

Keep your Summer Vacation Easy on the Environment with a Hampton Roads Staycation



Any plans yet for a summer vacation? Traveling to a far-flung coast, a national park or the big city may sound fun. Or you could save time, money and emissions by getting away from it all in your own backyard. From camping by the Chesapeake Bay to hiking and biking through parks and natural areas, there are plenty of ways to enjoy a Hampton

Roads staycation, while reducing your environmental footprint.

“We are lucky to live in this beautiful coastal environment, with access to beaches, the bay, world-class attractions and museums. Even if you picked a different place to visit each day of the week, you would not begin to check all the boxes on your to-do list,” said Rebekah Eastep, with askHRgreen.org, a region-wide environmental education initiative.

To help residents plan local, green-themed itineraries, Eastep and her colleagues developed a list of **Seven Coastal Virginia Staycation Ideas**, including tips for making each one easy on the environment.

1. State Parks

Virginia is awash with beautiful state parks, and there are four gems in the Hampton Roads region: York River in Williamsburg, First Landing in Virginia Beach, False Cape at the Virginia/North Carolina border and Chippokes in Surry County. All are ideal for hiking, biking and fishing. You can even make a night of it by renting a cabin or tent site at select locations.

Green tip: If your pup is coming along for a hike, make sure to pack plastic bags to scoop the poop.

2. Watery Excursions

We are surrounded by water in Coastal Virginia, with ample opportunities to explore its environs. A beach day makes perfect sense with sandy beaches available along the James and

York rivers, Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean. Fishers, kayakers and paddleboarders can use FishSwimPlay.com to find a new favorite fishing hole or water trail.

There are ferry boat options too. Take the pedestrian paddle boat ferry to cross the Elizabeth River between Portsmouth and Norfolk. Or drive aboard the Jamestown-Scotland Ferry to travel over the James River between Surry and James City County. ***Green tip: It can be windy on the water; secure your trash so it does not become litter.***

3. For a Limited Time

The name Maya Lin should ring a bell; she is the acclaimed artist who designed the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. (among other works). She put her creativity to remarkable use in [Maya Lin, a Study of Water](#), a solo exhibit showing at the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art.

Focusing on her sculptural interpretations of water spanning several decades, the exhibit centers on a newly created, site-responsible sculptural piece, *Marble Chesapeake & Delaware Bay*, using marbles to map the waterways onto the gallery walls and floors. See it while you can, through Sept. 4 at this Virginia Beach museum. Admission is free. ***Bonus point: This exhibit is free, but you will need to reserve your virtual ticket. No paper!***

4. Animal Attraction

For viewing animals of all shapes and sizes, there are options in Hampton Roads. From indoor galleries to the boardwalk trail, you can view critters native to the area at the [Virginia Living Museum](#) in Newport News. Norfolk's [Virginia Zoo](#) offers a beautifully landscaped tour of animals from across the globe, including lions, tigers, and bears (oh my!). The [Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center](#) features amazing animals representing hundreds of species. ***Good to do: Thank you for avoiding single-use plastics, especially straws. The Aquarium works with local organizations, including askHRgreen.org, to educate the public about alternatives to single-use plastics, which harm wildlife when ingested.***

5. Theme Park Fun

No need to drive south to a theme park when you have [Busch Gardens Williamsburg](#) and [Water Country USA](#) at your backdoor! If your group likes thrills and chills, get the year-rounds passes for "any time" trips. And don't forget [Ocean Breeze Water Park](#) in Virginia Beach. ***Green tip: Bring your own water bottle and fill it up with free tap water provided by the parks.***

6. Explore History

The abundance of history in Hampton Roads will have your summer itinerary overflowing! You can explore our nation's founding by visiting America's Historic Triangle, which includes Jamestown Settlement, the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown and Colonial Williamsburg.

The science and engineering buffs among you will be thrilled to learn about flight at the Virginia Air & Space Center, Air Power Park or Military Aviation Museum. There are also numerous maritime attractions including the Mariners' Museum and Park, home to artifacts from the *USS Monitor*; *Battleship Wisconsin* located at Nauticus in Norfolk; and the Virginia Beach Surf & Rescue Museum at the oceanfront. ***Mind blower: If Jamestown settlers had thrown out plastic beverage bottles, these vessels would still be here today! Plastics can take up to 450 years to decompose.***

7. Two-wheeled Fun

What could be more fun and eco-friendlier than biking? Hampton Roads has trails and paths aplenty for peddling your way around the region. The 5.3 loop of the Bikeway at Newport News Park comes with views of meadows, woodlands, the Lee Hall Reservoir and Colonial National Historical Park.

In Chesapeake, the Dismal Swamp Canal Trail offers 8.3 miles of smooth peddling adjacent to the historic canal and Dismal Swamp State Park. For an urban biking experience, you can't beat the Elizabeth River Trail in Norfolk. Hugging the river, the 10.5-mile trail runs from Old Dominion University, past Town Point Park, ending at Harbor Park Stadium.

Finally, there is a famous path built specifically with cyclists in mind—the Virginia Beach Boardwalk. The three-mile thoroughfare lends itself to a leisurely ride, with views of the sand, surf and sun-kissed beachgoers. There are separate paths for bikers and walkers, and places to stop for a smoothie or a cone. ***Pure green: Everyone wins when biking! People-powered bikes do not release harmful emissions that pollute the atmosphere.***

We hope these ideas will inspire you to plan your own summer staycation. With all the money and time saved, you may just want to do it again in the fall! For more tips and info on all things green, visit www.askHRgreen.org

About askHRgreen.org askHRgreen.org is your go-to resource for all things green in Hampton Roads – from recycling tips and pointers for keeping local waterways clean to water-saving ideas and simple steps

to make local living easy on the environment. Launched in 2011, the region-wide public awareness and education campaign is administered through the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission and powered by the following members: The cities of Chesapeake, Franklin, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Poquoson, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Williamsburg; the counties of Gloucester, Isle of Wight, James City, Southampton, Surry and York; the town of Smithfield; and HRSD. Like askHRgreen.org on [Facebook](#), follow on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), tune in to [YouTube](#) and catch the “Let’s Talk Green” [blog](#), written by a team of local experts.