

Bogue Banks Island appeals to those seeking direct beach access and a true island lifestyle. Housing options range from condominiums and townhomes to single-family homes, with variations in density, development patterns, and conservation focus depending on the municipality. Many buyers are drawn to the island for second homes, retirement living, or year-round coastal residence, understanding that pricing, insurance considerations, and seasonal population changes differ from mainland communities.



Daily life on Bogue Banks is closely tied to the beach, water activities, and seasonal rhythms. Boating, fishing, and ocean recreation are central to the island’s identity, while dining, local shops, and community events reflect a mix of year-round residents and visitors. Each town maintains its own pace and personality, but all share an environment shaped by coastal scenery, outdoor living, and a strong connection to the water.

Bogue Banks Island

Details

Population	~8,000
County	Carteret
Municipal Status	Multiple Incorporated Towns: Emerald Isle, Indian Beach, Pine Knoll Shores, Atlantic Beach
Setting	Barrier island/oceanfront
Development Pattern	Established coastal + resort development
Schools	Carteret County
Nearest Hospital	Carteret Health Care (Morehead City)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	NC-58
Nearest Airport	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN) New Bern
Nearest Beach Access	All towns have beach access

North Topsail Beach

Pender County

Quiet barrier island community with residential focus and open shoreline



North Topsail Beach is a barrier island community in Pender County located at the northern end of Topsail Island. Compared to other island towns in the region, it maintains a more residential orientation, with long stretches of beachfront and fewer commercial concentrations. The island is connected to the mainland by a single bridge and is defined by oceanfront living on one side and sound-side waters on the other.

North Topsail Beach appeals to those seeking a quieter island environment with less density and a slower pace. Housing consists primarily of single-family homes, many elevated and oriented toward ocean or sound views, with a mix of year-round residents and second-home ownership. Buyers are often drawn to the area for its relative calm, residential feel, and separation from busier resort-style beach towns.



Daily life on North Topsail Beach is shaped by natural surroundings and seasonal rhythms rather than a centralized downtown or event calendar. Beach access, boating, fishing, and time outdoors play a central role, while shopping, dining, and services are typically accessed on the mainland or in neighboring island communities. The town's understated character and open shoreline make it well suited for those who prioritize privacy, scenery, and island living without heavy commercial activity.

North Topsail Beach

Details

Population	~1,200
County	Onslow
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Barrier island/oceanfront
Development Pattern	Primarily residential + vacation
Schools	Onslow County
Nearest Hospital	Onslow Memorial (Jacksonville)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	NC-210
Nearest Airport	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ) Richlands
Nearest Beach Access	Oceanfront - direct access

Surf City Pender County

Lively island community with shops,
dining, and local activity



Surf City is a barrier island town located near the center of Topsail Island in Pender County and functions as the island's primary commercial and service hub. Unlike quieter stretches of the island, Surf City has a defined town center that includes local government, retail, dining, and public beach access. Its bridge connection to the mainland places it within reach of Hampstead, Holly Ridge, and the greater Wilmington area.

Surf City appeals to those who want island living paired with closer proximity to everyday services and activity. Housing options include condominiums, townhomes, and single-family homes, with a mix of year-round residents and second-home ownership. Many buyers are drawn to Surf City for its balance of beach access, centralized amenities, and a more connected island experience compared to quieter neighboring communities.



Daily life in Surf City reflects a blend of coastal living and local activity, with beach access, community events, and seasonal energy shaping the rhythm of the town. The area supports a range of restaurants, shops, and waterfront spaces, while fishing, boating, and outdoor recreation remain central to island life. Surf City's active atmosphere and defined town center make it a good fit for those who want island living with a stronger sense of place and convenience.

Surf City

Details

Population	~4,000
County	Pender (into Onslow)
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Barrier island + mainland commercial hub (ICW)
Development Pattern	Established + expanding residential and commercial
Schools	Pender + Onslow Counties
Nearest Hospital	Novant Health New Hanover Regional (Wilmington)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	NC-210
Nearest Airport	Wilmington International (ILM)
Nearest Beach Access	Oceanfront - direct access

Holly Ridge

Onslow County

Mainland community near Topsail Island
with convenient coastal access



Holly Ridge is an incorporated town in Onslow County located just inland from Topsail Island, serving as a key connection point between coastal communities and inland areas. Its position near major roadways and bridge access to the island places it along an active growth corridor. The town functions primarily as a residential and commuter-oriented community rather than a coastal destination.

Holly Ridge appeals to those seeking proximity to the coast while remaining on the mainland. Housing options include established neighborhoods, newer residential developments, and expanding subdivisions shaped by ongoing growth. Many residents choose Holly Ridge for its balance of accessibility, relative affordability compared to island towns, and convenience to nearby employment centers and services.



Daily life in Holly Ridge reflects its transitional role between inland and coastal living. Residents often enjoy easy access to beaches, boating, and outdoor recreation while relying on surrounding towns for shopping, dining, and healthcare. As the area continues to develop, Holly Ridge maintains a practical, residential focus that suits those who value location and flexibility over a defined downtown setting.

Holly Ridge

Details

Population	~4,500
County	Onslow
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Inland near-coastal near barrier island (Topsail, Surf City)
Development Pattern	Established + expanding residential and commercial
Schools	Onslow County
Nearest Hospital	Onslow Memorial (Jacksonville)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	US-17, NC-210
Nearest Airport	Wilmington International (ILM)
Nearest Beach Access	North Topsail Beach

Hampstead

Pender County

Growing coastal mainland area with golf communities and newer homes



Hampstead is a growing unincorporated community in Pender County located along U.S. Highway 17, north of Wilmington and inland from Topsail Island. Over time, it has developed into a key residential corridor serving those who commute toward Wilmington while still maintaining access to coastal areas. Its location places residents within reach of employment centers, healthcare systems, and regional amenities.

Hampstead appeals to those seeking newer housing options and long-term growth potential in a mainland setting. Residential development includes a mix of established neighborhoods and expanding subdivisions, with a range of home styles and price points. Many buyers are drawn to Hampstead for its proximity to Wilmington, access to coastal recreation, and the availability of newer construction compared to smaller surrounding towns.



Daily life in Hampstead reflects its role as a residential and commuter-focused community. Shopping centers, schools, and services are spread along the highway corridor rather than concentrated in a traditional downtown. Residents often balance everyday routines with trips to nearby beaches, waterfront areas, and Wilmington's cultural offerings, making Hampstead a fit for those who value location, convenience, and a growing community environment.

Hampstead

Details

Population	~6,000
County	Pender
Municipal Status	Unincorporated
Setting	Coastal mainland residential (ICW)
Development Pattern	Expanding suburban + golf communities
Schools	Pender County
Nearest Hospital	Novant Health New Hanover (Wilmington)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	US-17
Nearest Airport	Wilmington International (ILM)
Nearest Beach Access	Surf City

Wilmington

New Hanover County

Regional coastal city with healthcare, shopping, and diverse neighborhoods



Wilmington is the largest city in southeastern North Carolina and serves as the region's primary center for healthcare, specialized services, and major retail. Many residents from surrounding counties regularly travel to Wilmington for medical care, professional services, and shopping options not available in smaller coastal towns. Its location along the Cape Fear River and near the Atlantic coast positions Wilmington as both an urban hub and a gateway to nearby beaches.

Wilmington appeals to those seeking broader amenities, established infrastructure, and a wider range of housing choices. Neighborhoods range from historic districts and waterfront areas to suburban communities surrounding the city, offering options across many price points. Home values are generally higher than in surrounding towns, particularly near coastal areas such as Wrightsville Beach, while mainland and suburban neighborhoods provide more variety in style and affordability.



Daily life in Wilmington blends city conveniences with coastal influence. Residents have access to hospitals, universities, shopping centers, and cultural venues, along with nearby beach destinations including Wrightsville Beach and Pleasure Island. The city's size supports dining, entertainment, and professional services year-round, making Wilmington a practical anchor for those who value access, options, and regional connectivity alongside coastal living.

Wilmington

Details

Population	~120,000
County	New Hanover
Municipal Status	Incorporated
Setting	Coastal city/riverfront + beach access (Cape Fear, Wrightsville Beach)
Development Pattern	Established urban + suburban growth
Schools	New Hanover County
Nearest Hospital	Novant Health New Hanover Regional (Wilmington)
Trauma Services	Level III - Camp Lejeune Level II - Wilmington Level I - Greenville, NC
Major Highways	US-17, I-140, US-74
Nearest Airport	Wilmington International (ILM)
Nearest Beach Access	Wrightsville Beach

Community Overview

Town	County	Population (Approx.)	Sq. Miles	Setting
Jacksonville	Onslow	~72,000	45	Inland regional hub, Onslow county seat
Havelock	Craven	~20,000	17	Inland near Neuse River
New Bern	Craven	~31,000	29	Riverfront city, Craven county seat
Morehead City	Carteret	~9,500	8	Coastal mainland / waterfront
Richlands	Onslow	~2,000	3	Inland residential
Hubert	Onslow	~15,000	21	Coastal mainland (marsh & creek)
Maysville	Jones	~1,000	1	Inland rural
Trenton	Jones	~300	1	Inland river town, Jones county seat
River Bend	Craven	~3,000	3	Riverfront residential
Newport	Carteret	~5,500	8	Coastal mainland
Bogue	Carteret	~800	1	Coastal mainland / ICW
Swansboro	Onslow	~3,500	3	Waterfront town
Cape Carteret	Carteret	~2,300	2	Coastal mainland
Cedar Point	Carteret	~1,800	2	Coastal mainland
Sneads Ferry	Onslow	~3,000	6	Coastal mainland / fishing village
Beaufort	Carteret	~4,500	4	Historic waterfront town, Carteret county seat
Bogue Banks Island	Carteret	~8,000 permanent	21	Barrier island
North Topsail Beach	Onslow	~1,200	12	Barrier island
Surf City	Pender / Onslow	~4,000	6	Barrier island town
Holly Ridge	Onslow	~4,500	4	Inland coastal
Hampstead	Pender	~6,000	20	Coastal mainland
Wilmington	New Hanover	~120,000	52	Coastal city

Location & Access

Town	Closest Ocean Beach	School District (County)	Nearest Regional Airport	Major Highway Access
Jacksonville	North Topsail Beach	Onslow	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ)	US-17, NC-24
Havelock	Atlantic Beach	Craven	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	US-70 / I-42
New Bern	Atlantic Beach	Craven	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	US-70, US-17
Morehead City	Atlantic Beach	Carteret	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	US-70
Richlands	North Topsail Beach	Onslow	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ)	NC-24
Hubert	Emerald Isle	Onslow	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ)	NC-172, NC-24
Maysville	Emerald Isle	Jones	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ)	US-17
Trenton	Emerald Isle	Jones	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	NC-58
River Bend	Atlantic Beach	Craven	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	US-17
Newport	Atlantic Beach	Carteret	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	US-70
Bogue	Emerald Isle	Carteret	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	NC-24
Swansboro	Emerald Isle	Onslow	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ)	NC-24
Cape Carteret	Emerald Isle	Carteret	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	NC-58
Cedar Point	Emerald Isle	Carteret	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	NC-24
Sneads Ferry	North Topsail Beach Onslow Beach - on Lejeune	Onslow	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ)	NC-210
Beaufort	Atlantic Beach	Carteret	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	US-70
Bogue Banks Island	Direct ocean access	Carteret	Coastal Carolina Regional (EWN)	NC-58
North Topsail Beach	Direct ocean access	Onslow	Albert J. Ellis (OAJ)	NC-210
Surf City	Direct ocean access	Pender County	Wilmington International (ILM)	NC-210
Holly Ridge	North Topsail Beach	Onslow	Wilmington International (ILM)	US-17
Hampstead	Surf City / Topsail Island	Pender	Wilmington International (ILM)	US-17
Wilmington	Wrightsville Beach	New Hanover	Wilmington International (ILM)	US-17, I-140

Community Research Resources

Your Public resources are available for independent research on schools, safety information, environmental conditions, and community services throughout the region. text

School Information	Travel & Transportation
North Carolina School Report Cards https://ncreportcards.ondemand.sas.com	Albert J. Ellis Airport (Jacksonville) https://flyoaj.com
GreatSchools School Reviews https://www.greatschools.org	Coastal Carolina Regional Airport (New Bern) https://www.flyewn.com
Onslow County Schools https://www.onslow.k12.nc.us	Wilmington International Airport https://flyilm.com
Campe Lejeune Schools Expanded Eligibility Enrollment for off-base children. https://www.dodea.edu/americas/mid-atlantic/camp-lejeune-schools/enrollment-ontion	North Carolina DOT Travel Map https://drivenc.gov
Carteret County Public Schools https://www.carteretcountyschools.org	Military & Veteran Resources
Craven County Schools https://www.cravenk12.org	Camp Leieune Official Information https://www.lejeune.marines.mil
Pender County Schools https://www.pender.k12.nc.us	Naval Medical Center Camp Leieune https://lejeune.tricare.mil
Jones County Schools https://www.jonesnc.net	TRICARE Military Health System https://www.tricare.mil
New Hanover County Shools https://www.nhcs.net/	VA Coastal Health Care System https://www.va.gov/coastal-health-care
Flood & Environmental Information	Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) https://www.facebook.com/camplejeunemccs.efmp
FEMA Flood Map Service Center https://msc.fema.gov	Crime & Public Safety
North Carolina Flood Risk Information System https://fris.nc.gov	FBI Crime Data Explorer https://cde.ucr.fbi.gov
	North Carolina SBI Crime Statistics https://www.ncsbi.gov
	North Carolina Sex Offender Registry https://sexoffender.ncsbi.gov
	Cample Lejeune Noise Advisories https://www.lejeune.marines.mil/News/Noise-
	Leieune Installation Advisories https://www.lejeune.marines.mil/News/Installation-Advisories/

Planning a Move to the Crystal Coast Area?

If you're considering a move to eastern North Carolina, I'm happy to help you explore the communities featured in this guide and narrow down the areas that best fit your needs.

Many buyers relocating to the Crystal Coast begin their search from a distance. I regularly assist both civilian and military families who are purchasing remotely—often coordinating virtual tours, neighborhood insights, and the details needed to move forward confidently—even before arriving in the area.

Whether you're planning a primary residence near Camp Lejeune or Cherry Point, a second home along the coast, or a vacation or investment property, I can help you understand the local market, compare communities across the region, and identify opportunities that match your goals.

Toni Zito

North Carolina Real Estate Broker | Real Broker LLC

📞 910-939-0206

🌐 [GetMovingWithToni.com](https://www.GetMovingWithToni.com)



