



Family Nature Camp Activity and Field Trip Descriptions

Most trips described below, including the optional programs, are included in the price of the program. There are a few boat trips, described at the end of this document – Kayak, Whale Watch, Margaret Todd, and Frenchboro – that are optional and may be added on for an additional fee.

Geological Orientation to Acadia National Park and Mount Desert Island

Acadia National Park is a geological marvel with cliffs, granite-topped mountains and fascinating glacial history. The trip provides a guided tour of the Park Loop Road and an orientation to the Acadia and area attractions you may wish to visit during your free time. This field trip makes several stops at some of the island's extraordinary geological sites, including beautiful Sand Beach. **What to bring:** *Sweater, comfortable shoes, sunglasses, sunscreen, camera, binoculars, water bottle, and possibly a bathing suit – just in case the waves at Sand Beach tempt you!*

Bass Harbor Nature Cruise (participants provide their own transportation)

This cruise departs from Bass Harbor on the "quiet" side of Mt. Desert Island. You will pass the Bass Harbor Head Lighthouse on your way to the outer islands of Blue Hill Bay. Wildlife may include seals basking on the ledges, awe-inspiring bald eagles, porpoise, loons, herons and osprey. This trip will also relate the fascinating history of the islands and the business and politics of the Maine fishermen – you'll see aquaculture sites and watch as your captain hauls lobster traps. **What to bring:** *Sweater or jacket, camera, binoculars and sunglasses. Plan on a 40-minute drive to Bass Harbor from COA. We are happy to arrange transportation if you came to family camp without a car. The kitchen has been notified that you may be a little late for dinner.*

Beaver Watch

This guided trip will acquaint families with one of the shy and retiring mammals of Mount Desert Island. Participants will walk to active beaver sites, get a close look at beaver lodges, learn how to identify the presence of beaver activity and, if everyone is very quiet, perhaps observe beavers in their natural habitat. This trip is taken at dusk during the beaver's active work and play period. **What to bring:** *Comfortable shoes, sweater, binoculars, camera and bug repellent.*

World of Bats (on-site in the McCormick Lecture Hall)

A fascinating slide show and presentation featuring bats from around the world. COA's resident bat expert, Bruce Hazam, will introduce you to bats you probably have never seen or heard about and debunk many of the myths surrounding these shy and beneficial creatures. There will be plenty of time for questions and answers as well.

Early Morning Bird Walk (Optional)

If you are an early riser and enjoy learning about birds and their beautiful songs, you won't want to miss this excursion into Acadia National Park with Rich MacDonald, a local and colorful ornithologist. Transportation will be provided, and you'll be back on campus in time for breakfast. **What to bring:** *Warm and comfortable clothing, binoculars, camera and bug repellent and possibly an early morning snack.*

Beech Hill Farm Tour (*Optional – one day only*)

Learn more about organic farming on this guided tour of College of the Atlantic's working farm that provides fresh produce for our dining hall and serves local customers through a retail farm stand. ***As participants will drive themselves to the farm, anyone scheduled for the Bass Harbor Nature Cruise on this day will find it a short 10 – 15 minute drive from Beech Hill Farm to Bass Harbor.***

George B. Dorr Natural History Museum (visit on your own, M-F, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Museum educators will guide you through COA's natural history museum featuring dioramas, aquaria and other exhibits created by COA students. The dioramas show animals native to the area such as raccoons, black bear, deer, fox, marine birds, etc. Then move on to the salt water touch tank, where youngsters get a mini lesson about many of the ocean's fascinating creatures while they touch and observe them up-close.

Whales-on-Wheels – Bones, Baleen, and Whale Ecology (*Optional*) (on-site at the George B. Dorr Natural History Museum – requires a minimum of 5 participants)

Natural History Museum staff will assist participants in assembling the skeleton of a 24-foot Minke whale and provide an educational program about the behavior and anatomy of whales while looking at baleen, krill and other marine mammal artifacts.

Science Adventure with Tony Sohns - the “Bug Man” (on-site outside Blair Dining Hall)

Tony may bring his Leapin' Lizards and introduce you to the world of reptiles and amphibians. Maybe he will present Maine's Wild Wonders, with the help of museum specimens such as beavers, skunks, coyotes, porcupines and more. Perhaps he will choose to bring bog water from a local lake or stream and you will learn about all the tiny creatures that inhabit the waters that we swim and play in. Whichever program Tony presents, you won't want to miss listening to this enthusiastic and hands-on presentation. Don't miss the fun!

Ecology Hike

Acadia National Park offers many diverse mountain trails. Leaders will assess the varied ages and abilities of the group prior to departure and choose an appropriate trail for the group. Your naturalist guide will discuss the flora and fauna observed along the trail. ***What to bring:*** *A good pair of hiking shoes are a must. Depending on weather, you may need a sweater or jacket, sunglasses, sunscreen, camera, water bottle and bug repellent.*

Tide Pool Exploration

Guided by an experienced naturalist, families will enjoy getting wet and having fun as they explore tide pools and the creatures left behind by the ebb tide. The average rise of the tide in Bar Harbor is 10 to 11 feet so the view of the shoreline is always changing. Tide pools provide hands-on exploration in one of the most unique and diverse environments in Acadia National Park. ***What to bring:*** *An old pair of sneakers or water shoes are ideal – footwear that will provide good traction on wet rocks. Depending on weather, you may need a sweater or jacket, sunglasses, sunscreen, camera, water bottle and bug repellent.*

“Catch and Release” Insects (on-site starting at the Natural History Museum)

Along with a museum staff member you will explore the gardens and grounds of the COA campus to “catch” and learn about the bugs that are part of our everyday life and the crucial role they play in our survival. You will also learn proper “catch and release” techniques.

Diver Ed's Dive-in Theater aboard the *Starfish Enterprise*

Join Diver Ed, Mini-Ed and Captain Evil on a journey to the bottom of the sea without getting wet! This unique boat tour starts with a short boat ride to a dive site in Frenchman Bay. At the dive site, children on board help Diver Ed to suit up and then push him overboard! As he and mini-Ed swim to the bottom of the sea, the boat turns into a mini-theater with LCD projector. You will be able to see the bottom of the sea and follow the divers as they discover the sea-life combing the ocean floor. Captain Evil stays top-side to narrate their findings and to communicate with the divers. When they return to the boat, they bring with them a bag of underwater creatures such as lobsters, sea stars, scallops, sea cucumbers and other surprises. Enjoy holding and touching (even kissing!) these creatures, while learning about their underwater environment. Don't worry, all creatures are returned safely back to the sea. This trip leaves from and returns to the COA pier. **What to bring:** Warm clothing, sunscreen, binoculars, water, and a camera.

All the boat trips listed below are optional and not included in regular program registration fees. Add these trips on the "A la Carte" page when you register online.

Sea Kayak Tour:

Join experienced naturalist and kayak guide Rich MacDonald for a morning kayak tour departing from College of the Atlantic's beach. Rich is a lifelong birder, naturalist and field biologist and has guided numerous kayak trips in Frenchman Bay and throughout the Gulf of Maine. In addition to observing birds, seals, and other sea life, each trip also includes basic kayak instruction. In recent years Rich has served as lead naturalist for Garrison Keillor on each of the cruises of National Public Radio's A Prairie Home Companion. Tours are exclusively for Family Nature Camp and will be limited to no more than 10 participants per tour.

Price: \$45/per person.

What to bring: An old pair of sneakers or water shoes are ideal (don't wear flip-flops!), a lightweight and waterproof jacket, sunglasses, sunscreen, camera in a waterproof case or bag, water bottle and clothes you don't mind getting wet – cotton clothing/jeans are NOT recommended.

Whale Watch Trip:

This trip will take you as far as 25 miles off the coast and is approximately 4 hours long. On your way to the whale grounds, you may observe harbor seals, gray seals, pods of harbor porpoises and a variety of seabirds such as storm petrels, shearwaters, northern gannets and the North Atlantic puffins. The most commonly seen whales are finbacks, humpbacks and minke, however you may also spot the rare right whale, pilot whale or basking sharks. An on-board naturalist describes the wildlife as well as providing passengers with a history of the bay and area.

Price: \$45/per adult and \$28/per child 5 – 14 and \$9 for children under the age of 5.

What to bring: It is VERY IMPORTANT to dress in up to 5 layers of clothing, and if you are over the age of 18, to remember your photo ID. As this trip travels several miles off-shore, even on the warmest and sunniest of days in town, it can be extremely cold on the water. Also remember sunscreen, binoculars, a camera, and if you are prone to motion sickness, to take medication at least one hour prior to departure.

4-Masted Schooner Margaret Todd:

Take a sail on the first 4-masted schooner to work New England waters in over half a century. Launched new in April of 1998, the 151' Margaret Todd is a beautiful example of a replica historic wooden schooner. We schedule you on an afternoon trip for a lively, exhilarating sail among the islands in Frenchman Bay. Relax, bring snacks, and help hoist the sails!

Price: \$33 (ages 12 and up), \$23 (11 and under).

What to bring: Warm clothing, sunscreen, binoculars, water, and a camera.

Lunch Cruise to Frenchboro Island :

Similar to the Bass Harbor Nature Cruise, this narrated cruise winds through the islands of Blue Hill Bay, but then arrives on the off-shore fishing village of Frenchboro, about 8 miles off Mount Desert Island. You may purchase a lunch at the Dockside Deli (or enjoy a box lunch from COA's kitchen), take a short walk around the harbor and visit the museum. The island supports a seasonal restaurant, a bed & breakfast, a seasonal museum, a full-time post office and a year-round population of around 45. This 3 mile by 3 mile island with only one mile of paved road is truly an island of simple pleasures and unspoiled beauty.

Price: \$29 (ages 12 and up), \$18 (11 and under).

What to bring: Warm clothing, sunscreen, binoculars, water, and a camera.

Free-Time Activities:

Acadia National Park and Bar Harbor offer ample activities for your family to enjoy during your free time. We will email you your family's schedule several weeks prior to your program start date so that you have the option of scheduling your free time in advance. Family Nature Camp coordinators have knowledge of lots of special places on the island – ask them for suggestions, directions, trail information and maps. You may use your own vehicle or travel on the free Island Explorer shuttle which stops regularly on the COA campus. We will provide as much updated information as we have available to assist you with planning your free time. Your welcome packet will include a copy of the Acadia Weekly – what is happening on Mount Desert Island the week you are here, and a copy of the Island Explorer bus schedule.

Some suggestions for free-time activities include:

- Explore the carriage roads: more than 45 miles of smooth, gravel roads wind around the lakes and through the hills of Acadia. The carriage roads are perfect for bikes (bring your own or rent one in town), foot travel, or riding in a horse-drawn carriage (contact Wildwood Stables to reserve).
- Visit the Abbe Museum and learn about Maine's Native American culture and history.
- Learn about native plants at the Wild Gardens of Acadia.
- Go swimming at Echo Lake, or Lakewood, or – if you prefer swimming in cold ocean water, try Sand Beach or the cobble beach at COA.
- Participate in one of the many ranger-led interpretive programs offered by Acadia National Park, such as the "Stars over Sand Beach."
- An afternoon visit to Jordan Pond House (in Acadia National Park) for tea and tasty popovers is always a favorite.
- On Monday and Thursday evenings during July and August, local families and tourists mingle in the Village Green from 8 – 9 p.m. for a serene evening of music at the popular summer band concert. Bring a blanket or chair, and enjoy homemade ice-cream from a nearby shop to make this a truly memorable evening.