

2025 - 2026

NEW JERSEY STATE MUSEUM

MIDDLE SCHOOL FIELD TRIP GUIDE

6TH - 8TH GRADE

EXPLORE OUR FIELD TRIP GUIDE!

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PLAN YOUR MUSEUM ADVENTURE TODAY!

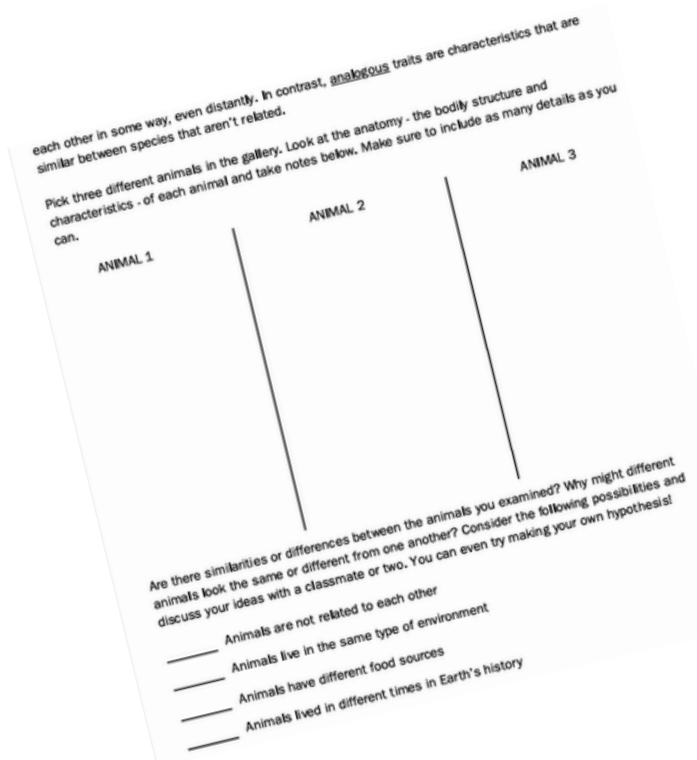
SCIENCE, HISTORY, ART - IT'S ALL UNDER ONE ROOF!

- Engage with hands-on workshops designed with NJ curriculum standards in mind
- Book a Planetarium show to explore space and the planet we call home
- Learn directly from Museum experts
- Explore new ideas in our exhibits

TEACHER RESOURCES

We are currently developing new teacher resources for you to use before or after your visit to the Museum. These resources can help prepare your students for learning at the Museum and keep the learning going once you're back in the classroom! Check our [Digital Resources tab](#) on our website, and keep checking for more resources as we post them.

Our current pre-visit resources include our gallery guides. Gallery guides encourage students to engage and explore each of our long-term exhibits. Feel free to use these guides to help plan your day at the Museum, especially for student gallery exploration. If you choose to use the guides, please make sure your students bring a pencil and something to write on. Pens and markers are not allowed in the galleries, and cases and walls cannot be used to write on. You can check out the gallery guides [here](#).



GALLERY EXPLORATION

Gallery exploration is an important part of any field trip to the New Jersey State Museum.

Keep the learning going outside of your workshop or Planetarium show by planning time to allow your group to explore our four floors of exhibits.

WRITTEN IN THE ROCKS: THE FOSSIL HISTORY OF NEW JERSEY

Step back through time and explore ocean life, birds, reptiles, and mammals. There are fossil and rock touchable stations throughout the gallery – so keep an eye out for the signs that indicate what you can touch! Our live paleontology lab is also in this gallery, and if you're lucky, there may be a museum paleontologist working on something during your visit that you can talk to. However, please keep your students out of the Discovery Den, as it is a space reserved for families and is not designed for school groups.



NEW JERSEY'S ORIGINAL PEOPLE, CULTURES IN COMPETITION, & A MUCH MOVED PEOPLE EXHIBITIONS



Archaeology and Ethnography exhibits are located on the lower level and encompass two galleries and the hallway between them. In “New Jersey’s Original People,” students can enjoy seeing a reconstruction of an archaeological dig site and learn how the Lenape made pottery during the Woodland Period. There is an interactive station in the Woodland Period room of the “Original People” gallery, as well as lift-up panels.

AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES: THE FINE ART COLLECTION

Our Fine Art gallery on the 2nd floor has a wide range of art on display, including paintings, sculptures, and collages/mixed media. While there is nothing that can be touched in this gallery, we encourage students to take their time appreciating the art and getting inspired.



PRETTY BIG THINGS: STORIES OF NEW JERSEY HISTORY

Our Cultural History gallery on the 3rd floor has objects that represent New Jersey history. Admire china and ceramic, quilts, historical toys, furniture, and more. While exploring this gallery, students can create their own State seal, design a quilt, and practice joinery techniques with a wooden puzzle.



ECOSYSTEMS AT RISK: THREATENED & ENDANGERED IN NEW JERSEY

Our first floor temporary exhibit, “Ecosystems at Risk,” will be on display until March 2026. The exhibition introduces students to New Jersey animals and environments that are in decline. Students will enjoy learning about the different animals and plants throughout our state. There are some panel interactives and a chalkboard for visitors to share their commitments to the environment.



Ecosystems at Risk

Threatened & Endangered in New Jersey

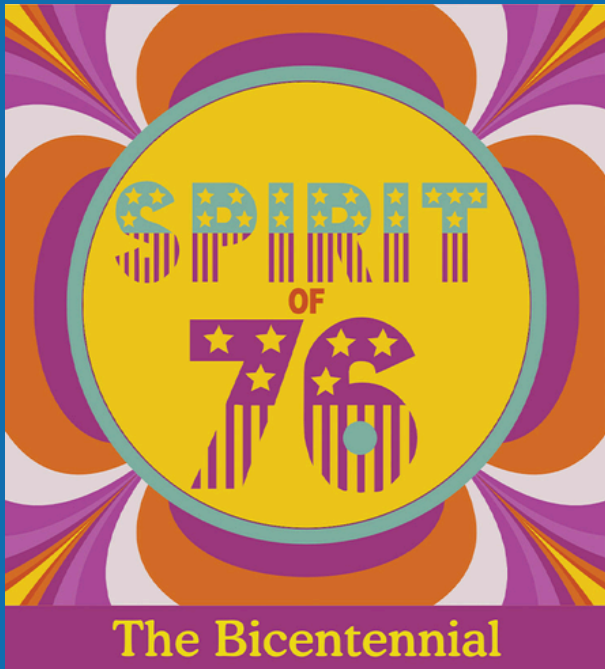


RECENT ACQUISITIONS: FINE ART

Our second floor temporary exhibit, “Recent Acquisitions: Fine Art,” will be on display through December 2025. Students can discover some of the latest accessions to the Fine Art collection, many of which are on view to the public for the first time. We suggest students visit this exhibit in tandem with our American Perspectives gallery to continue growing their creative minds.



SPIRIT OF '76: THE BICENTENNIAL



Opening on February 14, 2026, “Spirit of ‘76: The Bicentennial” showcases an assortment of never-before-exhibited artifacts and artworks produced fifty years ago as part of the energy and excitement of the Bicentennial. Students can make their own button at an interactive station. We suggest visiting both “Power to Change: Revolutionary Stories from the New Jersey State Archives,” opening April 25, 2026 and this exhibit for students to appreciate the past and present celebrations of our nation.

POWER TO CHANGE: REVOLUTIONARY STORIES FROM THE NEW JERSEY STATE ARCHIVES

Opening April 25, 2026, celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution with this exciting exhibit, developed in collaboration with the New Jersey State Archives. The exhibit highlights rarely seen foundational federal and state government documents. Visitors will also explore how revolutionary ideals, fought for by our founders, influenced the newly established government and continue to allow for reinterpretation and adaptation today.



WORKSHOPS

Enhance your field trip with hands-on experiences, designed around NJ's curriculum standards. Introducing complex concepts to develop critical thinking skills, our middle school workshops are for sixth through eighth graders, building on topics covered in previous workshops and throughout the Museum, and allowing for a fully comprehensive visit for your group.



Workshop FAQs:

- **How long is a workshop?** All workshops are 45 minutes long.
- **How many students can fit in one workshop?** All workshops can accommodate groups of 15 - 30 students.
- **What should I do if I have multiple classes on the same day?** Large groups will be divided into multiple sessions, often with two workshops occurring at the same time in our two classrooms.

JUNIOR PALEONTOLOGIST

Do you have what it takes to be a paleontologist? Explore the history of Life on Earth, then describe and interpret real fossils through observation, just like actual paleontologists!



Overview: In this workshop, learning is split between the Natural History gallery and our STEAM classroom. In the gallery, students travel back in time and learn about the evolution of life on our planet, and learn more about some fascinating animals that used to call New Jersey home! In the classroom, students practice scientific observation as they work in groups to describe and examine real fossils, including using a fossil guide to try and identify each fossil while learning interesting facts about ancient animals.

Suggested Planetarium Shows: We offer several Planetarium shows focusing on paleontology and earth sciences that would be an excellent complement to this workshop.

- We Are Guardians
- Dynamic Earth
- Dinosaurs in Antarctica
- Climate Change in Our Backyard

JUNIOR PALEONTOLOGIST

Suggested Skills: While the following skills are not requirements for your students to have, if your students do have them it can lead to deeper learning outcomes.

- Practice using descriptive words
- Familiarity with measuring items using rulers
- Comfortable with observation



Related Galleries: While some of the workshop takes place in our “Written in the Rocks” gallery, there is still plenty to explore in our natural history gallery before or after your workshop! Take a look at our mammal corner, including modern mammals and our Ice Age animals. Don’t forget to touch the mammoth and mastodon bones that are available for physical interaction, or say hi to our paleontology preparators in the lab!

LENAPE POTTERY IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

Explore the development of pottery in New Jersey, start to think like an archaeologist, and learn how to make your own pot like the Lenape did!



Overview: In this workshop, students are introduced to the science of archaeology! In the gallery, students learn how archaeologists find artifacts to study, what artifacts are, and why they are important to understanding past cultures. Students will also learn how the Lenape made pottery in the Woodland Period and why the development of pottery was an important technological advancement for the Lenape community. In the classroom, students develop skills that archaeologists use as they work in groups to put a pottery puzzle together, like observation and pattern recognition. Then, students make a pot to take home, modeling the coil method used by the Lenape.

Suggested Planetarium Shows: We offer a few Planetarium shows focusing on anthropology and culture that would be an excellent complement to this workshop.

- Tales of the Maya Skies
- Arora

LENAPE POTTERY IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD

Suggested Skills: While the following skills are not requirements for your students to have, if your students do have them it can lead to deeper learning outcomes.

- Familiarity with puzzles
- Comfortable with observation
- Understanding of culture



Related Galleries: While some of this workshop can take place in our “New Jersey’s Original People” gallery, there is still more archaeology to explore! Return to the “Original People” gallery to explore the Paleoindian and Archaic Periods, or discover what happened to the Lenape during and after European colonialism.

HEARTH & HOME

Using Indigenous homes as inspiration, students work together to build model homes designed for different biomes across North America.



Overview: In this workshop, students work in teams to identify resources and environmental concerns across different biomes in North America. Students teams examine a specific biome, design then build a home. Modeling approaches done by architects and engineers, students work together in a planning phase, identifying possible resources available and environmental conditions and making a sketch of their design. Then, students enter the building phase, where they work together to make their design come to life using items that represent possible resources available. At the end, students are encouraged to share their work to the class.

Suggested Planetarium Shows: We offer a few Planetarium shows focusing on natural environments or anthropology that would be an excellent complement to this workshop.

- We Are Guardians
- Dynamic Earth
- Tales of the Maya Skies

HEARTH & HOME

Suggested Skills: While the following skills are not requirements for your students to have, if your students do have them it can lead to deeper learning outcomes.

- Understanding of North American biomes
- Familiarity with the fields of architecture and engineering



Related Galleries: Explore the “New Jersey’s Original People” gallery to see how the Lenape built their houses and communities here in New Jersey. Then discover what happened to the Lenape during and after European colonialism in the “A Much Moved People” and “Cultures in Competition” galleries.

NEW

REVOLUTIONARY CHOICES, NEW JERSEY LIVES

Using primary source documents from the NJ State Archives, students work in teams to uncover stories from the past.



Overview: It all happened so long ago... Why does it still matter today? The American Revolution took place in the distant past, but the ideals behind it endure. In this workshop, students explore how foundational documents in the collection of the New Jersey State Archives guide us today. Through object-based learning combined with primary source documents students will team up to solve the case recreating stories of New Jersey's past.

NEW

REVOLUTIONARY CHOICES, NEW JERSEY LIVES

Suggested Skills: While the following skills are not requirements for your students to have, if your students do have them it can lead to deeper learning outcomes.

- Knowledge of US history
- Practice in observation



Related Galleries: Once they open, explore our temporary exhibits focusing on the revolution - “Spirit of ’76: The Bicentennial” opening Feb. 14, 2026 and “Power to Change: Revolutionary Stories from the New Jersey State Archives” opening April 25, 2026. These galleries allow students to learn more about the American Revolution and how we have previously commemorated the occasion. Students can also explore the long-term exhibition, “Pretty Big Things: Stories of New Jersey History.”

ASK THE EXPERTS CAREER TALKS

Our Ask the Experts Career Talks are great for any size group but especially large groups! Learn from museum professionals with different backgrounds as they share what drew them to their field of study, how they received their degree, and information about job options. Questions are encouraged during and after the talk.



Astronomy/Physics: What do astronomers do when the stars aren't out? Talk with astrophysicist Dr. Jacob Hamer about what a day in the life of an astronomer looks like, and the path to careers in astronomy.

Earth Sciences: What does it mean to be a paleontologist? Talk with paleontologist Dr. Devra Hock-Reid about her path in paleontology and career options within the earth sciences and science education.

Fine Art: What can you do with an Art degree? Talk with Museum Technician Amy Stevens, MFA, about art careers and her focus on art education in a variety of settings.

Public History: What is public history? Talk with Curator Beth Cooper, M.S. Ed, to learn how archaeology, ethnography, historic preservation and history museum interpretation are all careers in Public History.

PLANETARIUM SHOWS

From the prehistoric jungles of Antartica to the moons of Jupiter, we have shows for all age groups and interests!



Planetarium FAQs:

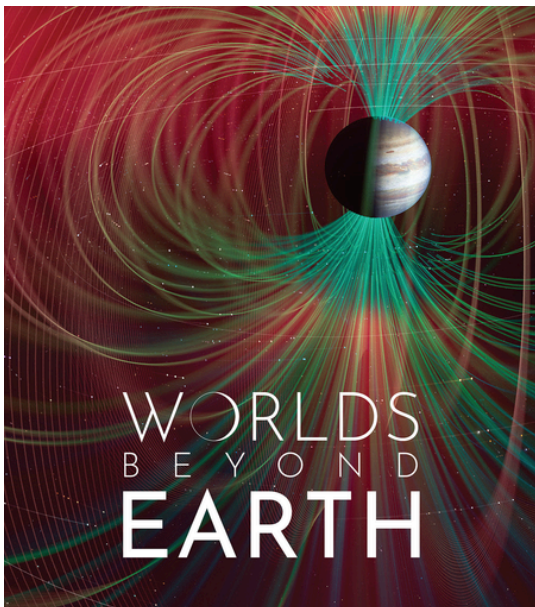
- **How long is a Planetarium show?** Program are 45 minutes long and include a Sky Talk about the New Jersey night sky.
- **What happens if we are late?** Planetarium shows begin promptly at the scheduled time. We are unable to start the show late or issue refunds for late arrivals.
- **How many students can fit in one Planetarium show?** The Planetarium can accommodate a total of 140 people. Larger groups will be split into two or more shows.
- **Are teachers and chaperones included in the total count?** Yes! All students, teachers, and chaperones must be included in the total count when reserving the Planetarium.

Spark: The Universe in Us **Available in Spanish**

From the oxygen we breathe to the uranium that warms our planet's core, we owe everything to the stars! Narrated by Diego Luna, *Spark: The Universe in Us* explores how hundreds of millions of celestial events have forged the elements that make up the Solar System, Earth, and us. Join us as we travel deep inside a giant star that is about to implode, experience the quiet demise of a star like the Sun, and witness the collision of compact stellar cores. Journey across space and time as we explore the movement of elements through our galaxy to understand how stars seed the Universe with the building blocks of life. Watch the trailer [here](#).



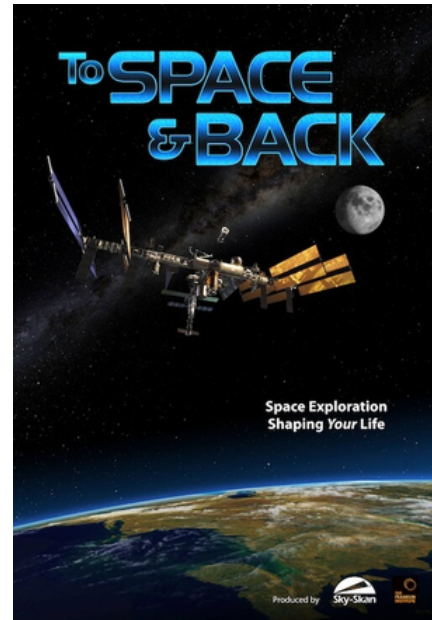
Worlds Beyond Earth **Available in Spanish**



Narrated by Academy Award-winner Lupita Nyong'o, *Worlds Beyond Earth* tells the story of the surprisingly dynamic worlds that orbit our Sun. Based on scientific data from groundbreaking space missions, the show takes viewers on an exhilarating adventure through our cosmic neighborhood. Immersive visualizations showcase the solar system with unprecedented accuracy, including a landing on the cratered surface of our own Moon, a dramatic flight through the swirling rings of Saturn, and soaring encounters with distant worlds of active volcanoes and buried oceans. Watch the trailer [here](#).

To Space and Back

Join us as we take audiences on an incredible journey from the far reaches of our known universe to our own planet. It is an extraordinary story of human ingenuity and incredible engineering, describing how the technology that transports us through space is paving the way for devices and applications we use every day. Discover how space exploration is shaping your world in this new fully immersive show. Watch the trailer [here](#).



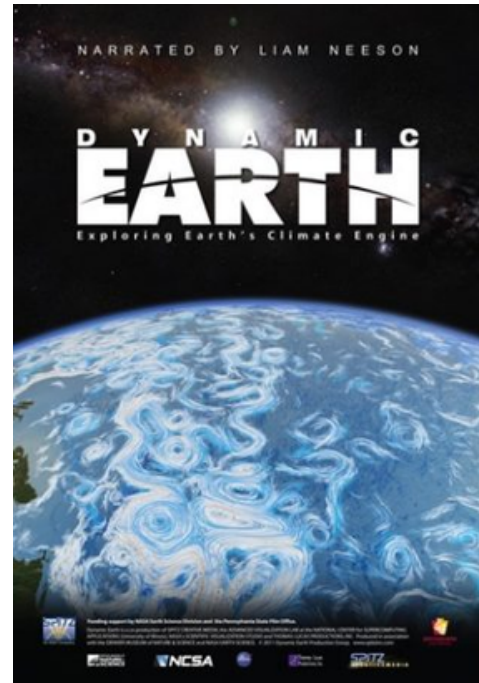
We Are Guardians Available in Spanish



Come get a view of our world from a satellite's perspective! We Are Guardians is a visually stunning show that reveals how the Earth, its ecosystems, and its people are all intrinsically connected. From a single bumblebee to an expansive forest, discover how each component of our planet's beautiful ecosystems fit together. Find out how satellites can help us monitor these environments, better understand the impact of climate change, and help us to protect our shared home! Watch the trailer [here](#).

Dynamic Earth Available in Spanish

Dynamic Earth is an exciting show that explores the inner workings of Earth's climate system. With visualizations based on satellite monitoring data and advanced supercomputer simulations, this cutting-edge production follows a trail of energy that flows from the Sun into the interlocking systems that shape our climate: the atmosphere, oceans, and the biosphere. Audiences will ride along on swirling ocean and wind currents, dive into the heart of a monster hurricane, come face-to-face with sharks and gigantic whales, and fly into roiling volcanoes. Narrated by Liam Neeson. Watch the trailer [here](#).



Áróra

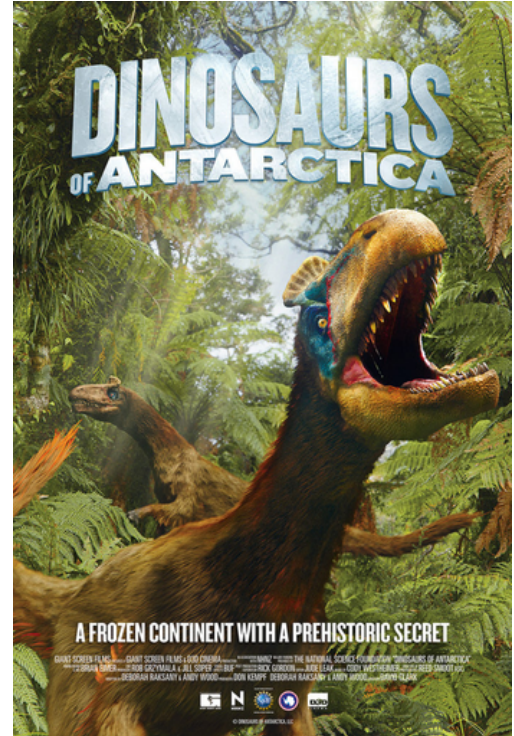
Áróra is an immersive fulldome show that transports audiences to Iceland to learn the story of the aurora, the northern and southern lights. Join us on a voyage through time and space to find out how auroras are caused by the Sun, how Earth's auroras have siblings across the Solar System, and how different cultures have explained this majestic and mysterious phenomenon. Watch the trailer [here](#).



Dinosaurs of Antarctica **Available in Spanish**

Roam through primitive forests and thick swamps filled with bizarre dinosaurs, colossal amphibians, and egg-laying mammals all fighting for survival! *Dinosaurs of Antarctica* tells the story of Antarctica's geological and ecological history, focusing on the Permian and Triassic extinction and Antarctica's climate transition from Greenhouse to Icehouse. Follow along as an expedition of scientists uncover Antarctica's past through the discovery of ancient animal and plant fossils. Computer-generated imagery brings to life these past eras of Antarctica's history! Watch the trailer [here](#).

Note: This show is 40 minutes, which does not leave time for the pre-show sky talk.



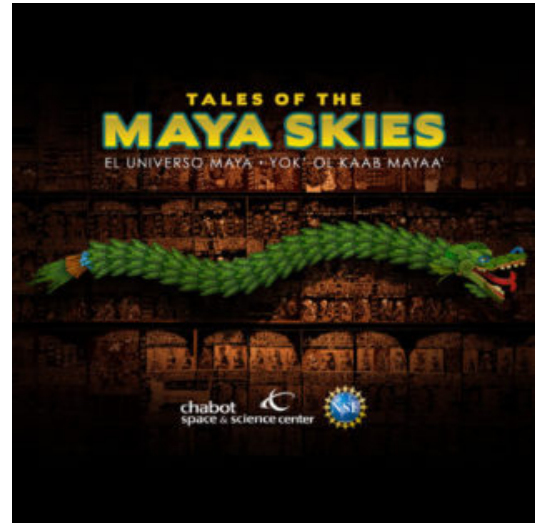
Destination Mars: The New Frontier **Available in Spanish**



Ever wonder what it would be like to fly to Mars? NASA – and others – have their sights set on the Red Planet and they're building the technology to get us there! Explore the work being done around the globe to help make the dream of getting humans to Mars a reality. Fly through the International Space Station, where astronauts are already living and working in space, and follow the rockets and vehicles that will take humans beyond the Moon and, one day, all the way to Mars! Travel along as we imagine this remarkable journey. This film is narrated by former NASA astronaut Mae Jemison and Emmy-award winning actor Keith David. Watch the trailer [here](#).

Tales of the Maya Skies **Available in Spanish**

Tales of the Maya Skies immerses viewers in the wonders of Maya science, cosmology and myth, as we are taken back in time to the jungles of Mexico and to the cities and temples of the ancient Maya. The beautifully illustrated story reveals how the Maya scholars developed a sophisticated understanding of astronomy, architecture, and mathematics that enabled them to predict solstices, solar eclipses, weather patterns and planetary movements, and through this knowledge make sense of the world around them. Watch the trailer [here](#).



Climate Change in Our Backyard



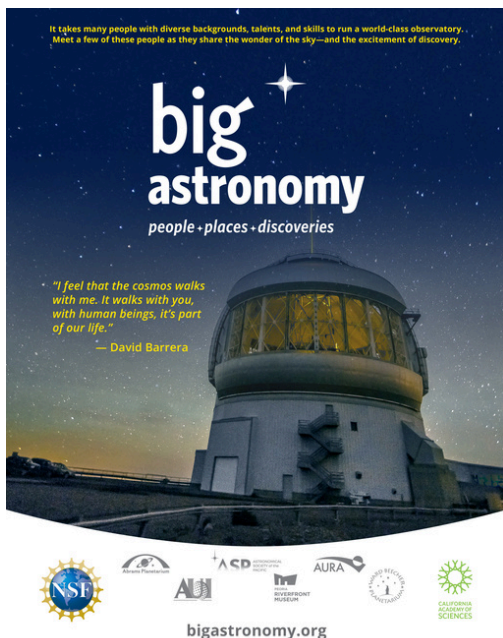
As we develop a larger picture about our Earth as a whole, we are coming to see it as a complex, interconnected, remarkable world, and one that humans have impacted directly. Explore the role of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, the natural temperature variations that Earth has experienced over millions of years, and how humans are affecting our planet today. How are scientists learning about our changing climate, and what strategies are people taking to protect our future? *Climate Change in Our Backyard* illuminates the story of how and why our climate is changing, from the remote mountain shack in the Colorado Rockies, through ancient bubbles in Antarctic ice, and into our own homes. Watch the trailer [here](#).

EXO: Are We Alone? 8th grade

Humankind has always sought to understand the mysteries of the Universe and speculated about the possibility of extraterrestrial life. Today we know of thousands of exoplanets — planets located outside our Solar System, that offer valuable information about our own planet, its origins and life on Earth. We're on the cusp of making some fascinating discoveries. But how will they change our lives? Explore the exciting realm of exoplanetary science in this show. Watch the trailer [here](#).



Big Astronomy: People, Places, Discoveries 8th grade; Available in Spanish



A great deal of astronomy is done in the nation of Chile, due to its special climate and location, which creates stable, dry air. With its high, dry, and dark sites, Chile is one of the best places in the world for observational astronomy. Big Astronomy: People, Places, Discoveries explores three observatories located in Chile, at extreme and remote places. It gives examples of the multitude of STEM careers needed to keep the great observatories working. Barbara Rojas-Ayala, a Chilean astronomer, narrates the show. Watch the trailer [here](#).

One Sky Project 8th grade

This fulldome feature film, developed by the *One Sky Project* collaboration, consists of six short films that represent the perspectives of different cultures or indigenous societies from around the globe. These shorts include “The Forge of Artemis” (Greece), “Thunderbird” (Diné/Navajo), “Jai Singh’s Dream” (India), “Celestial Canoe” (Innu/Indigenous Canada), “The Samurai and the Stars” (Japan), and “Hawaiian Wayfinders” (Hawai’i). The films revolve around the themes of “Finding Patterns” and “To Seek Far,” exploring how our One Sky connects us all.

Note: This show is 40 minutes, which does not leave time for the live pre-film sky talk.



RESERVATION & FIELD TRIP POLICIES

Cost & Discounts: The New Jersey State Museum has free admission. Planetarium shows are \$5 per person, including chaperones. Workshops are \$5 per student. A minimum of 15 students is required to reserve any program. We offer a 20% discount for Trenton Public School District schools and Title 1 schools. It is the responsibility of the group making the reservation to notify the reservationist if eligible for one of the discounts.

Online Reservation Form: Please use our [online reservation form](#) to submit your reservation request. Use this Guide to explore the options at the Museum before submitting the reservation request. After submitting your request, our reservationist will review it. If no other information is needed, they will build your itinerary and send a confirmation email. To help you plan your visit, we have created an orientation video. You can watch it [here](#).

Bulk Orders: If you are interested in making five or more reservations in a school year and will be paying for all in one PO, contact our reservationist directly at reservations.NJSM@sos.nj.gov. You will get a personal account representative who will work with you to schedule all of the trips.

Payments: All payment is due before arrival, and payment is required for the entire group in one payment, we do not accept deposits or partial payments. Reservations must be pre-paid in full, two weeks prior to your field trip date.

Arrival & Late Policy: Please have an arrival time in mind when making your reservation. We suggest arriving at least 15 minutes before the start of your first program. If your group is over 100 students, we suggest arriving at least 30 minutes before your first program. We are unable to hold Planetarium shows for late arrivals. If you are late, we can try and accommodate your original reservation, but cannot guarantee that. If you are more than 30 minutes late, your first program may be cancelled without a refund.

RESERVATION & FIELD TRIP POLICIES

Chaperones:

- We request 1 teacher or chaperone per 10 students for middle school groups.
- Teachers/Chaperones are required to remain with students at all times and refrain from talking on phones in the galleries.
- Teachers/chaperones must be included in the total number of seats for the Planetarium.

Code of Conduct:

The following behavior will result in the removal of individual students or the entire group:

- Locking the public bathrooms
- Smoking or vaping anywhere within Museum facilities
- Defacing or graffiti anywhere within the Museum facilities
- Harassing Museum visitors, staff or guards
- Throwing food or objects
- Loud noises including music, shouting, banging, etc.
- Failure to comply with directions from Museum staff or guards
- Any behavior that impacts the safety of students, visitors, or staff
- You can find the full Code of Conduct [here](#)

RESERVATION & FIELD TRIP POLICIES

Available Lunch Spaces :

- Lunch room reservations are no longer accepted.
- Limited seating (up to 60) is available indoors on the Museum's first floor on a first come basis.
- Please keep your students together so that there is seating available for other groups.
- Groups must limit their lunch to 30 minutes.
- Outdoor seating for up to 150 people is available at picnic tables around the Museum
- Groups may also picnic on the front lawn.
- There is no alternate space in the case of inclement weather.
- Lunches should be stored in bins inside the Museum's main entrance; students are not permitted to carry food or drink through the Museum.

We can't wait to see you and your students!

