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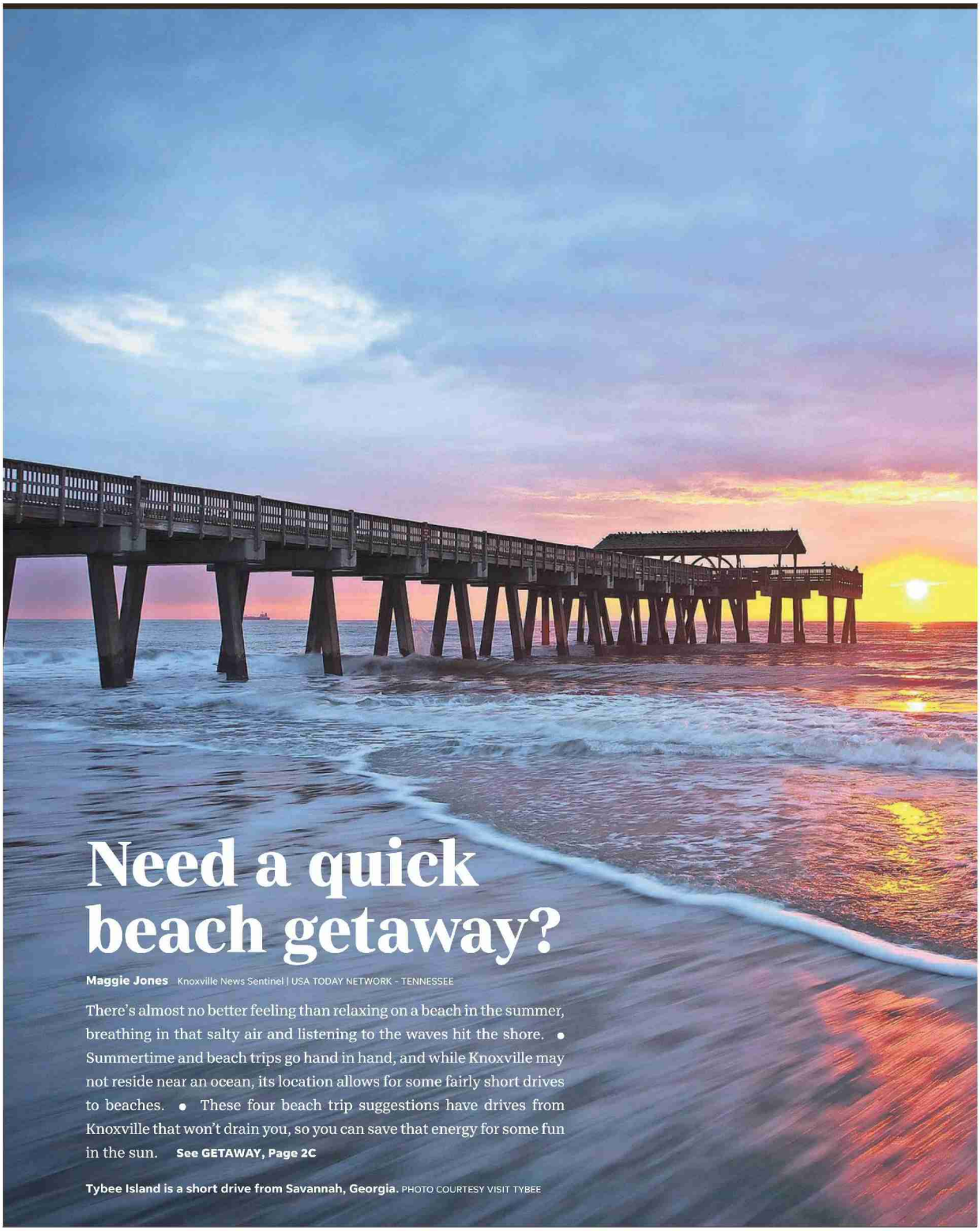

Need a quick beach getaway?

Maggie Jones Knoxville News Sentinel | USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

There's almost no better feeling than relaxing on a beach in the summer, breathing in that salty air and listening to the waves hit the shore. • Summertime and beach trips go hand in hand, and while Knoxville may not reside near an ocean, its location allows for some fairly short drives to beaches. • These four beach trip suggestions have drives from Knoxville that won't drain you, so you can save that energy for some fun in the sun. **See GETAWAY, Page 2C**

Tybee Island is a short drive from Savannah, Georgia. PHOTO COURTESY VISIT TYBEE

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Myrtle Beach/North Myrtle Beach

Distance and time via Google Maps: 411 miles, 6 hours and 31 minutes

While it's an obvious choice, Myrtle Beach and North Myrtle Beach's close proximity to Knoxville make them easy destinations for those seeking a nearby beach trip, and there's plenty of fun to be had.

Myrtle Beach and North Myrtle Beach are separate cities with their own beaches, attractions, restaurants and accommodations.

If you're seeking more of a peaceful escape, North Myrtle Beach provides a quieter setting, and it's around half the size of Myrtle Beach.

That doesn't mean you'll be bored though. In addition to its beaches, North Myrtle Beach features several live entertainment theaters, horseback riding excursions, a winery, water sports and other attractions.

If you want to enjoy the beach experience with carnival rides and typical tourist fare, Myrtle Beach will have you covered.

The town has several beaches to choose from including Surfside, Garden City, Pawley's Island and others. Its Broadway on the Beach entertainment complex provides activities beyond the shore with a movie theater, mini-golf, racing tracks, a Ferris wheel and other rides.

Charleston, South Carolina

Distance and time via Google Maps: 373 miles, 5 hours and 39 minutes

Just a bit farther down the South Carolina coast from Myrtle Beach sits Charleston, the largest city in the state.

Charleston has nearby communities with beaches where you can stay, including Sullivan's Island, Folly Beach and Isle of Palms.

The city itself also offers much to do. Charleston features beautiful buildings and sites to tour and restaurants focusing on seafood and southern cuisine.

Highlights include visiting the Charleston City Market, which is open daily and has more than 300 vendors in its three open air sheds and great hall, and exploring one of its many historic churches.

Savannah, Georgia

Distance and time via Google Maps: 416 miles, 6 hours and 13 minutes

Like Charleston, Savannah combines beach life, history and a southern setting.

If you want to go to the beach, Tybee Island is a short drive from Savannah and features beaches, restaurants, vacation rentals and shops. Other activities include dolphin viewings and visiting the island's lighthouse.

Savannah boasts its own set of things to do. One must-see is the 30-acre Forsyth Park, which features a cafe, memorials, a garden, playgrounds for children and a farmers market on Saturday mornings.

Visitors can also test out Savannah's Southern food scene, check out its many art galleries, historic homes and churches, and take a ghost or boat tour through the city and its waterways.

Gulf Shores, Alabama

Distance and time via Google Maps: 535 miles, 7 hours and 55 minutes

Gulf Shores may have a longer drive than others on this list, but you gain an hour while traveling there because it's in Central Time. Gulf Shores has many beaches and other activities.

Visitors to Gulf State Park can hang out on the beach and take part in paddle boarding, golfing, walking trails, fishing and camping.

The Hangout, a beachside complex in Gulf Shores, offers visitors beach access along with a restaurant, live music, bars, photo ops, shops and games all within walking distance.

If you want to venture beyond the beaches, pay a visit to Alabama Gulf Shores Zoo, which features kangaroos, lemurs, reptiles, sloths and more.

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