

# WELCOME & KUDOS

## The following employees are new to the Virginia Living Museum:

- **James Weinpress** — Senior Director, Living Exhibits
- **Jessica Ausura** — Senior Director, Guest Engagement
- **Clara Castle** — Interim Marketing Director
- **Greg Ornay** — Exhibits Director



Also at the Virginia Living Museum, **Abby Duncan** was promoted from Sales Director to Director of Guest Engagement. Additionally, Virginia Living Museum employees **Emma Giesken**, **Greg Ornay**, **Alex Meade**, **Matthew Stephens**, and **Kelly Herbst** were recently recognized as “Integrity, Stewardship and Community” winners.

**Juanita Conway**, Historic Site Assistant with Newport News Historic Services, was selected as the **Gregory Cherry Tourism Professional of the Year** in 2022. 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. Conway has worked as a volunteer and an employee with Newport News for more than two decades.

## The following employees received promotions at Second Street Bistro:

- **Gabriela Mendez** — Promoted to Assistant General Manager
- **Channing Timmons** — Promoted to Assistant General Manager
- **Carlos Zeledon** — Promoted to Closing Kitchen Supervisor



**Newport News Tourism**  
A Division of the City of Newport News  
Department of Communications

[newport-news.org](http://newport-news.org)  
[tourism-mailing@nnva.gov](mailto:tourism-mailing@nnva.gov)

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ANNUAL REPORT 2022 – 2023

# TALKING TOURISM

[newport-news.org](http://newport-news.org)

## LETTER

FROM THE CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

Last year was a time of great change and exciting growth for tourism in Newport News. In July, the Tourism Division moved from the Parks and Recreation Department and joined the Communications Department. This strategic transition helps amplify our messaging and strengthens the Newport News brand locally, throughout the Commonwealth, and beyond.

In November 2022, the city launched a dynamic new brand, **Newport News: Built on Breakthroughs**. Our new strategic message highlights our city's innovative and diverse story. Newport News is a city built on breakthroughs, a place where collective ideas come together without limitations. We've been working diligently to bring this new brand to life throughout the community, including in our tourism efforts.

Our visitors crave memorable moments, and Newport News is home to a wide range of unique experiences, including the arts, events, nature, museums, cultural opportunities, cuisine, and history. We also know tourism begins at home, so our goal is to empower residents to become brand ambassadors, proudly sharing their affection for our great city.

Your Tourism Division has been extremely busy planning a robust marketing and communications campaign. Over the coming months, you'll hear a great deal from us as we bring our

new Tourism message to life. Initiatives include a new Tourism website, an African American History and Experiences Tour, “A Breath of Fresh Air” outdoor campaign, an influencer program, “Live like a Local” profiles, and so much more. We will keep you posted as our plans develop.

Thank you for your support of our important efforts. We look forward to working with you to let everyone know about the variety of breakthrough experiences available in Newport News!

Very truly yours,



**Cleder Jones**  
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

**Department of Communications**  
City of Newport News

## EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHTS



### SARAH BOWMAN NAMED INTERIM TOURISM MANAGER

Sarah Bowman was named Interim Tourism Manager in February 2023. In this role, Sarah provides strategic direction, leadership, and vision to grow tourism and create unique experiences in Newport News. Sarah has been with the City of Newport News since 2018 as a member of the Communications Department. Her skills include marketing, branding, event planning, writing, public information, emergency communications, and storytelling. Prior to joining the city, Sarah was the Director of Marketing and Development for VersAbility Resources, a leading nonprofit on the Virginia Peninsula. She received her Bachelor of Arts Degree in English from Christopher Newport University.



### NEW TRAVEL COUNSELOR JOINED VISITOR CENTER STAFF

In July 2022, Steve Givens came out of retirement to join the Newport News Visitor Center as a part-time travel counselor. Since 1985, Steve has been a fixture in the hospitality industry. His stints in tourism took him from Busch Gardens in Tampa and Opryland in Nashville to marketing Colonial Williamsburg, MacArthur Center in Norfolk, and Patrick Henry Mall in Newport News. He has also worked at the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame and for Suffolk Economic Development. Steve, a resident of Newport News, has a degree in Business and Marketing from Old Dominion University and an Associate's degree in Liberal Arts, with an emphasis in Graphic Arts, from Thomas Nelson Community College (now Virginia Peninsula Community College).

## STAFF

### TOURISM STAFF

**Cleder Jones** — Director, Newport News Department of Communications  
**Sarah Bowman** — Interim Tourism Manager  
**Lisa Kaloustian** — Administrative Specialist  
**Cheryl Morales** — Marketing Manager  
**Rebecca Cutchins** — Media Relations Manager

### VISITOR CENTER STAFF

**Janie Tross** — Consumer Marketing & Visitor Center Manager  
**Dia Foden** — Tourism Specialist/Industry Training  
**Kathy “KJ” Jordan** — Travel Counselor  
**Steve Givens** — Travel Counselor

Newport News Tourism  
702 Town Center Drive  
Newport News, VA 23606



# ANNUAL REPORT 2022 – 2023 TALKING TOURISM



## 2022 — YEAR IN REVIEW

### NEWLY PRINTED

With the publication of the **2023 Newport News Visitor Guide**, travelers have the most up-to-date information to explore Newport News and enjoy dining and lodging here. It highlights city attractions, restaurants, parks, shops, accommodations, and 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 driving tours.



For bulk copies of any Newport News 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**.

### LATEST FIGURES SHOW TOURISM GENERATED \$302.2 MILLION FOR NEWPORT NEWS

Tourism was once again an important contributor to the economy of Newport News in 2021, the latest year for which figures are available. According to *Tourism Economics* and the Virginia Tourism Corporation, revenue from tourism in Newport News reached **\$302,249,243** — a **37.1% increase** over 2020, a year in which the pandemic had a devastating impact on the travel industry. Tourism also **supported 2,985 jobs in Newport News** — a **5.5% increase** over 2020. As an economic engine, tourism produced **\$17,846,583 in local taxes (a 21.5% increase)** and **\$9,148,184 in state taxes (a 29.3 % increase)** over 2020 figures. Clearly, tourism has been key to our economic recovery as the pandemic has stabilized.

### NEWPORT NEWS RESTAURANT WEEK COMBINED WITH NATIONAL TRAVEL & TOURISM WEEK IN 2022

Since dining out is such an important part of the tourism industry, Newport News Tourism decided to use National Travel & Tourism Week in 2022 to thank and support the fabulous restaurants in our city. Dubbed Newport News Travel, Tourism & Restaurant Week, the event was held April 30 – May 7. Sixteen establishments participated, offering set menus at fixed prices. To add to the fun, two contestants in our annual Tourism Awareness Contest won a \$250 gift certificate to the participating restaurant of their choice, with 16 contestants winning a \$50 restaurant gift card!



## NEWPORT NEWS TOURISM STATISTICS

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 2022 – and three years prior for comparison purposes.

Tax Collected	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Admissions</b>	\$1,021,817	\$451,084	\$529,827	\$817,840
<b>Meals</b>	\$28,720,058	\$23,412,671	\$31,100,715	\$32,919,849
<b>Daily Rentals</b>	\$144,977	\$126,021	\$113,561	\$139,738
<b>Lodging</b>	\$4,067,828	\$2,709,413	\$3,992,277	\$4,679,035
<b>Lodging Flat Tax</b>	\$645,061	\$523,816	\$643,539	\$665,896



#### Hotel Occupancy

**2019:** 69.6%  
**2020:** 51.2%  
**2021:** 63.9%  
**2022:** 66.4%



#### Average Daily Rate For Hotel Rooms

**2019:** \$98.30  
**2020:** \$79.95  
**2021:** \$98.03  
**2022:** \$111.75



#### Revenue Per Available Room

**2019:** \$68.39  
**2020:** \$40.91  
**2021:** \$62.60  
**2022:** \$74.23



#### Website Visitor Sessions

**2019:** 532,361  
**2020:** 541,266  
**2021:** 631,803  
**2022:** 408,441

\*Sources: Total Inquiries — Newport News Visitor Center; Hotel Occupancy and Average Daily Rate — Smith Travel Research (Smith Travel Research surveys a random sample of hotel properties in Newport News each month); Transient Room Tax — Newport News Commissioner of the Revenue.

### NEWPORT NEWS TOURISM HONORED WITH READERS' CHOICE AWARD

Newport News Tourism was **among 24 winners** selected in the Virginia-D.C. area for a Readers' Choice Award, presented annually by *ConventionSouth* magazine. Throughout the year, meeting professionals nominated meeting sites they believe provide exemplary service for groups. The nominated sites were listed in an online ballot, with more than **8,000 votes** cast by meeting professionals. Since the award's creation in 2001, this is the second time that Newport News Tourism has received the honor. *ConventionSouth*, based in Gulf Shores, Alabama, is distributed to more than 18,000 meeting professionals located across the country who book events held within the South.



### NEWPORT NEWS TOURISM SPONSORED REUNION-PLANNING WORKSHOP

Newport News Tourism sponsored a reunion-planning workshop in conjunction with the Family Reunion Institute in 2022. The online workshop addressed some of the challenges that reunion planners face when organizing family reunions. It provided strategies to break through the metaphorical "brick wall" so the planning process stays on track. The event included a 7-minute, videotaped spotlight on Newport News, which showcased some of the "big city" amenities available in the peaceful, "small town" setting of Newport News. It highlighted Newport News Park, our attractions and historic homes, a variety of entertainment options, and hundreds of shops and restaurants — everything reunion planners consider when choosing a destination.

### HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY EMPLOYEES GIVEN FREE CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING

In the fall of 2022, dozens of hospitality industry employees took advantage of free customer service training provided by Newport News Tourism, Hampton Tourism, the Newport News Hospitality Association, and the Hampton Roads Workforce Council. Most attendees were workers who come in contact with visitors at local attractions, hotels, restaurants, and retail establishments. The program, called *Bust Unconscious Bias for Better Customer Service*, defined and gave examples of unconscious bias and the way it affects customer service. It also helped attendees face their own biases and their effect on others so they could learn ways to combat it. Free customer service training is held twice a year, rotating between the cities of Newport News and Hampton.

## NEWPORT NEWS HOSPITALITY ASSOCIATION

Elizabeth "Liz" Parker of LTD Hospitality Group is the president of the Newport News Hospitality Association (NNHA). If your organization or company would like to join the NNHA, please contact Parker at [liz.parker@ltdhospitality.com](mailto:liz.parker@ltdhospitality.com) or **757-272-5000**.



## "ZOOM IN ON NEWPORT NEWS" PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

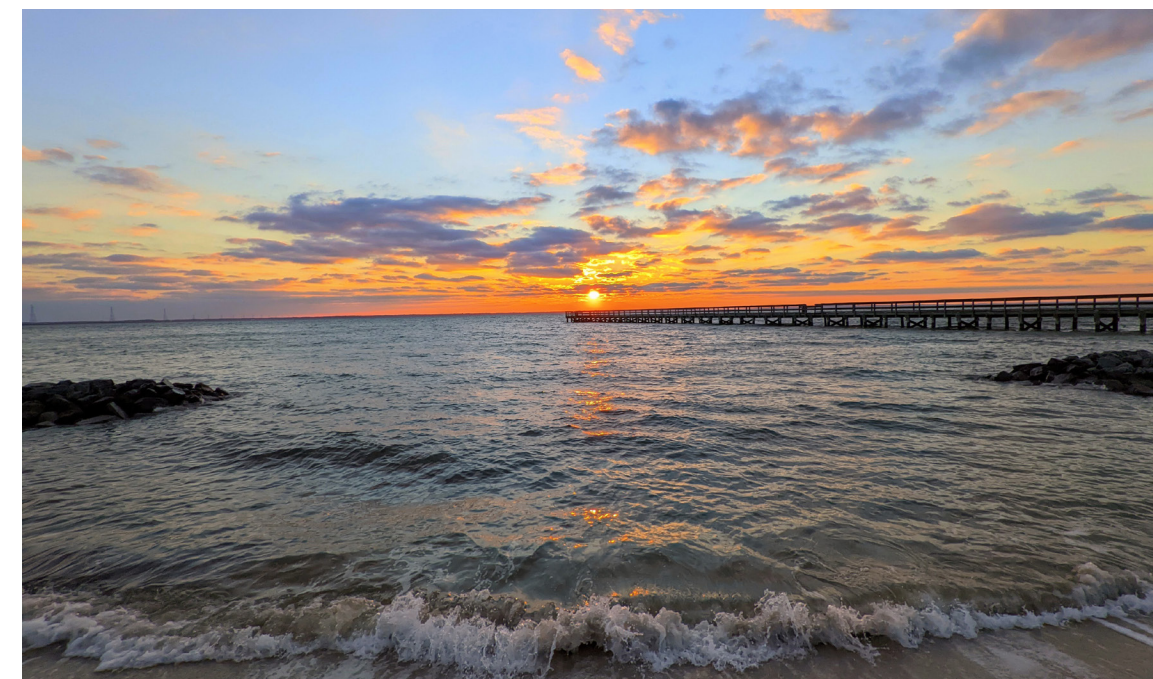
Congratulations to the winners of the 2022 ZOOM IN on Newport News Photo Contest! The theme for last year's contest was **"H<sub>2</sub>O in Newport News."** Some of these great pictures have already been used in our publications and online.

### GRAND PRIZE WINNER

**Kenneth Putland** of Chesapeake, VA

*James River Sunset*

(Taken in Historic Hilton Village)



### HONORABLE MENTION

**Lauren Forero** of Newport News, VA

*Lee Hall Sunset*

(Taken at Lee Hall Reservoir)

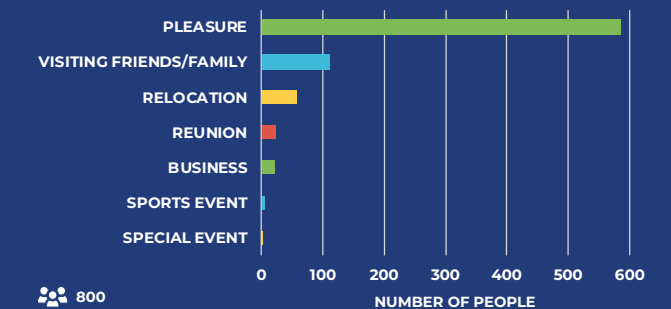


## WHO ARE OUR VISITORS?

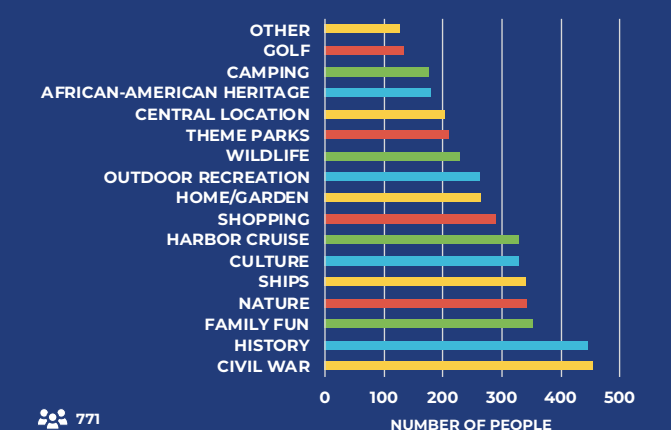
Each year, we survey visitors to create the **Newport News Visitor Demographic Profile**. Some results from the 2022 survey\* are detailed below. The majority of surveys (65%) were completed by women. The ages of survey participants ranged from 18 to over 55, with most surveys (51%) completed by those in the over 55 age group. The average household income ranged from less than \$25,000 to more than \$86,000, with most of the surveys completed by those in the \$56,000 to \$86,000 (36%) and the over \$86K (33%) categories.

— Denotes sample size

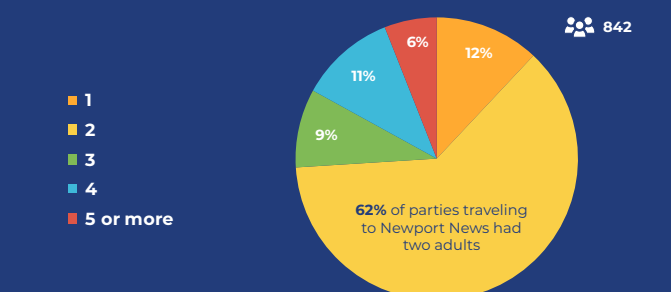
### REASON FOR VISITING NEWPORT NEWS



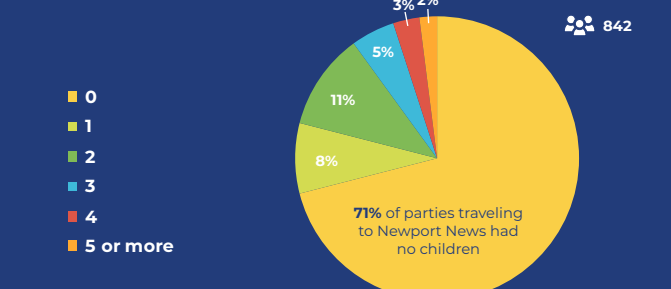
### TOP INTERESTS WHEN VISITING NEWPORT NEWS



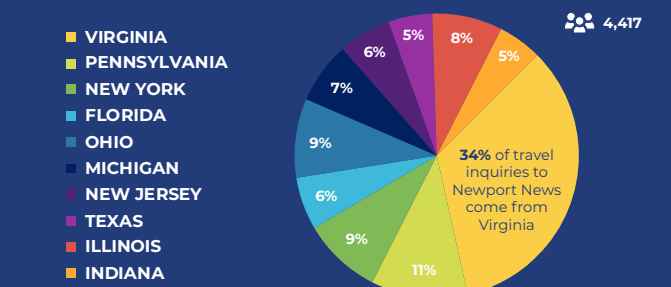
### ADULTS IN TRAVEL PARTY



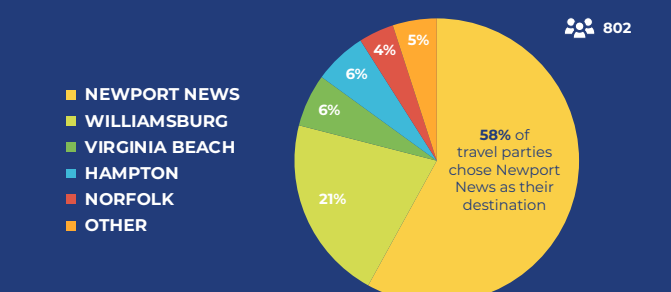
### CHILDREN IN TRAVEL PARTY



### TOP 10 STATES INQUIRING ABOUT NEWPORT NEWS



### FINAL DESTINATION



\*All surveys, except Final Destination, were completed by potential visitors requesting information from the Newport News website at [newport-news.org](http://newport-news.org). The sample size varied from question to question, as not all respondents completed all questions. The sample size for each question is shown for each chart or graph.