

PICK A COASTAL CRITTER

AND WE'LL TELL YOU WHICH BEACH TO VISIT

Whether you're looking to soak up rays, catch some waves, or explore scenic shorelines, a perfect day at the beach looks different for everyone. But sunbathers, shell collectors, castle builders, and water lovers all share a common passion for oceanfront living. So, when it comes to choosing the setting for your next beach vacation, take a tip from one of the creatures who call these coastal destinations home.

Just pick your favorite animal and take a beach walk on the wild side.

BY KATE BUSTILLOS

► *Wondering what else there is to do in these beachy destinations? Visit [RCI.com/dream](https://www.rci.com/dream) for booking options and travel inspiration.*



Puffin



IF YOU PICKED PUFFIN, GO TO

CANNON BEACH

A visit to Cannon Beach in the spring comes with the bonus of spotting tufted puffins nesting in their natural habitat. Oregon's rocky coastline creates the ideal environment for these adorable seabirds. The famous Haystack Rock marks tufted puffin territory where you can watch them roost and dive. When you're not busy bird-watching, discover tidepools, sea caves, and majestic rock formations on a beach walk, or explore the coast while sampling local brews on the North Coast Craft Beer Trail.

FUN FACT: A puffin's beak changes from dusky gray in winter to vibrant orange in spring.



Dolphin



IF YOU PICKED DOLPHIN, GO TO

NAPLES

The crystalline blue-green water of Florida's gulf coast is home to playful pods of bottlenose dolphins. For the best chance to spot that iconic curved dorsal fin, spend the day reclining in sugar-white sand at Naples Beach or book a boat charter out to Marco Island, where Florida's beloved marine mammal enjoys frolicking in the waves and boat wakes. It's easy to channel your inner dolphin and embrace the carefree life in Naples, renowned for its upscale shopping, gourmet dining, and championship golf courses.

FUN FACT: Intelligent and sociable, every dolphin develops its own unique whistle for identification.



Mustang



IF YOU PICKED MUSTANG, GO TO

NAGS HEAD

Officially the state horse of North Carolina, the Colonial Spanish Mustang still roams free in the rugged Outer Banks. For a close-up encounter with these legendary residents, embark on an off-road adventure in Nags Head, where 4WD-accessible beaches take you into mustang stomping grounds. Cruise along the Atlantic shore, past giant sand dunes and maritime forests on a 4x4 tour. Although mustangs are untamed, there are plenty of friendly horses at Outer Banks Horseback willing to give you an unforgettable ride along the Carolina coast.

FUN FACT: Mustangs possibly descended from the shipwrecked horses of Spanish conquistadors.



Fox

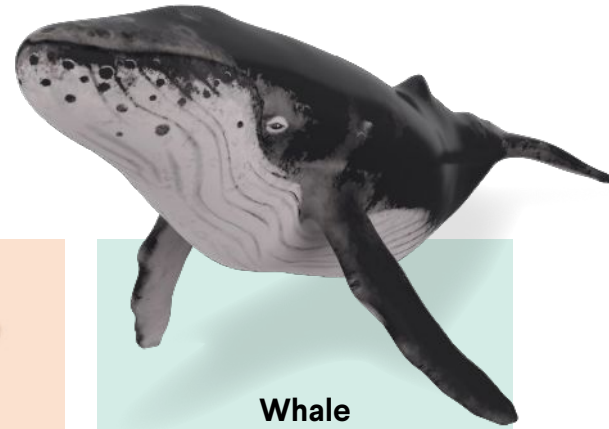


IF YOU PICKED FOX, GO TO

OCEAN CITY

When you think of maritime wildlife, the elusive North American red fox may not come to mind, but at New Jersey's Ocean City Beach, red foxes are an important part of the local ecosystem. These bushy-tailed beach bums can be seen scampering around the dunes and boardwalk in May, when the island becomes prime real estate for "denning season." Whether you head to the beloved Ocean City Boardwalk for seaside rides or stroll the 8-mile stretch of pristine shore, keep your camera ready for curious kits.

FUN FACT: In addition to a fiery red coat, the easiest way to identify a red fox is its white-tipped tail.



Whale



IF YOU PICKED WHALE, GO TO

MALIBU

Every year California gray whales make their Homeric migration from the Arctic to Mexico and back again, passing twice through Malibu, a favorite stop among gray whale mothers and their calves. From December through May, you can spot these journeying giants from right off the beach or get even closer on a whale-watching boat tour. Be sure to save some time to explore Malibu's glamorous beaches, where world-class surfing and 27 miles of golden sand await.

FUN FACT: The ultimate marathoner, gray whales migrate up to 10,000 miles per year.