The 10 Best Beach Towns in Southern New Jersey
By Marla Cimini for Trip Savvy

With sandy beaches, bustling boardwalks, and fun activities, the Jersey Shore is the Philadelphia area's most popular destination during the summer. Approximately 60 miles from Philly, it's where many residents head to escape the heat when the temperature rises. Despite what you might remember from the infamous "Jersey Shore" reality TV series, each town along the 200-mile Jersey coast is vastly different—so do what the locals do and take a ride "down the shore" in the summer. From wild nightlife to casual vibes to upscale living, these Southern New Jersey beach towns have what you're looking for.

Atlantic City

Wide beaches, great waves, and a lively boardwalk are what you'll find in Atlantic City, a town steeped in history. Known for its massive casinos along the boardwalk, this city also offers amusements, arcades, and plenty of food stands and amenities just steps from the sand. Take a ride on [The Wheel,](#) a giant Ferris wheel with enclosed pods for admiring the coast from the sky. The beaches in front of the casinos, including [Ocean Casino Resort](#) and [Hard Rock Hotel & Casino](#), are the most crowded, with beach chairs and umbrellas available; prices vary, depending on if you are hotel guest or just a day-tripper.

Ocean City

Some devoted fans say Ocean City has the best boardwalk on the Jersey shore. With amusement parks, arcades, and shops, there's so much to see and do here without even venturing onto the sand. Plus, you'll find plenty of vendors selling tempting treats—you can enjoy everything from seafood specialties to funnel cakes to "boardwalk" pizza slices. Keep in mind Ocean City is a family-friendly "dry" town that caters to young children, meaning that there are zero bars and alcohol is not sold anywhere.

Cape May

Known for its Victorian architecture, quaint homes, and lovely beaches, Cape May is located at the southernmost tip of New Jersey's Atlantic Coast. Many of the accommodations come with a rich history, such as the stately [Congress Hall](#), an elegant hotel and beautiful landmark. In the center of town, a paved promenade attracts big crowds day and night, with restaurants, ice cream parlors, local shops, and more.

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Beach Haven

Long Beach Island is home to a host of towns, and Beach Haven is one of the liveliest on this barrier island. There's everything you could possibly need for a great beach getaway: an amusement park, mini-golf, music venues, bike riding, and a number of lovely B&Bs and small hotels near the beach. And if you're hungry, you're in luck! There are so many restaurants to choose from, including picturesque spots along the bay, local eateries, and cafés.

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Stone Harbor

A relatively quiet, charming town, Stone Harbor offers fantastic beaches, great shopping, and family-friendly activities. For those interested in learning about the natural surroundings, you can ride a bike through the [Stone Harbor Bird Sanctuary](#) and visit the [Wetlands Institute](#). Foodies will want to check out the weekly Stone Harbor Farmer's Market to stock up on fresh vegetables and local goodies. The town also hosts outdoor concerts, parades, and family events all summer long.

Sea Isle City

Family-friendly and fun, [Sea Isle City](#) is a popular Southern New Jersey beach town that attracts visitors of all ages. With a boardwalk, plenty of restaurants, and lively bars that host live music all summer long, this town offers something for everyone. Kids love the amusement rides and mini golf, while adults adore the soft golden sand and mellow waves that are ideal for swimming. Off the beach, you can stroll along the 1.5-mile promenade, visit the [Sea Isle City](#)

Historical Museum, or wander Townsend's Inlet Waterfront Park, which is overflowing with natural beauty.

Wildwood

You may be familiar with the 1950s song "Wildwood Days, which literally sings the praises of this busy beach town. Often referred to as "The Wildwoods," the name encompasses several towns, including Wildwood Crest and North Wildwood. And wild it is, with beaches that are a mile in width and an expansive boardwalk that features multiple amusement parks, arcades, waterparks, and carnival games. There's also plenty of nightlife here; you'll find bars and restaurants situated throughout the town.

Margate

Margate is a residential town that's near Atlantic City, but very different in ambiance. It might be best known for the famous Lucy the Elephant" landmark, an elephant sculpture that was built in the late 1800s and now serves as a museum. There's also a number of great restaurants and beach bars in Margate, including Ventura's

[Greenhouse](#), which has a must-see outdoor deck that's popular with locals and day-trippers.

Barnegat Light (LBI)

ADDRESSBarnegat Light, NJ, USA
WEB [Visit website](#)

One of Long Beach Island's most well-known towns, Barnegat Light is situated at its northernmost point. Here, you can walk along the water and watch the waves crash against the shore. If you wish, visit [Old Barney](#), the area's iconic lighthouse. Just getting here is half the fun, as you must drive through a number of tiny beach towns throughout Long Beach Island—a great way to get a glimpse of the neighborhoods.

Island Beach State Park

ADDRESSIsland Beach State Park, Lanoka Harbor, NJ 08734, USA
WEB [Visit website](#)

For a true taste of the Jersey Shore without all the fanfare, head to this unspoiled, tranquil stretch of beach that may feel like a step back in time. There is only one entrance fee per car, and from any one of the parking lots, it's an easy walk down to the sand for a lovely day on the beach. The park also has lifeguards, picnic areas, and hiking trails.