From the Director of Tourism:

As we look back on 2021, we’ve witnessed many reasons to be optimistic that the travel industry is showing signs of recovery: 

• Hotel revenue in Hampton Roads was 9 percent higher in 2021 than in 2019 (before the pandemic began).
• Hotel room demand is inching back up to 2019 levels.
• Hotel ADR (Average Daily Rate) has fully recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

Nevertheless, we’re not out of the woods yet. The uncertainty around another Covid surge, supply chain issues, worker shortages, and inflation are challenges we must be aware of during 2022.

Fortunately, though, climbing vaccination rates and travel restrictions offer hope. Businesses are finding ways to adapt to supply chain constraints. Wages are rising in the hospitality industry, while the reasons for not working (like child care issues and concerns over Covid) are easing. Finally, inflation should decrease since the Federal Reserve is soon expected to raise interest rates.

Newport News saw some impressive numbers in 2021. We had an 8.3% increase in the meals tax collected versus our 2019 figure. That equals to about $2.4 million more in revenue for the city’s coffers. Hotel occupancy reached nearly 65%, edging closer to the 68.9% figure we saw in 2019. The 2021 average daily rate (ADR) for hotel rooms exceeded 2019 figures—jumping up to $78.52 from $69.80 two years ago. Revenue per available room (RevPAR) in 2021 also saw an increase—from $48.06 in 2019 to $50.93 in 2021. With ADR and RevPAR exceeding pre-pandemic levels, this is good news for our hotel industry.

While leisure travel has seen a significant improvement since the pandemic began, business travel continues to take a hit. In 2021, business travel was 50 percent of what it had been at its peak in 2019, but we are seeing progress. Many in-person meetings that were forced to be canceled in 2020-2021 are being rescheduled for 2022. Business travel is expected to be at 75% of 2019 levels this year, at 95% of pre-pandemic levels next year, with full recovery anticipated in 2024. Until then, virtual events will keep the industry going, but we all know there’s no substitute for the handshakes and meals shared together that face-to-face meetings provide.

While continuing on this road to recovery, we’ve been pleased with how well our website at www.newport-news.org has performed. Visitors are exploring our website more, clicking on more links, and spending more time on each page. We saw a 42% surge in visits to our “Camping” page from 2020 to 2021. Our “Outdoors and Recreation” content saw a 26% increase in page views in 2021 over 2020. Our “Fishing” page also ranked high in visits, along with our “Restaurant Awareness Week” landing page, which ranked as the 8th most-visited page on our site in 2021. Our site has been found in more diverse ways, including paid ads, referrals from other websites, and organic searches, with the latter showing the highest increase.

I know the past two years have been tough for everyone, but we have weathered it together. I have faith that 2022 will bring the tourism industry many great things, including a new visionary leader for Newport News Tourism. Yes, you read that correctly. After 26 years, I’m retiring. My time here will end May 1. It’s been a great ride, and I’m very thankful it is ending on a positive note. It has been a pleasure working with some of the brightest and most creative professionals in the Coastal Virginia tourism industry. It might take some time to secure my replacement, but I’m confident the wait will be worth it!
Newspaper:

Newly Printed

With the publication of the 2022 Newport News Visitor Guide, travelers have the most up-to-date information to explore the city’s attractions and enjoy dining and lodging here. It highlights city attractions, restaurants, parks, accommodations, shopping, plus more. It even has pages dedicated to places where you can capture incredible Instagram photos. The guide also includes coupons for featured attractions and recommendations for dining tours.

Additionally, the Newport News Civil War brochure was recently updated with new photography. This popular brochure tells the story of how Newport News played a role in the Civil War, especially with the Battle of the Ironclads and the Battle of Dam No. 1. For those who need bulk copies of any of our guides or brochures for meetings, conferences, family reunions, etc., please contact the Newport News Visitor Center at 757-886-7777 or toll-free at 888-493-7386.

20 Eaters Participated in 2021 Newport News Restaurant Awareness Week

Due to continued restrictions in 2021 that limited restaurant capacity, the Newport News Hospitality Association’s Annual Restaurant Week program was moved to 2022 last year as “Newport News Restaurant Awareness Week.” Twenty restaurants signed up to offer specials in house or for campus in place of the price-fixed meals typically offered for dine-in only during a typical Restaurant Week. Additionally, twenty $50 restaurant gift certificates were awarded as prizes in two separate Facebook contests held during the two-week promotion. The event is managed annually by the Newport News Hospitality Association with support from Newport News Tourism.

WanderLOVE Prize Package Awarded in Valentine’s 2021 Promotion

In celebration of Valentine’s Day 2021, a Facebook contest gave players a chance to win a WanderLOVE prize package valued at more than $500. It was filled with dining and shopping gift cards, a two-night stay in Newport News, along with some activities that allowed the winner and their “love interest” to get outside and have some fun! Contestants were asked to comment on Facebook with some of the romantic spots in Newport News and tell us why they felt that way. Responses ranged from sunsets at King-Lincoln Park to sunsets at the Denbigh Boat Ramp...and so many places in between. Contestants named these romantic places as the perfect spot for popping the question or something as simple as sharing a picnic lunch.

National Travel & Tourism Week 2021 Touted “Power of Travel”

In celebration of National Travel & Tourism Week in 2021, Newport News Tourism held a number of activities to remind visitors and residents of the power of travel and its ability to inject revenue directly into the city’s coffers. We launched the celebratory week with our annual tourism awareness contest in the Daily Press newspaper; awarding six prize packages valued at more than $400. In lieu of our delayed motorcoach tour of Newport News, we introduced a virtual familiarization tour of the city. This 20-minute video gave tourism employees a first-hand look at Newport News and all the wonderful things the city has to offer. Our annual Newport News Tourism Awards Luncheon was replaced with a Facebook Live event announcing the recipient of the 2021 Gregory Cherry Tourism Professional of the Year Award, live streamed from the winner’s place of employment.

The award is given annually to a hospitality industry employee who has made an outstanding contribution in promoting travel and tourism in the city.

Find LOVE at the Newport News Visitor Center

A lifetime-value LOVE artwork is now on display in front of the Visitor Center at 13560 Jefferson Ave., at the entrance to Newport News Park. The letters spell out LOV-E-N-N and are one set of more than 300 LOV-E-Words, called LOVEworks, in towns and cities across the Commonwealth. Created as part of a state and local partnership to promote travel and tourism, the letters are an extension of the Virginia is for Lovers brand, one of the most iconic slogans in the world. Each LOVE installation is a reflection of the community in which it stands, and the LOVEwork at the Newport News Visitor Center is no exception. The new LOVEwork features the letters “NN” at the end of the word “LOVE,” representing “Love Newport News.”

Virtual Tour Map of Newport News Created

Newport News Tourism has a new tool at its disposal. A “story map” of the city. Story maps combine location data with photos and text to help audiences visualize a destination. Called the Newport News Virtual Tour Map, this map gives an overview of the abundance of things to do and places to see, taking the public to the 35 stops in Newport News, starting with Endview Plantation in the northwest section of the city and ending with King-Lincoln Park in the Southeast Community. Each location includes a photograph and description of the attraction, its street address, and a link to its website for more details. A map showing an aerial view of Newport News pinpoints the approximate location of each attraction among the 35 stops. This is the third collaboration between Newport News Tourism and Information Technology/GIS. In recent years, GIS worked with Tourism to create an interactive bike trails map and one for the city’s pedestrian trails. These maps have won “Best Citizen Portal” awards from the Virginia Association of Counties.

Welcome & Kudos

• Torrie Rastatter became the Assistant General Manager of The Cove Tavern in November 2021.
• Kevin Kingdon is the new Head Brewer at Tradition Brewing. He joined the company in December 2021.
• The following employees are new to the Virginia Living Museum: Abigail Duncan started in January 2022 as the Education Director. Rachel Riesbeck started in January 2022 as the Director of Guest Experience in October 2021. Katie Hoffman is the new Birds & Mammal Curator, as of November 2021.
• Bob Goodough became the museum’s Facilities Manager in January 2022.
• Rachel Riesbeck started in January 2022 as the Education Director.
• Abigail Duncan was hired as Sales Director in February 2022.
• Kristina Mulipor was named Senior Director of Guest Engagement in February 2022.
• Edward Tyler, a front-desk associate with the Holiday Inn Newport News-Hampton, was selected as the Gregory Cherry Tourism Professional of the Year in 2021. The award is given annually during National Travel & Tourism Week to a hospitality industry employee who demonstrates superior customer service while also promoting travel and tourism in the city.

ZOOM IN on Newport News Photo Contest Winners

Congratulations to the winners of the 2021 ZOOM IN on Newport News Photo Contest! The theme for last year’s contest was “The Great Outdoors.” Some of these awesome pictures have already been used in our publications and online.

Who Are Our Visitors?

Each year, we survey visitors to create the Newport News Visitor Demographic Profile. Some of the results from the 2021 survey are detailed below. The majority of survey respondents were women (54%). The ages of survey respondents ranged from 25 to 65, with most of the surveys completed by those in the 55-64 age group (35%). The average household income ranged from less than $25K to more than $96K, with most of the surveys completed by those in the over $86K (29%) category.

2021 Newport News Tourism Statistics—An Overview

Newport News Tourism collects a variety of statistics to help target our marketing and better serve our visitors. * Summarized below are key tourism indicators for 2021— and two years prior for comparison purposes.

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* All surveys, except Final Destination, were completed by potential visitors requesting information from the Newport News Visitor Center and/or the Newport News Visitor Demographic Profile. Some of the results from the 2021 survey are detailed below. The majority of survey respondents were women (54%). The ages of survey respondents ranged from 25 to 65, with most of the surveys completed by those in the 55-64 age group (35%). The average household income ranged from less than $25K to more than $96K, with most of the surveys completed by those in the over $86K (29%) category.