



GREAT EVENTS

BRING MORE TO THE SHORE



BY KRISTY ALPERT

There's so much more to the beach than just sand and shorelines when the whole group comes out to play. From pickup games of Frisbee to impromptu chowder chow-downs, everything is more fun with a few cronies on the coast, especially when there's a reason to celebrate.

Beachfront festivals provide the perfect setting for group travel by offering something everyone can enjoy. Despite the consistent factor of a shoreline, seaside festivals differ dramatically from coast to coast, with each destination offering its own local spin on their seaside soirees.

Whether it's salsa dancing in a Caribbean night breeze or savoring the local flavors of the ocean at seaside festivals on the East Coast, the following beachfront festivals will transport your group to a place of salty-air celebrations, great stories and lasting memories.

— TOWN POINT VIRGINIA WINE FESTIVAL — NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

1

For one weekend only, everything glistens around the shores of the Elizabeth River as the Virginia waterfront in Norfolk, Virginia, plays host to roughly 250 varieties of wine in shimmering glass bottles from more than 35 of Virginia's finest wineries. More than 12,000 visitors come out each year, eager to fill their days with sunshine and their glasses with sauvignons and cabernets.

Virginia is often revered as the Napa of the East by those in the know, and just as the vines in this region have only gotten better with age, so has the Town Point Virginia Wine Festival. Now celebrating 27 years in operation, the festival has grown into one of the largest wine festivals in the state and offers groups opportunities to savor the local flavors of this bountiful region, with gourmet food and wine and cultural attractions like live music and local artisans. Groups can take advantage of table/pavilion reservations and parkside boater packages, along with regular general admission tickets.

"Virginia is the nation's fifth-largest wine grape producer, and the Town Point Virginia Wine Festival brings 35 of the wineries to Town Point Park, where guests can sample all wineries in one location over a two-day period," said Heather Bilodeau, communications director for Norfolk Festevents and self-appointed photographer of the festival. "I'm a big photo buff, and I love taking photos of all our guests enjoying the wineries, having a good time with family and friends, and really seeing this community of wine lovers come together in one place. The backdrop of the Elizabeth River makes the pictures even more stunning."

The next Town Point Virginia Wine Festival takes place October 18-19, 2014.

WWW.FESTEVENTS.ORG



TOWN POINT VIRGINIA WINE FESTIVAL

Courtesy Norfolk Festevents



HANGOUT MUSIC FESTIVAL

Courtesy Hangout Music Festival



CAYMAN COOKOUT

Courtesy Cayman Islands Department of Tourism



US OPEN OF SURFING

Courtesy Visit Huntington Beach



MAINE LOBSTER FESTIVAL

Courtesy Rockland Festival Corp.

HANGOUT MUSIC FESTIVAL GULF SHORES, ALABAMA

2

From a swimming pool set up stage level to a dress code that allows for swimsuits all hours of the day and night, the Hangout Music Festival is every beach lover's dream when it comes to a weekend spent in the sun. Add a giant Ferris wheel, tons of food vendors offering everything from vegan to gourmet and some of the best bands in the business, and groups have themselves a recipe for one unforgettable weekend.

Although this event is one of the most popular music festivals in the country, groups may be surprised that it's not necessarily the current chart toppers taking the stage during the weekend. Past headliners have included Tom Petty, the Kings of Leon, Paul Simon, and the Dave Matthews Band.

"Groups are going to see some of the big superstars of the world," said Sean O'Connell, festival director for the Hangout Music Festival. "But it's not necessarily about booking bands that are on the radio; it's about finding bands that give great live shows."

Now into its fifth year, the Hangout Music Festival has started to attract an eclectic crowd looking for a great weekend with their friends and families. While festival goers can enjoy the natural and artificial oasis on the beach while soaking in some sun and tunes, bands typically get the best views as they look out on a sea of happy faces and crystal-clear waters.

The 2014 edition of the Hangout Music Festival will be held May 15-18.

WWW.HANGOUTMUSICFEST.COM

CAYMAN COOKOUT CAYMAN ISLANDS

3

No stranger to culinary celebrations, the Cayman Islands have played host to the Cayman Cookout for the past six years alongside celebrity chef Eric Ripert. This can't-miss island event puts guests right in the sand for a weekend of decadent dining — last year the event served a lunch with more than 15 different burgers — festive fetes and tons of chances to mingle with the biggest names in the culinary scene.

"We have a rich, historic food culture," said Oneisha Richards, deputy director of international marketing and promotions for the Cayman Islands Department of Tourism. "When chef Eric Ripert opened his restaurant Blue at the Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman, we thought it would be fun to create an event to showcase the sophistication and barefoot elegance of the destination's food scene with someone as accomplished in his field as Chef Ripert and with partners such as The Ritz-Carlton, Grand Cayman and Food & Wine magazine."

The Cayman Cookout has become a sellout event, taking place over the course of four days. Groups can select from a variety of events to attend, from cooking demonstrations to food and wine tastings to culinary discussions, all set to the backdrop of the beautiful Caribbean. This year's chef lineup includes Ripert, Anthony Bourdain, Daniel Boulus, Daniel Humm and José Andrés.

The next Cayman Cookout takes place January 16-19, 2014.

WWW.CAYMANISLANDS.KY/EVENTSOFFERS/CAYMANCOOKOUT.ASPX

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— US OPEN OF SURFING —
HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIFORNIA

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Known as the definitive competition for serious surfers, the 55-year-old US Open of Surfing has recently grown from a surfing competition into a festival the whole group can enjoy. Running a total of eight days, the festival kicks off quietly at first with qualifying contests and chilled-out events like movie nights on the beach and autograph signings. As the surfing competition progresses, things pick up with live music, local art shows and contests.

“There’s nothing quite like it,” said Kelly Miller, president and CEO of Visit Huntington Beach. “One thing I’ve been blown away with is that the surf culture is certainly something that permeates everything about Huntington Beach. Some cities say they are a community that has a beach, but we are definitely a beach community, and there’s a big difference.”

The surfers are celebrities in Huntington Beach, and this festival brings them out in droves for groups looking to score a few autographs. From hanging out in the sand while watching the pros in action to exploring this beach community after a day spent taking a group surf lesson, there’s so much for the whole group to dive into at this free festival.

The 2014 US Open of Surfing will take place in late July and early August.

WWW.USOPENOFSURFING.COM

— MAINE LOBSTER FESTIVAL —
ROCKLAND, MAINE

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Located in the official “Lobster Capital of the World,” the Maine Lobster Festival in Rockland, Maine, is a great chance for groups to let loose with friends and family while cracking into some great local fun near the shore. The event features more than 20,000 pounds of lobster waiting to be dipped, dunked and devoured by adoring crustacean aficionados hanging out amongst a sea of events and entertainment.

“Not only do we have the world’s largest lobster cooker, but we also offer group discounts,” said Tim Carroll, president of the Rockland Festival Corporation for the Maine Lobster Festival. “We have many bus tours stop and take advantage of the group discounts and meal combinations.”

Celebrating its 66th year, the Lobster Festival will again feature a Lobster Crate Race, arts and crafts, a parade, cooking contests, local food vendors, live entertainment and more. Along with marina tours of the U.S. Coast Guard Station and the U.S. Navy ships, groups seeking seaside fun need look no further than the coronation of the annual Maine Sea Goddess after the judges make their final decision from this iconic beauty contest.

Next year’s Maine Lobster Festival will be held July 30-August 3.

WWW.MAINELOBSTERFESTIVAL.COM



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