

# Kids on Bald Head Island

*The island's best days for little ones — from someone who's had thirty years of them.*

There's no better place to be a kid than Bald Head. No cars, miles of wild beach, sea turtles, ghost crabs, and the kind of freedom that's hard to find anymore. Here's how to make the most of it — the stuff that turns an ordinary beach day into the one they talk about all year.

**The whole island runs on the tides.** Low tide is the magic hour — it's when the sandbars surface for sand dollars, the shelling is best, and the sand firms up for biking and walking. Pull up a Bald Head Island tide chart (a quick search, or ask at Maritime Market) and aim for the hour or two on either side of low tide.

## On the beach

- **Sand dollars & shelling** — at low tide the sandbars off the point and along South Beach become treasure fields. Bring a mesh bag; live sand dollars (fuzzy and brown) go back, white ones come home.
- **Ghost crab hunt after dark** — the single best kid activity on the island. Grab flashlights an hour after sunset and walk the dry sand near the dunes — you'll see dozens skittering. Pure magic for ages 3 and up.
- **Sandcastles, boogie boards & kites** — the wide, flat beach and steady ocean breeze are made for it. Gear can be delivered right to the house so you're not hauling it on the ferry.
- **Tide-pooling** — at low tide, the pools hold tiny crabs, minnows, and snails. A cheap bucket and net keeps little ones busy for an hour.

## In & on the water

- **Crabbing** — the classic. A bucket, a string, and a piece of raw chicken off the marina docks or a creek edge. No license, no cost, endless fun. Best on an incoming tide.
- **Kids' fishing** — off the pier, in the surf, or in the creeks. Easy to do yourselves with rented gear, or a patient local guide can take the littles out and bait every hook.
- **Family kayak or paddleboard** — the back creeks are flat and protected, far better for kids than the ocean. Go near high tide so there's plenty of water.

## Nature & wildlife — the BHI Conservancy

- **Sea turtle walks** — the headliner, summer only (nesting runs roughly May–October). The Conservancy releases walk tickets on a rolling basis at [bhic.org](http://bhic.org) and they vanish fast — check the moment you know your dates.
- **Kayak the Creeks** — a guided paddle through the marsh with a naturalist; tide-timed and genuinely beautiful.
- **Junior naturalist & Sea Turtle Patrol programs** — hands-on Conservancy sessions built for kids.
- **Wildlife spotting** — alligators sun themselves in the freshwater lagoons (look, don't approach), and deer, herons, and fiddler crabs are everywhere. Dawn and dusk are best.

## Explore & learn

- **Climb Old Baldy** — North Carolina's oldest lighthouse, 108 steps to the top, with the Smith Island Museum at the base. Big kids love the climb and the view.
- **Island scavenger hunt** — a guided treasure hunt the whole family does together; a local host runs them.
- **Bike the forest trails** — shaded, flat, and car-free. E-bikes, trailers, and kid seats make it work for any age.

## Evening & rainy-day

- **Beach bonfire & s'mores** — note there are night-lighting rules during turtle season, so keep it low and shielded near the dunes.
- **Ice cream run** — The Sandpiper by the ferry, Nye's Cream at Maritime Market, or Mike's Bites for ices.
- **Movie night, painting, or a craft kit** — the perfect rainy-afternoon reset.

## Club kids

These need your rental's Shoals Club or BHI Club access — not sure which you have? It's worth confirming, because it opens up the pools and camps.

- **Kids' camps & programs** — BHI Club runs them roughly ages 5–12; Shoals Club has movies, games, and story times.
- **Pools, tennis & family game nights.**

## What sells out — and how to grab it

What	When to grab it	Where
Sea turtle walk (summer)	The day you know your dates	bhic.org
Guided Kayak the Creeks	About a week ahead	bhic.org
Club kids' camps	Early — spots are limited	Your club
Scavenger hunt	A few days ahead	Local host
Old Baldy climb	Usually walk-up	oldbaldy.org

## Pack list for the kids

Reef-safe sunscreen · bug spray (the marsh trails have ticks) · water shoes · a bucket and net for treasures · flashlights for the crab hunt · a light layer for breezy evenings.

**P.S.** Rather have it all handled? Pick what you want and book your whole trip in minutes at [bhi-trip-planning.pages.dev](https://bhi-trip-planning.pages.dev) — carts, dinners, boat days, all of it. I take it from there, so the island is yours to enjoy.