



A Guide to the Best OBX Soundside KAYAKING SPOTS



Contents

Sound and Canal Kayaking Tips	3
Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge	4
Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge	5
Corolla Marshlands	6
Historic Roanoke Island	7
Kitty Hawk Maritime Forest	8

Explore the Outer Banks by kayak!

One of the most popular activities on the Outer Banks is kayaking. No matter what your skill level might be, you will find the perfect spot to enjoy the beautiful marshlands, waterways, and diverse wildlife around the barrier islands and wildlife refuges.

In this guide, you will learn where to launch and what you can expect at each of the featured destinations.

Do you need kayaking equipment to rent? Visit our [website](#).



Sound and Canal Kayaking Tips

- ⇒ For kayaking trips that are longer than an hour, bring plenty of water and some snacks.
- ⇒ In the spring and summer months, carry insect repellent, particularly if you will be paddling through marshy areas or saltwater canals.
- ⇒ Exercise caution on windy days: wind can produce strong currents, even in the shallow sound waters. Stay away from inlets where you can't gauge the currents. Also, if you are near an inlet, avoid boats that are always present in these areas.
- ⇒ Always wear a coast-guard-approved lifejacket. *For kids under 13, it's a state law.*
- ⇒ Unless you are physically conditioned to paddle in strong currents and for long distances, avoid traveling across long stretches of the sounds.
- ⇒ If you are fishing from your kayak, be sure that you have your **NC fishing license** with you.
- ⇒ Know the **tides**. Water levels can dramatically change in a short time. For example, during a low tide, your kayak can get stuck in the mud of some canals.
- ⇒ For day-long or late afternoon trips, pack a spotlight in case you are still on the water after dark.
- ⇒ While kayaking the sounds, always stay near shoreline in case of a thunderstorm.



1

Alligator River National Wildlife Refuge

- ↪ Launch Site: [south end of Buffalo City Road](#)
East Lake, NC 27953
- ↪ (252) 473-1131
- ↪ [Website](#)
- ↪ [Regulations/Map](#)

Alligator River offers fifteen miles of paddling fun through its cypress-lined creeks. On your kayaking adventure through the refuge, you might get a glimpse of an American Alligator. However, never fear—these shy, passive reptiles will likely hide from you. You might also see Bobcats, River Otters, owls, egrets, herons, Ibises, Black Bears, nutrias, and various species of turtles and snakes. Depending on the time of day, you might get lucky enough to hear the endangered Red Wolves howling! Wildlife are usually most active at dawn and dusk.

What to do if you see a snake:

If you encounter a snake, give it right-of-way and keep your hands inside your kayak. Never throw anything or splash water at a snake. Leave it alone and it will quickly vanish. The refuge is its home—be respectful to all its inhabitants.



2

Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge

- ↪ Launch Site: New Inlet (approximately 6 miles south of Oregon Inlet)
Rodanthe, NC 27968
- ↪ [Website](#)

Pea Island National Wildlife Refuge is located on the north end of Hatteras Island

Although the refuge ponds are closed, visitors are welcome to paddle to the beautiful Pamlico Sound.

This area is a nesting, resting, and wintering habitat for migratory birds, including the greater snow geese and other migratory waterfowl, shorebirds, wading birds, and raptors, as well as habitat and protection for endangered and threatened species. Don't forget your camera!



3

Corolla Marshlands

↪ Launch Site: Timbuck II Shopping Center
Corolla, NC 27949

Take in some of the most beautiful scenery on the Outer Banks while you paddle through the winding creeks around the marshlands of Currituck Sound.

In addition to seeing egrets, herons, and a wide variety of waterfowl, you might get a glimpse of a Banker Horse wading in a creek or a river otter diving into the marsh grasses.



4

Historic Roanoke Island

↪ Launch Site: Manteo Public Launch Area, Queen Elizabeth Avenue
Manteo, NC 27954

Historic downtown Manteo offers some of the most scenic kayaking around Roanoke Island. You and your friends can paddle along the Manteo waterfront, and take photos of the *Elizabeth II*, a replica of a 16th century sailing ship that brought the first European residents to the Outer Banks. Also, don't miss the Roanoke Marshes Lighthouse, a beautiful reproduction of the original lighthouse that guided vessels through the Croatan Sound.

After you reach the open water of the Roanoke Sound, you will see Jockey's Ridge, the tallest sand dune on the East Coast, in the distance.



5

Kitty Hawk Maritime Forest

➤ Launch Site: 6150 North Croatan Highway (Milepost 1)
Kitty Hawk, NC 27949

This route is a 4-mile stretch of channel known as Jean Guite Creek, High Bridge Creek, or Ginguite Creek, depending on whom you ask. In the 1800s, when the Outer Banks had a booming lumber business, Jean Guite Creek served as a protected waterway on which barges towed logs. This 600-acre preserve is now managed by the Town of Kitty Hawk and the North Carolina Coastal Reserve.

Some of the best features about this spot is that it is lined with Live Oaks and Loblolly Pines that help protect the area from the wind. As a result, it is peaceful, smooth-water paddle that is filled with wildlife. There is a good chance that you will see deer, otters, nutrias, reptiles, and a large variety of birds. In addition, you will pass the only wood-covered bridge in eastern North Carolina.

This is an excellent trip for beginners to intermediate-level paddlers.

