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36 HOURS

Virginia Beach



Gary C. Knapp for The New York Times

By LISA RICHMON Published: June 2, 2006

IN 1607, the first Europeans landed at Cape Henry, now known as Virginia Beach, but they didn't stick around and went instead to Jamestown, where they established the first permanent British colony in America. Four centuries later, Virginia Beach isn't snubbed anymore: it's the largest city in Virginia, home to more than 440,000 people and part of a metropolitan area of 1.6 million that includes Norfolk and Newport News. Famous for its naval installations and picturesque shorelines, Virginia Beach also has an eclectic array of famous residents past and present with strong ties to the area: the hip-hop stars Missy Elliott, Tim Mosley (a.k.a. Timbaland), and Chad Hugo and Pharrell Williams; the televangelist Pat Robertson; and the legendary psychic Edgar Cayce, who in 1925 was "called" to live in this city, with its gentle climate and lush locale along the Atlantic shore. LISA RICHMON

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Map: Virginia Beach

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Friday

4 p.m.

1) Kiss Off

If you perch yourself across the street from the Naval Air Station Oceana (757-433-3131, www.nasoceana.navy.mil), you can get a look at what the Navy's top fighter jocks are doing with your tax dollars. After executing a series of aerial combat maneuvers over the ocean, the pilots turn their F/A-18 Hornets and Super Hornets back to the naval station in formation. Then the lead pilot gives the "kiss off," the signal to peel off and land, and the planes simulate a carrier landing by dropping sharply onto a box painted on the runway. You can watch these daily mini-air shows from the jet landing observation area at POW/MIA Flame of Hope Memorial Park (Oceana Boulevard near the intersection with Bells Road).

5:30 p.m.

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2) Virginia Is for Surfers

Virginia Beach is all about its boardwalk and its clean 100-yard-wide beach. Each August, the area's large surfing community plays host to the annual East Coast Surfing Championship (www.surfecsc.com), North America's oldest running surfing competition (the 44th annual event will be Aug. 23 to 27 by the First Street jetty). The central pier off 15th Street is like a second home to people who live to fish — and ideal for people who just love to watch.

7 p.m.

3) New Southern Cooking



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Where once there was Virginia ham, now there is sushi. But while sushi parlors are sprouting up around town like wasabi plants, Walter Mizuno was born and trained as a sushi chef in [Tokyo](http://www.tokyo.com). At the Mizuno Japanese Restaurant (1860 Laskin Road, 757-422-1200), the proprietary salad dressing — made from 15 undisclosed Asian vegetables — is sold, when Mr. Mizuno feels like it, for \$15 a bottle. The dressing is great over the tuna tartare (\$8.75) and the delicately loaded sashimi salad of octopus, crab, avocado, raw tuna or salmon, seaweed, spinach and fresh salad greens (\$9.75).

9 p.m.

4) Reggae Meets Rugelach

The Jewish Mother is a deli by day and a restaurant and live-music bar by night. John Hammond, Roomful of Blues and Dr. John are among the performers who have played the Jewish Mother (3108 Pacific Avenue; 757-422-5430; www.jewishmother.com); local bands play four or five nights a week. If you're hungry, the Mother's Son Reuben (\$8.75) is a specialty of the house, as is, of course, the chicken soup with matzo balls (\$4.45).

Saturday

10 a.m.

5) Fit to Eat



Gary C. Knapp for The New York Times

Virginia Beach is rated the third-fittest city in America by Men's Fitness Magazine. So after you've spent the morning running, power lifting or bear wrestling, you'll have earned the right to eat Grandma's pancakes (\$5.29) at Big Sam's Inlet Cafe and Raw Bar (300 Winston Salem Avenue on Rudee Inlet, 757-428-4858). Professional surfers and others in town for competitions are regulars at this beachside restaurant, where a full breakfast menu is offered until 11 a.m.

1:30 p.m.

6) Where Ocean Meets Bay

First Landing State Park (2500 Shore Drive; 757-412-2300; www.state.va.us/dcr/parks/1stland.htm) commemorates the spot where, in April 1607, English settlers landed and established an elective government before pushing on to Jamestown. Today, it's the most visited park in Virginia, a cyclists', hikers' and nature lovers' paradise of almost 3,000 acres where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Chesapeake Bay (parking is \$2 or \$3). Nine walking trails, totaling 19 miles, wind around dunes and ponds surrounded by moss-covered live oak and bald cypress trees. A bike path runs 90 blocks, from Fort Story in the park to Rudee Inlet.

3 p.m.

7) Aura of Health

Edgar Cayce was a farm boy from [Kentucky](http://www.kentucky.com) who first gained fame in the early 1900's by

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harnessing his psychic powers to "enter" the body of another person. In that state, Cayce would diagnose conditions and offer specific treatments called "readings." Medical readings segued into general predictions of the future (reportedly the stock market crash and World War II), and Cayce gained the attention of scientists, medical experts and President Woodrow Wilson. In 1925, Cayce settled in Virginia Beach and in 1928 founded the Cayce Hospital, where his principles of faith healing were implemented. The hospital closed two years later, but at the Association for Research and Enlightenment, the foundation dedicated to Cayce's legacy (215 67th Street Virginia Beach, 800-333-4499; www.edgarcayce.org), you can browse the gift shop, buy holistic products and attend a day spa that offers Cayce-based home remedies dispensed with the belief that we are all just one session of colon hydrotherapy away from attaining good chi.

7:30 p.m.

8) Catch of the Night

For a great view of the scenery of both the natural and Saturday-night varieties, hit Catch 31 Fish House and Bar at the Hilton Virginia Beach Oceanfront (3001 Atlantic Avenue, 757-213-3474). The large glass bar extends outdoors, where it overlooks the boardwalk. Inside, below, the jam-packed grazing area is flanked by two dining areas offering a large selection of fresh fish — playfully displayed by a waterfall along with a conga line of parrotfish, salmon, red snapper, lobster, crab legs and New Zealand green-lipped mussels — as well as a raw bar featuring 7 to 13 oyster varieties.

Sunday

9 a.m.

9) Eggs on the Veranda

In 1949, before Virginia Beach had a proper hospital, there was Doc Taylor's home office. Today, it's an all-day breakfast and lunch joint (207 23rd Street, 757-425-1960), and the big doses of sunlight that pour into its covered porch are just what the doctor ordered. Breakfasts at Doc Taylor's include the Heart Attack (three eggs, bacon and a chop, \$10.95) and the Nurse Ratched (omelet with grilled red peppers, portobellos, spinach and hollandaise, \$6.75). Tautog's, the sister cottage next door (No. 205, 757-422-0081), takes over when Doc Taylor's closes at 5 p.m. In warm weather, two decks and a patio with a fish pond and a fountain are open to complement fresh flavor of the shrimp-and-crab-stuffed flounder in a bag (\$14.95) or the tuna Martinique (\$14.95).

Noon

10) Ocean and Marsh

The Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center (717 General Booth Boulevard; 757-425-3474; www.vmsm.com; \$11.95, children 3 to 11 \$7.95) features a 300,000-gallon tank with sharks and stingrays, an adjacent salt marsh and woodland preserve, and an IMAX theater. Its whale- and dolphin-watching boat tours let you see sea mammals in their natural habitat. The dolphin-watching tours, led by the center's knowledgeable staff, run daily June 10 to Labor Day, then on weekends into October (\$18, \$16 ages 11 and under; 757-437-2628 for reservations).

2 p.m.

11) Virginia Rose

The Norfolk Botanical Garden (6700 Azalea Garden Road; 757-441-5830; www.norfolkbotanicalgarden.org; \$6) is in essence a large park brimming with tens of thousands of flowers all year. The botanical garden's 155 lush acres sit right next to Norfolk International Airport, so you can check your bags at the airport and stroll over for a 20-minute tram ride, a 30-minute boat tour on the garden's waterways or an idyll in the butterfly garden, Japanese gardens or statuary vista. During wedding season, you can visit the Bicentennial Rose Garden, where you just might gaze at a bride and the 3,000 rosebushes in 430 varieties that are trying to upstage her.

THE BASICS

Getting to the Sand

Most major airlines fly in and out of Norfolk International Airport. The Virginia Beach oceanfront

is less than 30 minutes away by car. A Web search this week found nonstop flights from New York for late June weekends from \$335.

One of the newest hotels on the Virginia Beach oceanfront is the Hilton Oceanfront (3001 Atlantic Avenue, 757-213-3001; www.31ocean.com), with a rooftop infinity-edge pool, a sky bar 21 floors up and upscale casual dining at Catch 31 and Salacia. Ocean view and city view rooms range from \$279 to \$449.

Rooms at the recently renovated Cavalier on the Hill (the area's "it" hotel, circa 1930) are \$125 to \$450 a night. Directly across the street is the modern Cavalier on the Ocean, with poolside and rooftop dining, volleyball, tennis and the area's largest wading pool for kids; rooms there are \$185 to \$600 (42nd Street and Atlantic Avenue; 757-425-8555; www.cavalierhotel.com).

Barclay Cottage, a 111-year-old Victorian house with wraparound verandas on its two floors, is a bed-and-breakfast two blocks from the beach (400 16th Street, 866-466-1895; www.barclaycottage.com). Guest rooms are stocked with fresh beach towels. A room with a shared bathroom is \$144; one with a private bath is \$169.

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