

Summer Beach Program FAQs

What is the difference between the beach programs?

Jekyll Island offers four different sea turtle beach programs, each providing a unique way to experience sea turtle conservation. The programs vary in length, level of participation, time of day, and possible sea turtle sightings.

Ride with Night Patrol

This is our most immersive experience. Participants ride along the beach in UTVs with sea turtle biologists during nighttime patrols. Guests may have the opportunity to observe—and potentially assist with—scientific data collection if a nesting turtle is encountered. Programs typically last about three hours.

Ride with Dawn Patrol

This early-morning patrol focuses on nest monitoring and beach surveys conducted after nighttime nesting activity. Participants ride along with the patrol team and may have opportunities to assist with monitoring nests or documenting activity from the previous night. Programs typically last three to four hours, depending on patrol conditions.

Evening Walk

This program begins with a short presentation at the Georgia Sea Turtle Center before participants caravan to the beach for a guided nighttime walk. Guests will learn about sea turtle nesting behavior while searching for nesting turtles. Walks last approximately 1.5 hours.

Sunrise Walk

After caravanning from the Georgia Sea Turtle Center to the beach, participants will search for tracks and signs of nesting activity from the night before and learn about sea turtle nesting and the island's ecology. These walks last approximately 1.5 hours and include admission to the Georgia Sea Turtle Center from 9:00 AM–12:00 PM on the day of the program.

Because these programs take place in a natural beach environment, sea turtle sightings cannot be guaranteed on any program.

Am I guaranteed to see a sea turtle or hatchlings?

No. Because these programs take place in a natural beach environment, sea turtle sightings cannot be guaranteed. Sea turtles are wild animals, and nesting activity varies from night to night and throughout the nesting season.

When is the best time to book a program?

Sea turtle nesting season on Jekyll Island typically runs May through October, with most nesting activity occurring between June and August. During this time, female loggerhead sea turtles come ashore at night to lay their eggs.

While nesting occurs at night, our morning programs often observe signs of nesting activity from the previous evening, such as fresh tracks, newly marked nests, or evidence of hatchlings emerging. Because sea turtles are wild animals and nesting activity varies each day, there is no guaranteed time to see a turtle.

Which program is the most hands-on?

The Ride with Patrol programs (Ride with Night Patrol and Ride with Dawn Patrol) offer the most immersive experience. During these programs, participants ride along the beach in UTVs with the sea turtle patrol team and observe the work being done to monitor and protect sea turtle nests on Jekyll Island. If a turtle or nest activity is encountered, guests may have the opportunity to assist researchers with certain tasks at the discretion of the patrol team, such as documenting nesting activity or helping mark nests.

The Sunrise Walk and Evening Turtle Walk are guided educational experiences. These programs focus on learning about sea turtle nesting and beach ecology while walking along the beach with our educators.

How physically active are the beach programs?

All beach programs take place outdoors and involve walking on soft sand and uneven terrain. Participants should be comfortable spending time outdoors in warm, humid, or buggy conditions.

If you have mobility concerns, we recommend contacting us in advance so we can help determine whether the programs will be a good fit for you.

Is there a minimum age requirement for the beach programs?

Yes. Participants must be at least 10 years old to attend any of the beach programs. Guests ages 10–15 must be accompanied by a participating adult (18+).

Are we allowed to take photos during the programs?

Yes, personal photography is allowed, but flash photography and bright lights are strictly prohibited on the beach. Artificial light can disturb nesting turtles and hatchlings, so guests must keep their cameras and phones on no-flash settings at all times.

As a State Park, commercial or professional photography and videography are not allowed during the programs unless prior authorization has been granted by the Jekyll Island Authority. To inquire about commercial/professional photography or videography, email marketing@jekyllisland.com.

What should I bring?

Beach programs take place outdoors and participants should be prepared for changing coastal weather conditions.

We recommend bringing:

- A refillable water bottle to stay hydrated
- Comfortable shoes or sandals that can get sandy
- Weather-appropriate clothing, such as light layers or a rain jacket
- Bug spray

How many people participate in each program? Are private programs available?

Group sizes vary depending on the program. Ride with Patrol programs are very exclusive, with only 2 seats per program.

Sunrise Walks and Evening Turtle Walks can accommodate larger groups and typically include up to 20 participants per walk.

Private programs may be available. If you are interested in arranging a private patrol, contact conservation@jekyllisland.com. To inquire about a private walk experience for a larger group, please contact gstceducation@jekyllisland.com.