

Destination STEM FAQ's

What is the Destination STEM teen summer opportunity?

What to Expect on the Trip

At Texas State Aquarium, our mission is to engage people with animals, inspire appreciation for our seas, and support wildlife conservation. In this weeklong program, teen explorers will hit the road and discover the science that TSA participates in around South Texas while enjoying the outdoors. We will track wild birds, census fish populations in local lakes, and help conduct research on the impacts of pollutants on sharks. Discover how research conducted at TSA matches science carried out in both indoor and outdoor settings across the region.

For check-in/out logistics, parking, contact Information, corrective action policies and more, please make sure to download and review our 2020 Parent Packet on our Website.

Weekly Schedule at a Glance*

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<p style="text-align: center;">Research at Texas State Aquarium</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behind the scenes with Wildflight Animal Care Team • Work alongside TSA's Animal Wellness Specialist • Meet with a dolphin trainer • Behind the scenes of the Gulf of Mexico Exhibits 	<p style="text-align: center;">Animal Conservation at Partner Organizations</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in a bird banding project and honey bee conservation at Nueces Delta Preserve • Behind the scenes at San Antonio Zoo 	<p style="text-align: center;">Research on Wild Populations & Animal Conservation</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in shark tissue research in Dr. Jessica Dutton's Laboratory at Texas State University • Wetlands & Discovery Hall Tour of Spring Lake at the Meadows Center • Evening Snorkel Tour of Spring Lake 	<p style="text-align: center;">Habitat Conservation & Biodiversity of Texas</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horseback ride to observe and collect data on watershed habitat with Southern Trails Ranch • Learn archery skills with Southern Trails Ranch • Fishing & nocturnal hike for an animal species survey at Lake Corpus Christi State Park 	<p style="text-align: center;">Animal Veterinary Care</p> <p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in animal care work with researchers at Texas A&M Kingsville's Wildlife Veterinary Technology Program • Attend Shows and conduct animal observations at Texas State Aquarium
<p>Sleep At:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own Home 	<p>Sleep at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • San Antonio Zoo 	<p>Sleep at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Texas State University Dorms 	<p>Sleep at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tent Camping at Lake Corpus Christi State Park 	<p>Sleep at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own Home

**Activities may be subject to change due to safety concerns, severe weather or forces beyond TSA's control*

Will my camper be staying overnight during this week of camp?

Yes. This camp is structured as a road trip and will involve three overnight stays in a row. They will spend Monday onsite at TSA and spend that first night in their own homes. Starting Tuesday, they will hit the road for a jam-packed schedule of fun, hands-on science activities! They will return to TSA for pick-up by parents and guardians late Friday afternoon.

Who leads the Destination STEM teen summer opportunity?

This program is led by Texas State Aquarium's year-round Education Instructors, who have years of experience facilitating education programs in a variety of outdoor settings. Each week-long camp is led by two instructors, one male and one female. Each Instructor is fully Red Cross First Aid and CPR certified and annually background checked. Families will meet the week's Instructors, the Education Camp Specialist and Director of Education at the mandatory orientation meeting prior to the week of programming.

What is included in the program fee for this summer opportunity?

This is a five-day, three-night road trip experience around the South and Central Texas Regions. A mandatory orientation will precede this trip, during which families will learn more about what to expect and teen participants will meet and get to know each other.

Included in program cost:

- Private university research lab and campus tours at Texas State University and Texas A&M Kingsville
- Guided science & conservation investigations with leading STEM professionals
- Guided horseback ride & archery lesson with Southern Trails Ranch
- Guided snorkel tour at the TSU Meadows Center at Spring Lake
- All transportation expenses
- All entrance and activity fees
- Tents and camping supplies
- Overnight accommodations at San Antonio Zoo, Lake Corpus Christi and University Dorms

Not included in program cost:

- Meals
- Sleeping bag and pillow
- Swim and shower towel

What is the transportation plan?

Campers will be responsible for their own transportation to and from TSA on Monday, to TSA on Tuesday, and home from TSA on Friday. Once dropped off Tuesday morning, campers will load into a chartered van to begin their road trip. They will arrive back at TSA for pick-up late Friday afternoon. Please note that for safety reasons, we are unable to pick-up or drop-off participants from any location other than TSA. Furthermore, campers CANNOT be picked-up anywhere other than at TSA for any reason.

What are the sleeping arrangements like on the trip?

Participants will spend Monday night at their own homes. Tuesday night will be spent at the San Antonio Zoo in an indoor setting where participants will be separated into different sleeping areas by gender. Wednesday night will be spent in double occupancy dorm rooms on the Texas State University Campus. Dorm room occupancy will be assigned by gender. Thursday night will be spent camping at Lake Corpus Christi. Tents will be assigned by gender. Friday night Participants will sleep at their own homes.

What are the shower arrangements like on the trip?

Participants will have access to shower facilities at the Texas State University Dorms and at Lake Corpus Christi.

What will my camper need to pack?

Clothing & Toiletries

- 4 changes of comfortable, all weather clothes that can get wet and dirty
- 1 change of nice clothes and shoes for dinner in San Antonio
- Sturdy, closed-toed shoes for entering into laboratories, hiking nature trails and horseback riding
- 1 set of pajamas
- 1 light rain jacket or poncho
- 1 sweater or light sweatshirt
- Hat or visor with brim
- Plastic bag for dirty/wet clothes
- Clean, freshly laundered swim suit (requirement of Spring Lake that only swim suits that are freshly laundered may enter the lake to prevent contamination).
- Towel
- Shower sandals
- Water shoes
- Travel-sized shower & hygiene toiletries

Sleeping/Overnights

- Pillow
- Sleeping bag
- Padded sleeping roll
- *Due to space restrictions and no guarantee of electricity, cots and air mattresses are not allowed.*

Miscellaneous

- Reusable water bottle
- Bug spray
- Sunblock
- Spending money, recommended \$100 (for meals and any souvenirs)

- Cellphone, provided they are used appropriately at the discretion of their Instructors

Optional

- Camera
- Nature journal & writing/coloring utensils
- Nature guide
- Small, compact binoculars

Participant Requirements

Does my camper need a doctor's approval to participate?

Yes. A signed medical history form and waiver is required and due in person at the mandatory orientation. Campers must have their physician approve their participation in this program and have their parent or legal guardian sign the form. THEY WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM WITHOUT A COMPLETED AND SIGNED MEDICAL HISTORY.

What are the physical requirements of the trip's activities?

- Hiking over uneven terrain
- Lifting and carrying equipment
- Being outdoors in hot/cold weather or the rain
- Horseback riding for 1+ hours
- Swimming and snorkeling for 2+ hours
- Using archery bow

What types of conditions and environments will my camper need to be comfortable being in?

- Staying and moving with the group at all times
- Following all directions given by adult instructors
- 15 passenger van shared with fellow campers and adult instructors
- Outdoor, all weather nature centers
- Open water*
- Horse stables and open natural areas*
- Large, public spaces with large groups of other people
- Spaces with sudden, loud noises and changes in lighting
- Shared sleeping and eating facilities (university dorm, San Antonio Zoo, tent camping at Lake Corpus Christi)
- Public shower facilities
- Last minute changes in schedules due to safety, inclement weather or forces beyond TSA's control

**Campers are not required to horseback ride or swim/snorkel if they choose not to. However, they must be comfortable being in the close vicinity of horses and open water.*

What forms of ID will my camper need?

Your camper will need a government or school issued photo ID.

What are the cellphone/social media policies?

Campers are allowed to bring their cellphones, provided they use them appropriately at the discretion of their Instructors. Cellphones may be used for taking pictures of activities, recording videos of activities and for taking notes. All contact to parents/guardians must be done with Instructor knowledge and permission. While in the custody of TSA Staff, campers may not text or call parents/guardians unsupervised. Social media may be used with Instructor knowledge and permission provided campers only post pictures/videos of themselves unless given express permission by their Instructors as not all campers may have written permission by parents/guardians to be featured. Any posting of photos or videos of other campers that is not approved is expressly prohibited.

Orientation

Is the orientation mandatory? Who is required to attend?

Yes. The orientation meeting is fully mandatory. The teen participant and at least one parent/guardian is required to attend in person. Both will be required to attend for the entire length of the orientation. Late arrivals beyond 15 minutes or early departures will not be accommodated. This is NOT an event for friends or siblings.

What is included in the orientation?

Orientation will take place at TSA and will include meeting the trip's facilitating instructors, the Education Camp Specialist and Director of Education; information about the trip; time for questions; and time to sign and turn in final paperwork. Participants will then engage in fun, team bonding activities with their trip instructors to start making friends while the parents/guardians have additional time to discuss the trip with the Education Camp Specialist and Director of Education.

Registration and Payment

Where can I register my camper?

All registrations are via our website at texasstateaquarium.org.

How do I make my payment?

Your full payment is due at time of registration online at texasstateaquarium.org.

Is any portion of my payment refundable?

A refund of 50% of the cost can be accommodated prior to the two-week registration deadline. However, if you decide to withdraw from this program after the two-week deadline, your payment will not be refunded. The success of this program depends on complete participation and payment from all registrants.

How do I pay for travel expenses?

All transportation, overnight accommodations and some meals are included in the program cost. Participants will need to bring money with for the remaining meals and any souvenirs they wish to purchase. More details about what to pack and bring with will be provided at the mandatory orientation.