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My 7 Favorite Restaurants To Experience In Norfolk, Virginia



LA BRIOCHE IN NORFOLK, VIRGINIA
(PHOTO CREDIT: PENNY SADLER)

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Norfolk is located on the Chesapeake Bay in southeastern Virginia. It's part of the Mid-Atlantic area, though the state of Virginia is considered a Southern state. This strategic location has contributed to a fascinating city with a lot of history and culture to explore.

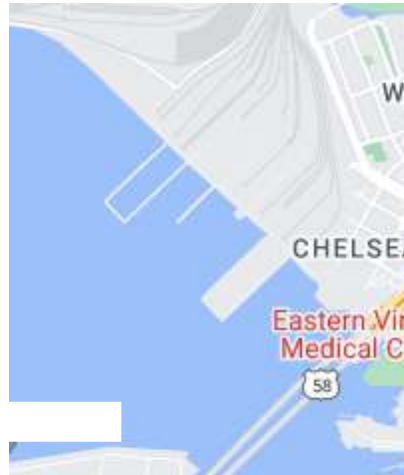
In addition, Norfolk is a great town for foodies. Downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods offer a wide variety of cuisine from Italian to Greek, and of course, seafood. I always like to do pre-trip research — for this trip I made a list of restaurants with good wine lists. However, a friend in the area steered me to a few other places that I'd likely have missed. I basically ate my way around Norfolk in between visits to museums and monuments.

Here are my top eight restaurants with something for every taste and budget. I've also included where to stay if you want to be within walking distance of cultural attractions and, well, almost everything. Besides learning that Norfolk has an amazing food scene, I also discovered it is a great walking town.

My stay was partially hosted by Visit Norfolk. All opinions are my own.



My ... ☆
Daniel Happe
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1. Cure

Cure is a lovely place in a historic building serving breakfast and lunch all day. Go for a freshly brewed coffee or tea, or if that's not your thing, they have a beer and wine list. Cure is in the Freemason District downtown, which is full of history and uneven cobblestone streets — so watch your step! Cure is open daily until 7 p.m.

2. La Brioche

For a taste of France in Norfolk try La Brioche, a small French bakery owned and operated by two lovely women who wanted to bring a bit of their home country to Norfolk. Locals lineup here for the baguettes, and the delicious quiche and sandwiches, all made from scratch.

Of course, the homemade pastries are to die for, too. I had a hard time deciding but settled on a goat cheese quiche and a macaron. La Brioche is open Wednesday through Sunday with varied hours.

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Pro Tip: La Brioche is located in the Neon District. Colorful murals and small unique shops are the thing here. If you're staying downtown, I recommend walking to really be able to see the murals. The Chrysler Museum of Art, The Chrysler Museum Glass Studio, and the Harrison Opera House are all located in the Neon District.





HUMMINGBIRD MACARONS AND DESSERTS IN THE NEON ARTS DISTRICT
(PHOTO CREDIT: PENNY SADLER)

Another fun stop in the Neon Arts District is Hummingbird Macarons and Desserts. All of the treats are homemade. Even if you're not hungry and can resist the sweet treats, stop in to see the pretty and very Instagramable interior.

3. Doumar's

For a delicious taste of Norfolk history, you must visit [Doumar's](#), best known for creating the first waffle cone in 1904. In 1907, Doumar opened his first stand in Norfolk, eventually relocating there from Florida. Doumar's old school drive-in service has never missed a beat, even during the pandemic.

Doumar's also makes barbeque, hamburgers, and all sorts of ice cream desserts and shakes. Of course, you go for the waffle cone but are then seduced by everything else. Doumar's is open every day except Sunday.

4. Orapax

Orapax is a traditional Greek restaurant with a few twists, like Greek eggrolls and Greek pizza. The menu is extensive, the servings are large, the food is good, and really, you can't go wrong here. I ordered the Greek chicken with a salad and pita and ended up with enough for dinner, too. The dining room is a large, casual, open room that can get quite loud. If that's not for you, sit in the bar at one of the high tops. There's also a smaller and quieter dining room at the front of the house. Orapax is open daily for both lunch and dinner.



"AS A WINE PROFESSIONAL ... I WAS SURPRISED AND IMPRESSED WITH EVERY WINE I TASTED [AT GRANDIFLORA WINE GARDEN]."
(PHOTO CREDIT: VISIT NORFOLK)

5. Grandiflora Wine Garden

Grandiflora Wine Garden is probably one of the most charming places I visited in Norfolk. Though a little bit of a challenge to find, I encourage you to make the effort — that is if you like tasty vegetarian or vegan food, unique and thoughtful natural wines, a cozy ambiance, and

attention to the details. I do not eat strictly vegetarian or vegan but I am open to trying and eating all types of food. We ordered a little bit of everything on the menu, all delicious. I liked the board presentation, too. We tried the fresh hummus, cucumbers, olives, olive oil, bread, and a tapenade. Another had cheeses with various chutneys and quince paste and yet another had roasted veggies.

Grandiflora serves natural wines, which are getting a lot of press right now — for better and for worse. As a wine professional, I wanted to try several so I ordered a flight. I was surprised and impressed with every wine I tasted. My first clue that the owners really know their wines was the white wine from Mount Etna, Sicily, by cult winemaker Frank Cornelissen.

If the food and wine aren't enough to draw you in, the owners also have a lovely herb and flower garden, outdoor seating when weather permits, and a three-room inn. Just go. Look for the yellow house on the corner near the shipyards.



POLLO AL LIMONE, OR LEMON CHICKEN, SERVED WITH CAPERS, TOMATO, AND WHITE WINE SAUCE
(PHOTO CREDIT: PENNY SADLER)

6. Luce

[Luce](#) is an Italian restaurant located on Granby Street, the main downtown thoroughfare. This is a neighborhood spot where you can have dinner or drinks at the bar — there are only six tables. I like sitting at the bar when I'm traveling alone, as I almost always end up chatting with someone.

The menu at Luce is a blend of the many regions of Italy. I had the gamberi e crema al limone, a tagliatelle pasta with a lemon cream sauce, asparagus, and six large shrimp. It was delicious and filling. I also tasted the pollo al limone, with capers, tomato, and white wine sauce.

Luce also has a good wine list and a decent selection of wines by the glass. There are some older bottles of good Barolo and other classic Italian wines from Piedmont and Tuscany. Tell the friendly and knowledgeable bartender what you like and let him select something for you.

Luce opens every day at 4:45 p.m. The kitchen closes at 11 p.m. on weekdays and midnight on weekends.

7. Varia

Continuing the Italian theme is [Varia](#), located on the second floor of the Hilton Norfolk The Main, a new, upscale destination hotel in Norfolk. Varia is all about the food and wine experience and offers several options for an exceptional evening. There are several menu options all offering Italian-inspired classics like linguini frutti di mare. For a blast of deco elegance, there is private dining in the Vault. Don't ask, just go. The deep wine list includes wine by the bottle from \$30 to \$2,000 for a Domaine de la Romanee-Conti Grand Cru Burgundy. If you just want a glass of great wine, check out the Wine Studio with its 28-bottle Enomatic wine selection. Varia is only open for dinner Thursday through Saturday. However, since it is part of the Hilton Hotel, you can grab breakfast daily from 6:30 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Also located at [The Main](#) is Grain, with over 80 beers on tap and one of the best views of the bay in Norfolk. I'm not a beer drinker but I went for the views and some bar food.

Pro Tip: After dinner take a walk down [Granby Street](#). The canopy of lights across the street recalls Granby Street's history from 1909 to 1925. Today, Granby Street is known as restaurant row.

Pro Tip: Where To Stay In Norfolk

I stayed at the [Glass Light Hotel](#) in downtown Norfolk. This location couldn't have been better for its proximity to tourist attractions, restaurants, and bars. The hotel was within a 14-30 minute walk of almost everywhere I wanted to go. If it was a little too far, I hailed an Uber or Lyft. The average fare was \$10.

The Glass Light, which serves breakfast and dinner every day, is located in the historic Royster building, and the architectural elements have all been wonderfully preserved. A cool feature of the hotel is the Perry Art Glass. A private collection, it features famous artists from around the world. The exhibits change regularly, and because it is a private collection, you can be sure you won't see it anywhere else. For history, location and culture, I highly recommend a stay at the Glass Light, an Autograph Hotel Collection.

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PENNY SADLER

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Penny's background as a professional makeup artist honed her eye for fine detail which informs her work as a wine and travel writer and photographer. Working in film and television introduced her to the elite of the travel industry including Richard Branson, Southwest Airlines CEO Herb Kelleher, ...
To 2015, she worked for the MSO at the University of California, Berkeley, where she worked on the wine and travel industry. This led her to a 2000 year old wine

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