

Be **GREEN** ^{and BLUE} because the
Ocean Matters



Brian Skerry Photo

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UTILA, BAY ISLANDS

Honduras, July 27-August 3, 2019

Ocean Matters Marine Science Through Service Programs

At the Whale Shark Oceanic Research Center (WSORC) and Bay Islands College of Diving (BICD), Utila, Bay Islands, Honduras

Come along with other ocean loving high-school aged students (15 or older) from all over the world for the experience of a lifetime. Earn Open Water scuba certification; explore Utila's underwater riches in daily

scuba dives; learn about the challenges facing the coral reef. Be part of the solution by participating in whale shark, coral and fish monitoring and address the many pressing environmental problems facing the coral reef through a

coral restoration project performed on scuba. Partake in other rare experiences that explore the nexus of technology, science, and sustainability.

Bring science to life!

July 27-August 3, 2019
Utila, Bay Islands, Honduras

Frequently Asked Questions

How might I benefit from coming on this program?

Alumni of the program have identified the following benefits of the program: explore whether or not you want to pursue college study and a career in marine science; increase self esteem through meeting both physical and academic

challenges; develop research skills; feel empowered by helping to solve a pressing environmental problem; develop team work skills including appreciation for differences, appropriate expression of feelings, effective problem solving;

develop leadership skills; develop grit and stamina through challenge; receive scuba certification; receive 6-10 hours of community service credit. See our website for alumni testimonials.

What are the prerequisites for the program?

You do not need to be scuba certified to attend this program, as scuba training and certification is included.

Students for this program **must be:**
1) High-school aged (grades 9-12) and minimally 15 years old when the program begins

2) Be able to swim 200 yards without stopping and tread water for ten minutes in order to pass scuba certification.



What activities will we be doing?

Each day will bring a completely different breathtaking underwater experience!

The first several days will revolve around our PADI Open Water scuba certification course. For at least 2 days we will be working in a confined pool-like setting on skills necessary for scuba certification. Then we will move to open water; where we will do our final testing for certification.

Once everyone in the group is PADI Open Water scuba certified, we will explore Utila's underwater treasures! There will be two educational boat dives focusing on coral and fish monitoring and identification as part of our service project. Monitoring coral and fish diversity is an important way biologists track the health of a coral reef. Then for three days we will participate in WSORC's coral restoration project, where students will be tying coral

fragments from an on-land coral nursery onto an artificial substrate underwater. This will be the centerpiece of our service project, as coral reefs in the Caribbean have faced unprecedented declines from warming waters. Planting new corals that might be more heat tolerant is a promising way scientists are addressing climate change's impacts on the reef.

Afternoons will feature marine biology instruction such as participating in hands-on opportunities to learn more about the challenges facing the coral reef; learning coral and fish identifications to be used during dives and for obtaining REEF Fish Identification certification; and understanding more about whale shark monitoring methods, including the high tech Wave Glider drones used by WSORC. On our last day we will spend the majority of the morning on a whale shark safari where with the help of the Wave Glider Drones we

will search for whale sharks in the local waters. If we are lucky enough to encounter a whale shark, we will monitor their behavior and identify the specific animal while snorkeling using skills including the photo recognition methods we learned through classroom sessions earlier in the week. We will also identify the whale shark's sex and spotted patterns to add to WSORC's database.

Leadership training is also a component of our program. Everything we do requires young people to take responsibility for themselves and others in the group and allows opportunity for students to take frequent leadership roles. Students also receive direct leadership skills training and support in bringing the learning home to address pressing issues facing the seas, no matter where they live, in projects around rivers, lakes, and even landlocked ecosystems!



Coral restoration at WSORC. Image by Utila Dive Lodge. Used with permission.

What will room and board be like?

We will be staying at the Utila Lodge, which is the home to both the Bay Island College of Diving and WSORC, allowing us to have access to a health clinic, hyperbaric chamber, the dive charter boats, restaurant, classrooms and labs all on one secure campus. Accommodations

consist of rooms with two double beds and will be shared by two same gender students in each room. Each room has its own bathroom and includes air conditioning.

You will arrive at the Lodge on July 27th by ground transportation provided by

the Utila Lodge from the Utila airport.

Since we will be eating at a full service restaurant, we are able to accommodate any dietary restrictions. Please let us know in advance, however.



An aerial view of the Utila Lodge.

What role will scuba diving play?

Utila has some of the best diving in the world with a high diversity of coral reef flora and fauna. PADI Open Water scuba certification is provided with your tuition, as well as three days of 2-tank educational boat dives. You must have your own mask, fins and snorkel, but all other scuba equipment including a wetsuit will be provided. Diving will be supervised by Ocean Matters Director of Dive Education Laura

McCallion. Laura is a PADI Course Director, which is the highest level of professional scuba certification available and has decades of experience teaching students of all levels. She will ensure that dives are customized to your comfort and skill level.

We dive together in a group with buddy pairs to ensure safety. Each dive is supervised by at least three professional dive staff with a Dive Master

or higher certification. We adhere to and exceed the highest of PADI dive standards.. Once you have paid a deposit, Laura will set up your online scuba course work (approximately 12-14 hours to complete) to be completed before attending the program. If you have any questions about the dive program, feel free to reach out to Laura McCallion at 508-320-5087.

Who will arrange my travel?

You will be paying for and arranging your own air travel. Please contact our preferred travel agency Atlas Travel for booking. Atlas does charge a service fee, but Ocean Matters will gladly pay for this service fee to ensure that you are well taken care of on your trip. By using Atlas you will have the peace of mind of obtaining a

hotline number for unexpected changes to your travel itinerary. Atlas Travel is also an expert at finding the best prices for your flight.

Whenever possible Atlas will ensure that an OM staff member and other applicants will be on the same flight to San Pedro Sula, Honduras

from connecting hubs in the United States. From San Pedro Sula you will travel on to Utila by a short charter flight or flights also arranged by Atlas. Once you have applied, we will give you the contact information for Atlas Travel to initiate your arrangements.



Utila Lodge standard double room. Image used with permission.

Who will the staff for this trip be?

We will have a minimum of six Ocean Matters staff supervising this trip. Ocean Matters Director Cassie Bergeron and Director of Dive Education Laura McCallion will be involved in every aspect of supervising this trip

and will be accompanied by Assistant Director of Dive Education Peter Lewandowski and Divemaster and Marketing Director Ari Liuzzi. WSORC professional staff, instructors and researchers will be presenting much of the

science instruction. Professional dive staff from Bay Island College of Diving will be assisting in supervising the boat dives. Biographies for our staff can be found at www.oceanmatters.org.



How much does it cost?

The fee for the trip is \$3,600 per person which includes all programming, scuba instruction, dives and gear, ground transportation, activities, food (3

meals a day), beverages, and accommodations. **Airfare is not included. Students must also bring their own mask, fins, and snorkel.**

How do I apply?

Applications must be in by March 14, 2019. To apply, please submit:

A completed application available online at www.oceanmatters.org.

One letter of recommendation: either an academic reference preferably from a science teacher or another high

school teacher or a character reference preferably from an unrelated adult.

An up-to-date transcript of all high school work completed to date (must include first semester).

A \$50 application fee paid to Ocean Matters. The fee should be paid online via the

application page.

Acceptance decisions will be announced by April 1, 2019 via an emailed letter.

Do you still have questions or want more information?

Please feel free to call Ocean Matters Director of Dive Education Laura McCallion at

508-320-5087, who is leading this trip. Additionally,

questions could be sent to admissions@oceanmatters.org

