VIRGINIA BEACH SUNRISES

VOLUME 1

Shawn Young

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Virginia Beach Sunrises, Vol. 1
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For more information, please visit www.shawnyoung.com
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For Connor

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Introduction



The full explanation of how I arrived in Virginia Beach is probably part of a larger story but, in general terms, it involved a series of things that I didn't exactly sign up for and that I wouldn't even wish on people I don't like. And all of that concluded with a one-way ticket to Hawaii in the fall of 2016.

I'd been to Hawaii many times before, and I didn't think I'd ever go back again. But it was there that I was, walking out of the terminal at Honolulu International Airport, greeted by that pleasantly-warm, breezy air, thick with saltwater and earth and vegetation, which characterizes nearly every place in the islands. I traveled light and stayed with an old Polynesian friend near the North Shore of Oahu. It was rough living, but, on some level, I also felt back at home again.

Early Mornings at the Beach

I believe that, when faced with challenging conditions, one should look for and start working with what good things are at hand, and that's how life gets better. In Hawaii, I was in a really tough situation and, beyond just my own individual circumstances, the immediately-apparent contrasts in daily life there can be unsettling by themselves. The differences between rich and poor, local and foreign, dark-skinned and light-skinned, civil and desperate, educated and underprivileged—and the intersection points of these axises and many others—were everywhere; these qualities and their extremes collided there like in few places that I've ever lived, and it was impos-

sible to go through a day and not be confronted by the harsh realities that precipitated. Still, I made an effort to look for the things that I could leverage, and I soon found a rhythm based on some of those elements.

I would start my day usually waking up while it was still dark, on the old military cot that I slept on, with the sound of forest birds and chickens outside. My old friend would usually be up already, and we'd often sit and talk for an hour or two about history or local politics while the rest of the world was still asleep. When the first signs of daylight would appear, I'd walk down the long dirt country road, passing a couple of horse stables and small farms, crossing the two-lane Kam Highway, and then cutting through the forest on a small footpath out to the beach. There, I had a spot under an ironwood tree where the grass was low, soft and even, and I'd stretch out, hydrate, meditate a little, dive in the ocean, and generally get centered. From there, I'd spend most of my mornings and afternoons freelancing, making use of a university library in the area as my unofficial co-working space. In the evenings, after it got dark, I'd often drink coffee and continue to work in the lobby of a nearby old resort hotel.

Instagram

I put a lot of what I did during that time in Hawaii—or at least the parts on land, where I had a phone with me—on my personal Instagram account, which you can find at @postmeta. As a designer and developer who helps small businesses to market their products and services better, I would occasionally get asked by clients about how to best use social media to reach new customers. That, to me, was an interesting question, and it was one that was becoming more and more relevant as time went on and social media use in society was generally growing. While in Hawaii, I made it a point to figure it out. I paid attention to friends and acquaintances who had built large followings, and I noticed what they did and then ran my own experiments. Within a short time, my personal account went from 110 followers to 2,200 followers. And while those aren't huge numbers, for the sake of purely answering my original question, I did figure out some factors that go into making a social media account attract

attention and grow. This social media activity was a very small part of what I did during that chapter in Hawaii, but I mention it here because it relates to the topic of this book.

Moving to Virginia Beach

The months in Hawaii were productive. I worked hard. It was not easy, and it was far from a vacation. All along the way, the question that I constantly asked myself was, *How do I get out of here?*

There's something about difficult times that can help one to narrow down to what is really important. For me, I had a five-year-old son in Northern Virginia who I had been very close with and then effectively cut off from and, more than anything, I knew how important fathers are in children's lives, and I wanted to get back to him in order to do what I could to make sure that he grew up to be capable and well-adjusted. However, I also felt stuck, constrained by the odd context of my own life; I did my best, but all I knew how to do was all I could do.

Slowly, however, things started to shift and opportunities began to appear. There was a round-trip flight, an all-day round of interviews and a very generous job offer in Silicon Valley that I declined. (That is a road not taken that I will probably think about for the rest of my life.) I kept looking. Eventually, I found a job in Virginia—Virginia Beach, to be exact—and, while the job itself didn't pay much, it put me within range of my son spending time with me again, and that seemed like an option that I could use.

After a stopover in Utah, I flew to Richmond, Virginia on June 10, 2017. There was a storage unit in Fredericksburg that I had, which contained the things from my old house, and a van that I had left parked near a train station not too far away. A good friend gave me a lift to pick up my car, then I swapped gear out of the storage unit, then drove further north, toward Washington, DC, to spend what time I could with my son. The next day, on Sunday night, I drove back south to Virginia Beach to start my first day of work on Monday morning, June 12.

I'd been to Virginia Beach a few times before, so I knew my way around—at least a little bit. In October 2012, I'd spent my 40th birthday sliding on glassy, clear, green little waves under the most blue, nearly cloudless sky. A few years later, in the summer of 2016, when my son

was four, he and I caught his first wave after paddling out from the beach together to get a closer look at some dolphins that were swimming beyond the lineup at the 1st Street jetty. And beyond that, I'd made maybe a dozen day trips there over the years when the surf forecast looked promising and I had a chance to break away from where I had been staying, in the DC area. But despite this past experience, actually moving to Virginia Beach seemed like a bit of a surreal course change. Still, it was not one that I was entirely opposed to.

On a personal level, I liked Virginia Beach. The energy was noticeably different than Northern Virginia. As I got to know it better, it felt a little bit like an East Coast variation of San Diego, and I liked that a lot. However, it was also in the course of some considerable personal turmoil that I was going there. So, like I'd done in Hawaii, after I arrived, I started identifying the pieces of a life that I could put together. There was really good coffee and health food. There was a small local gym. And there were a couple of spots that produced good waves once in a while. And the people that I started to meet in the day-to-day course of things seemed genuinely down-to-earth, unassuming, and good-natured, and with all of the ups and downs of the few years before, that was such a welcome thing for a change.

Social Media Methodology

For the most part, I lived that summer of 2017 in survival mode. I knew all this going into it, but the IT job that I took didn't pay enough to even get a basic apartment, so I slept in my van when I arrived. I ate simple and saved what money I could. Like in Hawaii, for some reason, I would often be wide awake by 4 AM, so for lack of anything else to do so early in the day, I'd usually just drive to 1st Street and check the waves. And, since I was there at the beach before sunrise most mornings, I soon began taking out my phone and snapping a couple of pictures. This just became part of the routine. After a few weeks, I thought it would be good to share the photos with others, so I started an Instagram account for that sole purpose. I called it @vabeachsunrises, and the idea behind it was simple and straightforward: to share a bit of the view that I was feeling really fortunate to enjoy day after day.

I took the first photo on June 14, 2017, which was two days after I arrived. That's the first photo in this book, after the introduction. I started the Instagram account itself about two months later, on August 23, and I posted about 10 photos from prior to that date in order to get the account up to speed. From that point forward, I posted a few days a week and, using some of the things that I'd picked up using social media in Hawaii, took note of the follower milestones—100, 200, 300, 500. When the account attracted the interest of 1,000 followers about three weeks later, I started to think that there might be something worthwhile to it, so I kept going.

In October 2017, about four months after I arrived in Virginia Beach, I got an apartment a few blocks from the ocean, so I continued the same daily program of going to the beach in the mornings, and it was easy to continue sharing photos to the account. Based on some practices that I'd identified in my experimenting with social media before, my approach to @vabeachsunrises was fairly direct:

1. Post about a single topic that others would want to see.
2. Post regularly.
3. Do it with quality.
4. Keep myself out of it, for the most part.

In a professional sense, I also used it to continue to experiment and make a study out of the social media platform, itself—stress testing, seeing what worked, what didn't, what made the account grow, and what could be expected from an Instagram account in terms of marketing reach and even potential monetization. It wasn't that I was going about it aggressively or was only focused on the numbers, but in a sort of academic sense, I was genuinely interested in the workings of social media, and this was an opportunity to learn.

Apart from the data-driven side of the account, on a more artistic level, at first, I just shot basic photos looking straight out toward the horizon. There was a kind of simple, understated Rothkoesque minimalism to this that I liked—a quality of, all other things being equal, how did this sunrise compare to the day before, and how would it compare to the day after? After some time, though, I started to look for ways to compose my photos to make them more interesting, so I began to play with new angles and different locations.

Eventually, I started to develop a kind of structure with the account, and I settled on a specific content program:

- Two or three short videos, posted in the account's story.
- A photograph of the sunrise, portrait orientation, posted to the account's feed, if of high enough quality.
- A photograph of the sunrise, often in landscape orientation, to be sent in reply to DMs.
- A short video of coffee after sunrise, usually while getting started with my workday, posted to the account's story.
- Announcements, news, and props to people who reposted my story or photos, which I also posted in the account's story.

All along, I made an effort to keep everything aligned to these points. I wanted there to be a sense of consistency and predictability in the content that I shared. From personal experience, this would be the first thing that I would recommend to almost anyone seeking to cultivate a larger audience on social media.

Community

Regardless of where it is in the world, in all of my travels, it seems that good people tend to show up on the beach early in the morning. There was a crew of regulars at the jetty and the Rudee Loop parking lot who always said hello and who were always good to talk with. I also met other people taking photos on the beach. One of these was someone named Zebbie (@100_percent_that_beach), who had an extraordinary ability to find the most amazing things on her walks in the woods and early morning strolls on the sand. I met another guy named John (@4a2015) who, like me, had spent a good part of his twenties snowboarding in the Mountain West. He had also run on foot across the entire United States—an amazing feat—and did it twice, both times for a charitable cause. He and I met up for sunrises and coffee quite a bit until he moved back out west again. There was also someone named Tracy who contacted me and asked me if she could borrow from my idea and make a Virginia Beach sunsets account. I thought this was so cool, not only because what I was doing inspired someone else and that she had a genuinely good idea, but also because she had the consideration to ask. Her account is

@vabeachsunsets and I recommend checking it out.

One thing that I started doing after the Virginia Beach Sunrises account gained a little popularity was opening it up to guest posts. One such guest post was by someone named Carlye (@gnarly_carlye) on October 14, 2018. She shot a photo that was really low to the sand and the waterline filled the foreground. This single photo got more likes than any that I had posted up to that point. It was doubly interesting to me because I had been on the beach that same morning and, in comparison, I had totally just mailed it in, as they say, with my own photos. I took note and, in a spirit of healthy competition, realized that she set the high bar that I had to now exceed. This low angle method that she used was impressive and one that I started using more and more. Eventually, I took it even further and just started putting my camera down directly on the wet sand, so the lens was just millimeters off the ground. When done well, this gave a really impressive foreground effect and an especially shallow depth of field. An example of this method is in the photo from September 17, 2019, which you can find toward the end of this book.

Camera Equipment

I've received a lot of DMs from people who have asked me what kind of camera I use. Basically, all of the photos on the Instagram account (and in this book) were shot with a phone. At first, I used an iPhone 6s Plus, which was the phone that I had with me in Hawaii from 2016–2017 and that I was using when I got to Virginia Beach. Eventually, though, I upgraded to an iPhone XS. So, you might notice a difference in quality before and after October 10, 2018, when I made the switch. (In the summer of 2020, I upgraded again to an iPhone 12 Pro Max, which I used exclusively as a camera and social media device, so that's another break point at which the quality of my photos on the Instagram account noticably changed.)

Early on, I tried using a DSLR camera to get what I thought might be better images than what the phone's camera produced, but while the undeniably better image quality was compelling, the bulky hardware and cumbersome workflow made it a non-starter for social media; being able to shoot, edit, and post all on the same device was

such a game-changer in photography, and it was undeniably convenient. Eventually, I just sold all my DSLR hardware and I've mostly not regretted it since—at least not for sunrise shots.

While the DSLR camera proved too slow and limiting, one thing that I did start using with success was a set of phone camera add-ons by a company called Moment. Of these, an 18mm wide-angle lens attachment provided great results with the iPhone XS. Typically, with photos taken on a phone, regardless of the make and model, the images are predictably similar. I liked how the add-on lens changed the entire field of view. You can see this in the photo from August 11, 2019, which was taken at the 15th Street pier. Another thing that I started using at around this time was a filter attachment by the same company, combined with a 37mm CPL filter. I found that this could be used to reduce glare off of the water and it made photos generally more clear and vivid. If you're into photography—and especially outdoor photography—I'd recommend looking into getting something like this. It's one thing that I definitely wish I'd discovered earlier on.

Looking forward, rather than upgrading to a specialty camera, I can see myself just continuing to upgrade my phone periodically and using these types of add-on lenses and filters, as needed (though that is becoming less and less the case as phone cameras get better and better). This route seems like the best way to go for almost anything getting published to screens.

Workflow

Like other aspects of the account, my general workflow for taking photos developed over time. Initially, I started out casually, taking just a few shots and selecting the single best image after the fact. However, as the account gained viewers and the posts gained attention, I started to put more effort into really getting the best photos that I could. Eventually, this resulted in me taking anywhere between 20 and 200 photos each morning, depending on the sunrise, plus a few videos. (One morning, I shot 384 photos, which is, admittedly, ridiculous. It was a good sunrise, though!) The many-photos method was due to the simple fact that the digital camera allows you take as many pictures as you want and throw away 99% of them when you're done.

And that was exactly my technique for a while. I would just shoot everything, trying to get the light at just the right time, the waterline in just the right place, or birds at just the right moment. I made the large number of photos manageable by reviewing my camera roll every few minutes along the way and favoriting the best ones as I'd go. After about 30-45 min on the beach, I'd have about 20 that were pretty good. When I finished shooting, I'd bulk select and move everything that wasn't marked with a heart to the trash, then unfavorite all of those that I'd marked, then review again and mark two or three as absolute favorites, with the rest left as outtakes of the session.

Eventually, the method above started to seem rather messy, and I began to go the other way, seeing if I could actually take as few pictures as possible—as in seeing if I could just theoretically walk out there onto the beach and, with the right mix of timing and attention, just nail the shot in one take. That's an extreme case, but once I'd adopted this streamlined method of shooting with precision, I stopped spending my time on the beach trying to get photos and instead just enjoyed watching the sun rise in the sky again.

Wilderness

On a very personal level, in any place that I've lived, having a sense of connection to nature has mattered a lot to me. I've sought out wilderness wherever I can find it—often in far-flung places in deserts and mountains, as its been in much of my adult life. In a more urbanized place like Virginia Beach, the ocean is that wilderness. The buildings can only go so far, and once you step past the waterline, you're suddenly in a bit of a different world. So, going to the beach in the morning has been a kind of spiritual practice for me. To varying levels, I've seen it's also that way for many other people. The beach scene at sunrise, literally, is sometimes one of a kind of informal religious community, with everyone's attention turned toward a singular thing and everyone drawing their own personal and universal meaning from the event unfolding in front of them.

Everyday Astronomy

The Sun, as an object in nature, is our planet's closest star. It's

about 93 million miles (150 million kilometers) away. The light that it creates takes a full eight minutes to reach us on Earth once it leaves its surface. Compared to our planet, the Sun is huge. To put it in perspective, if the Sun was the size of a large grapefruit, the Earth would be about the size of a tiny grain of sand, and at that scale, the distance between the two would be about 40 feet (12 meters). To put it in slightly different terms, if the Sun was the size of a regular basketball, the Earth would be about the size of a tiny pebble and 90 feet (30 meters) away. For cosmic things, that's a scale that's at least somewhat comprehensible.

It never ceases to amaze me that, when standing by the waterline at the oceanfront, the sun only appears to be rising because, at the point on the earth where we're situated in Virginia Beach, we're actually just spinning toward it at the rate of 839 mph (1,350 km/h). We're, literally, being hurled toward it faster than the speed of sound. Add to that the fact that the Earth itself is traveling through space at a rate of 66,627 mph (107,226 km/h) in its orbit around the Sun, and the additional fact that the Sun and our solar system, as a group, are moving at about 448,000 mph (720,986 km/h) around the galaxy. Unlike the relative scale of the Earth and Sun, those speeds are kind of confounding to think about, yet here we are. Everything is in motion—and moving astonishingly fast. And, if you contemplate that for a moment while watching the sun rise, it's easy to access a state of awe for a little while.

I think we're fortunate on the East Coast in that we get the sunrise over the ocean (and, perhaps, doubly fortunate in the Virginia Beach area in that we get sunsets over the Chesapeake Bay, as well). Looking east in the winter, the sun crosses the horizon to the south. In the summer, it's more to the north. As a result of simply showing up so often, I started tracking the north-south travel of the sun across the horizon and was a little surprised by how much movement there was from one end to the other through the seasons. I made a sort of informal study of this. Over the course of a few months, I took a photo from the same point at the top of the Rudee Inlet bridge on the first day of the month, every month. The bridge became a sort of makeshift astronomical observatory. You can see this by scrolling back

through the account or searching for the hashtag #rudeeinletastrolab, which will pull up all of the photos of that group.

Urban Exploration

From an artistic perspective, over time, the photographs that I was taking at the beach became for me a study of tension—of getting the waterline and surrounding forces balanced just right, and trying to capture that balance in a single image. Some obvious reference points in the art world were Mark Rothko (referenced earlier) and Hiroshi Sugimoto. There was also some individual precedent to the photographs that I was taking. If you go to my personal Instagram account and scroll back in time, you'll see these same types of photos set across water every so often.

The activity of managing the account also became a sort of prompt for exploration. After a while, I started looking for new angles to shoot from. Occasionally, I would send a drone up in the air, and the resulting images were always impressive, but it also seemed too easy. I started looking behind me from wherever I would happen to be on the beach, studying hotels, and looking for places well above the sand. This would turn into outings with a small backpack, athletic wear, and running shoes—inconspicuously stealing past hotel lobby front desks and finding ways through stairwells onto rooftops—slightly lonesome and forbidden places where the world always feels a bit special—kind of like urban mountaintops, in a sense. I found a few that became go-to spots to get away to.

Making A Book

The idea for a book took shape in August 2019, after about two years of posting photos to the account. Over that time, what I was doing had gained a small audience, and I'd received a really unexpected amount of positive feedback from others who had followed it and enjoyed the photos and stories that I'd been sharing. Some told me that it had helped them to feel connected to nature. Others told me that it had helped them through hard times. Others said it helped them to feel connection to a place that they love and that they looked forward to visiting again. Still others—many of them from distant

places around the world—would thank me for showing them a beautiful place that they'd never known before. I genuinely enjoyed all of this kind of dialogue.

Occasionally, others expressed an interest in having some of the photos that I shared through the Instagram account in print. Personally, as a graphic designer, I love it when a work transcends the digital space to the material world, so as I considered the best way to make this happen with the Instagram account, the idea of a limited-edition photo book became more and more compelling. I used a crowdfunding service to gauge whether the idea had any value, and the project reached its funding goal. So, I moved ahead with the work of producing an actual book.

My method for creating the book was fairly straightforward. I began by reviewing the approximately 300 Instagram posts and choosing about 100 photos from that mix. Next, on my laptop, I made folders for each one of the selected photograph dates, and then went into my own photo archive and pulled down all of the sunrise photos from those days and put them into the folders. Then, I found from that mix the original photos that I'd posted, and I also identified three to five outtakes from each day. Next, I created a document in Adobe InDesign and built a few parent pages that would become the basis of the book layout. It took a lot of time to sort through and organize, but the formula was fairly simple from there: just drop photos into frames, build the document, export to PDF, and send it to print. Apart from bits that I'd been jotting down in the notes app on my phone along the way, this introduction was actually the most difficult part in the process and the thing that I left until last. Given the ambitious timeline of the project, which was less than three weeks from start to finish, the narrative here is admittedly rough, as I worked to write it against the final deadline to send the book to the printer. In a way, though, there's a quality to that, which I like.

Photograph Selection

As you go through the book, there are some things to take note of. Sometimes, I put a photo in because it is continuous with another day, and I wanted to give the viewer a reference to the change in

the sky from one day to the next. So, every photo isn't necessarily meant to be the best available, but sometimes may be meant to simply provide context and contrast, and to support a different photo that I thought was actually really good. For example, see the photos from September 19–20, 2017, and also from December 29–31, 2017.

In a bit of a different sense, I also constructed the book so that it could potentially be used as an activity for younger kids. If there was ever a list of favorite things that my son and I would do every day when he was very young, at the top of that list would probably be wrestling and reading. In that second activity, he seemed to learn at an early age that the pages of a book could hold things of real interest. I imagined being able to hand this book, with its pages full of pictures, to that younger version of him and saying, "Here! Find the dinosaur!" Or, "Find the dog!" Or, "Find the crab!" Or, "Find the coldest day!" There are a lot of details like that mixed in, and those things were intentional. Prompts to elicit curiosity and to get kids to look closely at the world can be such a good thing, and in a quiet way, I wanted to create an alternate-use option where the book could be approached like a scavenger hunt in this regard.

Personal Notes

Although my primary reason for doing the book was to create an easy-to-share, tangible product that others could have, I also had my own internal reasons for undertaking the project. On a very personal level, I had really started thinking about the way that I was living and using the tech devices that, in the years since 2008, when I got my first iPhone, have really transformed the habits that I use in my daily life. The tech had started to have too much of a footprint and too much of a presence. I've been at least acquainted with people with huge social media audiences, and it has often looked to me to be kind of like a cautionary tale: there's often a discontinuity between the portrayed life and the private life, with the private life characterized by some level of social anxiety, obsession with stats, and constant use of devices to keep tabs on account activity. In my own small level of social media experience, I'd too often caught myself compulsively checking my phone and getting sucked into the time vortex of the

apps, as I'm sure we all have, and I knew that if I ran that story forward five or ten years, it would not exactly leave me being better off for it. I needed to correct course. So, I considered the possibility that the book might be like a kind of capstone project to something that was really good, but that, for practical reasons, just couldn't go on forever—or at least not with the same level of activity that it had while I still maintained the balance of priorities that I truly valued.

There was another reason for wanting to dial back my personal use of social media, and that was due to the fact that the devices and the apps had, in themselves, fundamentally changed since the time that I had first begun using them. As phone hardware and software became more advanced, they provided a suite of features for sophisticated app publishers to collect finely-detailed data about individual users' behavior, which could then be repurposed. It's why Facebook purchased Instagram in 2012 for what seemed at the time to be a staggering amount of a billion US dollars, and it's why that amount has proven to be such a bargain in retrospect. Going even further, sometime in early 2019, Facebook made a big shift in the Instagram algorithm. With that change, I just started to lose interest in a big way. The rules of the game had shifted, and I just felt less interest in trying to figure it out like I had before. Maybe it was time to move on.

Finally, on a very, very basic level, things in my life were just getting better. I started to get some things with my own self sorted out. Quite plainly, the Instagram account was a good thing that came about because of a serious sleep disorder. That was brought on by a few things, but all of the stress that I had been living through for years was a big part of it. But I started to get those things under control, and in so doing, I also started to reprioritize some fundamental self-care. Getting enough sleep was part of that. It was something that I just had to start doing. So, with that, I didn't get up early so often. And that was a good thing.

But as I gained more balance in my personal life, I didn't just start sleeping longer, I also started being able to go to sleep earlier. That was a good thing, too. And, during most of the year in Virginia Beach, the sun doesn't come up all that early, so if you get to sleep at a reasonable time, it's not that difficult to get to the water's edge at the

beginning of the day—especially if you live just a few blocks away. So, I just kept going to the beach. And I kept sharing photos and videos through the account.

I also took some steps to help me temper my social media use. I got a dedicated phone that didn't have a SIM card and generally isn't connected to the Internet, and I put Instagram and all of the related apps on that one device. It usually sits at home on a shelf. There's no compulsion to check the app at points throughout the day when I'm bored or anxious. For the smaller, older phone that I keep with me most of the time, I keep apps to a minimum. There's a nice simplicity to that, and this second-device method is actually something I would recommend to everyone.

The Virginia Beach Sunrises account has been many things to me: it's been a creative outlet; it's been a sort of support community; it's been an organizing practice in my day; it's been a method of paying close attention to the world around me. I'll be honest and will say that the years from 2017–2019 were some dark ones, but it was also a time in which things slowly got brighter. The metaphor is not lost on me in that.

It's a real privilege to have an audience of any kind. It means that one has something of value to give to others. I don't take that for granted. If you enjoyed the Instagram account from which this book originated, thank you. If you were one of the people who supported the publication of the book, you did a seriously cool thing. And if you're reading these words now, thank you, too. I hope you enjoy the images in the pages ahead.

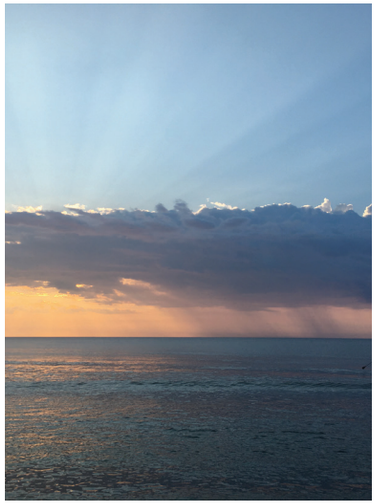
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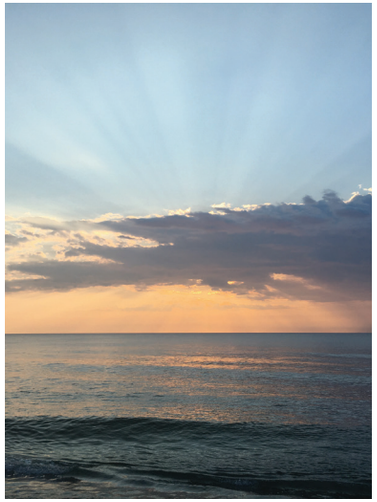












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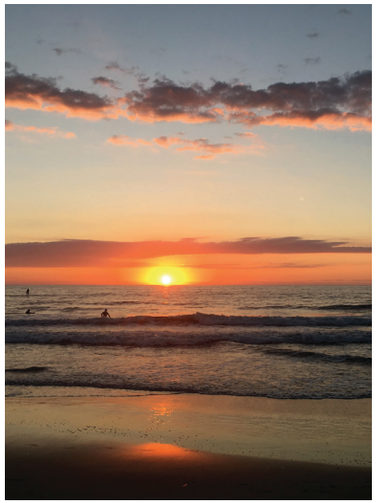
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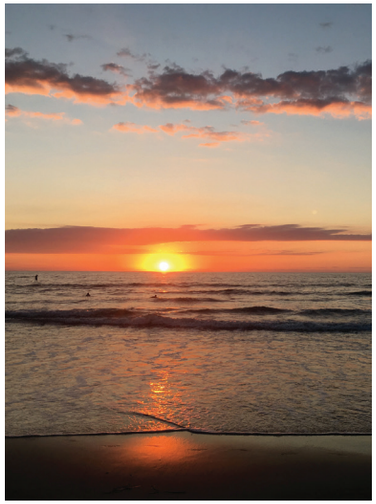
Tuesday, June 27, 2017
3rd Street Beach • 5:32 AM • 64° F

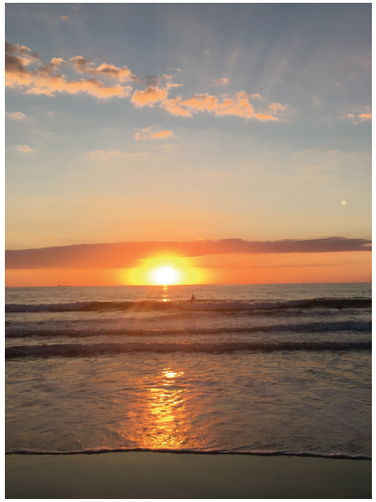
Current Pages

Monday, July 3, 2017
3rd Street Beach • 6:34 AM • 75° F







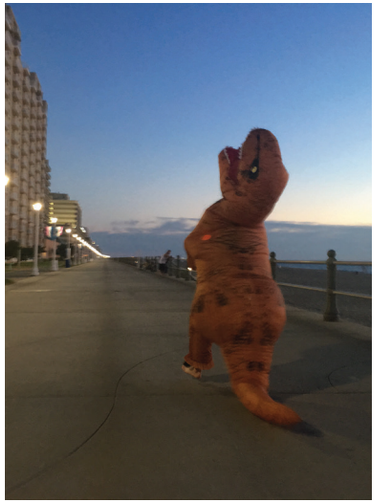


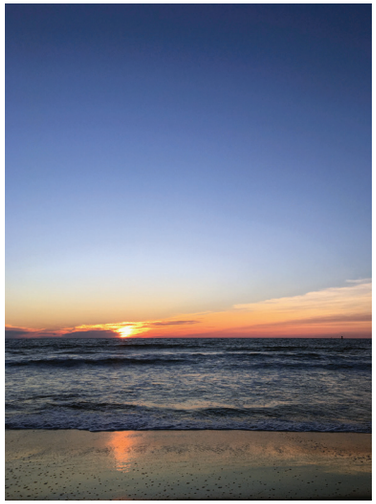
Current Pages

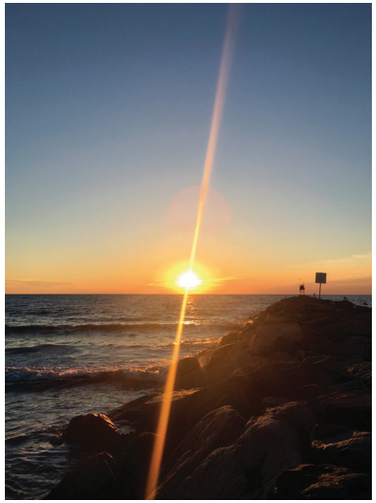
Wednesday, July 26, 2017

2nd Street Beach • 6:12 AM • 72° F





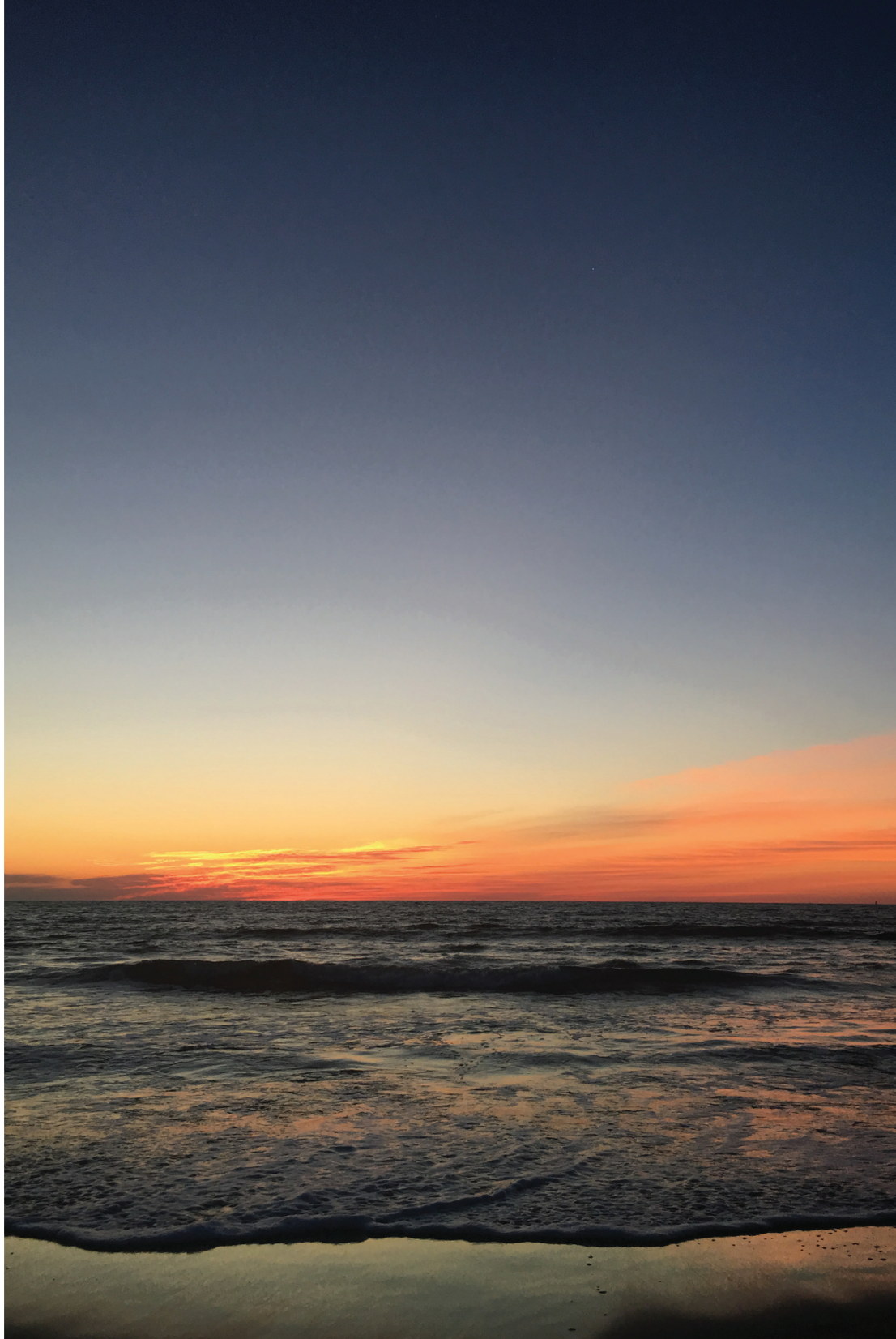




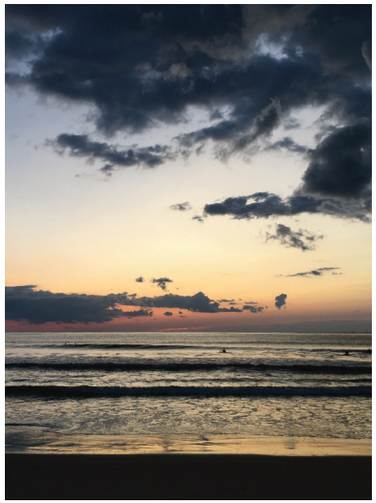
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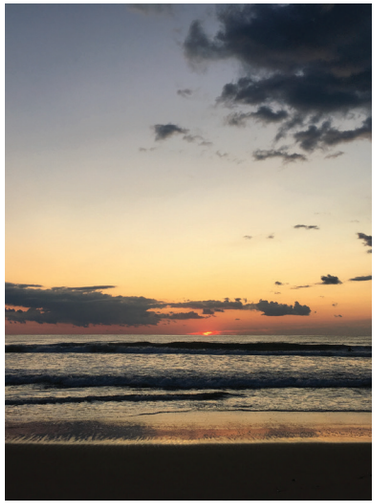
Sunday, August 6, 2017

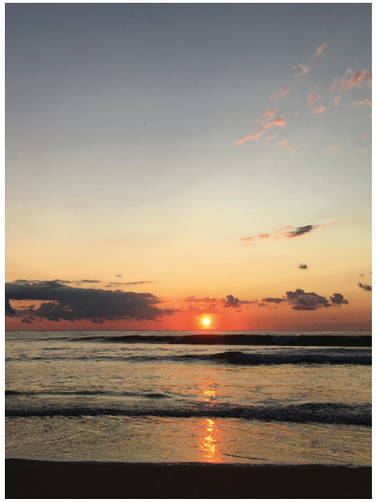
2nd Street Beach • 5:59 AM • 64° F











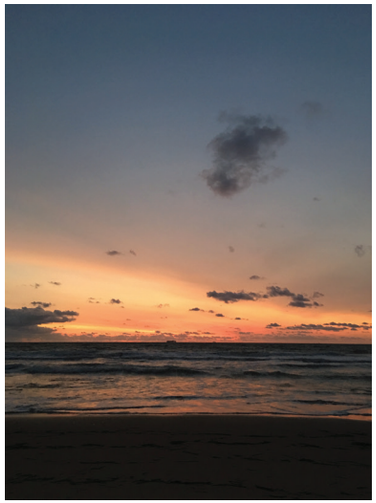
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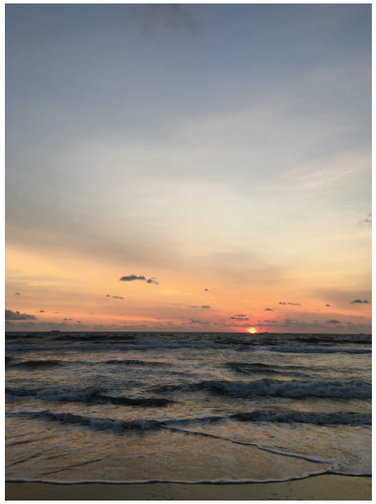
Wednesday, August 23, 2017
1st Street Jetty • 6:34 AM • 75° F

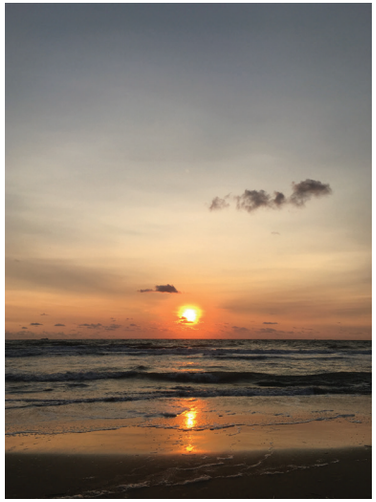
Current Pages

Saturday, September 9, 2017
3rd Street Beach • 6:47 AM • 58° F







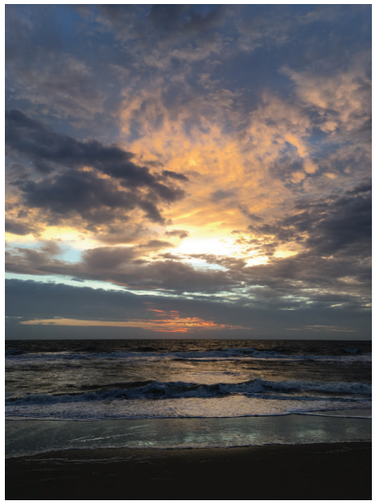


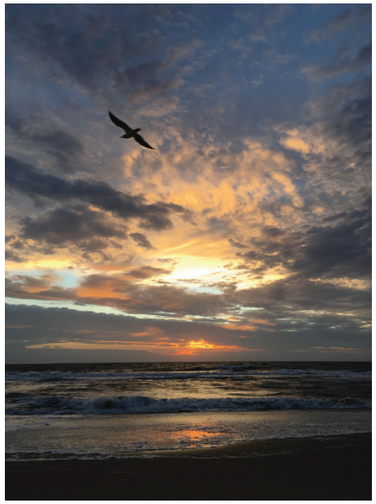
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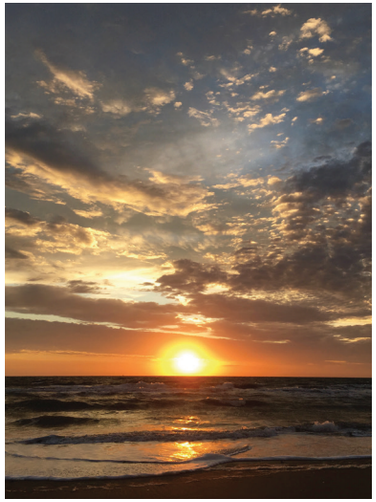
Monday, September 11, 2017

4th Street Beach • 6:55 AM • 67° F





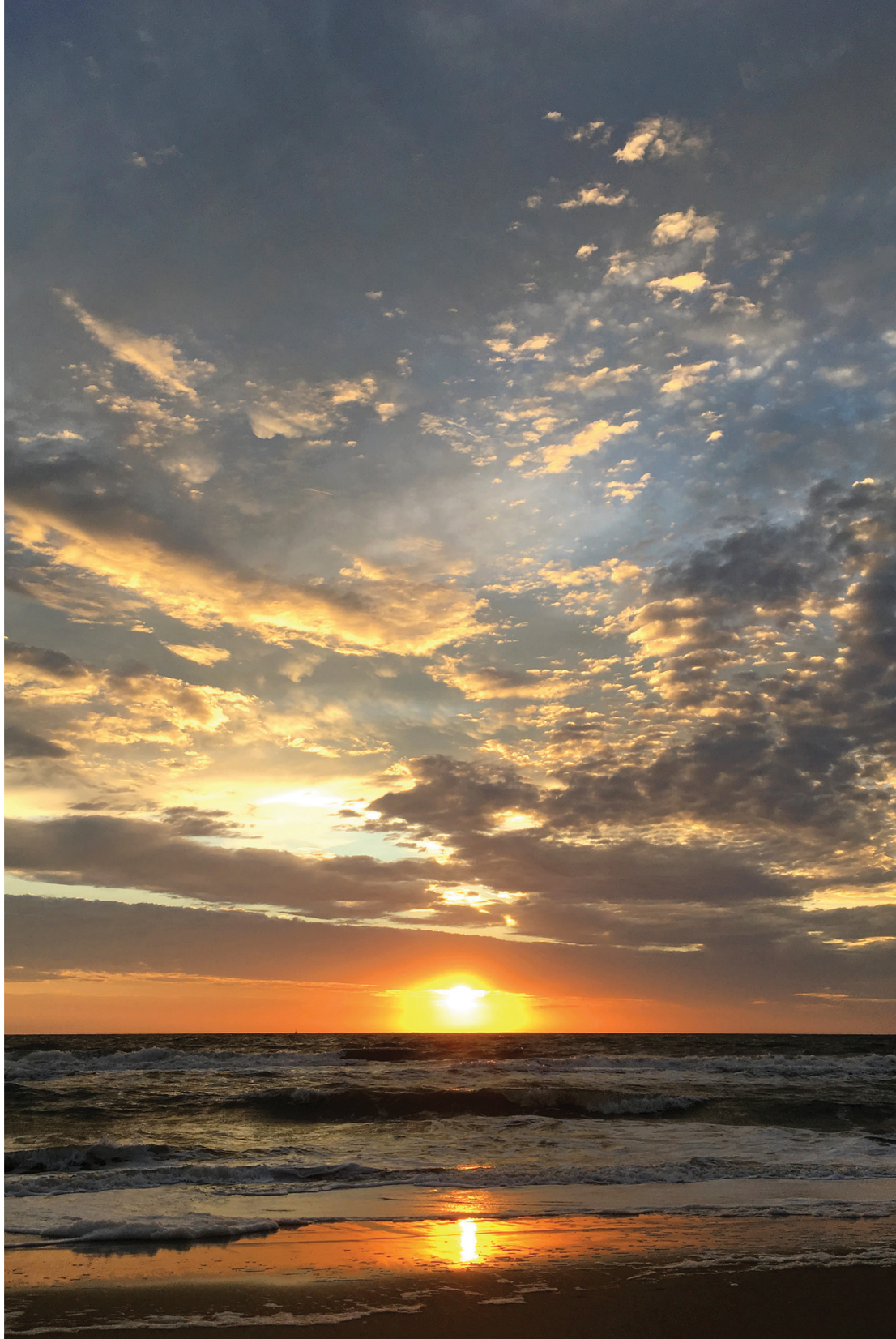




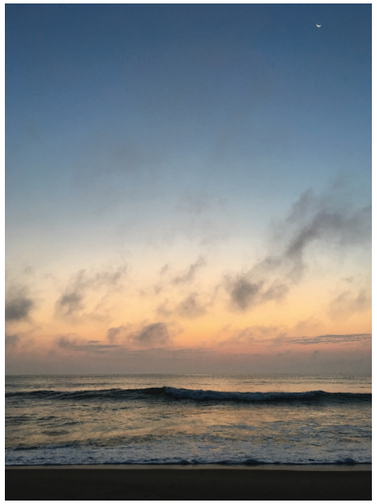
Current Pages

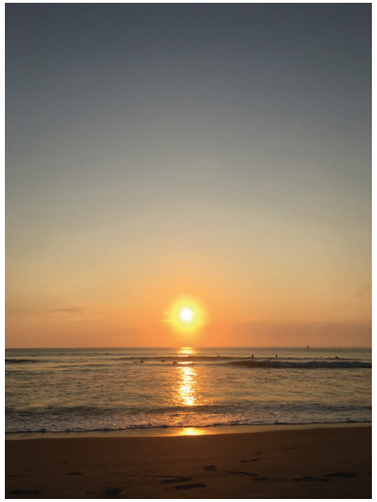
Tuesday, September 12, 2017

Sandbridge • 6:55 AM • 70° F





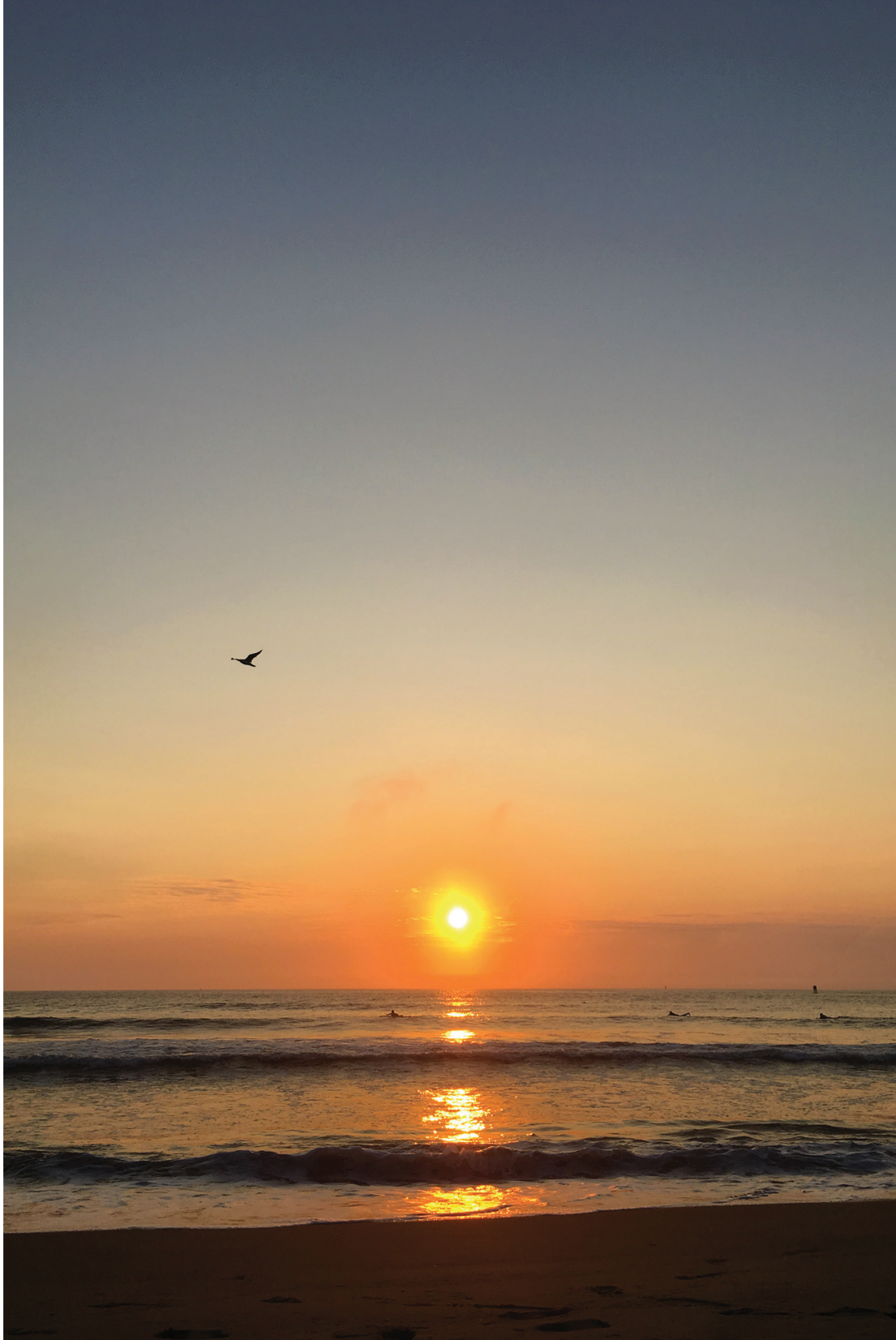




Current Pages

Saturday, September 16, 2017

3rd Street Beach • 7:05 AM • 71° F







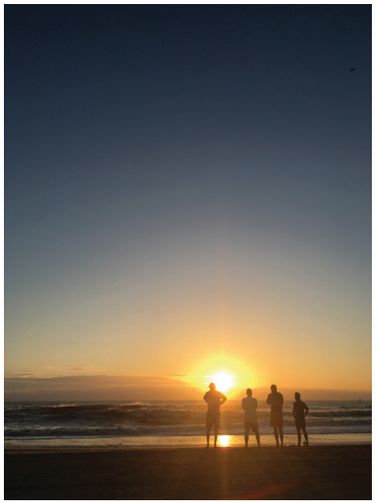


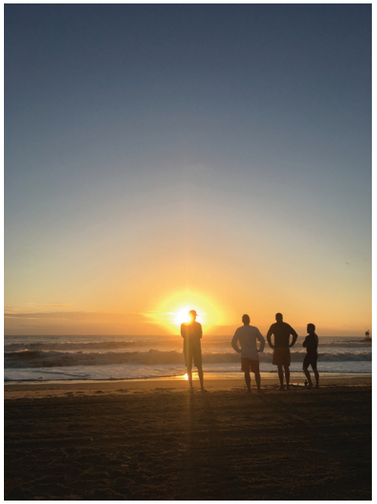
Current Pages

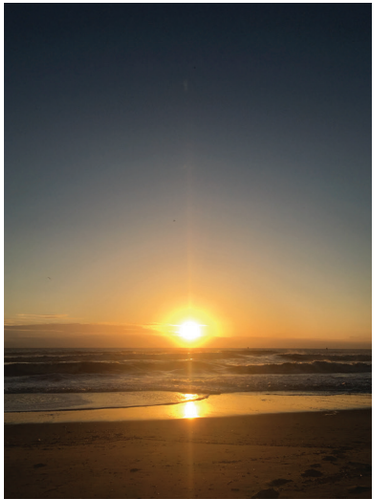
Tuesday, September 19, 2017

1st Street Jetty • 8:26 AM • 72° F







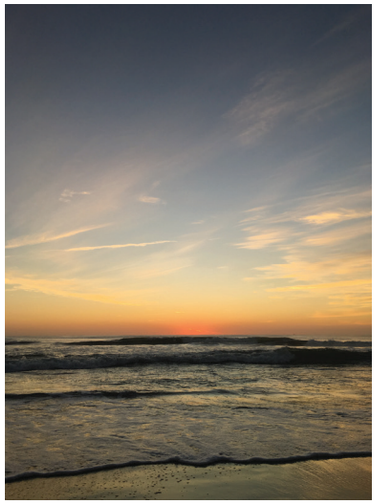


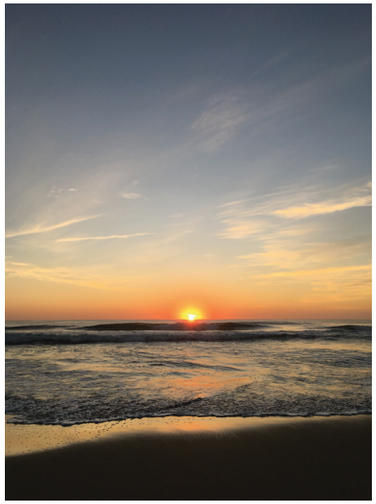
Current Pages

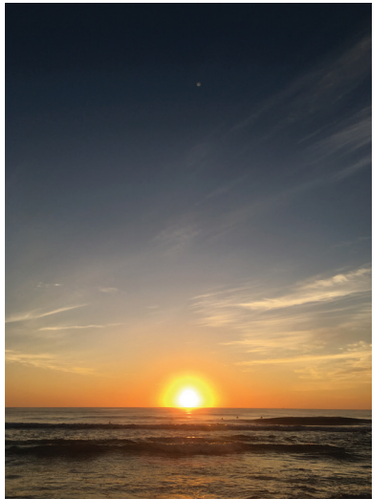
Wednesday, September 20, 2017

1st Street Jetty • 7:02 AM • 71° F





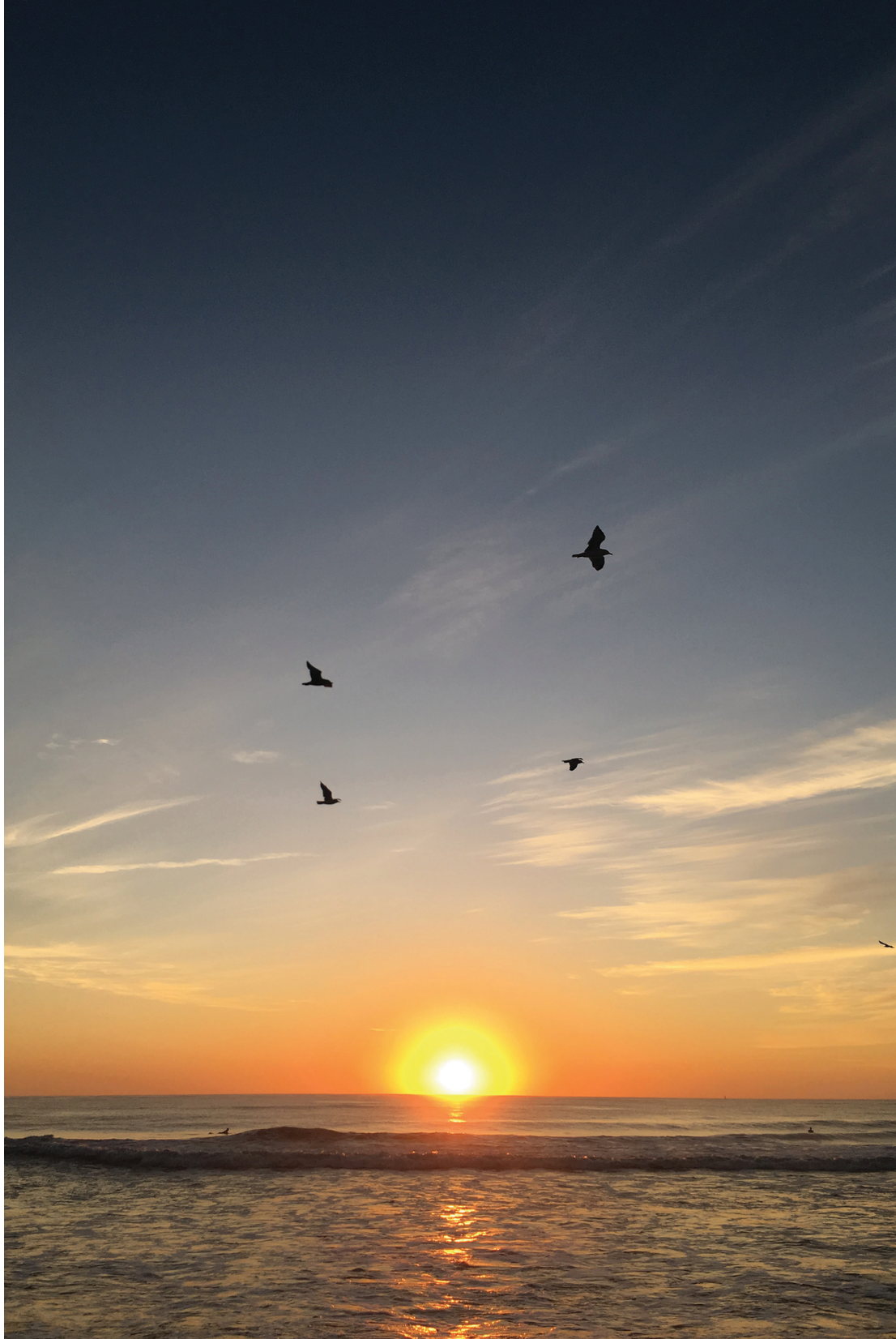




Current Pages

Sunday, September 24, 2017

4th Street Beach • 6:59 AM • 65° F







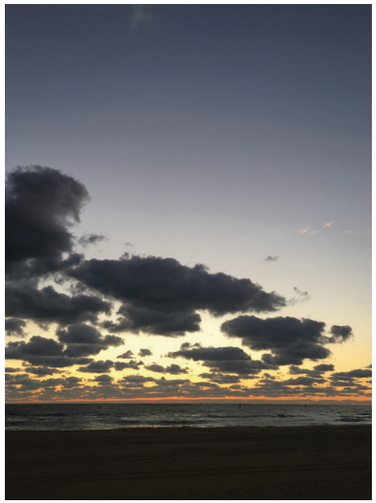


Current Pages

Tuesday, September 26, 2017

3rd Street Beach • 7:10 AM • 72° F







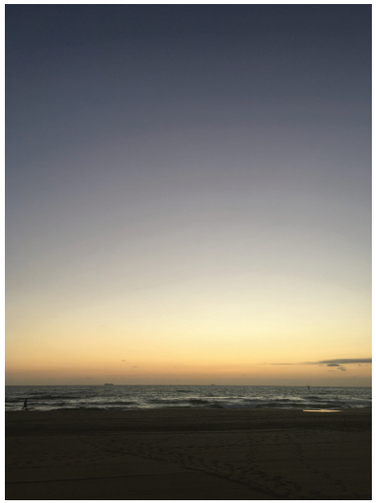


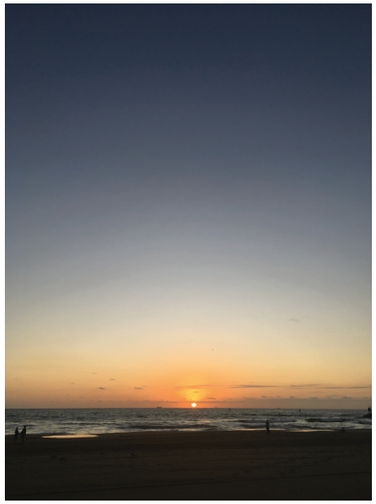
Current Pages

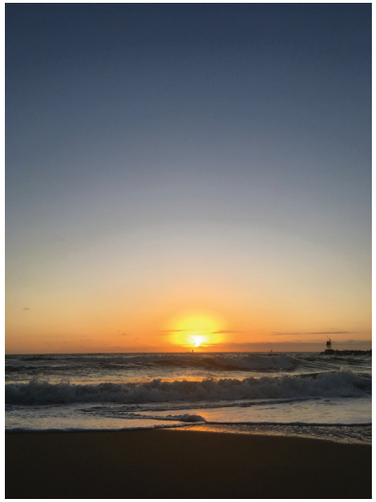
Monday, October 2, 2017

3rd Street Beach • 7:02 AM • 55° F





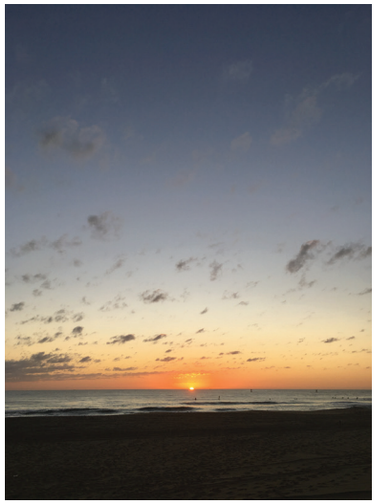


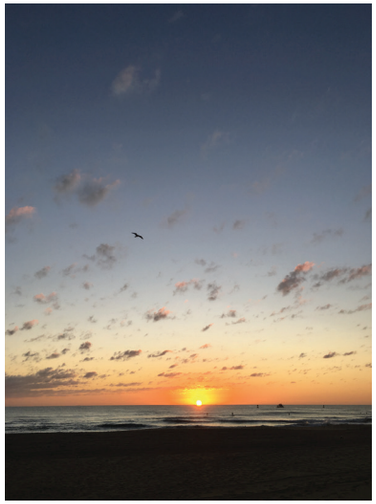


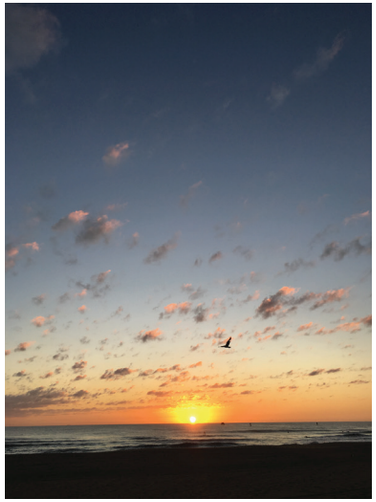
Wednesday, October 4, 2017

1st Street Jetty • 7:08 AM • 55° F









Current Pages

Thursday, October 5, 2017

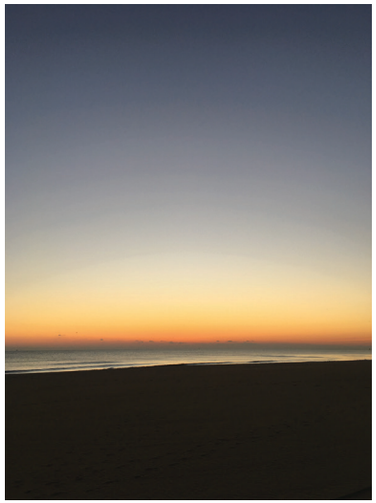
2nd Street Beach • 7:10 AM • 57° F

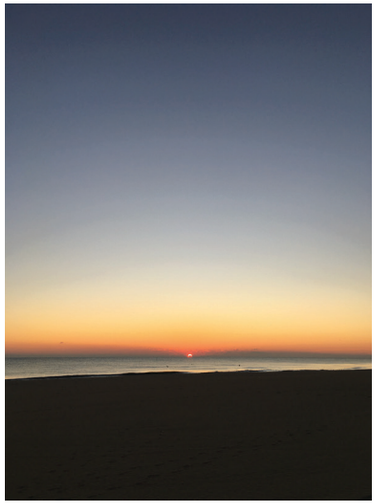


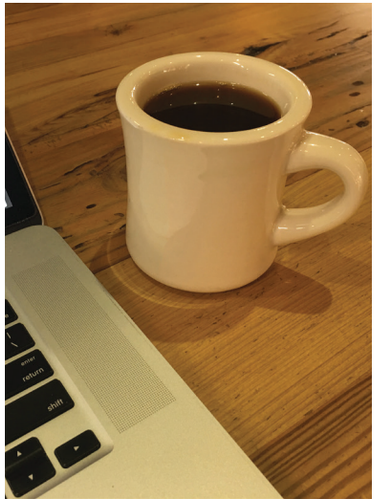


CONTENT REMOVED

Pages 62–71 have been removed from this abridged sample version.



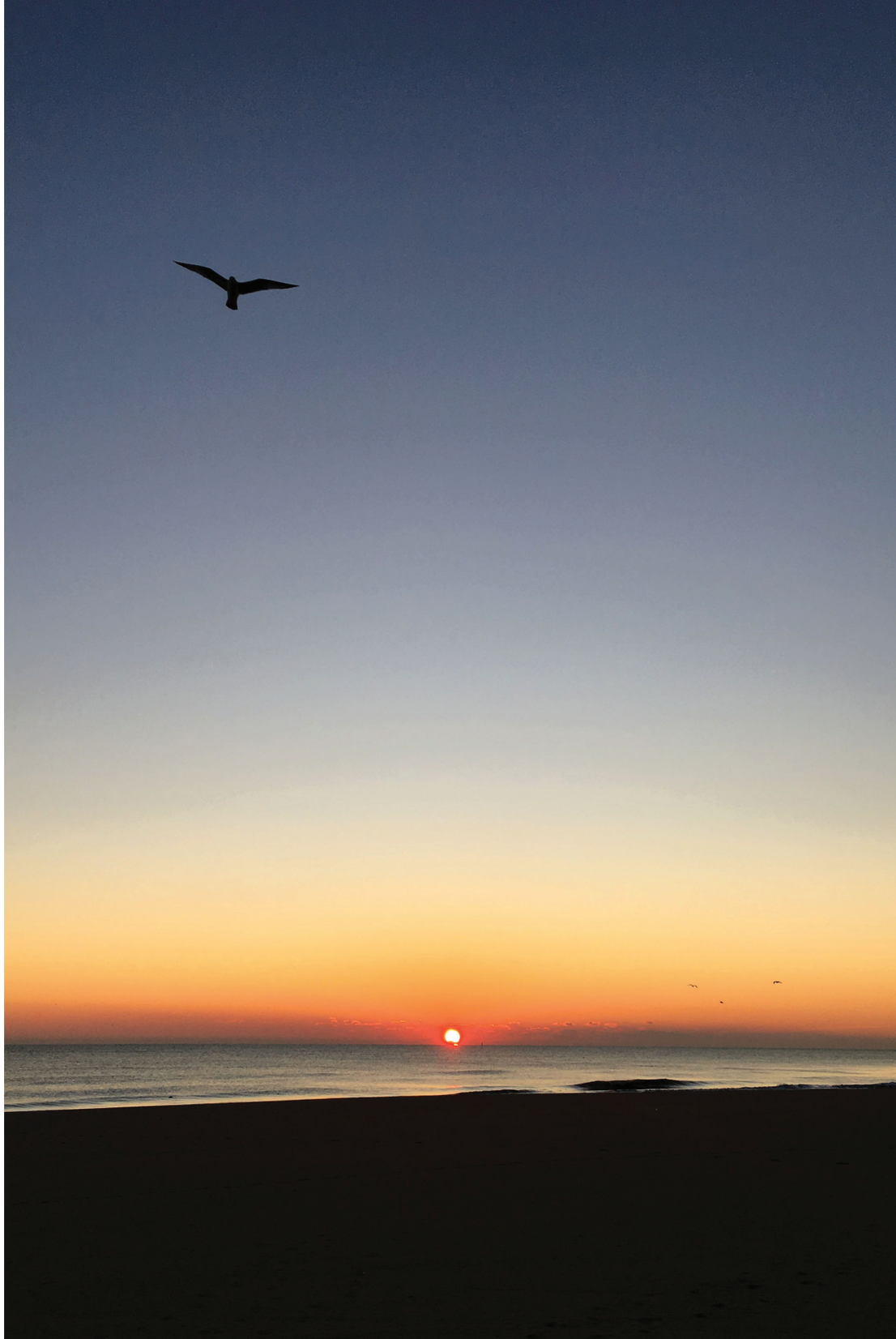


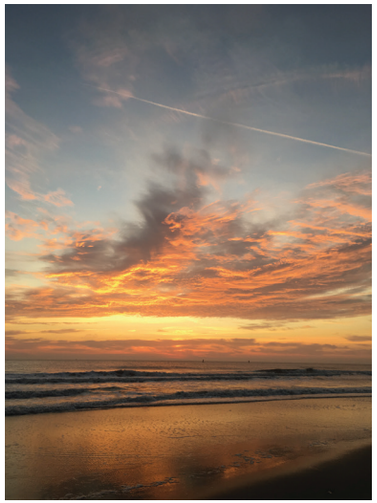


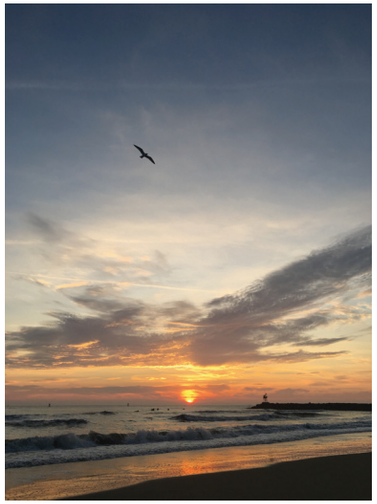
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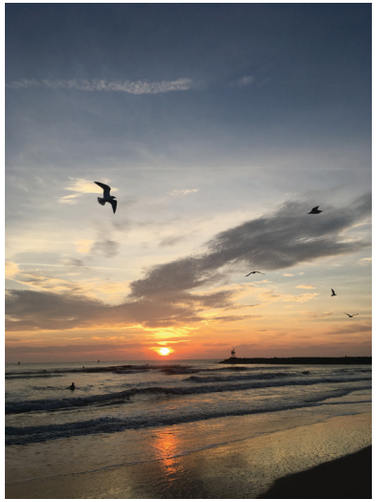
Saturday, December 16, 2017

12th Street Beach • 7:05 AM • 25° F





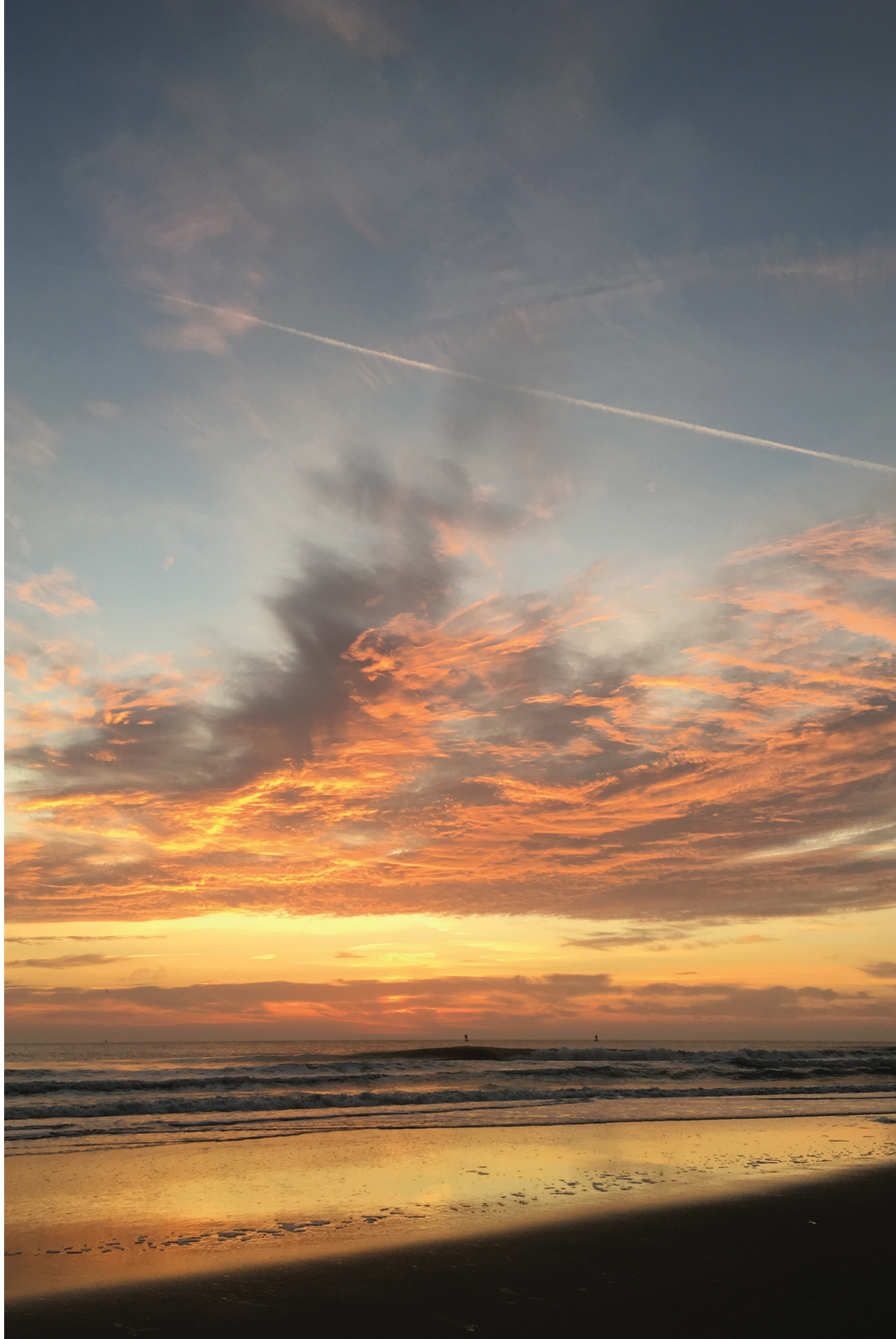


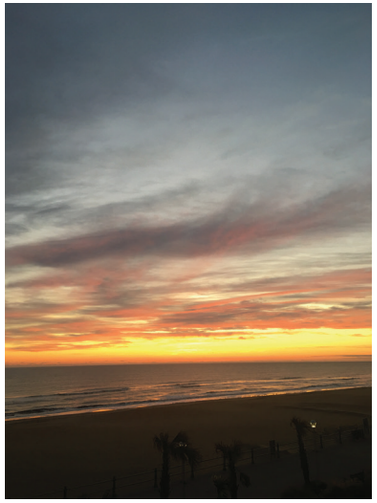


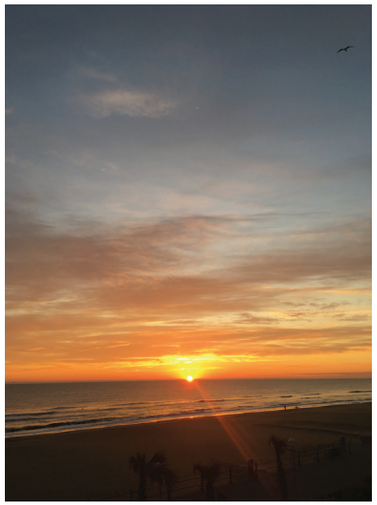
Current Pages

Saturday, December 23, 2017

4th Street Beach • 7:07 AM • 50° F





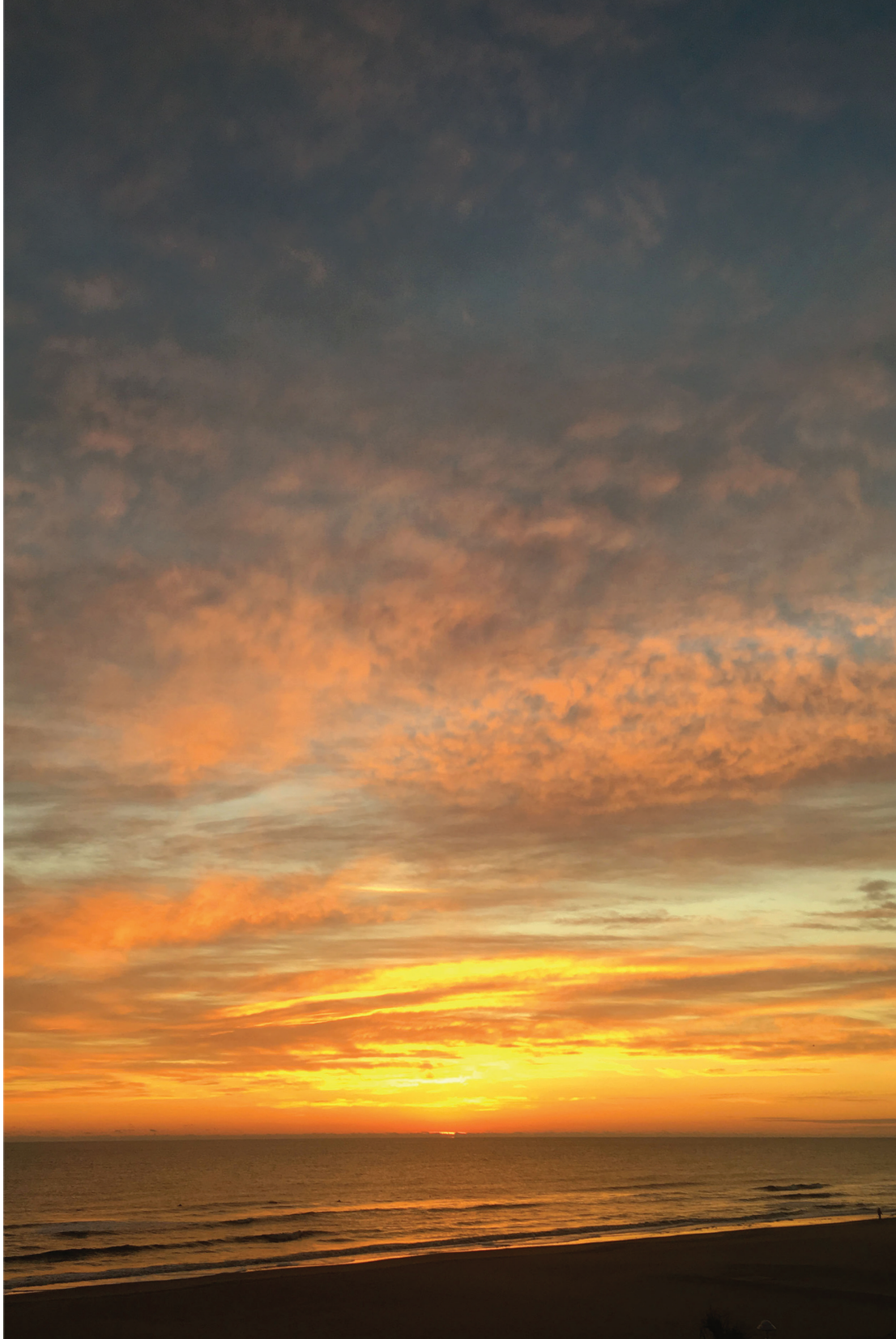


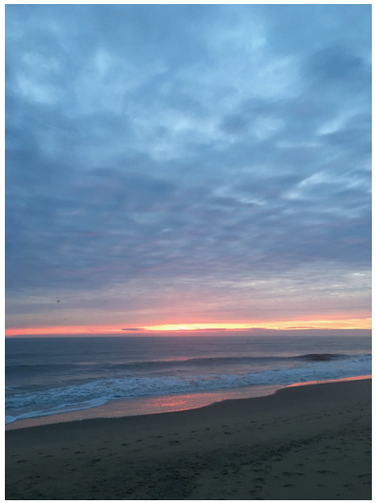


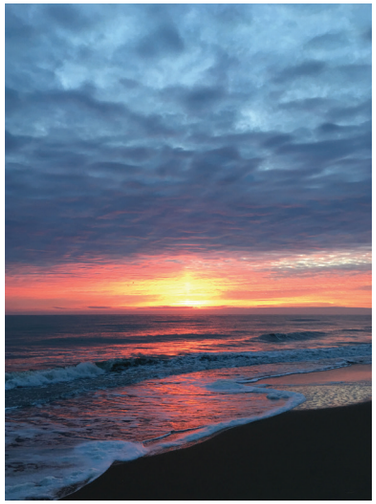
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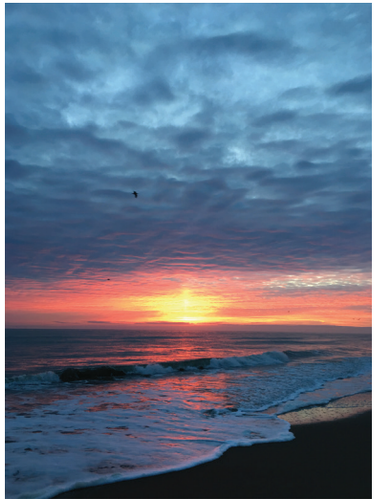
Friday, December 29, 2017

31st Street Beach • 7:13 AM • 19° F





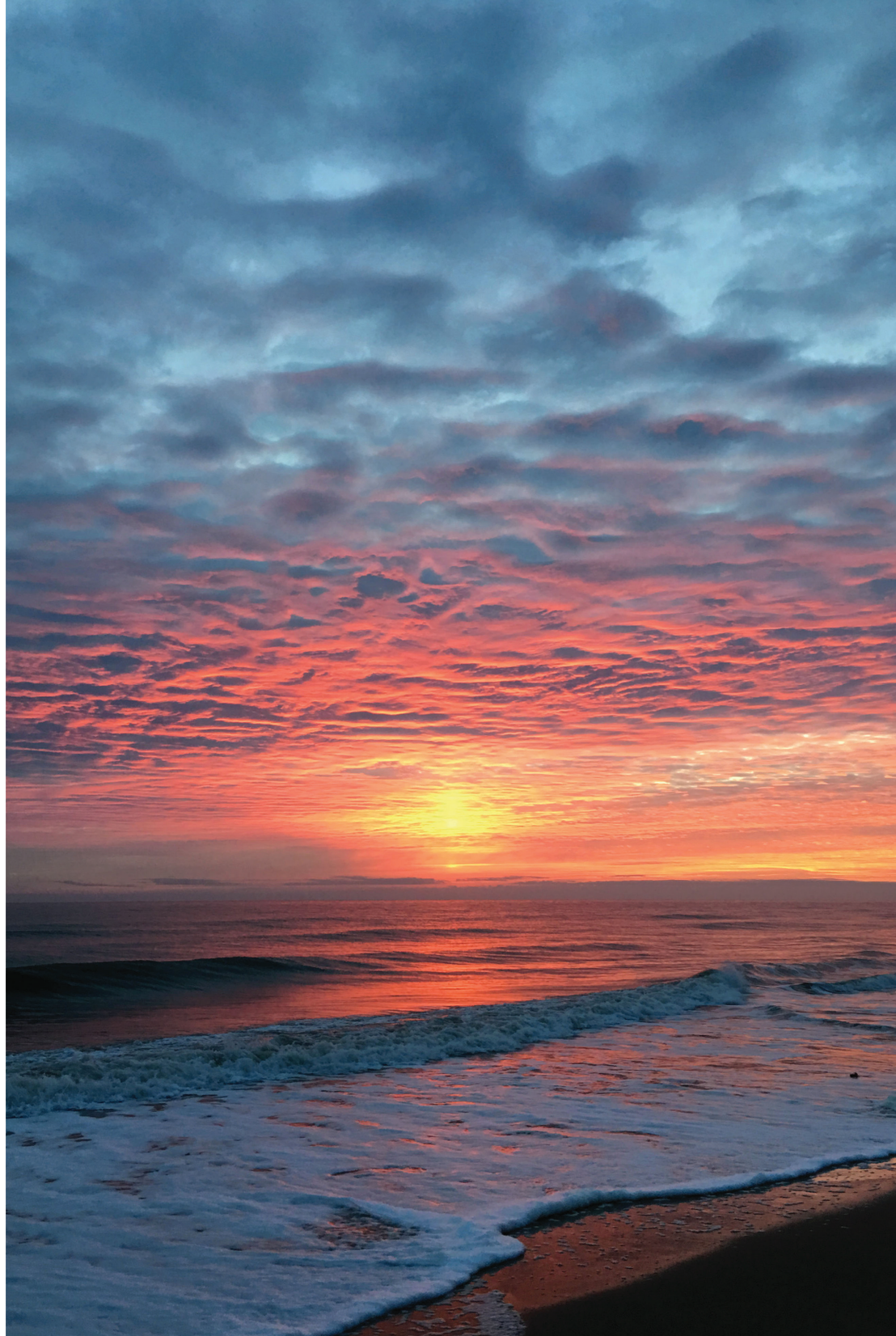




Current Pages

Saturday, December 30, 2017

30th Street Beach • 7:09 AM • 25° F









Sunday, December 31, 2017

14th Street Beach • 7:34 AM • 25° F







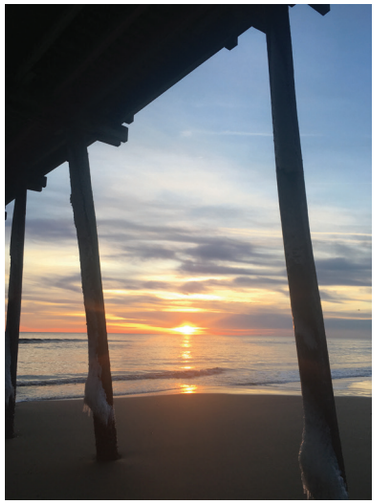


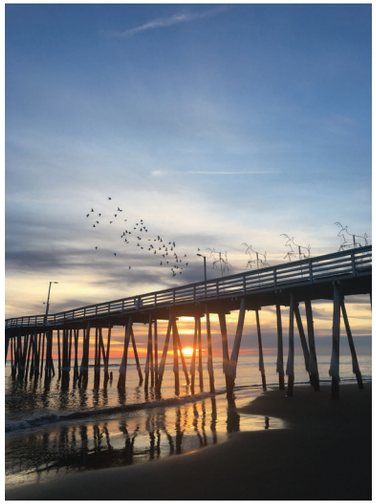
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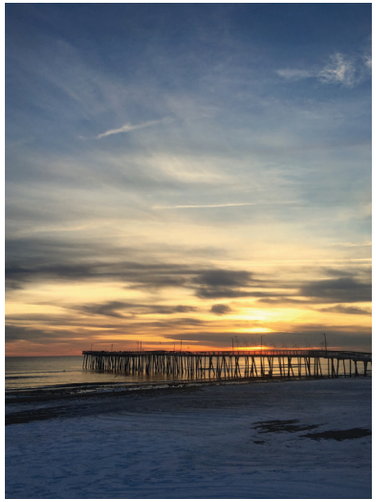
Thursday, January 4, 2018

31st Street Beach • 7:46 AM • 23° F



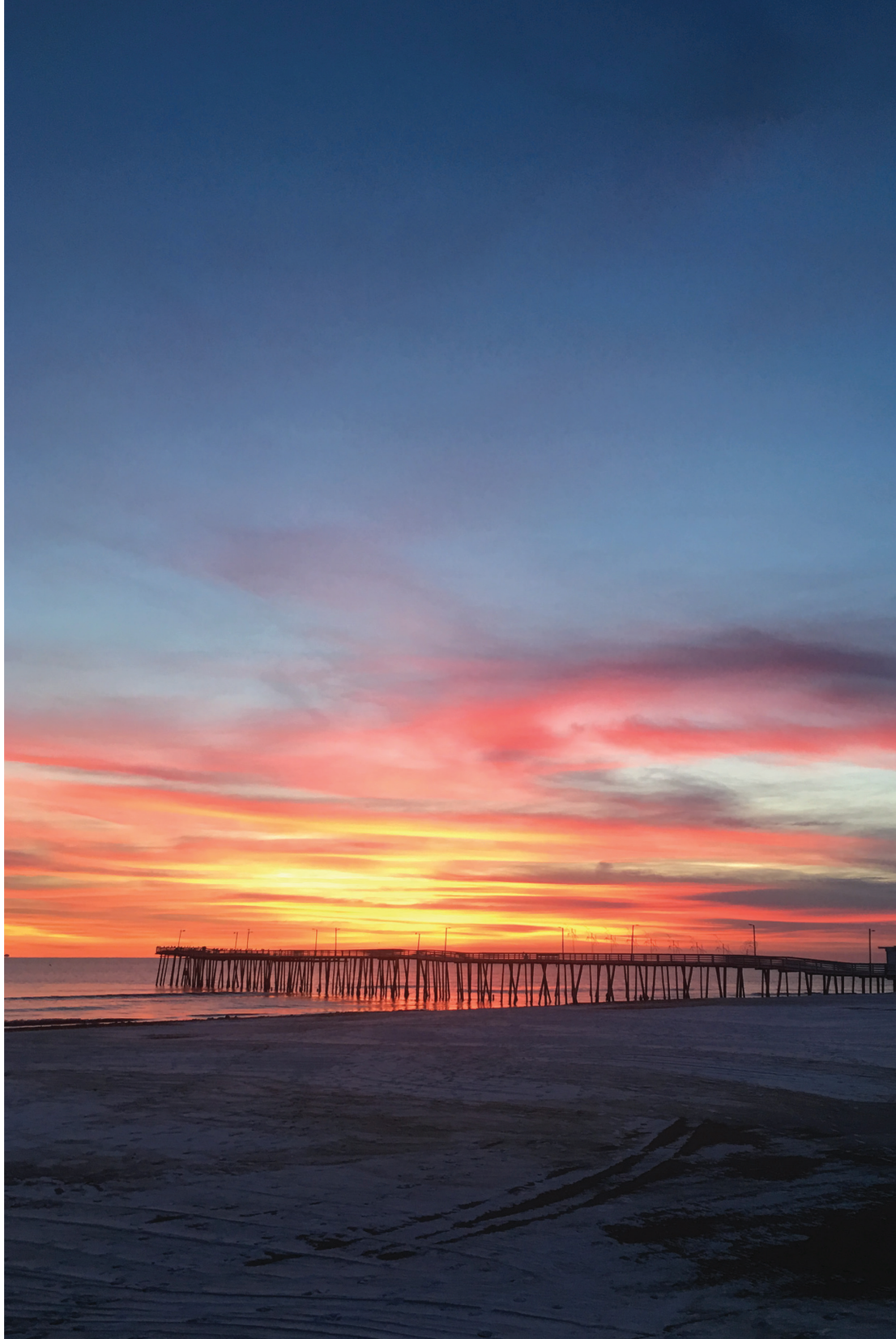


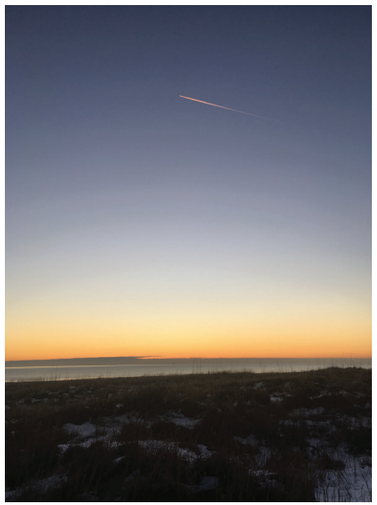


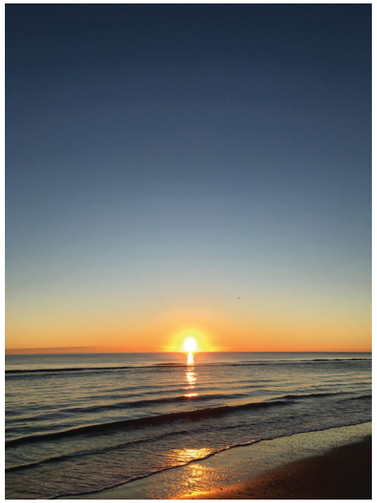


Monday, January 8, 2018

15th Street Pier • 7:00 AM • 15° F







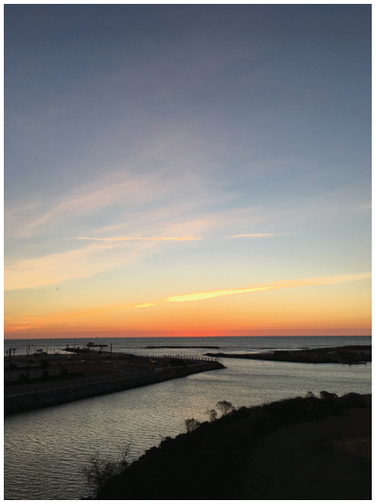


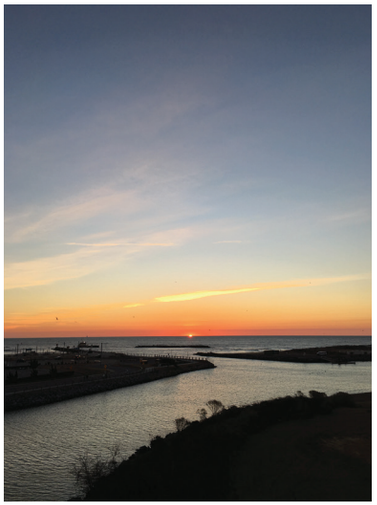
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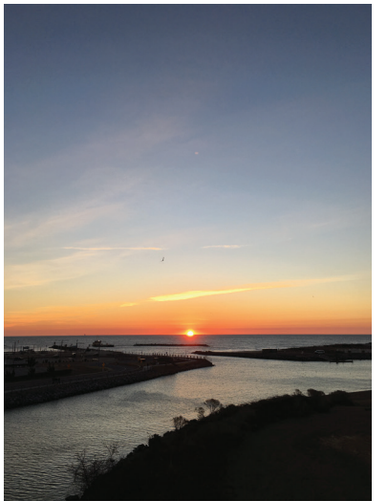
Tuesday, January 9, 2018

83rd Street Beach • 7:11 AM • 36° F



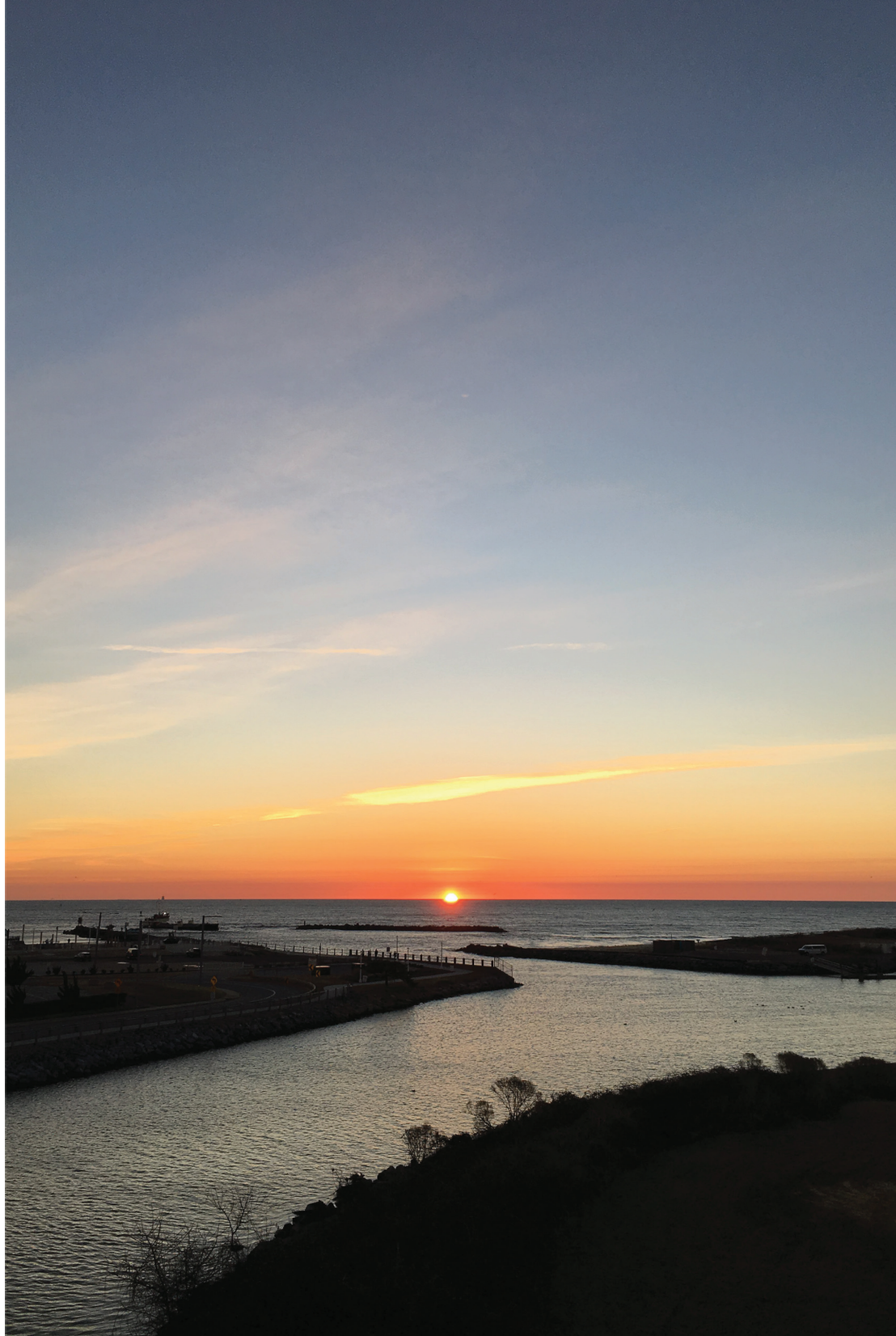


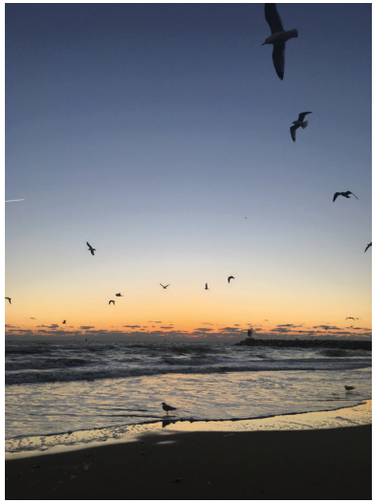


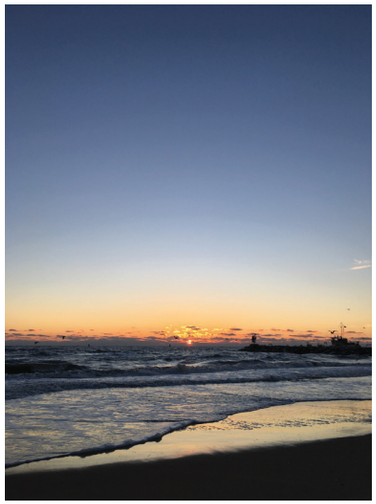


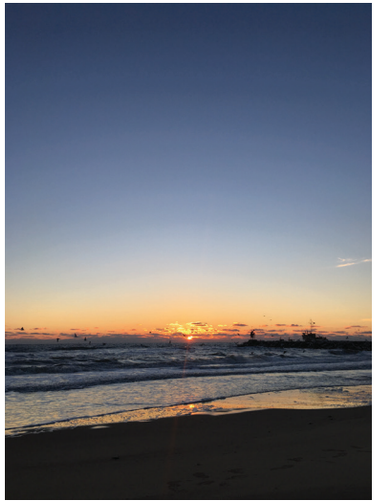
Thursday, February 1, 2018

Rudee Inlet Bridge • 7:05 AM • 37° F





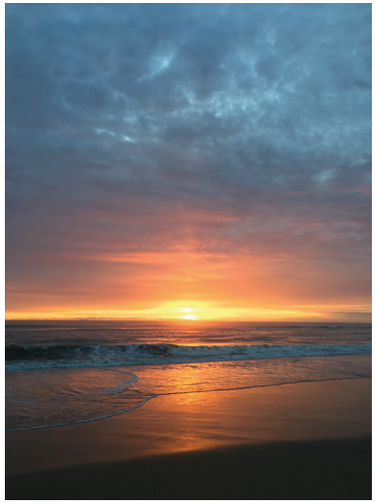


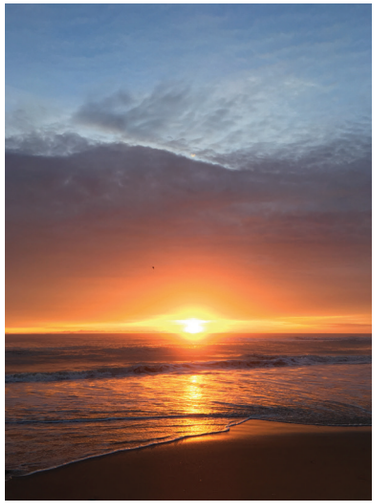


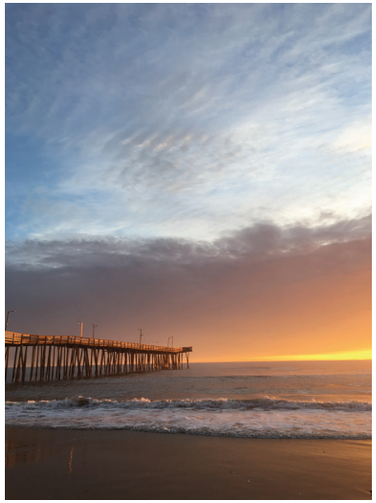
Saturday, February 3, 2018

2nd Street Beach • 7:07 AM • 20° F





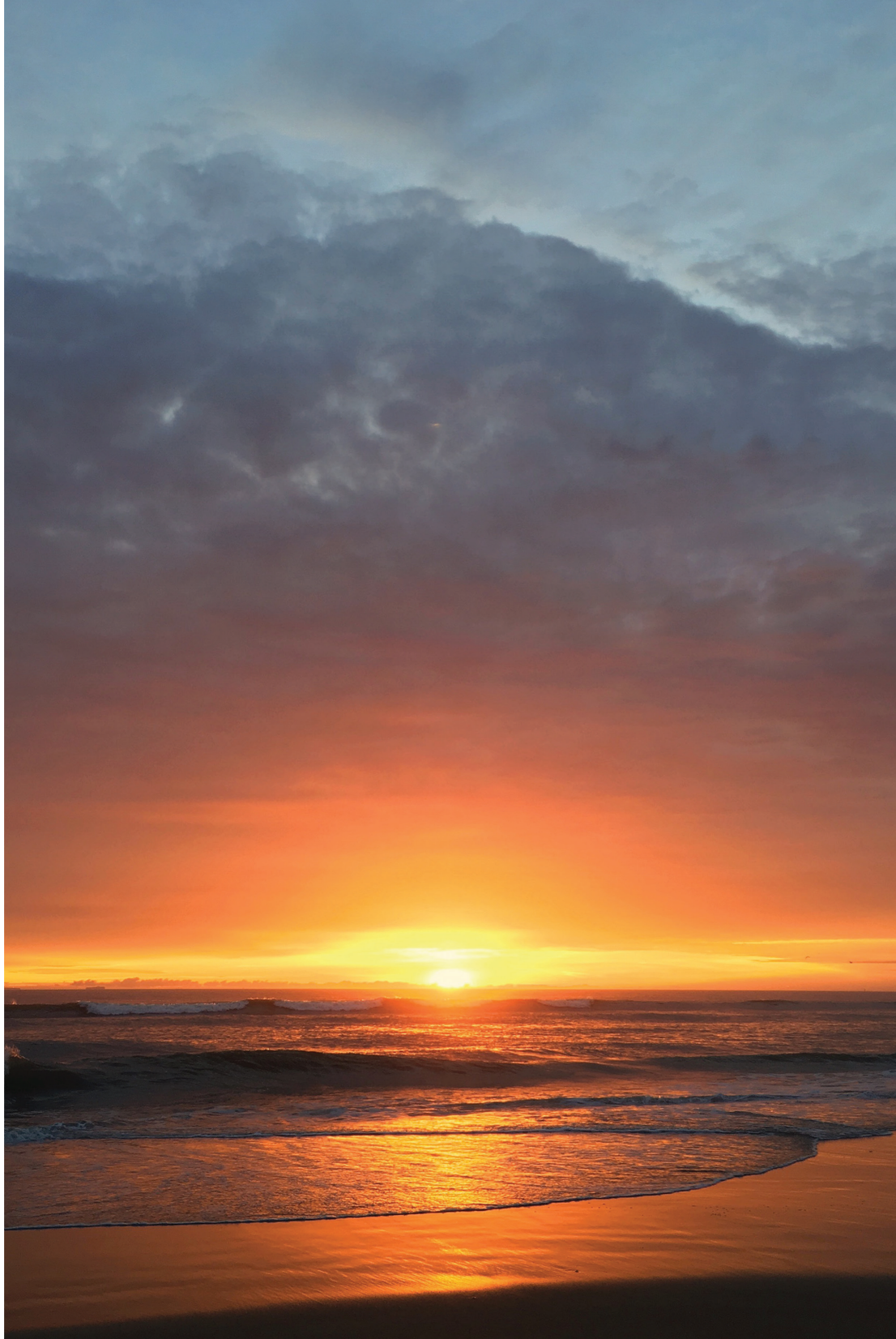




Current Pages

Sunday, February 4, 2018

15th Street Pier • 7:06 AM • 37° F







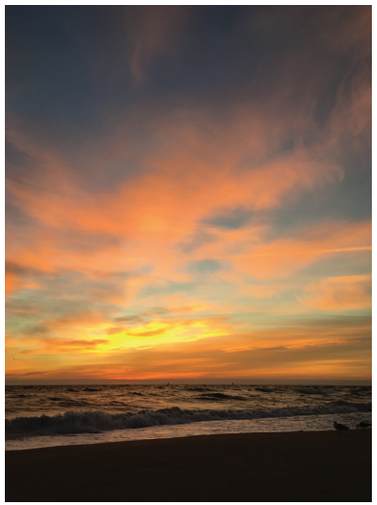


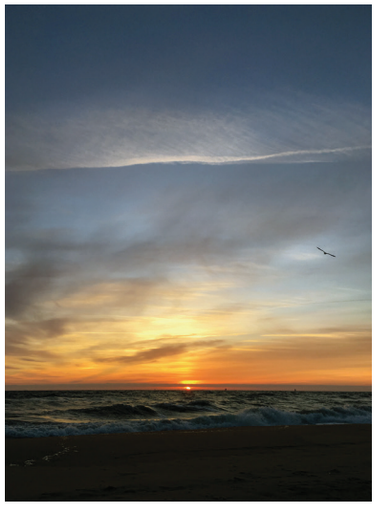
Current Pages

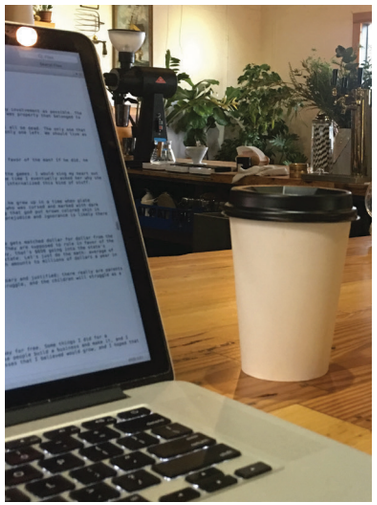
Wednesday, February 14, 2018

2nd Street Beach • 7:22 AM • 42° F





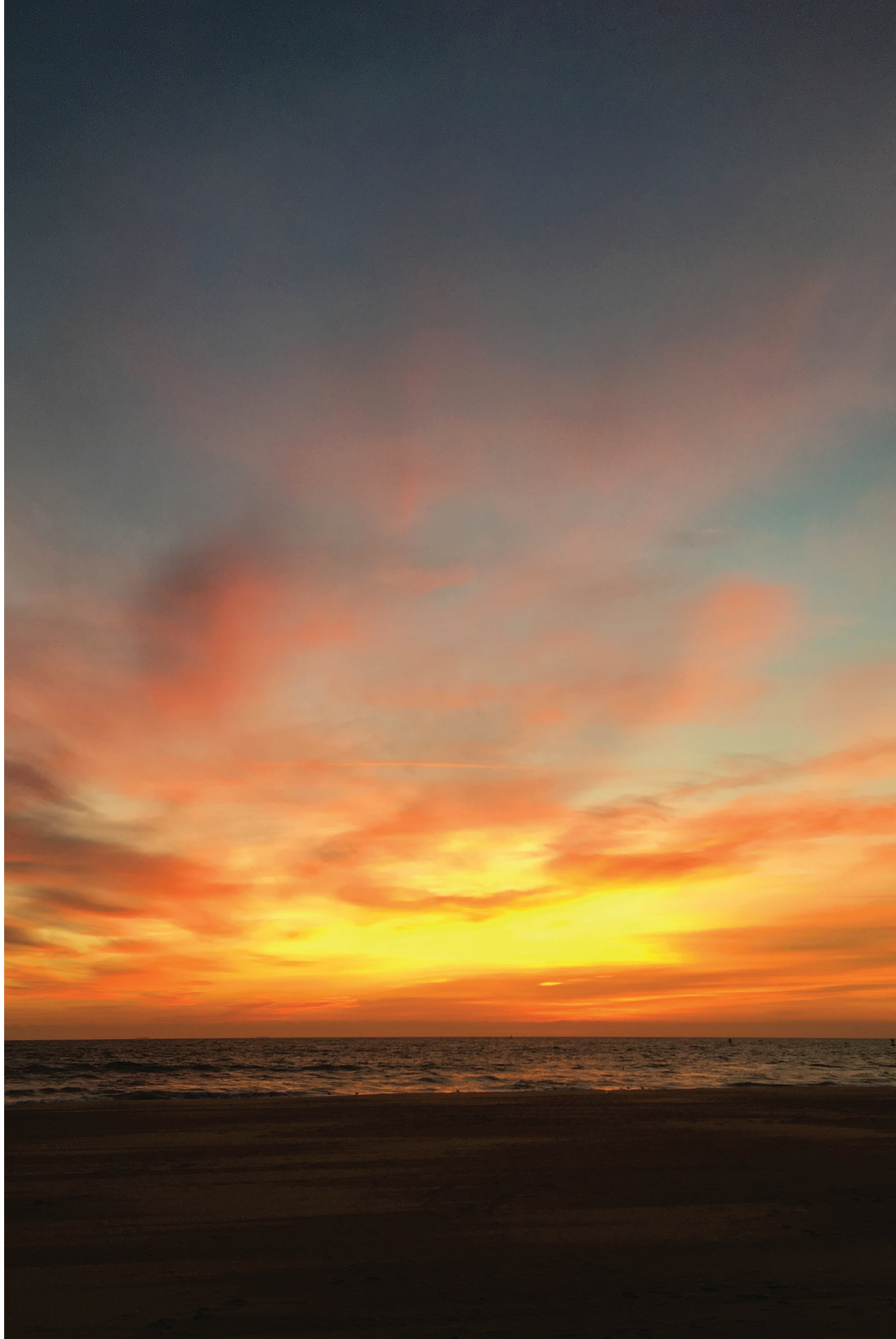


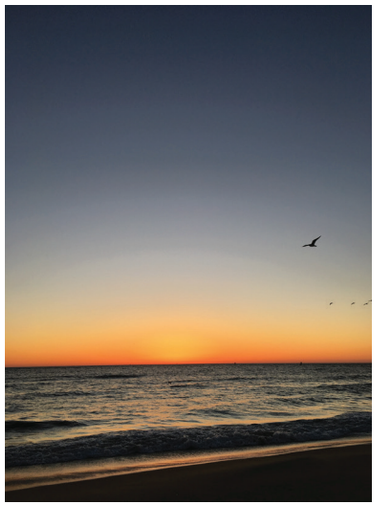


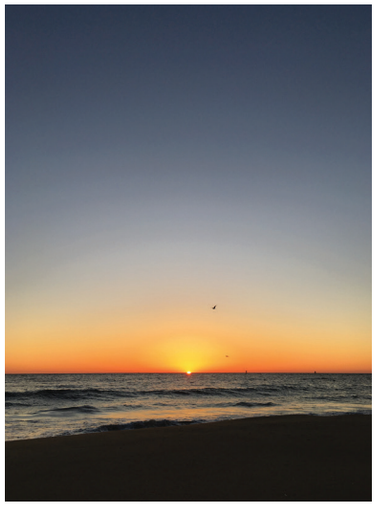
Current Pages

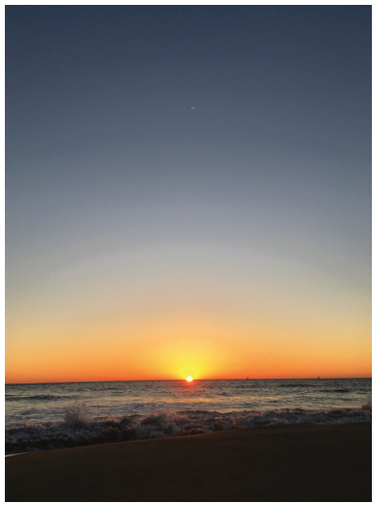
Saturday, February 17, 2018

2nd Street Beach • 6:38 AM • 43° F





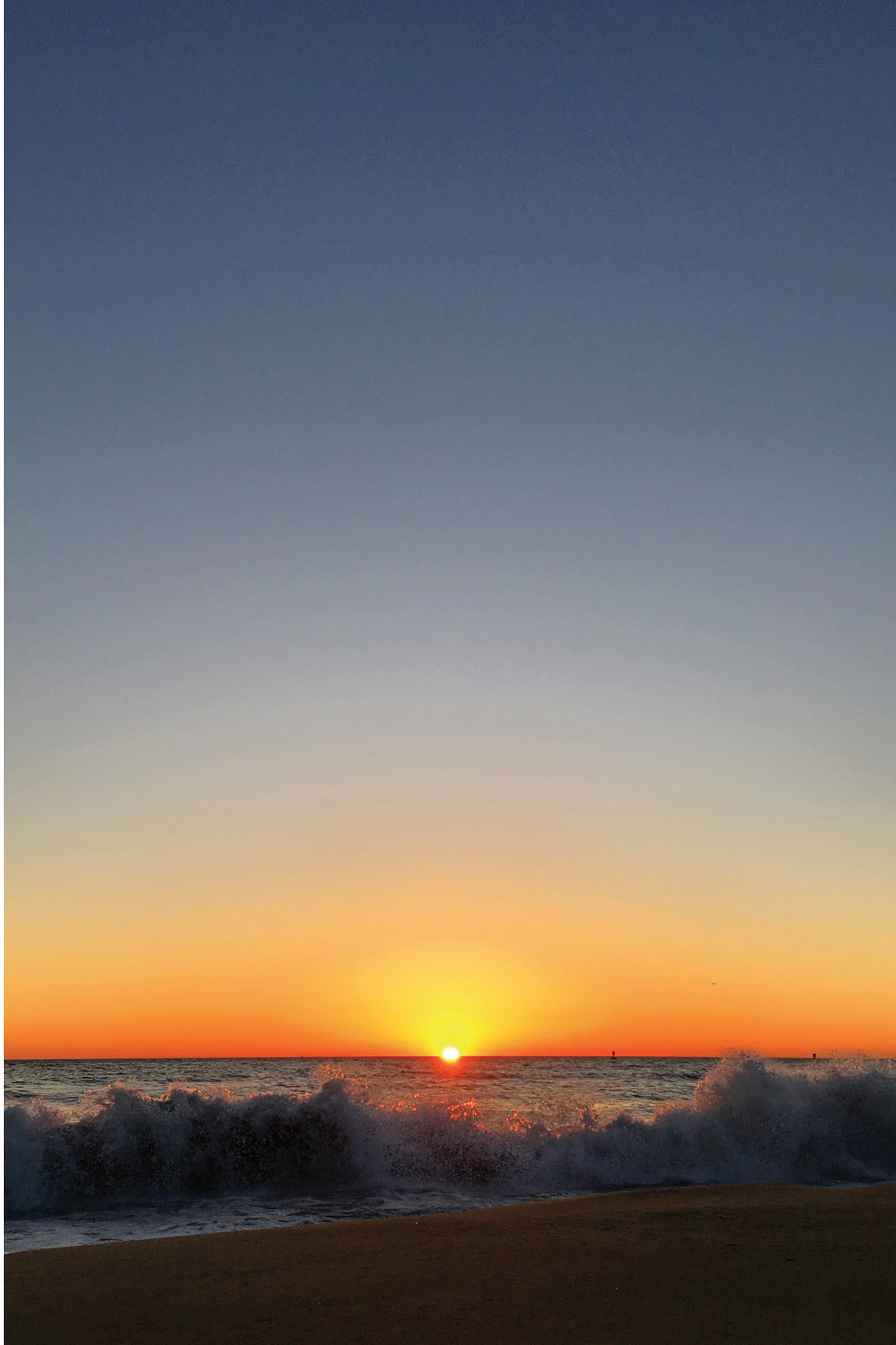


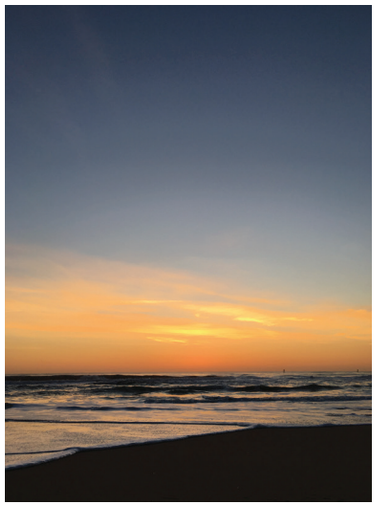


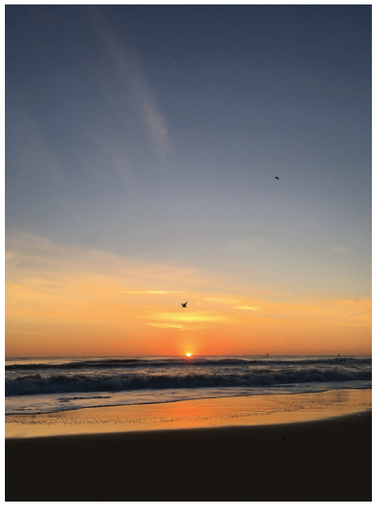
Current Pages

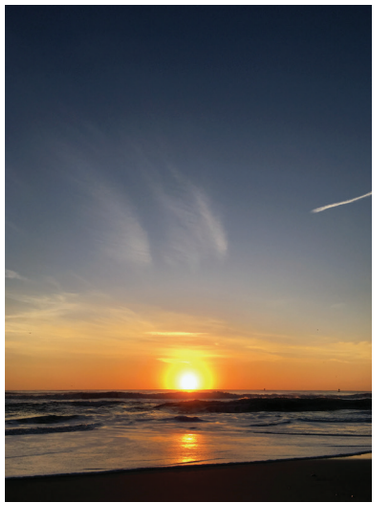
Tuesday, February 27, 2018

5th Street Beach • 6:38 AM • 48° F





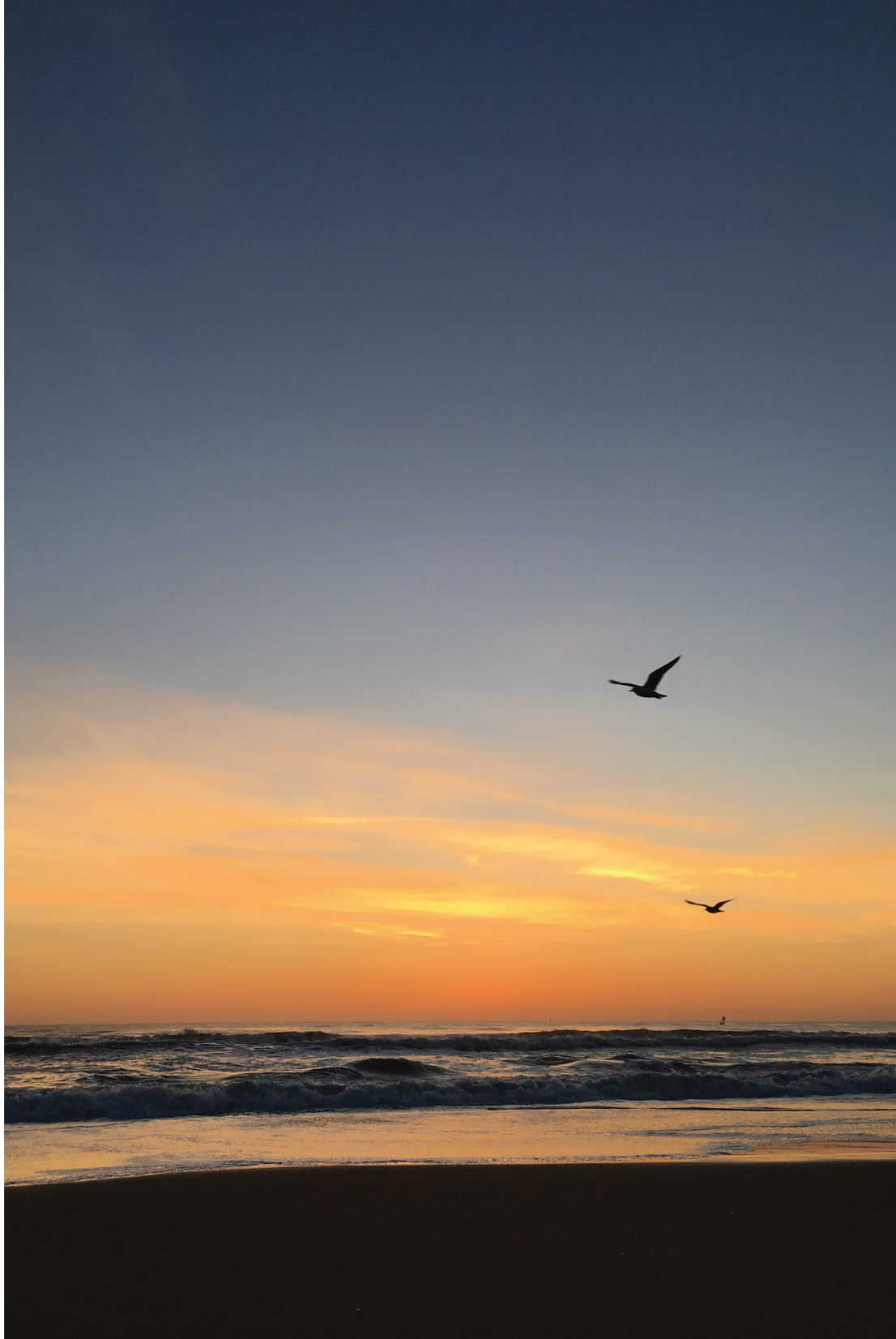


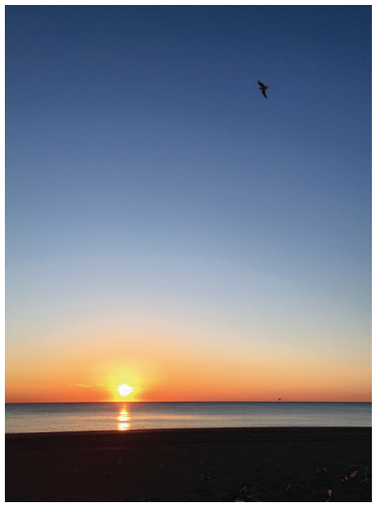


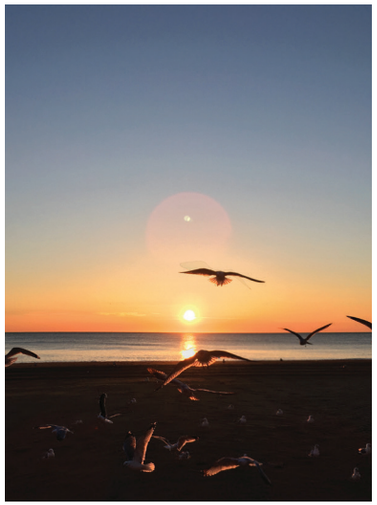
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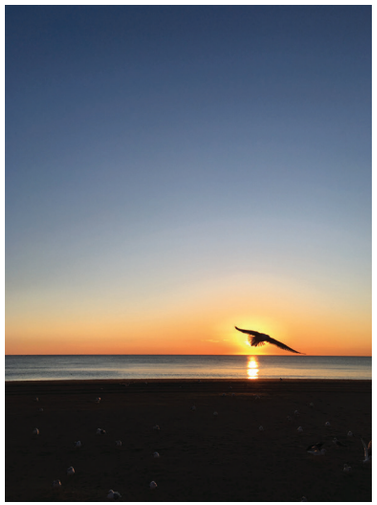
Tuesday, March 6, 2018

2nd Street Beach • 6:25 AM • 32° F





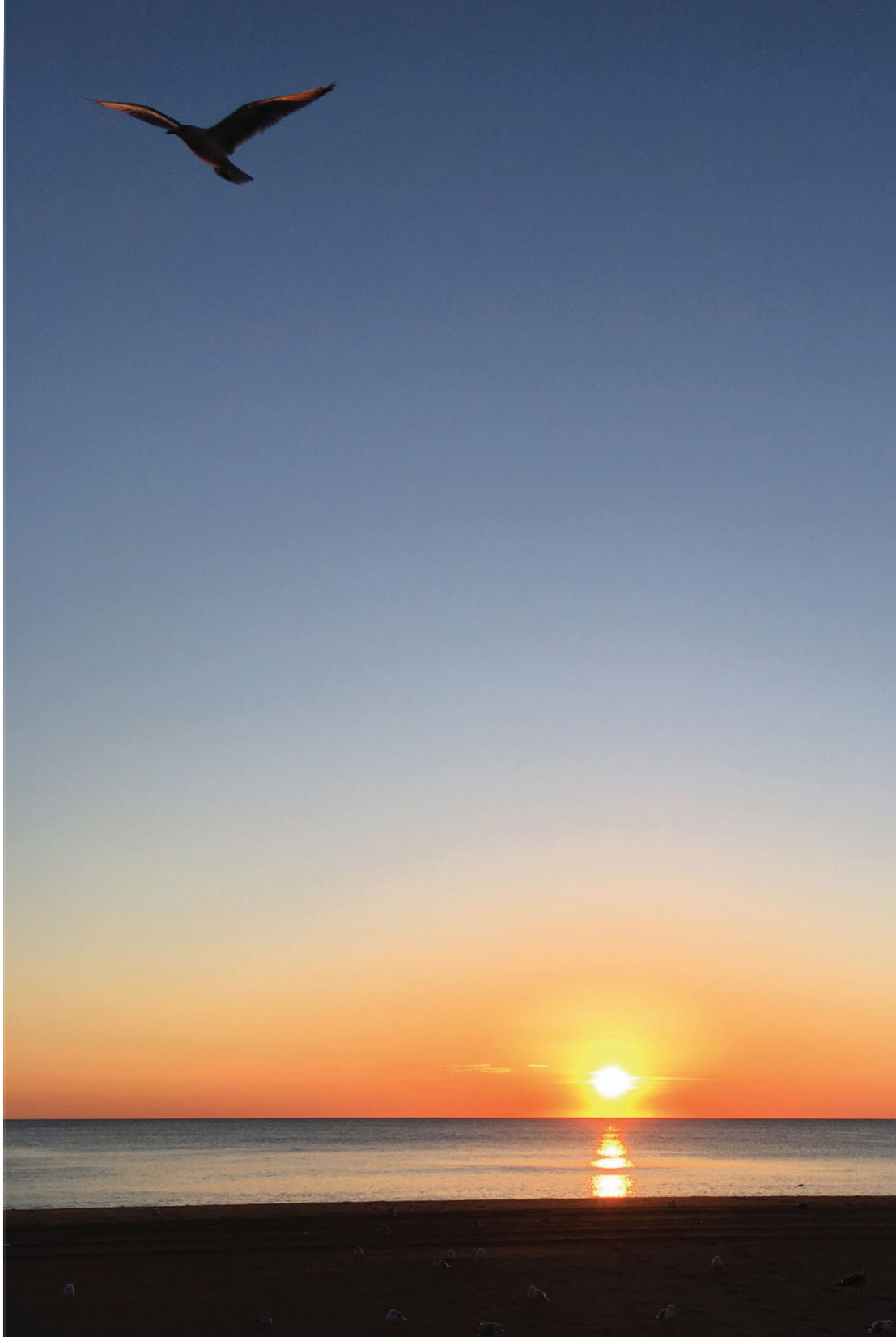


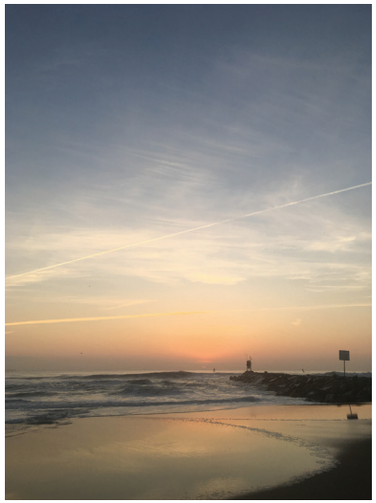


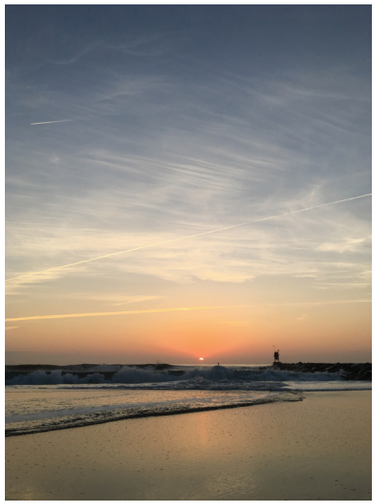
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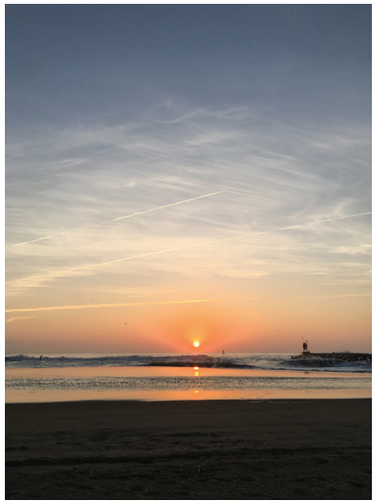
Thursday, March 15, 2018

22nd Street Beach • 7:23 AM • 35° F







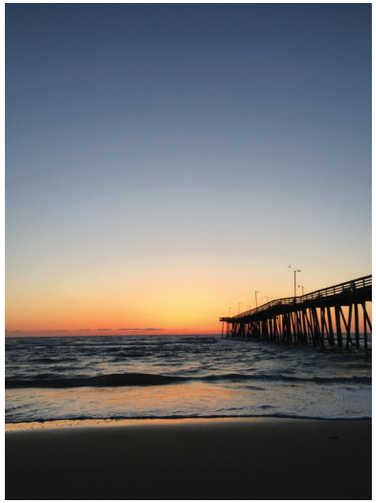


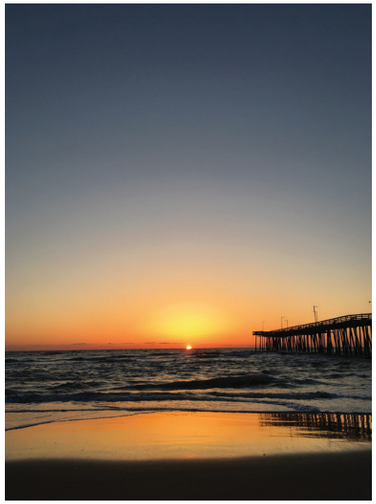
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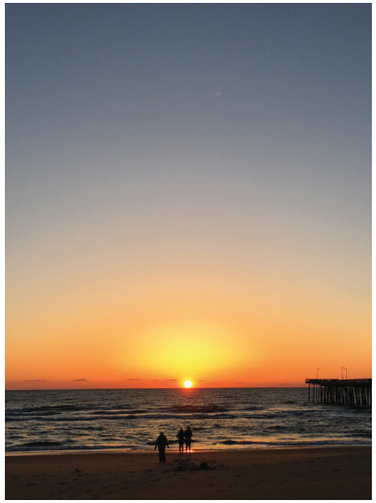
Wednesday, March 28, 2018

2nd Street Beach • 6:59 AM • 45° F





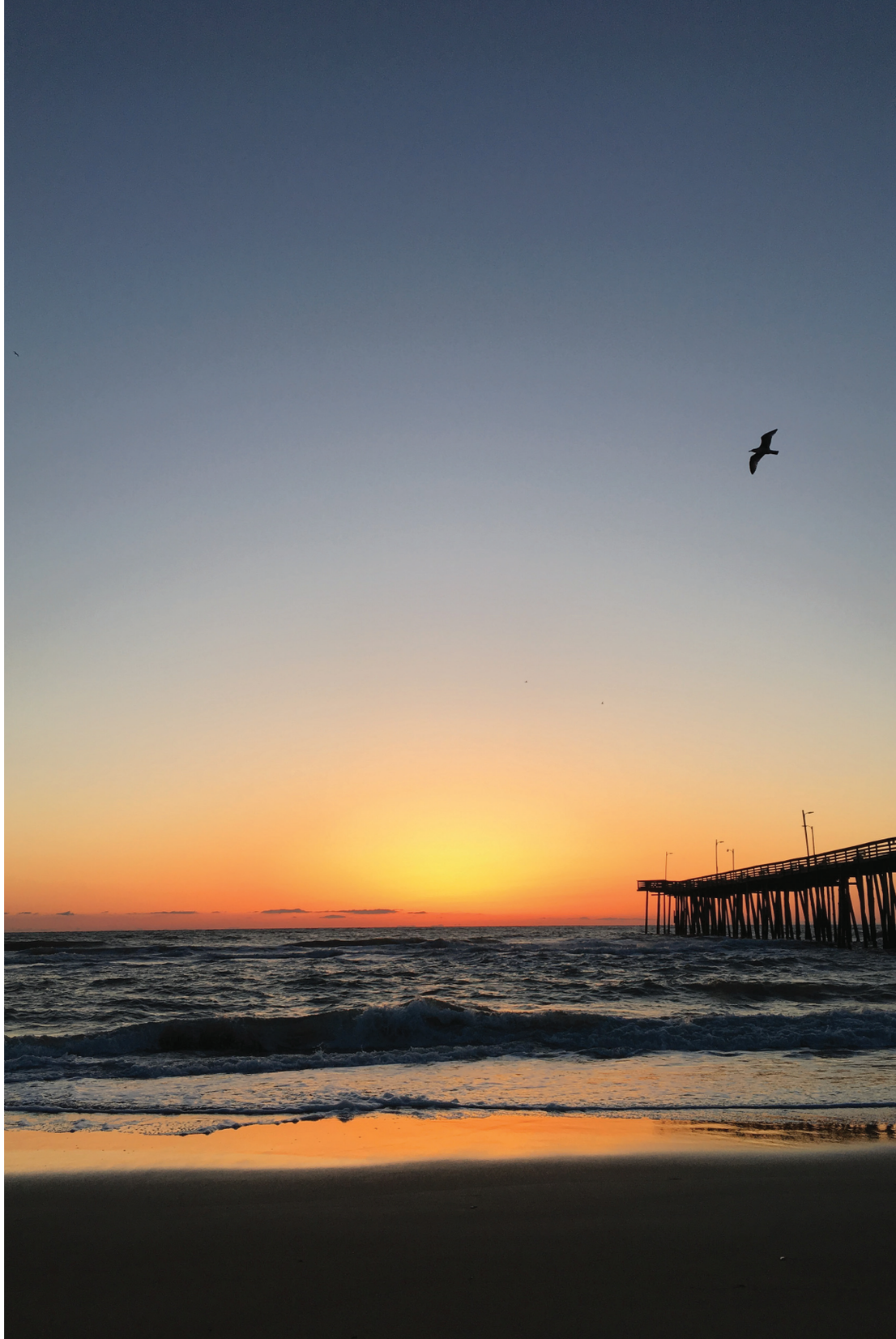


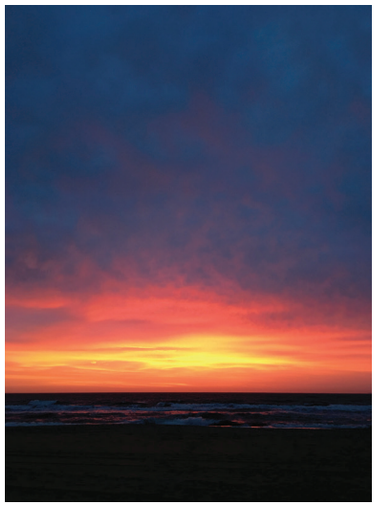


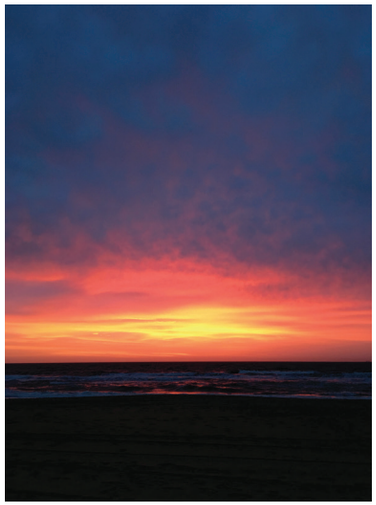
Current Pages

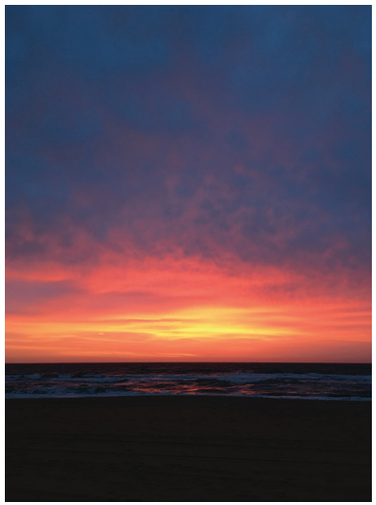
Thursday, April 5, 2018

15th Street Pier • 6:40 AM • 44° F





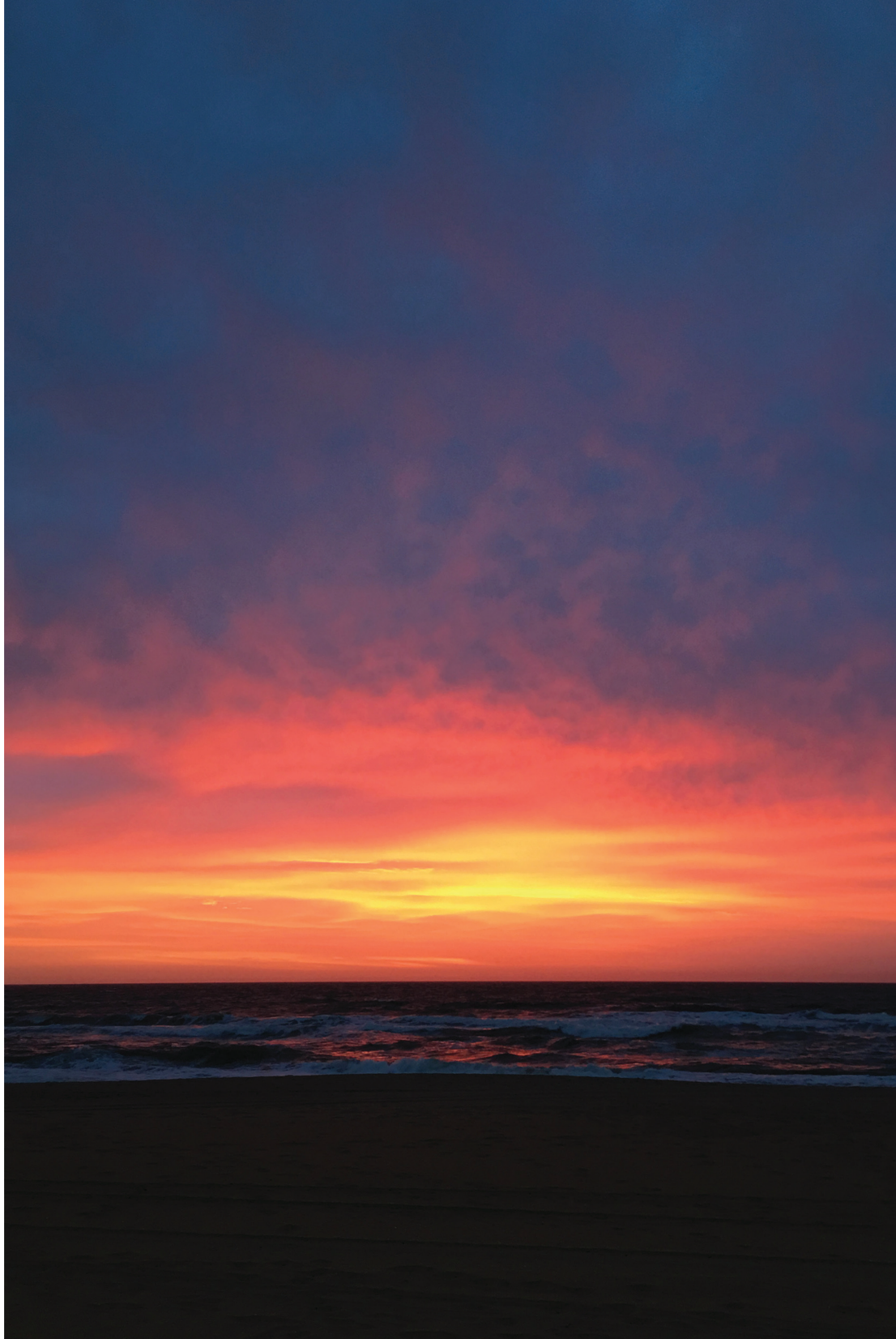


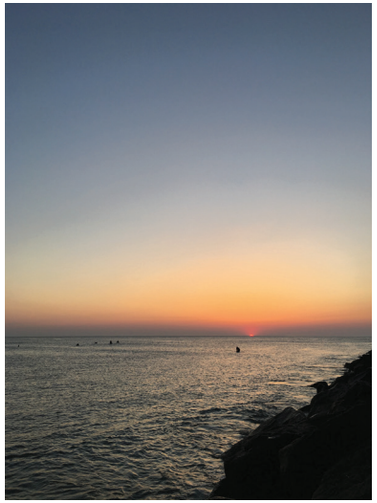


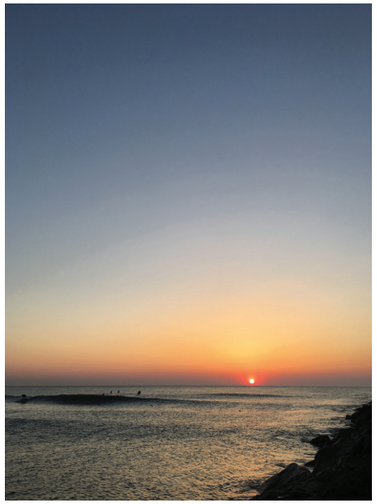
Current Pages

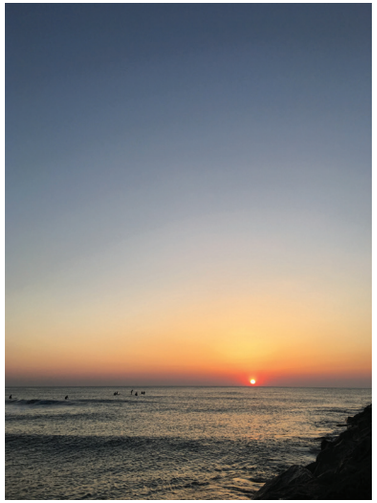
Tuesday, April 24, 2018

16th Street Beach • 6:11 AM • 55° F



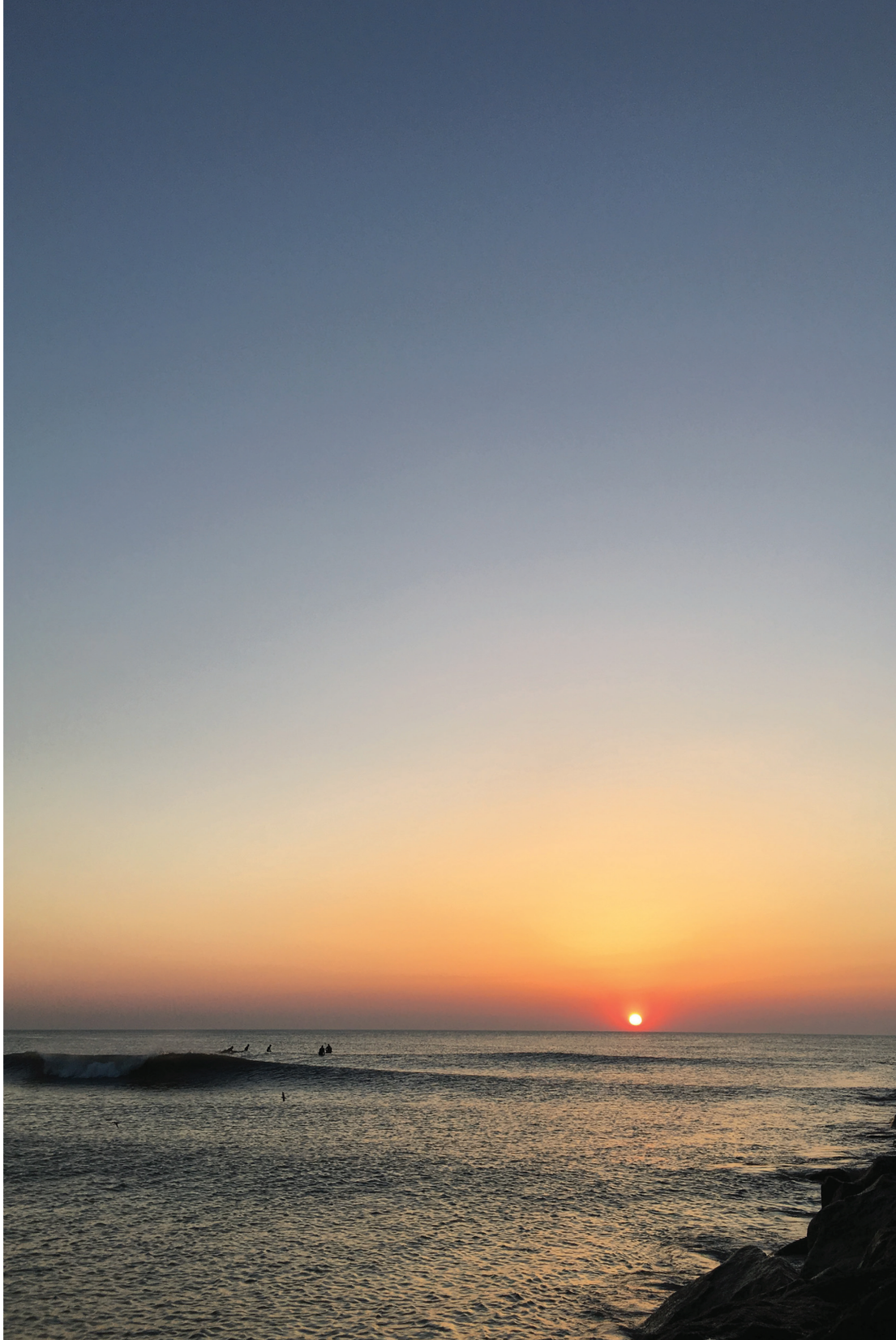


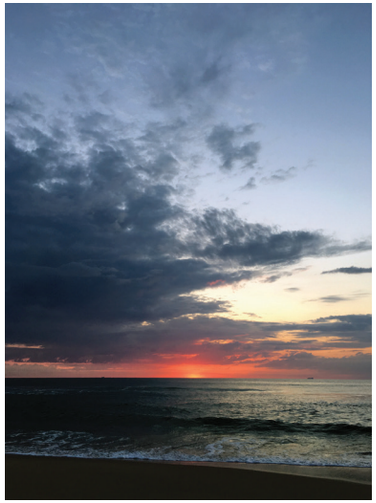


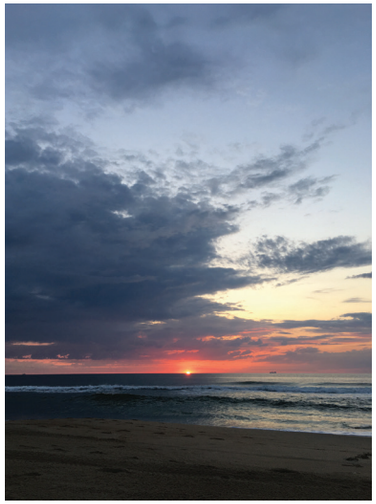


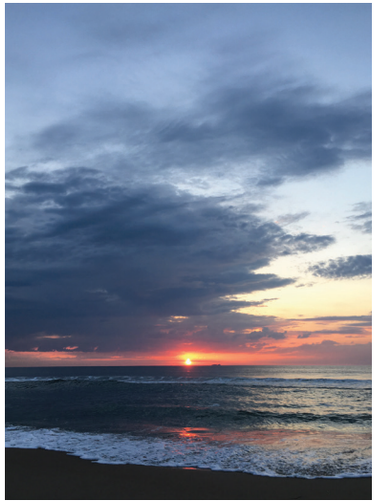
Tuesday, May 1, 2018

1st Street Jetty • 6:04 AM • 49° F





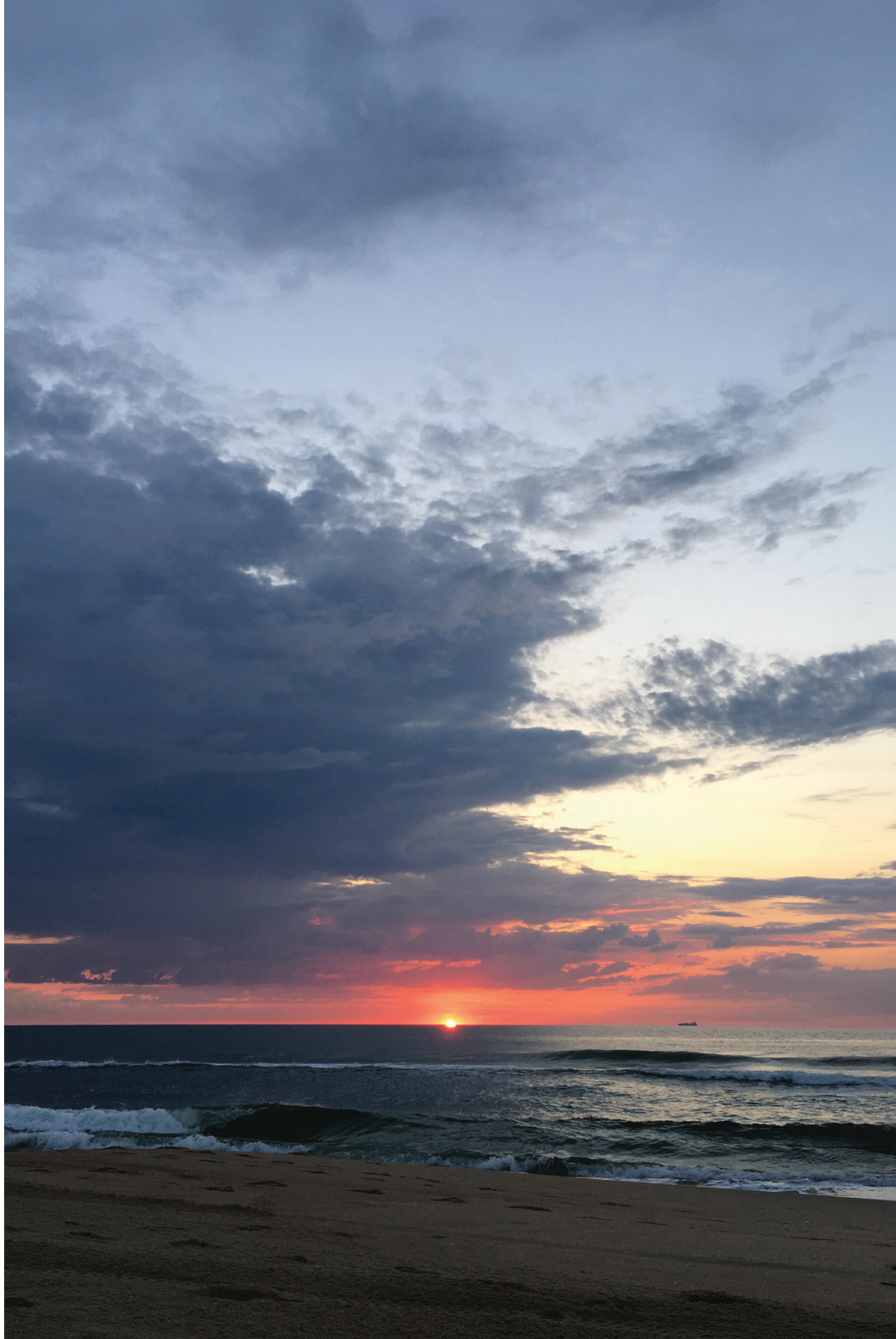


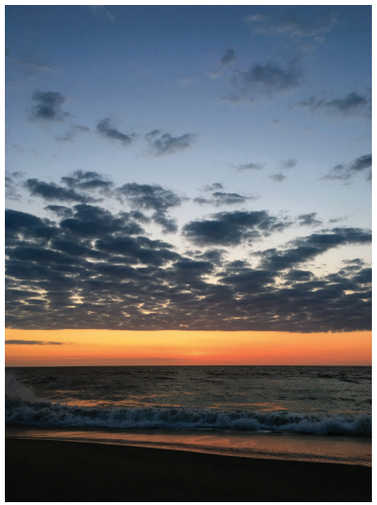


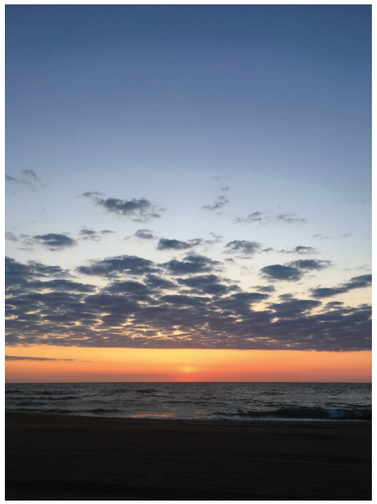
Current Pages

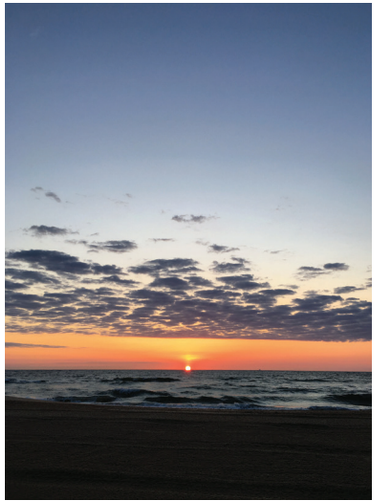
Wednesday, June 6, 2018

17th Street Beach • 5:45 AM • 66° F







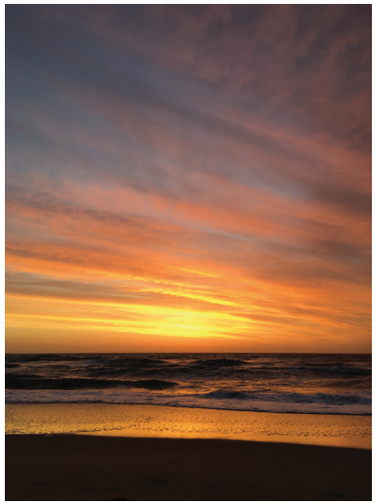


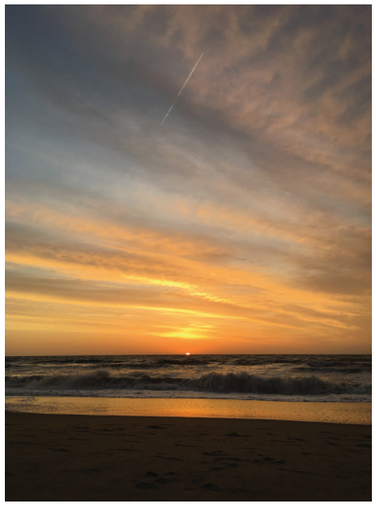
Current Pages

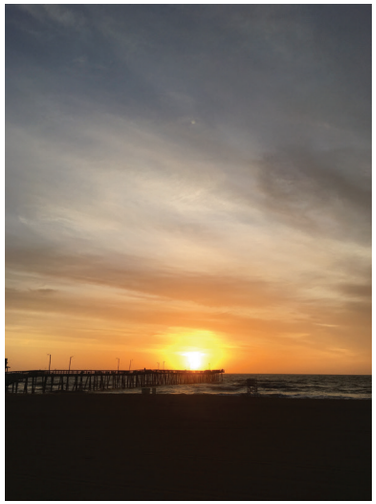
Thursday, June 7, 2018

17th Street Beach • 5:46 AM • 64° F





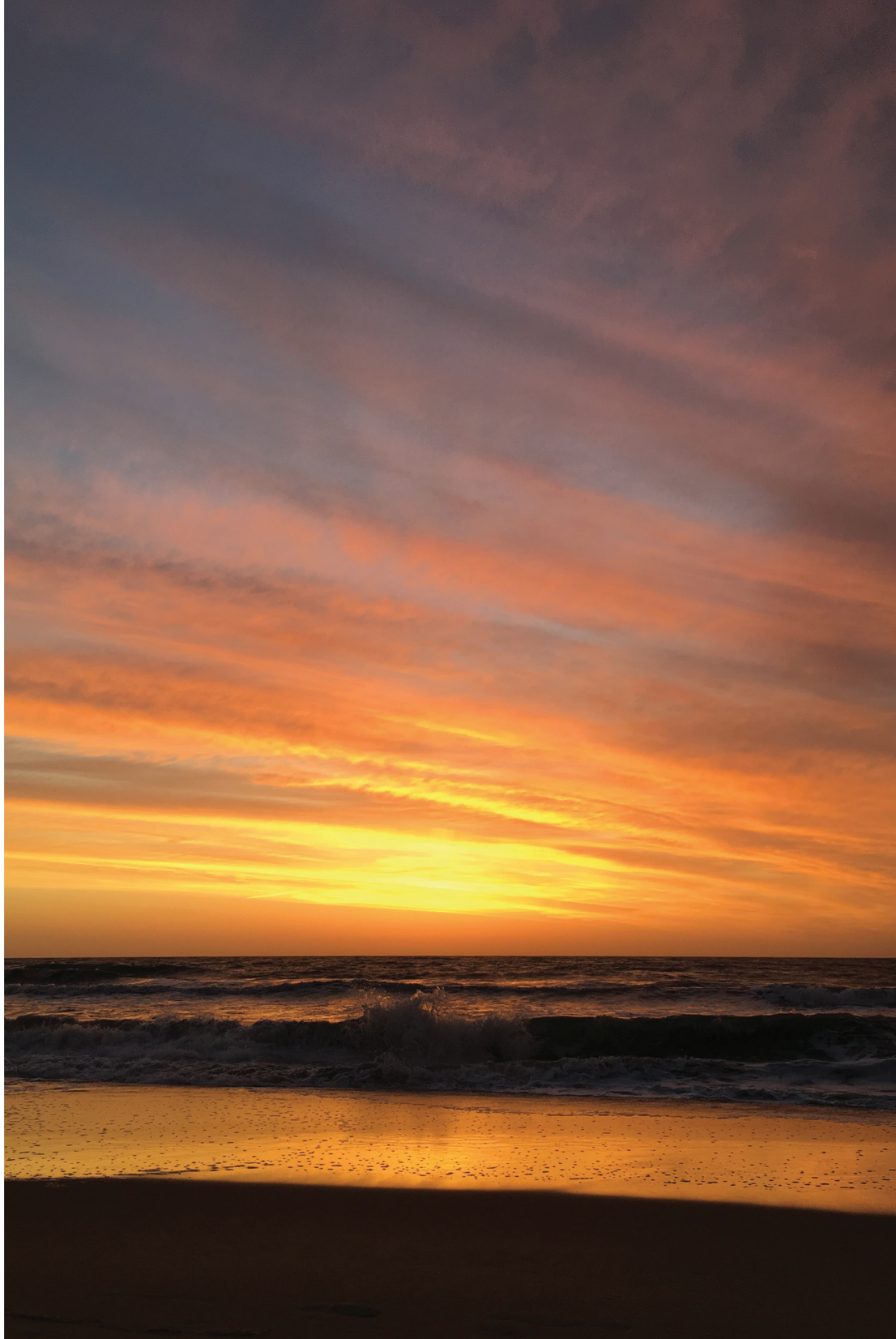




Current Pages

Tuesday, June 12, 2018

16th Street Beach • 5:38 AM • 63° F











Previous Pages

Saturday, June 30, 2018

1st Street Jetty • 6:03 AM • 72° F

Current Pages

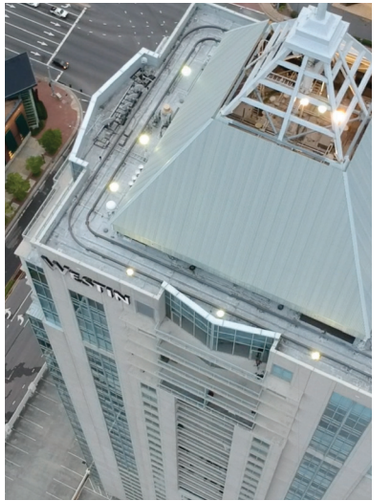
Wednesday, July 4, 2018

52nd Street Beach • 5:55 AM • 77° F







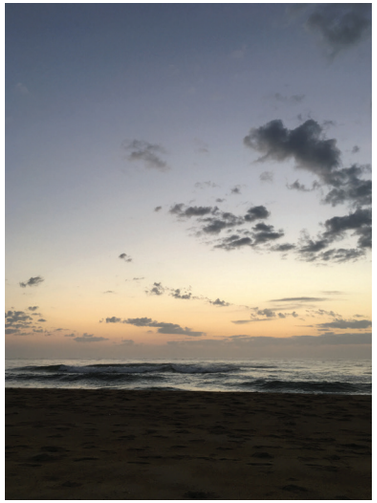


Current Pages

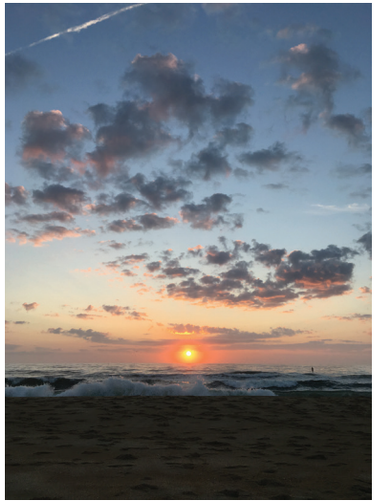
Monday, July 16, 2018

The Westin Town Center • 5:50 AM • 75° F









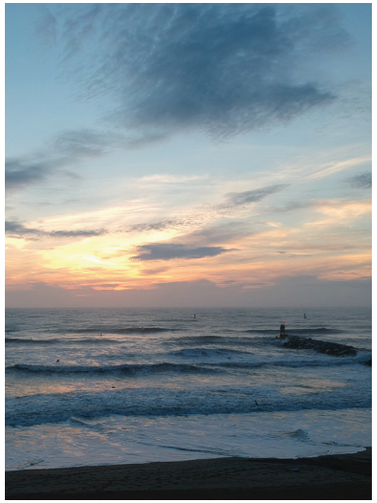
Current Pages

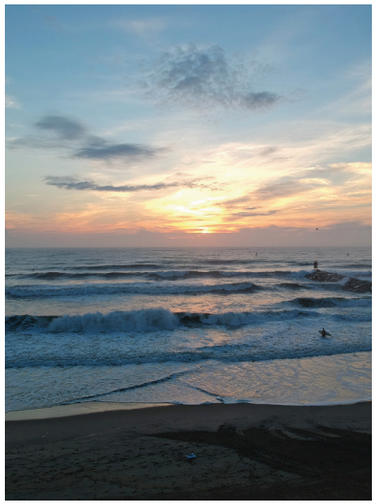
Sunday, August 26, 2018

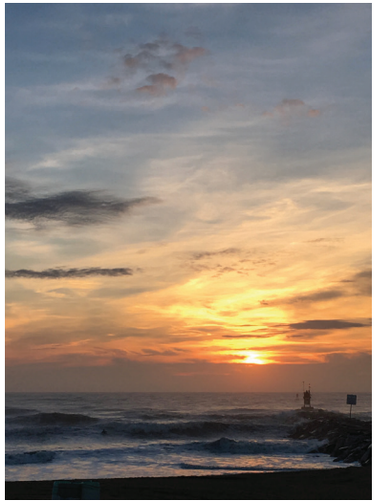
Sandbridge • 6:38 AM • 68° F









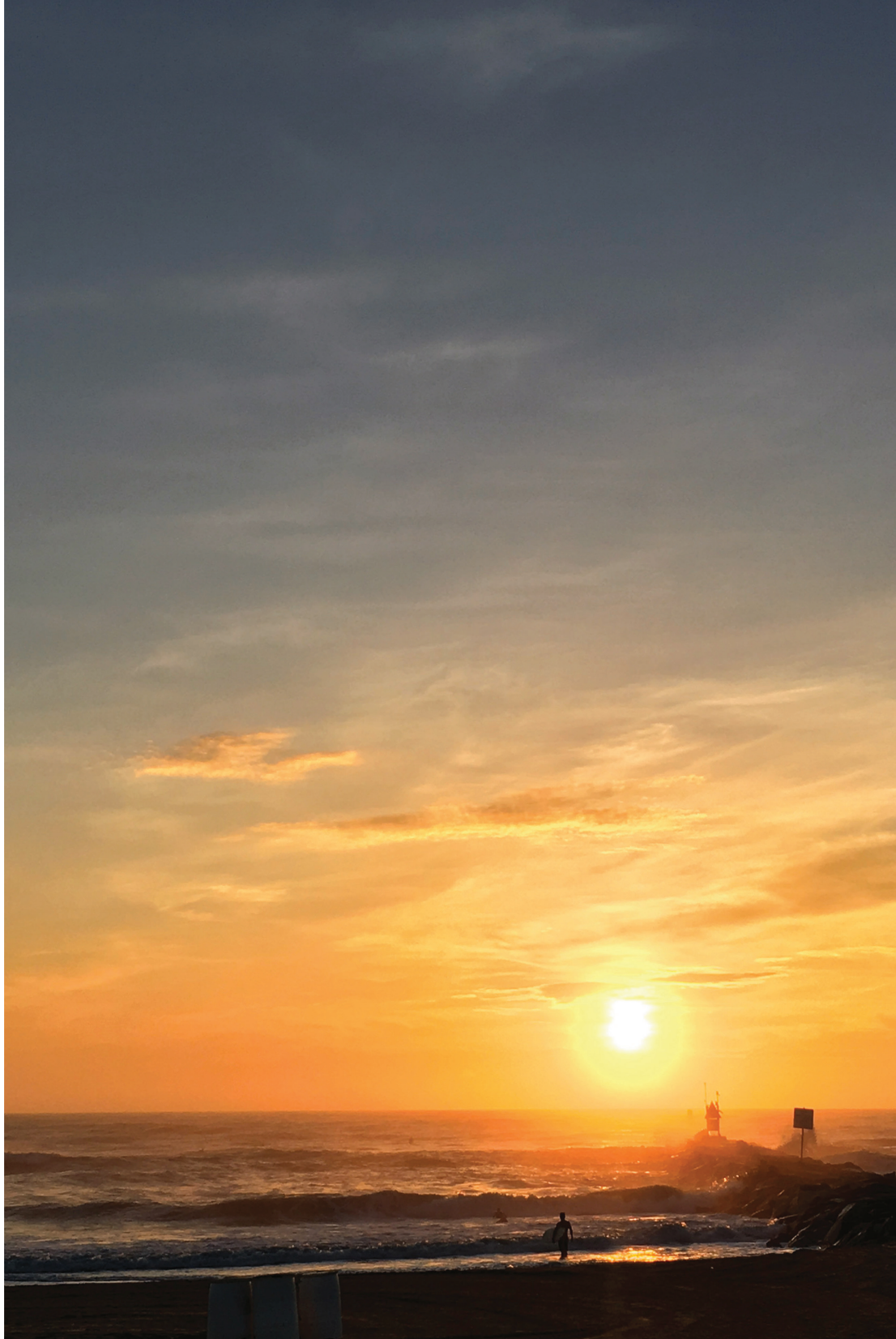


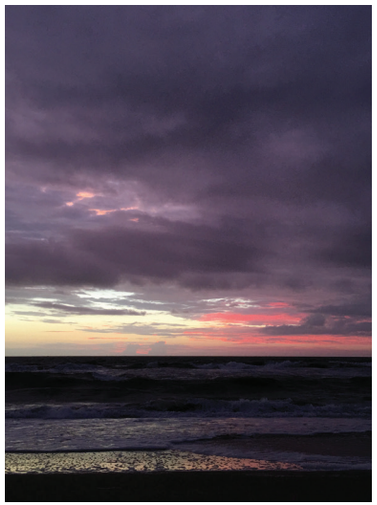
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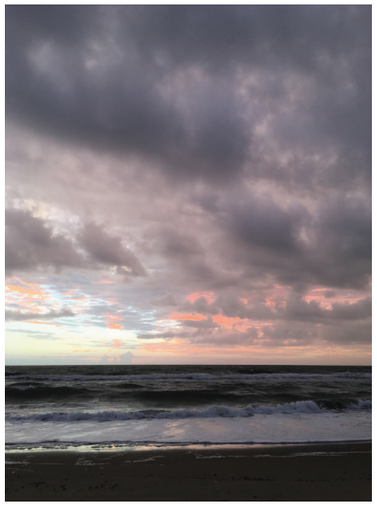
Monday, September 10, 2018
1st Street Jetty • 6:49 AM • 72° F

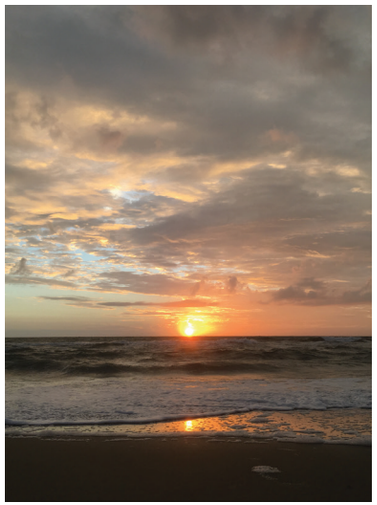
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Monday, September 10, 2018
1st Street Jetty • 6:49 AM • 72° F







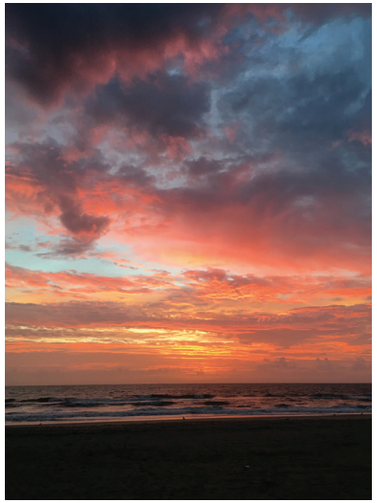


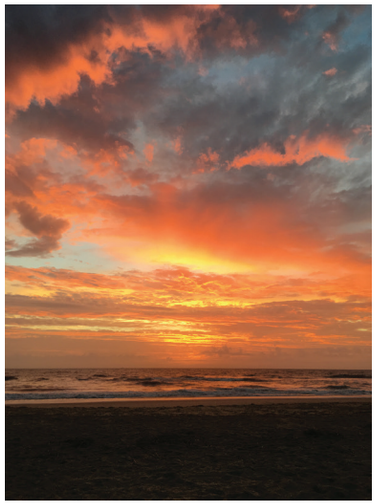
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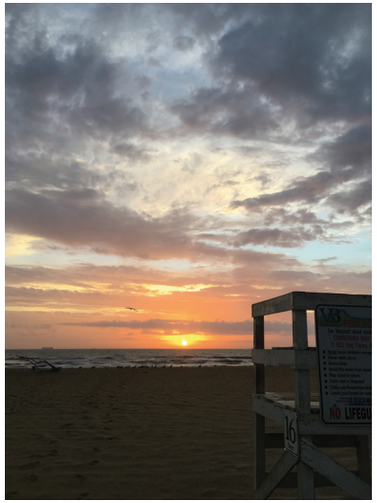
Sunday, September 16, 2018

11th Street Beach • 6:53 AM • 75° F







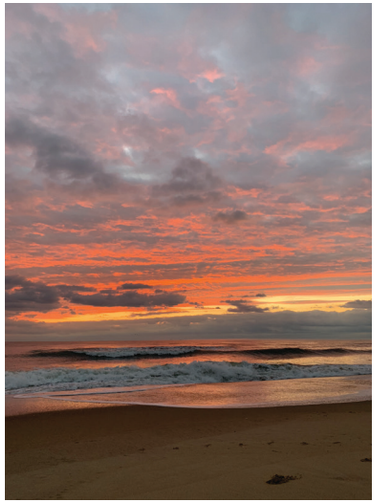


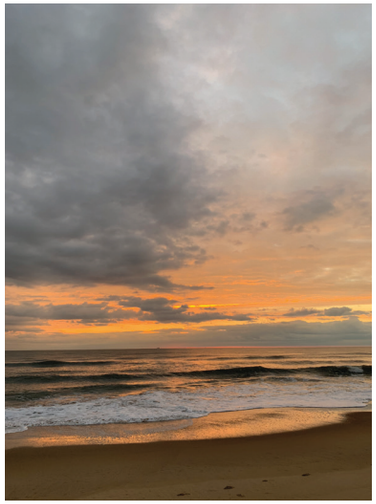
Current Pages

Monday, September 17, 2018

16th Street Beach • 6:43 AM • 77° F









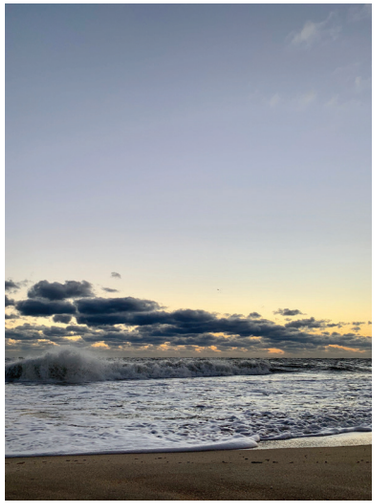
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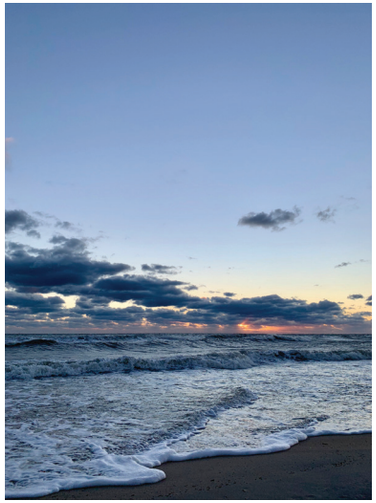
Saturday, October 13, 2018

47th Street Beach • 7:06 AM • 56° F









Sunday, October 21, 2018

11th Street Beach • 7:24 AM • 51° F











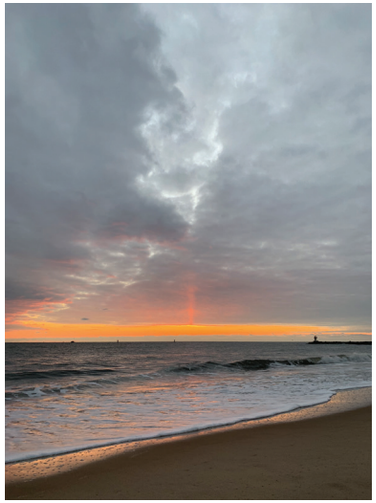
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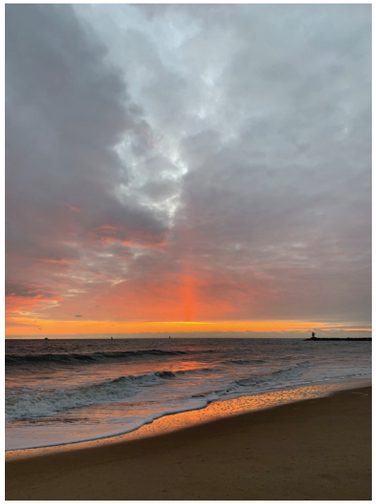
Thursday, November 1, 2018
First Landing State Park • 7:46 AM • 62° F

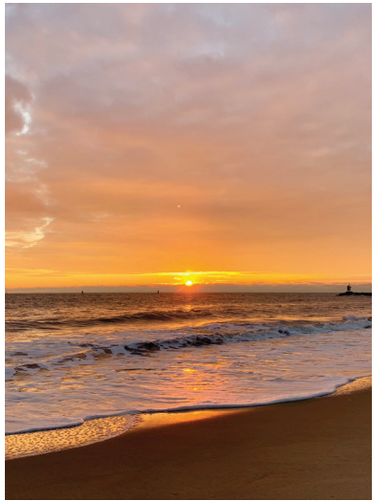
Current Pages

Thursday, November 1, 2018
First Landing State Park • 7:48 AM • 62° F







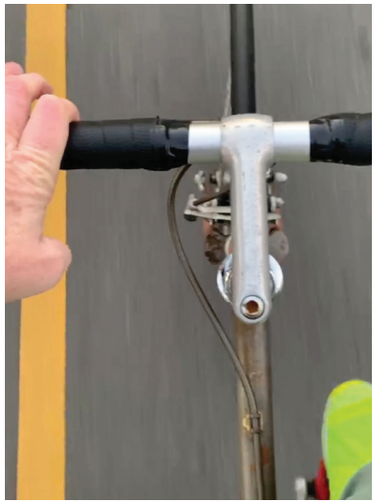


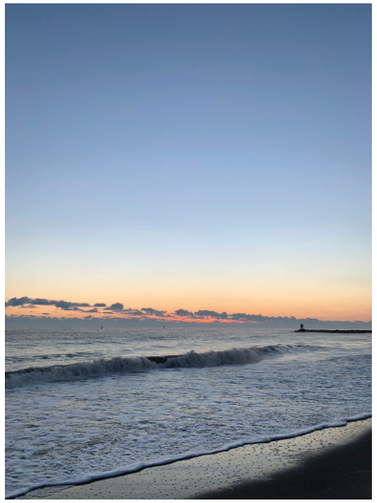
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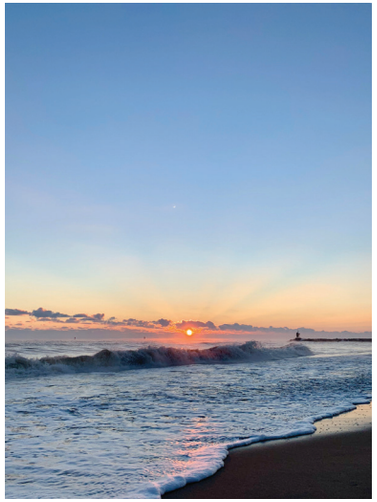
Wednesday, December 5, 2018

2nd Street Beach • 7:03 AM • 38° F









Current Pages

Thursday, December 6, 2018

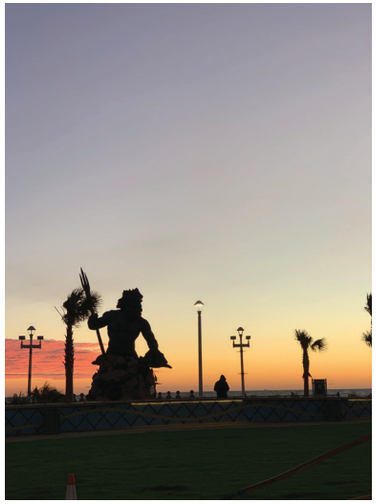
3rd Street Beach • 7:13 AM • 31° F

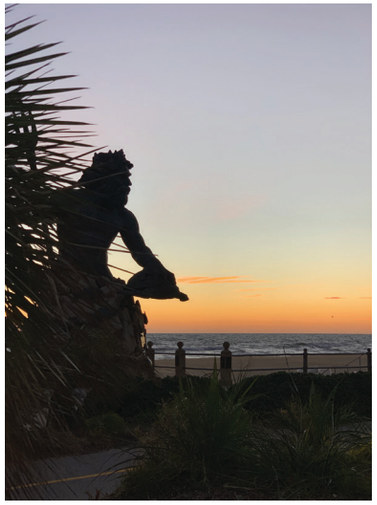


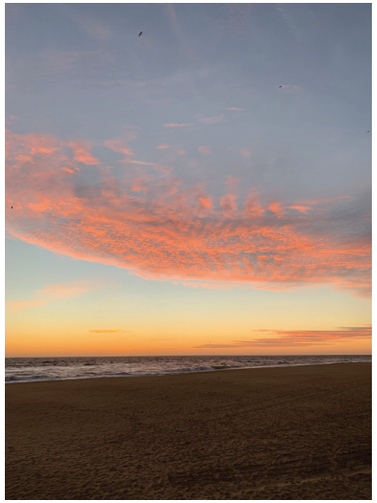
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Pages 146–155 have been removed from this abridged sample version.









Previous Pages

Tuesday, January 1, 2019
6th Street Beach • 7:28 AM • 68° F

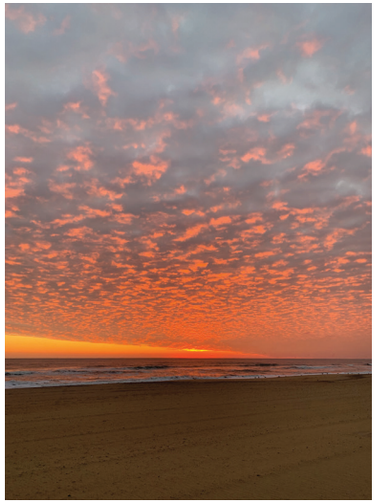
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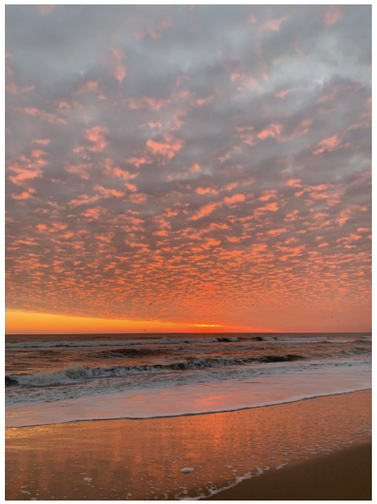
Monday, January 7, 2019
31st Street Boardwalk • 7:07 AM • 39° F

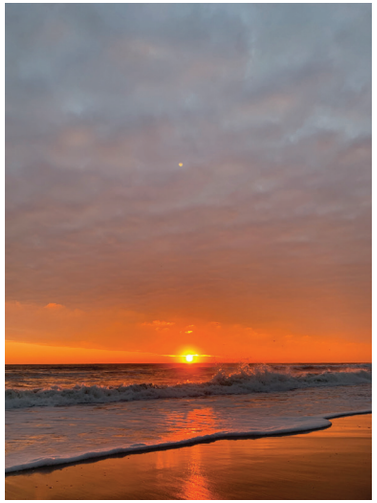












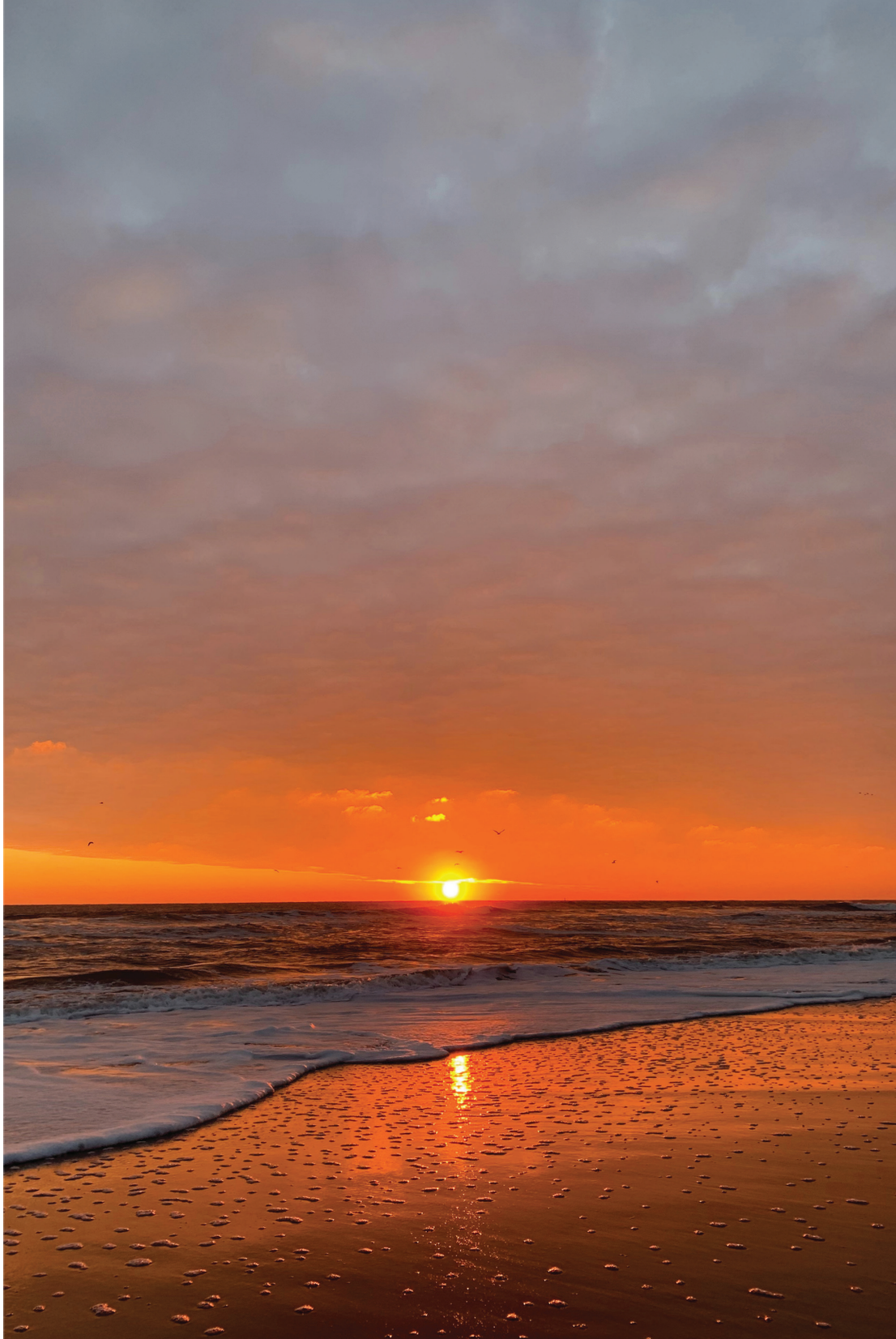
Previous Pages

Friday, January 11, 2019
70th Street Beach • 7:25 AM • 33° F

Thursday, January 15, 2019
12th Street Beach • 7:17 AM • 38° F

Current Pages

Thursday, January 15, 2019
12th Street Beach • 7:20 AM • 38° F

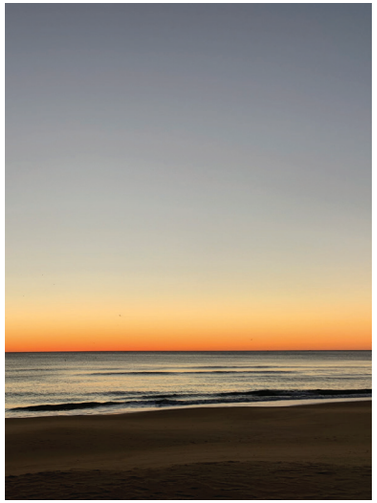


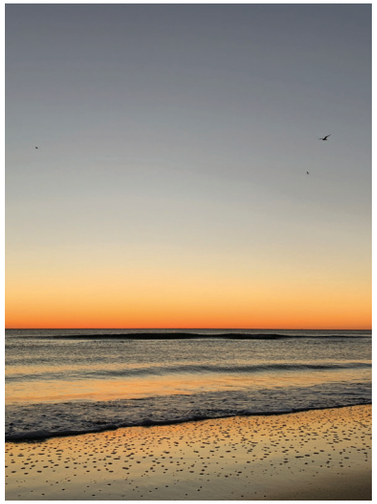
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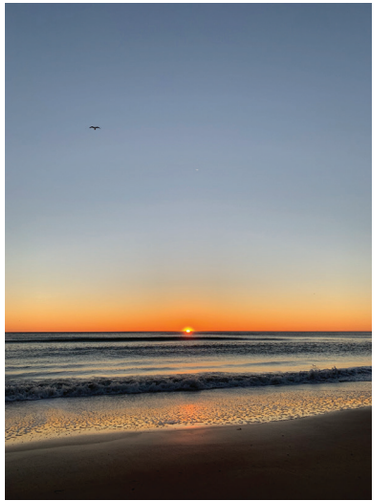
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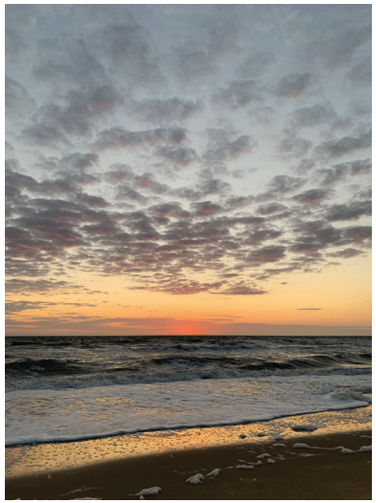
Friday, February 1, 2019
31st Street Beach • 6:46 AM • 29° F

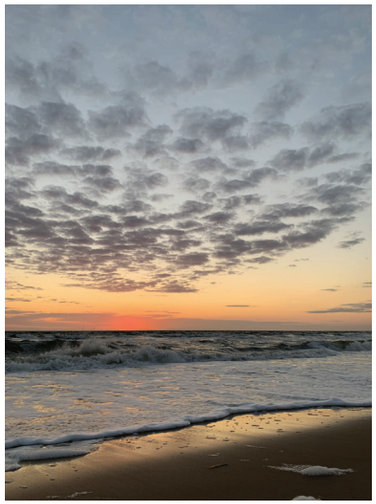
Sunday, February 17, 2019
10th Street Beach • 6:53 AM • 38° F

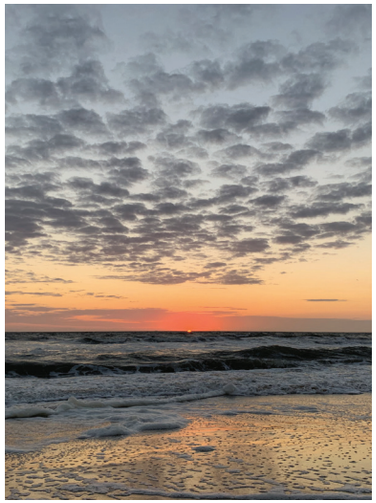
Current Pages

Monday, February 25, 2019
10th Street Beach • 6:38 AM • 46° F









Current Pages

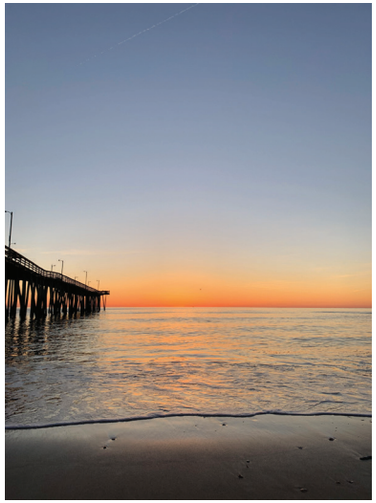
Wednesday, February 27, 2019

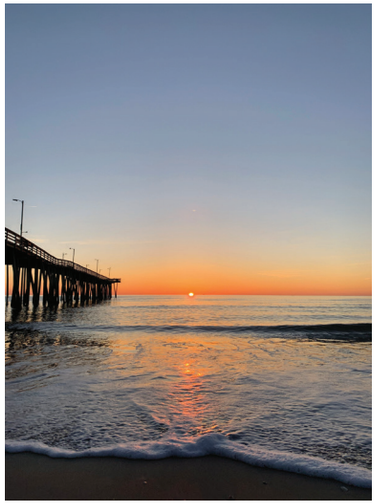
11th Street Beach • 6:38 AM • 44° F



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Pages 178–185 have been removed from this abridged sample version.







Previous Pages

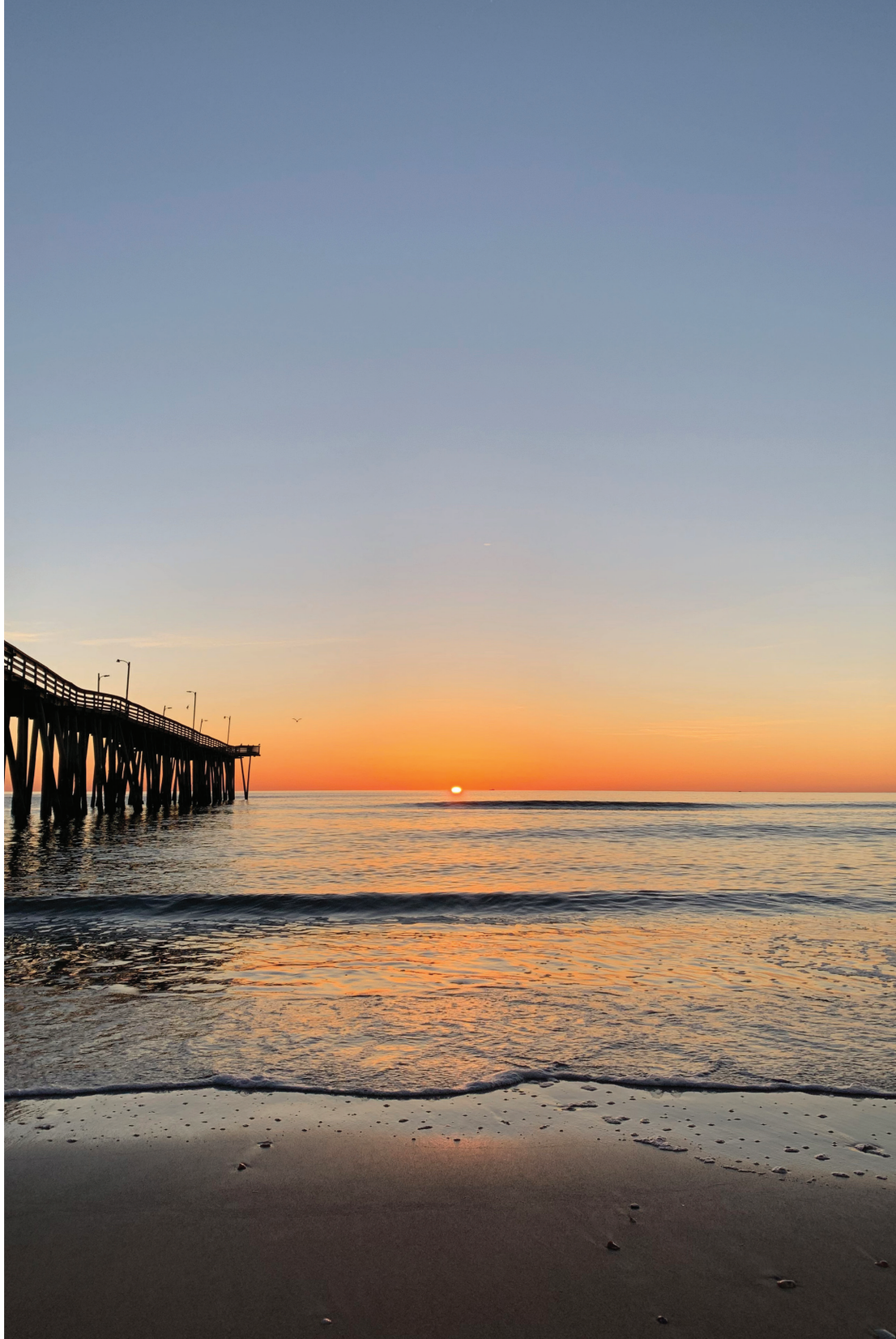
Wednesday, March 6, 2019
12th Street Beach • 6:41 AM • 31° F

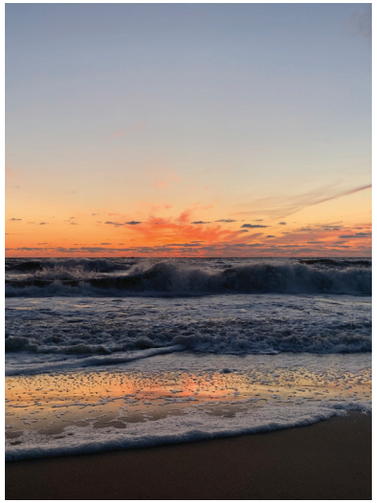
Monday, March 11, 2019
2nd Street Beach • 7:03 AM • 52° F

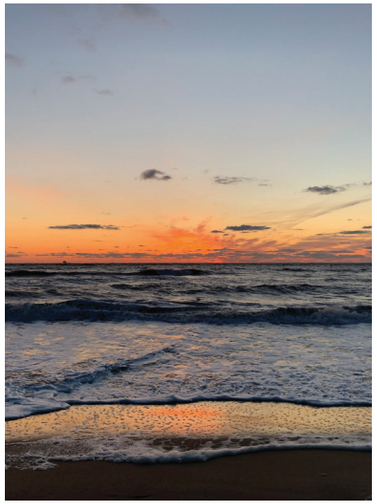
Sunday, March 17, 2019
10th Street Beach • 7:13 AM • 41° F

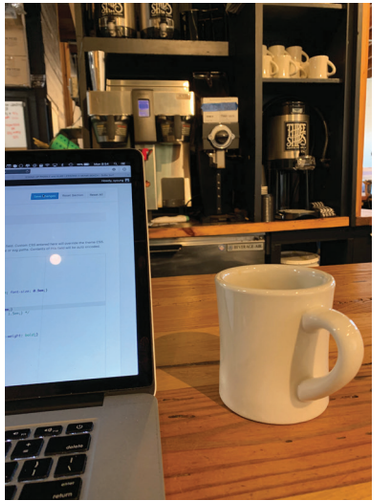
Current Pages

Sunday, March 24, 2019
15th Street Pier • 7:01 AM • 36° F







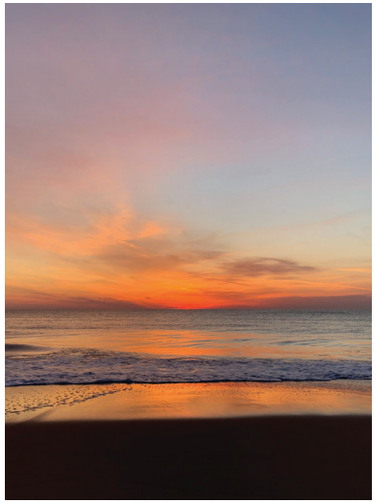


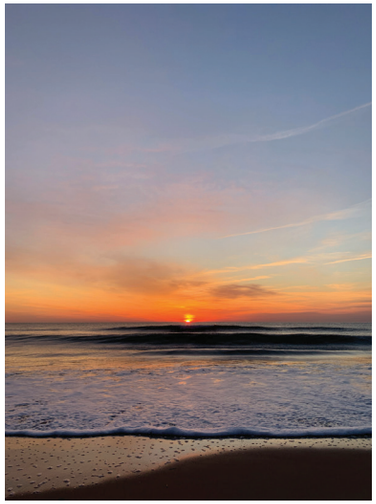
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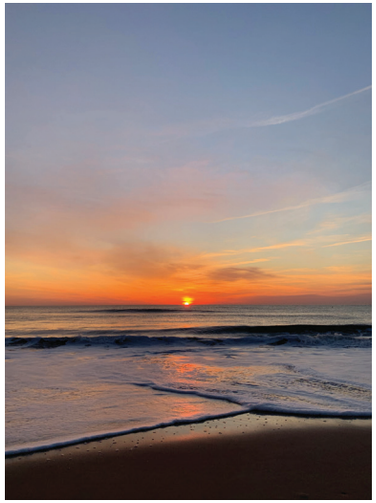
Monday, April 1, 2019

12th Street Beach • 6:41 AM • 37° F





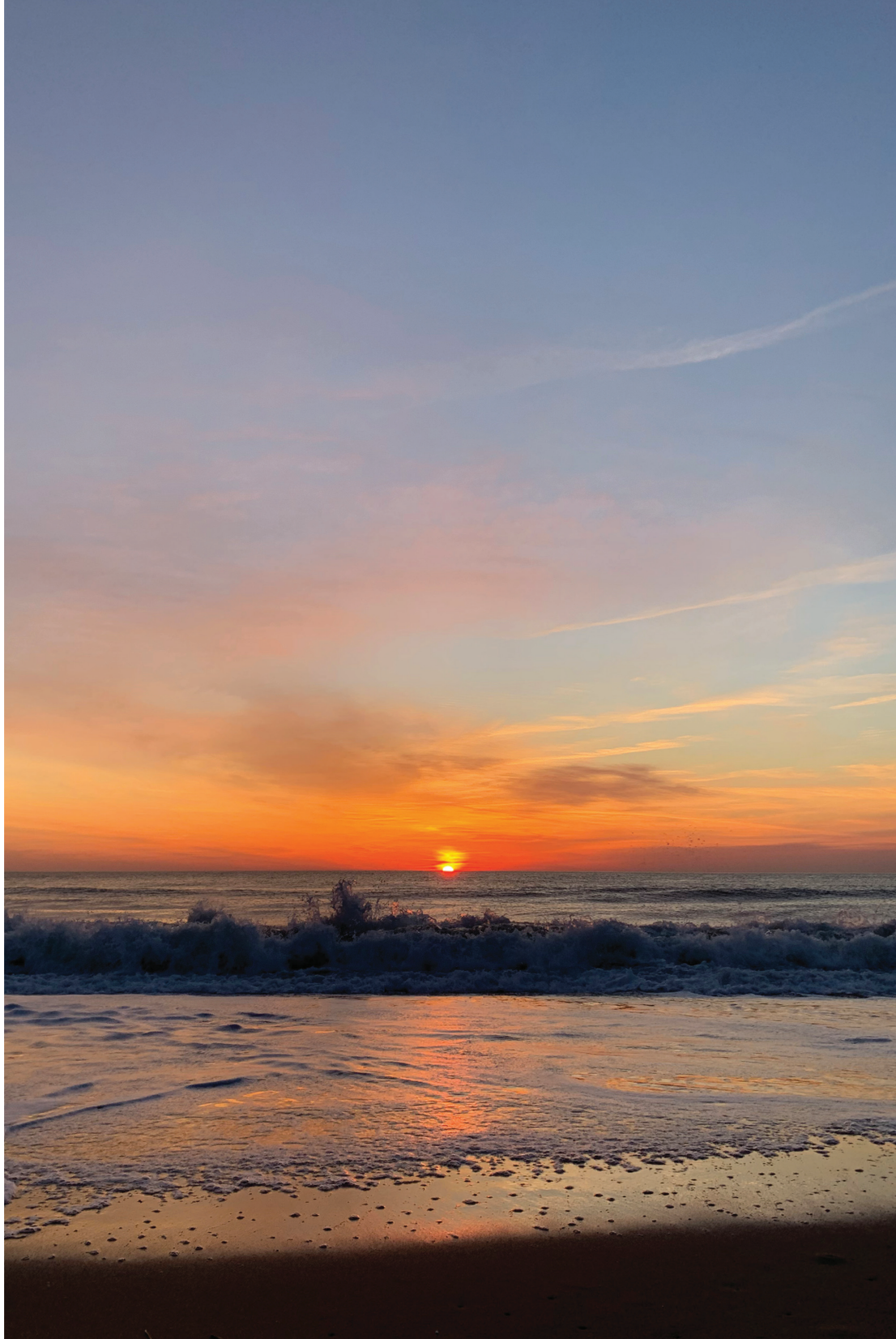




Current Pages

Thursday, April 4, 2019

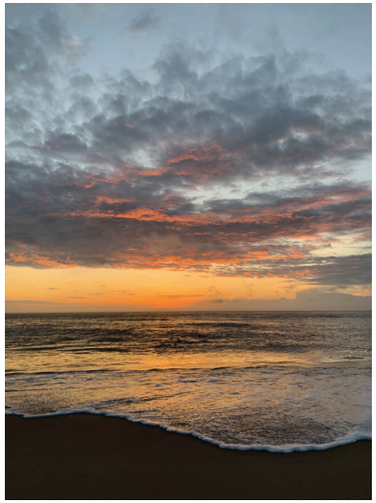
10th Street Beach • 6:46 AM • 47° F

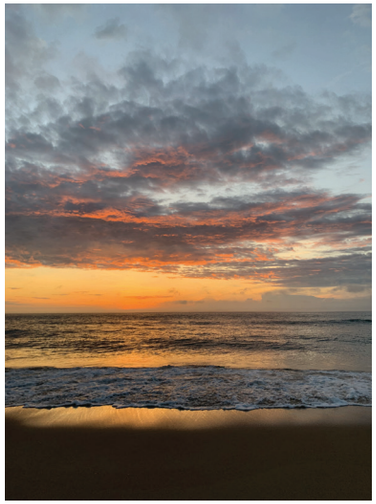


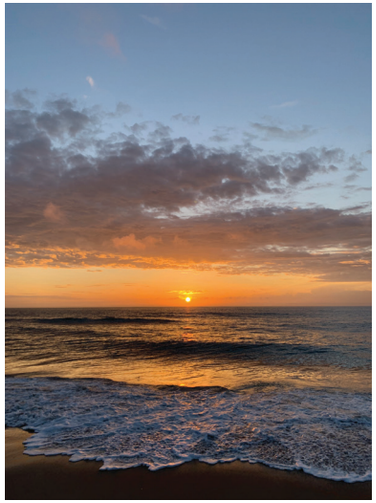












Previous Pages

Sunday, April 7, 2019
1st Street Jetty • 6:41 AM • 48° F

Wednesday, April 24, 2019
1st Street Jetty • 6:28 AM • 64° F

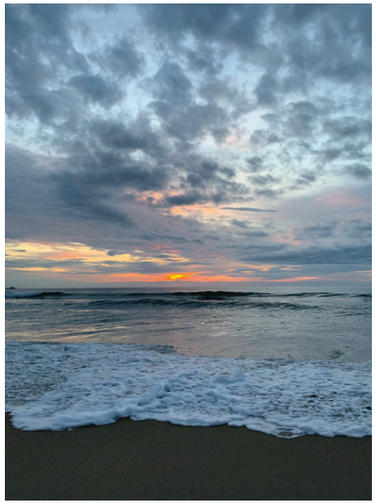
Sunday, April 28, 2019
Sandbridge • 6:14 AM • 59° F

Current Pages

Saturday, May 4, 2019
12th Street Beach • 6:07 AM • 70° F







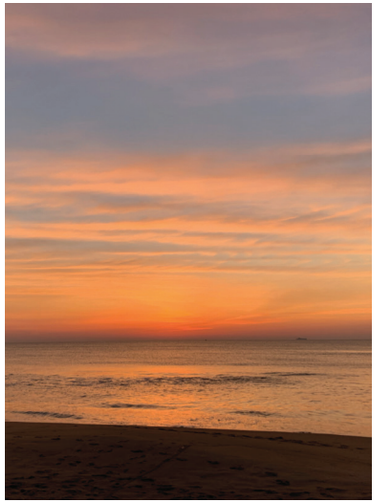


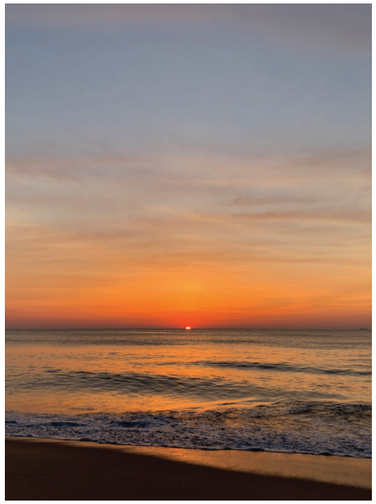
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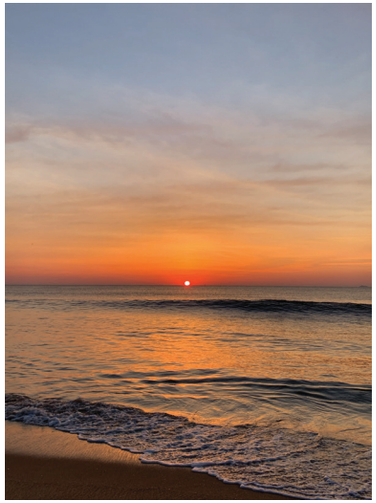
Sunday, May 5, 2019

12th Street Beach • 6:12 AM • 70° F









Current Pages

Friday, May 17, 2017

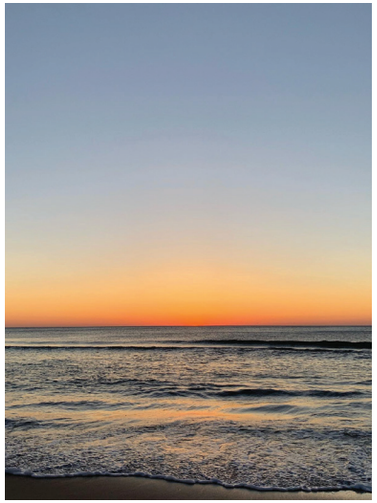
Croatan • 5:56 AM • 63° F

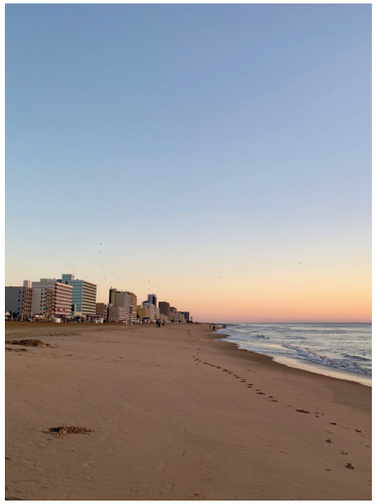














Previous Pages

Monday, June 10, 2019
15th Street Pier • 6:02 AM • 72° F

Saturday, June 15, 2019
3rd Street Beach • 5:49 AM • 55° F

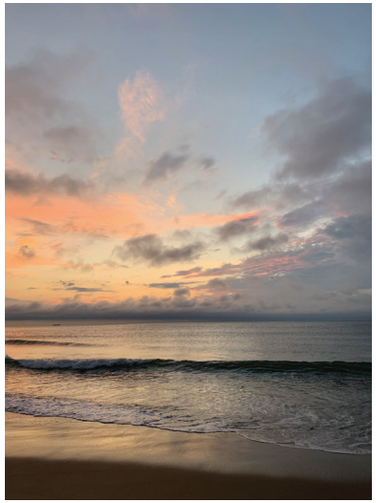
Sunday, June 16, 2019
Sandbridge • 5:37 AM • 66° F

Current Pages

Friday, June 21, 2019 (Summer Solstice)
17th Street Beach • 5:45 AM • 72° F











Previous Pages

Saturday, June 22, 2019

1st Street Jetty • 5:42 AM • 68° F

Current Pages

Friday, July 12, 2019

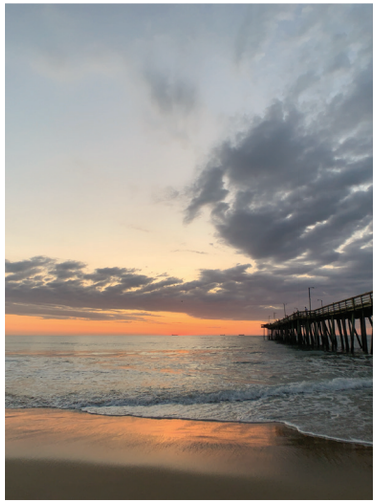
1st Street Jetty • 6:12 AM • 72° F

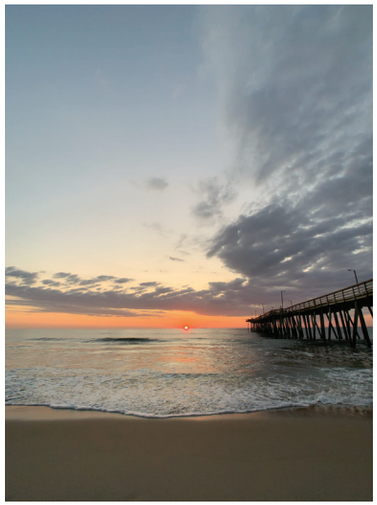


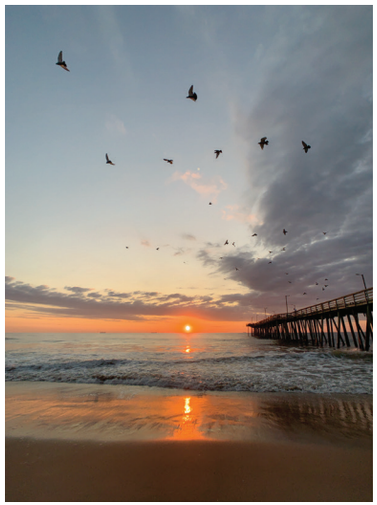












Previous Pages

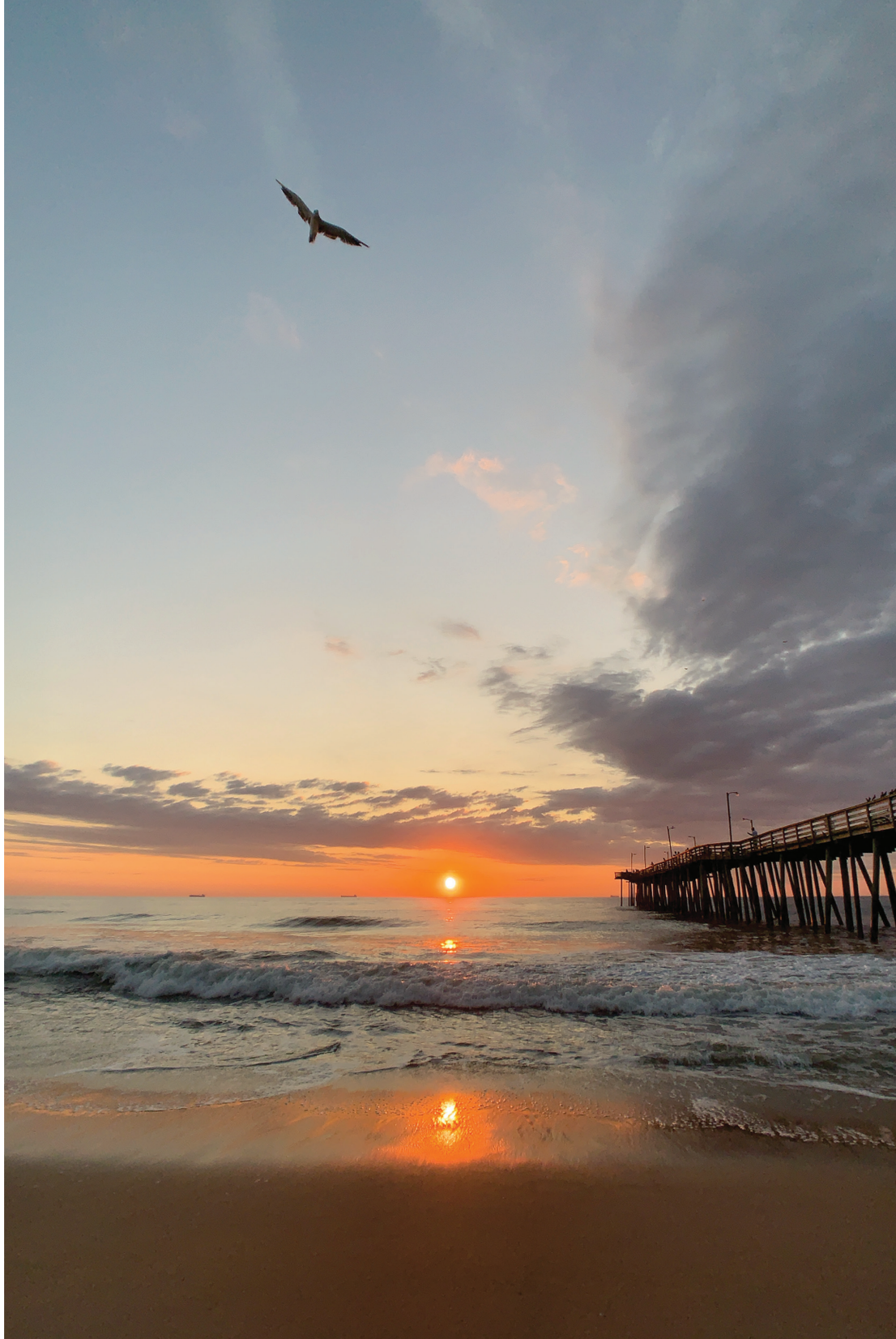
Sunday, July 28, 2019
4th Street Beach • 5:49 AM • 64° F

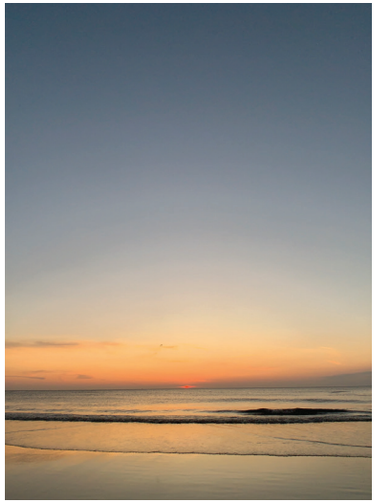
Monday, July 29, 2019
1st Street Jetty • 6:08 AM • 70° F

Friday, August 9, 2019
3rd Street Beach • 6:12 AM • 73° F

Current Pages

Sunday, August 11, 2019
15th Street Pier • 6:24 AM • 68° F









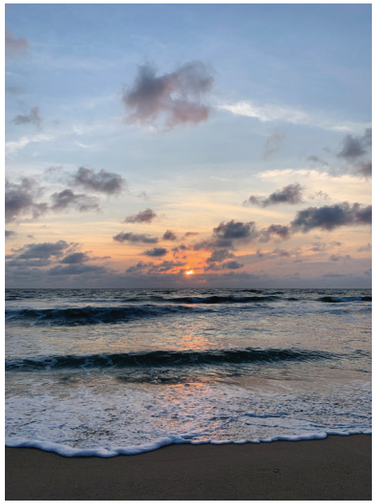
Current Pages

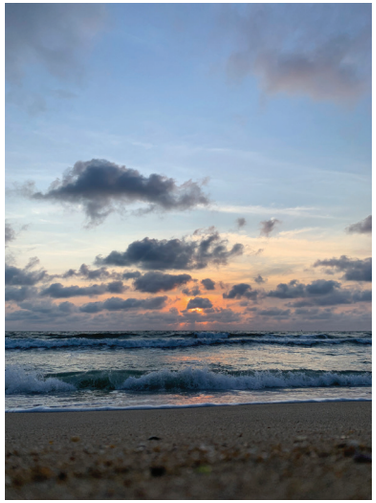
Thursday, August 22, 2019

Croatan • 6:33 AM • 76° F









Current Pages

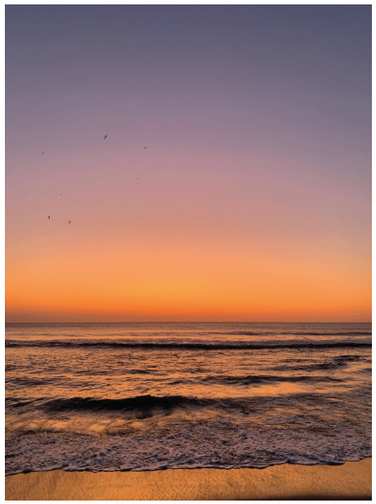
Tuesday, September 17, 2019

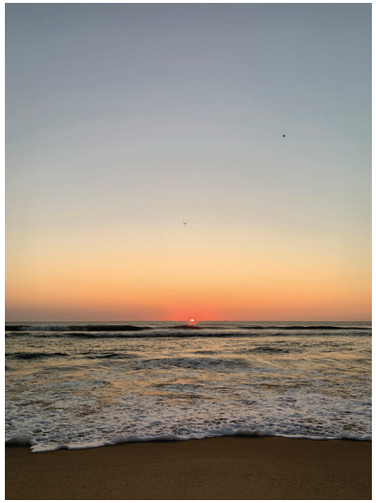
5th Street Beach • 7:05 AM • 70° F











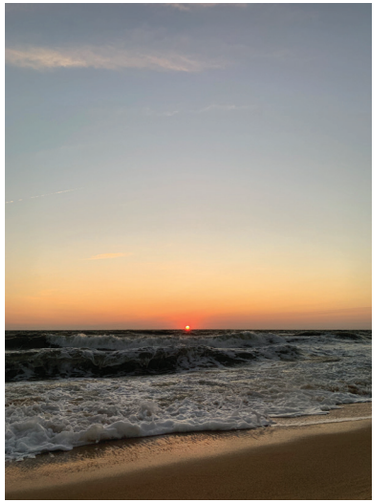
Previous Pages

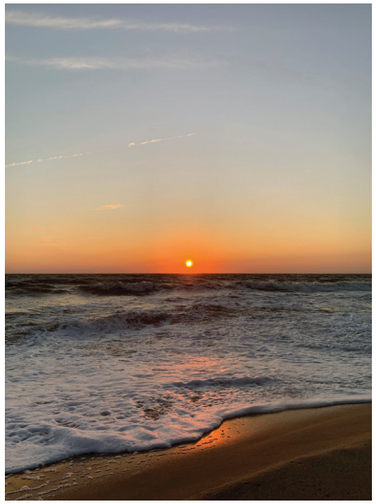
Saturday, September 21, 2019
7th Street Beach • 6:55 AM • 57° F

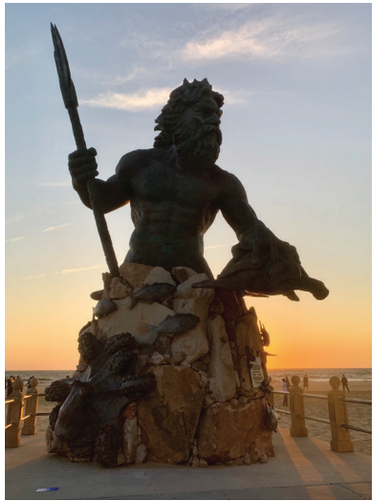
Current Pages

Monday, September 23, 2019 (Fall Equinox)
12th Street Beach • 7:03 AM • 68° F







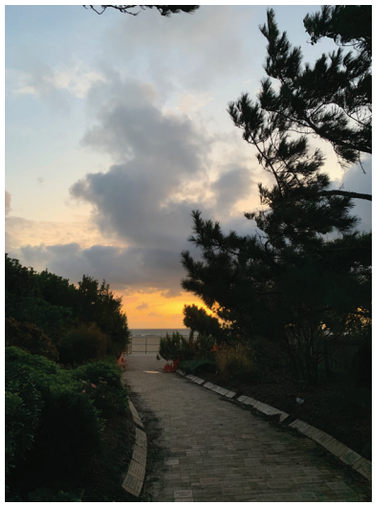


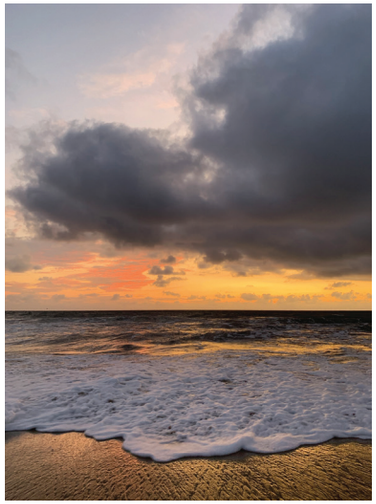
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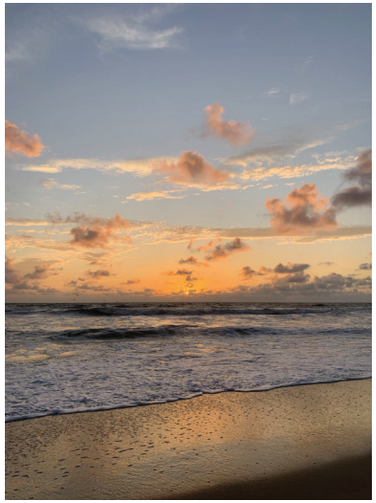
Friday, September 27, 2019

31st Street Beach • 7:05 AM • 74° F









Current Pages

Monday, September 30, 2019
47th Street Beach • 7:08 AM • 72° F

Following Pages

Monday, September 30, 2019
47th Street Beach • 7:14 AM • 72° F





About the Author

Shawn Young works as a designer in Virginia Beach, Virginia. More information about him and his work can be found at shawnyoung.com.



Photograph by John McKay (@4a2015)
Tuesday, September 24, 2019
15th Street Pier



Virginia Beach Sunrises is a collection of photographs that were shared to the Instagram account @vabeachsunrises beginning in the summer of 2017. It contains imagery from Virginia Beach, Virginia, and the book tells a pictoral story of the Mid-Atlantic Coast city's natural environment through the months and seasons over the course of two years. The work presents some of the Instagram account's most-favorited photos in a tangible format that can be enjoyed and shared outside of the digital space.

Shawn Young is a graphic designer and unabashed morning person living near the Virginia Beach oceanfront.

Cover design by Shawn Young

Author photo by Guy Dumas (@thelessyoucarry)
1st Street Jetty
Friday, October 11, 2019 at 7:13 AM

Limited Edition of 400

/ 400

US $26.00
www.shawnyoung.com
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