

SEA CAMP HANDBOOK



2025



USM MARINE
EDUCATION CENTER

SEA CAMP PARENT HANDBOOK

Welcome to Sea Camp! Thank you for registering your child for Sea Camp this summer! Sea Camp is an educational day camp hosted by the University of Southern Mississippi's (USM) Gulf Coast Research Laboratory's (GCRL) Marine Education Center (MEC). Designed for children in grades 1-6, it encourages an appreciation for the Gulf Coast's unique marine and aquatic environments.

Facility Location and Contact Information

Sea Camp takes place at USM's Gulf Coast Research Laboratory Cedar Point site, located at 101 Sweetbay Drive, Ocean Springs, MS 39564. To find us, enter the Gulf Islands National Seashore property via Highway 90, take the second left onto Laurel Oak Drive, and continue straight on the gravel path to 101 Sweetbay Drive. A staff member will assist you upon arrival. For assistance, contact the facility at (228) 818-8095. Hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. [Click here for directions on Google Maps.](#)

Registration

On Monday morning, please arrive between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. for check-in at the MEC Conference Center. Access the Conference Center from the designated parking areas. Sea Camp Counselors will be available to answer questions and assist during the registration process.

Tuition

The tuition for Sea Camp is \$300 per week and includes all instructional materials, transportation, admission fees, art supplies, and a camp T-shirt. A non-refundable \$50 deposit is required to secure your spot, and this amount will be applied toward the total cost. Full payment is due on the first day of camp; campers with unpaid balances will not be able to participate.

Refund Policy

Refunds of paid tuition balances are available upon written request (by fax, email, or in person at the MEC administration office), according to the following schedule:

- 15+ days before camp session: 100% refund minus \$50 deposit
- 7-14 days before camp session: 50% refund minus \$50 deposit
- Less than 7 days before camp session: No refund

Refunds will be issued by check and may take up to eight weeks to process. Exceptions to this policy may be considered under certain circumstances

Arrival Procedures

Drop-off is from 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. each morning. On Monday, parents should park and enter the MEC Conference Center to sign in their child and receive "dash cards" with the child's information. For the rest of the week, display the "dash card" in your car window to help staff keep the car line moving efficiently. Each morning, sign in your child with a Sea Camp staff member, who will escort them to their group. Please use the looped driveway and follow staff instructions.

Dismissal Procedures

Afternoon pickup follows the same process. To avoid traffic congestion, please pick up your child as close to 2:30 p.m. as possible. You will not need to exit your car—a staff member will collect your signature, and your child will wait in their designated area until picked up. After pickup, follow the gravel drive back to the main road.

If you have multiple children in different camps, you may drop off or pick up all children at the same time (e.g., Sea Camp and Angler Camp). Please contact the Camp Coordinator to coordinate this arrangement.

Early Pickup For early checkout, visit the administrative offices and sign your child out with the Camp Director or Camp Coordinator.

Sign-Out Requirements

Only a parent/guardian or designated person listed on the child's registration form may pick up the child. They must provide a signature and a valid ID at pickup.

What to Bring Each Day

Your camper will be playing water games and could be wet each day of camp.

- Lunch, two drinks, and two snacks
- Change of Clothes
- Sunscreen
- Hat and sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Closed-toe shoes (e.g., Keens®, Crocs™, or sneakers)
- Towel
- Small backpack
- Reusable water bottle

Discipline Policy

Camp counselors handle minor disciplinary actions. For serious issues, the Camp Director will be involved. If behavior problems persist, parents will be notified, and the child may be removed from the camp without a tuition refund.

Off-Site Transportation/Safety Policies

State-owned vehicles or authorized rentals will transport campers on field trips.

General Safety Procedures

Sea Camp staff are certified in First Aid, CPR, and AED and have passed federal background checks. For safety:

- All campers and staff must wear closed-toe shoes on the beach, in water, on trails, and aboard watercraft.
- All campers will wear a Coast Guard-approved life vest during boat outings.
- Staff strictly enforce safety rules, and swimming is not allowed during camp.

Medication Policy

Medication will only be administered if a parent/guardian signs the required medication form. Counselor assistants manage medications, including Tylenol/Benadryl (checked against the camper's registration form). Parents should discuss any medication needs with the camp coordinator during registration.

Medical Emergencies

In case of an emergency, the Camp Coordinator or counselor will care for the child and contact the parent. If needed, the child will be taken to the nearest hospital until the parent arrives. If parents are unreachable, staff will contact someone from the emergency contact list.

Medical Crisis Exemptions

If your child is exempt from medical care due to religious beliefs, please provide the contact details of a certified practitioner for emergencies. This information must be submitted before camp begins.

Child Abuse Reporting

Sea Camp staff are legally required to report any suspected child abuse or neglect. Any concerns will be reported to the Camp Coordinator.

Questions?

For questions about Sea Camp, please contact the Marine Education Center at (228) 818-8095, or Samantha Capers (Summer Camp Coordinator) at (228) 818-8088 or samantha.capers@usm.edu.

MARINE EDUCATION CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Gulf Coast Research Laboratory
Marine Education Center
101 Sweetbay Drive
Ocean Springs, MS 39564

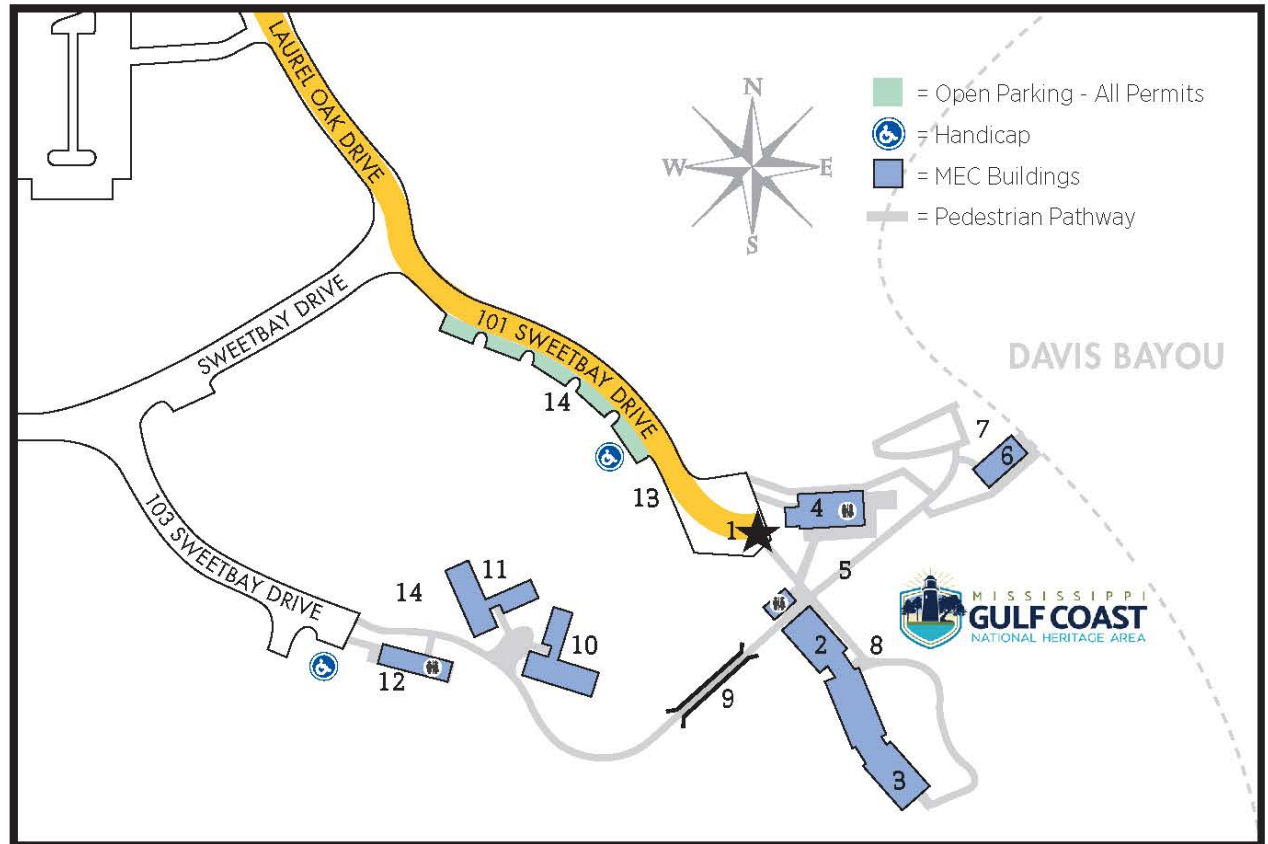
DIRECTIONS

From Bienville Boulevard (Hwy 90) in Ocean Springs, turn south into Gulf Islands National Seashore Park. Travel on Park Road for 1.3 miles. Make a left turn onto Laurel Oak Drive. Continue to Sweetbay Drive and enter at 101 Sweetbay Drive. There is a student drop-off/turnaround at the end of drive.

For mobile map/directions, Google Maps is recommended.

For more information, contact us at marine.education@usm.edu or 228.818.8095.

Sponsored by



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| 1. Student Drop-off | 8. Nature Trail |
| 2. Exhibit Hall and Administrative Building | 9. Bayhead Bridge |
| 3. Citizen Science Laboratory | 10. MEC Education Building I |
| 4. Conference Center | 11. MEC Education Building II |
| 5. Courtyard | 12. Showers & Restrooms |
| 6. Pavilion | 13. Bike Racks |
| 7. Pier | 14. Emergency Blue Phones |