

AAA/CAA Travel Counselors/Agents Invited to 5-Day, 4-Night Holiday Familiarization Tour, Dec. 4-8, 2019

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

Coastal Virginia, June 27, 2019 – 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 **15th Annual Hi-Lite Hampton Roads Destination Awareness FAM Tour**.

More than 300 AAA and CAA professionals have attended this familiarization tour since its inception in 2004. Clubs in 36 U.S. states and five Canadian provinces have sent domestic travel staff on this 5-day, 4-night tour, 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. 4 in Olde Towne Portsmouth, where you'll check in to the **Renaissance Portsmouth Waterfront Hotel** for a 2-night stay. While in Portsmouth, you'll be treated to a motor-coach tour of the historic district, taken to a local distillery to enjoy a Christmas cocktail, introduced to some of the shopkeepers of Olde Towne, and encouraged to "sock skate" at the **Children's Museum of Virginia**! You'll also experience a spectacular showcase of animated figures among holiday-inspired scenes at the famed *Winter Wonderland* inside the **Portsmouth Arts & Cultural Center**, indulge in some German cuisine at the popular **Bier Garden** restaurant, marvel at the period-decorated homes dressed for the holidays, and enjoy coffee and dessert at the historic **Hill House**.

Day 2 on Dec. 5 starts with a short scenic passenger ferry ride to neighboring Norfolk, where breakfast will await you at the **Sheraton Norfolk Waterside Hotel**. After a driving tour of **Naval Station Norfolk**, the world's largest naval base, guests will take a behind-the-scenes tour of the **Virginia Zoo**. After lunch at a Norfolk hotel, the itinerary includes tours of **Nauticus** and the **Battleship Wisconsin**.

The afternoon will include a sweet treat at **Doumar's**, famous for its original hand-rolled ice cream cone – first sold in 1904 at the St. Louis Exposition. The next stop will be Norfolk's expanded **Chrysler Museum of Art**. The group will get a chance to freshen up at their hotel prior to a special holiday dinner and will end the night with a stroll through **Norfolk Botanical's "Garden of Lights" Million Bulb Walk**.

After breakfast at the **Quality Inn & Suites** in Olde Towne Portsmouth on Day 3, the group will travel to Newport News. While in Newport News, guests will visit the **Virginia Living Museum** to experience the state's natural heritage, which will be followed by a tour of the world-renowned **Mariners' Museum** and its adjoining **USS Monitor Center**, one of the largest and most comprehensive maritime history museums in the world. After lunch at **The Cove Tavern** in Newport News, the group will check in to the new **Element Hampton Peninsula Town Center** for the next two nights.

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The motorcoach group will then travel to Williamsburg to take a walking tour of the historic area of **Colonial Williamsburg**. This will be followed by an evening at the *11th Annual Christmas Town: A Busch Gardens Celebration*, where you'll be free to experience the park and have dinner on your own to maximize your time among the holiday displays with more than 10 million twinkling lights! After a holiday show in the Globe Theater, we will return to your Hampton hotel.

Day 4 (Dec. 7) will start with breakfast at your leisure at the **Element Hotel**, followed by a tour of the **Hampton History Museum**, where you'll discover 400 years of history. Next, you'll tour the **Virginia Air & Space Center** and view the latest IMAX on a 6-story screen. The fun continues with a spin on the **1920 Hampton Carousel**.

After lunch at the **Tapestry by Hilton Hampton Marina Hotel**, the group will tour historic **Fort Monroe** and the **Casemate Museum** and then be treated to the nation's oldest African-American museum and its holiday bazaar at **Hampton University Museum**. Afterward, the group will travel back to Newport News to tour the **Virginia War Museum**.

Following some downtime and a hosted dinner in Hampton, the evening will continue with *25 Nights of Holiday Lights* in City Center at Oyster Point, followed by a two-mile ride through **Celebration in Lights**, Virginia's first drive-through light show, located in Newport News Park. 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*." From there, you'll return to Hampton's **Peninsula Town Center** to experience its nightlife and fun – or just retire to your hotel room!

The final day of the FAM tour, a travel day, is Sunday, Dec. 8. Enjoy breakfast at the **Element Hotel** before boarding the motorcoach for a ride to the airport, train station, or for car retrieval. The group will then return to their respective AAA/CAA offices with knowledge of the many year-round attractions in Coastal Virginia so they, too, can Hi-Lite Hampton Roads and send members our way for a visit!

This invitation is limited to AAA/CAA travel counselors who have not attended the Hi-Lite FAM in the last five years (i.e. travel counselors who took the FAM in 2014-2018 are not eligible to attend). Those who took the FAM prior to 2014 and are interested in attending again will be wait-listed until November 1, 2019, with acceptance subject to space availability.

Because space is limited, early registration is highly encouraged. A \$150 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 questions regarding registration or invoices, contact Lottie Onks with the Hampton CVB at lonks@hamptoncvb.com or 757-728-5332. Payment in full is due by Nov. 1, 2019.

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