

Things To Do in Cocoa Beach, Florida



Cocoa Beach, is one of the most laid-back and scenic [*beaches in Florida*](#), located on the Atlantic Coast. Known for its soft sandy shores, perfect surf waves, and family-friendly vibe, it is the kind of place where time slows down and ocean breezes do the talking. Located just an hour east of Orlando, Cocoa Beach is a favorite getaway for beach lovers, surfers, and space enthusiasts heading to the nearby Kennedy Space Center.

Whether you want to ride the waves, stroll along the famous Cocoa Beach Pier, explore nature preserves, or enjoy waterfront dining, there's something for everyone here. The town perfectly blends coastal adventure with relaxed small-town charm, making it a must-visit stop on Florida's Space Coast.

Quick Facts About Cocoa Beach

- **The Surfing Capital of the East Coast:** Cocoa Beach is home to world-famous surfer Kelly Slater and is often called the “East Coast Surfing Capital” for its consistent waves and surf culture.
 - **The Iconic Cocoa Beach Pier:** The historic Cocoa Beach Pier stretches 800 feet over the Atlantic Ocean and has been a local landmark since 1962.
 - **Gateway to Space:** Located near Cape Canaveral, visitors can often see rocket launches lighting up the sky right from the beach.
 - **Birthplace of Ron Jon Surf Shop:** The original Ron Jon Surf Shop opened here in 1963 and remains the largest surf shop in the world today.
 - **Over 300 Days of Sunshine a Year:** Cocoa Beach enjoys nearly endless sunshine, making it an ideal year-round vacation spot.
 - **Part of Florida’s Space Coast:** It is part of the region known as the Space Coast, named for its proximity to NASA’s Kennedy Space Center.
 - **A Sea Turtle Haven:** From May to October, sea turtles come ashore on Cocoa Beach to nest, offering a rare glimpse of nature in action.
 - **Perfect for Space Launch Viewing:** Few beaches in the U.S. let you relax by the ocean while watching a rocket soar into space, Cocoa Beach does both.
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12 Best Things to Do in Cocoa Beach, Florida



Cocoa Beach is where fun meets the ocean breeze. From surfing and space adventures to dining by the water, here are the best experiences to enjoy in this classic Florida beach town:

Visit the Cocoa Beach Pier

The Cocoa Beach Pier is the heart of the town's action and a must-visit for first-timers. Stretching 800 feet into the Atlantic Ocean, this lively spot offers oceanfront dining, souvenir shops, and live music. You can watch surfers ride the waves below while enjoying a cocktail from one of the pier's tiki bars. Anglers can cast a line for local catches like redfish and snapper. Sunset views here are breathtaking, making it the perfect end to a beach day. Whether you're dining, fishing, or strolling, the pier captures the true coastal charm of Cocoa Beach.

Explore the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex

Just 25 minutes from Cocoa Beach, the Kennedy Space Center is one of Florida's most inspiring attractions. You'll get up close with real spacecraft, learn about NASA's missions, and even meet an astronaut. The Space Shuttle Atlantis exhibit is a highlight, letting you experience what liftoff feels like in the Shuttle Launch

Experience. Families love the Rocket Garden and interactive displays that make science exciting for all ages. If you're lucky, you might catch a live rocket launch. It's an unforgettable experience that connects you to America's space legacy.

Relax at Lori Wilson Park

Lori Wilson Park is one of Cocoa Beach's most beautiful and family-friendly destinations. With free parking, soft sand, and calm surf, it's perfect for swimming and sunbathing. The park also features picnic areas, nature trails, and boardwalks that wind through coastal hammocks filled with native plants and wildlife. Lifeguards are on duty year-round, adding an extra layer of safety for families. It's also a great spot for beach yoga or morning walks. The natural beauty and peaceful atmosphere make Lori Wilson Park a favorite among both locals and visitors.

Surf at Shepard Park

If you've ever wanted to try surfing, Shepard Park is one of the best spots in Cocoa Beach to learn. The waves are gentle enough for beginners, and you can find several surf schools nearby offering lessons and rentals. This 5-acre oceanfront park also provides restrooms, showers, and picnic areas, making it a comfortable place to spend the day. Watching local surfers in action is inspiring, and once you catch your first wave, you'll understand why Cocoa Beach is famous for its surf culture.

Shop at Ron Jon Surf Shop

A visit to Cocoa Beach isn't complete without stopping by the world-famous Ron Jon Surf Shop. Open 24 hours a day, this massive store covers two acres filled with surfboards, beachwear, and souvenirs. Even if you're not a surfer, the shop's colorful displays and vibrant energy make it worth visiting. You'll also find a small surf museum inside with memorabilia from the area's surf legends. It is more than just a shopping trip, it is an experience that celebrates the laid-back lifestyle of Cocoa Beach.

Watch a Rocket Launch from the Beach

Cocoa Beach is one of the few places where you can watch rockets soar into the sky while your feet are in the sand. SpaceX and NASA frequently launch rockets from nearby Cape Canaveral, and the sight is truly awe-inspiring. Check the launch schedule before your visit and head to the beach for a clear view. The rumble and light trail of a rocket launch create memories you'll never forget. It's a perfect blend of relaxation and wonder, unique to Florida's Space Coast.

Kayak the Thousand Islands

The Thousand Islands near Cocoa Beach offer a peaceful escape into nature. This maze of mangroves and waterways is home to dolphins, manatees, and colorful birds. Guided kayak tours are popular, letting you explore hidden coves while learning about the area's fragile ecosystem. You might even spot bioluminescent plankton glowing in the water during summer night tours. Whether you're paddling solo or with a guide, the experience brings you closer to Florida's wild, untouched beauty.

Visit the Florida Surf Museum

Located next to Ron Jon Surf Shop, the Florida Surf Museum tells the story of the state's surfing heritage. You'll see vintage surfboards, photos, and memorabilia from Florida's surf legends. The exhibits change often, showcasing everything from early wooden boards to the evolution of surf culture. It's a small museum but packed with character and local history. For surf enthusiasts or anyone curious about beach life, it's a fascinating stop that captures Cocoa Beach's spirit.

Take a Bioluminescent Night Tour

If you're visiting Cocoa Beach between June and October, don't miss a bioluminescent kayak tour. The waters around the Indian River Lagoon come alive at night with glowing blue light created by tiny organisms. Every paddle stroke and fish movement creates a magical sparkle in the water. It's a rare natural phenomenon you'll never forget. Local tour companies provide everything you need, including kayaks and safety gear. This experience combines adventure, tranquility, and pure wonder.

Dine with an Ocean View

Cocoa Beach offers fantastic oceanfront dining, where every meal comes with a view. Restaurants like Coconuts on the Beach and Pelican's Bar & Grill serve fresh seafood, tropical cocktails, and live music by the water. Whether you're watching the sunrise with breakfast or enjoying a romantic sunset dinner, the beachside atmosphere is unbeatable. Many spots are family-friendly, with open-air patios and beach access. Dining by the ocean is one of the simplest yet most memorable experiences Cocoa Beach offers.

Fish from the Cocoa Beach Pier

Anglers love fishing off the Cocoa Beach Pier, where you can catch everything from whiting to snook. You can bring your own gear or rent equipment from shops nearby. Even beginners can enjoy the thrill of reeling in a fish with the Atlantic waves below. The pier's location gives you a chance to see dolphins and sea birds up close, too. Whether you are fishing at sunrise or relaxing after sunset, it's an authentic Florida coastal experience.

Take a Sunset Cruise on the Banana River

End your Cocoa Beach adventure with a sunset cruise on the Banana River. These scenic tours offer breathtaking views of the golden sky reflecting over calm waters. Many cruises include sightings of dolphins, manatees, and coastal birds. You can choose between family-friendly sightseeing cruises or romantic private charters. The peaceful ride, ocean breeze, and warm colors of sunset create the perfect ending to a day in paradise. It's a must-do experience for anyone visiting Cocoa Beach.

Expert Travel Tips for Visiting Cocoa Beach, Florida



Cocoa Beach is easy to explore when you know a few smart local tips. Here's how to make your trip smoother, more affordable, and unforgettable:

- **Check the Weather Before You Go:** Cocoa Beach enjoys sunshine most of the year, but afternoon rain showers are common from June to September. Pack light layers, sunscreen, and a rain jacket so you can adapt to changing conditions easily.
- **Bring Reef-Safe Sunscreen:** Protect your skin and the ocean by using reef-safe sunscreen. Many local shops sell eco-friendly options that prevent damage to marine life and coral reefs while offering solid UV protection.
- **Visit on a Weekday for Fewer Crowds:** Weekends can get busy, especially near the pier. Visiting during the week means easier parking, quieter beaches, and more relaxed dining. Early mornings are also ideal for peaceful beach walks.
- **Stay Near the Beach for Convenience:** Book accommodation close to the shore. Many hotels and rentals are within walking distance of restaurants, shops, and the pier, making it easy to explore without driving everywhere.

- **Rent Beach Gear Locally:** Instead of packing bulky chairs or umbrellas, rent what you need from local beach shops. Many offer affordable daily or weekly rates and deliver straight to your hotel or rental.
- **Plan a Day Trip to Kennedy Space Center:** It is only a short drive from Cocoa Beach, and one of Florida's top attractions. Buy tickets in advance, arrive early, and plan at least half a day to explore all the exhibits and interactive experiences.
- **Keep an Eye on Rocket Launch Schedules:** SpaceX and NASA launch rockets frequently, and you can see them from the beach. Check the official Kennedy Space Center website or download launch alert apps to catch the next one.
- **Try Surf Lessons Early in the Day:** Mornings usually bring calmer waters and fewer crowds, perfect for beginners. Several local surf schools offer lessons for all ages with experienced instructors who make learning fun and safe.
- **Pack Light but Smart:** Bring swimwear, flip-flops, sunglasses, and a hat. If you plan outdoor adventures like kayaking or hiking, include water shoes and quick-dry clothing. A waterproof phone case is also handy.
- **Support Local Restaurants and Cafes:** Skip the big chains and try local spots like Simply Delicious Café or Fat Kahuna's. You'll enjoy fresher food, friendlier service, and a true taste of the Cocoa Beach lifestyle.
- **Explore Beyond the Beach:** While the beach is the main draw, don't miss kayaking through mangroves, walking nature trails, or browsing local art galleries. Cocoa Beach has a surprising mix of nature, culture, and charm.
- **Stay for the Sunset:** Don't rush back after a beach day. The sunsets over the Banana River are stunning. Find a quiet pier, beach bar, or scenic viewpoint to enjoy the golden colors and relaxed atmosphere.
- **Respect Wildlife:** Manatees, sea turtles, and seabirds are common in the area. Watch from a distance, avoid feeding them, and never disturb nesting sites along the dunes.
- **Book Accommodations Early in Peak Season:** From December to April, Cocoa Beach gets busy. Secure your hotel or rental early to get the best locations and prices, especially during holidays or launch events.

- **Bring Cash for Parking and Small Vendors:** While most places accept cards, beach parking lots and local food stalls often prefer cash. Keeping a small amount of cash handy saves time and hassle.
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Conclusion: Plan Your Cocoa Beach Adventure!

Cocoa Beach is the perfect mix of sun, surf, and seaside charm. Whether you are learning to surf, exploring the pier, or watching a rocket launch, every moment here feels special. The best part? You can make it a quick weekend trip or a full coastal vacation.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Cocoa Beach known for?

Cocoa Beach is best known for its surfing culture, the iconic Cocoa Beach Pier, and its close proximity to the Kennedy Space Center.

Can you swim year-round at Cocoa Beach?

Yes, the Atlantic waters stay warm enough for swimming most of the year, especially from April through October.

Is Cocoa Beach good for families?

Absolutely. Families love the calm waves, fun attractions like mini golf, and nearby space-themed activities.

When is the best time to visit Cocoa Beach?

The best months are March to May and September to November as these offer warm weather, fewer crowds, and good hotel rates.

How far is Cocoa Beach from Orlando?

Cocoa Beach is about an hour's drive from Orlando, making it a perfect coastal escape for theme park visitors.

Are there free things to do in Cocoa Beach?

Yes. You can stroll the pier, relax on the beach, watch rocket launches, or visit Lori Wilson Park, all for free.

Is parking easy at Cocoa Beach?

Most beaches and attractions have paid parking lots, but you can find free spots early in the morning near public access points.

What are the best beaches near Cocoa Beach?

Alan Shepard Park, Lori Wilson Park, and Jetty Park are some of the most scenic and traveler-friendly beaches in the area.

Can you see rocket launches from Cocoa Beach?

Yes! Cocoa Beach offers great views of launches from Cape Canaveral, especially from the pier or Jetty Park.

Is Cocoa Beach walkable?

The main areas around the pier and downtown are very walkable, with shops, cafes, and beach access all nearby.
