

Alabama's Coastal Connection

Alabama's southern tip is a place where even first-time visitors find a connection. Here, you can experience the links between the traditions of the Deep South and a more laid-back island lifestyle, between the wildlife of thousands of acres of preserved lands and a beachfront vacation, and between the gunships of past naval battles and the countless recreational opportunities of the present. Make your own connection from the moment you take in one of the area's exceptional sights. As you journey on the route, see the sun sinking into the warm Gulf of Mexico, the weathered halls of a 150-year-old brick fort, the flutter of a colorful neotropical migrant bird, or a fishing boat easing from the dock at sunrise.

Length: 130 miles / 208.0 km



Local Information

We do not have contact information for this Byway.

Visitor Services



Accessibility

Many of the individual attractions and facilities along the byway are handicap accessible and ADA compliant.



Bicycle/Pedestrian Facilities

The Eastern Shore Trail is a 32-mile multipurpose trail that runs along the shores of Mobile Bay and parallel to the byway. The Town of Dauphin Island has more than 10 miles of bike paths and sidewalks. Gulf Shores and Orange Beach currently have bicycle lanes, sidewalks and multi-use paths along the byway route on Highways 182, 161 and parts of 180.



Camping

Gulf State Park offers modern and primitive camping.



Food

There are cafes in Fairhope. Enjoy lunch overlooking Mobile Bay at one of Fairhope's local restaurants. Seafood is a specialty here, so savor the flavor of

Alabama's Coastal Connection

the bounty of the waters that are such an integral part of life here and all along the byway.

Gasoline



Gasoline is available in the towns along the byway including Montgomery and Fairhope.

Information



* Dauphin Island Welcome Center, on Dauphin Island, is open from 10 am to 2 pm, Monday-Saturday and can provide more information to travelers. * Alabama Gulf Coast CVB Welcome Center, on Orange Beach, is open seven days a week, 9 am - 5 pm, and offers Internet access, along with visitor information. * South Baldwin Chamber of Commerce, in Foley, is open 8 am - 5 pm, Monday-Friday, and provides more information for visitors. * Foley CVB, in Foley, is open 9 am - 5 pm, Monday-Friday, and provides visitor information. * Eastern Shore Chamber of Commerce, in Fairhope, is open 8 am - 5 pm, Monday-Friday, and the Daphne location is open seven days a week with seasonal weekend hours. Both provide visitor information.

Lodging



A refreshing night's stay at any of a variety of gulf-front accommodations in Gulf Shores or Orange Beach allows you to sit back and enjoy the sounds of the surf, the smell of the salt air, and the view of the sunset overlooking the Gulf waters.

Restrooms



Restrooms are available at many of the places and towns along the byway.

Retail



Retail is available in the towns along the byway and there are gift shops at many of the places along the byway.

Special Considerations

The Mobile Bay Ferry is a service offered for a fee during regularly posted daytime hours, which vary by season. Vehicles 30 feet or longer should call ahead for loading guidance due to seasonal tide changes. The Foley Beach Express portion of the route includes a bridge with a per-axle toll.

Restrictions

The route includes crossing Mobile Bay via the Mobile Bay Ferry, a service offered for a fee during regularly posted daytime hours. Vehicles 30 feet or longer are asked to call ahead for specific loading instructions to avoid delays. Schedule and fees are posted at mobilebayferry.com.

Alabama's Coastal Connection

Seasons

Best Time to Drive

Alabama's Coastal Connection offers scenic views all year, but fall brings festivals, art shows, and the most brilliant sunsets over the waters.

Fall

Fall brings festivals, art shows, and the most brilliant sunsets over the waters.

High Season

Alabama's Gulf Coast is a family beach destination, so spring break time (April-May) and summer months are the busiest along the byway.

Spring

High season because of the beaches

Summer

High season because of the beaches

Alabama's Coastal Connection

Map and Directions



Legend:

Point of Interest	Campground	Featured Byway	Water	State Border
Park	Picnic/Rest Area	America's Byways	Wildlife Refuge	Urban Area
Mountain	Interstate	Other Byway	Wilderness Area	Tribal Nation
City	U.S. Highway	Other Road	Other Federal Lands	Military Base
Capital	State Highway	Trail	Other State Lands	

Driving Directions

- The byway starts on Grand Bay Wilmer Rd. off of I-10, north of Grand Bay, AL. GPS Point (30.4965, -88.33548).

Alabama's Coastal Connection

- Drive south on Grand Bay Wilmer Rd. to Government Blvd. Entering Grand Bay, AL.
- Drive northeast on Government Blvd. to State Hwy 188.
- Drive south on State Hwy. 188 to State Hwy. 188.
- Drive east on State Hwy. 188 to State Hwy. 188/Wintzell Ave.
- Drive south on State Hwy. 188/Wintzell Ave. Entering Bayou La Batre, AL.
- Drive south on State Hwy. 188/S. Wintzell Ave. to County Rd. 59/Bellingrath Rd.
- *First Spur*: Drive north on County Rd. 59/Bellingrath Rd. to Bellingrath Gardens. Return back to State Hwy. 188.
- Go east into Alabama Port, AL.
- Drive south on State Hwy. 193/Dauphin Island Pkwy. to Bienville Blvd. Entering Dauphin Island, AL.
- Drive east on Bienville Blvd. to the Ferry that takes you between Dauphin Island and Fort Morgan.
- Take the ferry to Fort Morgan.
- Drive east on State Hwy. 180/Dixie Graves Pkwy./Fort Morgan Rd. to Gulf State Park.
- Drive east into the park on State Hwy. 135/Fort Morgan Rd.
- Stay on State Hwy. 135 til State Hwy. 182/Perdido Beach Blvd.
- Drive east on State Hwy. 182/Perdido Beach Blvd. to the junction with State Hwy. 161/Orange Beach Blvd.
- *Second Spur*: Continue on State Hwy. 182/Perdido Beach Blvd. to the state line with Florida. Return back to the junction of State Hwy. 182/Perdido Beach Blvd. and State Hwy. 161/Orange Beach Blvd.
- Drive north on State Hwy. 161/Orange Beach Blvd. to State Hwy. 180/Canal Rd.
- *Third Spur*: Drive east on State Hwy. 180/Canal Rd. til the road ends. Return back to the junction of State Hwy. 161/Orange Beach Blvd. and State Hwy. 180/Canal Rd.
- Drive west on State Hwy. 180/Canal Rd. to Foley Beach Expy.
- Drive north on Foley Beach Expy. to Co. Rd. 20/Mifflin Rd.
- Drive east on Co. Rd. 20/Mifflin Rd. then east on Co. Rd. 83.
- Enter Elberta, AL.
- *Fourth Spur*: Drive east on U.S. Hwy. 98/State Ave. to Baldwin County Heritage Museum. Return back to Elberta, AL.
- Drive west on U.S. Hwy. 98/State Ave. to Foley, AL.
- Continue west on U.S. Hwy. 98 and then west on U.S. 98 Alt.
- Drive north on U.S. 98 Alt. entering Point Clear, AL.
- Continue north on U.S. 98 Alt. to Magnolia Ave. in Fairhope, AL.
- Drive east on Magnolia Ave. to U.S. 98 Alt./N. Section St.
- Turn north onto Co. Rd. 98/Main St. going into Montrose, AL.
- Continue on Co. Rd. 98/Main St. to Daphne, AL.
- Continue north on Co. Rd. 98/Main St. then north on U.S. Hwy. 98 to I-10. GPS point (30.65569, -87.91190).

Alabama's Coastal Connection

Getting to the Byway



Nearby airports

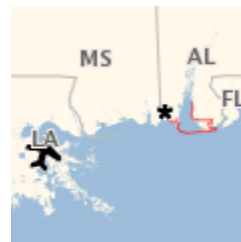
Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport, LA
(133 miles / 214.04 km, 2 hours)

Start: ✈️ Louis Armstrong New Orleans International Airport
N 29.984° W 90.256° [?]

Directions:

- Leaving the airport, turn left on W. Airline Hwy/US 61, then left onto Airport Access Road.
- Merge onto I-10 East.
- Keep left on I-10 East, which merges into I-610 East.
- Merge onto I-10 East via Exit 239A-B.
- Travel 117 miles through Mississippi and into Alabama.
- Take Exit 4 at Grand Bay, Alabama.

Junction with byway: * I-10 Exit 4, Grand Bay
N 30.497° W 88.336° [?]



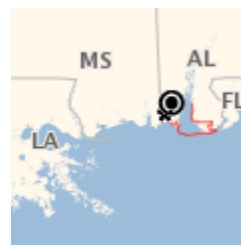
Nearby cities

Mobile, AL (19 miles / 30.58 km, 25 minutes)

Start: 📍 Mobile Regional Airport
N 30.677° W 88.243° [?]

Directions:

- Upon leaving the Mobile Regional Airport, turn right onto Airport Boulevard and travel to Newman Road/County Road 11.
- Turn left (south) on Newman Road, and follow it as it turns into Grand Bay Wilmer Rd.
- The byway begins when you cross with I-10.



Alabama's Coastal Connection

**Junction
with
byway:** * AL-188 in Grand Bay
N 30.497° W 88.335° [?]

Road Trip: Connecting with Nature

Departure: Dauphin Island Audubon Bird Sanctuary, Alabama

Destination: Eastern Shore Trail, Alabama

Time to allow: 2 days

There are many ways to enjoy Alabama's Coastal Connection, but none offers more scenic views than this "Connecting with Nature" itinerary. Take two days and experience the beauty and variety of the natural assets of Alabama's Gulf Coast and the interpretive facilities that help visitors understand their connection. Spring and fall are the best times of year to enjoy this itinerary, and completion times will vary depending upon the degree of interest in hiking and/or biking along the variety of trails.

Day 1

- **Start: Dauphin Island Audubon Bird Sanctuary**

After beginning your drive along the rural farmlands of Mobile County and by the scenic docks of Bayou La Batre, continue across the Dauphin Island bridge onto the island.



Arriving at the Dauphin Island Audubon Bird Sanctuary, you'll find parking and picnic areas and interpretive signage describing the habitats and birds you can find here and along the Alabama Coastal Birding Trail on which the sanctuary is a stop. Explore the 1,000-foot handicap-accessible boardwalk from the parking lot to "Gaillard Lake" or the raised walkway through the Tupelo swamp. The sanctuary encompasses more than a mile of trails through a variety of intact habitats, including preserved maritime forest.

Alabama's Coastal Connection

- **Stop 1: Dauphin Island Sea Lab Estuarium**

From previous stop: 5 minutes / 0.5 mi (0.8 km)

Directions: Upon leaving the sanctuary, turn right onto Bienville Boulevard and travel approximately one-half mile to the Estuarium.

Suggested time at this stop: 2 hours

The estuarium is an exciting educational facility highlighting the four key habitats of coastal Alabama: the Mobile Tensaw River Delta, Mobile Bay, the Barrier Islands and the Northern Gulf of Mexico. It includes the 10,000-square-foot exhibit hall and Living Marsh Boardwalk. This facility is a showcase of the plants, animals, and other natural resources found in the Estuary and its surrounding marine habitats.

Through beautiful visuals and engaging interactive exhibits, the estuarium will leave you with a comprehensive understanding of the crucial link between the land and the sea-- how watersheds, rivers and estuaries interact with Mobile Bay, the fourth largest estuary system in the United States.

This would be a good time to have lunch before continuing your trip.

- **Stop 2: Mobile Bay Ferry**



From previous stop: 5 minutes / 0.5 mi (0.8 km)

Directions: Depart from the estuarium and turn right onto Bienville Boulevard. Then enter the boarding area for the Mobile Bay Ferry.

Suggested time at this stop: 45 minutes

The Mobile Bay Ferry connects the Mobile and Baldwin County segments of the byway and also offers travelers a unique connection with the waters of Mobile Bay. The 30-minute trip across the bay gives an up-close look at the waters and a chance to view the recreational and commercial maritime endeavors ever-active in these waters.

Alabama's Coastal Connection

- **Stop 3: Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge**



From previous stop: 20 minutes / 12 mi (19.2 km)

Directions: Upon disembarking the ferry, turn to the left, exiting Fort Morgan Historic Site and continuing approximately 12 miles to the Pine Beach Trail entrance to the Bon Secour National Wildlife Refuge on the right.

Suggested time at this stop: 2 hours

Habitats of the refuge include beaches and sand dunes, scrub forest, fresh and salt water marshes, fresh water swamps, and uplands. Explore all of these along the three-mile Pine Beach Trail, which will lead you to the sugar-white sands of the area's spectacular beaches.

- **End: Scenic Views at Gulf Shores and Orange Beach**

From previous stop: 15 minutes / 10 mi (16.0 km)

Directions: Continue on AL-180 to the east (right) from the refuge and follow the route into Gulf State Park and onto AL-135, which intersects AL-182.

After a full day of hiking the trails and exploring the waters, take time out to relax and let nature come to you. A refreshing night's stay at any of a variety of gulf front accommodations in Gulf Shores or Orange Beach allows you to sit back and enjoy the sounds of the surf, the smell of the salt air and the view of the sunset overlooking the Gulf waters. For the more rustic types, camping and cabin accommodations are available with lake or lagoon views.

Totals for Day 1

Total Distance Traveled: 23 miles / 36.8 km

Total Travel Time: 45 minutes

Total Stopping Time: 4 hours 45 minutes

Day 2

- **Stop 1: Orange Beach Marinas**

From previous stop: 10 minutes / 6 mi (9.6 km)

Directions: From your beachfront accommodations, travel east on AL-182 (Perdido Beach Blvd.), or north on AL-161 and then east on AL-180, to the marina from which your charter departs.

Suggested time at this stop: 2 hours

From one of the many marinas in Orange Beach visitors can enjoy a scenic back bay excursion aboard a charter cruise boat. Most have regularly scheduled morning and evening sightseeing trips and will schedule private trips upon reservations. This trip will offer an intimate view of the hundreds of acres of back bays along the byway and an interpretive overview of the birds and marine life you'll see there. Resident wild bottlenose dolphin are a favorite site on these tours.

• Stop 2: Weeks Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve

From 30 minutes / 26 mi (41.6 km)

**previous
stop:**

Directions: After the cruise, depart Orange Beach traveling west on AL-180 (Canal Road) to the Foley Beach Expressway. Travel across the toll bridge and continue to County Road 20, where you'll take a right. Continue on County Road 20 until it takes a 90-degree left turn and becomes County Road 83. When you reach US-98 in Elberta, turn left and continue through the towns of Foley and Magnolia Springs. Just beyond the Fish River, the entrance to the Weeks Bay Estuarine Research Reserve's interpretive center is on the left.

**Suggested
time at
this stop:** 1 hour

Weeks Bay is one of only 27 National Estuarine Research Reserves in the country and offers an exceptional opportunity for travelers to enjoy the educational materials of the interpretive center or take to the boardwalks and enjoy the environment first hand.

Estuaries represent some of the most sensitive and ecologically important habitats on Earth. They provide sanctuary for many species of waterfowl, store nutrients for larval and juvenile marine life, and serve as breeding grounds for many desirable species of ocean fish. As one of the largest estuaries in the country, the Mobile Bay system is the foundation for the environmental beauty and diversity of Alabama's Coastal Connection's setting.

Alabama's Coastal Connection

- **Stop 3: Downtown Fairhope**



From previous stop: 20 minutes / 11 mi (17.6 km)

Directions: Turn left (west) from the interpretive center and travel on US-98, which turns into Scenic Route 98 and runs north along the coast. Follow that route into downtown Fairhope.

Suggested time at this stop: 1 hour

Enjoy lunch overlooking Mobile Bay at one of Fairhope's local restaurants. Seafood is a specialty here, so savor the flavor of the bounty of the waters that are such an integral part of life here and all along the byway. Walks on Fairhope's famous municipal pier provide spectacular views.

Since Fairhope is known as an artists' colony, the art lover could take a leisurely visit to the Eastern Shore Art Gallery or the many local stores.

- **End: Eastern Shore Trail**



From previous stop: 1 minute

Directions: The trail can be accessed all along the byway on Scenic Route 98, which runs north along the coast, through the Eastern Shore area.

Work off your lunch by taking in the beautiful Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. Take your choice of hiking or biking on the multi-use Eastern Shore Trail, where you can enjoy beautiful bay views and oak-canopied roadways.

Totals for Day 2

Total Distance Traveled: 43 miles / 68.8 km

Total Travel Time: 1 hour 1 minute

Alabama's Coastal Connection

Total Stopping Time: 4 hours