VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

Coastal Virginia:

Eastern Shore



2024 Annual Economic Impact

STATE OF THE REGION

Between the Chesapeake Bay and Atlantic Ocean, the Eastern Shore offers unspoiled barrier islands, wildlife refuges and working waterfronts. Chincoteague, Cape Charles and Onancock connect visitors with outdoor adventures, maritime heritage and the quieter pace of small-town coastal life.

$261.6M	1.87K	$56.5M	$6.2M	$10.5M
Total Direct Spending	Total Employment Jobs	Total Labor Income	Total State Taxes	Total Local Taxes

STRENGTHS

RECREATION & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Assateague Island National Seashore • Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge • Barrier Islands • Birding, paddling and coastal scenery

AUTHENTIC ARCHITECTURE & PUBLIC PLACES

Cape Charles Historic District • Onancock's Market Street • Tangier Island • Working waterfronts, historic towns and walkable centers

HOTELS & HOSPITALITY

Boutique inns and hotels • Chincoteague Bay RV Resort & Cottages • Cape Charles KOA • State park stays and vacation rentals

OPPORTUNITIES

SHOPPING, DINING & BEVERAGE

More year-round restaurants and extended hours • Coastal seafood, aquaculture and local farm experiences • Walkable downtown dining

ARTS & CULTURE

Connect Historic Onancock School, ESO Arts Center, museums and galleries • Expand maritime storytelling and indoor cultural attractions

ENTERTAINMENT

Flexible indoor performance venues • Build on festivals and the new Pavilion at Historic Onancock School • Year-round programming

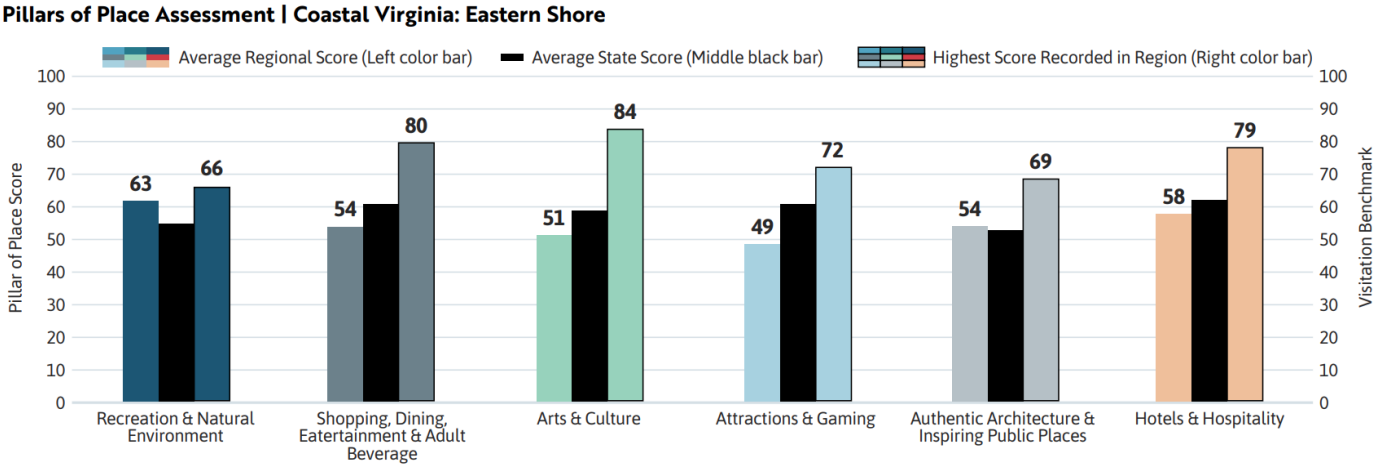
WEAKNESSES

Two main highway access points and no direct commercial airport • Seasonal dining and services • Few rainy-day family options • Staffing gaps

THREATS

Workforce housing shortages and rising business costs • Weather and environmental exposure • Peak-summer dependence • Competing coastal destinations

PILLARS OF PLACE – REGIONAL ASSET PERFORMANCE



Arts & Culture has the highest average asset score, while Recreation & Natural Environment and Hotels & Hospitality contribute to the region's coastal appeal. Entertainment, Sports and Conventions have limited asset bases.

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Coastal Virginia: Eastern Shore

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vatc.org/STP

AUDIENCE PROFILES

C BOOMING WITH CONFIDENCE

Established couples and families
Value comfort, quality and shared experiences
Enjoy outdoor, cultural and family-oriented trips

J AUTUMN YEARS

Mature, long-settled couples
Value familiar, quiet routines, scenic drives, heritage and relaxed outdoor trips

Q GOLDEN YEAR GUARDIANS

Financially cautious and traditional retirees
Value community and familiarity
Prefer peaceful, comfortable experiences

COMPETITORS

Outer Banks (Ocracoke, Manteo, Hatteras), North Carolina • Crystal Coast, North Carolina

WHAT MAKES THE REGION UNIQUE

Unspoiled barrier islands, wildlife refuges, working waterfronts and authentic coastal towns offer a quieter alternative to larger beach destinations.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

RECREATION & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT | HOTELS & HOSPITALITY

Connect Assateague, Chincoteague and the Barrier Islands with the Eastern Shore Rail Trail, improved harbor access, cycling rentals and guided tours. Pair these outdoor experiences with distinctive lodging to encourage visitors to explore more of the Shore and stay longer.

ARTS & CULTURE | ENTERTAINMENT

Connect the Historic Onancock School, ESO Arts Center, museums and theaters through indoor cultural venues, maritime interpretation and flexible performance spaces. Expand year-round experiences beyond festivals and fair-weather visits.

SHOPPING, DINING, EATERTAINMENT & ADULT BEVERAGE | AUTHENTIC ARCHITECTURE & INSPIRING PUBLIC PLACES

Grow year-round dining, seafood experiences and specialty retail in Cape Charles, Onancock and Chincoteague. Link walkable waterfronts and historic town centers through placemaking, food trails and heritage storytelling to encourage multi-stop trips.

ATTRACTIONS & GAMING | SPORTS | CONVENTIONS & CONFERENCES

Add small indoor family discovery options and community-scale recreation such as pickleball. Pursue modest meetings and multipurpose spaces suited to the Shore, rather than large convention or sports facilities.

TACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

ARTS & CULTURE

- Connect museums, galleries and watermen heritage sites
- Reuse civic and waterfront spaces for indoor exhibits
- Create a regional cultural and heritage trail

ENTERTAINMENT

- Add flexible indoor performance venues
- Focus on Chincoteague, Cape Charles and Onancock
- Support concerts and cultural events year-round

DINING & WATERFRONTS

- Develop a Coastal Flavor Trail for local seafood
- Expand year-round restaurants and evening hours
- Grow dock-and-dine and downtown culinary events