

MYRTLE BEACH



SPECIAL TO WNC PARENT/MYRTLE BEACH AREA CONVENTION VISITORS BUREAU
The Palace Theatre hosts shows such as the Le Grand Cirque.

GO BEYOND THE OCEAN

Activities, music, shopping give families plenty to do

By *Lockie Hunter*
WNC Parent contributor

The Myrtle Beach area has long been a family destination.

Western North Carolina is within an easy drive of South Carolina's Grand Strand. And the white sand beaches, warm ocean waves, fresh seafood and activities pull families to the area to enjoy sunny days and playful nights.

Back to nature

Oceanfront Huntington Beach State Park offers nature lovers a treat. About 2,500

acres featuring freshwater lagoons, a maritime forest and coastal hiking and biking trails provide opportunities for immersion and study of coastal nature.

Nearby **Brookgreen Gardens** houses the most significant collection of figurative sculpture in an outdoor setting by American artists in the world. Daily programs include Meet the Animals and Creek Cruises.

Ferris wheels and fish

For the younger kids, or the young at heart, there is a complex called **Broadway at the Beach** that features a Ripley's

Aquarium, IMAX theater, MagiQuest, pavilion rides, paddle boats and a zip line.

The aquarium, IMAX and MagiQuest fill up by midday, so plan on going early in the morning or waiting until afternoon.

The Pavilion, featuring original rides from the old waterfront pavilion in downtown Myrtle, includes the famous Hershell-Spillman Carousel with chickens, tigers and other painted animals.

See the ocean from atop the largest Ferris wheel in South Carolina at nearby

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Family Kingdom Amusement Park. Look down on the brave souls riding the park's wooden roller coaster (the Swamp Fox) then cool off at Myrtle Beach's only oceanfront water park.

For more splashy fun, check out two more of the area's largest waterparks, **Myrtle Waves** and **Wild Water and Wheels**. Both parks features speed slides, tube slides and lazy rivers.

The show must go on

Entertainment is a big deal on the Grand Strand. The two-hour family variety show at the **Carolina Opry** is worthwhile; Southern Living dubbed the show "an entertainment phenomenon."

The Palace Theater has seasonal resident shows such as the Irish Tenors and Cirque du Soleil as well as rotating Broadway shows such as "The Secret Garden."

If you wish for dinner with your show, try either the pageantry and rousing stunts of **Dolly Parton's Dixie Stampede** or the drama of a **Medieval Times** jousting tournament, flush with 14th-century knights and princesses.

Beach bums

Gentle waves make for great body-surfing and boogie boarding, but they are not so large as to be truly intimidating. Watch out for the undertow, especially around the piers and in stormy weather. Forgot your board? Surf over to locally owned **Xtreme Surf & Skateboards Co.** offering surf lessons, surf camps and daily and weekly board rentals.

Dine like a local

Downtown Myrtle has dozens of family-friendly restaurants that are also a good value.

River City Café boasts Southern fare such as half-pound fried bologna sandwiches and buckets of peanuts to shell, while the breakfast buffet at **Mammy's**



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Enjoy a hearty four-course banquet, served Medieval style, while cheering for six brave knights at Medieval Times.

DESTINATION DETAILS

- ◆ Xtreme Surf & Skateboards Co., xtremesurfshop.com
- ◆ Huntington Beach State Park, huntingtonbeachsc.org
- ◆ Brookgreen Gardens, brookgreen.org
- ◆ Broadway at the Beach, broadwayatthebeach.com
- ◆ Ripley's Aquarium, myrtlebeach.ripleyaquariums.com
- ◆ IMAX theater, imax3dmyrtlebeach.com
- ◆ MagiQuest, magiquest.com
- ◆ Family Kingdom Amusement Park, familykingdomfun.com
- ◆ Myrtle Waves, myrtlewaves.com
- ◆ Wild Water and Wheels, wild-water.com
- ◆ Carolina Opry, thecarolinaopry.com
- ◆ Palace Theatre, palacetheatremyrtlebeach.com
- ◆ Dolly Parton's Dixie Stampede, myrtlebeach.dixiestampede.com/index.php
- ◆ Medieval Times, medievalltimes.com/myrtlebeach.aspx
- ◆ River City Café, rivercitycafe.com
- ◆ Mammy's Kitchen, mammyskitchen.net
- ◆ Gulf Stream Café, centraarchy.com/gulfstream.php
- ◆ Flo's Place, flosplace.com/site
- ◆ Drunken Jack's, drunkenjacks.com
- ◆ Capt. Dave's Dockside, davesdockside.com
- ◆ Nance's Creek Front Restaurant, nancescreekfrontrestaurant.com
- ◆ Tanger outlet malls, tangeroutlet.com/center
- ◆ Market Commons, marketcommonmb.com
- ◆ Hammock Shops in Pawleys Island, thehammockshops.com

Kitchen will fill even your hungry teens.

For local seafood fished from the inlet, head south to **Garden City Beach** and **Murrells Inlet**.

Arrive at sunset at Garden City's **Gulf Stream Café**. Sit on the deck and watch the sun sink into the inlet and light the

marsh an electric orange. There is also live music depending on the season.

Highway 17 Business in Murrells Inlet is a seafood restaurant's row. You are almost guaranteed that the places along the inlet, **Flo's Place**, **Drunken Jack's** and **Capt. Dave's Dockside** will afford both great



SPECIAL TO WNC PARENT

Broadway at the Beach hosts rides for all ages in addition to a wide variety of family friendly restaurants and shops.

views and excellent seafood. For a lot of fresh seafood in a very casual place, try **Nance's Creek Front Restaurant** and order steaming pots of oysters, clams and shrimp and drop your shells into holes in the table. Nance's is great for a big party or for groups with kids.

Many places along the Grand Strand offer discounted early bird specials as well, and the busier restaurants will offer curbside pickup service.

Shopping, golf

Golf is everywhere, and it's hard to go wrong with this sport. There are more than 100 courses in the area, so it pays to check each course for "deals."

There are also an abundance of miniature golf parks, and much of Highway 17 in Myrtle boasts one (or more) mini golf park per city block.

Shopping is super at the outlet stores. There are two Myrtle Beach **Tanger outlet malls**, one on Highway 17 and the other on Highway 501. Each has more than 100 stores including OshKosh B'gosh, Strasburg Children, Kate Spade, Carters, Children's Place and Vans. Find coupons online before you go.

There is also a new center, **Market Commons**, which has an Anthropologie, a nice yoga studio and a cinema.

Also check out the Hammock Shops in Pawleys Island, where your family can stroll around under Spanish moss-draped trees while shopping and dining.

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