

IN THE FIELD

SNAPSHOT: THE OUTER BANKS

Beach Bound

By Lia Grabowski

A string of barrier islands, **North Carolina's Outer Banks** stretch more than 120 miles south from Virginia's southern border, hugging the Atlantic coast. Only three miles across at its widest point, the island chain was the first national seashore in the country and sees an annual influx of beach-seeking seasonal tourists—especially to centrally located hubs Duck and Nags Head. But when the tourists vacate their beachfront rentals, a tight-knit community of year-round residents remain, working in the commercial fishing industries and coastal cafes and kitchens that dot the distinctive towns of the Outer Banks.

EAT

Spending any length of time in the Outer Banks requires a stop at **Duck Doughnuts**. Design your own sweet treats from selections of glazes, toppings, and drizzles, or choose from one of the suggested combinations. (Feeling overwhelmed? Maple glaze, bacon, raspberry drizzle. You can thank us later.) Catch sunset views over the Currituck Sound from the pier next to **AQUA Restaurant** in Duck before settling in to an order of Bangin' Shrimp. (The restaurant also houses a spa upstairs—find their sugar scrubs in the bathrooms.) Catch another sunset at nearby **Kimball's**



COASTAL PROVISIONS

Station, Sanderling's other dining concept, housed in a renovated Coast Guard station—note the vintage diving helmet mounted on the bar. Swing by **Coastal Provisions Oyster Bar & Wine Café** in Southern Shores for a quick lunch, but save time to browse the market stocked with cured meats, artisanal cheeses, and an impressive wine selection. Nags Head's **Trio Wine, Beer, Cheese** also boasts an extensive marketplace, plus charcuterie and self-serve wine taps perfect for getting a taste of the good stuff without a spending splurge. **Waveriders Coffee and Deli** is the Nags Head go-to for



DUCK DOUGHNUTS

Kitchen at Sanderling Resort, where a wall of windows provides every seat a view of the sound. For a more casual evening, walk across the street to **the Lifesaving**



ON THE WATER AT SANDERLING RESORT

panini-pressed bagel sandwiches. Anchoring an unassuming strip mall is **Blue Moon Beach Grill**, which serves up coastal comfort food. Pair fried shrimp tossed in buffalo sauce with a North Carolina craft beer. Or, get hyperlocal with your suds with a flight from **Lost Colony Brewery** in Manteo.

DO

Enjoying the outdoors is essential to the Outer Banks experience, be it lounging on the beach or state park-hopping. Hang gliding lessons at **Jockey Ridge State Park** let you soak up panoramic views of the ocean, sound, and sand dunes in between. If you prefer both feet on the ground, climb the dunes for another stunning vista. Take in local history at **Roanoke Island**,

the site of the Lost Colony, and the **Wright Brothers National Memorial** in Kill Devil Hills to see the site of the first successful flight. (Kitty Hawk gets the notoriety



TRIO

because that's where the Wright Brothers' victorious post-flight telegram was sent from.)

STAY

Most visitors rent a house near the ocean, but if a hotel is more your style, book a room at **Sanderling Resort** in Duck, one of the few resorts in the Outer Banks, featuring a spa, beachfront access, and fire pits for s'more-roasting.

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: KITTY HAWKS KITES; COURTESY OF TRIO WINE, BEER, CHEESE; BRITNEY HIPPENSTEEL; RYAN MOSER

IN THE FIELD

MEET A LOCAL: SCOTT SMITH



"If you have a dream on the Outer Banks, people are going to support you and make it happen."

Kill Devil Drinking

As a fourteen-year resident of the Outer Banks, **Scott Smith** is the newcomer among the four owners of Outer Banks Distilling. The other co-owners are lifelong residents, not uncommon among business owners on the coastal island chain. For Smith, who relocated from Newport News, Virginia, after college, the local community is unmatched. "If you have a dream on the Outer Banks, people are going to support you and make it happen," Smith says. The distillers infuse their flagship product, Kill Devil Rum, with raw ingredients (pecans, honey) that are indigenous to the region they call home.

INTERVIEW BY LIA GRABOWSKI
PHOTO BY BAXTER MILLER

How did four guys start making rum in the Outer Banks?

We all worked at Outer Banks Brewing Station in Kill Devil Hills, and got to be good friends. We wanted to go out on our own but didn't want to start a competing brewery. With such rich rum history in the area, we switched gears and went into distilling. We've been embraced by all the local restaurants and stores, and people have really given us the time to perfect our craft. We got incredibly lucky with the type of business like this, having that support from our community.

What is the story of rum in the Outer Banks?

Back in the colonial days, people were very spiritual and believed if you were sick, you had the devil inside you. They distilled sugarcane as a medicine known as "kill devil," which became what we now call rum. The Outer Banks are known as the Graveyard of the Atlantic for all the shipwrecks, and when barrels of rum from a ship would wash ashore, locals would hide them in the sand dunes, leading to the name Kill Devil Hills. We wanted to bring back that history.

How do you incorporate that history into your distillery?

When you first walk into Outer Banks Distilling, you notice our ship's wheel, which came off the 1925 wreck of the Irma in Kill Devil Hills. Above our tasting bar is a mantle made from wood off the Corolla, a wrecked British warship. Aside from our flagship rums—silver, gold, and pecan honey—we release an installment of our shipwreck series every fall and spring. Those are experimental rum batches with different raw ingredients that are named for local shipwrecks. April's release was aged for a year and a half and includes Muscovado sugar from Barbados. We also do spiced rums; our most recent was aged in brandy barrels and infused with coffee, vanilla bean, cocoa nibs, and cinnamon.