Downtown Hampton

The best kept secret on the Lower Chesapeake Bay.

Downtown Hampton is defined by its waterfront. Hampton Road's harbor offers deepwater slips and first-class amenities and is a great place to drop anchor, gather with friends, go to a festival, shop, and dine. Hampton's downtown waterfront district encompasses the site of the original 17th century seaport that served as a port of entry for commercial vessels from Europe, Africa and the Caribbean. Now dotted with restaurants, pubs, art galleries, shops, marinas and a waterfront park, it provides a safe haven for boaters in its sheltered harbor.

Where to Dock

Hampton Public Piers (tel: 757.727.1276) is a fully transient facility located within walking distance of Downtown Hampton's historic district and local attractions.

Customs House Marina (tel: 757.868.9375) is directly in front of the Radisson Hotel.

Joy's Marina (tel: 757.868.9375) is directly across on the east side of the river. You can take the walkway, which begins at Joy's, over the Settlers Landing Bridge to get to Downtown Hampton.

Bluewater Yachting Center (tel: 757.723.6774) on the southern side of Sunset Creek and the western side of the Hampton River, is a full service marina and yacht yard.

What to Do

Events/Festivals: 2007 Summer Night Street Fest is held every Saturday, 6 p.m. to 11 p.m., April 21– September 1, 2007 where Hampton takes to the streets for a fun-filled street fair featuring live musical entertainment, and cold refreshments. Hampton is also home to festivals such as the annual Hampton Bay Days (September 7, 8, & 9, 2007) festival goers enjoy shopping, a grand fireworks show and lots of free entertainment.

Attractions: Downtown Hampton is the home of exciting area attractions including the Virginia Air and Space Center featuring the Riverside IMAX Theatre and the 1920's Hampton Carousel, one of less than 200 antique carousels still operating in the United States. History buffs can tour the Hampton History Museum and Hampton University Museum or visit historic St. John's Church, the oldest English-speaking parish in America.

Shopping: Variety of options from Benton-Knight Clothier, men's clothing and gifts to Something Different, fun and whimsical gifts, and Cabbages & Kings, showcasing unique antiques.

Art: Downtown Hampton is adorned with public art and art galleries.

Where to Eat

Downtown Hampton offers a wide variety of restaurants, ranging from enticing Creole, Italian, Thai and Japanese cuisine to gourmet sandwiches, Chesapeake Bay seafood and Southern tea rooms. Don't miss:

Marker 20 (tel: 757.726.9410) Downtown Hampton's seafood destination. Microbrews, live entertainment, outdoor dining.

Oyster Alley (tel: 757.727.9700) Enjoy seafood and American cuisine with some of the best views of the Downtown Hampton waterfront.

Pier 21 (tel: 757.727.8925) Unique waterfront dining specializing in fresh local and seasonal seafood all in a friendly, casual environment.

Surf Rider Restaurant (tel: 757.723.9366) Premier waterfront dining overlooking the Bluewater Marina. Serving the freshest local seafood, steaks, and pasta.

Taphouse on Queens Way has the largest selection of craft beers in Hampton Roads. Tavern fare, entrees, fresh salads, and great specials.

Downtown Hampton has much to offer the cruising boater. Let Marinalife help you plan your next cruise to Hampton including booking your dockage at one of the great Hampton marinas.

For more information visit www.downtownhampton.com

James River

Twenty–six miles up the James River from Hampton Roads is Jamestown, the first permanent European settlement and Colonial Williamsburg. This area located between Richmond and Virginia Beach, is known as the Historic Triangle. It is a great cruising destination with endless options for the entire family. Whether your interest is history and archaeology, outdoor fun, spas and golf, or thrills at state-of-the-art theme parks, you will find it here — all against a backdrop of charming historic towns and natural beauty.

Where to Dock

Kingsmill Resort Marina (tel: 757.253.1703) This new, full-service marina offers 15 transient boat slips equipped with water and power connections, concrete floating docks, and convenient, full-service dockside fueling and access to all there is to do at Kingsmill Resort & Spa. The resort provides transportation to Colonial Williamsburg, Busch Gardens, and Water Country USA.

Jamestown Yacht Basin (tel: 757.229.8309) This marina is located on the Powhatan Creek and is an easy walk to the Jamestown Festival Park. The marina can accommodate vessels up to 40 feet (there is a 12-foot fixed vertical clearance bridge).

What to Do

Colonial Williamsburg: From 1699 to 1780, Williamsburg was the political and cultural center of Britain's largest colony in the New World. Colonial Williamsburg is the nation's largest living history museum encompassing 301 acres including some 500 buildings, homes, stores and taverns reconstructed and restored to their 18th-century appearances. Watch as tradesmen practice 30 historic trades and domestic crafts, enjoy historical interpreters and character actors and wander 90 acres of gardens and greens. Highlights include the Governor's Palace, the Capitol, the Museums of Colonial Williamsburg including the DeWitt Wallace Decorative Arts Museum and the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum and Bassett Hall.

Jamestown Settlement: At Jamestown Settlement visitors are immersed in the world of America's first permanent English colonists and the Powhatan Indians they encountered. The expansive indoor museum complex brings history to life through a 23-minute dramatic introductory film, "1607: A Nation Takes Root." The events and environment of 17th-century Virginia are brought to life in Jamestown Settlement's exhibition galleries. New 30,000-square-foot gallery exhibits explore Jamestown's beginnings as a business venture, the impact of European colonization on the Powhatan Indian culture, and the origins of the first known Africans in Virginia.

Historic Yorktown: Before the cannon fire on the battlefields and the forming of a new nation, there was Yorktown. Once a thriving seaport home to thousands, Yorktown welcomed hundreds of ships a year importing and exporting cargo between the colonies and England.

Up on Main Street, referred to as "on the hill", the wealthy passed their days trading commodities and dreaming of independence. "Under the hill", the area along the waterfront, was rife with taverns and merchant shops where the sailors would spend time and money before their ship once again set sail. Riverwalk Landing, a multi-million dollar project, includes shops, fine dining, a performance area, and two docks - one that supports large vessels such as cruise and tall ships, and the other for smaller personal watercraft.

Attractions for Kids

Busch Gardens Europe is a European-themed park, located in the heart of Williamsburg, VA, Offering exciting rides like Curse of DarKastle and Apollo's Chariot to Broadway-quality shows, animal interactions and culinary delights, Busch Gardens Europe has been voted the world's "Most Beautiful Theme Park" for 16 consecutive years.

Water Country USA, Virginia's largest water park is located just three miles west of Busch Gardens Europe. The park features more than 30 water rides and attractions, live entertainment, shopping and restaurants, all set to a 1950s and '60s surf theme. ml