Academic Year Educational Opportunities

The Dauphin Island Sea Lab’s Discovery Hall Programs (DHP) are offered for grades K5 - 12th from September through the 2nd Monday in May. In January, vessel trips are not available, but we still offer a variety of marine science field trip programs.

The maximum number of participants per program is 35 students which includes teachers & chaperones. Larger groups of students will be divided into smaller “teaching groups” for programs and activities. We can divide book multiple programs at a time.

**Student:Chaperone Ratio**
- K5 -5th grade / 5 students: 1 adult
- 6th -8th grade / 7 students: 1 adult
- 9th -12th grade / 10 students: 1 adult

Please assign a lead chaperone to each group. Accompanying adults resulting in group sizes over 35 may not be able to participate in activities.

**Lodging Facilities**
There are two dormitories on the DISL campus available for lodging during overnight field trips. Each dorm has two floors with double occupancy rooms (two twin beds per room). The first floor has 20 rooms (40 beds), and the second floor has 23 room rooms (46 beds). **Linens are not provided.** The dorms cost $20 per person/per night.

Each group is assigned to one floor of the dormitory. We may not have enough room to accommodate extra adults above the Student:Chaperone ratio. The number of extra adults able to stay in the dorm depends on the number of rooms available and the group’s dorm assignment.

**Cafeteria**
May’s Café on the DISL Campus is a full-service cafeteria which offers 3 hot meals per day. Field trip groups are scheduled mealtimes in the cafeteria. Special dietary needs can be accommodated with advanced notice. The education group rates are available for pre-scheduled groups. Breakfast $6.50, Lunch $8.50, Dinner $11.50. For small groups under 20 people, please check availability with the scheduler. Sack lunches are available with advanced notice.

**Deposit & Payment**
A $100 deposit is required for overnights and a $50 deposit for day groups. Deposits are due one month after creating a reservation. This amount is non-refundable but is deducted from the final reservation cost.

Total payment is not due until arrival. All payments may be made online through our reservation system.
How to Make a DISL Field Trip Reservation

Field trips must be scheduled through the Scheduling Coordinator, Jennifer Latour. The coordinator can be reached by phone at 251-861-2141 ext. 7511, or you may send an email to scheduler@disl.org. We recommend reserving your dates one year in advance, but you may need to schedule up to two years in advance for peak dates. Vacancies during the current school year are available but may be limited. The following information will help in finding availability for your group:

- Number of students
- Grade level(s) of students
- Date and length of preferred visit (day trip or overnight)
- Arrival and departure times
- Programs of interest

DISL Educational Opportunities

Self-Guided Tour of the Alabama Aquarium
$4.50 per person, (All ages), tour time about 1.5 hours

- Students explore Gulf of Mexico habitats, species, and issues through a self-guided tour of the Dauphin Island Sea Lab’s 12,000 ft² aquarium. Galleries highlight the Mobile-Tensaw Delta, the Mobile Bay estuary, the coastal Gulf of Mexico, and the Gulf’s barrier islands. The Aquarium displays more than 100 local species and showcases evolving displays on local, regional, and national environmental issues. Grade-based curricula are available online to help focus student attention or assessment. https://www.disl.edu/estuarium

1-2 hour Lab Programs

- **Marine Animal Touch Lab**, (K5 and up) 1 hour, $2.00/student, $50.00 minimum/program
  Students explore a variety of marine species from the coast of Alabama and the Gulf of Mexico through sight and touch. The educator facilitates a discussion of animal classification, morphology, and life cycles, introducing marine ecology concepts appropriate for the grade level (ex. food webs, cycles, predator-prey relationships).

- **One Fish, Two Fish…**, (K5-3rd grade), 1.5 hours, $2.00/student, $50.00 minimum/program
  Students investigate the phrase ‘form follows function’ as they discuss what makes a fish a fish, what different body shapes tell us about what a fish eats, where it lives, and how fast it can swim. Students then apply these ideas as they create their own fish species.

- **Squid Dissection**, (5th grade and up), 2 hours, $150.00
  Students investigate the anatomy of a common marine invertebrate through a guided dissection of a squid. This class can be coupled with the Touch Lab class.
Field and Lab Programs (5th grade and up)
3.5 - 4 hours long, $150.00 per program

- Coastal Habitats Field Class (formerly Beach Walk)
  Students explore Alabama’s coastal ecology through a guided walk along the beach and maritime forest habitats of Dauphin Island. The educator facilitates a discussion of the biotic and abiotic characteristics of beaches, barrier islands and maritime forests, as well as invasive species while students examine plants and animals.

- Designing Plankton Lab (STEM)
  Students investigate the many species of phyto- and zooplankton using plankton nets to take live samples from Mobile Bay and use microscopes in the laboratory to observe what they caught. Students then apply what they have learned and ‘bioengineer’ their own plankter to use in the Race to Survive!

- History of Dauphin Island (4th grade and up)
  Dauphin Island is rich with the past and stories that include Native American civilizations, French settlements, and Civil War events. Students investigate Alabama’s history by traveling by bus to visit shell middens and touring historic Fort Gaines. Note: Ft. Gaines requires additional cost and separate payment for admission.

- Marine Debris - It’s what’s in the water
  Students explore the problem of marine debris by discovering microplastics, its sources and how it affects ocean life. Students collect marine debris in the field and engage in an authentic research experience as they categorize, analyze, interpret data, and discuss the implications of their personal choices.

- Ocean Currents and Drifters (STEM)
  Students design and build current drifters; a type of technology scientists use to study ocean currents. Students deploy a full-size ocean drifter at the beach and track its motion using an app. The significance of nearshore currents in barrier island dynamics and the effects of ocean currents on the distribution of organisms, heat, energy, and other materials in the water are discussed.

- Oceanography of Waves (STEM)
  Students explore the scientific method as they develop and test hypotheses by measuring, graphing and analyzing wave height data. The group explores the physics of waves, online examples of unusual waves and investigates hypotheses while the educator facilitates a discussion of how waves can impact shorelines and communities with their constancy and power.

- ROVing the Gulf (STEM)
  Students design, build and fly their own unique remotely operated vehicle (ROV). As they do, they explore buoyancy, hydrodynamics and apply the engineering design process. Students learn to work as teams and rise to challenges as their ROVs carry out missions. The educator shares local and global examples of ROV use in underwater research, exploration, and industry.

- Sea Level Rise and Climate Change (STEM)
  Through a series of short laboratory activities, students explore the issue of sea level rise, climate change and barrier island dynamics. Traveling to the beach, students use common GPS
technology to map the shoreline, upload their maps to Google Earth and track changes in shorelines seasonally and over longer periods of time.

- **Squid Dissection & Specimen Lab**
  The first part of this class covers the biodiversity of marine species from coastal Alabama and the Gulf of Mexico. Students discuss adaptations, life cycles, basic marine ecology, and have the opportunity to touch preserved specimens. During the second part of class, students work in pairs to dissect squid as they learn about marine invertebrate anatomy during an educator-guided dissection.

- **Watersheds to Water Quality Lab**
  Students engage in an authentic research experience by visiting a local pond on Dauphin Island, conducting water quality tests and interpreting their data. The educator facilitates a discussion of the Mobile Bay watershed, water quality in Alabama and how humans affect water quality – both positively and negatively.

- **Wetland Ecology Field Class (formerly Salt Marsh)**
  Students use common sampling equipment such as seines and sieves to catch and identify various plant and animal species from Dauphin Island’s salt marsh, while the educator facilitates a discussion of its ecology, food webs and the importance of wetland habitats, estuaries, and coastal marshes.

**On the Water Educational Opportunities**

- **Kayaking Though Coastal Habitats**
  - 3.5 - 4 hours (7th grade and up), $150.00 per program – Maximum 24 participants.
  In this class, students explore the biodiversity of coastal habitats by kayak. After safety training, students kayak through coastal habitats practicing their observational skills, exploring recent phenomena in that environment, and discussing how scientists would approach the study of its biodiversity. This class requires the participation of a person with school authority such as a teacher, coach or administrator and assistance loading/unloading kayaks.

- **Research Vessel Experience**
  - 2-hour trip (5th grade and up), $425.00 weekdays, $550.00 weekends
  - 4-hour trip (7th grade and up), $625.00 weekdays, $725.00 weekends
  Students take an exciting trip in Mobile Bay aboard DISL’s research vessel, the RV Alabama-Discovery. Students learn how scientists study estuaries by exploring the types of equipment used by scientists (trawls, nets, water quality sensors, bottom grab), and discuss Alabama’s watersheds, the species that inhabit estuaries, and how humans affect these critical coastal habitats through their actions.

*Note: Both the Kayaking program and the Research Vessel Experience require notarized Vessel Release Forms to be turned in upon arrival for everyone boarding the vessel.*

More details about DHP programs can be found at, [https://www.disl.org/dhp/school_year](https://www.disl.org/dhp/school_year) and a great FAQ page to answer common questions or find forms needed for your field trip. [https://www.disl.edu/dhp/field-trip-faq](https://www.disl.edu/dhp/field-trip-faq).