

## America's Best Beach Bars

**Soak up the views and fruity cocktails at America's best beach bars, from Florida to Hawaii.**

From [June 2011](#) By [Margie Goldsmith](#)

The sun twinkles on the turquoise water off palm-fringed Waikiki Beach, the air heady with the scent of coconut suntan lotion. “Aloha,” grins the waiter at Duke’s Barefoot Bar as he sets down a Tropical Itch, an icy mixture of vodka, rum, and Curaçao with a foot-long bamboo back scratcher sticking out.

That scratcher is yours to keep, but the strongest itch you’ll feel is the desire to linger forever on the bar’s open-air patio above the white sand, listening to live music and watching coral and lavender hues streak the sky. Sure, it sounds clichéd, but 50 million people will be inspired to head to American beaches this summer. The latest American Express Spending & Saving Tracker reveals that 42 percent of all vacationers prefer to be near the water, and 29 percent of those are choosing their summer destination based on its proximity to the beach. And from the sand, it’s never far to a bar.

“The beach bar is a perfect summer respite,” says Jamie LaMarco, bartender at The Beachcomber, nestled in the dunes of Cape Cod, with a roofed deck open to the beach and a 45-foot bar. “You never have to change your clothes, and you don’t have to pack lunch or a cooler. It’s where you find lifeguards, surfers, and beach bunnies of all shapes and sizes.”

You’ll also find something going on whatever the time of day. The Beachcomber packs in a crowd at lunchtime and is family-friendly until after sunset, around 9 p.m., when it morphs into a casual club with musicians playing anything from surf-rock to reggae to jazz.

Such an easygoing vibe is typical of dive bars, surfer shacks, and even beach bars affiliated with exclusive luxury brands. Guests at the Ritz-Carlton in Naples, FL, for instance, trade business casual for swimsuits when hanging at the resort’s Sand Bar—no shirt, no shoes, no problem.



It's your vacation, after all, and the point is to mellow out. So scratch your itch this summer at one of America's best beach bars, serving up refreshing cocktails and handcrafted beers.

### [Old Tony's Bar, Redondo Beach Pier, CA](#)

**The Scene:** This octagonal all-glass landmark on top of Old Tony's Bar attracts South Bay beach bums who come for the spectacular sunsets, crashing surf, and 360-degree views of the coast. A spiral staircase leading up to the Crow's Nest, as it's known, is lined with shots of celebrities who've joined the regulars for nightly live entertainment.

**Signature Drink:** The Fire Chief, a grenadine Mai Tai with a kick from three different rums including a 151-proof floater, served in a take-home collectible cocktail glass imprinted with Old Tony's logo, \$7.75.



### [Half Moon Bay Brewing Company, San Francisco](#)

**The Scene:** A surfer's haven that's conveniently adjacent to Mavericks break, famous for some of the world's toughest big-wave surfing. Handcrafted Mavericks Amber Ale and Mavericks Budgetary Alement are piped directly to the bar from the Half Moon Bay Brewery next door. Grab a patio seat near the blazing fire pits in time to watch the sun set. Weekends are for live rock 'n' roll and blues while "Brews & Views," a heated political discussion, takes place monthly.

**Signature Drink:** Mavericks Amber Ale, as full-bodied and robust as the legendary wave for which it was named, \$6.75 for a 22 oz bottle.



## [The Barefoot Bar, Duke's, Waikiki Beach, HI](#)

**The Scene:** The dress code at this Waikiki hot spot takes its cue from the name: bare feet with bikini or surf shorts. Beach loungers drop in for the Jawaiian music, a mixture of classical Hawaiian mixed with groovin' reggae. Named after Olympian Duke Kahanamoku, father of international surfing, the bar displays paraphernalia such as his original redwood board. Sip a Tropical Itch, Lava Flow, or draft beer served at a chilly 28 degrees while taking in drop-dead views of Diamond Head and Oahu's leeward coast.

**Signature Drink:** Tropical Itch, with passion fruit juice, vodka, rum, and orange Curaçao, served with a local bamboo back scratcher (yours to take home), \$7.75.



## [Sand Bar, Naples, FL](#)

**The Scene:** You might not expect the funky two-year-old Sand Bar to be part of the opulent Ritz-Carlton Resort. The vibe here is casual and cool. Guests saunter up from the beach to sit on a bamboo barstool beneath a tiki roof. Nurse your drink and, with any luck, a school of dolphins will swim by before long. Nature-themed info boards educate guests about other area wildlife like the loggerhead turtles that nest on the beach and the fauna in the resort's mangroves.

**Signature Drink:** The Naples Sunset, a blend of rum, peach schnapps, and tropical juices, \$12.95.



## Marshside Mama's, Daufuskie Island, SC

**The Scene:** “Our bar is like *Canterbury Tales*; there’s a little bit of everything,” says bartender Tyler Gerow of the honky-tonk Marshside Mama’s. Owner Beth Shipman cooks up mouthwatering gumbo, shrimp, and grits, and there’s always the freshest fish because fishermen pull up to the dock to drop off the catch of the day. Even though it’s only a 45-minute ferry ride from Hilton Head, the ferry doesn’t always run, so the crowd is mostly local boaters. They rock out to live bands on weekends and follow the lead of owner Beth, who’s known to yell out, “No whining, just dance.”

**Signature Drink:** Marshside Mama’s Rum Fruity: four different types of rum mixed with fruit juices, \$8.



## Tamboo Tavern, Rincon, Puerto Rico

**The Scene:** Simply one of the most romantic, sultry beach bars imaginable. Owner Javier Quinones and his wife had their first date here in 1990. They now serve everyone from wedding guests in formal attire to sunburned yuppies in bathing suits. Sit on the beachfront deck with a drink and watch for whales, play footsie in the sand with your loved one, and welcome the evening with hot Latin rhythms.

**Signature Drink:** Mojito: Bacardi rum with simple syrup, soda water, lime, \$7.



## [The Wayfarer](#), Cannon Beach, OR

**The Scene:** Restored original portholes and light fixtures and a more rustic look are the result of a recent \$300,000 tune-up of this charming spot on the Northern Oregon Coast. From the glass-enclosed Lounge or the outside summer deck a few feet above the beach, you can hear the crashing surf and gaze at Haystack Rock, a 235-foot-tall iconic basalt monolith. The restaurant itself is a special occasion kind of place serving some of the Pacific Northwest's freshest seafood, but the atmosphere is unfussy.

**Signature Drink:** The Tolovana Fizz (named after the nearby park): house-infused strawberry vodka, Triple Sec, and a splash of strawberry purée topped with champagne, \$8.50.



## [The Rusty Nail](#), Cape May, NJ

**The Scene:** This iconic surfer bar on the grounds of the Beach Shack was first hot in the '70s, when lifeguards from the nearby station came nightly for an ice-cold beer in a frozen mug. When a road separated it from the beach, the owner dumped 10,000 pounds of sand next to an outside breakfast nook and turned it into a tiki bar with its own beach of sorts. Happy-hour crowds spill outside for the sunset, fire pit, live music, and the coldest beer in Cape May.

**Signature Drink:** The Hammer: coconut rum and spiced rum, passion fruit, and fresh-squeezed lemons, limes, and oranges served in a keepsake hollowed-out coconut with the Rusty Nail Logo, \$14



## Tom's Burned Down Café, Madeline Island, Lake Superior, WI

**The Scene:** An old tavern burned down in 1992 and was totally destroyed so that only the decks remained. That didn't bother owner Tom Nelson, who thought, "Do not rebuild it, and they will come." Nelson pulled in a 40-foot trailer to the decks and began serving beer from the back of the truck. Since then, he's built more decks and a bar and added a tarp roof and knickknacks. It's a quirky place that could keep your attention for hours between the bartenders' stories and the view of kayakers and stand-up paddleboarders on the lake. There's even a chance of glimpsing the northern lights.

**Signature Drink:** Island Rum Punch: three kinds of rum with pineapple, cranberries, orange juice, and lemonade, topped with a cherry and lime, \$8.



## The Beachcomber, Wellfleet, MA

**The Scene:** For the last 50 years, hippies, rockers, and New Agers have flocked to this Cape Cod hangout, originally built in 1897 as the Cahoon Hollow U.S. Life Saving Station. It's right on the dunes with a roofed deck open to the beach and a 45-foot bar. The Beachcomber is a family-friendly restaurant until 9 p.m., when it morphs into a club with live entertainment, anything from surf-rock to reggae to jazz.

**Signature Drink:** The Goombay Smash, spiced and coconut rum with pineapple and orange juice, \$7.



## [Beach Tree Bar, Big Island, HI](#)

**The Scene:** Come as you are to this aloha-friendly bar, part of the Four Seasons Resort, but much more rustic. Wiggle your toes in the sand, sip a drink, and embrace the bar's motto: don't worry, be happy. You'll want your camera at the ready to capture the sun as it sets behind the iconic beach tree for which the bar is named. Try one of the equally colorful cocktails or a glass from its selection of more than 60 wines.

**Signature Drink:** Tom's Pink Shirt, a combination of Tanqueray Rangpur, orchid guava liqueur, strawberries, lime juice, agave nectar, and Sprite, \$16.

