

**COASTAL CHARTS**  
**for**  
**Cruising Guide to**  
**COASTAL NORTH CAROLINA**



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**Claiborne S. Young**



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Please note that channel conditions, depths, aids to navigation, the various editions of charts depicted in this book, and almost all on-the-water navigational data is subject to change at any time. While we have used the latest edition of the NOAA charts available at the time of this book's publication, new editions will undoubtedly appear in the future. Failure to follow current on-the-water reality, even when it differs from the data depicted in this book's various charts, can result in expensive and dangerous accidents. There are potential hazards in any cruising situation, for which captains, navigators, and crew are solely responsible.

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# INTRODUCTION

We've all heard the old expression that "seeing is believing." Well, in the art and science of coastal navigation, we might take this old saw a bit further to say that "seeing is understanding." That, in a nutshell, is the purpose of this third in our series of coastal chart books. To verbally describe a marina, an anchorage, or a channel is one thing, but to see it located on a full-color reproduction of the NOAA nautical charts is something else entirely.

Any of you who are familiar with our cruising guides will undoubtedly have noticed that we go to great lengths to describe the location of the various points of interest by employing voluminous references to navigational aids, readily identifiable geographic features, and the Intracoastal Waterway standard-mile notations. Also provided are numerous sketch charts that help locate marinas and anchorages. While we will continue to include an increasing number of sketch charts and grayscale snippets of NOAA charts in our cruising guides, we firmly believe that most cruisers will find this companion series of chart books to be of far greater value than any black-and-white cartographical aid.

We have always advised readers to use our cruising guides hand-in-glove with the NOAA nautical charts. If, for instance, you were trying to locate Claiborne S. Young's Marina, one of our guidebooks might tell you that it is to be found along the ICW's easterly shores, southwest of flashing daybeacon #24, near Standard Mile 1024. At this point, it would have been necessary for the cruiser to haul out the appropriate chart, locate #24, and thereby divine where CSY's Marina is located. These chart books render this entire process unnecessary. I know at this point you are probably saying, "What a relief." Believe me, we could not agree with you more. Now, all you need to do is peruse within the confines of this book all the charts for the particular stretch of coastline on which you are contemplating a cruise. There, right before your eyes, you will find everything you need to know in living color.

Specifically, what we have done is to assign unique symbols to marinas, yacht clubs, repair yards, anchorages, bridges, navigationally challenging channels, shoreside restaurants, lighthouses, and recreational (historical) points of interest. We have then carefully placed these symbols on full-color reproductions of the appropriate NOAA charts, subdivided them into book form, and then spiral-bound the pages for convenience. In some cases, we were able to place the symbols in close enough proximity to the actual locations. In most instances, however, to avoid obscuring some important navigational information, the symbols were placed near to the actual location, and then lines were drawn from the symbols to where the point of interest is located.

Of course, some locations are more general. For instance, there might be any number of different places to anchor on a large, sheltered cove. In these circumstances, our location lines and dots refer to a more general area.

Beside each symbol, you will find a unique number. These numbers are very important! In fact, these numerical designations are the key to how this chart book will integrally work with our cruising guides. Armed with these numbers, you can turn to the legend at the back of this chart book and discover on exactly what pages that point of interest is discussed in the corresponding cruising guide.

For example, suppose you were studying the page-to-page depiction of Chart 12206 in this book and noticed an interesting anchorage (denoted by an anchor symbol) on the waters of Broad Creek (off North River). You would then notice that the number "10" appears next to this anchor symbol. By turning to the legend at the back of this book, you would discover that anchorage #10 is discussed in *Cruising Guide to Coastal North Carolina* on pages 29 and 33. By referring to these pages in *CGCNC*, it would be possible to make a quick determination as to whether this would be a stop that would interest you. This same pattern is repeated for marinas, yacht clubs, repair yards, bridges, channels, restaurants, lighthouses, and historical points of interest. By using this chart book and our North Carolina

cruise guide together, you will be able to plan your cruise far more quickly and with far greater ease and accuracy than has ever been possible before.

Before taking a quick look at the North Carolina coastline, let's meet one issue that is sure to arise head-on. Other authors and publishers have chosen to combine full-color reproductions of the NOAA charts and verbal cruising-guide-type descriptions in a single book. Why, you may be asking yourself, should we buy two of Claiborne's books when we can get this same sort of information within a single volume?

It was with specific intent that we chose this two-book format over a single volume. The hallmark of our cruising guides for the last twenty years has been an approach that we call "narrow and deep." Our cruising guides are highly in-depth, ultracomprehensive, and information intense. We describe every marina, anchorage, stream, and repair yard, not to mention every nook and cranny, along the way. It is this approach that readers and reviewers have praised and commented favorably upon for the last twenty years.

Quite early on, we came to the conclusion that to try and include full-color reproductions of the NOAA charts, plus all the verbal cruising-guide-type information in a single book would simply not be practical. For example, to combine *Cruising Guide to Coastal North Carolina* and the North Carolina chart book in a single volume would probably require some 550 pages, resulting in a book that would resemble nothing so much as an unabridged dictionary, and at a cost that we would rather not imagine. The only way to reduce all this data to a manageable single book would have been to sacrifice some of the in-depth character of our information, and that we were not about to do.

Well, with that out of the way, let's pause to note that this third in our series of chart books addresses the voluminous waters of the North Carolina coastline. Cruising navigators will discover all the charts they will need to take full advantage of these waters' fascinating and varied cruising potential.

You should also be sure to take note of the *Cruising Guide to Coastal North Carolina* edition referenced at the top of this chart book's legend. The page numbers in the legend correspond only to that edition and should not be used with earlier or later editions of that cruise guide.

## THE NORTH CAROLINA COASTLINE

I envy the cruisers who have not yet experienced the delights of the North Carolina coast. The state has the largest expanse of inland waters on the East Coast and enough shoreline for years of exploration. Much of the shore remains undeveloped and retains its natural character. What a treat it is to anchor for the first time in a cove miles from civilization and to see the incredible array of stars in the clear coastal sky. Such anchorages give mariners an opportunity to feel something akin to what the early settlers must have felt when they first explored this storied coastline.

Out-of-the-way anchorages are often surprisingly near coastal cities and towns where cruisers can enjoy life ashore. Edenton, Washington, Oriental, New Bern, Morehead, Beaufort, and Wrightsville Beach are major centers of pleasure-boating known to all who have traversed the Intracoastal Waterway in North Carolina, but the cruising captain will also find marinas near many lesser-known towns, or even hidden behind a bend in a creek or river in the middle of nowhere.

Vast tracts of North Carolina's waters have been largely ignored by cruisers, partly because skippers have not had easy access to the reliable and detailed information needed to fully take advantage of this splendid cruising potential. I have tried to satisfy that need with *Cruising Guide to Coastal North Carolina*. Within this volume, we pay special attention to facilities and anchorages, as well as general navigational information. To add value and pleasure to your cruise, I have also included accounts of coastal history, legends and folklore, and current information on shoreside attractions.

Another fabulous source of information for cruisers can be found on-line at [www.icw-net.com](http://www.icw-net.com). The "ICW Net," as it is often called, is now one of the largest coastal-oriented Web sites in the world, with more than three thousand pages of data. Web publisher Bob Jordan of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, is to be highly commended for putting together an array of linked cruising and shoreside Web sites that is second to none! Cruisers will find good info on every single waterside community in both Carolinas, as well as all sorts of other valuable data. We can't recommend the ICW Net strongly enough to our fellow cruisers. At all costs, if you have any access whatsoever to the World Wide Web, be sure to pay a visit to this incredible fount of information.

One of the great delights in cruising North Carolina waters is the many fine restaurants found along the coast. Unless you happen to dislike all forms of seafood, coastal dining will never be an unpleasant experience. The Tar Heel State is justly famous for its fried seafood. For the landlubber palate, there is also quite an array of coastal restaurants that specialize in exotic sandwiches and beef dishes.

Although we do not detail the many sport-fishing opportunities of the North Carolina coast, it is worth noting that fishing is popular on both inland and ocean waters. One of the largest charter fleets on the East Coast is to be found at Morehead. Other impressive sport-fisherman fleets are based at Hatteras and at Oregon Inlet. These intrepid craft regularly ply the coastal waters for any catch from billfish to king mackerel.

A familiarity with the coast of North Carolina requires some knowledge of both the geography and the history of the region. The tides, winds, and rivers have blessed (some might say cursed) the state with a unique geographical feature known as the Outer Banks. The narrow, long sandpits of the banks block off the Atlantic Ocean and enclose four large sounds: Currituck, Albemarle, Pamlico, and Core. Albemarle Sound is the largest freshwater sound in America. It is served by eight principal rivers, all navigable by pleasure craft. Except for Chesapeake Bay, Pamlico Sound is the largest, essentially landlocked, coastal water in the United States. While parts of Pamlico Sound are shallow and treacherous, much of it is readily navigable. Among a host of lesser streams, three major rivers—the Neuse, the Pamlico, and the Cape Fear—are navigable for considerable lengths and provide excellent cruising.

The Outer Banks protect the sounds from the more violent effects of ocean storms, but their shifting sands keep the waters in constant flux. Much of the history of the Tar Heel coast is the story of the effects of the rise and fall of the various inlets. If a once-deep inlet shoaled, then the community built around that cut died. If a new and deep inlet was opened by storm, new commercial ventures sprang up in response to the natural phenomenon.

Edenton, Manteo, Hatteras, Ocracoke, New Bern, Bath, Beaufort, Southport, and Wilmington are just some of the well-preserved coastal cities that have enduring pride in their historical heritage, and especially in their place in the history of colonial times and the Civil War. It is often forgotten that the Carolina coast was the first portion of North America to be settled by English colonists.

For many years, North Carolina's coastal communities existed in a state of near isolation. Overland travel was difficult and often dangerous. The sea lanes were the region's main communication with the outside world. The fruits of this isolation include a tradition of storytelling and a large body of folk tales and legends that have been handed down from generation to generation. Through these tales, the unique character of the coastal native can be understood and appreciated.

Some of the eastern seaboard's most treacherous offshore waters are to be found on the North Carolina coast. Cape Hatteras, adjoining with Diamond Shoals, has long been known as the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." Cape Lookout was once given the dubious title of "Promontorium Tremendum" by early explorers.

Soon after the Revolutionary War, the fledgling American government began to address the problem of marine safety by the erection of lighthouses along the Outer Banks and Southern coastline. Many lighthouses have come and gone since those early days, but today, five major lighthouses remain in operation on the banks: Corolla Lighthouse, Bodie Island Lighthouse, Oak Island Lighthouse, Cape Lookout Lighthouse, and Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. The Cape Lookout lighthouse is threatened by the erosion of the beaches and may not survive many more years. The lighthouse at Cape Hatteras was moved inland in 1999, offering it a measure of safety. Cruisers

should not miss the chance to view these monuments from an age of the sea now long departed.

As the lighthouses came to the North Carolina coast for the safety of offshore mariners, so came the Lifesaving Service. In the nineteenth century, lifesaving stations were established all along the Outer Banks. The bravery and courage of the early lifesaving crews is still remembered with pride and honor. Several of the old stations still stand, and a few continue in operation under the United States Coast Guard.

Cruising captains visiting North Carolina from other climes will find the state's waters very different from those of Chesapeake Bay, Long Island Sound, or even Charleston Harbor. North Carolina's waters are much shallower than their northern or southern counterparts. While most are certainly deep enough for the pleasure craft, there are many sand bars, shoals, and other obstructions that can readily bring the unwary mariner to grief. Consequently, the science of navigation must be actively practiced by those cruising Tar Heel waters.

On the plus side, there is a noticeable absence of swift tidal currents along much of the North Carolina coastline. There are exceptions, however, particularly along the southerly part of the state's coast; so stay alert.

Inland waters along the North Carolina coastline exhibit a wave pattern quite different from those of deeper waters. The consistently shallow depths can result in short but steep waves in high winds. Onboard motion is very different from that given by deepwater swells. If bad weather threatens, it is better to wait out the storm rather than have the fillings jarred out of your teeth. The Pamlico and Albemarle sounds are particularly susceptible to such conditions. However, with winds of less than 15 knots, cruising conditions, particularly under sail, are generally delightful.

As a general rule, power craft of less than 25 feet and sail craft under 20 feet should take great care before venturing on the open waters of Pamlico and Albemarle sounds. Happily, most rivers and creeks offer sheltered cruising for smaller craft.

In North Carolina waters, it is sometimes necessary to follow narrow, improved channels. For this reason, it is extremely important to watch for lateral leeway. Unwary navigators can quickly be set aground by a crosswind or current, even when they think they are headed just where they should be going. Watch your stern as well as your forward course. By looking back, you can quickly tell if you are being swept sideways.

Aids to navigation along the North Carolina coast are reliable and well maintained. The vast majority are placed exactly where they should be to warn of shallow water. Except in the vicinity of inlets, it is rare that an aid is moved (though in recent years there have been notable exceptions).

Ice damage is not a problem on Tar Heel waters, and cruisers from the North will find many more daybeacons and far fewer buoys than they might expect.

Autumn is the ideal season for cruising North Carolina waters. From about the tenth of September to the first of November, coastal weather is usually at its best, with only a few stormy exceptions. There is generally just enough of a breeze for a good sail, but not too much wind to kick up a nasty chop. October is also the driest month in the state. Often, good weather persists until December. Unless a hurricane threatens to roar up from the tropics, fall cruising along the Tar Heel coastline is usually a genuine delight.

Summer is also a good cruising season, though temperatures and humidity during July and August can be uncomfortable. Summer calms can leave sail craft plodding along under auxiliary power, but this condition usually lasts only a few days. Afternoon thunderstorms can also be a problem, but generally, summer cruising off the Tar Heel coast is a pleasurable experience.

From about the fifteenth of March to the middle of May, cruising conditions range from good to simply awful. There are bright, shining days with light winds that seem born in paradise. The trouble is that the next day may be overcast and cool with 40-knot gales. Spring cruising should be planned with a ready ear to the weather forecast.

Most North Carolina pleasure cruising ends by the latter part of December and resumes as early as March 1. However, some hearty souls cruise the state's waters year round. Certainly, the commercial fisherman is not daunted by the North Carolina winter.

With three exceptions, inlets along the coast should be considered hazardous; channels can shift overnight! Generally, cruisers should

seek local knowledge before attempting any of these capricious cuts. Aids to navigation at most North Carolina inlets are seldom charted because they are frequently shifted to mark the ever-changing sands. The three exceptions to this rule of unreliability are the Beaufort, Masonboro, and Cape Fear inlets. All three are carefully maintained, deep, and well marked. Aids to navigation in the Beaufort and Cape Fear inlets are clearly charted. A stone jetty facilitates navigation of the Masonboro cut.

By now, after having read all my warnings about shallow water, you may have some concerns if you pilot a sail craft with a fixed keel. Happily, by practicing basic navigation, sailors whose craft draw less than 6 feet can safely cruise all major North Carolina bodies of water except the Currituck and Core sounds. While shallow-water patches

exist and in some sections are numerous, it is reasonably easy to avoid such hazards if you pay attention to what you are doing.

I hope this introduction has served to inform you of the nature and diversity of North Carolina waters. It is all too rare for the present-day mariner to discover a region that has so many necessary facilities but still retains so much of its verdant natural character. All of us are fortunate that North Carolina's waters fulfill these requirements. I take pride in being able to help my fellow cruisers discover the North Carolina coast. Steeped in history and tradition, blessed by a benevolent climate, and peopled by some of the friendliest souls on this good earth, the Tar Heel coast beckons.

Good cruising!

