

22 REASONS TO VISIT OCEAN CITY MD

1. FAMILY FUN

Ocean City Mayor Rick Meacham recently described the town as "a first class resort and the choice of today's families." Indeed, a major point of emphasis has been put on offering events and attractions geared toward families, from movies on the beach and free laser light shows, to Sunday concerts in the park that include make-your-own ice cream sundaes. The beaches, of course, are always family friendly.

2. THE FOOD

From Thrasher's world-famous French fries on the Boardwalk, to the dozens of crab houses, to award-winning fine dining like The Shark on the Harbor, The Hobbit and Liquid Assets, Ocean City is filled with enough food options to satisfy literally any palate. And did we mention the fresh, local seafood?

3. BERLIN AND SNOW HILL



Town Berlin 10 miles

Two small towns within a half hour of the beach, Berlin and Snow Hill offer a respite from the bustle of the Ocean and the busy resort. Berlin, about 10 miles away, was voted "America's Coolest Small Town" in 2014 and features a picturesque Victorian brick downtown filled with dozens of unique shops and several notable restaurants. The town is also home to the Burely Oak Brewing Company, a local hotspot for craft beer enthusiasts. Snow Hill, meanwhile, is a small town on the rise thanks to its location along the scenic Potomack River and its unique shops that include the gallery Bishop's Stock Fine Arts, Crafts and Wine.

4. BEAUTIFUL BEACHES

The obvious draw is the 10-mile stretch of ocean beaches nestled along the Atlantic Ocean. Sunbathing is probably the most popular activity there, but there are also separate beach areas set aside for surfing. Take a quick dip, build the world's tallest sandcastle, play volleyball on several beachfront courts, or simply enjoy some of the best people-watching anywhere. The beaches are inclusive, filled with visitors from all over the world, and monitored during the summer with dedicated expertise by the Ocean City Beach Patrol.

5. WATERSPORTS HUB

Swimming and surfing not good enough? There's also kayaking, windsurfing, wave runner, jet ski opportunities and more, hosted by more than a dozen local companies that specialize in water-optimized fun. Rentals and lessons are available throughout the resort, both on the ocean and on the Chesapeake Bay.

6. FREE ACTIVITIES

Each year, the town sponsors weekly free events at its many parks and beaches. Movies, beach olympics, parades, concerts and games are lined up on a daily basis throughout the summer, and indoor parks and recreation programs are even sprinkled throughout the spring, fall and winter. The resort makes it easy to stay busy for cheap.

7. SUNFEST AND SPRINGFEST

Bookending the season is two of the biggest events in OC: Springfest to start it off with a bang, and Sunfest to close it out with one last hurrah. Both events feature a colossal amount of arts, craft and food merchants spread out over booths and tables in the Inlet parking lot, near the base of the Boardwalk, and local and national recording artists perform nightly during both free and ticketed events.

8. THE ARTS

The new Ocean City Performing Arts Center hosts major recording artists and touring plays throughout the year, ranging from modern country music artists to national ballet companies. For a more hands-on approach, visit the Art League of Ocean City for classes on everything from painting to sculpting. Each year, the Boston-based Brown Box Theatre Project also presents a well-known Shakespeare play, for free, and an independent dramatic performance.

9. THE BOARDWALK

Recognized as one of the best boardwalks in the country, the Ocean City Boardwalk is home to hundreds of shopping opportunities, including traditional food fare like pizza, ice cream and locally made sweets, as well as one-of-a-kind t-shirt shops and local oddities like the Ocean Gallery. The Boardwalk is also home to classic arcades, free museums and a Ripley's Believe it or Not.

10. THE SHOULDER SEASON

Things slow down during the off months, but there is still plenty of fun to be had in Ocean City. Less crowding, lower rates and many enticing restaurant specials make the shoulder season an attractive option for those budget conscious — and claustrophobic — vacationers.

11. THE PLAYGROUNDS

It's not easy getting the kids to stay still, even after a long day dodging waves and burying their siblings in sand. When the children get antsy, take them to one of the many unique playgrounds at or near the beach. A dinosaur-bone jungle gym, for instance, sits in the sand near the 3rd Street beaches, while Northside Park at the other end of town offers several sprawling structures, good for both toddler play and those expert-climbing 8-year-olds.

12. JULY 4

Two epic fireworks displays await the more than 1 million visitors that flood the resort during the single-busiest event of the year. Get there early — and take public transportation to avoid the parking rush — and enjoy a once-in-a-lifetime patriotic experience that also includes several free, outdoor concerts.

13. BIKE WEEK

Bikers rejoice! The annual Delmarva Bike Week, observed both in Ocean City and nearby Salisbury, brings barbecues, bands and beer to a weeklong series of events aimed at motorcycle enthusiasts. What's more, the wildly popular event also attracts industry exhibits, meaning you can demo or purchase all the latest accessories to trick out your hog.

14. WINTERFEST OF LIGHTS

Normally a quiet part of the year, December's yearly Winterfest of Lights transforms Northside Park into a winter wonderland of Christmas illuminations, decorations and animatronic displays. Ride through the park in a festive trolley, or grab a hot chocolate — and a few gifts — in Santa's Village. The jolly old elf himself also makes regular appearances.

15. THE FISHING

The Ocean City Fishing Pier and Route 50 Bridge are hotspots for those that wish to set up a chair and a cooler and cast off into the bay. Charter boats are also available for both ocean and bay-side fishing, and the tuna and marlin crop is generally excellent in this part of the Atlantic.

16. WHITE MARLIN OPEN

The White Marlin Open is the largest sport fishing tournament in the world, giving away millions in prize money each year and drawing boats from all over the East Coast. What's more, the daily weigh-in have become popular spectator sports, with food and drink vendors surrounding the docks and local radio station Ocean 98 playing music and giving away prizes.

17. GOLFING

More than a dozen golf courses are within a half hour of the beach, including several on the island itself. Play ranges from beginner to PGA-level difficulty, and package play rates are readily available if you're looking to make that beach vacation double as a golfing trip. For the true beginners, several classic mini golf courses line Coastal Highway on the resort, including the enduring Old Pro, which boasts several locations.

18. SKATE PARK

Surfing not enough? Ditch one board for another and ramp up the fun at the Ocean City Skate Park, where a large skateboard bowl awaits. Regular events, including the occasional punk rock concert, are also home to the park.

19. SHOPPING

What's a vacation without a little — or a lot — of shopping? The White Marlin center is home to dozens of name-brand outlets, cutting deep discounts on clothing and shoes daily. Other, more unique and independent, shops line Coastal Highway along the 10-mile stretch of the resort, including the beachy Sensations and the more fashion-forward South Moon Under.

20. THE BAY AND ASSATEAGUE

If the huge crowds at the oceanside beach aren't exactly your thing, two other great beach areas await at nearby Assateague Island, home to the world-famous wild ponies of Assateague, and along the Chesapeake Bay, just opposite the ocean. Each offers a different type of beach experience, with the bay home to many watersports and fishing opportunities, while Assateague boasts a pair of beaches, including an entire section where the water remains calm — and only about knee-high — just right for small children.

21. CAMPING

Several large campgrounds let you bring your RV, set you up in a cabin, or give you just enough space to pitch a tent. One campground, Frontier Town, even includes an Old West theme and amenities like a waterpark and rope climbing.

22. THE AMUSEMENTS

Amusement parks in Ocean City range from small bumper cars for small kids, to massive water parks. Jolly Roger Amusement Park includes both, along with a go-cart track perfect for your inner speedster. Ride rollercoasters and Ferris wheels, then cool off on more than a dozen different waterslides.



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