

OFFICIAL 2026 PONY SWIM GUIDE

Presented in Partnership with the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company, The Town of Chincoteague, and the Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce

No pets or emotional support animals are permitted on/in shuttle buses, Pony Express trolleys, Veteran's Memorial Park, or Chincoteague Carnival Grounds. Service animals specifically trained to aid a disabled person are permitted.

Starting Friday, July 24, 2026, and continuing every night unless otherwise noted:

Trolley Service – 5pm – 10pm. Last call at 9:45pm in front of Carnival Grounds. \$0.50/ride. Cash or tokens only.

Carnival – 6pm - 10pm rides, games, live music, Bingo, and raffles. Tickets for the Neptune Pony are on sale at the Information Stand! Tickets are \$1 each. You must have a ticket and be present at the carnival bandstand at 7:30pm on Wednesday to win.

Saturday, July 25, 2026 South Herd Roundup – 7am (time is tentative depending on weather)

The “Saltwater Cowboys” will ride out to the southern end of Assateague Island, VA to herd the more than 50 ponies (adults and foals) into the Southern Corral. The public may come view the arrival of the ponies at the Southern Corral on Beach Road. The ponies will be there Saturday through Tuesday for photos and viewing.

Carnival and Trolley Service will run on their regular schedule.

Sunday, July 26, 2026 North Herd Roundup – 6am (time is tentative depending on weather)

The northern end of Assateague Island, VA is home to the largest population of ponies and their foals (about 100-150). The “Saltwater Cowboys” herd this group into the Northern Corral. BE ADVISED, the public does not have access to this event.

Please note: The Carnival will not be open on Sunday.

Monday, July 27, 2026 Beach Walk – 6am

The “Saltwater Cowboys” release the Northern herd ponies at daybreak and walk them along the shore of the Atlantic Ocean to join those in the Southern Corral. It is advised to be at Assateague Island National Seashore, VA by 6am for parking purposes. Refuge gates open at 5am. Bring your beach gear and stay the day or walk behind the ponies to the corral and visit awhile. Bikers and hikers may access the beach via Swan Cove Trail.

Carnival and Trolley Service will run on their regular schedule.

Tuesday, July 28, 2026 Vet Check and Selection of Buyback Ponies – Approximately 9am at the Southern Corral

We want to be sure our ponies are healthy for the big swim. The public may view the ponies in the Southern Corral during the veterinary checks. Parking is available in the lot at the Woodland Trail.

Carnival and Trolley Service will run on their regular schedule.

Wednesday, July 29, 2026 Pony Swim – 8am – 10:30am window (Updated 7/16/2026)

At “slack tide” – The Chincoteague Ponies will swim across the Assateague Channel, led by the Saltwater Cowboys, just south of Veteran’s Memorial Park (7427 Memorial Park Dr.) on the east side of Chincoteague Island at Pony Swim Lane.

Shuttles – Free service begins at 5am. There is no charge by the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company or Town of Chincoteague for parking or viewing of Pony Swim. See attached shuttle map and information.

Pony Parade - After swimming the short distance across the channel, the ponies will rest for approximately 45 minutes to an hour before “parading” to the carnival grounds on Main Street. See shuttle bus map for parade route.

Trolley Service - FREE from 1pm - 5pm. Fare of \$0.50/ride 5pm - 10pm. Last call at 9:45pm in front of Carnival Grounds.

Carnival - will run on its regular schedule. Neptune Pony Raffle drawing at the carnival bandstand at 7:30pm. You must be present to win.

*See page 3 for **Helpful Hints for Pony Swim Day**

Thursday, July 30, 2026 Auction of Foals – 8am at Carnival grounds

The annual pony auction raises funds for the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company and veterinary care of the ponies and serves to control the pony population on Assateague Island, VA. Winners will receive certificates of purchase from the CVFC.

Select ponies, designated as “buy backs,” will also be auctioned, but returned to the herd to help maintain the population. Each winner of a “buy back” pony gets to name their adopted pony. The “buy back” auctions are typically the most popular at this event, so if you are interested in naming a Chincoteague pony be ready to bid!

A few auction tips to remember:

1. The auction will begin at 8am. Bidders/viewers will be allowed in at 6am on a first come, first served manner that morning. You can park at the Carnival Grounds or ride the Trolley. **Nobody will be granted access until 6am and all persons and items are subject to search. No pre-setting of chairs or placeholding will be permitted. Any chairs placed before 6 am on July 31st will be removed by law enforcement.**
2. Be there early if you wish to bid on a pony. A large crowd is expected and you will want a space as close to the front as possible.
3. Wear a sun hat and sunscreen. Bring plenty to drink. A pencil and paper are always useful. A folding chair is a great idea as bleachers will not be available due to insurance restrictions.
4. You do not have to register for the in-person auction. If you raise your hand during the auctioneer’s chant, you ARE MAKING A BID. Online bidding is also available during the live auction and registration is required. More information is available at www.chincoteaguechamber.com/auction-day/.

Trolley Service - FREE from 6am - 1pm. Fare of \$0.50/ride 5pm - 10pm. Last call at 9:45pm in front of Carnival Grounds.

Carnival will run on its regular schedule.

Friday, July 31, 2026 Pony Swim Back – Time TBA (Typically announced during the auction. Usually takes place 2 hours after the time the ponies swam on Wednesday.)

Ponies will leave the Carnival Grounds on Friday morning, and the adult ponies of the Southern Herd will make their swim back to Assateague Island.

Trolley Service - FREE from 7am - 1pm. Fare of \$0.50/ride 5pm - 10pm. Last call at 9:45pm in front of Carnival Grounds.

Carnival will run on its regular schedule.

Saturday, August 1, 2026 Final Night of Carnival

Carnival and Trolley Service will run on their regular schedule.

FOLLOW THE CHINCOTEAGUE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AT FOR UPDATES, VIDEOS & PICTURES OF PONY SWIM FESTIVITIES AT [FACEBOOK.COM/CHINCOTEAGUECHAMBER](https://www.facebook.com/chincoteaguechamber)

HELPFUL HINTS FOR PONY SWIM DAY

1. Plan ahead! Leave early and be patient. We recommend allowing yourself extra time this year for the various events as there will be added security screenings for everyone's safety and enjoyment.
2. Please be prepared for hot and humid conditions. Bring plenty of water, sunscreen, and insect repellent.
3. Volunteer guides are available on some buses to assist you. Other volunteers will be available to answer questions.
4. A large screen will be located in Veteran's Memorial Park with a live feed of the swim.
5. Those wishing to view the swim from Pony Swim Lane are advised to wear appropriate attire—old clothing and closed toe shoes or muck boots—as this area is very muddy and has oyster shells. Flip flops not recommended. Pony Swim Lane is marshland.
6. Seating is not provided at either location.
7. Restrooms and porta-potties are located at Veteran's Memorial Park and there are porta-potties on Pony Swim Lane.
8. Parking for persons with disabilities is available ONLY at the Chincoteague Municipal Center, 6150 Community Drive. There will be a bus to transport to Veteran's Memorial Park. No handicap parking will be available at Veteran's Memorial Park. Please see a Shuttle Volunteer for assistance.
9. Tour buses should contact the Town of Chincoteague at 757-336-6519 for parking information.
10. Water stations will be provided at Veteran's Memorial Park and Pony Swim Lane. Bring cash! Proceeds from water purchases support local non-profit organizations.
11. The first foal to come ashore will be named King or Queen Neptune and will be given away in a raffle drawing at the carnival grounds bandstand at 7pm. Tickets are sold each night at the carnival and during the wait time for the swim. You must have a ticket and you must be present to win.

For a first person guide to the swim read [The Pony Swim Experience Blog](#) post on [ChincoteagueChamber.com](#).

ROAD CLOSURES On Pony Swim Day, the following street closures will be in effect:

- Both Beebe Road and Bunting Road will close at 5am
- Willow Street, South of Jester Street will close at 5am
- Ridge Road, South of Bunting Road will close one hour prior to the swim
- Main Street, South of Jester will close at 9:30am

IMPORTANT! PLEASE NOTE:

The following rules apply for this year's events:

ABSOLUTELY:

- No Coolers
- No Umbrellas
- No Glass Containers
- No Bags or Backpacks
- No Drones

NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS:

- Bags or backpacks that are clear vinyl, plastic, or PVC will be allowed
- One-gallon clear plastic freezer bag (Ziploc or similar)
- Small clutch bags or belt bags are allowed but should not exceed 4.5" X 6.5", with or without a handle or a strap. These can be carried separately or within a clear plastic bag.

DISCOURAGED:

- Large water bottles
- Thermoses

ALL ITEMS WILL BE SUBJECT TO SEARCH



FREE PARKING & SHUTTLE BUS INFORMATION

If taking the shuttle, do not carry large strollers or yard/porch chairs on the buses. **Bring only what will fit in your lap.**

BEFORE THE SWIM

1. Day Visitors: Upon arrival to the island, you will be directed to parking by signage and Town Officials. Please follow all instructions for a smooth parking process.
 - From the bridge, turn **left** at the stoplight onto Main Street
 - Proceed to Chincoteague High School and turn **right** onto Hallie Whealton Smith Drive.
 - Continue as directed by Town Officials to the Chincoteague Municipal Center, 6150 Community Drive, unless directed otherwise.
 - There is no parking at other Shuttle Stops.
 - Please remember where you are parked. Parking Lot A (Municipal Center), Parking Lot B (Elementary School), Parking Lot C (Island Nature Trail), or Parking Lot D (Donald Leonard Park/High School).
2. Shuttle Buses will begin operation at 5am
 - Day Visitors – A Shuttle Bus will pick you up from where you have been directed to park
 - Locals and Visitors staying on Chincoteague - Additional Shuttle Bus stops will be at convenient locations along Maddox Boulevard and Main Street. (Refer to the Shuttle Map.) Please look for the **GREEN** Shuttle Stop Signs.
 - PLEASE NOTE - New this year: there are no stops south of **Jester Street**.
 - The shuttle stop at Fairfield Inn will be available before and immediately after the swim.
 - There is no stop at Marina Bay/Waterside Inn. The closest stop before and immediately after the swim will be the corner of Main and Jester (approx. 1,000 ft) away. After the pony parade, walking from the Carnival Grounds is recommended.
3. All visitors riding the Shuttle Buses will be taken to Veteran's Memorial Park. This **is not** the pony landing site. If you wish to go to the landing site, you will need to walk from Veteran's Memorial Park.

Pre-Swim Shuttle Route:

1. **Municipal Center at Deep Hole Road Trolley Stop** - Day Visitors and Handicapped Visitors should report here. There is no parking at other pick-up points. There will be handicap accessible buses.
2. **Corner of Maddox Boulevard and Deep Hole Road** - Serving Chincoteague Inn, Atlantic Shores Inn & Suites, Sea Hawk Motel, and Maddox Inn
3. **Maddox Blvd at Crosswalk** by Funland
4. **Traffic Circle on Maddox Boulevard** At entrance of Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park Camp-Resort serving Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park, Days Inn, The Reef Vacation Villas, Refuge Inn, & Spark by Hilton
5. **Corner of Main Street and Clark Street** - Serving Watson House, Inn on Main, Comfort Suites, Hampton Inn & Key West Cottages
6. **Corner of Main Street and Church Street** - at Don's Seafood Restaurant serving Channel Bass Inn & Miss Molly's Inn
7. **Corner of Main Street and Marlin Street** - At Fairfield Inn (Before and Immediately After Swim Only)
8. **Corner of Main Street and Jester Street** – Serving Waterside Inn, Anchor Inn, and Marina Bay Hotel & Suites (Before and Immediately After Swim Only)
9. **Veteran's Memorial Park** Closest stop to the Swim Site. (Before and Immediately After Swim Only)
10. **Corner of Main Street and Taylor Street** - Serving Island Resort and Holiday Cottages

2026 Pony Swim Shuttle Map

Pre-Swim and Post-Swim Route

Begins at 5am until Veteran's Memorial Park is Empty

-  Shuttle Stops
-  Pony Parade Route
-  Walking Route from Swim to Carnival



Carnival Grounds

Willow Street
Rear of Carnival Grounds

9 Memorial Park

Pony Swim Lane

Day Visitor Parking -
Turn LEFT onto North Main
RIGHT onto Hallie Whealton
RIGHT onto Deep Hole
Park as directed by
Town Officials.
Note which lot you are in.

Parking Lot D
Donald Leonard Park/High School

Parking Lot C
Island Nature Trail

Parking Lot B
Elementary School

1 Parking Lot A
Municipal Center
Day Visitors & Handicap Parking
6150 Community Drive

3 Maddox Pedestrian Crossing
by Funland

Maddox Traffic Circle
Entrance to Jellystone

2 Maddox Blvd & Deep Hole Rd.

5 Main St. & Clark St.

6 Main St. & Church St.
Don's Seafood

7 Main St. & Marlin St.
Fairfield Inn

8 Main St. & Jester

10 Main St. & Taylor St.

PLEASE NOTE:
Handicap Parking - ONLY at Municipal Center
Tour Bus Parking - Call Town of Chincoteague to make
arrangements. 757-336-6519

Official Pony Swim shuttle map provided in cooperation with the
Town of Chincoteague and the Chincoteague Chamber of Commerce.

AFTER THE SWIM

1. Immediately after the swim, two lines will form in the front of Veteran's Memorial Park (*where you were dropped off for the swim*).
 - Both lines will go to the **Municipal Center, motels, and other designated shuttle stops**.
 - PLEASE NOTE: There will be NO SHUTTLE SERVICE to the Carnival Grounds after the swim. You will need to walk from Veteran's Memorial Park to the Carnival Grounds. Please see map for walking route. The distance is approximately 1/2 mile. Shuttles will be available for persons with disabilities ONLY.
2. If you walked from Veteran's Memorial Park to the pony landing site, you must return to the front of Veteran's Memorial Park **within 30 minutes** of the ponies coming ashore to catch the shuttle.
3. You must be in line to get shuttle transportation at Veteran's Memorial Park. Please be patient after the swim! In the several hours before the swim, we transport thousands. We cannot accommodate thousands immediately after the swim.
4. After Veteran's Memorial Park is cleared, there will be no further service from the park. Shuttle Buses will then be available behind the Carnival on Willow Street to take guests back to the **Municipal Center, motels, and other designated shuttle stops**. (See details below and Pony-Pony Parade Route Map.)
5. Vehicle travel will be extremely heavy in the Carnival area and throughout the Island after the swim. Several of the roads from the swim site to the Carnival will be closed. (Main Street south of Jester Street, Bunting Road, Ridge Road south of East Side Road and Beebe Road). Please do not attempt to go back to your car then drive to the Carnival. You will hold up traffic!

Shuttles Immediately After Swim until Parade:

The Pony Swim Shuttle will run the reverse of the pre-swim route, starting at #9 Veteran's Memorial Park and ending at #1 Municipal Center until Veteran's Memorial Park is empty. As soon as Veteran's Memorial Park is empty, shuttles will switch to the Post-Pony Parade Route.

LEAVING THE CARNIVAL

1. **Buses will begin to load after the ponies arrive at the Carnival. Service from the Carnival will continue until APPROXIMATELY ONE HOUR AFTER THE PONIES ARRIVE.**
2. A **long** single-file line will form at Willow Street behind the Carnival immediately after the ponies arrive. The end of the line is to the north of the corral. You must get to the end of the line and work towards the buses. Be sure everyone in your party is present before getting in line. The line moves quickly as buses become available. PLEASE NOTE: Willow Street is narrow and will have two-way bus traffic. **DO NOT BLOCK THE ROAD AT ANY TIME.**
3. Staying longer at the Carnival Grounds? The Pony Express Trolley will begin FREE service across from the main entrance of the Carnival Grounds on Main Street **at approx. 1pm until 5pm**. Starting at 5pm the fare is 50¢ per person. [View trolley brochure and schedule](#) at ChincoteagueChamber.com/trolley-schedule.
4. If you paid to park in areas around Veteran's Memorial Park and walked to the carnival after the swim, you will need to walk back to your car as **there are no stops at Veteran's Memorial Park after the park is empty**.

Post-Parade Route:

1. **Willow Street – Behind Carnival Grounds**
2. **Corner of Main Street and Church Street** - at Don's Seafood Restaurant serving Channel Bass Inn & Miss Molly's Inn
3. **Corner of Main Street and Clark Street** - Serving Watson House, Inn on Main, Comfort Suites, Hampton Inn & Key West Cottages
4. **Corner of Main Street and Taylor Street** - Serving Island Resort, Holiday Cottages
5. **Municipal Center at Deep Hole Road Trolley Stop** – Stops will be made at each parking lot as well.
6. **Corner of Maddox Boulevard and Deep Hole Road** - Serving Chincoteague Inn, Atlantic Shores Inn & Suites, Sea Hawk Motel, and Maddox Inn
7. **Maddox Blvd at Crosswalk** by Funland
8. **Traffic Circle on Maddox Boulevard** At entrance of Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park Camp-Resort serving Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park, Days Inn, The Reef Vacation Villas, Refuge Inn, & Spark by Hilton

2026 Pony Swim Shuttle Map

Post-Pony Parade Route

To Begin after Ponies arrive
at the Carnival Grounds

● Shuttle Stops



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