



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | March 29, 2021

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Explore Norfolk's Backyard Like Never Before

NORFOLK, VA – Your Zoo, parks and trails are calling you to see, play or ride this spring - right in your own backyard. Connecting with nature is proven to boost the cognitive, creative, physical, social and emotional development of children, as well as instill empathy for the great outdoors at any age. The Elizabeth River Trail, Norfolk Recreation, Parks and Open Spaces and the Virginia Zoo have teamed up to show their backyards offer something for everyone.

Explore miles of city landscapes on the Elizabeth River Trail or drop your kayak in at Plum Point Park. Challenge your friends to a game of frisbee golf at Lafayette Park or get sandy at Ocean View Beach. Bring your family to meet a family of giraffes or come face-to-face with a Malayan tiger at the Virginia Zoo.

Or, take flight on a bike with a free, costumed ride looping from Norfolk's Lafayette Park along the Elizabeth River Trail and back to the Virginia Zoo. On April 17, the community is invited to this eight-mile, casual-paced ride that celebrates the partnership. Registered participants will also receive a \$5 discount code to purchase timed tickets to the zoo anytime between April 17 and June 30, 2021. In accordance with current COVID safety guidelines, attendance is limited and advanced registration, beginning March 31, is required. Register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/148236269673>

This partnership, made possible by a grant from the Virginia Tourism Corporation's (VTC) Recovery Marketing Leverage Program (RMLP), encourages the community to explore what's possible in their own backyards.

Follow your Zoo, parks and trails online for more ways to get out and see, play or ride this spring - and all year long.

About the Virginia Zoo

The Virginia Zoo, located in Norfolk, Virginia, is home to more than 700 exceptional animals representing over 150 fascinating species. Founded in 1901 and residing on 53 beautifully landscaped acres, the Virginia Zoo has demonstrated a commitment to saving and protecting the world's wildlife by inspiring a passion for nature and taking conservation action at home and around the world. The Virginia Zoo is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is recognized as a global leader in education, recreation, science, wildlife conservation, and animal care and welfare. For more than a century, the Zoo has connected adults, families and school children with the natural world and its wildlife. To learn more, visit www.virginiazoo.org.

About the Elizabeth River Trail

The Elizabeth River Trail Foundation's mission is to promote, enhance and transform the Elizabeth River Trail into the most iconic urban riverfront trail in the country. The ERT runs 10.5 miles and connects businesses, historic attractions and 28 neighborhoods within a five-minute walk. The multi-use trail is designed for walking, running and biking. It comprises 11 sections and 11 trailheads from Norfolk State University to NIT Terminals along the Elizabeth River. Highlights include Harbor Park, Downtown Norfolk, Freemason Historic District, Sentara campus, Fort Norfolk, Chelsea, West Ghent, Lambert's Point, Old Dominion University, Larchmont and Lochhaven. In 2018, the ERT Foundation launched a \$4 million comprehensive capital campaign to raise funds to activate and enhance the 10.5-mile trail. It successfully achieved the goal in 2020. Major sponsors include Sentara and the City of Norfolk. For more information, visit www.elizabethrivertrail.org.

About Norfolk Department of Recreation, Parks and Open Space

The Norfolk Department of Recreation, Parks and Open Space (RPOS) is nationally accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) and a 2019 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management Finalist. RPOS works to enrich the quality of life for residents and patrons through a full spectrum of recreational services for youth, adults, and special populations, while ensuring the management and maintenance of the city's parks, playgrounds, beaches, urban forestry, and city-owned cemeteries.

About Virginia Tourism Corporation

Virginia Tourism Corporation is the state agency charged with marketing the Commonwealth as a premier travel and film destination. In 2019, visitors to Virginia spent \$27 billion, which supported 237,000 work opportunities and contributed \$1.8 billion in state and local taxes. To learn more, visit virginia.org