

# What is Delmarva Low-Impact Tourism Experiences (DLITE)?

DLITE represents a union of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia businesses, conservation organizations, and local, state, and federal partners which have formed an alliance to strengthen and promote low-impact, nature-based tourism on Delmarva. Low-impact tourism plans, manages and promotes the enjoyment and protection of the environment and local culture to generate income, employment, and the conservation and sustainability of local ecosystems.

## Why Become a DLITE Partner?

By joining DLITE, you will be supporting the only organization on Delmarva working across state and county lines to increase

- the visibility, access, quality, and economic value of low-impact tourism on Delmarva;
- the utilization of existing resources (human, financial, natural, cultural, historical) to strengthen low-impact tourism on Delmarva; and
- Delmarva's identity as a region rich with low-impact tourism opportunities.

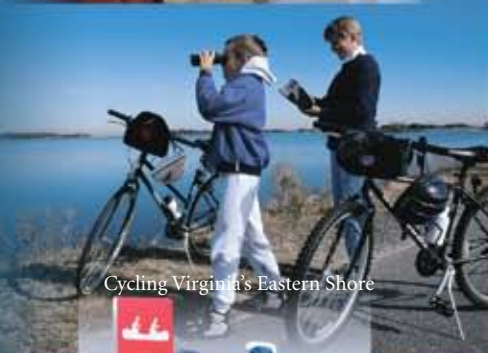
DLITE partner organizations will be linked to the DLITE website and listed in the DLITE quarterly newsletter. DLITE partners also receive regular updates about Delmarva low-impact tourism news, events, and projects.

## DLITE Accomplishments

DLITE promotes cycling, birding, and paddling opportunities across Delmarva through the creation of trails and hosting of regional events. We train park and museum interpreters and nature tour providers to help them tell great stories to our visitors, and practice low-impact, "leave no trace" travel. We host tours for travel writers and work with journalists who share our experiences with millions of readers and viewers. We provide a one-stop shop that connects tourism providers with visitors through our websites and newsletters. Recent trail projects include the production of the Great Delmarva Bicycling Trail, Smith Island Water Trail, and the EA Vaughn Kayak Trail. Annually, DLITE hosts low-impact tourism events, such as the Delmarva Birding Weekend.



Bird Banding at Kiptopeke



Cycling Virginia's Eastern Shore



Smith Island Water Trail



DLITE is supported through the generosity of:



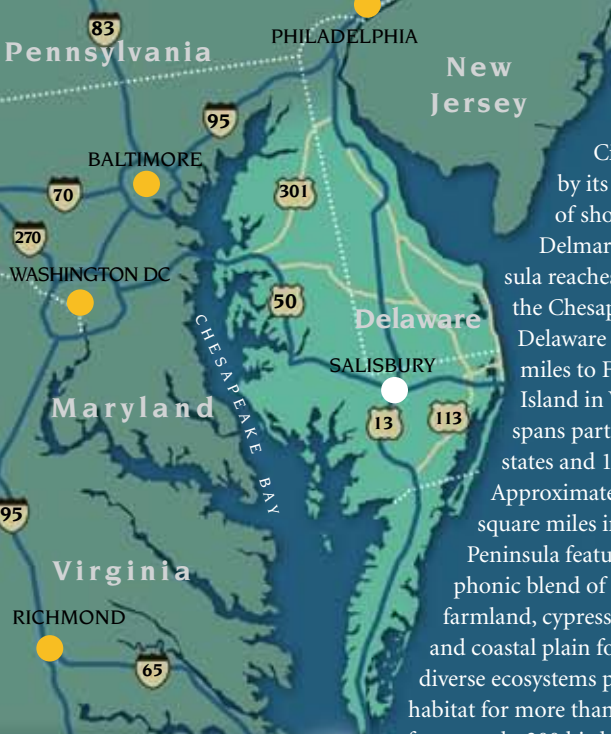
DLITE partner organizations include businesses, educational institutions, non-profit and environmental organizations, and local government and state agencies. Individuals and families are also welcome to support the work of DLITE.

For information, please contact:

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Growing Jobs



# The Delmarva Peninsula - Explore Our Nature & Heritage

Circumscribed by its 3,600 miles of shoreline, the Delmarva Peninsula reaches south from the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal for 180 miles to Fisherman's Island in Virginia. It spans parts of three states and 14 counties. Approximately 5,500 square miles in area, our Peninsula features a symphonic blend of tidal marsh, farmland, cypress swamp, and coastal plain forest. These diverse ecosystems provide habitat for more than 100 species of mammals, 300 birds, 70 reptiles and amphibians, 60 butterflies, and thousands of aquatic and terrestrial animals and plants.

For centuries, Native Americans hunted and fished the land and water of our Chesapeake, Delaware and coastal bays. The region still echoes their presence – Chincoteague and Accomack, Nanticoke and Choptank. Famed explorer Giovanni da Verrazano kept a journal of his visit to our Atlantic coast in 1524. Captain John Smith documented his journeys of exploration in our Chesapeake waters in 1608. Our coastal bays are believed to have been a hideout for Edward Teach, also known as Blackbeard the Pirate. Much of the coastal landscape witnessed by the early explorers and pirates exists in the vistas of our rivers and bays today.

The British, Dutch and Swedish staked early claims to the Peninsula. Colonial plantations were patented in the 17th century, and many of their stately mansions

remain with us as reminders of a bygone era. Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass were born here as slaves, and led the country with their revolutionary actions against the institution of slavery. Our rivers served as pathways to freedom on the Underground Railroad.

Early agriculture and fishing industries were developed in our forests and fields and along our coasts. Our cypress and hardwood forests were mined for bog iron and timbered for shipbuilding. Railroads shipped local produce and products from our working communities. Family farms and waterman's communities still dominate a rural landscape that hosts millions of travelers each year.

Throughout our human history on Delmarva, wild animals and plants have survived despite the pressures faced from modern civilization. Bears, wolves, and cougars once lived alongside our Native American ancestors, but are locally extinct today. Captain John Smith described two globally extinct species – the Carolina parakeet and the passenger pigeon – in his journals of Chesapeake exploration. Despite years of commercial and unregulated hunting and trapping, animals such as river otter, beaver, and whitetail deer are now thriving. Waterfowl, once hunted for profit, now winter in large numbers above the seagrass beds in our shallow bays. These seagrass beds support a wide variety of marine life, including blue crabs, striped bass, seahorses, and diamondback terrapins.

Migratory birds provide us with one of the greatest wildlife spectacles on the planet. Our Delaware Bay parks and refuges host hundreds of thousands of snow geese each winter, and thousands of shorebirds each spring. The Delaware Bay is a critical feeding stopover for rare shorebirds such as the red knot and ruddy turnstone, who fly here to feed on the eggs of spawning horseshoe crabs. Spring is a great time to paddle through our Delmarva swamps in search of migrating warblers, nesting woodpeckers, and basking turtles. Summer is the season for dragonflies, butterflies, and twilight serenades performed by frog choruses in our freshwater swamps and ponds. The Eastern Shore of Virginia funnels migratory songbirds and raptors flying south in the fall. Thousands of migrating birds can be counted on a good day in October.

Our Chesapeake marshes and forests host one of the largest concentrations of breeding bald eagle and osprey in North America. Our barrier islands provide nesting sites for terns, herons, egrets, ibis, and the endangered piping plover. We also celebrate the famous wild horses of Chincoteague and Assateague made famous by Marguerite Henry's book "Misty of Chincoteague."

Low-impact tourism is a growing sector of our modern travel industry, and is worth billions of dollars to our state and local economies. The Delmarva Peninsula is perfectly positioned along the Eastern Seaboard within easy reach of millions of travelers wishing to escape generic landscapes and experience authentic nature, heritage, food, and culture. Delmarva boasts six National Wildlife Refuges, one National Seashore, 12 state parks, and dozens of wildlife areas, state forests, preserves, and heritage sites. Visitors to the Peninsula

experience our rich nature and heritage by navigating our waters, paddling our water trails, combing our beaches, watching wildlife in our parks, cycling our scenic country roads, exploring our heritage sites and museums, and tasting the bounty of our bays and farms.

## Building a Conservation Movement Through Low-Impact Tourism Experiences

Think about the places that matter and mean the most to you. Chances are those places are ones in which you have enjoyed a profound personal experience. It might be a trail along which you saw your first eagle in the wild, or a visit to an historic working village. Whether you recognized it at the time or not, that experience was a key moment in your decision to value and conserve our nature and heritage.

DLITE seeks to bring those special experiences to thousands of people each year. While cycling, birding, paddling, or any of the myriad other recreational activities on the Delmarva Peninsula, many people will have that seminal experience that motivates them to protect our nature and heri-

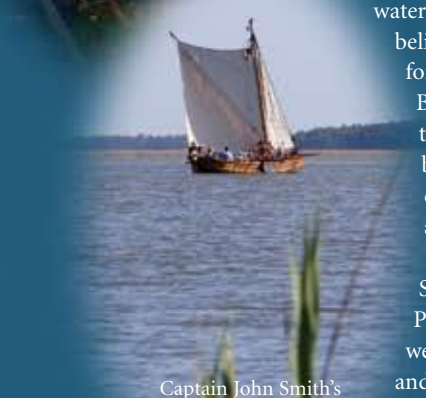
tage. While traveling on



Harriet Tubman



Pemberton Hall



Captain John Smith's Shallop



River Otter



Diamond back Terrapin



Bald Eagle



Smith Island Cake



Chincoteague Pony

Delmarva, visitors spend money with our hotels, restaurants, outfitters, parks, and museums. The economic development supported by low-impact tourism helps our

local communities develop comprehensive strategies for protecting open space, water quality, historic sites, and cultural traditions.

The most effective conservation advocates are those who have a personal connection with a place. They have been inspired by its beauty and richness. Ultimately, they develop a personal stake in its future and are willing to act on its behalf. These doorways open the heart and the mind to the magnificence of what is, a sense of what was, and to an intense desire for what must continue to be.