

Authentic Pirates' Gold on Display at Norfolk's Nauticus

"I was looking for treasure," said Barry Clifford, who discovered the pirate shipwreck *Whydah* in 1984 near Cape Cod and has been actively excavating it ever since, "and I found more treasure than I ever imagined. The whole bottom of the ocean was covered with it."

You can see the result of Clifford's search at "Real Pirates," a *National Geographic* exhibit at Norfolk's Nauticus, running through April 4. The exhibit features the only authentic pirates' gold ever found anywhere!

Visitors begin their journey into the past with a film that tells the story of the *Whydah*, a slave ship captured by pirates 300 years ago that sank in a storm near Cape Cod. The ship has proven to be a treasure seekers' dream. After the film, the screen rises to reveal the first artifact found, the ship's bell. Also on display are brilliant gold Spanish coins, silver pieces of eight, and well-preserved artifacts like cannons, shackles, navigational equipment, and domestic items that tell the story of what life was like aboard the *Whydah* in the early 1700s

Kenneth Garrett, National Geographic



The Sun King pistol is among the treasure found with the wreck of the *Whydah*. The silk ribbon was wrapped around the handle for a better grip or used to carry the weapon around the pirate's neck.

Besides showcasing artifacts, the exhibit also tells many stories — of the slave trade, of 18th-century pirate lifestyle, of punishments faced by pirates who were caught, of the painstaking work involved in restoring artifacts buried under the sea for three centuries, and finally of modern pirates off the coast of Somalia, who present a dangerous threat to container ships even today.

The stories that "Real Pirates" tell are as interesting as the artifacts. Many escaped slaves joined pirate ships, as did freedmen, often resulting in crews that were 50 percent African-American. You also learn about the *Whydah*'s youngest crewmember, only ten years old.

It's easy to think that we can learn all we need from flat screens and keyboards, but seeing 300-year-old artifacts or touching real gold makes you connect with real-life adventure in a way computers can't match.

Make sure you allow time to visit the other Nauticus exhibits, too, for an in-depth look at man's ongoing relationship with the sea.

By Peggy Sijswerda

It's free! It's fun! It will jump start your vacation planning!

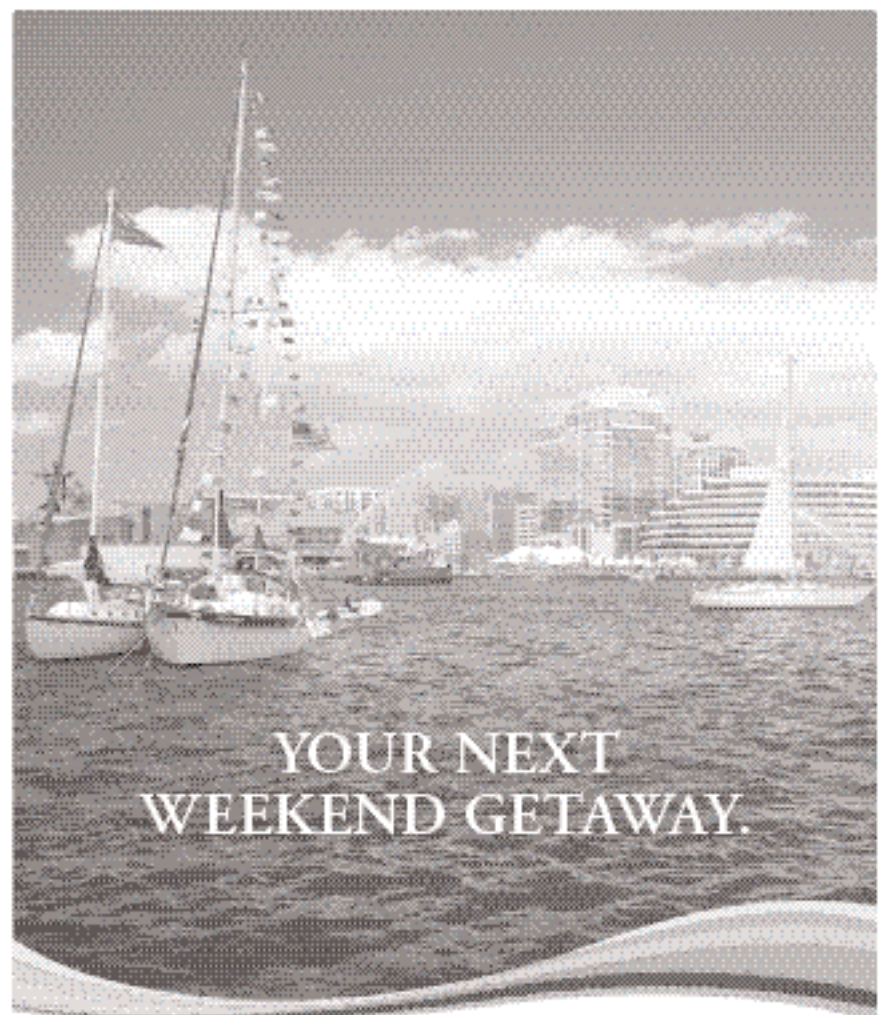
Check out the free travel info on page 35.



The stern of the *Whydah* sets the tone for the "Real Pirates" exhibit.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Nauticus: 800-664-1080, www.nauticus.org



NORFOLK VIRGINIA
Convention & Visitors Bureau
The heart of the Virginia Waterfront.

visitnorfolktoday.com | 1-800-368-3097

When it comes to fun, affordable getaways, look no further than the Norfolk waterfront.

With hotels, dining, entertainment and attractions for every budget, Norfolk is as comfortable as it is sophisticated.