

Best fall beach festivals for families

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Summer may be over, but it's still a good time to visit a beach. Think: Less crowds, cheaper hotels and special events all paired with gorgeous fall weather and a scenic backdrop. Beaches know they are still great in the fall, and to prove it, many host fall festivals and events to entice families to their endless summers. Here are a few we love.

Sea Witch Festival: Rehoboth Beach, Del.

The 23rd annual Sea Witch Halloween & Fiddler's Festival takes place on family-friendly Rehoboth Beach, Oct. 26 to 28. Kids can enjoy both Halloween-themed fun and activities, including a Sea Witch hunt, Pirate Treasure Challenge, magic shows, Pirate Adventures, a costume parade and free outdoor movies in the park at dark. As a Fiddler's Festival, fiddles and banjos will be providing foot-stomping music. On Saturday, kids are invited to participate in Old Fashioned Beach Games to receive ribbons for winning games like the Beach Ball Roll, Hula Twist Off and Pumpkin Dash.

National Shrimp Festival: Gulf Shores, Ala.

Visit the Gulf Shores Oct. 11 through 14 for its 41st annual fall event, the National Shrimp Festival. More than 250 vendors will be on hand to sell arts and crafts, as well as, what else? Shrimp! Two stages provide continuous live entertainment, and the Children's Activity Village will keep little ones busy with arts and crafts of their own. There is even a sand sculpture contest -- may the best shrimp win!

Harbor & Seafood Festival: Santa Barbara, Calif.

A relatively young festival when compared with the others on this list, the 11th Annual Santa Barbara Harbor & Seafood Festival is a chance for West Coasters to hit the beach in October. On Oct. 13, local seafood vendors and fishermen will bring on a seafood feast filled with lobster, crab, chowder, gumbo and more. Arts and crafts vendors will also be displaying their wares, as families tour tall ships, enjoy free boat rides and dockside tours, and get close to sea life in maritime exhibits and touch tanks. Live music rounds out the day-long event.

Endless Summer Festival: Myrtle Beach, S.C.

North Myrtle Beach celebrates the end of summer by enjoying its seemingly never-ending warm weather on its sandy shores. This year, on Saturday, Oct. 27, the festival will offer free live entertainment from a stage on Main Street, along with carnival rides, a children's play area, arts and crafts, a car show and plenty of festival food. The entire event is free and takes place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Harvestfest & Kidsfest: Coastal Maine

Coastal Maine's York Beach is home to this 28th fall festival -- this one featuring a Kidsfest just for kids to enjoy games, entertainment, crafts, hayrides and a special Saturday night pumpkin stroll. The event, which takes place Oct. 13 and 14, provides plenty of adult festivities as well. Live bands, food and beverage vendors, crafters and a marketplace fill the weekend with fun.

Cranberry Festival: Nantucket, Mass.

Ride the ferry from Cape Cod to Nantucket to witness the island's intimate, seafaring charm and to enjoy the 10th annual Cranberry Festival. The event takes place Saturday, Oct. 6, featuring kids' events, hayrides, sheep shearing, wool spinning and sheep herding demonstrations. Of course, cranberry dishes will be featured, alongside homemade clam chowder and other festival food.

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