



NORTH CAROLINA

A healthy dose of shipwrecks and sharks makes the Outer Banks an unforgettable destination

BY TERRY WARD

1 INDRA

A popular inshore wreck in just 60 feet of water off Emerald Isle, the 330-foot-long landing craft *Indra* was sunk as an artificial reef. The intact hull teems with life — barracuda, amberjack and the occasional sea turtle — and experienced divers can penetrate the wreck.

2 AEOLUS

Just a few hundred feet from the *Spar* lies the remains of the *Aeolus*, a purpose-sunk wreck that received a proper beating in the 1990s when a hurricane busted it in two. Sand tiger sharks that reside inside the wreck have given rise to the moniker "Club Aeolus," which is where you're hanging when you venture in among them.

3 CURRITUCK BEACH LIGHTHOUSE

Unique along the Carolina coast for its unfinished redbrick exterior, this climbable lighthouse — 222 winding steps to the top — rewards your stamina with sweeping views of Currituck Sound, the Atlantic Ocean and, on a clear day, all the way to the Virginia border.

4 U-352

Sunk by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1942 during World War II with a death toll of 13 men, the German U-boat rests in 110 feet of water and is considered a war grave that cannot be penetrated. Diving here gives a window into a tumultuous time when danger came remarkably close to U.S. shores.

5 JOCKEY'S RIDGE STATE PARK

A landscape that looks like it belongs more on the West Coast, the towering waves of sand at Jockey's Ridge are the largest natural sand dunes on the East Coast. Stroll the boardwalk, watch the hang gliders soaring on the thermals or try a spot of sand boarding — just bring your own boogie board or sand board (even a piece of cardboard will do).

6 PROTEUS

A 1918 collision with another ship off Ocracoke Island sent the 406-foot-long passenger ship *Proteus* to its final resting spot, listing to port at 120 feet. Among the cool things to look for here are the brass wheel to stern and the largely intact propeller.

7 SPAR

Another piece of the puzzle in the North Carolina artificial-reef project, the purpose-sunk wreck of the *Spar* — a fully intact U.S. Coast Guard Cutter — thrills divers with classic Outer Banks sights such as sand tiger sharks, schooling spadefish and greater amberjack.

8 LOCAL SEAFOOD

Feast on locally harvested seafood such as shrimp from the Pamlico Sound and traditional Outer Banks recipes such as flounder with grit cakes at Basnight's Lone Cedar Cafe, a favorite waterfront restaurant on the Roanoke Sound in Nags Head.

9 W.E. HUTTON

The promise of patrolling sand tiger sharks (sometimes as many as 20) and visibility that can push the 100-foot mark make the upside-down wreck of the *W.E. Hutton* (also called the *Papoose*) popular with photographers.

10 COROLLA'S WILD HORSES

Go where the wild horses roam, north of Corolla, where wild beaches and maritime forests are home to wild Spanish stallions. Set out by 4x4 tour in an open-air safari-style truck while your guide imparts local folklore along the way.

DIVERS GUIDE **AVERAGE WATER TEMP** From 75 to 80 degrees F in summer, 55 to 60 degrees F in winter **WHAT TO WEAR** 3 mm in summer, 5 mm (or drysuit) in winter **AVERAGE VIZ** From 40 to 100 feet **WHEN TO GO** Year-round **CONTACT** olympusdiving.com; patriotdivecenter.com



TERRY WARD got certified in Florida's springs for a college course, and has since dived everywhere from Halmahera, Indonesia, to Norway's icy Svalbard archipelago.