

Coasts with the most

Life's a beach on the
Atlantic shores of
Delaware and Maryland



*Summertime, and the living is easy!
And few places make living easier than
the East Coast, where the Delaware and
Maryland shores wash away the doldrums
with warm salt breezes, sandy beaches,
and crashing waves.*

*Groups can hunt down some fun in the
sun at these summer destinations, only a
stone's throw from the Atlantic.*

*Hit up some annual festivals to sample
a community's best food, entertainment,
and attractions, or stop by some historic
destinations for a peek into America's
Mid-Atlantic past. Whether it's strolling
along a famous boardwalk or looking for
wild ponies on the beach at Assateague,
the Delaware and Maryland coasts
continue to prove themselves an irresistible
group destination.*

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Coastal Delaware

Like the state, Delaware's coastline is relatively small and most of it touches the Delaware Bay, but that doesn't mean there isn't plenty of summertime coastal fun to be had in the First State.

Tucked away in the south corner of Delaware is Lewes, the state's first town. Lewes was originally settled by the Dutch in 1631 and is situated where the Delaware Bay meets the Atlantic Ocean, providing plenty of beachfront for viewing — or slipping in for a quick dip.

Groups can visit the Zwaanendael Museum, a 1931 adaptation of the old city hall, called the *Stadhuis*, in Hoorn, Netherlands. The museum houses permanent and changing exhibits and displays, including stories about Cape Henlopen, the H.M.S. *DeBraak*, and the area's culture. Behind the museum, the Fisher-Martin House is a gambrel-roofed structure built around 1730.

Tours of the Lightship *Overfalls* can be arranged. This ship was the last lightship built by the U.S. Lighthouse Service and was commissioned in 1938. One of only seven American lightships open to the public, the entire ship has been restored inside and out.

For a little on-the-water adventure from another time, pay a visit to the tall ship of Delaware, the *Kalmar Nyckel*. Docked at its home port in Wilmington, where the ship was built and launched, the ship is a replica of the one that carried Swedish settlers to America in 1638. It makes regular visits to Lewes, and it offers daily onboard tours, daytime sails, and private charters.

The DuPont Nature Center in nearby Milford

is operated by the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife. The center's observation deck is open for groups interested in getting an unbeatable view of the harbor and wildlife; this is one of the best viewing areas for spawning horseshoe crabs and migratory shorebirds during peak season. Be sure to visit the Interpretive Center for an in-depth look at this special habitat.

Groups moved by the patriotic spirit can stop by the beaches of Cape Henlopen State Park, a mile east of Lewes. Here, two World War II watchtowers still stand guard over America's East Coast. The view from the top is a stunning 360-degree panorama.



Horseshoe crabs spawn at the DuPont Nature Center.



Photo: St. Mary's County DECD

Historic St. Mary's City's maritime festival features activities and entertainment.

Coastal Maryland

With its 10 miles of white sand beaches, three miles of world-famous boardwalk, more than 17 championship golf courses, and plenty of waves, it's no surprise that Ocean City draws some 8 million visitors each year.

Groups won't want to miss out on the action that takes place all summer long. Ocean City's historic boardwalk is a perennial favorite. The turn-of-the-century charm, wooden walkway, and antique carousel make a stroll down the Boardwalk a must for any group. The Ocean City Life-Saving Museum, located on the south end of the boardwalk, offers a glimpse into the city's past with exhibits of shipwrecks, beachwear, and sand from around the world. The museum also features mermaid displays, an aquarium room, and Davy Jones' locker. The museum is open daily all summer long.

To quell even the heartiest appetites, grab some Maryland fried chicken, crab cakes, or pit beef barbecue along the boardwalk, or indulge with saltwater taffy, funnel cakes, cotton candy, and fudge.

Ocean City hosts the White Marlin Festival and Crab Soup Cookoff on May 10, 2008. Join the community for an afternoon of fun and activities, including a competitive crab soup cookoff contest featuring local chefs, live music, and community exhibits. Group members can participate in the soup sampling and vote for their favorite.

The first week of June brings Ocean City Restaurant Week, a week-long culinary experience designed to indulge guests in the finest local fare. Participating restaurants offer two- and three-course meals at a special price all week long.

Other Ocean City events, such as car shows, festivals, and concerts on the beach,

take place all summer long. And don't forget about Ocean City's famous Winterfest of Lights display every winter from mid-November through January.

For a look at some real wildlife, head down to Assateague Island. This National Seashore park is a barrier island that is the home of the wild ponies, which roam the island freely. Nature trails or hands-on activities can be geared to any age group.

St. Mary's County has been welcoming visitors since the early 1600s, when 140 adventurers first set foot on the Chesapeake shore. While here, groups can visit Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Historic Park for a climb up the oldest lighthouse on the Potomac River. More of the region's history can be discovered at the Point Lookout State Park Lighthouse and Civil War Museum, which features a museum and reconstructed fort at the site of a Civil War prison camp. St. Clement's Island Museum, located on the mainland, traces the history of English colonization in Maryland.

St. Mary's County offers a large selection of motorcoach-friendly events all summer long, too. The Southern Maryland Quilt and Needlework Show is held at the Sotterly Plantation May 16-18, 2008. The judged show is one of the region's most acclaimed quilt and needlework shows.

Groups won't want to miss the 22nd annual St. Mary's Crab Festival on June 8, 2008. Enjoy local crabs and seafood, live music, classic cars, and arts and crafts. Historic St. Mary's City hosts the Maritime Heritage Festival a week later, on June 14. Come see big and little boats, hear traditional sea shanties, participate in hands-on activities, and view demonstrations of all things nautical at Maryland's first capital.



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