



# Discover the region at Discovery Center

Written by

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POCOMOKE CITY, Md. -- It's a museum, an aquarium and a history lesson rolled into one. And it's just a quick drive from Virginia's Eastern Shore.

Born from the need to boost the downtown economy after Route 13 redirected traffic from the once-booming area of Pocomoke City the Delmarva Discovery Center is a hands-on way for visitors to learn about the history and ecology of the Eastern Shore.

The center offers an interactive walk-through of the major eras in the region's history, from 12,000 years of Native American culture on the peninsula to the steamship era, where the museum transforms into a two-story steamboat.

Visitors can expect to use a set of tongs to dig for oysters, walk through a beaver dam and interact with local species in the touch tank.

"You want people to engage with what you're offering them as much as possible," DDC Executive Director Brian Garrett said.

The project began as a concept in the 1990s, when locals were seeking ways to

revitalize a struggling economy. A decision was reached to begin a cultural project to attract "a different type of visitor for a different reason" than commerce, Garrett explained.

"We sought out different experts, worked with different volunteers," he said. The result was the opening of the 16,000-square-foot museum in June 2009.

"It's been a great tool for kids," Garrett said.

A 6,000 gallon tank -- the largest in the region -- housing local species of fish was added in 2010 and has been a major attraction.

At the DDC's annual Fintastic Festival, held last Saturday, one of the main events included watching the museum's Aquarium Curator Jennifer Rafter dive into the tank to feed the fish.

Other events hosted by the DDC throughout the year include the Winter Watermen's

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Festival in December, a haunted tour of the museum for Halloween and a Marine Biology Summer Camp from July 18-22 this summer. The center has also been rented out for birthday parties and other events.

Visitors make day trips from Ocean City and Chincoteague to learn more about the area through the DDC, but locals also visit the Discovery Center.

On the first weekend of every month, locals get half off admission and one free child with each paid adult.

"We've tried to do some things to make it affordable for locals to come," Garrett said.

Aside from what the DDC has to offer inside, visitors are encouraged to explore the local community. The center offers packages, including guided tours of the Pocomoke River on the Bay Queen, fishing trips and walks on the nature trail across the street.

Those who venture outdoors can hope to see otters, beavers, bald eagles and turtles, depending on the season. The Pocomoke River is also home to the nation's northern-most cypress swamp, giving it a "tremendously unique ecology," said Garrett.

The DDC is open seven days a week in the summer, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Admission costs \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors and \$5 for children. Group tour pricing is available.

To learn more about the DDC's summer camp and other events, visit [www.delmarva](http://www.delmarva)

[discoverycenter.org](http://discoverycenter.org) or call the center at .

The Delmarva Discovery Center is located less than two miles off of Route 13 at 2 Market St., Pocomoke City, Md.

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