VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

Chesapeake Bay



2024 Annual Economic Impact

STATE OF THE REGION

Chesapeake Bay offers a quieter coastal experience shaped by historic waterfront towns, working waterways and oyster traditions. Boating, outdoor recreation and the Northern Neck National Heritage Area connect visitors with the region's maritime and rural heritage.

$366M	2.56K	$78.3M	$7.7M	$15.4M
Total Direct Spending	Total Employment Jobs	Total Labor Income	Total State Taxes	Total Local Taxes

STRENGTHS

WATERFRONT TOWNS & PUBLIC PLACES

Urbanna, Irvington and Colonial Beach • Historic main streets, working harbors and public gathering spaces

RECREATION & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Boating, fishing and paddling along quiet waterways • Virginia Water Trails and Bethpage Camp-Resort • Virginia's River Realm connects waterfront experiences

EVENTS & ANNUAL FESTIVALS

Urbanna Oyster Festival • Gloucester Daffodil Festival • Tour de Chesapeake • Local farmers markets

OPPORTUNITIES

WATER ACCESS & TRAIL NETWORKS

More kayak launches, marinas and rentals • TriWay Trail and Lancaster waterfront projects • Connected blueways

HOTELS & HOSPITALITY

Boutique inns, midscale hotels and family lodging in Kilmarnock, Gloucester and Colonial Beach

CULINARY EXPERIENCES & SPORTS

Connect oyster traditions, farm-to-table dining and wineries into culinary trips • Explore youth sports facilities that generate overnight stays

WEAKNESSES

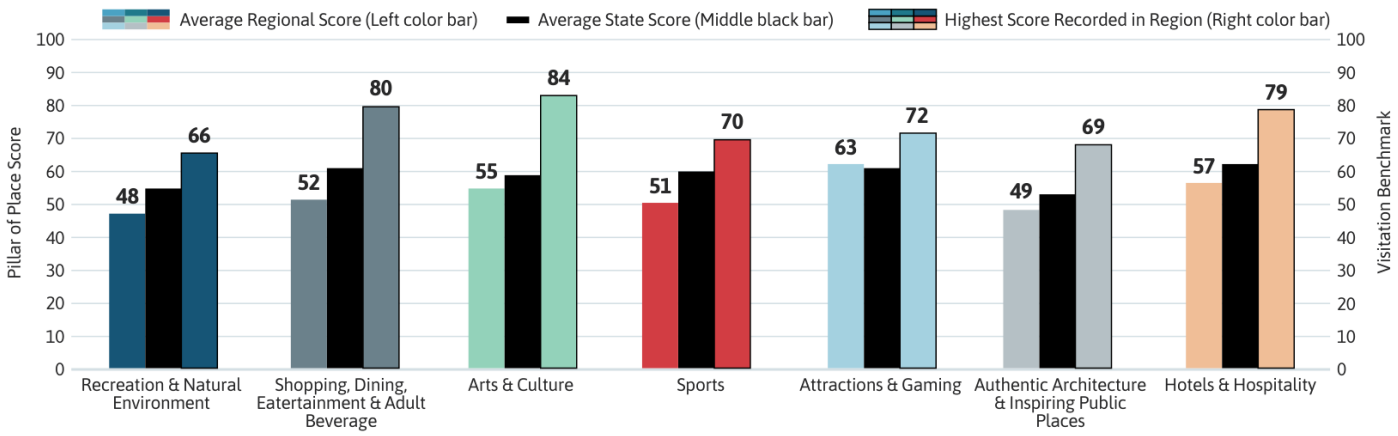
Limited midscale and family lodging • Limited public water access • Rural drives, weak wayfinding and uneven regional coordination

THREATS

Workforce housing and labor shortages • Seasonal and weather-dependent tourism • Anti-growth sentiment • Competition from better-equipped coastal towns

PILLARS OF PLACE – REGIONAL ASSET PERFORMANCE

Pillars of Place Assessment | Chesapeake Bay



Attractions & Gaming has the highest average asset score, while Arts & Culture, Shopping & Dining, and Hotels & Hospitality have standout individual assets despite lower overall averages.

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

Chesapeake Bay

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AUDIENCE PROFILES

C BOOMING WITH CONFIDENCE

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

Q GOLDEN YEAR GUARDIANS

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

E THRIVING BOOMERS

Established, active couples
Value comfort, independence and meaningful experiences
Enjoy outdoor recreation, dining and cultural trips

COMPETITORS

Eastern & Western Shore, Maryland • Outer Banks, North Carolina • South Carolina Lowcountry • Historic Delaware Coast

WHAT MAKES THE REGION UNIQUE

Historic waterfront towns, oyster culture and quiet waterways across two peninsulas offer a relaxed, authentic alternative to resort-style coastal trips.

REGIONAL PRIORITIES

RECREATION & NATURAL ENVIRONMENT | HOTELS & HOSPITALITY

Make the region's waterways easier to explore by connecting launches, trails and rentals through Virginia Water Trails, the TriWay Trail and Lancaster waterfront projects. Pair these experiences with boutique inns, family lodging and cabins to encourage longer stays.

SHOPPING, DINING & BEVERAGE | AUTHENTIC ARCHITECTURE & PUBLIC PLACES

Build on oyster culture, farms, wineries and Virginia's River Realm. Connect Urbanna, Irvington, Mathews and Tappahannock through better waterfront dining, wayfinding, walkable main streets and year-round culinary itineraries.

ARTS & CULTURE | ENTERTAINMENT | ATTRACTIONS & GAMING

Connect maritime, Indigenous and rural heritage through the Northern Neck National Heritage Area, museums and visitor itineraries. Add indoor entertainment and family attractions that complement waterfront activities and give visitors more reasons to stay year-round.

SPORTS | CONVENTIONS & CONFERENCES

Grow modest tournament-ready sports venues and flexible meeting spaces near lodging and dining in places such as Gloucester, Kilmarnock and Colonial Beach. Focus on community-scale facilities.

TACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

HOTELS & HOSPITALITY

- Add boutique inns, midscale hotels and cabins
- Focus on Kilmarnock, Urbanna and Gloucester
- Pair lodging with events, dining and waterfronts

WATER ACCESS & TRAILS

- Improve public landings, launches and marinas
- Connect Virginia Water Trails and cycling loops
- Add rentals, tours, signage and itineraries

DINING & BEVERAGE

- Expand year-round waterfront restaurants
- Connect the Virginia Oyster Trail and farms
- Extend hours and link dining to events