

Glass, Art, Ducklings, Ships, and More—A Day Out in Norfolk

Sherene Silverberg, Norfolk

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I've yet to meet a homeschooler who doesn't salivate over the little word, "free." Free is good, and here in Norfolk we have a wonderful free field trip opportunity six days a week. You can tailor your trip to suit squirrely kids who need to move, or to quiet, contemplative artists who want to absorb the art. Start with a visit to the Chrysler Museum of Art's glass studio. Follow up by letting the kids blow off some steam while they eat a picnic lunch beside the Hague. Then take a walk along the Elizabeth River, through the historic Freemason district to the USS Wisconsin. End your delightful day in the air-conditioned splendor of the [Chrysler Museum of Art](#). Best of all, if you pack your lunch, you will not have to spend a penny! If you have a child who wants to submerge himself or herself in art, skip the outside stuff and make your way directly to the art museum once you've finished with the glass studio; you can eat your lunch in the quiet, shady, sculpture-filled gardens surrounding the museum.

At noon, Tuesday through Sunday, the [Chrysler Glass Studio](#) presents free glassblowing demonstrations by resident artists, glass-art lecturers from Tidewater Community College, and visiting artists. Since my family lives almost across the road from the glass studio, we often spend our lunch hour watching these skilled artists turn blobs of glass into beautiful works of art with furnaces that run upwards of 2,100 degrees Fahrenheit. *Distinction* magazine wrote a [good story](#) on the glass studio.

I've always been a firm proponent of the concept that the process in art is more important than the final product. Watching these glass artists work firmly cements the idea that the process is vital in art. As the artists work, they explain what they are doing and why they are doing it. They pepper their patter with interesting tidbits on the chemistry of glass, the origins of the craft, the sourcing of the various types of glass, the reasons they use different types of glass, and many other interesting facts.

Once you are finished watching amorphous blobs of glass turn into breathtaking works of art, you can meander over to [the Hague](#) for a picnic lunch along its banks, or you can picnic on the grounds of the Eastern Virginia Medical School's administration building. They have a large piece of open lawn that is perfect for a game of tag or some soccer, so remember to bring some balls.

The Hague is a nature lover's joy during spring when all the ducks and Canada geese are hatching their babies. Ducklings and goslings, all in a row, are sure to delight even the most jaded teen. I know it is not Boston, but bring a copy of *Make Way for Ducklings* to read after you've watched the babies march behind their parents.

The Hague is an offshoot of the [Elizabeth River](#) and as you walk its banks you can see the NOAA boats and PETA's headquarters. The houses that line the Hague date back over a hundred years and include several colorful "painted ladies." A 10-minute stroll over the Hague and under the Brambleton Bridge will bring you to the [Historic Freemason district](#), where you can take a leisurely walk along the Elizabeth River and watch the ships as they are guided up the river.

You'll soon arrive at Norfolk's [Town Point Park](#), the nautical museum Nauticus, and the [Battleship Wisconsin](#). While Nauticus and tours of the *Wisconsin* cost money, you can still walk around the *Wisconsin* for free. My kids get a particular kick out of knowing that their grandfather spent many years during WWII on a ship very similar to this one. Naval veterans (some who are veterans of WWII and the Korean War) are always very happy to bend homeschoolers' ears.

As you meander back to the Chrysler Museum, you'll notice that ardent lovers have adopted the Parisian habit of affixing locks to the railings on the bridge over the Hague.

We love that general admission to the art museum is free. We no longer feel the need to see every painting and sculpture in the museum during each visit. We can choose what we want to focus on, and if someone becomes over-tired or over-whelmed, we can leave and not feel guilty.

The Chrysler has one of the world's leading Tiffany art glass collections, so don't miss it. The museum is set up perfectly for homeschoolers, as there are galleries filled with art from Ancient Greece and Rome, the Far East, the Colonial period of the US, and the European Renaissance and Middle Ages. Over the years we've included the art exhibits from the museum in our studies of various periods in history.

The docents are passionate about their subjects and love homeschoolers. I've yet to find a docent who will not go out of his or her way to help and educate homeschoolers, so don't be shy about asking them questions. What's more, the museum welcomes artists who spend hours sketching the beautiful sculptures and paintings; so if you have an artist in your family, be sure to leave time for sketching in the schedule.

Sherene Silverberg is a South African transplant who is learning about homeschooling all over again as she starts high school with her always homeschooled twins, Ben and Shira.