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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Sail250® Virginia 2026 Dates Announced

Major Maritime Celebration Planned for Virginia in Summer of 2026

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Norfolk, VA- 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 ports of Virginia as part of the national Sail250® tour.

Sail250® Virginia, with affiliate events throughout 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 and Norfolk Festevents Executive Chairman 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.

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 - 22, 2026 schedule will coincide with the national Juneteenth celebration and the 50th annual Norfolk Harborfest.

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, Optima Health, TowneBank, Crofton Industries, Dominion Enterprises, E. G. Middleton, Inc., W.F. Magann Corporation, Visit Norfolk, Hampton Roads Shipping Association, 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, Bruce Bishop.

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Dennis Matheis, President and Chief Executive Officer, Sentara Health says “Sentara Health is proud to recognize America’s Semiquincentennial anniversary and serve as a sponsor of the signature Sail250® Virginia event”. Matheis adds, “Hampton Roads has played a key role in American history and maritime culture from the very beginning, and I am excited for the opportunity to share this while we represent the entire Commonwealth of Virginia and welcome visitors from across the world to our shores. As we celebrate this milestone, may the spirit of unity and the enduring legacy of our nation as a true melting pot carry on.”

“The Sail250® Virginia commemoration events will allow the Commonwealth of Virginia, and specifically Hampton Roads, the opportunity to host more than 20 nations representing a global fleet,” says Bob Aston, TowneBank Executive Chairman. Aston continues, “These events will fill our harbor with excitement, while driving significant economic impact for our region. TowneBank is proud to partner with Sail250® Virginia to foster international goodwill and create lasting memories”.

Planned in partnership with the United States Coast Guard, United States Navy, and other military commands, Sail250® Virginia is collaborating with the Virginia250 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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