

OCEAN CITY 2.5 HRS

Want some family-friendly fun in the sun? Head to **Ocean City, MD** for 10 miles of free beaches (among TripAdvisor's Top 10) and a 3-mile-long boardwalk (voted a best by the Travel Channel) packed with rides, games, shops and food. Go swimming, surfing, fishing, kayaking and canoeing, and enjoy plenty of free family activities during the week—concerts, movies and Beach Olympics.

Or start the day with a morning bike ride on the **Ocean City Boardwalk**. Bring your own, or rent from one of the bike shops around town. And the boardwalk has lots of games and rides for the kiddos. Choose a thrilling ride on the roller coaster or slower-paced fun on one of the country's oldest continuously operating carousels. Be sure to check out **Jolly Roger**, a collection of five different amusement parks including a water park and miniature golf.

While you're there, sample some of Ocean City's shopping and dining. Embrace the local surf culture over at **K-Coast Surf Shop**, Maryland's largest surf shop. Then savor a dinner of spicy Maryland steamed crabs at one of the town's 200 restaurants.

They say the fun never ends at OCMD! OcOcean.com.

Maryland Getaways

Mercedes Thomas

From beach towns and breweries, to state parks and wild horses, neighboring Maryland has plenty to offer for your next family getaway!

NEW GUINNESS FACTORY 2 HRS

For a getaway with great beer and interesting history, head to Baltimore to check out the new-ish **Guinness Open Gate Brewery and Barrel House**. For over 250 years, Guinness has been one of the most famous beer brands of Ireland. Now their Baltimore brewery, on the site of an old distillery, is their first on American soil in over 65 years (after a brief stay in Long Island City, NY from 1949–1954).

The Baltimore brewery is one of only two **Guinness Experimental Tap Rooms** in the world—the other's based in Dublin. At these special tap-rooms, brewers have creative license to explore new recipes, reinterpret old ones and experiment freely to create new beers. Make sure to ask your bartender what's on tap from their barrel-aged beers and sample Guinness Blonde, their flagship beer. But don't worry, your favorite classic Guinness brews are also available on tap.

We suggest you take the one-hour tour with experienced guides to see the brewery and learn more about Guinness lore and heritage. Afterward, stick around for the tasting, where they always pour a perfect pint!

And if you're hungry, grab a bite at the **1817 Restaurant**—with a menu highlighting beer pairings for every dish. 5001 Washington Blvd., Halethorpe. GuinnessBreweryBaltimore.com.

ASSATEAGUE ISLAND 2.75 HRS

Roam 37 miles of pristine beaches on **Assateague Island** to catch a glimpse of its famous wild ponies. Just south of Ocean City, and running along the coast of Maryland and Virginia, Assateague has over 300 wild ponies that call the beaches, pine forest and salt marsh home. The ponies are used to seeing people—you may spot them walking along the side of the road, which makes photographing them much easier! A major event is the **Chincoteague Wild Pony Swim** in late July.

Stop at the **National Seashore Ranger Station** in Maryland for parking, ranger-guided programs, and more information about the island. Camp on the beach with your tent or trailer, or bring your bike and cycle through 4 miles of island habitat. And enjoy all the beach has to offer—swimming, surfing, clamming and shell collecting.

You can drive over the border to Chincoteague, VA to go on a wildlife cruise or kayak tour with **Assateague Explorer** to visit more remote areas of the island where many of the ponies live. You may just spot peregrine falcons, egrets, osprey and scores of marine-life!

In the Virginia part of Assateague, check out the **Assateague Lighthouse**. Built in 1833 and still operational, it's open to the public. Climb to the top for a stunning view of the island and beaches before you leave. AssateagueIsland.com.

DEEP CREEK LAKE 4.25 HRS

Explore nature at **Deep Creek Lake**—a hidden gem found in the far west corner of the state in Garrett County. Set by the mountains of western Maryland, Deep Creek has plenty of nature and adventure for summertime fun.

Along the lake's border, stop at the 1,800 acres of **Deep Creek Lake State Park** for hiking, camping, boating, fishing, biking and swimming. And for something educational for the kiddos, check out the park's **Discovery Center** or the **Heritage Mobile app**. Attend a campfire program, go on a talk and hike led by a park naturalist, and see displays like science stations, exhibits and an aviary, home to 10 non-releasable birds of prey.

Want to stay the weekend? Book an inn or resort along Deep Creek to extend the fun. **The Wisp Resort** is Maryland's only 4-season ski, golf and recreational resort, and great for your family vacation. Learn how to whitewater raft and kayak, see the treetops on the zip-line and get your adrenaline rush on the Mountain Coaster. And if you don't have July 4th plans, bring the family to Deep Creek for the **Fire on the Mountain Fireworks Display**, 9:30 p.m., set off from the Wisp Resort.

But Deep Creek Lake isn't just a summer destination! Go for a visit during the winter for sledding, snowboarding, skiing, snowmobiling and more! VisitDeepCreek.com. ♦