

**Follow along with us as we cruise onboard our
56' Ocean Yacht.**

Somewhere on the Water

Update Winter Cruise 2023-2024

Day 16 – December 16, 2023 – Hampton, VA to Chesapeake, VA

Departure time: 12:40 pm ish

Arrival time: 3:55 pm

Total hours cruised: 3 hrs 15 minutes

Average speed: 6 knots against current

Weather: low 50's today light wind and mostly sunny with scattered clouds

About last night:

After dinner; sloppy joes with broccoli on the side, Mark was unsuccessful finding any local TV that would come in over the antennas. We turned on the music, cleaned the galley and decided to have ourselves a dance party. We had no close boat neighbors so we cranked the stereo and had ourselves a blast playing some of our favorite songs (now considered oldies). Hampton, VA did not know what they were getting when Valkyrie came to town. LOL.

This morning we lowered the tender and went to town! We were able to dock at the Old Point Comfort Marina dingy dock which provided us a short walk to Fort Monroe. We were told it would be a \$10 to dock here fee but they did not end up charging us so thank you to the marina.

Fort Monroe: <https://fortmonroe.org/things-to-do/experience-historic-sites/>

Once we crossed the bridge that spanned an actual moat into the main entrance to the fort we took a right and proceeded to climb to the grassy top and walked its perimeter. There are many tombstones along the

way.....here is one man's take on these tombstones and the pet cemetery here at Fort Monroe:

The grassy top of the rampart was lined with stones inscribed with names like Tippy and Dusty and Tinkie and Toodles and Dutchie, Goldie and Blacky and Red and Mitzy and all the condescending stuff we usually do to these once-wolves and -lions. At least, they were either pet graves or Virginia went through a real dark time in its maternity wards.

So there I was, on a Poe mission, inadvertently finding cats in walls.



The tombstones were in a line on the wall as far as I could see, like they were defending it. The styles varied, and I saw some that dated to the 1930s. I followed the line, treating them like paving stones. Every once in a while they wended across the remnants of batteries. It was, in fact, the pet cemetery for the fort, as well as some of the surrounding residential areas. Like I said, the walls encompassed an entire town. Lives were spent there, both human and animal. They say more than 400 animals ended up in those walls, with the oldest marker dating to 1936, although it's surmised that interments go further back than that. The current fort structure goes back to 1834, after all. It officially stopped being an active pet cemetery in 1988, about six years after Stephen King made those things creepy. However, the presence of some 21st century markers indicates that people still sneak their dead pets up there.

<https://www.oddthingsiveseen.com/2015/09/if-these-walls-could-bark-fort-monroe.html>



Within the 565 acres of Fort Monroe are 170 historic buildings and nearly 200 acres of natural resources, including 8 miles of waterfront, 3.2 miles of beaches on the [Chesapeake Bay](#), 110 acres of submerged lands and 85 acres of wetlands. It has a 332-slip marina and shallow water inlet access to Mill Creek, suitable for small watercraft.^[12] -- -wikipedia. (map is not from Wikipedia)





<https://www.hmdb.org/m.asp?m=166612>

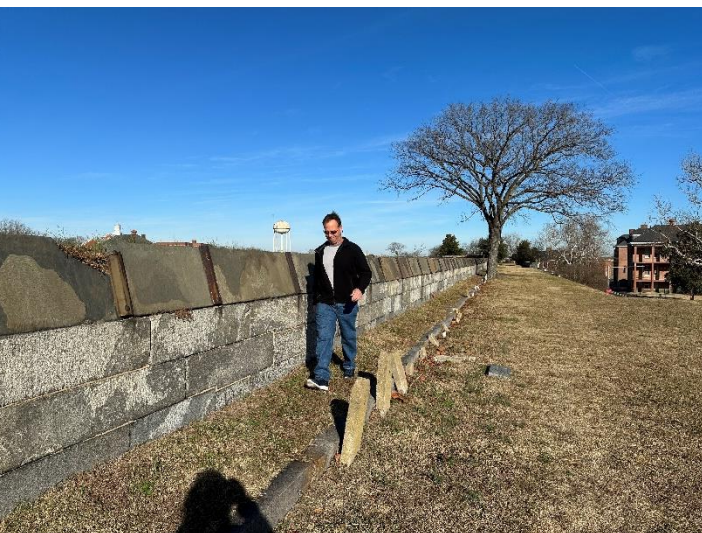
The water-filled moat surrounding Fort Monroe covers about 19 acres, ranging from 50 to 250 feet in width, and was designed to be eight feet deep. The moat is tidal, fed by the waters of Mill Creek.

Excavation of the moat began in 1820. It was first used as a canal that enabled barges to move stone and brick around the fort's construction site. Once the fort was completed, the moat served

as a barrier between the main fortification and its outlying defenses. Three gates for vehicles and one for pedestrians allow access over the moat.

Beneath The Sediments

Over the years, sediments accumulated on the moat's sandy bottom. In 1978, US Navy divers searched the top two feet of sediments for possible munitions and explosives. They recovered 17,400 rounds of small arms ammunition—all live. They also discovered a bicycle, a bugle, and large assortments of glass bottles.



Taking a lot longer than anticipated we decided our next stop should be the museum but before you can go to the museum you have to stop in at the visitor center to get your no-cost timed ticket. The Fort Monroe Visitor & Education Center is an incredible experience.



Our time is limited today however you could spend about an hour (or more) of your time in the galleries at the visitor center, and in addition, they offer ranger-guided tours of the fort that depart from here. Mark and I used the restrooms (bigger and nicer than any public restroom I have ever visited) and went over to the Casemate Museum. Even though it was a mild sunny Saturday here in Hampton, the fort and the museum were not busy. We were the only two in the museum during our timed, self-guided 11 a.m. entrance.

Housed within the brick and stone walls of Fort Monroe, the Casemate Museum chronicles the history of seacoast fortifications at Old Point Comfort. From Fort Algernourne, the first militarized structure at Point Comfort, to Fort Monroe National Monument, the museum shares over 400 years of history. The roles and uses of casemates varied over time. Casemates were constructed as gun positions but also used to house soldiers, store weapons and ammunition, and hold prisoners. <https://www.nps.gov/places/casemate-museum.htm>



Fort Monroe was the largest stone fort built in the U.S. It has a moat!

It is a bastion fort with an irregular hexagon shape and seven bastions.

It was the only federal military installation in the Upper South to remain under United States control throughout the American Civil War (1861–1865).



Jefferson Davis was imprisoned at Fort Monroe, Virginia for two years.

On May 27, 1861, Major General Benjamin Butler made his famous "contraband" decision, or "Fort Monroe Doctrine", determining that the enslaved men who reached Union lines would be considered "contraband of war" (captured enemy property) and not be returned to bondage.

News of this extraordinary development spread, and Fort Monroe quickly earned the nickname "Freedom Fortress." Hundreds of African-American families streamed into the area around Fort Monroe.

The fort's property is expansive and today includes walking paths, beaches, a lighthouse, and 160 ish year-round residents.

The ENTIRE time we were visiting the fort Mark's anchor alarm was going off. The good news, the radius of the alarm is significantly longer than we thought, the bad news, it was going off the entire time we were visiting the fort. Because the current had changed, Valkyrie was just outside the preset alarm peramitor so Valkyrie set off the alarm every time she moved outside the circle. The boat was doing its typical 'anchor swing' so nothing was alarming in that situation, just distracting from our time at the fort.

Yesterday, Mark and I did not know what to make of this S/V. At first we thought it was abandoned but come to find out it isn't!

<http://www.alvei.org/>
Sailing on ALVEI is a hands-on, authentic learning experience and lifestyle. Our aim is to maintain a low cost, self-sufficient lifestyle on the world's oceans, learning the traditional arts of the sailor and doing some good along the way.



It is time to get cruising. We returned to Valkyrie, hauled the anchor, and set out for the Atlantic Yacht Basin, Chesapeake, VA via Norfolk. This portion of the James & Elizabeth's River, where our Navy's ships are docked is for me, the second most amazing man-made site of our journey. First, NYC and the Statue of Liberty. The enormity and magnificence of these vessels that we passed by is astonishing. My dad was in the Navy, along with his brother (Retired Navy) and many of our friends. Respectfully, even without that connection, seeing a portion of our US Navy fleet gives me chills.



Along the Elizabeth River, after passing through Norfolk, and Portsmouth we come to Chesapeake. We go through the only lock system we will

have this trip and then dock at the free dock that is just past the lock right before the Great Bridge. We will spend the night here.

Little bit of Triva:

Taken from this site:

<https://www.visitchesapeake.com/blog/post/great-bridge-l>

Locks are used to raise and lower water levels to help vessels easily travel between bodies of water. The Great Bridge Lock can hold up to 20 boats at a time while operators open and close four sets of gates and valves. What makes the Great Bridge Lock particularly unique is that it's a guard lock, meaning it protects water quality.

On one side of the lock, freshwater flows from the Currituck Sound in North Carolina. On the other side, salty water flows from the Elizabeth River fed by the Chesapeake Bay. Most plants and animals are suited for either fresh or saltwater. Not both. The mix caused harm to the ecosystem. Everyone knows that part of what makes Chesapeake so special is its natural habitats, so action needed to be taken. A special guard lock to both protect the environment and allow for transportation was the solution. It was completed in 1932 and is still in use.

The plan is to stay at the free dock for 2 days. We are expecting bad weather and we are very protected here. We are within walking distance to stores and restaurants if needed however since it is going to be raining and blowing like crazy I don't predict we will be leaving the boat.

*Stay
tuned*



<https://youtu.be/SV-e4rV6MSk>
<https://youtu.be/v9IzC7mOwP4>

Time is unrenewable and tomorrow is never promised so do it before you can't!