

AUGUST 13, 2008 / TRAVEL

# Thanks for the Banks

Sparkling blue water and sweet Southern smiles? Yeehaw. We'll take us some of that. Time for a road trip to the Outer Banks.

## So Close Yet So Far

The **Outer Banks**, a.k.a. OBX, is a chain of barrier islands off the coast of North Carolina. And although Orville and Wilbur took the first flight here, the best (and really only) way to explore the beaches is to get in the car, crank the Jack Johnson, and head to Nags Head. It's the most popular destination in OBX, but even in high summer, you'll have more than enough elbow room. In other words, this ain't no Jersey Shore.

## No Better Place to Stay

Family-run, old-school, and beachfront, **Beacon Motor Lodge** (2617 South Virginia Dare Trail; 252-441-5501) probably hasn't had a makeover since 1975. Love that! You'll get an inexpensive, immaculate room with Wi-Fi, grills, and a fridge large enough to hold a twelve-pack. Spring for an oceanfront room to open your door and walk right onto the beach.

## Y'all Hungry?

Lying on the beach is *really* hungry making. And, hmm, you're in the mood for seafood. Recharge at the Red Drum Taphouse (2412 South Virginia Dare Trail; 252-480-1095) with fried calamari and a pound of snow crab legs. It's expected that you'll use your napkin as a bib. For prebeach munchies, grab breakfast at **Stack 'em High** (1225 North Croatan Hwy; 252-441-7064), where they really do stack 'em high — for very little dough.

## Easy Essentials

Need a boogie board? OBX shot glass? Beach towel with a scary-looking pirate on it? Go to Wings (3022 South Croatan Highway; 252-441-4113). Or go to the Wings across the street, or the Wings down the road.

## Day-Trip to Paradise

Tiny **Ocracoke Island** is at the southernmost tip of the Outer Banks. When you finally get there, you'll think you died and went to heaven. So you'll want to spend the day. Take route 12 to the **Hatteras-Ocracoke ferry**. There's no bridge connecting Ocracoke to any other part of the world. The main road off the ferry leads to beaches so stunning and desolate, you may toss your keys into the ocean and stay forever.

Or you can just come back, y'all.

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