

# 2024 Visitor Centers Seminar



**Welcome to Chincoteague Island!**

## **Study Tour Itinerary**

**Tuesday, March 12th**

**12:00pm- 1:30pm-** Early Registration (Refuge Inn)

Virginia Tourism Welcome Center staff and ESVA Staff will be in the hotel lobby to welcome you.

**2pm-4pm : Pre-Event Activities (Drive your own vehicle to starting location)**

**Option #1:** Join Chincoteague Step Through Time Tours for a walking history tour of the island with local historian, Cindy Faith. The tour is limited to 40 people and free parking is available downtown. After your 1/2 mile walking tour, there is an option from 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. to visit the Beebe Ranch, where Misty of Chincoteague lived.

**Option #2 :** Step aboard a complimentary guided boat cruise around the island (weather permitting) with Daisey's Island Cruises, looking for wildlife and wild ponies in their natural habitat while learning about our rich history from a knowledgeable captain. The pontoon boat will leave from Curtis Merritt Harbor, 2246 Curtis Merritt Harbor Drive, promptly at 2:30 p.m. Bring a warm jacket! Blankets will be available. This tour is limited to 60 people.

**Option #3 –** Enjoy a tasty option and enjoy some homemade ice cream at the Island Creamery, 6243 Maddox Boulevard - just voted 'Best Ice Cream Shop in the U.S.' by USA Today, or you can enjoy some retail therapy in our eclectic shops and boutiques located in historic downtown.

**5:00pm:** Registration & welcome reception with private dinner party compliments of Steamers Restaurant located at 6251 Maddox Blvd. There will be a cash bar available. Dinner to begin at 6:00pm.

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## **Study Tour Itinerary: Wednesday, March 13**

### **Breakfast at your hotel**

**7:30am-8:00am:** Registration: Refuge Inn or overflow hotel

**8:30am:** Board the Pony Express Trolleys, based on group number, from your hotels.

### **Group 1:**

**9:00 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.:** Arrive at Wallops Research Park for a tour of Rocket Lab's mission control room with Rachel Harley and view the construction of a rocket in the hangar. **NO PHOTOS ALLOWED IN THE HANGAR.**

**9:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. :** Travel to NASA Wallops Flight Facility with your guide, Rebecca Hudson, to see launchpads where rockets are launched. Learn about the missions that resupply the international space station, experiments that travel on some of these rockets, and about sounding rockets. Photo-op at the launchpad if no launches are planned for that day.

**11:00 a.m. :** Visit the NASA Visitor's Center to engage with interactive exhibits depicting the history of space exploration from Wallops Flight Facility. It has quite a story to tell! Great NASA souvenirs in their gift shop!

**11:45 a.m.:** Board Trolleys to return to Chincoteague Center for lunch. Lunch provided by Don's Seafood.  
(Sponsored by the Town of Chincoteague)

### **Group 2 :**

**9:00 a.m.:** Arrive at Tom's Cove Visitor Center on Assateague Island. Take a walk on the beach to find seashells and breathe in that wonderful salt air or stay inside and view the exhibits that explain life on the seashore. Learn about sea creatures like horseshoe crabs, starfish, whelk, and more.

**9:30 a.m.:** Stop at the breathtaking Assateague Lighthouse -great photo op and chance to explore the maritime forest surrounding it. You can take the short walk or board the trolley to cross the street to the Herbert H. Bateman Educational Center.

**10:00 a.m.:** Arrive at the Herbert H. Bateman Educational Center. Engage in interactive displays interpreting life on a wildlife refuge. Learn about ecosystems, birds, and animals that call the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge home. See a life-size bald eagle's nest!

**10:45 a.m.:** Board the Trolleys to visit the Museum of Chincoteague Island. You will be immersed in our history and culture. Learn about a waterman's way of life, oystering and clamming, our schools, churches, volunteer fire company, and so much more!

**11:45 a.m. :** Board Trolleys to return to Chincoteague Center for lunch. Lunch provided by Don's Seafood.  
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## **Study Tour Itinerary: Wednesday, March 13 Cont'd**

**1:55 p.m.:** Board the Trolleys to enjoy the opposite of the morning tour

**5:00 p.m.:** All guests will gather at the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company for a presentation about the wild Chincoteague Ponies by Ayden Leonard, a true "Saltwater Cowboy" of the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company.

**6:30 p.m.:** Board Trolleys and head to the Refuge Inn for a special treat: "Meet and Greet" with a couple of real Chincoteague Ponies!!

Dine around town on your own. Restaurant suggestions to be provided.

## **\*Optional Friday, March 15th Activities \***

Post-Seminar Option #1 – 2:00 p.m. - Matinee showing of the famous movie, Misty, at the historic Island Theatre, 4074 Main Street, in the heart of downtown Chincoteague. The cost will be \$5 per person. Popcorn, soda, and candy will be available for purchase.

Post-Seminar Option #2 – 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. – Take part in the 14th Annual Search for the Shamrocks! Visit our local businesses to find clues and solve the riddle. The Search for Shamrocks continues on Saturday from 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. Stay over and enjoy some of the festivities that Chincoteague has to offer. Learn more at [www.chincoteaguechamber.com/events/search-for-the-shamrocks/](http://www.chincoteaguechamber.com/events/search-for-the-shamrocks/)

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## **Thursday, March 14: Seminar Programming-Chincoteague Center**

***\*Subject to Change\****

### **Breakfast at hotels**

**7:15am-7:45am** Registration at the Chincoteague Center

**8:00am** Welcome and Greetings

### **8:30am Community Involvement with the VA250 Commemoration**

*Cheryl Wilson, Executive Director, VA250 American Revolution*

**9:00am** Break

### **9:15am Civil War Trails Updates**

*Drew Gruber, Executive Director, Civil War Trails*

**10:00am** Advancements in Artificial Intelligence

*Tom Kirk, Director of Digital Marketing, Virginia Tourism Corporation*

### **10:30am Incorporating Virtual Reality into the Visitor Experience**

*Justin Kerns, Executive Director, Winchester-Frederick County CVB*

### **11:45am LUNCH- sponsored by the Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce**

Includes a raw bar of freshly shucked clams and Chincoteague "Salts" generously donated by Mike McGee. Other lunch offerings will feature local restaurants and chefs for a "Taste of Chincoteague" experience.

### **12:45pm Is it more difficult today to satisfy visitors? Is Exceptional Customer Service Achievable?**

#### **Space Tourism Updates**

*Rebecca Hudson, Public Affairs Specialist, NASA*

**1:45pm** Break

### **2:00pm Leveraging Your Community's Wildlife Management Areas As Tourism Assets**

*Mike Bednarski, Chief of Fisheries, Department of Wildlife Resources*

### **2:45pm VTC Presentations**

*Val Guffy, Dir. of Consumer and Partner Services, Virginia Tourism Corporation*

- What's New in Virginia 2024
- Print is ALIVE- Gary Jeffrey, PMAP Manager, Virginia Tourism Corporation
- Newly Certified Tourist Information Center (CTIC)
- Trailblazer Award

**3:30pm** Closing Remarks and Adjournment



**VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS**

