



Hampton

CONVENTION & VISITOR BUREAU

Media Release

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COMMEMORATE THE 300TH ANNIVERSARY OF BLACKBEARD'S DEMISE

19th Annual Blackbeard Pirate Festival Returns to Downtown Hampton, Virginia June 1-3

--Event featured on Travel Channel's Expedition Unknown and Named One of the Top Five Pirate Festivals in North America by USA Today Travel celebrates demise of most daunting colonial pirate in three-day event; Prepare to Walk the Plank!--

Hampton, VA- Pillage and plunder your way through the coastal seaport city of Hampton, Virginia this June 1-3 when the 19th annual Hampton Blackbeard Pirate Festival returns for another year of swashbuckling excitement! Featured on the October 21, 2015 episode of the **Travel Channel's Expedition Unknown** entitled **Blackbeard's Hidden Gold** (<http://www.travelchannel.com/shows/expedition-unknown/episodes/blackbeards-hidden-gold>) and named one of the **Top Five Pirate**

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**19th Annual Blackbeard Pirate Festival Returns to Downtown Hampton, Virginia
June 1-3- Page 2**

Festivals in North America by *USA Today Travel*

(www.usatoday.com/story/travel/destinations/2015/02/24/pirate-festivals/23880041/?csp=travel), the festival celebrates Hampton's rich maritime heritage by commemorating the **300th ANNIVERSARY** of the demise of our most infamous visitor, Captain Edward Teach, a.k.a. Blackbeard the Pirate.

During the later part of the 1600's and early 1700's, pirates roamed the coastal waters of Virginia and North Carolina in search of ships laden with tobacco and other goods. The marauders terrorized waterways and unsuspecting cargo ships, capturing goods, sailors and ships. Captain Edward Teach, better known as Blackbeard the Pirate, was the most daunting of these menacing outlaws.

After years of wreaking havoc on Virginia's shores and economy, Blackbeard's life was finally taken in a violent sea battle with Lieutenant Robert Maynard in 1718. His severed head was impaled upon a pole near the mouth of Hampton Creek, now known as Blackbeard's Point, to serve as an unyielding reminder that piracy would not be tolerated in Virginia.

Three-hundred years later, beginning June 2, roughly 50,000 seafaring attendees, as well as Blackbeard and his crew, will once again invade downtown Hampton during the 19th annual Blackbeard Pirate Festival! Interact with Blackbeard (personified by first-person interpreter Ben Cherry) and more than 300 other authentically costumed pirate re-enactors as they run rampant on the streets of America's oldest continuous English-speaking settlement.

The festivities kick off Friday night, June 1, 7:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m., at the Crowne Plaza Hampton Marina Hotel in downtown Hampton with the 19th annual Grand Pirates Bash

-More-

**19th Annual Blackbeard Pirate Festival Returns to Downtown Hampton, Virginia
June 1-3- Page 3**

(creative black tie, period attire or Pirate fantasy). The celebration, a recreation of Blackbeard's Party at Ocracoke, will feature a bounty of food, adult beverages, live music Rusty Cutlass (one of the world's most notorious pirate bands), and more. Though the festival is free, there is an admission charge for the ball. Tickets are \$35 in advance and \$40 at the door. Advance tickets can be purchased by phone at 757/727-6348. Purchase in person at Hampton Parks & Recreation (5th Floor Hampton City Hall, 22 Lincoln Street, Hampton, VA 23669).

Saturday's activities include a swarm of extemporized street skirmishes between pirates and militia (costumed interpreters), a replica of Blackbeard's pirate camp, complete with living history interpreters teaching the skills of the sailor circa 1700, and the trial and escape of William Howard, one of Blackbeard's fellow pirates with ties to Hampton. Don't miss the exhilarating re-enactment of the classic sea battle between Lt. Maynard and Blackbeard, featuring two full - scale replica vessels in the Hampton Harbor. At the conclusion of the sea battle a presentation ceremony takes place in which Blackbeard's severed head will be bestowed upon Virginia Governor Alexander Spotswood (1710-1722). Visitors can participate in the festivities when they join Blackbeard's funeral procession, Hampton's own version of Mardi Gras, and share in the booty from the treasure chest.

This year, the Hampton Blackbeard Pirate Festival welcomes three tall ships to the downtown docks: *MEKA II*, *Macnab*, and *Tall Ship Adventure*. Based in Beaufort, NC *MEKA II* has an overall length of 54' and is a 2/3 - scale replica of an 17th Century, two masted pirate brigantine armed with 8 cannons. Her homeport is Beaufort, North Carolina where locals and tourist take pride in her ongoing efforts to preserve maritime heritage. The *Macnab* is a 28ft. cutter based in Deltaville, VA.

-More-

**19th Annual Blackbeard Pirate Festival Returns to Downtown Hampton, Virginia
June 1-3- Page 4**

Brand new this year is *Tall Ship Adventure*, Hampton's very own character vessel! The sailing vessel *Flying Lady* will arrive in Hampton a week prior to the festival and will ultimately be retrofitted and recommissioned as Tall Ship Adventure, to become a semi-permanent fixture on the Hampton River. The Tall Ship Adventure was Blackbeard's true flag ship so it's only fitting that she is unveiled during the 300th anniversary of Blackbeard's last battle.

In addition to the tall ships, the festival will also welcome *Sailboat Apostle*. *Sailboat Apostle* was built by Thomas E. (Tom) Colvin in 1959 in Bayou La Batre, Alabama. Originally an open cockpit centerboard sailboat, Apostle drew 22 inches with centerboard up and six feet with centerboard down. Throughout her history, she made many excursions in the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico.

Small boats taking part in the Blackbeard festivities this year include *Jolly Boat* and *Adventure*, a 22' gaffe rigged skiff revenue cutter that will remain in the pirate encampment as a static display.

This year, the event will once again feature the Blackbeard children's area, with children's entertainment and activities including colonial games, pirate face-painting, strolling fairies, digging for treasure, and more within Carousel Park along Settlers Landing Road. Featured this year are Pirate of Fortune's Folly of Pennsylvania, Fins and Seashells Mermaids of Virginia, and more.

In addition to the children's area, guests will have the opportunity to stroll through Blackbeard's Pirate Camp where they can learn how to use a cutlass, load a cannon, or even sing a sea chantey at Pirate's Cove. At Mill Point Park, visitors can also explore a collection of 17th & 18th century period vendors selling items such as jewelry, clothing, art, and personal accessories.

-More-

**19th Annual Blackbeard Pirate Festival Returns to Downtown Hampton, Virginia
June 1-3- Page 5**

Another highlight of Pirate's Cove is Bunch of Grapes Tavern, a rustic tavern-style throwback to what a Hampton bar would have looked like in the 18th century. Feel free to rub elbows with some of the local swashbucklers and be served by wenches.

Other weekend amusements include a pirate procession, stage performances, street entertainers, cannon fire at Battery Point, period weaponry demonstrations, vendor demonstrations, roving music, and more. Head down Queens Way to check out the Blackbeard stage, complete with daytime pirate entertainment. Don't forget about The Downtown Hampton Block Party, with musical guest Buckshot taking place 7:00 p.m. – 11:00 p.m. on Queens Way. Saturday night will conclude with a dramatic fireworks display at 9:00 p.m. over the Hampton River!

Those looking for dock space during the Blackbeard Festival are encouraged to contact marinas located throughout the downtown area, including the Hampton Public Piers (757/727-1276), Customs House Marina (757/636-7772), Bluewater Marina (757/723-6774), and Sunset Boating Center (757/722-3325). Call for details and availability.

The Blackbeard Pirate Festival schedule is as follows: 7:00 p.m. -11:00 p.m. on Friday, June 1 (Blackbeard Bash- Ticketed Event); 10:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 2; and Noon- 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, June 3.

For more information on these and other Hampton events and programs, individuals are encouraged to contact the Hampton Visitor Center at 757-727-1102, or the Hampton 311 Call Center at 757/727-8311. For those into surfing the web, visit www.blackbeardfestival.com.

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