

A 3-Day Chesapeake Bay & Eastern Shore Road Trip

Wild Ponies by Day, a Crab Feast by Night

DURATION	BEST TIME TO GO	FROM
	mild shoulder-season weather without the summer humidity or the crowds of the late-July Chincoteague Pony Swim; the wild ponies are visible on the refuge year-round	for 2 people, incl. rental car, lodging, and tours

Three days down the spine of the Delmarva Peninsula: a working watermen's harbor and a maritime museum in St. Michaels, a narrated boat tour past the free-roaming ponies of Assateague, and a barrier-island wildlife refuge where the horses outnumber the stoplights — with real inns, real outfitters, and 2026 prices for every stop.

Day 1

St. Michaels & Talbot County

A slow start on Maryland's Eastern Shore — a maritime museum on the water, a historic harbor inn, and a sunset crab dinner on Tilghman Island.

Rental Car Pickup — BWI Airport or Annapolis

~1.5 hours to St. Michaels · from \$50 USD / day

Most Eastern Shore road trips start from Baltimore–Washington International or Annapolis, crossing the Chesapeake Bay Bridge onto Route 50/322 toward St. Michaels.

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

~2 hours, self-guided · \$20 USD / adult

A waterfront campus of historic buildings and a restored 1879 screwpile lighthouse, tracing the skipjacks, oystermen, and watermen who built the bay's working culture.

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum · cbmm.org

Dinner — Tickler's Crab Shack, Tilghman Island

~1.5 hours · \$30–\$45 USD / person

A working waterman's dock turned crab shack about 20 minutes from St. Michaels — steamed blue crabs by the dozen, Old Bay dusted, newspaper tablecloths.

Tickler's Crab Shack · wylderhotels.com/tilghman-island/dining/

Overnight — St. Michaels Harbour Inn, Marina & Spa

From \$260–\$320 USD / night, for 2 people

A waterfront inn on the St. Michaels harbor, most rooms with a private balcony over the marina — an easy walk to the Maritime Museum and Talbot Street shops.

St. Michaels Harbour Inn, Marina & Spa · www.harbourinn.com

Day 2

To Chincoteague & Assateague

South across the Eastern Shore to Virginia, where wild ponies outnumber stoplights and a barrier-island refuge protects one of the East Coast's last untouched beaches.

Drive — St. Michaels to Chincoteague, VA

~3 hours via US-13 · self-guided

A straight run down the spine of the Delmarva Peninsula through farm country and small watermen's towns before crossing onto Chincoteague Island.

Boat Tour — Salt Water Pony Tours

~1.5 hours, narrated · \$45–\$50 USD / adult

A narrated boat cruise through the marshes around Assateague, with a naturalist guide pointing out the feral Chincoteague ponies grazing along the shoreline.

Salt Water Pony Tours · www.saltwaterponytours.com

Assateague Island National Seashore

Late afternoon, self-guided · \$25 USD / vehicle (NPS)

A 37-mile barrier island shared by Maryland and Virginia — dunes, surf, and the wild horses that roam the beach and marshes unmanaged, descended from a herd of colonial-era stock.

Assateague Island National Seashore (NPS) · www.nps.gov/lasis

Overnight — Refuge Inn, Chincoteague Island

From \$170–\$220 USD / night, for 2 people

A family-run inn a few minutes' drive from the Assateague refuge entrance, with a heated pool and bikes for rent — ponies have been known to wander the inn's own back fields.

Refuge Inn · www.refugeinn.com

Day 3

Chincoteague & Departure

A last morning on the water before the drive back across the bay.

Brunch — AJ's on the Creek

~1 hour · \$12–\$20 USD / person

A Chincoteague waterfront standby on Maddox Boulevard — crab cakes and a creekside deck, a low-key last meal on the island before the drive north.

AJ's on the Creek · www.ajsotc.com

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge Loop

~1.5 hours, self-guided · included in Assateague vehicle pass

A paved wildlife loop through the marsh side of the refuge, usually the best odds for spotting ponies, herons, and the refuge's resident snow geese in one slow drive.

Departure — Drive Back to BWI / Annapolis

~3.5 hours via US-13 and the Bay Bridge · self-guided

Closes the loop on three days that ran from a working crab shack to a barrier island of wild horses — return the rental car and check timing around Bay Bridge traffic, which backs up on summer weekends.