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# DRIVE 2.0

2020-2025 STRATEGIC TOURISM PLAN

REGIONAL PLAN: **COASTAL VA - HAMPTON ROADS**

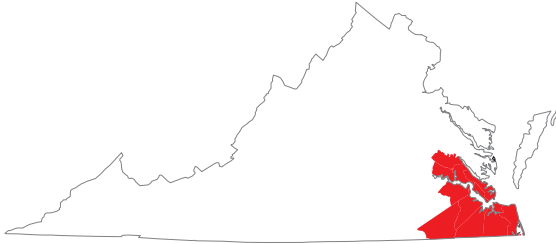


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# **HAMPTON ROADS INTRODUCTION**

The Hampton Roads regional plan builds upon the foundational insights established in the 2020-2025 statewide tourism plan, as well as the original 2013 DRIVE Hampton Roads regional plan. Developed for every locality within the region to use, this plan provides insights and recommendations on where to focus product development and promotional efforts over the next five years. The plan aims to help spur the growth and impact of travel and tourism for every locality in Hampton Roads by increasing tourism products, expenditures, employment and local and state tax receipts.

**All DRIVE 2.0 research was conducted in 2019 and compiled pre COVID-19 Crisis.  
Please see [vatc.org/coronavirus](http://vatc.org/coronavirus) for COVID-19: Industry Response Toolkit.**



The Hampton Roads region consists of the municipalities of Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, Newport News, Hampton, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Williamsburg, Poquoson, Smithfield, Franklin, Yorktown, and Charles City as well as the counties of James City, York, Isle of Wight, New Kent, Southampton, Charles City, and Surry

## **QUICK FACTS**

- Population: 1.71 million (3rd largest of the 10 VA regions)
- Largest town/city: Virginia Beach (450,189)
- Interstates: I-64
- US-60, US-58, US-17
- Commercial airports: Norfolk International Airport, Newport News/Williamsburg International Airport
- Proximity to urban hubs: Richmond, Washington, D.C., Greensboro, Raleigh, Durham

## **TOURISM IMPACT**

The Hampton Roads region accounted for \$5.1 billion in travel and tourism expenditures in 2018 (approximately 20% of the state's overall travel and tourism expenditures). Year over year, the region experienced a 4.6% increase in expenditures (in line with the overall Virginia state expenditure growth of 4.4%).

- **Total expenditures:** \$5.1 billion
- **Employment:** 45,443
- **Payroll:** \$290 million
- **Local tax receipts:** \$65 million
- **State tax receipts:** \$44 million

From a tourism industry perspective, the region has a number of established destination marketing organization as well as the Coastal Virginia Tourism Alliance to serve as a regional destination marketing partnership for the Hampton Roads and Eastern Shore regions. The alliance has brought together stakeholders across the region and has the potential to enhance the profile of the region. In recent years, the regional marketing capacity of the organization has diminished due to a shift from dues based on TOT revenue to a flat \$500 fee per locality.



## LURES

Hampton Roads' history and heritage, as well as its beaches, continue to be strengths for the region. In addition, sports, food and beverage, attractions and events, amusement parks, and natural and outdoor experiences remain strong offerings as well.

The region provides numerous outdoor offerings tied to its coastlines. For example, the Virginia Beach area boasts nearly 30 miles of Atlantic oceanfront, a paved boardwalk, and outdoor activities such as fishing, surfing, canoeing, kayaking, and sailing. And the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed rivers also offer an abundance of coastal activities and related attractions in destinations including Norfolk, Newport News, Hampton, Chesapeake, Portsmouth, James City County, and Yorktown.

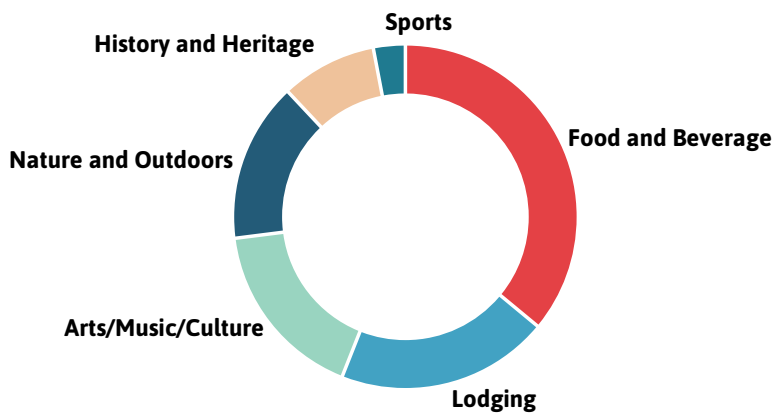
**When asked to name a the primary lure for the region, industry leaders identify the following:**



Well-known attractions such as Colonial Williamsburg, Historic Jamestowne, Jamestown Settlement, Yorktown Battlefield, the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown, and Fort Monroe remain prominent history and heritage draws that continue to serve as key visitor strengths. Also, historic homes, and historic churches are located throughout the region, and popular, long-standing accommodations, such as the newly renovated Cavalier Hotel and Beach Club, along with the Williamsburg Inn, and Williamsburg Lodge and Colonial Houses, contribute to the region's assets.

**Inventory of Regional Assets**

Source: VTC Research



**LURES** (cont'd)

With Virginia Beach and Williamsburg as attraction anchors, the area offers many family-friendly attractions. For example, Virginia Beach has the Virginia Beach Aquarium and Ocean Breeze Waterpark, while Williamsburg has Colonial Williamsburg, Busch Gardens, and Water Country USA. Norfolk features the Virginia Zoo; Hampton boasts the Virginia Air and Space Center; and Portsmouth is home to the Children’s Museum of Virginia. Furthermore, while in the region, families can attend amateur and collegiate sporting events such as the Norfolk Tides, and Old Dominion athletics, or events at the Hampton Coliseum or Norfolk Scope Arena.

The region also boasts a strong military culture, with maritime and military history featured at museums such as Nauticus, the Mariners’ Museum, the Naval Shipyard Museum, Virginia War Museum, and Fort Monroe, among others. In addition, the region is home to numerous military facilities including Norfolk Naval Base, Camp Perry, Fort Eustis, Langley Air Force Base, Naval Air Station Oceana, and others.

With trails like the Salty Southern Route, which offers a journey into the culture and traditions of Virginia’s renowned peanuts, pork products, and salt-cured ham by exploring the towns of Smithfield and Suffolk, agritourism opportunities also exist in the region. And cultural entities of note include the Ferguson Center, Sandler Center, Virginia Arts Festival, Chrysler Museum of Art, Virginia Opera, Virginia Ballet, Virginia Symphony, and the Wells Theater.



**LURES** (cont'd)

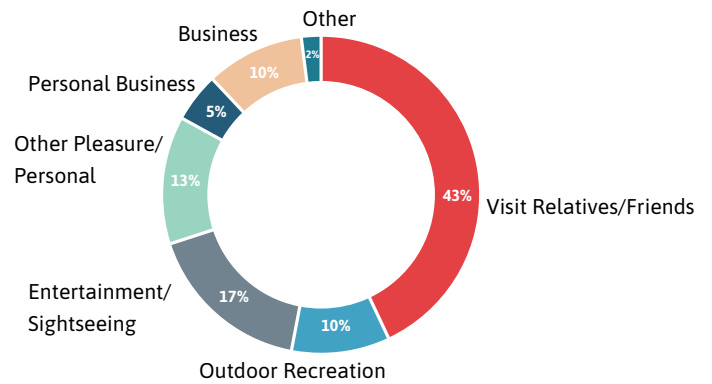
In addition to its beaches and coastal activities, the region offers outdoor enthusiasts opportunities to explore the outdoors in other ways, with four state parks, and national attractions like the Back Bay National Wildlife Refuge, First Landing State Park, Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, and Plum Tree National Wildlife Refuge.

Finally, meetings remain a strong element for the region with a number of facilities, including the Hampton Roads Convention Center, Virginia Beach Convention Center, Kingsmill Resort, Norfolk Waterside Marriott, and Founders Inn & Spa, among others, which provide a range of meeting space options for corporate and association groups.

**HIGHLIGHTS OF REGIONAL LURES**

- **History & Heritage:**
  - Colonial, Revolutionary War, Civil War, Maritime, Military history
  - Historic Triangle (Williamsburg, Jamestown, Yorktown)
- **Virginia Main Streets:** Franklin
- **Notable Towns & Cities:** Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Newport News, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, Hampton, Smithfield, Suffolk, and Franklin
- Numerous Beaches, such as Oceanfront–Virginia Beach, Buckroe Beach, Huntington Port, Ocean View, Sandbridge, Grandview Beach Preserve, and Chic’s Beach
- **State Parks:** York River State Park, First Landing State Park, False Cape State Park, Chippokes Plantation State Park
- Interstate connectivity and airports
- **Convention Centers:** Hampton Roads Convention Center, Virginia Beach Convention Center
- Military presence
- Attractions and family-friendly, value destination reputation

Past visitors to the region cite the following as the primary purpose of their trip and top activities they participated in during their visit:



**Top Activities**

Visiting Relatives	29%
Shopping	26%
Beach	21%
Historic sites/Churches	20%
Fine dining	15%
Museums	15%
Rural Sightseeing	12%
Visiting Friends	12%
Theme/Amusement Park	11%
Urban Sightseeing	10%

## CHANGES OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS

In the past five years, the Hampton Roads region has seen the addition of some new attractions, as well as the updating of existing ones.

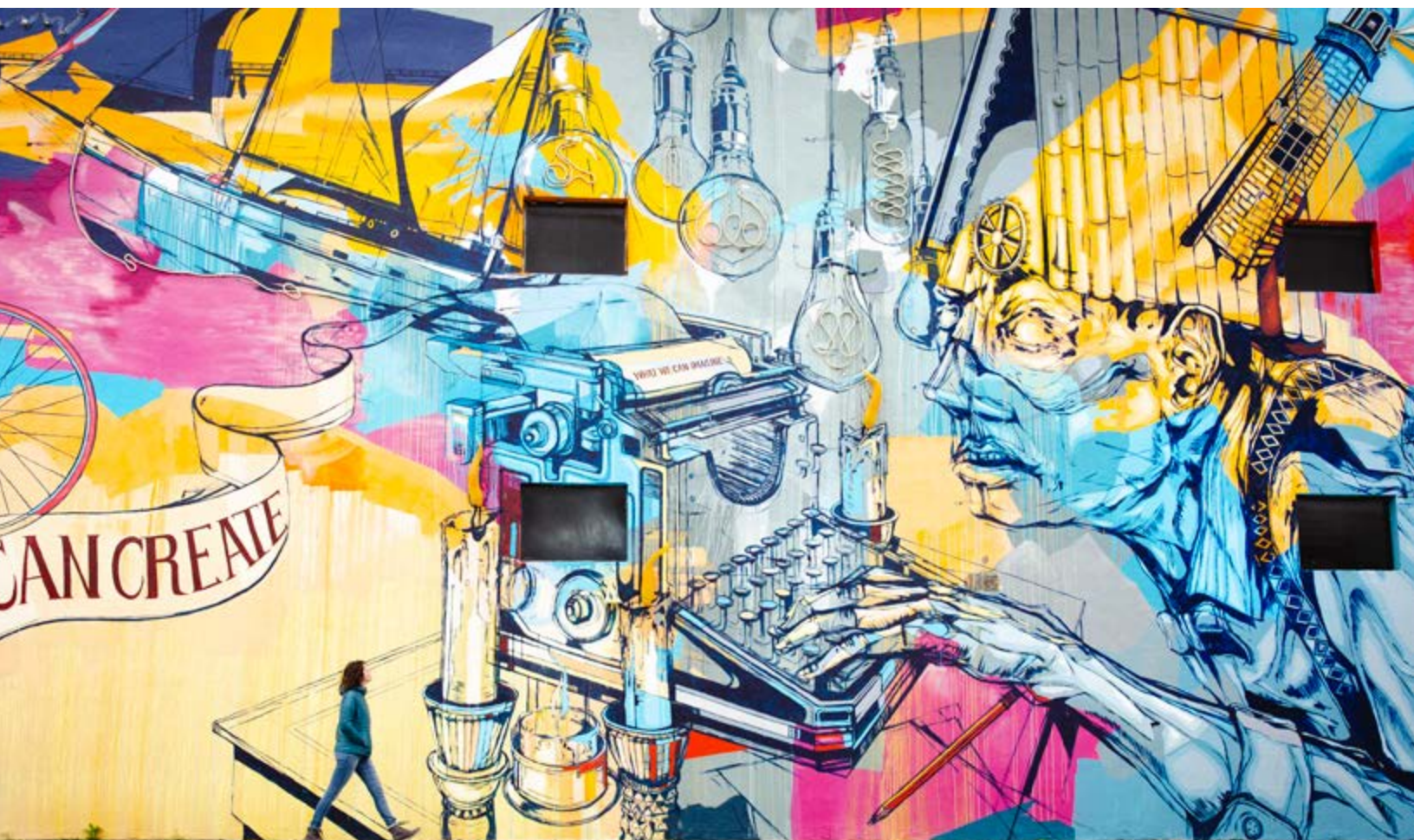
The summer of 2019, for example, saw the launch of a brand-new music festival, Something in the Water, produced by local native Pharrell Williams, which Pitchfork named as one of the world's top music festivals for the summer. Also, interactive experiences like iFLY indoor skydiving and Top Golf have opened in Virginia Beach, and New Kent has welcomed Rosie's Gaming Emporium in New Kent.

The region's newest and recently renovated lodging assets include Virginia Beach's famous nearly 100-year-old Cavalier Hotel and Beach Club, which underwent a four-year, multi-million dollar renovation in Virginia Beach has been completed. The Virginia Resort & Conference Center has been renovated and rebranded as a Marriott Delta. Meanwhile, Hilton also opened an upscale hotel in downtown Norfolk called "The Main," and the new "Element by Westin" hotel opened in Hampton's Peninsula Town Center. The

Williamsburg Inn earned AAA 5 Diamond Hotel status and Colonial Williamsburg Art Museum reopened after a 65,000 sq. ft expansion and upgrade.

The past five years have also witnessed an increased focus on developing vibrant neighborhoods. Norfolk has elevated the Neon District, Virginia Beach is experiencing a growing Vibe District, and now Williamsburg is working on the Edge District. These neighborhoods are focused on bringing together, arts, culture, food, beverage, and shopping experiences great for both residents and visitors alike.

As for transportation, Norfolk to DC to NYC is now available as part of Amtrak's Northeast Regional train service. After a brief hiatus in 2018, cruise tourism is back with the return of Carnival Cruise Line at Half Moon Center in Norfolk. And, most of I-64 from Richmond to Virginia Beach has been expanded to six lanes, with construction scheduled to be completed in late 2020.





**FUTURE PRODUCT OPPORTUNITIES**

The importance of the region’s sports facilities registers highly with area leaders, particularly as a prime complement and boon to the area’s overall outdoor recreation landscape.

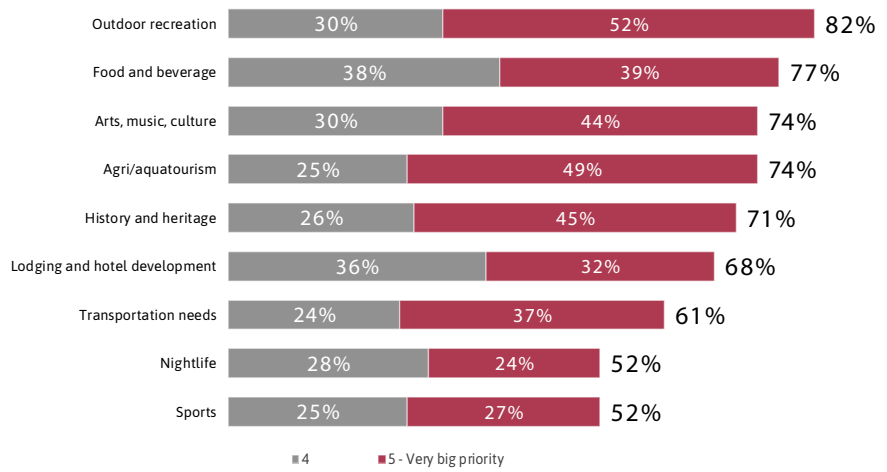
As such, in the DRIVE 2.0 strategic plan development survey, Hampton Roads travel and tourism industry leaders identify outdoor recreation as a priority need and when asked to identify specific outdoor recreation priorities, industry leaders in the region point to sports facilities and park improvements or development.

While the region boasts a number of facilities to support the area’s sports tourism offerings, such as the Virginia Beach Sportsplex, Virginia Beach Field House, Hampton Roads Soccer Complex, and the Boo Williams Sportsplex, the Virginia Beach Sports Center will add a state-of-the-art venue to the list when it opens in the fall of 2020 capable of hosting a variety of events and tournaments that should provide a center of gravity and create additional momentum for year-round sports tourism in the region.

Rounding out the sports and outdoor recreation improvement, the counties of Charles City, New Kent and James City are working to identify new and existing water trail potential in the region. By partnering with the Virginia Water Trails program, the counties will develop eco-tour guide certification programs, interpretive programming and materials for its water trails.

As a region, Hampton Roads competes for highly-sought-after beach vacationers, outdoor enthusiasts, and history and heritage travelers. As such, the region faces constant market pressure to ensure its lodging options remain strong and steady complements

**When asked to what degree are the following a priority for your region, industry leaders responded:**



to the area’s experiences. New construction and necessary renovations are essential in this regard, and the region’s renewed interest in the gaming industry represents an opportunity to add attractions that also provide lodging options for visitors.

The opening of Rosie’s Gaming Emporium in Hampton in October 2019 has met with early successes and helped continue to fuel the region’s popularity. In fact, Norfolk City Council voted in September of 2019 in favor of a partnership with the Pamunkey Native American Tribe to build a \$700 million resort hotel casino and spa on the east side of Harbor Park that will include a minimum of 750 gaming machines, 25 gaming tables, a luxury hotel, three upscale restaurants, a 750-seat entertainment facility, and a waterfront promenade. Meanwhile, city officials in Portsmouth announced in November 2019, their plans to build an entertainment district at the Victory Village site near Victory Boulevard which include a casino in partnership with Rush Street Gaming.

**When asked to name a potential game changer for the region, industry leaders identify the following:**



## FUTURE PRODUCT OPPORTUNITIES (cont'd)

On a community level, recent efforts have been made to develop vibrant neighborhoods such as Norfolk's Neon District, Virginia Beach's Vibe District, and Williamsburg's Edge District; however, there are no designated Virginia Main Streets in the entire region and town and city centers often feel limited. Investment in more walkable community environments throughout the region may be needed.

The region's music scene may also present a strategic area of opportunity to add to the vibrancy of the region as a whole. Though the Norva, located in downtown Norfolk, and larger venues like Hampton Coliseum offer great experiences, the recent focus and investment in the region by major producer and recording artist Pharrell Williams, should be leveraged to promote the entire region as a destination for music lovers.

Similarly, while the region has strong offerings related to arts, culture, dining, and libations — the things that make up vibrant communities — compared to other larger regions like Northern and Central Virginia, increasing food and beverage offerings and connecting these with trails and unique experiences are prime areas of opportunity.

For example, the Salty Southern Route was established in 2019 as a partnership among localities to develop a marketing campaign promoting peanuts and pork, including restaurants that serve these items as signature dishes on the "trail." Connecting these assets was a goal of the 2013 DRIVE effort, and the program was recently awarded a VTC Marketing Leverage Program Grant, which should allow for continued focus and effort to build the route and attract more partners and attractions to enrich this unique and differentiating niche experience.

Finally, continued focus should be placed on the Virginia Space Loop partnership, which is developing a plan for a comprehensive regional approach to promoting and growing space tourism in the eastern portion of Virginia. Ultimately, the Space Loop will be a designated route that creates a driving loop around the "east of 95" coastal region, and the partnership anticipates growing ecotourism offerings as they relate to the night sky and full moon tours and trips.

Of course, the success of these efforts to boost visitation and expenditures through sports tourism, gaming, music festivals, and increased connectivity of attractions, among other initiatives, will mean the region must constantly monitor its lodging industry to ensure it has enough rooms to meet demand and that those rooms meet traveler preferences.

## AREAS OF FOCUS

Based upon Drive 2.0 research and in consideration of the tourism situation, Hampton Roads should focus on the following primary and secondary product opportunities.

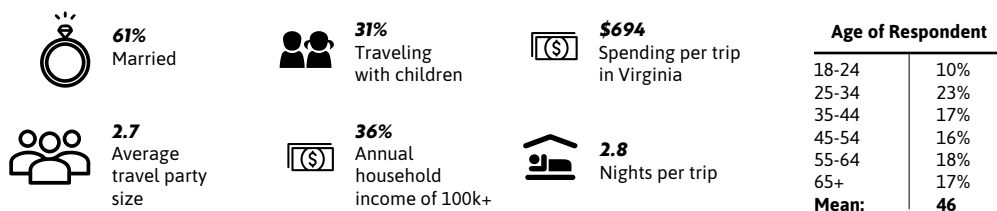
- **Primary:**  
Nature & Outdoor Recreation (including beach/coastline), History & Heritage, Town/City Centers, Music, Sports, Events
- **Secondary:**  
Arts & Music, Culinary (Dining, Breweries, Wineries), Industry (Military, Corporate/Business Base), Meetings (Meetings & Conferences), Lodging





## CURRENT VISITORS

According to research collected by VTC and TravelTrakAmerica, the primary visitors are:



## EMERGING NICHE MARKETS

As the region examines ways to broaden its customer base, keep in mind the key demographic reality facing Virginia and the country today and in the immediate future. Right now, minority children are being born at a higher rate than white children, and by 2044, the country's combined minority populations will comprise the majority of the total population. The shift toward a more diverse, pluralistic society is already underway, and making everyone feel welcome can become a differentiating attribute and strategic advantage, appealing to a broader demographic base of potential visitors.

For example, being welcoming and inclusive can have ramifications for the LGBTQ audience. In 2017, 4.5% of the U.S. population identified as LGBTQ, and data suggests this segment travels more and spends more. The #loveva campaign authentically resonates with the values of this community and capturing this opportunity market hinges on destinations being inclusive — whether it be through hosting Pride events or simply promoting your region as open and welcoming to all.

In addition, operators across the board are showing significant increases in female visitation, especially in outdoor and active travel experiences, which represents another opportunity to increase the region's customer base. So, whether promoting a girl's trip or a solo adventure, a heightened focus on female travelers may also prove beneficial.

Building equity in your region as a diverse and inclusive place to visit, as well as one with appeal for women travelers, will be greatly aided by finding and enlisting ambassadors who can speak to these values and attributes. And, since nearly half of visitors come to spend time with friends and family, helping them understand all there is to see and do, and where to take their friends and family when they come to visit, can enhance the visitor experience and help residents see the value of tourism in their community.

**EMERGING NICHE MARKETS** (cont'd)

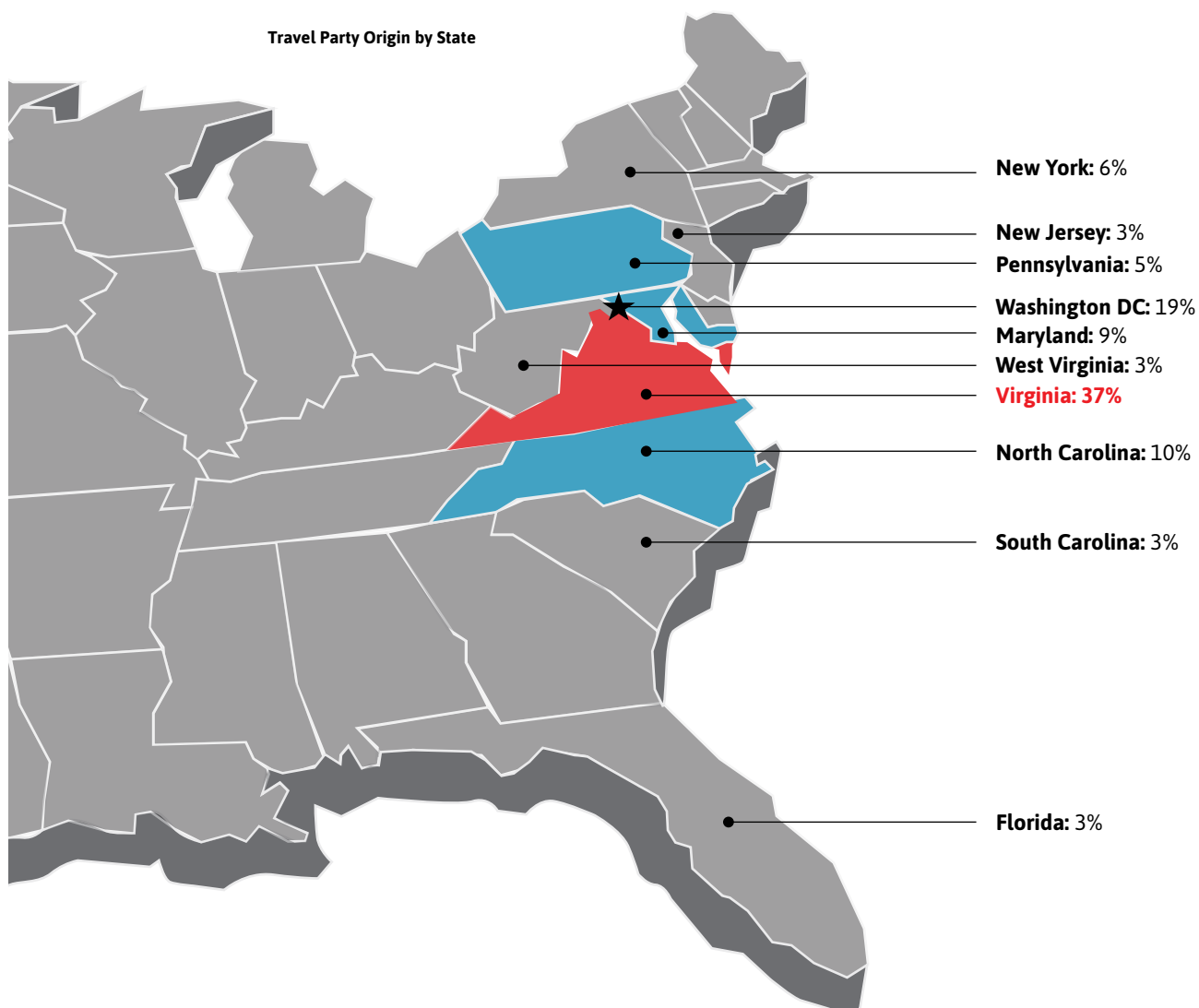
Additional opportunity audiences based on growing trends include:

TRENDS	OVERVIEW	IMMEDIATE IMPLICATIONS FOR COASTAL VA - HAMPTON ROADS
<b>BLACK HERITAGE</b>	<p>Today's Virginia tourism customer base is predominately white. To increase the trajectory of tourism expenditures across Virginia, we must broaden our appeal to broaden our customer base. One critically important audience is the Black segment. According to Mandala Research, Black visitors spent nearly \$63 billion on tourism in 2018, up almost \$20 billion since 2010, from \$48 billion.</p>	<p>Virginia's history is complicated and can often feel unwelcoming to the Black population. Virginia was the starting place for the Black experience, and we should also be the ones leading how we commemorate what was and celebrate what's new. Localities throughout the region have a compelling story to tell — whether it's Revolutionary War, Civil War, or the impact of Black culture today in creating vibrant communities — and Hampton Roads has an opportunity to reposition many of its historical assets using a new lens on how the Black travel segment views its history and what they want from historical assets.</p>
<b>CULTURAL HERITAGE</b>	<p>History is one of Virginia's biggest assets. But it is not just about names and dates, it's about the cultural impact these historic events have on the community. Whether it is music, agriculture, crafts, or politics, Virginia is full of rich cultural heritage experiences.</p>	<p>Packaging historic assets as experiences that highlight the cultural impact on our lives today is key to keeping history relevant and authentic to today's diverse tourism audience. Threading themes across localities and regions can create an even more compelling and impactful story.</p>
<b>RISE OF MUSIC TOURISM</b>	<p>According to Billboard, 32 million people attended music festivals in 2018. Virginia has a strong and unique music heritage (country, bluegrass, beach music, alternative, hip hop, pop rock, heavy metal), and a growing number of music festivals like Bristol Rhythm n' Roots, Lockn', Something in the Water, and Floyd Fest, just to name a few.</p>	<p>Music and music heritage is a core identity of Virginia. It's both authentic and it's experiential – two essential traits travelers seek. There are old and new festivals and potential for several new large venues to be built within the next 5 years. Leverage these events and music experiences as a way to tell the story of Virginia and keep people coming back to their favorite music destinations and experiences.</p>

**GROWING OPPORTUNITY OF NEARBY DRIVE MARKETS**

National tourism trends suggest leisure travel is now a year-round activity, with shorter, more frequent trips taking the place of traditional week-long summer vacations. This translates into the increasing value and impact of near versus far-away markets.

With the average trip length of 2.8 nights, the Hampton Roads region is no exception, and according to a TravelTrakAmerica survey, the majority of Hampton Roads travelers (56%) originate from nearby drive markets – Virginia, North Carolina and Maryland. This concentrated primary feeder area gives all of Hampton Roads’ destinations and industry leaders an opportunity to work closer together in promotional planning to target prospective visitors.



## COMPETITION

Given Hampton Roads' primary coastal and history and heritage lures, the primary competitors identified through this effort include Myrtle Beach, SC, Outer Banks, NC, and Washington, D.C.

COMPETITOR	PRIMARY LURES
MYRTLE BEACH, SC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Beaches</li> <li>2. Golf</li> <li>3. Shopping</li> </ol>
OUTERBANKS, NC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Beaches</li> <li>2. History (light houses, Wright Bros.)</li> <li>3. Fishing</li> </ol>
WASHINGTON, D.C.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. History (monuments/memorials/museums)</li> <li>2. Neighborhoods</li> <li>3. Restaurants</li> </ol>

As noted in 2013, similar coastal destinations like Myrtle Beach and the Outer Banks offer beaches, water-oriented outdoor recreation, family-friendly attractions, and coastal towns with heritage and culture. The region's generally family-friendly/value destination image may overshadow higher-end elements available, and those higher-end images may be more prominent in competitive destinations like the Outer Banks. The region's historical assets are a critical benefit for distinction, though D.C. also competes for the history-seeking traveler.

In appealing to prospective visitors, Hampton Roads' destinations and travel attractions must realize that competing head to head from a siloed or individual experience perspective is less effective than the hub and spoke method of bundling experiences together. Hampton Roads' unique history and heritage, food and beverage, water-related activities, music, and other visitor experiences, can help the entire region's offerings stand apart from the competition. This is the hub and spoke method in action.

**REGIONAL CHALLENGES (VOIDS)**

General research indicates a continuing decline in visitation to historic sites and attractions — one of the region’s primary lures. History, however, must be thought of not just in terms of names and dates, but rather the cultural impact these historic events have on the community. Whether it is music, agriculture, crafts, or politics, packaging historic assets as experiences that highlight the cultural impact on our lives today is key to keeping history relevant and authentic to today’s diverse tourism audience. Indeed, threading themes across regions can create an even more compelling and impactful story.

The Hampton Roads region continues to face the challenge of traffic congestion. While the I-64 expansion scheduled to be completed in late 2020 should be helpful, the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel expansion will be a serious challenge for the coming decade.

Meanwhile, regular tidal flooding creates challenges, as stormwater mitigation takes funds from tourism. For example, the Surf park plans have already experienced a compromise in legislation, with 25% of revenue going to stormwater investments that would otherwise be reinvested in tourism development and marketing.

**REGIONAL CHALLENGES**

- Traffic congestion; Hampton Road Bridge Tunnel Expansion
- Somewhat limited attraction connectivity and perceived distance of regional destinations
- Differentiation from competition in nearby, coastal destinations
- Attendance issues related to historical experiences
- Coastal seasonality
- Image/perception issue to overcome
- Local perception of tourism

TRENDS	OVERVIEW	IMMEDIATE IMPLICATIONS FOR COASTAL VA - HAMPTON ROADS
<p><b>SHIFTING LABOR DYNAMICS</b></p>	<p>Available workers between the ages of 16 and 54 have been in decline for the past decade — a decline projected to continue — while the supply of workers 55 and older is projected to increase 18%. With overall population growth far outpacing working age population growth, competition for younger workers will intensify, and Baby Boomers as workers will become more important to ALL industries, including travel and tourism.</p>	<p>Assess the region’s destinations and attractions’ current workforce, as well as future workforce needs. Work with destinations and attractions to determine how workplace culture aligns with the values and priorities of a shifting workforce population. Future players could be entrepreneurs for their next stage of life.</p>
<p><b>TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM</b></p>	<p>Ability to grow and prosper is due in no small part to having one of the best transportation systems in the country. Over the next five years, significant transportation improvements will be realized on the I-95 and I-64 corridors, including a new tunnel at the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel. In December 2019, Governor Northam announced a \$3.7 billion agreement for the state to buy 225 miles of track and build new passenger rail improvements.</p>	<p>The vast majority of visitors use an automobile to get around Virginia during their trip. Having connected and easy access with minimal congestion is an important part of the overall experience. Hampton Roads has some of the most significant challenges due to its population size and unavoidable bottle necks like bridges and tunnels. And while efforts are underway to make vast improvements, this must continue to be a priority knowing there will be continued population growth throughout the region.</p>



### **REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY**

Bundling or packaging experiences for potential visitors' consideration continues to gain traction. According to TripAdvisor, "[they're] seeing more travelers balancing their itineraries with a mix of classic sightseeing and more unique local experiences." Hampton Roads' travel and tourism efforts may be behind this trend, as existing assets appear to be siloed, with few regional cross promotions, connectivity, or packaging of complementary experiences. This lack of cohesion is especially true between towns and cities across the region.

Travel and tourism industry leaders should work together to formulate and orchestrate outdoor product development plans and initiatives that marry well with authentic historic experiences.



**REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY** (cont'd)

Additional opportunities for the region based on growing national trends, include:

TRENDS	OVERVIEW	IMMEDIATE IMPLICATIONS FOR COASTAL VA - HAMPTON ROADS
<b>MINI-CATIONS</b>	According to Allianz, over half of Americans last year did not take a vacation longer than four nights. Millennials are leading this movement.	Campaigns like the recent Crush Friday can take advantage of this trend. Consider other marketing campaigns and packages that encourage younger generations to take their vacation for a long weekend trip. With the average trip length at 2.8 nights, mini vacations should be a natural opportunity for the region to pursue.
<b>SPACE</b>	While not everyone can afford a trip to space, interest in space is growing. Dark Sky locations, observatories, and even stations are growing in popularity.	Hampton Roads has an opportunity to capitalize on this growing trend and interest. Whether it's the new Space Loop or full moon kayaking, Hampton Roads has an authentic and compelling story and experience to share in this realm.
<b>CASINOS AND GAMBLING</b>	Worldwide gaming is big business. The global gambling market is expected to reach revenues over \$525 billion by 2023. The U.S. is no exception. With the repeal of the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act in 2018, the industry is seeing exponential growth across the country. Moreover, research shows the gaming sector's reinvestment in communities, building partnerships with small business and nonprofits and providing employment opportunities.	Stakeholders across the Commonwealth are talking about gaming. New Kent County's Colonial Downs and Rosie's Gaming has brought back horse betting to the state. From Hampton Roads, to Danville, to Northern Virginia, to Bristol, localities are expressing interest in investing in gaming opportunities. While any potential recession can impact this industry, there does appear to be an opportunity for localities to take advantage of this growing industry.
<b>SPORTS</b>	Sports tourism is one of the fastest growing travel industries. Worldwide it equates to \$7.68 billion. The Travel Industry of America reports that nearly 40% of American adults each year travel 50 miles or more to a sporting event. But it's not just attending sporting events, it's also hosting youth tournaments and providing venues that attract year-round events drawing hundreds, often thousands of visitors.	While the Commonwealth does not support any major league sports teams, the state is beginning to hone its focus on sports tourism. Localities in Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, Richmond, and Roanoke area are all finding ways to use sports to bring in new visitors and fill up hotel rooms year-round. With new venues in the works, localities should work together to find ways to elevate the entire state through this growing market.
<b>SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL</b>	There is a growing economy and movement toward stewardship of our earth and our cultures. Destinations and attractions are participating in this movement by promoting low impact and green experiences and practices.	In a state rich with natural resources, wildlife, and small towns, low-impact experiences are important. Think about ways to highlight low impact visitors will have on nature, the wildlife, and the small towns. In visiting, they can contribute to the vibrancy of the local economy in a sustainable way so generations can continue to enjoy Virginia's beauty and rich culture.

**REGIONAL OPPORTUNITY** (cont'd)

Additional opportunities for the region based on growing national trends, include:

TRENDS	OVERVIEW	IMMEDIATE IMPLICATIONS FOR COASTAL VA - HAMPTON ROADS
<p><b>SHIFTING FOOTPRINT</b></p>	<p>The country’s population growth over the past century has been concentrated in urban and suburban areas. Likewise, 80% of Virginia’s population growth is projected to occur in the “Golden Crescent” corridor that runs from D.C. through Northern Virginia, Richmond, Williamsburg, and Hampton Roads. This growth in urban areas is being accelerated by Millennials, who prefer downtowns, activity centers, and 15-minute “livable” communities close to everything, meaning many western counties in the Commonwealth may continue to lose population and industry.</p>	<p>The Hampton Roads region has already experienced growth in its population by 100,000 people in just the past five years. Not all regions are as lucky, and Hampton Roads communities should work together to develop a coordinated plan to manage and better take advantage of this growth, which will have positive and negative impacts. While it will increase vibrancy, and hopefully add new businesses and economic growth, it also means more congestion and higher property costs, etc. The industry should come together to develop a plan for how travel and tourism can take advantage of this opportunity.</p>
<p><b>VALUE TOURISM</b></p>	<p>Virginia is increasingly being known for affordable travel experiences. In fact, Williamsburg was named as a top 10 most affordable vacation in the U.S. in 2019. Marketing Outlook Forum also predicts that there will be a decline in luxury travel nationwide in the near future.</p>	<p>Find ways to promote free and affordable experiences. These messages will tie-in well with promoting outdoor recreation and beach experiences. Vacations can be equally exciting and affordable no matter where they travel in the region.</p>



# PROMOTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

## RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES

Based on the situation and analysis of the Hampton Roads region, the following set of recommendations are offered in order of priority:

1. **Enhance sports.** While outdoor recreation is the biggest priority for the region, it's really all about sports facilities. The new Virginia Beach Sports Center is overwhelmingly the number one gamechanger for the region according to industry stakeholders. But across the region, localities mention creating more sports fields and parks. The year-round opportunity indoor sports complexes afford the region can help position and promote the region as a sports and tournament destination. In addition, developing promotions that highlight the secondary activities that make the experience great for tournament attendees helps entice them to come back for their next vacation. This includes quality lodging options, food options, breweries, music venues, and city centers and walkable spaces.

**To get inspired about how to formulate a regionwide product development plan, see Drive 2.0's How To Guide #2: Enhance Experiences.**

2. **Collectively, breathe new life and meaning into history and heritage assets:** Given the number of major historical attractions in the Hampton Roads region and the slow decline in the appeal of heritage tourism, the entire region's historical attractions should come together to create more cross promotions and shared guidelines on how to respectfully give our history more of an edge by presenting Virginia's history plus, focused on authentic lived experiences by diverse groups who shaped the region. This could include:

- Packaging relatable personal stories;
- Making history more personal by connecting with and appealing to what's on travelers' minds and in their hearts today;
- Building in suspense; and
- Keeping it fresh.

History and heritage assets, especially in the Historic Triangle area, demonstrate strong cooperation and collaboration. But how can collaboration be maximized to advance a more compelling narrative? One opportunity lies in the story of Black Americans and their earliest ancestors, as well as Virginia's indigenous populations. Imagine for a moment the power of the entire region creating a trail that starts in Fort Monroe and then journeys through Hampton including Hampton University and the Emancipation Oak, through Jamestown, Yorktown and Colonial Williamsburg, to recognize the complex history of Africans in America. Next, imagine that trail continues its way back east to Norfolk and Virginia Beach, celebrating the exciting art, music, and entrepreneurial spirit of local Black residents along the way. Hampton Roads has a unique, believable, and authentic story to tell in this regard, but it must come with everyone working together.

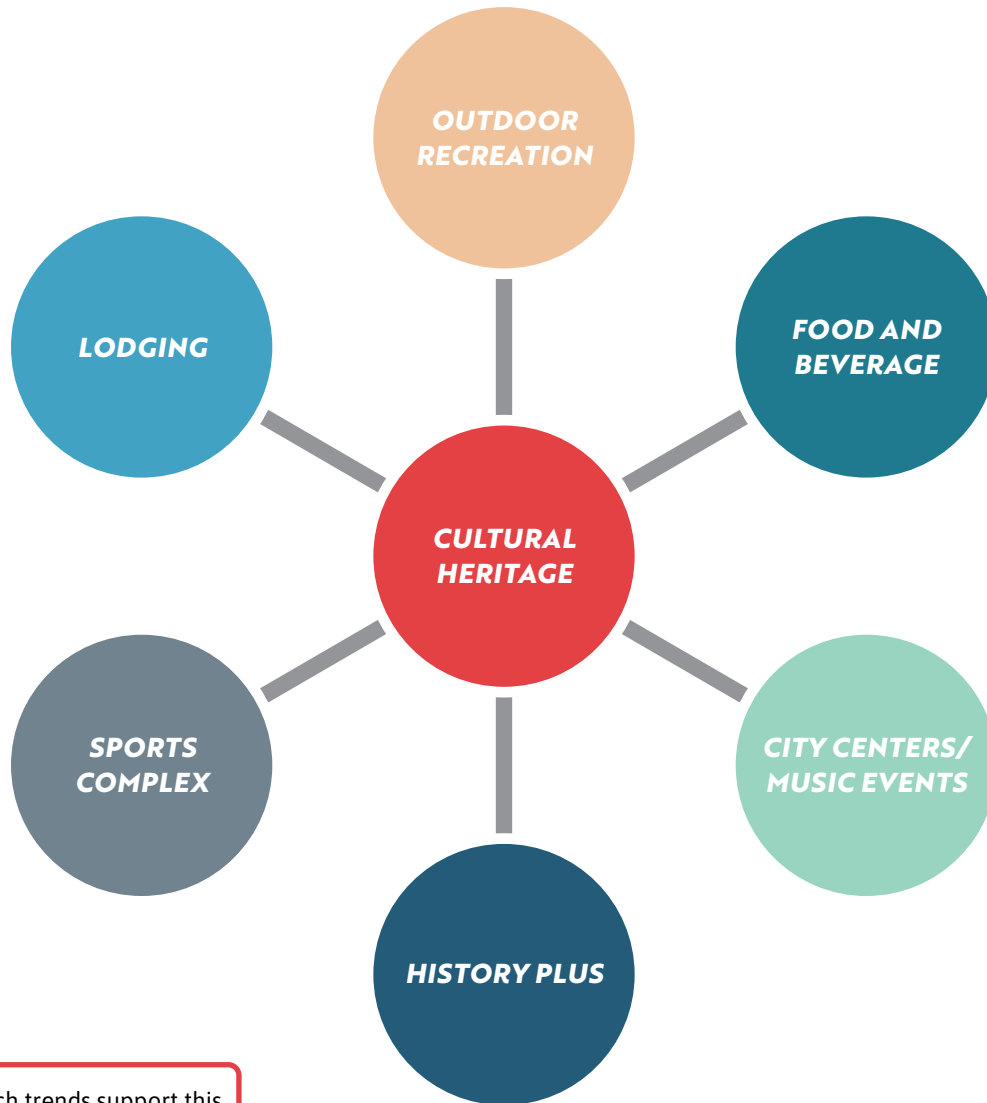
3. **Bundle and package experiences using the hub and spoke method to increase the overall appeal of individual attractions and offerings.** Overall, the region's primary lures should adopt a packaging perspective to increase average spending and room nights in Hampton Roads. Focusing on just one lure will make it more challenging for the region to compete against similar offerings in other states.

The region has the right lures to create vibrant visitor experiences. For example, a weekend itinerary could allow visitors to paddle board on the river, brewery hop, catch a concert, and stay in a boutique hotel with a top restaurant. Actual tours that combine a history-themed bike tour one day and a brewery tour the next also hold potential. More deliberate thought about how to bundle experiences across localities to increase the unique experience may encourage people to turn their day trip or overnight into a two- or three-day trip.

# PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

## HUB & SPOKE

In considering all of the research to date, the following hub and spoke approach is recommended for the Hampton Roads region as a whole:



**Exercise:** See which trends support this development hub & spoke.

### TREND 1

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### TREND 2

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### TREND 3

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## **VISION FOR COASTAL VIRGINIA - HAMPTON ROADS**

The vision for the Hampton Roads regional plan is to collaboratively build upon the region's coastal and historical and heritage assets in an authentic manner and to further diversify its tourism asset base through the development of sports facilities, outdoor recreation, food and beverage, and lodging — the foundation of vibrant communities — to sustainably maximize its tourism potential.

## **SUMMARY**

The Hampton Roads region has incredible opportunity, and through increased collaboration, teamwork, and a common vision across jurisdictions, the region can be even more competitive with nearby destinations in North Carolina and D.C. The communities and assets are there, but regionalism is key to growth. Through better connectivity and cohesion, together we can take the entire region to the next level.







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