

TRAVEL

Surf & turf

Splash and play, enjoy the nature of Virginia Beach

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SPECIAL WRITERS

There's a lot more to do in Virginia's largest resort city than sunbathing, splashing in the surf and strolling down the beach. Virginia Beach offers something for everyone year-round. This great vacation spot is one of the most pristine areas on the East Coast.

With two wildlife refuges, a 3,000-acre state park, over 108 square miles of wetlands and water, it's a back-to-nature getaway.

Aside from bird watching for more than 500 native and migratory birds, whale watching is available from January through the beginning of March, dolphin watching from June through September.

For the sports-minded there's deep sea and pier fishing, 20 golf courses, 200 free tennis courts and kayaking.

History buffs will be interested in the historic homes, Cape Henry where Capt. John Smith landed before settling Jamestown, the Cape Henry Lighthouse or a visit to Williamsburg and Jamestown

If you are going....
■ Call 1-800-VA BEACH (1-800-822-3224) or visit the Web site www.vofun.com for a free copy of the Virginia Beach Nature Guide, and more information about vacation packages.

(one and one-half hours by car).
Virginia Beach is 718 miles from Detroit, a 20-minute ride from Norfolk Airport.
A good time to visit is fall, winter or spring. Mild temperatures, value-priced hotel rates, good fishing and great eating lure savvy visitors.

Marine science

The Virginia Marine Science Museum is one of the nation's top facilities of its kind. It contains an aquarium and more. Visitors take a journey through four habitats following aquatic life in Virginia from freshwater inland creeks to salt marshes, from the Chesapeake Bay to the Atlantic Ocean. These are: The Coastal River Room, a freshwater habitat where birds and turtles roam free; The Owls Creek Marsh Pavilion, and a one-third-mile long nature trail through the Owls Creek Salt Marsh; the Chesapeake Bay Aquarium with

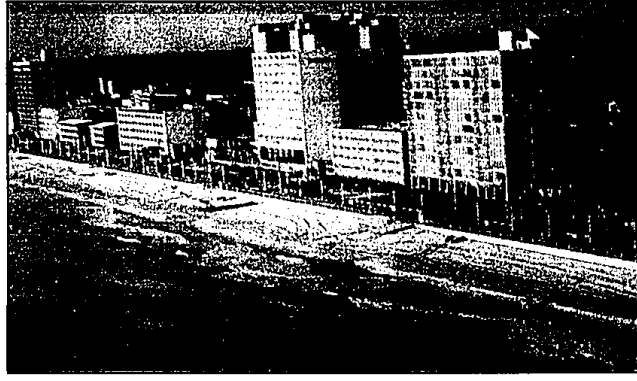
800,000 gallons of aquarium and live animal habitats; and the Atlantic Ocean Pavilion with sharks, sea turtles and stingrays. There are more than 300 hands-on displays at the museum. An IMAX theater shows several different films daily, including ones on whales and dolphins, seasonally.

On the boardwalk

Rollerblade, stroll or bike on the recently refurbished boardwalk. The boardwalk is nearly three miles long and 28-feet wide with a concrete surface. It's lined with open-air cafes and three oceanfront stages. Starting in mid-November, visitors can ride in a bus or their car to see more than 300 lighted displays during the Holiday Lights at the Beach show.

Get back to nature

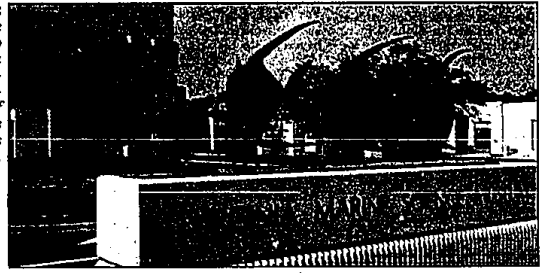
Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge Park/False Cape State



Vacation destination: The Virginia Beach oceanfront draws vacationers who want to sunbathe or splash in the surf.

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Marine life:
This is the entrance to the Virginia Marine Science Museum, one of the nation's top facilities of its kind.



Park is an over-8,000-acre refuge of beach, woodland, sand dunes and marsh. It is one of the last undeveloped beach areas on the East Coast. Visitors can get to the remote areas of the refuge on winter weekends by Terra-Gator. This one-of-a-kind vehicle with tires almost five feet high and four feet wide holds up to 36 people. Climb aboard and take a four-hour narrated tour. The cost is \$8 per person. In spring, an open-air electric tram traverses the area more frequently.

Among the animals you'll see are ducks, snow geese, tundra swans, deer, gray and red fox, rabbit, raccoon, possum, bobcat, wild horses, and bald eagles.

First Landing State Park is Virginia's most-visited state park and is also famous as the site of the landing of the first

permanent English settlement in 1607. There are campgrounds and cabins, miles and miles of hiking and biking trails, and Bay Lab, an educational center with hands-on programs including field explorations on the beach to collect marine life such as hermit crabs and starfish.

Virginia Beach is a hot birding spot with its state parks wildlife refuges and natural area preserves. Bring your binoculars.

Healing workshops

Visitors from around the world gather at the Association for

Research and Enlightenment to attend workshops, lectures and conferences based on the works of the best-documented psychic of modern times and father of holistic medicine, Edgar Cayce.

The association also houses the country's largest metaphysical library with more than 14,000 readings. Guided tours include films, lectures, meditation classes and ESP demonstrations as well as health services including massage, facials and reflexology.

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