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SIX-MONTH COUNTDOWN TO SAIL250® VIRGINIA: The World's Fleet Returns to Virginia in June 2026

NORFOLK, VA (December 29, 2025) — With Sail250® Virginia now six months away, President & CEO Karen Scherberger announced today that the official “Countdown Clock” will begin at midnight on December 31, 2025, on the Sail250® Virginia website home page www.sail250virginia.com. The countdown launch will be ushered in with a special message from participating tall ship captains from around the world on the Sail250® Virginia’s Facebook and Instagram pages.

Sail250® Virginia and leaders from state and regional agencies and municipalities continue to announce major updates and expanded international participation for what is projected to be the largest event planned in Virginia to celebrate America’s 250th.

“As of December 1, we’re expecting more than 77 tall ships and military vessels representing over 36 nations, along with 14,000 officers, cadets, and crew,” said Scherberger. “Tall ships will be docked in downtown Norfolk, 10 Chesapeake Bay Affiliate Harbors, and the international military fleet will be stationed at the Norfolk Naval Base.” She adds, “Together, we are creating a once-in-a-generation event and an extraordinary opportunity to honor our naval heritage, strengthen global partnerships, and welcome millions of visitors to the Commonwealth.”

Scherberger also emphasized the region’s unity in preparing for the event. “Norfolk is proud to serve as host city for Sail250® Virginia and values the unprecedented cooperation from our partner communities across the Chesapeake Bay region,” she said.

Plans to commemorate the national Juneteenth holiday, June 19, 2026, are scheduled in Norfolk and several of the Affiliate Harbors.

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A Statewide, Multi-Site Celebration Across 12 Localities

Beginning June 12–14, 2026, historic vessels will arrive at Sail VirginiaSM Affiliate Harbors — Alexandria, Hampton, Onancock, Richmond, Yorktown, and Smithfield/Isle of Wight — followed by additional ship visits and events June 18–23, 2026 in Virginia Beach, Cape Charles, Chesapeake, and Portsmouth. Norfolk hosts the international fleet in downtown June 19 – 23, 2026. The fleet departs for Baltimore, Tuesday, June 23, 2026, with a select group of ships departing the evening of June 22, 2026. Northern Neck communities will have the opportunity to see ships in the Chesapeake Bay or off the Atlantic Coast on their voyage to Baltimore throughout the day.

Sail250[®] Virginia in Norfolk, June 19–23, 2026, featuring:

- The 26-nautical-mile Parade of Sail with 15 public viewing sites along the route from Virginia Beach Lynnhaven Anchorage off Shore Drive, Virginia Beach, to docking locations in Norfolk, (additional locations in Portsmouth, Cape Charles, and Chesapeake.)
- More than 6.5 miles of continuous waterfront access and 12 tall ship docking locations in downtown Norfolk.
- Four days of ship tours, international crew events, maritime exhibitions, and waterfront activities, concerts, fireworks (Friday, June 19 and Saturday, June 20, 2026), Juneteenth Celebrations, and Norfolk Harborfest festival activities—all free and open to the public.
- US Navy international FLEETEX 250 international military ship visits, Norfolk Naval Base, June 20 – 21, 2026.

Projected Record Economic & Regional Impact

Sail250[®] Virginia organizers project the event will generate:

- More than 3 million visitors across 10 days of Chesapeake Bay Region Sail250[®] Virginia events.
- More than \$150 million in total event spending activity.
- Participation from more than 4,000 personnel involved in Sail250[®] Virginia planning, public safety, maritime operations, and logistics.
- Educational engagement from more than 70 interested and confirmed Adopt-A-Ship schools and community organizations from across the state.

Unprecedented Education & Community Engagement

Statewide education programs will connect K-12 and higher-ed students with visiting ships and crews. The Adopt-A-Ship program — pairing schools, civic groups, and community organizations with international vessels — continues to expand ahead of June 2026.

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A National and International Stage

Sail250® official partner ports – New Orleans, Norfolk, Baltimore, New York, and Boston – commemorate the Semiquincentennial of the United States. The Commonwealth anticipates hundreds of local, regional, national, and international media outlets will cover the event, as well as hundreds of international visitors, including military and government dignitaries, will attend.

“Virginia will welcome the world in 2026. Host city Norfolk and the Affiliate Harbors are reaffirming their place as harbors of history and ports of international friendship,” Scherberger concluded. “The ships, the sailors, and the stories they carry will inspire millions. Together, we are making history again.”

About Sail250® Virginia

Sail250® Virginia is part of the United States’ national commemoration of America’s 250th anniversary. Scheduled June 12-23, 2026, the event will bring a fleet of international tall ships, military ships, historic and character vessels to Norfolk and Affiliate Harbors in the Chesapeake Bay Region for multi-day waterfront festivals, featuring ship tours, fireworks, concerts, and educational programming. Sail250® Virginia will showcase Virginia’s role as a maritime gateway to the world, bringing together participants and visitors from around the globe. For more details, visit www.sail250virginia.com, Facebook, and Instagram.

Sail250® Virginia support includes:

In Partnership with VA250.

Sponsors: Virginia is for Lovers, The City of Norfolk, Sentara, TowneBank, W.F. Magann Corporation, Crofton Industries, E. G. Middleton, Inc., Dominion Enterprises, McLeskey, VIGOR Marine | MHI Norfolk, The Port of Virginia, Dominion Energy, Hampton Roads Shipping Association, Fairlead, Light Tech, Inc., Colliers, Virginia Pilot Association, ICON, Virginia 250 Commission, Colonna’s Shipyard, Inc., Perry Family Foundation, Visit Norfolk, BAE Systems, Coastal Precast Systems, Elizabeth River Concrete, S. B. Ballard Construction Company, Bay Power Solutions, STIHL, Coastal Virginia Tourism Alliance, Decker Law, Schaubach Fund/Suffolk Foundation, McAllister Towing of Virginia. WHRO Public Media, Official Education Media Partner.

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