

5 family beaches we love

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If it's family fun you're looking for, Delmarva has a host of options to help you enjoy the sun and surf together.



Kite surfers prepare for liftoff at Cape Charles beach.

Jay Diem file photo

With miles of coastline stretching from northern Delaware to southern Virginia, choosing the right beach for a family getaway on Delmarva can be a daunting task. Each destination offers its own unique list of amenities to suit a variety of interests.

If it's family fun you're looking for, Delmarva has a host of options to help you enjoy the sun and surf together. Here are five favorites:

1 Cape Henlopen State Park

Located in Lewes, Cape Henlopen has several beaches featuring designated areas for fishing, swimming and camping.

For an action-packed day, visitors can rent kayaks, play Frisbee golf, or go for a hike on the park trails. Taking it easy? Pay a visit to the Fort Miles Historic site, Seaside Nature Center, or just relax on the beach under a rented umbrella.

Some creature comforts make this an ideal park for families with small children, with the availability of food, drinks, picnic areas, restrooms and showers. During the summer months, the park also offers eco-friendly summer camps and concerts for the whole family to enjoy.

2 Assateague Island National Seashore

If you're looking for a quieter way to get in touch with nature, Assateague Island National Seashore offers unique wildlife experiences at every turn. Visitors can camp, hike and go on nature tours both on land and water.

The seashore is home to a large herd of wild ponies descending from families of horses that have inhabited the island since the 1600s. The ponies make their way around the island every day, frequenting both the ocean and bay sides.

The island is also frequented by hundreds of species of birds, including the American bald eagle, various shorebirds and several species of owl, egret and heron. Lucky campers might also sneak a peak at red foxes, deer and other wild mammals. Visitors are likely to come across dolphins, horseshoe crabs, blue crabs and countless varieties of fish.

"The coolest thing about Assateague is everyone's friendly, and it's a nice environment," said Deja Small, visiting from Philadelphia. "I like Assateague because it's fun, and you can just chill out with your friends and hang out on the beach, which I like to do."

3 Cape Charles Beach

Located just 10 miles from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, the calm, clear bay waters provide peace of mind for parents. Children can play in the safe, easy water without the threat of choppy waves or strong currents.

The beach can be accessed from every block of Bay Avenue and does not require a parking permit or entrance fee. Visitors can bathe in the glow of a Chesapeake Bay sunset from two wooden beach platforms and the fishing pier.

Those who want to enjoy a fresh catch for dinner need not worry about getting a license — the Town of Cape Charles has a saltwater fishing license for the pier, which allows visitors to enjoy fishing and crabbing without worry.



Brayden Dycus, right, keeps a watchful eye on the bobber at the end of his friend Lynnze Ruland's fishing line while the pair fish off the Cape Charles Pier.

Jay Diem file photo

4 Ocean City (Boardwalk area)

Nothing says “family vacation” like binging on Thrasher’s fries, ice cream from Dumser’s or Kohrs Brothers and a bag full of treats from the Candy Kitchen. Once your belly is satisfied, stock up on vacation memories at any of the dozens of shops that decorate the beachside Boardwalk.

Kids can shake off a long car trip in one of many glittering arcades, jam-packed with games, rides and entertainment. Speaking of entertainment, check out the talented locals who showcase their moves along the way performing a range of feats from dancing to singing to magic.

Didn’t pack the right clothes or accessories? Visit one of the many shops specializing in gear for all tastes, including surfing/skating apparel, upscale clothing, souvenir T-shirts and a wide range of jewelry.

“We love how the Boardwalk is right in front of the beach,” said Brandy Blosser, visiting from Morgantown, West Virginia. “It’s easy access to the beach, and there’s so many hotels that you can just walk out the door and be on the Boardwalk.”

5 Deal Island Beach

If calmer waters and fresh seafood are your preference, Deal Island Beach is the place to go. Situated on the Chesapeake Bay, this quiet town is home to hundreds of watermen who haul in oysters, crabs and other Maryland favorites and serve them up in the local restaurants.

Jewelry makers and collectors — even the queen of homemaking, Martha Stewart — love the natural sea glass that gathers on the beach. Don’t worry, though: years of water and sand refinement have made the glass smooth, so it’s safe for barefoot kids!

Families can also enjoy their own boating and crabbing adventures on the smooth waters, or they can sit back and watch Colonial-era ships sail by during the island’s annual skipjack races.

Unwind at the end of the day at one of the island’s bed and breakfasts housed in the 3-mile-long Somerset County secret.

Deal Island has an “old, small-town charm,” said Bill Lichtfuss, who works with the island’s tourism group. “The Deal Island Wildlife Management Area weaves throughout the entire island. Because of this, major resort development cannot happen.

“This is what gravitates visitors to Deal Island.”

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