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ON THE COVER - Who wouldn't want to lazily languish in a warm French Polynesian pool during the height of winter weather here in Tidewater. Join us as we explore the world in our new Jet Setter department.

Publisher's Note

Celebrating Six Years Of Boulevard Magazine

It's hard to believe that six years have passed since Boulevard Magazine first hit the stands, and yet, here we are—celebrating a milestone that fills us with immense pride and gratitude. When we set out to launch this publication, we knew that Tidewater Virginia was a community full of life, culture, and stories that deserved to be told. What we didn't know was how deeply Boulevard would be embraced by our readers, partners, and contributors. As we mark our sixth anniversary, it's impossible not to reflect on the incredible journey we've shared with all of you. It has been a remarkable ride, and we couldn't have reached this point without the unwavering support and trust of the very community we serve.

From day one, our mission has been clear: to create a lifestyle magazine that truly captures the spirit of Tidewater Virginia. We wanted Boulevard to be more than just a magazine; we envisioned it as a reflection of the people, the businesses, and the culture that make this region such a special place to live, work, and visit. Six years later, we're proud to say that we've stayed true to that vision. With every issue, we've aimed to highlight the beauty, diversity, and uniqueness of our area—from the charming streets of Norfolk to the coastal beauty of Virginia Beach, the historical richness of Williamsburg, and the vibrant communities throughout Hampton Roads.

As the publisher of Boulevard, I've had the privilege of working alongside an incredibly talented and dedicated team. Together, we've crafted articles that tell the stories of local entrepreneurs, showcase the area's finest dining and entertainment, and celebrate the people who make this region thrive. The behind-the-scenes work that goes into every issue is nothing short of a labor of love, and it's been made all the more rewarding by the feedback and support we've received from you—the readers and members of this community.

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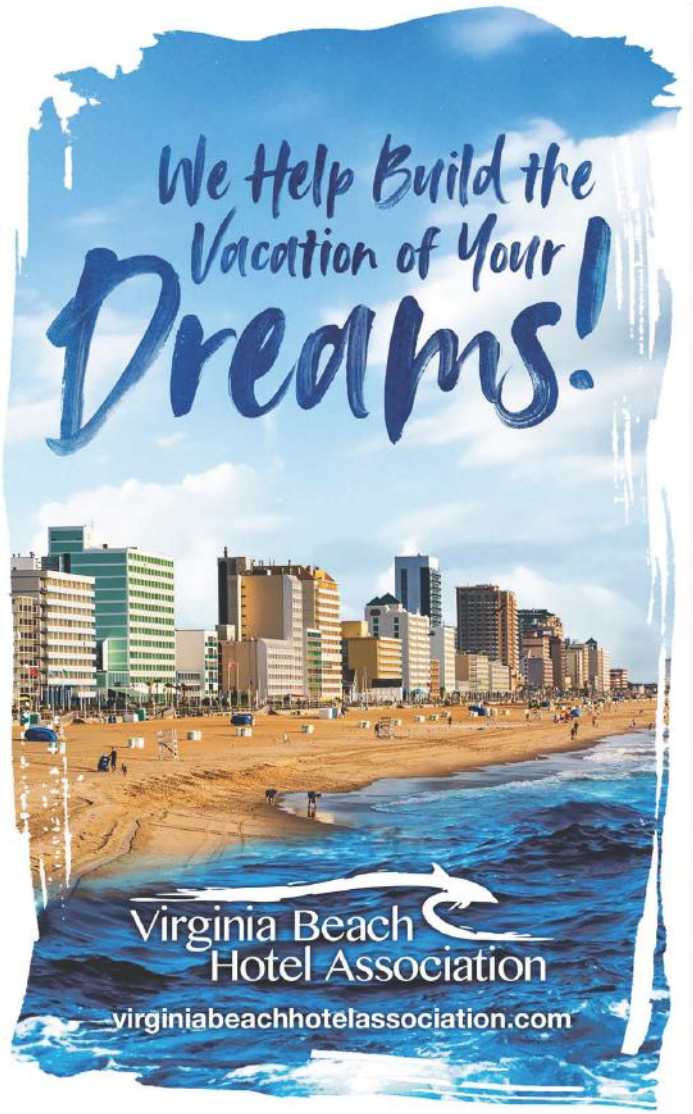
As we reflect on the past six years, it's also important to acknowledge the challenges we've faced—none of which would have been possible without the resilience of our team and the support of our readers. In an ever-changing media landscape, where the digital world continues to evolve and print publications face unprecedented shifts, we've remained steadfast in our commitment to bringing you quality content that you can trust.

We've adapted to new platforms, embraced innovative storytelling techniques, and continuously pushed the boundaries of what we can achieve. Despite the obstacles, we've thrived because of the incredible people who stand behind Boulevard Magazine, and we're proud of what we've accomplished together.

Looking ahead, we're more excited than ever about what the future holds. While we're taking a moment to celebrate our past achievements, we're also setting our sights on new horizons. We've only just scratched the surface of what we can do for Tidewater Virginia, and we're eager to continue exploring, sharing, and inspiring. Our commitment to bringing you the best of what our area has to offer remains unwavering, and we're determined to keep pushing the envelope when it comes to storytelling, design, and community engagement. We're also looking forward to expanding our reach, creating new opportunities for collaboration, and continuing to celebrate the vibrant, diverse spirit of this region.

There is so much to be thankful for as we celebrate this incredible anniversary. We are grateful for every subscriber who has made Boulevard part of their monthly routine, for every advertiser who has partnered with us to help grow their business, for every writer, photographer, and designer who has contributed their talents to our pages, and for every person who has shared their story with us along the way. But most of all, we are grateful for the Tidewater community that has supported us since the very beginning.

You've made Boulevard Magazine what it is today, and we're honored to continue serving you as we move forward into the next chapter. We are inspired by your enthusiasm, creativity, and passion for our shared home, and we can't wait to see what the next six years will bring.



Thank you, Tidewater Virginia, for embracing Boulevard Magazine and making it a part of your lives. We are incredibly proud to be part of such a dynamic and welcoming community, and we look forward to continuing this journey with all of you.

Here's to six more years of great stories, inspiring people, and celebrating the best of Tidewater Virginia.
With deep appreciation,

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Bonjour. French Polynesia!

By: Stephanie Saelee

The Adventure Begins

From Seattle to LA, then to Tahiti, and finally Raiatea—it was a journey fit for a modern explorer. Delta ONE brought me to paradise with a side of luxury, and Air Tahiti took me closer to the dream. After a quick overnight at the Hilton Tahiti (which, despite my brief stay, oozed charm), it was time to board the sailboat in Raiatea.

The warm airport welcome—complete with dancers and music—set the tone, and I didn't forget to snag a bottle of champagne duty-free (pro tip: always be prepared). My cozy stay at Le Maison Du Voyage, nestled in a serene residential area, featured a private deck, stellar hospitality, and a breakfast that kickstarted my day perfectly.

Dinner at Chez Monsieur was a hidden gem recommended by my host—a no-sign food truck across from the harbor, serving up huge plates and heartwarming vibes. The kind of spot you'd never find without a local tip, and absolutely worth the walk.

This is just the start—Voila! French Polynesia, you've already stolen my heart.

Day 2: Sailing with Yacht Americas from Raiatea -Taha'a

I met the crew and fellow travelers at Marina Uturoa right around noon. Yacht Americas charter by TJ Wagner was exactly as stunning as the pictures promised. I'd already sailed with Skipper Adam Morris and Chef Jelly Velazquez in Ibiza back in June, so I knew this catamaran was going to be top tier.

After a quick lunch and some essential shopping, we reviewed the 10 Golden Rules of Sailing (pirate vibes, minus the mutiny). Then we went off to Fish & Blue Restaurant for a sunset dinner. With shoes optional and toes in the sand, the beachfront ambiance was unbeatable. The food? Divine. The restroom setup? Instagram-worthy.

Day 3: More Magic from Raiatea to Taha'a

The day began with early morning breathwork on the front deck—well, for some. My roommate Courtney Bouillon and I—true late risers—opted for a back-deck dolphin sighting instead. A whole pod! It was a magical start to the day, even if the Zen crowd missed the memo.

Breakfast by Jelly, the galley wizard, was nothing short of miraculous. Fueled up, we hopped into the dinghy for a snorkeling adventure. Manta rays at their cleaning station stole the show, gliding gracefully while colorful fish darted around.

Dinner on the boat featured fresh tuna, courtesy of Lisa Wywrot and Michael Wilton from DC, paired with a golden sunset and an impromptu '90s dance party. Yacht Americas perfectly balanced relaxation and lively fun, making the hours of travel entirely worthwhile.

Day 4: Sail Taha'a to Bora Bora

The morning kicked off with snorkeling at the Coral River. Floating downstream amidst vibrant marine life was unforgettable, though I did have a few "close encounters" with the coral—nature's way of keeping me on my toes. Post-snorkel, lime juice became my emergency antiseptic. Note to self: pack waterproof Band-Aids.

We hoisted sails for a four-hour trek to Bora Bora, with waves and wind joining us for the ride. While a few shipmates battled seasickness, I managed to stay upright and ready for adventure.

At Bora Bora Beach Club, we split into groups for ATV and jet ski tours. Naturally, I channeled my inner Mad Max on the ATV, cruising rugged trails and soaking in cinematic views. Lunch followed, complete with an espresso martini, because why not? Then it was mermaid fins and a sparking beachside photoshoot by Karen Muramatsu. The evening wrapped up with a Tahitian dance performance and a lesson in Tahitian dancing at Bora Bora Yacht Club. Spoiler: I'm no pro, but I tried!

Photo by Karen Muramatsu

Day 5: Birthday Festivities Begin!

The day started with balloons in the main cabin and a celebratory lunch packed by Jelly for a scuba adventure with TJ Wagner and Lisa Wywrot. Two dives with Bora Bora Scuba showcased a giant manta ray and crystal-clear waters that made the undersea world feel surreal. Cozumel might still hold my "top dive" title, but Bora Bora's beauty was undeniable.

My birthday theme, "Gods and Goddesses of the Sea," was a hit. The crew embraced their divine roles, complete with golden temporary tattoos for added sparkle. Though I missed the Tree of Life hike due to an ankle mishap (gravity is rude), the yacht's vibe more than made up for it.

Dinner at St. James felt like stepping into a pirate's luxe dream. The food was sensational, the cocktails adventurous, and the company—a 14-strong birthday crew—made it unforgettable. The evening ended with a heartfelt toast and the most divine raspberry cake, leaving me teary-eyed and grateful.

Back on the yacht, we capped the night off with champagne before diving into an impromptu, moonlit swim—snorkels on, spirits free. Above us, the sky shimmered with endless stars, while beneath us, bioluminescent organisms ignited the water like a celestial dance. For a moment, we weren't just swimming—we were drifting between worlds, weightless in a sea of stars. Truly magical.

Day 6: Bora Bora Adventures

We anchored in paradise, and the morning's agenda included a swim with reef sharks and playful stingrays at a sandbar. If you've never had a stingray nudge you for attention, you're missing out—they're basically ocean puppies. The reef sharks, though less cuddly, were equally mesmerizing.

Next up, shopping in town led us to Arc En Ciel Black Pearl Jewelry, a quirky Tahitian speakeasy where cocktails come with surprise pearls. My pearl, valued at $85, was a lovely keepsake, though one lucky mate scored a $250 gem.

The evening brought a dreamy sunset cruise back to Taha'a. Jelly's legendary Piña Coladas made an appearance, and dolphins danced along the bow as the sun dipped below the horizon. A storybook ending to a perfect day.

Day 7: Taha'a's Hidden Gems

Docking at Motu Pearl Village, we met our guide Tama, who greeted us with freshly cracked coconuts. First stop: Pari Pari Distillery, where Taha'a's award-winning rhum wowed us. Next, the vanilla farm—an aromatic delight and a testament to the art of organic farming. Finally, the Motu Pearl Dive, where we snorkeled to collect oysters housing stunning black pearls.

Tama's stories about the islands' history added depth to the day, making it both educational and enchanting. Back aboard, we dressed up for dinner at Restaurant Bar de Plage, indulging in a local buffet alongside mesmerizing Tahitian dancers and fire performers. It was the grand finale to an unforgettable leg of the journey.

Day 8: Farewell to the Yacht, Hello Moorea

We said our goodbyes and set off for new adventures. My destination? Moorea and the glass-floor overwater bungalows at the Hilton. Luxury vibes intact, I treated myself to a holistic massage at Vahinerii Moorea Spa. Vahinerii's magic hands and energy work released stress I didn't even know I was holding onto. She even dropped me off at my hotel, where birthday champagne awaited.

Dinner with Sunny Soroosh and Danielle Martin at Manuea Grill was the perfect mix of casual and delicious, featuring grilled meats and seafood under the stars.

Day 9: Brunch, Snorkeling, & a Scenic Farewell

The Hilton's brunch buffet lived up to its reputation as the best on the island. Afterward, Sunny Soroosh and Danielle Martin joined me snorkeling off my private deck. The marine life and tranquility made for a picture-perfect morning. A fast ferry to Tahiti marked the next leg of my adventure, offering an affordable and enjoyable alternative to flying.

Photo by Karen Muramatsu

Day 10: Bora Bora Bliss

Arriving at the Westin Bora Bora, I was greeted with a lei, champagne and a personal cake awaiting a fitting welcome for my upgraded villa with Mount Otemanu views. The Bluetooth system, private pool, and electric bikes added to the resort's charm. Dinner at Vara Vara Grill was a delight, with perfectly prepared mahi mahi and vino providing the perfect ending to a day of pure bliss.

Relaxation and Reflection

My final day was a mix of spa indulgence, poolside lounging, and soaking in Bora Bora's beauty. Jelly and Adam's surprise visit added a sweet touch, and I used the quiet moments to reflect on the journey. This wasn't just a trip; it was a celebration of life, independence, and the joy of living fully.

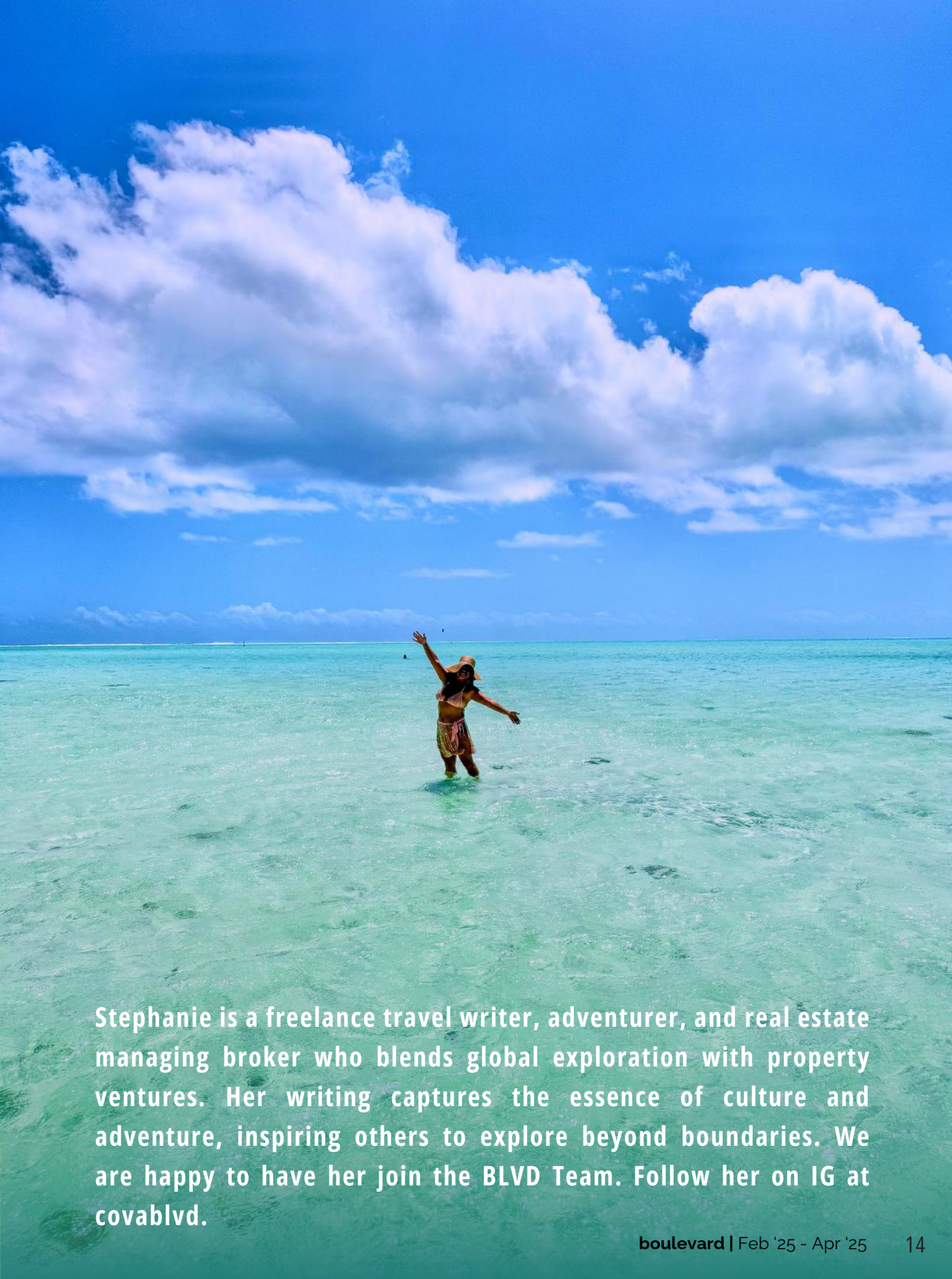
French Polynesia, you've captured my heart. For anyone hesitant to travel solo, take the plunge—the world is waiting, and there's no better time to embrace it. Cheers to new adventures, unforgettable memories, and the thrill of exploring life on your terms.

Au Revoir & À Bientôt!

During the sail, Skipper Adam had us share our pits, peaks, and giggles of the day. My pit? A snorkeling mishap that left me with a few scrapes and a good story. My giggle? We have video footage courtesy of Tami Evnin of Jelly and me squeezing Sunny Soroosh in a mermaid fin— #MermaidsDontQuit. My peak? The lifelong connections forged with incredible souls on this phenomenal journey. Here's to embracing every moment—the highs, the lows, and the laugh-until-you-cry adventures that make life extraordinary.

These solo days were more than a celebration—they were a chance to reflect, feel inspired, and soak in gratitude. Sure, these resorts might scream "honeymoon vibes," but who says you need a plus-one to revel in this kind of joy? Life is too short to wait.

Here's the takeaway: Embrace life wholeheartedly, live with purpose, and make every moment count— no matter your status. Au revoir and à bientôt French Polynesia. You've been an absolute dream.



Stephanie is a freelance travel writer, adventurer, and real estate managing broker who blends global exploration with property ventures. Her writing captures the essence of culture and adventure, inspiring others to explore beyond boundaries. We are happy to have her join the BLVD Team. Follow her on IG at covablvd.

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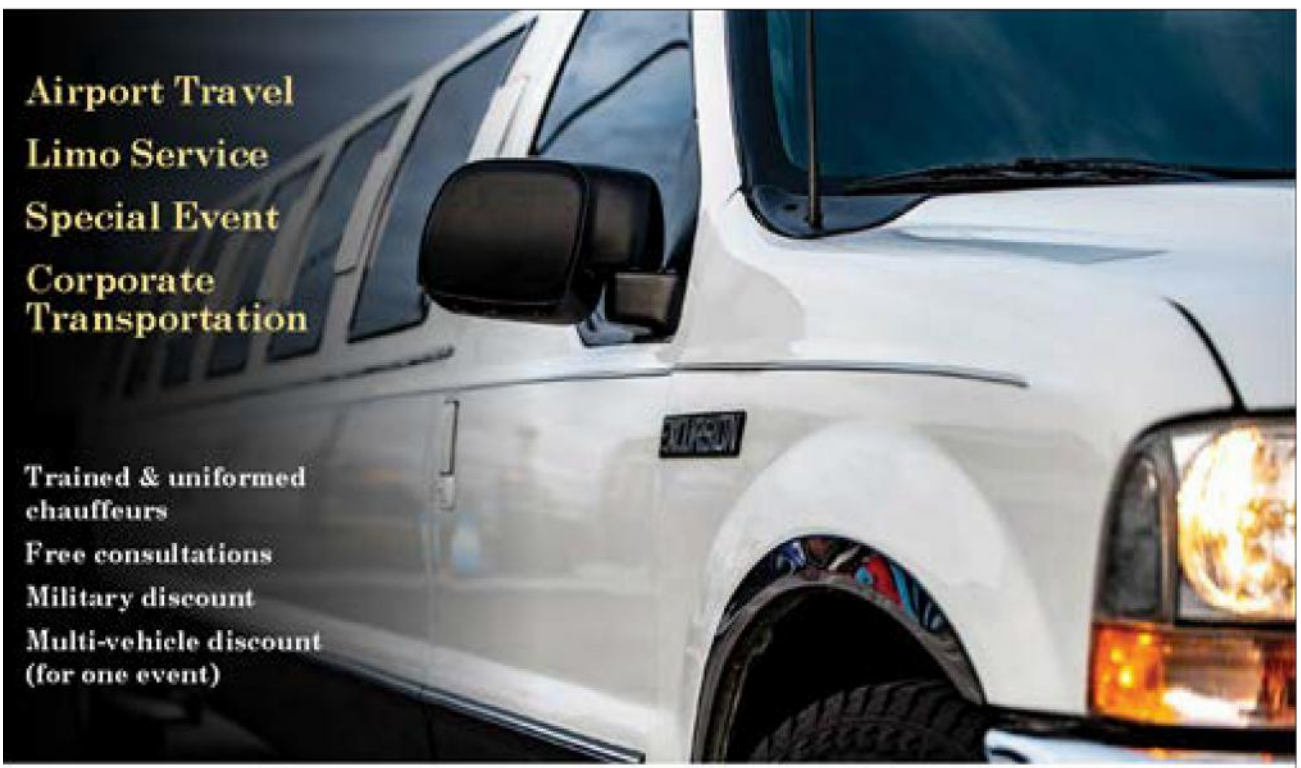

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what's biting?

February - April 2025

By: Billy Sugg

Yes!!! It's bitter cold outside and we are fully in the throes of winter's grip! The freezing temperatures will continue to interfere with many anglers who just want to get out there and enjoy some fishing. But fear not my friends, because our beloved area is host to many species who are willing to bite right now and many more are poised to "spring" into action as warmer temperatures will be here in the coming months. Sometimes you just have to remember, the fish which call coastal Virginia waters their home do eat when they get hungry and conditions allow them. We are the ones who must adapt to the weather, as the fish do that daily. Deep droppers are catching their share of quality fish along the coastline offshore on wrecks and contour changes in the bottom. Cut bait is still your best option either on plain hooks or added to artificials. Black Sea Bass, Blueline and Golden Tile along with snowy Grouper have been the most heavily sought after this winter, but look for flounder to move up the list of targeted species as the season progresses.

Offshore sport fishing for huge bluefin tuna has been outstanding between 35 miles offshore and just a few miles out by trolling with large ballyhoo rigs, parachute rigs, large shad body plastics, and fast trolling Nomad lures with large single hooks instead of trebles. Look for the topwater trolling action to improve as water temperatures increase and the method of skipping jelly baits resembling flying fish under kites gets back underway. Trolling spoons on planers can produce good numbers of cold pelagic as well. Look for yellowfin and big eye tuna to join in the mix. Swordfish action has been steady as they are available most of the year in Virginia waters for those deep droppers pursuing them.

Bay and tidal river action has been slow, but productive for anglers targeting inshore striped bass, redfish and speckled trout. Anglers trolling live eels or artificials for striped bass in the cut channel near Cape Charles and the mouth of the Rappahanock River caught both keeper size rock as well as the giants that were protected and had to be released. Look for those fish to make their way up the large rivers such as the James, York, Potomac and Rappahanock to spawn as spring approaches.

Many absolute "gator" trout have been caught in the Elizabeth River over the winter in both deep and shallow waters by anglers using suspended lures and slow sinking plastics. Look for action to improve and become more widespread as the water temperature increases and the trout along with reds leave their winter haunts. Live minnows, menhaden or mullet under corks near structure or oyster beds is an excellent way to target trophy trout, stripers and puppy drum, and using cut bait like peeler crab, mullet fillets or chunks of menhaden on the bottom is usually very productive near grass beds along the bayside creeks.

Paul Brown topwater and suspended baits along with large glide baits thrown over grass and mud flats as the water warms should produce strikes, especially early or in low light conditions. While the number of puppy drum will continue to increase as resident winter holdovers and schools of migrating fish converge on the area, by April you can expect large red drum to be an option either casting in the open waters of the bay or using cut bait on the bottom near the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge tunnel. Beach and pier fisherman should see good action for Croaker, sheepshead, roundhead, sand perch, trout, puppy drum, flounder and pompano as water temperature warm.

Standard high, low bottom rigs with sand fleas, worms, squid, shrimp, minnows and crab will produce strikes from many bottom feeders while cut bait like mullet and menhaden on fish finder rigs will get the job done for larger species. Flounder will be making their way back into the shallows for the summer and many brackish river systems will produce good numbers of keeper flatties in the spring. After the last few years of action, you can expect big blue fish in the surf along the coast, especially between Sandbridge and the beaches of North Carolina. Casting large spoons, diving plugs, tube lures or large topwater hard baits with wire leaders are a must. By mid April you should be consistently catching bluefish trolling spoons on cannonball rigs with 3-ways, stretch 25's, Cisco Kids, rubber eel and tube lures or rag-mop lures. Keep several rigs handy so if you have a deep hooked fish you can just throw the fish in the cooler with the bait and keep fishing. More than likely the fish will shake the bait loose in the box. Casting near the rocks over the tunnels during strong current periods should also be productive.

Freshwater lakes and brackish River action was amazing again this winter for big catfish with Blue Cat action topping the list. Cut bait like eel, menhaden, shad, perch, chicken and crab on circle hooks and fish finder rigs on the bottom are great producers for cats of all sizes. Live bait like perch and minnows are great during the cold months while bream work great in the warmer months. Setting out multiple rods with preset drags will increase your odds. This is a great way to catch alligator gar as well. Noodling or jugging is a fun way to catch them too. Remember in Virginia no live bait can be fished using this method. Yellow perch action has been on fire in the Chickahominy River in recent years and this is the best time to target them as they are primed for spawning. Hard to beat a small minnow on a jig under a cork for all the perch species. Spider rigging with multiple poles and targeting drop offs, flats and shelves is an excellent way to find and work over schools of quality fish. Many anglers have great success casting or jigging small hair jigs or plastics. Sometimes tipping them with earthworms. Remember yellow and white perch tend to be close to the bottom whereas crappie tend to suspend in the water column. Crappie fishermen have landed some great catches all winter by finding deep structures holding fish and forage. Many of these were in the mouths of large creeks near channels. Look for the fish to move shallower with every warm day as they prepare to spawn. I like to target brackish rivers and ponds early in the year and then lakes and reservoirs as spring goes in full swing. The Nottoway, Northwest, James and Blackwater Rivers have seen great runs of white perch in recent springs so look for that action to be on fire again this year.

Targeting chain pickerel or Pike can be very rewarding as they are at their heaviest right now about to spawn. With waters still cold, live bait is the ticket for lethargic pike. Shellcrackers, Bluegill and other members of the sunfish family will be moving shallow soon. Largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass action will increase dramatically as deep water dormant, bass will move shallow to bulk up on forged food before they begin to bed up for spawning. Spinner baits, shad or crawfish style crank baits are great for finding and patterning feeding bass. Pig&jig baits work great in timber and rock ledge areas and deep points.

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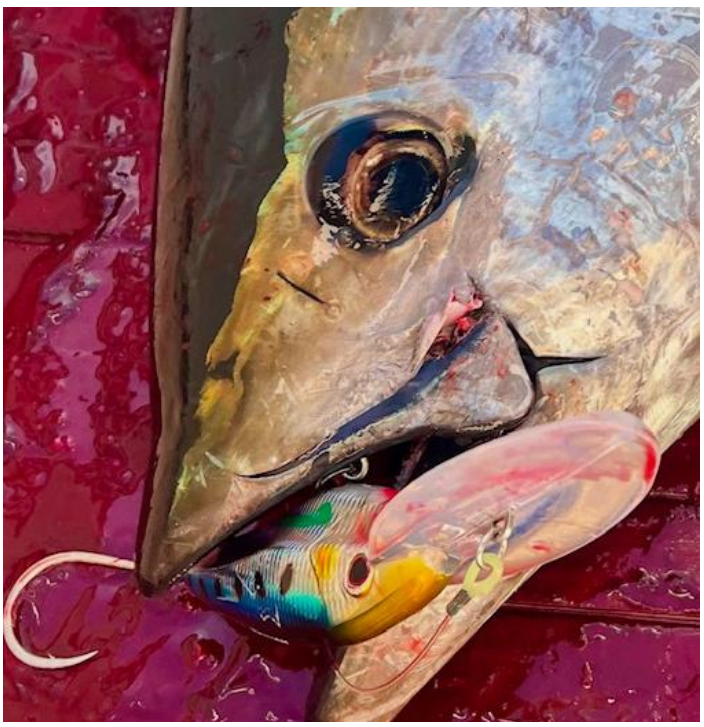

As March approaches look for the worm bite to improve as more fish seek out spawning grounds. Topwater action will have improved by then as well. Landlocked striped bass, musky and walleye are present in many rivers and freshwater bodies of water in Virginia and North Carolina. Trolling minnows or live shad on bucktails or plain hooks under corks or trolling deep diving hard baits is an excellent way to locate feeding fish. Casting for musky in the New and James Rivers has become much more productive as populations of this amazing species has increased. Using large swim baits and hard glide baits has been producing some quality fish for those anglers with enough patience to wait on a strike. Make sure you have your drag set to slip so you don't break your line when these fish strike violently and always have a big net with a long handle in the boat. Brown,

Brook and Rainbow trout action should be heating up as more insects come out with rising air temperatures. Many of these critters will find themselves to be trout candy when they venture too close to the surface of many streams and lakes where these beautiful trout species live. Artificial baits like spoons and Mepp's spinners will also produce along with salmon egg replicas. They can be very challenging. Give it a try.

The featured fish for this issue is winter bluefin tuna. These giants travel up and down the east coast and throughout the Atlantic Ocean as water temperatures fluctuate, ever in search of food supply or their preferred spawning grounds. The tuna follow the food supply, and have begun traveling right off Virginia Beach into the mouth of the bay gorging on schools of menhaden. These fish will move back offshore and more southward as temperatures drop during the winter but will make their way northward again in the spring heading to the North Atlantic. Many captains have found by covering the water column they are increasing their catches. By running Nomad DTX Minnow lures down about 25ft, pulling Joe Shutes and lead headed jigs with large shad bodies subsurface, and ballyhoo rigs of various sizes way back behind the boat on the surface, they are getting the strikes. The distance you must travel changes daily to stay on these fish so look for other boats to give away the location of feeding fish. The presence of whales is usually a good indicator as well. There is a slot limit to abide by and permits which you must have to keep these fish so make sure you are up to date on the ever changing regulations. Good luck and leave some pictures of your tuna in the comments!!! Try this recipe: For me it's hard to beat pan seared tuna in butter and lemon juice with just a sprinkle of salt and pepper. A few minutes on each side is all you need, depending on the thickness of the filet. Tight lines friends!!!

what's biting

During February, March and April you'll typically reel in these catches:

FEBRUARY

Offshore
Bluefish, seabass, tautog

Chesapeake Bay
Rockfish, tautog, speckled trout

Tidal Rivers
Speckled trout, puppy drum

MARCH

Offshore
Bluefin tuna

Chesapeake Bay
Tautog

Tidal Rivers
Speckled trout, puppy drum

APRIL

Offshore
Yellowfin tuna

Chesapeake Bay
Tautog, red drum, black drum, bluefish, roundheads

Tidal Rivers
Speckled trout, puppy drum, flounder, bluefish

What have you reeled in?

We would like to publish your photos, information, prize catches and catches of note in our What's Biting segment. Send us your favorite amateur photos with a description and the photographer's name.

Born and raised in Portsmouth, Virginia, son of Judy and legendary local fisherman and avid hunter, Captain Billy Sugg Sr., Bill Jr. was taught from an early age to love the great outdoors. He began working on his parent's boat at a very young age and began mating professionally when he was approximately 12, catching most saltwater and freshwater species along the East coast and teaching fishing classes with his father. As a young adult he worked in the marine industry selling boating equipment until 1995 when he joined the Portsmouth Sheriff's Office, serving for over 28 years in law enforcement, retiring in January 2024 as a Major. Bill now continues to serve part time as a school resource officer, while sharing his knowledge and love for fishing with anglers of all ages. He is married to his high school crush, Christine, residing in Suffolk, Va. and they have 4 children together.

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Disney On Ice Brings Spectacular New Show to Hampton and Norfolk – A Dazzling Celebration of Music, Magic, and Storytelling

Hampton, VA – February 2025 – In a breathtaking fusion of dazzling figure skating, spectacular acrobatics, and timeless Disney storytelling, Disney On Ice made an electrifying stop in Hampton, VA, from November 7-10, 2024, at Hampton Coliseum, setting the stage for an unforgettable experience. This all-new production, featuring beloved characters from Frozen 2, The Lion King, The Little Mermaid, Moana, and Disney's newest sensation Wish, transported audiences on an exhilarating adventure of music, energy, and heartwarming moments.

The tour continued its magic into December, enchanting audiences in Norfolk, VA, from December 5-8, 2024, at Scope Arena, where families gathered to witness the extraordinary fusion of storytelling and ice artistry that Disney On Ice is renowned for.

A Party Like No Other – The Ultimate Disney Celebration

Bringing a fresh twist to the classic ice show format, Mickey, Minnie, Donald, and Goofy transformed into DJs, remixing Disney's most beloved tunes into vibrant, immersive performances. As the lights dimmed and the first skaters glided onto the ice, an electric atmosphere ignited—one where fans were encouraged to **sing, dance, and cheer** as their favorite Disney moments unfolded before their eyes.

With **cutting-edge figure skating, mesmerizing stunts, high-flying acrobatics, and dazzling special effects**, this show pushed the boundaries of live entertainment, captivating audiences of all ages.

ON ICE

Unforgettable Highlights from Fan-Favorite Stories

Wish – The Kingdom of Rosas came alive as Asha, Valentino, Star, and King Magnifico lit up the ice with performances of *"This Wish," "I'm a Star,"* and *"This Is The Thanks I Get?!"*

Frozen 2 – Audiences journeyed with Anna, Elsa, Kristoff, and Olaf as they rediscovered that *"Some Things Never Change"* and Elsa sought answers in *"Show Yourself."*

The Lion King – Simba and Nala's story unfolded in the Pride Lands, while Scar's wicked plot unfolded to the ominous tune of *"Be Prepared,"* and Timon and Pumbaa lightened the mood with *"Hakuna Matata."*

The Little Mermaid – Ariel's longing for a life beyond the sea was beautifully captured in *"Part of Your World,"* while Sebastian's *"Under the Sea"* brought a burst of color and energy.

Moana – The spirit of adventure took center stage as Moana set sail to *"How Far I'll Go"* and encountered Maui, who proudly declared *"You're Welcome."*

With a show-stopping grand finale, Disney On Ice left audiences mesmerized, proving once again why it remains a ***must-see family event*** *year after year.*

This remarkable production marks just the beginning of an exciting chapter for Disney On Ice. With future shows promising even more innovation, interactive experiences, and beloved characters, fans can look forward to new surprises as Disney continues to reimagine the magic of its timeless stories on ice.

For those who missed the Hampton and Norfolk shows, tickets for upcoming Disney On Ice performances in various locations are available at Ticketmaster.com or at local venue box offices.

A Special Frozen-Themed Preshow Experience

For those seeking an extra dose of magic, the "Frozen Fun" Character Experience provided an exclusive opportunity to engage with Anna and Elsa before the show. Guests participated in games, crafting activities, a sing-along, and interactive photo moments, creating cherished memories that would last a lifetime.

CONNECT

Fans can follow **Disney On Ice** for the latest updates, behind-the-scenes content, and upcoming tour dates:

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok
📺 **YouTube: www.youtube.com/DisneyOnIce**

For more details on the **Hampton and Norfolk events**, visit:
🔗 Hampton Event Info
🔗 Norfolk Event Info

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Virginia Beach Mayor Bobby Dyer

I've always had a joke about myself. My nickname is Bobby D. I'm a physical therapist with a Ph.D. and ADHD." Overcoming challenges associated with a disability to pursue what he believes is his life's calling is no small achievement. Robert "Bobby" Dyer, a self-proclaimed "Reagan Republican," was born in 1950 in Newark, New Jersey. He attended the same high school as comedian Jerry Lewis, although not at the same time. Bobby joined the Marine Corps in 1968 and vividly remembers the turmoil surrounding the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Senator Robert Kennedy.

Mayor Dyer attended Saint Louis University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Physical Therapy. He then went on to Fairleigh Dickinson University, where he obtained a Master of Public Administration degree, and later received his PhD in Organizational Leadership from Regent University. Bobby currently serves as a principal lecturer at Regent in the Robertson School of Government.

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With over four decades of experience as a physical therapist, Bobby believes his work has prepared him for a life dedicated to serving the people of Virginia Beach. In physical therapy, he encounters individuals facing some of the most challenging situations, such as those recovering from severe accidents or strokes. He emphasizes that the first step toward recovery is to establish a meaningful relationship with the patient by actively listening to them. It is also essential to build rapport with their loved ones, create trust, and focus on immediate needs. As a Home Care Physical Therapist, Bobby has worked in thousands of homes. Throughout this aspect of his career, he has developed a deep understanding of people, their families, and their concerns.

Bobby believes that the best public servants are servant leaders. During the Covid-19 pandemic, he collaborated with Governor Ralph Northam to maintain open lines of communication. Virginia Beach was one of the first places in the nation to reopen its beaches to the public. After achieving this, they began the process of reopening other venues in the city and neighboring communities along the Eastern Seaboard.

Mr. Dyer served the City of Virginia Beach for 14 years as a member of the city council. In 2018, he was elected mayor, marking the beginning of his third term. During his previous years in office, he was recognized as one of the 15 Best Mayors in America, ranking #3 according to Newsmax, an American cable news and digital media company founded in 1998.

Bobby Dyer loves his city and often refers to Virginia Beach as the "smallest big city in America," emphasizing that its strength lies in its people. Residents who are born here work hard, volunteer, and establish businesses in the community. He firmly believes that “we are a faith-based community” that "constantly lifts and motivates me." Even after 24 years of public service, Bobby Dyer maintains a strong presence in his hometown. He is dedicated to providing the best quality of life for its citizens.

U.S. News and World Report has named Virginia Beach the best city on the East Coast and the 8th best in the nation. Additionally, it has been recognized as the safest city in Virginia, known for its caring residents. The city has a strong military presence, with many service members describing it as cordial and welcoming. More military personnel are choosing to remain in Virginia Beach after their retirement. The mayor has seen the development of the Towne Center the advent of Amazon locating within the city, the long-established Stihl Corporatiion, and countless other amazing and prosperous companies. He hopes to see further development of sports complexes and is eagerly awaiting the completion of Atlantic Park featuring Wave garden Cove. Located on the site of the former Virginia Beach Dome, this park will feature a 2.67-acre surf park with waves generated up to six feet. There will be restaurants and retail, residential, and office space serving as a year-round destination with positive cultural vibes.

During his time in office, Virginia Beach has experienced the impact of Mayor Dyer's leadership as a dedicated public servant. He credits his accomplishments to the support of a great city council, wonderful constituents, and an exceptional team of volunteers. Some notable achievements during his tenure include the reopening of public venues that were closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the improvement of relationships with the Navy and other military branches, and fostering collaboration among the mayors of the other six cities in Hampton Roads, particularly in the areas of fire services, law enforcement, and emergency medical services. Virginia Beach, with Mayor Dyer and its citizens contributed one million dollars to the food bank during those days of crisis and uncertainty.

Mayor Dyer believes that local governments (Virginia Beach and the other 6 cities in Hampton Roads) are working together for meaningful reasons, primarily to restore the way of life that existed before the pandemic. He takes pride in meeting with local interdenominational pastors who are dedicated to offering hope to inner-city children who feel that there is "no hope" for the future. Basketball camps serve as a starting point, and the establishment of The H.O.P.E. Pipeline is a significant step forward. Helping Our People Excel. This network operates alongside Hands of Grace, an organization that assists individuals who may not speak English and need guidance in adapting to a new environment. The pipeline focuses on helping at-risk youth, the homeless, and those seeking better mental and physical health, as well as providing mentorship.

Looking ahead, Mayor Bobby Dyer plans to expand broadband capacity through the development of sea cables and address concerns related to artificial intelligence, which he believes presents both opportunities and challenges. His primary vision, however, is to ensure that the city remains "open and safe."

Every individual leaves a legacy that reflects their true character. In my recent conversation with Mayor Dyer, I found him to be a man of humility, a quality that does not equate to weakness. Throughout his twenty-four years of public service, he has achieved numerous accomplishments on both personal and community levels. Bobby has been a steady guiding presence, maintaining a strong sense of honesty that allows him to connect with people from all backgrounds, ethnicities, and social statuses.

A man of faith, Bobby strives to guide the city of Virginia Beach toward continued harmony. As he looks toward the future, he considers this term in office to be his "last rodeo." He embraces this prospect, eager to spend more time with his wife Trish and their family. Mayor Dyer describes politics as a "contact sport," but he considers it a privilege and an honor to serve the caring people of Virginia Beach, Virginia.

The future of Virginia's crown city looks incredibly promising, filled with potential that vibrates through its bustling streets and close-knit communities, inviting residents and visitors alike to experience its charm. Should you happen to spot Mayor Bobby Dyer as he strolls through this vibrant city, whether now or in the years to come, don't hesitate to approach him and introduce yourself. Engaging in conversation with him will undoubtedly enrich your perspective and make you feel uplifted. Mayor Bobby Dyer embodies the values of faith, community, and strong leadership, truly exemplifying what it means to be a dedicated steward of the city's future.

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Does a College Education Lead to Higher Earnings for Virginia Residents?

The relationship between higher education and earnings has long been a topic of debate, with conventional wisdom suggesting that obtaining a college degree guarantees financial security. While data consistently show that college graduates, on average, earn more than those with only a high school diploma, this trend is far from universal. In Virginia, a nuanced analysis reveals significant variability in post-college earnings based on factors such as the institution attended, the field of study pursued, and the socioeconomic background of the student. This report examines whether obtaining a college degree translates into higher earnings for Virginia residents and the factors that influence this outcome.

The Earnings Premium: General Trends in Virginia

Nationally, college graduates earn, on average, $1.2 million more than high school graduates over a lifetime, according to Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce. In Virginia, the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard indicates that 80.1% of graduates from four-year institutions earn more than the median high school graduate 10 years after entering college. While Virginia's performance is slightly better than the national average of 77.5%, the data still highlight that nearly 20% of Virginia's college graduates earn less than their high school-educated counterparts within a decade of starting college. This disparity underscores the importance of examining the factors influencing earnings outcomes. These include the institution attended, the field of study, and local economic conditions. Virginia offers a unique case study because of its diverse higher education landscape, ranging from prestigious research universities to smaller liberal arts colleges and regionally focused institutions.

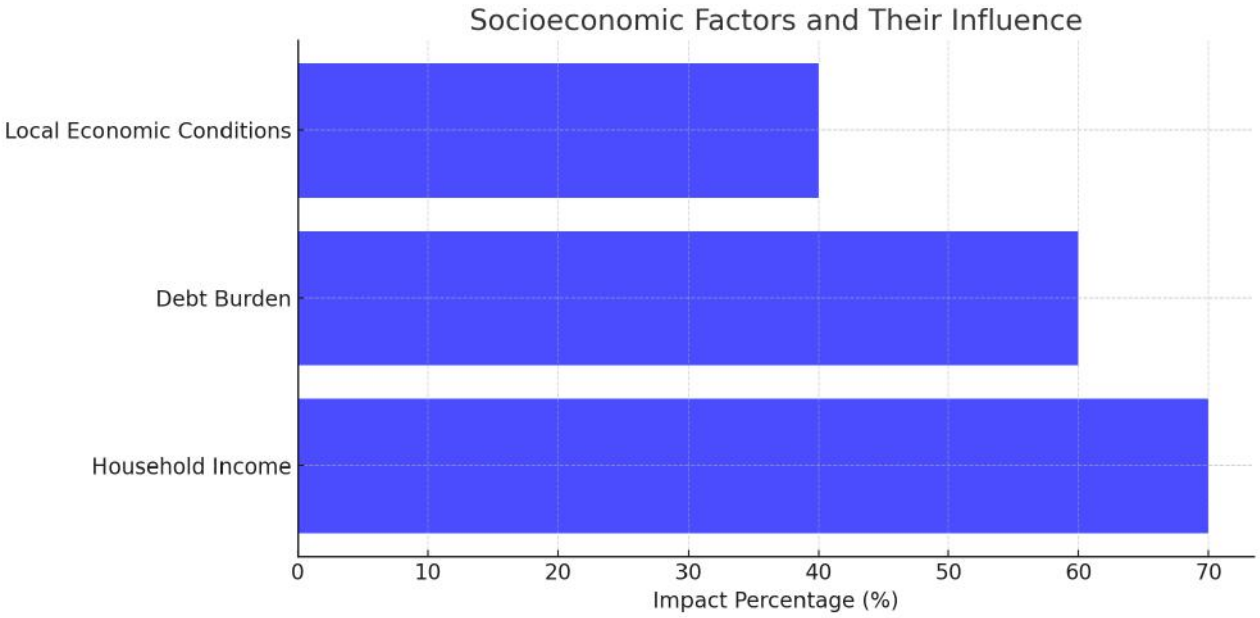
Field of Study: A Key Determinant

The choice of major plays a critical role in determining earnings outcomes. In Virginia, as elsewhere, graduates in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields and business disciplines tend to command higher salaries than those in the liberal arts or education.

1. High-Earning Majors: Engineering graduates from Virginia Tech report starting salaries exceeding $70,000, with mid-career earnings surpassing $100,000. Similarly, business and computer science graduates from George Mason University and the University of Virginia often achieve strong earnings trajectories.

2. Low-Earning Majors: In contrast, graduates with degrees in social work, education, or the arts often face starting salaries below $40,000. While these fields may provide personal fulfillment, they typically do not offer the same financial returns as high-demand, technical disciplines.

3. Variability by Institution: Even within the same field, the institution attended can influence earnings. For example, an engineering graduate from the University of Virginia may earn significantly more than one from a smaller, less well-resourced institution.



Socioeconomic Factors and Their Influence

A student's background also affects their earnings potential after college. Students from higher-income households often have access to greater resources, enabling them to focus on their studies without the financial pressures faced by their lower-income peers. This disparity manifests in both academic performance and post-graduation outcomes.

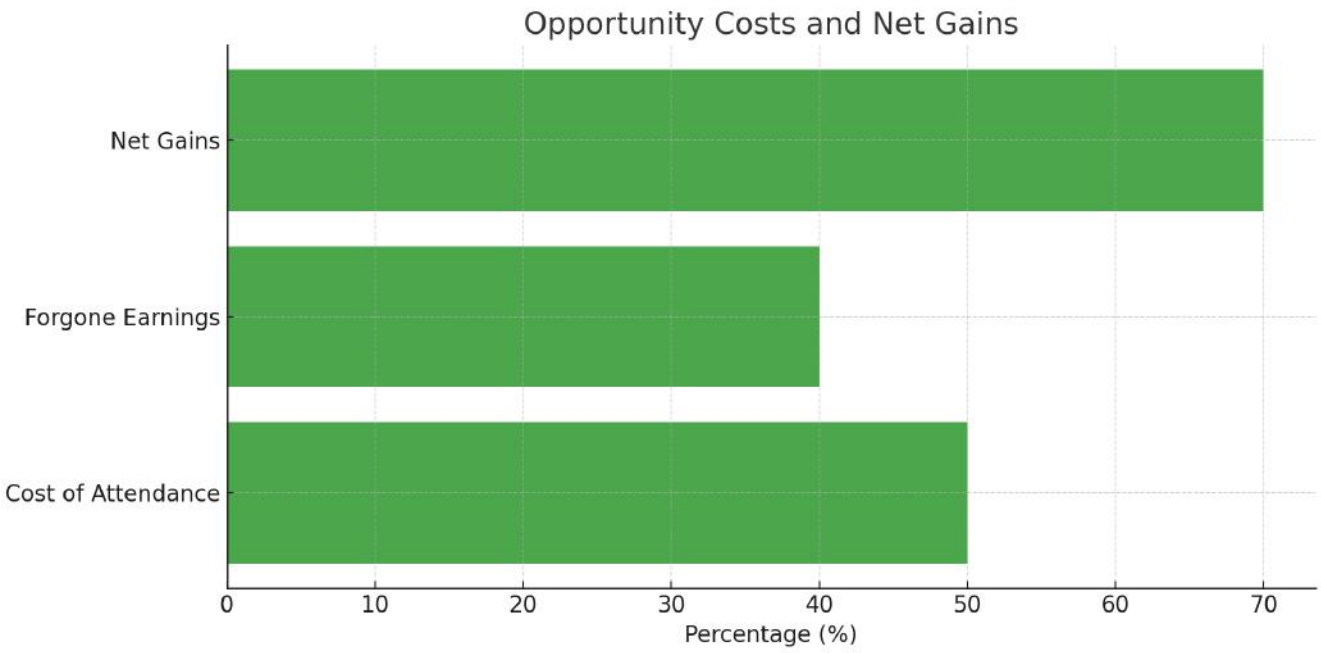
1. Household Income: Research shows that students from wealthier families are more likely to attend selective institutions and graduate on time, leading to higher earnings. In contrast, students from lower-income families may take longer to graduate or drop out, diminishing their earnings potential.

2. Debt Burden: The average student loan debt for Virginia graduates is $29,400. While manageable for those entering high-paying fields, this debt can be crippling for graduates in lower-paying professions, further eroding the financial benefits of a college degree.

3. Local Economic Conditions: Graduates who remain in economically depressed areas of Virginia, such as parts of Southwest Virginia, often face limited job opportunities, regardless of their qualifications.

The Role of Completion Rates

Another critical factor is whether students complete their degrees. In Virginia, as in the rest of the United States, individuals with some college education but no degree often earn only marginally more than high school graduates. Institutions with higher graduation rates, such as the University of Virginia and William & Mary, tend to produce graduates with stronger earnings outcomes. Conversely, schools with lower completion rates see a larger proportion of students who struggle to recoup the costs of their education.



Opportunity Costs and Net Gains

While college graduates often earn more than high school graduates, it is important to consider opportunity costs. Attending college typically means four or more years of lost income, as well as tuition and other expenses. For many students, particularly those who take longer than four years to graduate, these costs can outweigh the financial benefits of a degree.

1. Cost of Attendance: In Virginia, the average net annual cost of attendance (after scholarships and grants) for public universities ranges from $10,000 to $20,000, with private institutions costing significantly more.

2. Forgone Earnings: High school graduates who enter the workforce immediately can accumulate several years of earnings before their college-bound peers even begin their careers. For some, particularly those in high-demand trades, this early income advantage can offset the benefits of a degree.

Addressing the Earnings Gap

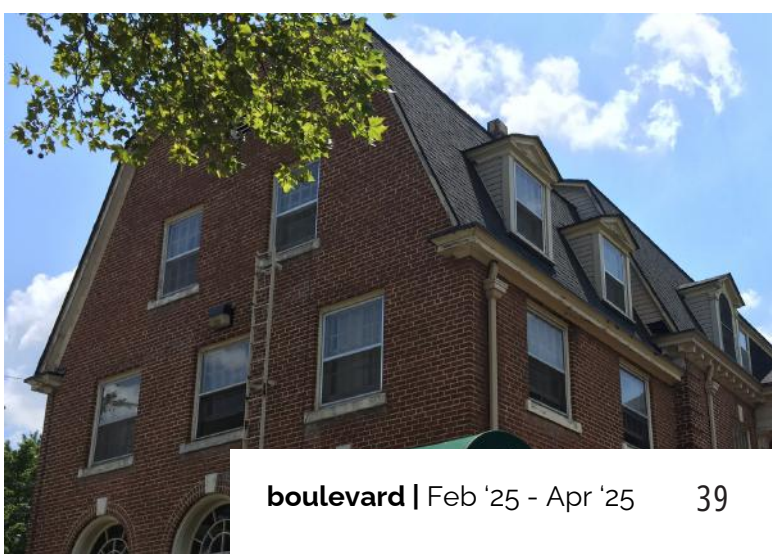
Given the variability in outcomes, policymakers and educators must work to ensure that higher education delivers on its promise of economic mobility. Several strategies can help bridge the earnings gap for Virginia residents:

1. Improved Career Services: Colleges should strengthen career counseling and job placement services, particularly for students in lower-earning fields.

2. Focus on High-Demand Fields: Expanding programs in high-demand fields such as healthcare, technology, and engineering can improve earnings potential for graduates.

3. Support for Low-Income Students: Enhanced financial aid and support services can help students from lower-income backgrounds complete their degrees and access higher-paying jobs.

4. Regional Development: Addressing economic disparities across Virginia's regions can create more opportunities for graduates to find well-paying jobs close to home.



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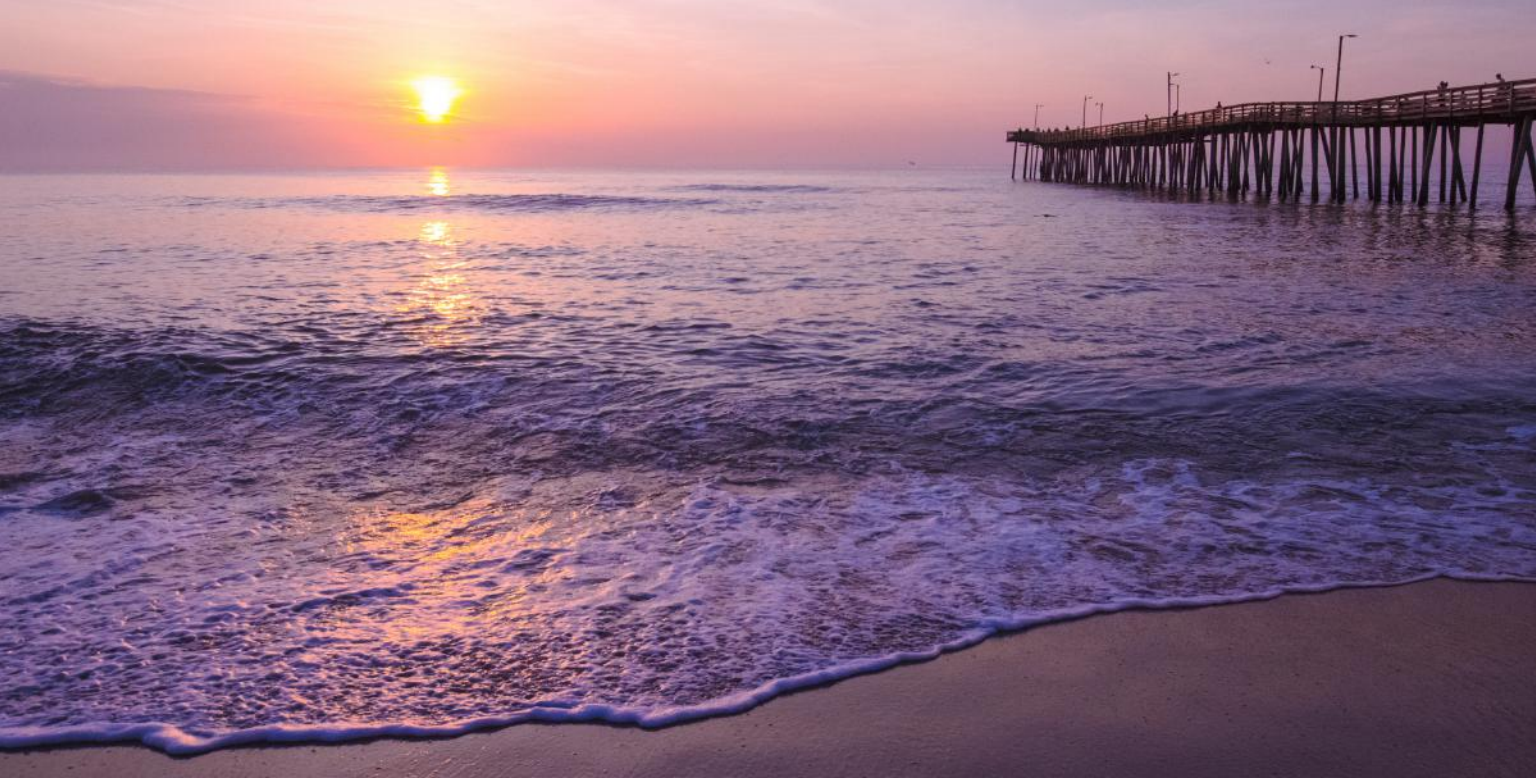

The Takeaway for Our Readers

For Virginia residents, obtaining a college degree often leads to higher earnings, but this outcome is not guaranteed. Factors such as the institution attended, the field of study, socioeconomic background, and local economic conditions significantly influence financial outcomes. While Virginia's colleges and universities outperform national averages in many respects, nearly 20% of graduates still earn less than the typical high school graduate within a decade of entering college.

To maximize the benefits of higher education, students must make informed decisions about where to study and what to major in, while policymakers and institutions must address disparities in access and outcomes. By aligning educational offerings with the demands of the labor market and supporting students from diverse backgrounds, Virginia can ensure that college education remains a pathway to economic success for all.

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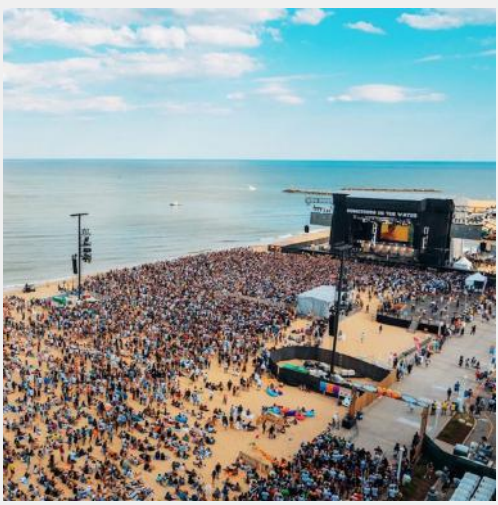
viewpoint

A Tale of Two Cities...or Maybe Three

By Berry Brunk

The cancellation of the Something in the Water festival in Virginia Beach, initially scheduled for April 2025, has raised several questions regarding the long-term future of the event, local cultural impact, and the broader consequences for Virginia Beach's tourism industry. While such decisions are not made lightly, the festival's abrupt end signals a turning point in how major events are hosted and the responsibilities organizers and local communities face when considering the sustainability and impact of large-scale festivals.



Created by Pharrell Williams in 2019, Something in the Water quickly became a cultural milestone for Virginia Beach. The event was a blend of music, art, and activism, featuring top-tier artists, local talent, and a commitment to giving back to the community. It was more than a music festival; it served as a vehicle for Pharrell's deep-rooted connection to his hometown and the opportunity to bring global attention to Virginia Beach. The festival quickly gained traction as an economic engine for the region, attracting tourists, boosting local businesses, and offering a platform for emerging artists.

The cancellation of such a beloved event has left fans and critics alike questioning the reasons behind it. At face value, it's hard not to see this decision as a blow to the local economy, which has undoubtedly benefitted from the influx of attendees and the exposure provided by the festival. According to several reports, the 2022 edition brought in millions of dollars in revenue, with local hotels, restaurants, and vendors seeing increased traffic. More importantly, the festival provided an unmatched opportunity for Virginia Beach to position itself as a cultural destination rather than just a beach town, a feat that many small towns and cities long to achieve. For a region that is often overshadowed by its larger counterparts, the festival represented the potential for sustained growth in the tourism sector, far beyond the typical summer crowds.

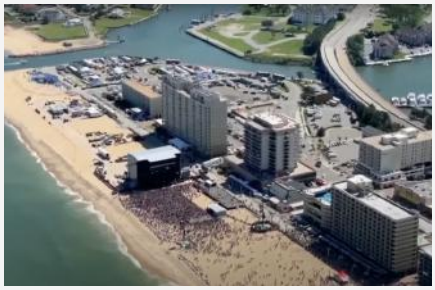
viewpoint

However, it is essential to consider that hosting an event of Something in the Water's scale comes with complexities. The financial risks, logistical challenges, and unfore see consequences that arise from trying to satisfy an increasingly diverse and demanding audience are significant. Issues of safety, crowd control, and community relations cannot be taken lightly. Organizers may have faced pressure from various local authorities or residents concerned about the impact on public services, or perhaps financial losses from previous years may have made it difficult to continue at the same level of investment. Moreover, tensions between event organizers and local government officials, or even among festival-goers themselves, could have played a role in this cancellation.

This cancellation should serve as a wake-up call to other cities considering similar ventures. It's important to recognize that large festivals must balance commercial objectives with the well-being of the community and the long-term environmental and social consequences of hosting such events. When cities prioritize events that place strain on infrastructure, local resources, and the lives of residents, they must be prepared for the fallout when something inevitably goes wrong.

In the end, the cancellation of Something in the Water may mark the end of an era for Virginia Beach, but it can also serve as a starting point for reassessing the way the city wants to develop its cultural and economic landscape moving forward. Will there be other festivals in the future? Perhaps.

But the real question is whether Virginia Beach can find a way to marry cultural vibrancy with sustainable development—a challenge that extends far beyond any single event . his was but just one of several regional economic development projects that has faced opposition - now let's turn our focus to Norfol.



viewpoint

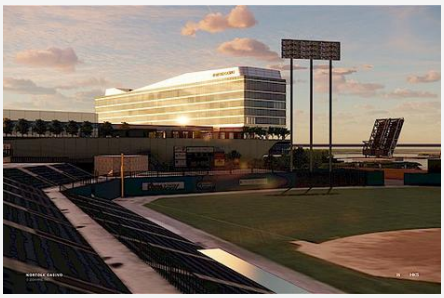
The planned casino project in downtown Norfolk, Virginia, is a bold and ambitious initiative designed to boost the local economy, attract tourists, and revitalize the city's downtown area. While the proposal has garnered significant attention and enthusiasm from supporters, it also faces scrutiny and criticism from opponents concerned about the potential consequences. Here's a closer look at the pros and cons of the project.

Opponents of the casino argue that gambling often brings significant social issues, such as addiction, crime, and economic disparity. The introduction of a casino may lead to an increase in gambling-related problems in the community, which could strain public resources and support services. The long-term social costs, including the potential for higher rates of crime or financial distress, could outweigh the short-term economic benefits. While the casino is expected to generate new revenue, it could also draw resources away from existing local businesses. There is concern that smaller establishments, particularly those in the entertainment and hospitality industries, could be negatively impacted by the competition.

If the casino monopolizes the region's tourism dollars, it could hurt local restaurants, bars, and shops that do not directly benefit from the casino.Some critics argue that Norfolk could become overly reliant on the casino for tax revenue. If the casino's revenues fall short of projections or if gambling becomes less popular over time, the city's finances could be jeopardized. The long-term sustainability of a casino-based economy remains uncertain, and there is a risk that the city could be left vulnerable if the project does not meet expectations.

With the influx of visitors, there are concerns about the strain on Norfolk's infrastructure, such as roads, public transportation, and parking. The project's environmental impact, particularly in terms of traffic congestion, pollution, and waste management, may also be significant. Critics argue that the necessary upgrades to infrastructure could take a toll on city resources or delay other important development projects.

viewpoint



The planned casino project in downtown Norfolk presents both exciting opportunities and significant risks. On one hand, it could drive economic growth, tourism, and urban revitalization. On the other hand, it could bring social and economic challenges, including the potential for gambling addiction, increased competition for local businesses, and reliance on volatile revenue streams. Balancing these pros and cons will be key to determining whether the casino ultimately benefits Norfolk or if the city's investment in such a project proves to be unsustainable in the long run.

As the debate continues, careful planning and mitigation of potential downsides will be critical to the project's success. The question of why Norfolk, Virginia, is pursuing a casino project despite the recent opening of a casino across the river in Portsmouth is a valid concern that highlights the competitive nature of the regional gaming and tourism market. While it might seem redundant at first glance, there are several reasons why Norfolk believes a casino would still be beneficial, even with the nearby competition in Portsmouth.

Even though Portsmouth, which is just a short drive away from Norfolk, now has a casino, it's important to understand that the two cities are not directly competing for the same pool of customers. Norfolk has its own distinct identity, with different cultural attractions, hotels, and a rich history that can complement, rather than directly rival, what Portsmouth offers. By establishing its own casino, Norfolk aims to tap into a larger regional tourism market, where visitors could be drawn to both cities, increasing overall foot traffic in the area.

The competition between the two casinos could also elevate the quality of experiences available, attracting a wider audience to the region. Additionally, Norfolk has long struggled with a lack of large-scale, high-profile attractions compared to other nearby cities. The proposed casino, with its upscale amenities and potential for a hotel, could help elevate Norfolk's position in the regional tourism market, driving more visitors who might otherwise pass through on their way to other destinations like Virginia Beach.

viewpoint

Norfolk's economy is historically tied to government and military sectors, including the naval base and port operations. While these are critical to the city's economy, they can also make the city vulnerable to federal budget changes or shifts in global trade. The casino project is part of a larger effort to diversify Norfolk's economy and reduce its reliance on a few industries. Having a casino can serve as a catalyst for other developments, such as hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues, and retail spaces, helping to create a more resilient economy in the long run. The proposed Norfolk casino is positioned as a key part of the city's downtown revitalization efforts. Norfolk's downtown has faced challenges with vacant buildings and underdeveloped properties for years, and a major project like the casino could spur additional investments, fillingthese gaps with more businesses, infrastructure, and public spaces. A casino could serve as the anchor for further development and create a bustling district that benefits residents and tourists alike. Without a casino, the city risks missing out on this economic opportunity and falling further behind in attracting large-scale development projects. A major casino project in Norfolk promises to create thousands of jobs in construction, hospitality, and casino operations. The positive economic impact from these jobs can extend beyond the casino itself, benefiting local businesses in Norfolk, such as restaurants, shops, and service industries. Though Portsmouth's casino is also expected to create jobs, the proximity of a second casino in Norfolk could amplify employment opportunities across the region, with both cities benefiting from the influx of workers and their spending.

Casinos tend to have a significant local economic impact, especially if they offer a variety of attractions beyond just gambling, like entertainment, dining, and retail. Norfolk might believe that a casino would tap into a slightly different market than the one served by Portsmouth, targeting visitors who may want a different experience or who are more familiar with Norfolk's unique offerings. The regional population is large enough to support multiple casinos, particularly when
one takes into account the combined draw of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and nearby areas such as Virginia Beach.

Norfolk sees the casino project as a way to carve out its own place in the regional economy, despite Portsmouth's new casino. The hope is that by offering a distinct mix of attractions, leveraging its central location, and contributing to long-term economic development goals, Norfolk can create a sustainable and complementary casino environment that benefits the entireregion, rather than one city at the expense of the other.

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Notable Potables

Jack Rose: The Fresh Version

- 2 oz. Calvados (I used "Selection" from Christian Drouin), or American apple brandy
- 0.75 oz. lemon juice
- 0.75 oz. fresh-juiced grenadine

Shake hard on ice for 8 to 10 seconds, strain into a coupe. No garnish.

Jason O'Bryan, Bartender

Palo Santo

- 2 oz. *Buffalo Trace Bourbon*
- 0.25 oz. palo santo-smoked cinnamon syrup*
- 0.125 oz. St. Elizabeth Allspice Liqueur
- 2-3 dashes chocolate bitters

Combine ingredients in a mixing glass with ice and stir for 10 to 25 seconds (shorter for small ice, longer for big ice). Strain into a rocks glass over fresh ice and garnish with an orange peel.

Jason O'Bryan, Bartender

Gage & Tollner's Harvey Wallbanger

- Gin (Plymouth preferred) – replaces vodka for a balanced flavor
- Galliano – incorporated into the drink rather than floated
- Fresh orange juice – as fresh as possible
- Lemon juice – adds bracing acidity
- Rich cane sugar syrup (1 teaspoon) – enhances body and sweetness
- Orange peel (long curl) – for garnish and expressed oils

Express orange peel oils inside a Collins glass, then set the peel aside.Shake gin, Galliano, fresh orange juice, lemon juice, and sugar syrup with ice.Strain into the prepared Collins glass over fresh ice.Garnish with the long orange peel, draped elegantly like a "horse's neck."

Olive Oil Martini

- Gin (Plymouth preferred) – replaces vodka for a balanced flavor
- Galliano – incorporated into the drink rather than floated
- Fresh orange juice – as fresh as possible
- Lemon juice – adds bracing acidity
- Rich cane sugar syrup (1 teaspoon) – enhances body and sweetness
- Orange peel (long curl) – for garnish and expressed oils

Express orange peel oils inside a Collins glass, then set the peel aside.Shake gin, Galliano, fresh orange juice, lemon juice, and sugar syrup with ice.Strain into the prepared Collins glass over fresh ice.Garnish with the long orange peel, draped elegantly like a "horse's neck."

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DESTINATION: SMITHFIELD, VIRGINIA

If you're looking for a hidden gem in Virginia, look no further than the charming town of Smithfield, located in the heart of Isle of Wight County. Just an hour away from the Virginia oceanfront, Smithfield is celebrated as one of Virginia's safest and most picturesque cities. This delightful town, nestled between Windsor Castle Park and the scenic Pagan River, is known as the "Ham Capital of the World," home to Smithfield Foods. Established in 1752 by Arthur Smith IV (but named after Captain John Smith), Smithfield boasts a rich history that the locals cherish and protect. Its historic district features over 70 structures from Colonial, Federal, and Victorian periods, with the P.D. Gwaltney Jr. House being one of the most photographed landmarks, proudly listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Smithfield Hams: A Culinary Legacy

Remarkably, the Isle of Wight Museum showcases "A Tale of Two Hams," featuring the World's Oldest Edible Ham, now over 121 years old. While it may resemble a weathered piece of leather, visitors often remark about its smoky aroma. This intriguing exhibit tells the story of a single-cured ham shank left to age in an old warehouse, famously documented in Robert Ripley's Believe It or Not in 1932. And if that doesn't capture your attention, check out the world's largest ham, weighing in at an astonishing 65 pounds and still coated in peanut oil.

Opened in 1976, the Isle of Wight County Museum showcases a range of exhibits that cover colonial history, the saga of Smithfield hams, and accounts of the Civil and Cold Wars. A highlight is the interactive turn-of-the-century country store, offering a captivating glimpse into the past.

Smithfield's Porcine Parade: Art in the City

While Norfolk, Virginia boasts an eclectic collection of mermaid statues, Smithfield has its own unique artistic display—The Porcine Parade. This charming collection features eight life-sized pig statues, each adorned by local artists and strategically positioned throughout the historic downtown area. These vibrant sculptures celebrate Smithfield's rich heritage as the Ham Capital of the World

Culinary Delights Await!

If you're planning a day trip to Smithfield, prepare your taste buds for an unforgettable culinary experience. The town offers a variety of dining options that are highly recommended by locals, with The Smithfield Inn and Smithfield Station standing out as top choices.

Smithfield Inn - A Culinary & Historical Experience

The Smithfield Inn, with its rich history dating back to 1752, ensures an unforgettable dining experience. Known for its delicious meals, inviting atmosphere, and beautiful garden, it embodies the spirit of hospitality. Its historical significance is further underscored by the fact that George Washington himself stayed here.

The inn features five charming suites, each elegantly decorated in 18th-century style yet equipped with modern amenities such as gas fireplaces, bathrobes, high-speed internet, LCD TVs, and telephones. Guests can unwind in private baths and comfortable bedrooms, some boasting king- or queen-sized beds.

Dining options abound in two excellent venues, the Inn Dining Room and The William Rand Tavern. For true food enthusiasts, joining the Smithfield Inn Wine Club offers an exclusive experience. Plus, as an overnight guest, you'll enjoy a complimentary breakfast at The Smithfield Gourmet Bakery and Café, where delicious meals and pastries await.

The Pagan River: Nature's Playground

Known as a "river town," Smithfield revolves around the picturesque Pagan River. This winding body of water flows for 12.5 miles and serves as a tributary of the James River. The upper reaches of the Pagan River remain as they were when John Smith navigated these waters with the Warraskoyack Indians. With plentiful fishing opportunities and numerous boating activities, the river is a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. Public boat launches, along with a self-rental kayak station near the hiking trails at Windsor Castle Park, make this a perfect destination for adventure seekers.

The Restaurant At Smithfield Station

Smithfield Station is more than a restaurant. There are several shoppes and lodging on the Pagan River. However; award-winning dining remains the featured attraction. Their menu of fresh seafood, pork, and Smithfield ham as its mainstay. They host a Sunday morning breakfast buffet along with catering services. There is nothing quite like a quiet romantic dinner by candle light while enjoying the views of the marina and the marshes of the Pagan.

Smithfield is not restricted to the fine dining of the two aforementioned restaurants. There are others that I can recommend from having experienced them personally. What this means is that you may have to make several visits to this wonderful, charming city. Other recommendations: Taste of Smithfield Restaurant, Farmer's Table, The Cockeyed Rooster Cafe (mainly serving breakfast and lunch), Anna's Ristorante - Pasta, Vino, and Pizza, Q-Daddy's Pitmaster BBQ (awesome!), Tops China, and San Marcos Mexican Restaurant. There's always room for ice cream, so wander back down to Main Street to the Smithfield Ice Cream Parlor.

If you are desiring a potent potable, you may want to visit the following:

Bon Vivant Market Wine & Brew of Smithfield

Smithfield Winery

Summerwind Vineyard

These and other vineyards may be featured in upcoming issues of Covablvd.

Parks and Recreation

Aside from the casual stroll through Historic Downtown Smithfield, there are quite a few venues where exercise and other leisure activities thrive. The favorite, and most popular destination by far, is Windsor Castle Park. The official address is 301 Jericho Road, but I dare say that anyone you ask can direct you there. Taking his vision and making it a reality was the original founder of Smithfield Foods - Joseph W Luter III. In an effort to prevent "urban sprawl," the current property was purchased.

If you cannot find something to do while visiting Windsor Castle Park, you're not looking hard enough. There is a compass course, a dog park, a fishing pier, a fitness map, a kayak launch with self-service rentals, a mountain bike trail, a natural playscape for children, a picnic area, and many opportunities for taking pictures or videos. Windsor Castle Farm is just one stop along the 3.8 miles of walking trails known as the Captain John Smith National Historic Trail.

One notable attraction that draws history enthusiasts from across the country is the Windsor Castle Manor House & Grounds Tour. Visitors can choose between a self-guided tour or opt for a guided walking tour, which offers more in-depth insights into this historical landmark. Additionally, there are many educational opportunities available, including an online guide to the park's natural resources. This encompasses bird and tree walks, as well as exploring the life within and around the waterways of the Pagan River. One could easily spend an entire day in this beautiful park.

After visiting the charming city of Smithfield, situated along the banks of the Pagan River, you might find yourself planning another day trip.

Rick Polston, a Portsmouth native, is a retired teacher from Suffolk Public Schools. He continues teaching as a substitute 2-3 times a week. He enjoys journalism and travel with his wife Donna.

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Atlantic Park: The Future of Surfing, Entertainment, and Coastal Living

In the heart of Virginia Beach's iconic oceanfront, a groundbreaking development is about to take shape that will redefine the city's cultural and tourism landscape. Atlantic Park, a $350 million mixed-use development, is poised to become a one-of-a-kind destination offering a unique blend of surfing, shopping, entertainment, dining, and lodging, all against the stunning backdrop of the Virginia Beach coast. With its combination of outdoor recreation, world-class entertainment, and upscale living spaces, Atlantic Park is set to become the beating heart of Virginia Beach, attracting tourists and locals alike while contributing to the city's economic growth.

A Transformative Vision for Virginia Beach

Atlantic Park is not just another luxury development; it's a bold reimagining of the Virginia Beach Dome site, one of the most recognizable landmarks along the Virginia Beach Oceanfront. The project aims to breathe new life into the area while embracing the city's rich traditions of music, entertainment, surfing, and community gatherings. The vision for Atlantic Park is clear: to create a dynamic, year-round destination that draws visitors, enhances the city's tourism economy, and establishes Virginia Beach as a world-class, global travel hub.

The project is a public-private partnership between the City of Virginia Beach, The Virginia Beach Development Authority, Pharrell Williams, W.M. Jordan Company, Bishard Development, Priority Title/H20 Investments, and Venture Realty Group. With the involvement of Pharrell Williams, a Virginia Beach native and global superstar, Atlantic Park also benefits from added international visibility and star power.

Set to begin opening in May/June 2025, Atlantic Park will blend the best of both worlds—surfing and entertainment—creating a space that offers year-round fun, whether it's enjoying live music performances, taking a surfing lesson, or simply relaxing at one of its boutique lodging units with sweeping views of the ocean or surf lagoon.

The Surf Lagoon: A Surfing Paradise

One of the major highlights of Atlantic Park is its surfing component, the Atlantic Park Surf, which features the first-ever Wavegarden Cove Surf Lagoon in North America. This state-of-the-art surf lagoon spans over 4.3 acres, with a 2.67-acre water surface area that generates up to 1,000 waves per hour, ranging from one-foot ripples for beginners to six-foot barrels for seasoned surfers. Powered by Wavegarden Cove's energy-efficient technology, the lagoon promises the largest capacity and the highest quality waves for surfers of all levels.

Wavegarden, a cutting-edge Spanish engineering company, has revolutionized the surfing world with its wave-generation systems, and Atlantic Park will be its flagship location in North America. The technology ensures consistent, high-quality waves in a variety of conditions, making it an ideal venue for both local surfers and tourists eager to experience the sport in a controlled, non-oceanic environment.

But the surf lagoon is more than just a place to catch a wave. Designed to create a full "beach club" experience, the area features a welcoming environment where surfers can relax before or after their sessions. For non-surfers, the lagoon is a scenic, tranquil retreat offering a great view of the action. Daily beach passes will allow visitors to access the beach area and enjoy the atmosphere, making it an ideal spot for those who want to soak in the energy of the surf without actually getting wet.

Boutique Lodging: Surf-Inspired Luxury

Atlantic Park is taking the concept of coastal lodging to the next level with its 20 boutique lodging units that offer unparalleled views of the surf lagoon. These premium accommodations provide guests with a front-row seat to the action, allowing them to watch surfers catch the perfect wave from the comfort of their rooms. Guests can also enjoy a host of upscale amenities, including a community lounge, a private pool deck, and personalized concierge services.

Whether you're a seasoned surfer or simply looking for a relaxing getaway, the boutique lodging units at Atlantic Park are designed to provide an unforgettable experience. The modern, luxurious rooms will feature coastal-inspired designs, top-tier finishes, and expansive windows that allow for panoramic views of the surf and surrounding landscape. For those who want to experience the surf lifestyle in comfort and style, these boutique units will be the epitome of oceanfront living.

Atlantic Park Living: Upscale Residences with a View

For those who want to make Atlantic Park their home, the development includes 309 luxury apartments ranging from cozy efficiencies to spacious three-bedroom units. The apartments are designed to take full advantage of the stunning views, with many units offering expansive ocean views or vistas of the Surf Lagoon. Residents in the west-facing units will enjoy front-row seating to the outdoor amphitheater and summertime concerts, making it easy to enjoy the city's vibrant music scene right from home.

Atlantic Park Living is designed to offer residents a premium coastal lifestyle with a range of high-end amenities. The development features an infinity-edge pool overlooking the surf lagoon, spacious clubrooms with views of the entertainment venue, and a fully equipped fitness center. Whether you're looking to relax by the pool, enjoy a workout with a view, or attend an outdoor concert, Atlantic Park Living will offer a dynamic, comfortable lifestyle right on the oceanfront.

The Entertainment Venue: A Hub for Music and Culture

One of the most exciting components of Atlantic Park is its 70,000-square-foot entertainment venue, which is designed to host a variety of events, from concerts to live performances and community gatherings. With an indoor capacity of 3,500 and the ability to expand to 5,000 with its indoor/outdoor design, the venue is set to become a premier location for live entertainment on the East Coast.

On non-event days, the venue's surrounding public green space will transform into a vibrant community park that hosts art fairs, markets, free performances, and more. This versatile venue will become a key gathering point for locals and visitors, providing a space for cultural enrichment, socializing, and relaxation. The collaboration with Oak View Group (OVG 360) and Live Nation, two global leaders in live entertainment, ensures that the venue will attract top-tier talent and events throughout the year.

Retail and Dining:
A Shopper's Paradise

Atlantic Park is not just a place to surf or live; it's also a hub for shopping and dining. The development offers more than 100,000 square feet of mixed-use retail space, featuring restaurants, shops, and experiential attractions. More than 90 percent of the retail leasing is dedicated to new-to-market concepts, ensuring that Atlantic Park will be a fresh and exciting destination for visitors and locals alike.

With a diverse mix of dining options, from casual eateries to fine dining, as well as boutique shops and interactive experiences, Atlantic Park promises to be a retail and culinary hotspot. Whether you're looking to grab a quick bite after a surf session, enjoy a leisurely dinner with friends, or shop for unique coastal-inspired fashion, there will be something for everyone.

Additional Features:
A Complete Community Hub

In addition to its surf and entertainment offerings, Atlantic Park will include 10,000 square feet of office space, making it an ideal location for businesses looking to be part of this exciting new development. With 1,469 structured parking spaces, parking will be convenient and easily accessible for visitors and residents alike.

Phase two of Atlantic Park's development will include additional retail, residential, and parking spaces, further expanding the project's scope and impact. As the development continues to grow, it will solidify its role as a key driver of Virginia Beach's economic and cultural future.

A Vision in Motion

Atlantic Park is more than just a development; it's a vision for the future of Virginia Beach. Combining surfing, luxury living, world-class entertainment, and community-focused spaces, Atlantic Park is set to become a transformative destination that enhances the city's identity as a vibrant, year-round coastal hub. With its bold design, innovative features, and commitment to sustainability,

Atlantic Park will not only redefine the Virginia Beach Oceanfront but also create a new standard for what it means to live, work, and play in a modern, coastal community.

As the development moves toward its grand opening in 2025, Atlantic Park is poised to leave an indelible mark on the city of Virginia Beach—and on the world stage—making it a must-visit destination for surfers, music lovers, and anyone who seeks to experience the best of what the beach has to offer.

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The future of technology is brighter, smarter, and more awe-inspiring than ever, as showcased at CES 2025. This year's event in Las Vegas delivered a stunning array of innovations that could revolutionize industries and daily life alike. From next-level sustainability solutions to flying EVs, here's a roundup of some of the standout technologies that stole the show.

Powerfoyle: Solar Energy Anywhere, Anytime

A breakthrough in sustainable energy, Powerfoyle brings solar technology into the modern age with a material that generates power from ambient light, both indoors and outdoors. Flexible, lightweight, and seamlessly integrated into devices, Powerfoyle panels can power everything from headphones to smartwatches, eliminating the need for cords and batteries. Imagine a world where your gadgets charge themselves while you go about your day—Powerfoyle is making that vision a reality. For more information, visit www.powerfoyle.com.

XPeng AeroHT EV: The Flying Car Dream is Here

The XPeng AeroHT EV was one of CES 2025's biggest head-turners, combining electric vehicle efficiency with futuristic mobility. The two-seater foldable quadcopter integrated into the back of the vehicle gives owners the freedom to take to the skies. Designed for urban commuting and short-range travel, the AeroHT EV offers a bold glimpse into the future of personal transportation. While regulatory hurdles remain, XPeng's innovation proves that flying cars are no longer science fiction. Could we soon be commuting over traffic instead of through it?

Smart Yards: A Robot Revolution for Your Lawn

CES 2025 made it clear that the smart home is extending outdoors. Enter Smart Yards, the automated robot that takes the hassle out of lawn care. Equipped with advanced sensors and AI, this robot can mow your lawn, trim edges, and even adapt to seasonal changes. Say goodbye to sweaty weekends in the yard—Smart Yards handles it all, giving homeowners a perfectly manicured lawn with zero effort. It's a win for busy schedules and the future of outdoor automation.

Richtech Robotics: Enhancing Everyday Efficiency

From hospitality to retail, Richtech Robotics introduced a suite of intelligent robotic solutions designed to make life easier. Their robots can deliver food, assist with customer service, and even clean high-traffic areas with precision. CES attendees marveled at their seamless interaction with people and the potential to transform workplaces. In a world where labor shortages and efficiency demands collide, Richtech Robotics provides a practical path forward.

Eyechip: Industry-Leading Eye Tracking Technology

CES 2025 showcased Eyechip, a groundbreaking eye-tracking sensor that's setting a new standard in precision and performance. Known for its unparalleled accuracy, Eyechip offers industry-leading technology that outperforms every other sensor on the market. Whether used in AR/VR systems, gaming, medical devices, or accessibility tools, Eyechip provides seamless tracking and responsiveness that enhances user experiences across applications. Compact, efficient, and adaptable, this sensor is redefining what's possible in human-machine interaction.

CES 2025: A Vision of the Future

CES 2025 once again cemented its reputation as the world's most exciting technology showcase. From harnessing renewable energy to redefining transportation and revolutionizing our yards, this year's innovations highlight the limitless potential of human creativity. These technologies don't just hint at what's possible—they actively shape a smarter, greener, and more connected world.

Stay tuned as these groundbreaking products begin to enter our lives, changing the way we live, work, and play. For more updates on CES 2025, follow #CES2025 and explore the future of innovation.

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Please provide your email address / contact information with your submission incase you're the lucky one .

We will award a prize each issue. for this contest we will provide a $150 gift certificate at one of The Boulevard Team's favorite restaurants. Of course, we'll name the winner in the next issue and on social media so you can take advantage of all the appropriate bragging rights with your friends and family. Good Luck Everyone!

Last issue's winner:

Nathan Pearce

Location:

New Orleans, LA

The photo in the Holiday issue is a painting on the wall at the pedestrian walkway from the Arrivals Terminal to the Baggage Claim in Norfolk International Airport. The photo was correctly identified by Nathan Pearce from New Orleans, LA

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