



AAA/CAA Auto Travel Counselors and Travel Agents Invited to 5-Day, 4-Night Holiday Familiarization Tour of Region, Dec. 2-6, 2015

~ Tour includes Newport News, Hampton, Norfolk and Portsmouth ~

Newport News, VA, Aug. 6, 2015 – From the Virginia Peninsula to Southside Hampton Roads, staff members from the American Automobile Association (AAA) and the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) are invited to experience an incredible assortment of drive- and walk-through holiday light shows, historic homes decorated for the season and live entertainment during the **11th Annual Hi-Lite Hampton Roads Holiday Familiarization Tour**.

The 5-day, 4-night tour is designed to familiarize AAA/CAA counselors and travel agents with not just the holiday events in the region, but also the attractions and wide variety of lodging, dining, and shopping options available in the Coastal Virginia cities of Newport News, Hampton, Norfolk and Portsmouth.

The tour starts Dec. 2 in Portsmouth with a night-time visit to the famed **Coleman Nursery Winter Wonderland** collection of animatronic figures among holiday-inspired scenes. After dinner in Olde Towne Portsmouth and a good night's sleep in Downtown Norfolk (where, by the way, the skylines of Norfolk and Portsmouth will already be illuminated for the season), the group will spend Day 2 touring Norfolk's **Nauticus, Battleship Wisconsin, Half Moone Cruise & Celebration Center**, and **Chrysler Museum of Art**.

After lunch, the group will take a motorcoach driving tour of **Naval Station Norfolk**, the world's largest naval base. Afterward, they'll be treated to **Doumar's** famous original hand-rolled ice cream cones, first sold in 1904 at the St. Louis Exposition. Prior to dinner, the group will take a behind-the-scenes tour of the **Virginia Zoo** and at nightfall, they'll be taken to the **Norfolk Botanical Gardens** for a tram tour of the annual **Garden of Lights** holiday show.

Day 3 will take the group back to Portsmouth via the Elizabeth River passenger ferry for a walking tour of the historic homes of **Olde Towne**, followed by tours of the **Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Museum, Children's Museum**, and **Virginia Sports Hall of Fame** before leaving for Hampton for lunch. Prior to checking into their Hampton hotel rooms, the group will check out 400 years of history at the **Hampton History Museum**.

Christmas Town at Busch Gardens is on the agenda for early evening, but not before participants take a walking tour of the historic area of **Colonial Williamsburg**. After their visit to Busch Gardens, the group will cap off the night in **Newport News Park** for a two-mile drive through **Celebration in Lights**, Virginia's first drive-through light show. In this 7,711-acre park, more than 200 displays, including 70 animated ones, are set up in themed areas, such as "*Forest Friends*" and "*Battle of the Ironclads*."

Newport News Tourism Development Office

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Newport News Virginia

Saturday, Dec. 5, will start with breakfast and waterfront views of Hampton, followed by a tour of the **Virginia Air & Space Center**, a spin on the 1920 **Hampton Carousel**, a visit to historic **Fort Monroe** and the **Casemate Museum**, followed by a visit to the nation's oldest African-American museum – **Hampton University Museum** – and its annual holiday bazaar.

After lunch in neighboring Newport News, the group will tour the **Virginia Living Museum**, where they can catch a holiday planetarium show or just connect to Virginia's natural heritage – from the mountains to the sea. Later in the afternoon, participants will visit one of the largest and most comprehensive maritime history museums in the world, **The Mariners' Museum and USS Monitor Center**. After dinner in City Center, the night will culminate with **Hollydazzle**, a one-of-a-kind holiday show that combines synchronized fireworks, theatrical lighting, ground-based pyrotechnics and special effects all choreographed to festive music.

The final day of the FAM tour, a travel day, is Sunday, Dec. 6. After breakfast, participants will board the motorcoach for airport transfers or car retrieval and return to their AAA/CAA offices with knowledge of the many year-round attractions in Coastal Virginia so they, too, can **Hi-Lite Hampton Roads!**

Four years ago, Kelly Thomas of AAA Missouri took the tour and had this to say about it:

“Less than a month after our Hi-Lite Hampton Roads FAM, I'm already sending members to the Hampton Roads area for 8 nights,” Thomas said. *“My client was excited about seeing the brochures from our FAM folder, and I'm pretty sure she'll be visiting many places we visited ... Without attending this FAM, I would have had no idea all these places even existed. My knowledge of the whole area opened up a lot of opportunities for those heading to Southeastern Virginia from our area.”*

To date, AAA/CAA travel counselors and agents from Missouri, North Carolina, Nova Scotia, and Ontario have registered for the tour. The invitation is limited to AAA/CAA travel counselors who have not attended the Hi-Lite FAM in the last five years. Travel counselors who took the FAM between December 2010 and December 2014 are not eligible to attend. Those who took the FAM prior to 2010 and are interested in attending again will be wait-listed until November 1, 2015, with acceptance subject to space availability.

Because space is limited, early registration is highly encouraged. A \$150.00 participation fee is required from those AAA/CAA staff members whose applications are accepted. A companion rate of \$100 is available for those who would like to bring one guest and share his/her room. For additional information, contact Dana Howe, Consumer Sales Manager at VisitNorfolk, at 1-800-368-3097, Ext. 627, or via email at dhowe@visitnorfolktoday.com.

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