

Chincoteague, Virginia: A Peaceful Island

by Sue Kulick, PassPorter Featured Columnist

This summer, we had the good fortune to spend a few days on Chincoteague Island, Virginia.

Our adventure began with the decision to visit [Assateague Island](#), home of the wild ponies and the fulfillment of a childhood dream for me. Chincoteague, the central area in Marguerite Henry's beloved book "Misty of Chincoteague" was the natural place to stay. We knew we would enjoy our time there. What we didn't realize is how much we would come to love the area!

Chincoteague Island is a peaceful, quaint island off the Virginia coastline. As soon as you get close to the island, you know you are in for something special. The causeway leading to the island takes you through beautiful marsh country. You cross a drawbridge spanning the Chincoteague Canal, and you land squarely in the center of town. This is where your adventure truly begins.

There are many wonderful places to stay on the island. There are hotels with waterfront views, and townhouse villas for rent. You can camp, or stay in a lovely cottage. And the area abounds with bed and breakfasts. We chose [Miss Molly's](#), a bed and breakfast located on Main Street, and lovingly restored to its original glory by Innkeepers Sam and Lin Mazza. Miss Molly's was the house where Ms. Henry actually wrote "Misty," and we stayed in the room where the book was penned!

Once you make your decision about where to stay, you will need to decide what you would like to do. Naturally, the theme of the island centers around the ponies, but Chincoteague is so much more! For shoppers, the island is a funky little town of eclectic shops and souvenir emporiums. You can purchase everything from a hand drawn map of the island, to a coffee mug with Misty on it, to a hand baked treat for your four-legged friend back home. And don't overlook the purchase of a native conch shell or driftwood. These are available on tables outside of resident's homes, left there to be purchased on the honor system.

Chincoteague naturally has a big maritime business. You can charter a fishing boat, or go clamming or crabbing. You can fish either the Atlantic Ocean or the inland waterways, and you can surf fish on Assateague Island!

If fishing is not your style, relax on one of the many island scenic

cruises. We chose to take a pony cruise on the [Assateague Explorer](#). There are many other cruises available, including sunset cruises and dolphin cruises. All take you up close and personal with the abundant wildlife of Chincoteague and Assateague Island.

You can get a glimpse into Chincoteague history by visiting one of the local museums. The Beebe Ranch is the home of the original Misty, and houses many items from that wonderful book. The Oyster and Maritime Museum highlights local fishing history and culture, while just down the road, the NASA Wallops Island Flight Center showcases NASA's test flight facility.

If all that activity has made you hungry, you are in luck! Chincoteague has some wonderful choices. Of course, the seafood is fresh and abundant. Try AJ's on the Creek, Etta's Channel Side Restaurant, or Steamer's. We had incredible prime rib at [Don's Seafood](#). For quick sandwiches, try the Sea Shell Cafe. And top it off with ice cream from Muller's. Don't be surprised if you see some Pennsylvania touches at Muller's...the family that owns it are transplanted from Philadelphia!

If you are lucky enough to be here in July, you will see the annual pony penning hosted by the Chincoteague Fire Company. Each year, the wild ponies are rounded up on the Island of Assateague and swim over to the island of Chincoteague. There, the fire company hosts the annual pony sale, where the foals are sold at auction. After the week, the adults and some of the foals swim back to Assateague Island. The money raised supports the totally volunteer fire company, and also goes for the horses' upkeep.

One of our favorite things to do in a small local town is just to walk around and enjoy the sights. We strolled down to Memorial Park, where we listened to a local musician play. We walked over to the Chincoteague Pony Center, where we got to see some of Misty's descendants. We shopped at several local stores, including Egret Moon Artworks and the Chincoteague Pet Boutique. We picked up some 45's in a little used record store. And we had a nightcap at Chattie's Lounge.

[Chincoteague Island](#) is a wonderful way to spend a weekend, or a week! There is so much to see and do, you will not run out of ideas. And you will take home a lifetime full of memories!

About The Author: Sue Kulick is a resident of the Pocono Mountains and an avid Disney fan. She and her husband, Steve, live in a log home with their Golden Retrievers, Cody and Belle and their cat Tigger.

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