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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sail250® Virginia Tall Ships Return in June 2026 To Norfolk, Hampton Roads, and Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Region

Release Date:

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Norfolk, VA- The two-year countdown to the arrival of the Sail250® Virginia international fleet of tall ships and military ships to Norfolk, Hampton Roads, and Virginia's Chesapeake Bay region, planned to commemorate the nation's 250th Anniversary, begins in just a few weeks.

Sail250® Virginia CEO Karen Scherberger officially announced this week that several Virginia localities will be joining the official Sail250® Virginia host port Norfolk as Affiliate Harbors to help host several of the visiting ships from June 12 – June 22, 2026.

Scherberger states "We are honored to partner once again with Cape Charles, Hampton, and Yorktown to bring these magnificent sailing and military ships to our area for residents and visitors to experience firsthand. Sail250® Virginia, as with previous OpSail Virginia events, exemplify the strong regional cooperation that exists when we focus on our shared rich military, maritime, and international history." Joining as a new Affiliate Harbor for the first time is Smithfield/Isle of Wight County. Additional Virginia waterfront localities will be announced this summer.

Each Affiliate Harbor will also present a special themed event during their ship visits.

Norfolk- Official Sail250® Virginia Host Port

Events: Sail250® Virginia International Fleet of Ships, Norfolk Harborfest®, and Juneteenth.

Dates: Thursday, June 18, 2026 – Tuesday, June 23, 2026.

Official Sail250® Virginia Harbors confirmed to date:

Cape Charles

Event Name: Tall Ships at Cape Charles

Location: Cape Charles Harbor (Town Docks) 11 Marina Rd, Cape Charles, VA 23310

Dates: Friday, June 19, 2026 – Monday, June 22, 2026.

"Cape Charles and the surrounding communities are very excited to host two or three vessels at Tall Ships at Cape Charles, an Affiliate Harbor for Sail 250® Virginia in June of 2026. This celebration and commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence will provide a wonderful means to tell the story of the contributions of the Eastern Shore during the Revolution and the establishment of the new nation. We expect to include schools, historians, boating enthusiasts, local musicians and many more groups from the area to help welcome and showcase the ships we'll host here in Cape Charles." **Patsy Harris** Vice President Cape Charles Main Street

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Hampton

Event Name: Blackbeard Pirate Festival

Location: Mill Point Park and the Docks at Downtown Hampton 710 Settlers Landing Rd, Hampton, VA 23669

Dates: Friday, June 12, 2026 – Sunday, June 14, 2026.

“We are excited to be an affiliate harbor for Sail250® Virginia in June 2026,” said **Hampton Mayor Donnie Tuck**. “We welcome these vessels to attend one of the top U.S. pirate festivals, Blackbeard Pirate Festival on June 12-14, before the Parade of Sail into the Hampton Roads harbor.”

Smithfield/Isle of Wight County

Event Name: Smithfield Maritime Rendezvous

Location: Smithfield Station Marina, 409 S. Church Street, Smithfield VA 23430

Dates: Friday, June 12, 2026 – Monday, June 15, 2026

“Smithfield and Isle of Wight County are thrilled and proud to be a participating Sail250® Virginia Affiliate Harbor in June of 2026. We anticipate a tremendous amount of interest and engagement in our **Smithfield Maritime Rendezvous** event that will take place on the historic banks of the Pagan River. The experience will include not only the pageantry of a tall ship from the Sail250® Virginia invited fleet, but traditional local work boats and unique pleasure crafts as well,” said **Judy Winslow**, Director of Tourism for Smithfield & Isle of Wight County & the Affiliate Harbor Event Coordinator.

Yorktown

Name Event: Yorktown Tall Ships Festival, a Sail250® Virginia Affiliate Event

Location: Yorktown Waterfront 331 Water St, Yorktown, VA 23690

Dates: Friday, June 12, 2026 – Monday, June 15, 2026.

"We are thrilled to announce the partnership between York County and Norfolk Festevents for the Yorktown Tall Ships Festival, a Sail250® Virginia Affiliate Event. Through the resplendent presence of tall ships, attendees can immerse themselves in Yorktown's rich history, offering a unique glimpse into the pivotal role these vessels played in America's revolutionary victory. The festival not only celebrates our maritime heritage but also serves as a poignant reminder of the impact tall ships had in securing our nation's independence in Yorktown." - **Darren Williams**, Deputy Director of York County Economic & Tourism Development

Background:

The year 2026 marks the 250th Anniversary of the nation's founding in 1776- the United States of America's Semiquincentennial.

For this milestone occasion, a fleet of the world's most magnificent international tall ships, historic character vessels, and modern military ships, will again sail into the harbors of Virginia as part of the national Sail250® tour.

More than 60 ships from 20 countries are expected to fill the harbors of Norfolk, Hampton Roads, and Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Region from June 12 – June 23, 2026. The International Fleet will arrive on Thursday, June 18, 2026 off the Virginia Beach shore in time for the traditional Parade of Sail on Friday, June 19, 2026.

Sail250® Virginia, with affiliate events throughout Norfolk, Hampton Roads, and Virginia's Chesapeake Bay region, is planned as part of America's 250th Anniversary, and one of Virginia's signature events of the Semiquincentennial year.

According to Sail250® Virginia CEO Karen Scherberger, "In the tradition of the past five iconic OpSail and Sail Virginia events held in the Norfolk/Hampton Roads/Chesapeake Bay region since 1976, the international fleet will once again bring extraordinary experiences and opportunities to every corner of our communities".

The Sail250® Virginia fleet will officially arrive in the Hampton Roads harbor with the traditional Parade of Sail on Friday, June 19, 2026, followed by ships docking in downtown Norfolk and several other Virginia locations. Free public ship visits will continue until the fleet departs on Tuesday, June 23, 2026. Additional Virginia Affiliate Harbors will host several tall ships and events the preceding weekend, Friday, June 12 – Sunday, June 15, 2026, to be announced this summer.

Virginia affiliate events in regional locations, to be announced in upcoming months, will also host early arrival tall ships for free public visits the prior weekend, June 12-14, 2026.

Sail250® Virginia's June 19 - 23, 2026 schedule will coincide with the national Juneteenth celebration and the 50th annual Norfolk Harborfest®, June 19 – 22, 2026.

Scherberger adds, "For two weeks in June 2026, 4,000 officers, cadets, and crews of more than a record 60 ships from at least 20 nations will engage with residents and visitors across Hampton Roads and the Virginia Chesapeake Bay region in events and programs symbolic of the bonds of international goodwill".

Sail250® Virginia sponsors include:

Virginia is for Lovers, City of Norfolk, Sentara, TowneBank, Crofton Industries, Dominion Enterprises, E. G. Middleton, Inc., W.F. Magann Corporation, Visit Norfolk, Hampton Roads Shipping Association, Fairlead, Colonna's Shipyard, Inc., Perry Family Foundation, Light Tech, Inc., BAE Systems, Coastal Precast Systems, Elizabeth River Concrete, S. B. Ballard Construction Company, Bay Power Solutions, MHI Ship Repair & Services, The Dwight and Jane Schaubach Fund of the Suffolk Foundation, Bruce Bishop.

Planned in partnership with the United States Coast Guard, United States Navy, and other military commands and regional maritime partners, Sail250® Virginia is collaborating with the VA250 Commission, local, regional, and national government departments and agencies, civic and volunteer organizations, and endorsed by the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission.

Sail250® Virginia is one of five official US ports selected to host the 2026 Sail250® America tour, including New Orleans, Baltimore, New York, and Boston.

Sail250® Virginia is planned and directed by Sail Norfolk, the maritime division of Norfolk Festevents, Ltd., based in Norfolk, VA.

Regular updates and more information can be found at sail250virginia.com.

Inquiries and requests for more information, email Sail250vainfo@festevents.org.

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