COASTAL EASTERN SHORE

A narrow 70-mile peninsula jutting out between the Atlantic Ocean and the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia’s EASTERN SHORE is a true getaway. Spend your days exploring quaint waterfront towns and nearby beaches, as pristine as they are vast. Or venture offshore to explore a paddler’s paradise of undeveloped barrier islands – the largest stretch of wild coastline remaining on the East Coast. Just be sure to leave time for your bucket list experiences: a NASA space launch, a bird-watching adventure and the world-renowned Chincoteague Pony Swim.

CELEBRATE

Spend a long summer weekend in Chincoteague for memories that will last a lifetime at the 95th Annual Pony Swim. Join thousands of visitors from around the world to watch the renowned Salt Water Cowboys round up herds of beautiful wild ponies on nearby Assateague Island and guide them down the beaches and across the Assateague Channels for a festival and pony auction on Chincoteague Island. The auction helps control the herd size, which helps preserve the delicate salt marsh ecosystem, and is also a fundraiser for the local Volunteer Fire Company, which uses the proceeds to provide care for the ponies.

DISCOVER

Prep for adventure with a stay at the Inn at Onancock and a hearty breakfast with hosts Matt and Kim Spuck. Then cruise on over to Tangier Island, a tiny spit in the middle of Chesapeake Bay that’s only accessible by boat, plane or ferry from Onancock (or Reedville). Listen for a dialect that dates back to the Elizabethan era while gorging on seafood at the famous Chesapeake House and exploring the island by bike or golf cart; play on the wild beach, observe unique bird wildlife and pop into the Tangier History Museum for the full experience. Water lovers can even book a sailing trip with Onancock Sailing Adventures or a paddling trip with Burnham Guides to explore the waterways that connect to Tangier.

BASK

In beautiful Cape Charles, the public beach boasts calm, shallow waters that are perfect for the kids to practice their sandcastle engineering skills. Rent kayaks or paddleboards for the more active family members; dining, shopping, B&Bs and a town pier perfect for fishing are all within walking distance. Visit the LOVework art, a piece that perfectly represents the community and its history. Rest your head at the recently remodeled, pet-friendly Sunset Beach Hotel and Beach Club (also offering an onsite campground with deluxe cabins, safari tents and room for your deluxe RV), with private beach, resort pool and more.

LAUNCH

Did you know NASA has been launching rockets from the Eastern Shore Center on Wallops Island since 1945? Now you can see it for yourself! Home to one of only four major locations in the U.S., this flight facility offers resupply rockets for the International Space Station and hosts moon missions, education programs and more. The NASA Wallops Visitor Center offers exhibits on the history of space, special programs and weather satellites. Space camp is offered every summer, but book early to get a spot for lift off!

SAVOR

Explore the sleepy Victorian-era town of Wachapreague, populated by only 200 permanent residents and surrounded by farmland, woods, water and some of the only undeveloped wetlands and barrier islands in the Mid-Atlantic. Bird watchers can enjoy spring and fall migrations, watching thousands of birds take flight across the region. Dig for clams, fish or rent a kayak to see every detail up close. Don’t skip dining at the most popular place in town, Wachapreague Island House Restaurant, where you’ll devour fresh seafood, award-winning crab cakes and delicious burgers, all while overlooking the picturesque harbor.
Welcome Center at New Church — Virginia Tourism Corporation Access US 13 North & South in New Church, VA 23860, 757-634-5200.

Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge — 621 Beach Rd, Oyster, VA 23120, 757-824-6577; refuge.fws.gov/chincoteague.

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