



MYRTLE BEACH, SOUTH CAROLINA

Called “The Grand Strand” Myrtle Beach, SC has been a family vacation favorite for most of the east coast over 60 years. And each time a hurricane has touched near the area they have rebuilt it, bigger and better than ever. A Myrtle Beach vacation is particularly special because there are so many different things to do, that every family member gets their chance at something special and memorable.

There are basically 6 different categories of things to do at Myrtle Beach. In no particular order they are: Entertainment, Shopping, Attractions, Ocean, Sports/Activities and Amusement Parks. Once you visit, you will probably come up with many more. This list is just to get you started (and wishing you were there).

Entertainment:

The “Center” of Myrtle Beach’s world used to be the Pavilion; a rowdy beach-front building where dances were held, gaming machines and Bingo were played, and there were 40 amusement park rides including the largest wooden roller coaster in South Carolina. Across a side street at the Bowery was where the famous singing group Alabama was the house band for many years. The Pavilion was demolished in 2006 but many of its attractions have been moved to newer location at Broadway at the Beach.

Branson, MO has nothing on Myrtle Beach, which hosts nearly a dozen theatres, many of them featuring live entertainment. They include The Palace, 3-D Discovery IMAX, Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament, Legends in Concert, The Grand 16 Cinemas, Calvin Gilmore Productions, High Steppin’ Country, Good Vibrations, Spirit of the Dance, Dolly Parton’s Dixie Stampede Dinner & Show, Carolina Opry, Alabama Theatre, and the House of Blues. Whether you want music, comedy, impersonators, or big name stars, Myrtle Beach has it all.

Shopping:

Broadway at the Beach - With a lake in the middle, Broadway at the Beach boasts nearly 70 shops and over 30 restaurants and snack bars, including 4 hotels and over a dozen “watering holes” in their 350 acre setting. There’s no shortage of shops or ample parking and you’ll probably spend at least two days at this venue. Broadway also is the home of the Carmike 16 Movie Theatres, IMAX, The Palace Theatre and Ripley’s Aquarium. Incredible fireworks shows occur almost year round – weekly from the end of May through the beginning of September and are a treat for the whole family.

Gay Dolphin – A many leveled gift shop on the boardwalk and near the old Pavilion location, this gift shop has been a fixture at the beach for many years. You'll never run out of things to look at; each level has its own identity and merchandise. Originally one building, the Dolphin has continually bought adjoining properties and merged them all into one amalgam of treasures, and all reasonably priced. Navigating through the Dolphin is almost an amusement in itself, as it's quite a maze. It's been called the Nation's Largest Gift Shop and there's nothing to suggest it isn't true.

Barefoot Landing – It started life many years ago as The Village of the Barefoot Traders, and consisted of small huts and shops connected with dirt pathways between them. The idea was before its time and it eventually went broke. But it was then purchased and rebuilt into a collection of more than 100 specialty and retail shops for the entire family. A man-made lake wanders through the property as it is bordered at the rear on the Inter-Coastal Waterway, from which a number of cruises originate. The cruises only last a few hours but go as far as Hilton Head and also some of the low country. Over a dozen restaurants and pubs are also on the property, including Greg Norman's Australian Grill (he has a house nearby). Many special events also take place at the Landing. The Alabama Theatre, House of Blues and Alligator Adventure are also on the property, which is right on the main highway.

Throughout the Myrtle Beach area are many shopping centers, strips and malls, many of which feature manufacturer's outlets with highly discounted merchandise.

Dining

Dining has always been a major part of the Myrtle Beach experience. There are too many restaurants to even try to number them (it's in the hundreds). Some of the most popular ones are along a stretch of highway 17, the main thoroughfare between Myrtle Beach proper toward North Myrtle Beach called Restaurant Row. And the variety of food is greater than almost any other place in the country. There's probably not a single type of dining not represented. One of the more popular cuisines is called "Low Country Cooking" which is the traditional southern style synonymous with the area. Seafood, of course, is very popular and plentiful, being at the ocean's edge.

All of the national chains are at Myrtle Beach, but the locally owned restaurants outnumber them greatly. Almost all the restaurants offer coupons for early diners, check the local brochures and travel pamphlets available at all hotels and inns. Or you can just be adventurous, and start driving; there is bound to be a restaurant or three on just about every block on Route 17.

Nearby Murrell's Inlet, a 25-minute hop south from the beach is home to the area's fishing fleet and a triple handful of excellent dining experiences. Turn off 17 to the left (ocean side) and the 2-lane road down to the fishing boats is nothing but restaurants on both sides of the road. No chains, all locally owned, predominantly seafood. Rarely is a restaurant here (or at the beach for that matter) very formal. There are family style and intimate little places, but there's no particular dress code – you're on vacation!

Attractions

Ripley's Believe It or Not museum is an interesting venue, and all the oddities and weird presentations you associate with Ripley. But Ripley also runs the Aquarium, which is at Broadway at the Beach. It is a \$40 million, state-of-the-art, 87,000 square feet experience that is among the great aquariums in the country. All sorts of denizens of the deep are presented, including the shark tank, giant Octopus, jellyfish and Manta Rays. It also includes a 750,000-gallon tank on the world's longest (330 feet) moving glide path that guides you through many living species. Of course feeding time is always a treat as well as a See-For-Yourself Discovery Center and hands-on demonstrations.

Often overlooked at Myrtle Beach is the Brookgreen Gardens, just 18 miles south of the beach in Murrell's Inlet. It was created in 1931 to preserve the local flora and fauna and display works of art in that setting. It is a National Historic Landmark property and contains some 1200 sculptures by 350 sculptors from all over the world. The entire park is 9,200 acres large and the works of art are scattered throughout the gardens as well as some indoor sites. There is usually a sculptor or two present, working on new pieces, and you can watch them bring life to the stone. The Lowcountry Zoo is also on the premises. Not a trek for a toddler but a must for those who love art.

Myrtle Beach also has an Art Museum, the Franklin G. Burroughs, Simeon B. Chapin Art Museum with tours and programs and ever changing exhibitions of works.

Ocean

The original attraction of Myrtle Beach, the 50 plus miles of uninterrupted white sand beach, produces a perfect place to swim and sunbathe. John's Beach Service, in business almost as long as the beach has been there, will provide you with beach chairs and umbrellas as well as floats. You can't use your floats unless they are approved. You CAN use your own chairs and umbrellas though, but you have to set them up behind John's Beach Service umbrellas. At high tide there's still twenty plus yards of beach and at low tide there's several hundred feet. Certain areas allow surfing.

There are a number of long docks out into the ocean from which you can fish. And even at certain times, casting from the beach is allowed. But if you really want to FISH, there's nothing like a deep-sea charter experience. Murrell's Inlet, just south of the beach is home to the fishing fleet that supplies many of the restaurants of Myrtle Beach. It's also home to several fishing charter boats, complete with equipment, bait, and a wise captain who has been doing this for years to know where they "running" that day. There are half-day, three-quarter day and all day excursions available from a 6 person maximum party up to the 65' cruisers that take large parties and go out about 35 miles into the Atlantic. Some are family run, now the third generation. When you come back to shore they will even pack the fish you caught on ice and prepare them for you to take with you or ship them for you when you specify.

Sports/Activities

Myrtle Beach boasts a .528 mile, paved track, sanctioned by Nascar, where a number of Nascar divisions race. The track has been the training ground for such racers as Jeff Gordon, all three generations of Earnhardts, and all four generations of Pettys. The track hosts Late-Model stock cars, Super Trucks, Limited Late Models, Street Stock and Mini Stock as well as Modified racecars. There are races at the track from April 2 through September 12.

Myrtle Beach also has a professional Baseball team, the Myrtle Beach Pelicans, an Advanced A League farm team of the Atlanta Braves in the Carolina League. Their season runs from April 9 to September 7.

For the whole family there is miniature golf, and there are almost as many miniature golf courses at the beach as there are restaurants. The current most popular course is called Mt. Atlanticus, with two completely different courses, beginning inside and running through outside and back in. The courses are challenging and enjoyable yet good fun for all ages.

The most popular activity at the Beach, and the one with the longest season is golf. With nearly 100 courses throughout the area, it is a golfer's paradise. Several of the courses are championship caliber courses with PGA and LPGA events staged there. Some of the more famous courses have been designed by such greats as Pete Dye, Tom Cate, Fazio, Davis Love and Greg Norman. Only a few courses rate 3 stars, all the rest are four stars and above. Many are featured in the list of 100 top golf courses by Golf Digest. Golfers play well into November and start again as early as February.

Amusement Parks

Some are for smaller tots but all are family, there are a number of amusement parks throughout Myrtle Beach. From Family Kingdom, to Nascar SpeedPark, or the Freestyle Music Park to Magiquest, there are plenty of parks to enjoy. There are also go-cart tracks, Alligator Adventure and Pirates of the Carolinas.

Waves Water Park is South Carolina's largest water park at 20 acres and with pools, changing rooms and life guards. It features Raft Rides – which include a 1200 foot Lazy River as well as a Racin' River on skimmer boards and 8 different Slides. In addition there is a 20,000 square foot Ocean In Motion Wave Pool, Bubble Bay for the small ones, and a water volcano called Saturation Station that soaks guests every six to eight minutes. This is THE place to be cool and stay cool.

Broadway at the Beach is home of the Nascar SpeedPark, Fantasy Golf, the Carousel Park, The Pavilion Nostalgia Park (some rides from the old pavilion as well as some new one; mostly for the younger set), and a new ride called The Water Walking Ball, which is a ball your youngster gets into and is rolled out into the pool where they can walk inside

the ball all over the pool without getting wet. Seasonal Fireworks are also presented at Broadway at the Beach.

Some advice. Myrtle Beach boasts many hotels and motels, but it also offers many time-share and rented-by-the-week condos, all of which have the same move-in move-out times. Move in day is Saturday at 3 or 4 and move is the following Saturday at 10 or 11. With so much happening at the same time, it is best to come to the beach earlier than check-in-time, which will avoid the traffic slow-down. There's plenty to do until your room is ready (although sometimes if you check with the condo it might already be ok for move-in). You can eat, go to the Aquarium, play miniature golf; there are lots of choices. Likewise check out early to avoid the traffic, pack your vehicle the night before (except for the bare morning necessities) and eat breakfast on the road. Also because of so much activity, on move-in day most people spend the day unpacking. There are shows at some of the live theatre venues and tickets sometimes are hard to come by. Get some brochures (available all over the beach area), decide which one you want to see that night, and make reservations early, insuring yourself a good set.

Pick up all of the several publications offered free where you are staying that list activities for the particular time you are there. From parties to fishing contests to parties to fireworks shows - they're all listed there. Plan your week, but don't forget you're on vacation. Too much planning makes it seem like work and you want to enjoy every minute in this vacation paradise called Myrtle Beach.

Call Rooms101.com to book your Myrtle Beach escape now! 1-800-749-4045 Check out all of the great Myrtle Beach discount vacations, getaway packages & last minute deals at <http://rooms101.com/category/myrtle-beach>