

HILTON HEAD ISLAND · LOCAL GUIDE

Hilton Head Island in May

Weather, crowds, events, and the best things to do

Visiting Hilton Head in May offers warm beach days, fewer crowds, and the perfect start to summer. Discover weather, events, top things to do, and where to stay for an unforgettable island getaway.

> **The Quick Answer**
>
> May on Hilton Head Island means highs near 82°, moderate crowds building toward Memorial Day, and ocean water warm enough for swimming. Whether you're planning a family vacation, a romantic escape, a golf trip, or a long weekend recharge, May offers sunshine, space, and plenty of ways to enjoy the coast.

It's the moment when spring energy transitions into early summer. Restaurants are lively, the ocean feels inviting, and the island's outdoor lifestyle truly shines.

Weather in May
Crowd Levels
Top Things To Do
Events & Festivals
Where to Eat
Where to Stay & Booking Tips
Questions, Answered

LAST UPDATED MARCH 20, 2026 · HOST & HOME, HILTON HEAD ISLAND

82°
AVERAGE HIGH

68°
OVERNIGHT LOWS

Moderate
CROWD LEVELS

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Weather in May

82°
AVERAGE HIGH

74°
OCEAN TEMPERATURE

68°
OVERNIGHT LOWS



Sun-soaked afternoons and perfect beach breezes.

May weather on Hilton Head Island is close to perfect. Temperatures warm up significantly compared to spring, but the intense summer humidity hasn't fully arrived yet. It's the ideal time for beach days, boating, biking, and outdoor dining. Here's what to expect:

- **Daytime highs** average around 78–85°F (26–29°C) — excellent beach weather
- **Evening lows** settle around 65–70°F (18–21°C) — comfortable for evening walks
- **Ocean temperatures** reach 72–75°F (22–24°C) — warm enough for swimming
- **Humidity** begins to rise but remains manageable
- **Rainfall** comes mostly in brief afternoon showers
- **Long daylight hours** mean more time at the beach

Compared to April, May feels noticeably warmer and more summery, making it one of the best months to enjoy the water and outdoor activities.

TIMING YOUR TRIP

Crowd Levels



Relaxed energy before peak summer.

May sits right before Hilton Head's busiest summer season, which makes it an excellent time to visit. The island feels lively but not overcrowded, and many visitors enjoy the extra space on beaches and trails. Expect:

- Moderate crowds during weekends and holiday events
- A quieter atmosphere earlier in the month
- Increasing activity as Memorial Day approaches
- Popular restaurants filling up in the evenings
- Vacation rental demand steadily increasing

While Memorial Day weekend can be busy, most of May still maintains a relaxed coastal pace that many visitors love.

SIX IDEAS FOR THE MONTH

Top Things To Do

May is the perfect month to slow down and explore—wildlife, local traditions, and easy island adventures at every turn.



01

Watch Sea Turtle Nesting Season Begin

Loggerhead sea turtles begin nesting on Hilton Head's beaches right around the start of May. Take an early morning walk and keep an eye out for fresh tracks in the sand—just remember to give any nests plenty of space.



02

Take a Day Trip to Old Town Bluffton

Just a short drive from the island, Old Town Bluffton's arts district is full of galleries, antique shops, and riverside charm. Spend an afternoon wandering the oak-lined streets and stop for lunch along the May River.



03

Take a Sunset Sailing Cruise

Warm evenings and steady breezes make May one of the best months to get out on the water under sail. Book a sunset cruise for calm winds, golden light over the marsh, and one of the prettiest ways to end the day.

Nature, Wandering, and Local Traditions



04

Walk the Trails at Sea Pines Forest Preserve

This quiet 605-acre preserve is one of the island's best-kept secrets. Wander the shaded boardwalks and nature trails to spot native plants, birds, and the occasional alligator, all just minutes from the beach.



05

Grab Ice Cream and Stroll Coligny Plaza

With warm evenings and longer days, Coligny Plaza is the easy, low-key way to spend a night out. Grab a scoop, browse the shops, and enjoy the lively, laid-back energy just steps from the beach.



06

Go Crabbing Off a Dock

All you need is a line, some bait, and a dock—crabbing is one of the simplest, most classic Lowcountry pastimes. It's an easy, low-cost activity the whole family can do together, and a great way to spend a warm May afternoon.

WORTH PLANNING AROUND

Events and Festivals

May brings a mix of live music, outdoor gatherings, and seasonal island traditions.



VENDORS GATHER BY NEPTUNE

Hilton Head Island Art Festival

A three-day weekend celebration of fine art, featuring the work of talented artists from across the United States. Taking place along the scenic promenade at Shelter Cove Harbour & Marina, this free, family-friendly event highlights dozens of craftspeople and visual artists working in pottery, glass, wood, jewelry, metal, painting, photography, and more.



HarbourFest

Celebrate the magic of summer at HarbourFest, where golden sunsets meet sparkling fireworks over Shelter Cove Harbour. Expect live music, family fun, and unforgettable coastal nights, from glowing string lights to the iconic lighthouse.



Hilton Head Community Market

A lively, open-air gathering at Shelter Cove Community Park where locals and visitors shop fresh produce, handmade goods, and unique artisan finds, with live music and a relaxed, family-friendly atmosphere.

WHERE WE SEND OUR GUESTS

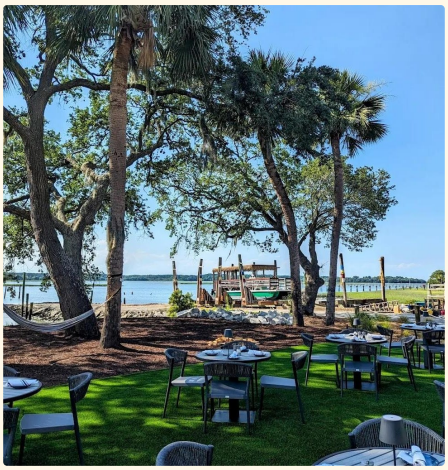
Where to Eat

May is one of the best months for outdoor dining—warm evenings and longer daylight hours make patios and waterfront tables especially enjoyable.



The Salty Dog Cafe

A Hilton Head staple, the Salty Dog is known for its relaxed marina setting, live music, and fun atmosphere. Grab a frozen drink, enjoy classic coastal fare, and soak in the energy of one of the island's most recognizable spots.



Benny's Coastal Kitchen

With multiple dining spaces, a lively outdoor area, and a stunning rooftop bar, it's the kind of place you go to linger—whether that's for sunset cocktails, fresh oysters, or a full seafood dinner. The menu leans into bold coastal flavors with a slightly elevated twist.



Coco's on the Beach

One of those hidden gems that instantly feels like vacation mode the second you arrive. Tucked right along the shoreline near Singleton Beach, this colorful, laid-back spot serves up ocean views, cold drinks, and casual beach bites in a fun, no-frills setting.

BOOK DIRECT · NO PLATFORM FEES

Where to Stay

May is an excellent time for vacation rentals, especially homes with outdoor living spaces where you can enjoy the warm evenings.



BOOKING TIPS

Reserve Early

Especially for Memorial Day weekend—this is one of the first big rental surges of the season.

A WARM-WEATHER MUST

Pools & Hot Tubs

Choose rentals with pools or hot tubs for extra comfort, and consider walkable areas for restaurants and activities.

WHERE TO LOOK

Sea Pines

Classic Hilton Head scenery with golf, beaches, and Harbour Town.

Palmetto Dunes

Perfect for active travelers with golf, tennis, and bike trails.

Forest Beach

Walkable to Coligny Plaza, shops, and restaurants.

> A LOCAL TIP
>
> Reserve early if your trip lands near Memorial Day weekend—rentals with pools or hot tubs in walkable areas go first as summer demand starts to build.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERED

Before You Book

Is May a good time to visit Hilton Head Island?

Yes—May offers warm beach days, vibrant greenery, and long golden evenings before the peak summer crowds fully arrive.

Is the ocean warm enough to swim in May?

Yes. Ocean temperatures reach 72–75°F, warm enough for swimming for most visitors.

Is Hilton Head Island crowded in May?

Crowds stay moderate through most of the month, with activity building as Memorial Day approaches. Early May tends to feel quieter and more relaxed.

What events happen on Hilton Head Island in May?

Highlights include the Hilton Head Island Art Festival, HarbourFest, and the Hilton Head Community Market.

How far in advance should I book a May rental?

Reserve early if your trip falls around Memorial Day weekend, since rental demand steadily increases as the month goes on.

Find Your Hilton Head Stay This May

Let our local team match you with the property that fits. Book direct, and skip the platform fees.

Find your stay →

