

# Family Nature Camp - Frequently Asked Questions:

## Accommodations

*What will our accommodations be like?*

Families reside in suites in the Blair/Tyson residence hall. There are seven sections of Blair/Tyson and each section consists of an upstairs and a downstairs suite. Each suite consists of three bedrooms, with one or two beds in each – sleeping a maximum of 4 people. Rollaway beds will be made available as needed. Each **suite** has a private bathroom, with a shower and separate room with a toilet and sink. Each **section** has a small common area and a kitchen with full-sized appliances – shared by the upstairs and downstairs suites. These are college dorm rooms, COA style.

*How do you determine room or suite assignments?*

We assign rooms/suites based on the size and needs of your family. We have two sections of the B/T dormitory which connect and often use these sections to accommodate very large families or families traveling together. In most cases, families will be housed in their own individual suite.

*Will my family ever have to share a suite with another family?*

Given the limited number of suites, we do often pair up very small families of either 2 or 3 family members in one suite. When doing so, we pay close attention to the ages of the children and the genders of the family members.

*What is provided in the bedrooms and what should we bring?*

Each bed has a pillow, mattress pad and blanket. You can either pack your bed linens and towels or lease sets through our online registration site. You will find a downloadable checklist of what to bring to camp, as well as a complete list of what COA does and does not provide.

*Are the dorms air-conditioned?*

No. Given that our campus has a seaside location, we usually benefit from night-time sea breezes. However, in case extremely hot weather, we do encourage families to bring their own fans if they have difficulty sleeping in this type of weather. We have a limited number of fans available, upon request.

*Are we allowed to use the dormitory kitchen to cook our own meals?*

No. Since all meals are included in the cost of your family camp, we ask that you limit your use of the kitchen to preparation of snacks and storage of either leftovers, special dietary options for folks with food allergies, or medications. We also ask that each family clean up after themselves when re-heating food or preparing snacks.

## MEALS

*What are meals like?*

Meals, served cafeteria style in the Blair Dining Hall, are prepared from scratch with emphasis on the use of local, organic ingredients. Meat is humanely raised and seafood is from sustainable sources. A salad bar, featuring a variety of organically grown vegetables and homemade dressings, is a staple at both lunch and dinner. Delicious homemade desserts will cap off your meal.

*How many meals do we get?*

Family campers are served meals starting with dinner from Sunday night through Friday night dinner.

*How does lobster night work? What if some of my family members don't like lobster?*

One night during the week - usually on Wednesday evening - we serve an optional lobster dinner, at no additional cost to you. You will sign up for this option the day you arrive. Other delicious fare is available for the non-lobster eaters in your group.

*My child is a very picky eater – will there be food that he likes?*

“Kid-friendly” options are available at every meal and the kitchen staff is happy to provide specific food options for picky eaters. We are happy to discuss this with you and you can indicate your child’s food preferences when you register. However, we do not serve things like chicken nuggets or frozen pizza. Many parents say they are happy to have so much wholesome food available for their children to try. We’ve heard that kids are more likely to do this at COA than at home!

*I have food allergies - does your kitchen staff accommodate special dietary needs?*

Our kitchen staff is adept at meeting the needs of many, whether you are an omnivore, vegetarian or a vegan. With advance notice our staff can also accommodate the individual needs of clients with food allergies or special dietary challenges. **Please note:** our kitchen is used to preparing foods that contain peanuts, soy, gluten, etc. so if you have severe allergies to trace amounts of a certain ingredient, please talk to us about making alternative arrangements.

*Is breakfast served on Saturday morning?*

No. Three full meals are provided each day starting with Sunday night dinner and ending with Friday night dinner. All day Saturday until dinner on Sunday, we give our kitchen staff some well-deserved time off.

## **Field Trips**

*What does a typical week look like?*

We are asked this question all the time! We have put together a sample week so that you can see the variety of activities that we plan for you and your family. The link for **A Typical Week at Family Nature Camp** – can be found on the activities page. Your daily schedule may be slightly different.

*Can I select my field trips?*

Although some family members opt out of certain field trips, we assign a slot to each first time family so that they will benefit fully from the Family Nature Camp experience. A few programs, such as assembling the bones of a Minke Whale and the Beech Hill Farm tour, are optional field trips that have been added for families who want to have a full schedule while they are at camp.

*How many extra boat trips should we sign up for?*

Two boat trips, the Bass Harbor Nature Cruise and Diver Ed are included in your packet. We recommend no more than two additional boat trips be added. This will easily fill up your week and still give you a little down time to venture out on your own.

*How much free time will we have?*

In most cases, people will have all day Wednesday and one other full day off. However, depending on how many of the optional field and boat trips that you decide to sign up for, this can change.

*What kinds of things are there to do in our free time?*

You will be given a copy of the Acadia Weekly in your welcome packet that outlines all the events and activities taking place on Mount Desert Island (MDI) the week that you are here. The Family Nature Camp coordinators know many special places on MDI and will be happy to give you suggestions as well. Some suggestions can be found on our website (see the link for: **A Full Description of Field and Boat Trips**).

*Is there a pool? TV? Basketball, or tennis court?*

COA has none of the above. The town of Bar Harbor has basketball and tennis courts that are available to the general public, only a short distance from campus.

*Are there any beaches on the island? How cold is the ocean water? Are there any fresh water lakes?*

If you like swimming in very cold ocean waters – the temperature rarely exceeds 55 degrees - you can either take a swim from our beach or drive to Sand Beach in Acadia National Park to enjoy these invigorating waters! There are also several freshwater lakes on the island, including beaches at Lakewood, Echo Lake and Long Pond.

*Does COA provide kayaks and bikes?*

COA kayaks are reserved for the families who sign up for the optional kayak trips. We do not have kayaks or bicycles available for individuals to take out on their own. You are encouraged to bring your own (we do have a bike shed to secure your bikes) or you may opt to rent kayaks or bicycles in town.

## **Transportation**

*Do we need a car?*

Although a car gives you more freedom to do things on your own, you will not be stranded on campus without one. We will arrange transportation to places like the Bass Harbor Nature Cruise and Beech Hill Farm for families who do not have their own car. Also, the Island Explorer, a free bus service which travels to all areas of Mount Desert Island and Acadia National Park, operates all summer and every day with stops on the campus every 15 minutes. (A schedule is included in your welcome packet).

*What if we are late in arriving?*

If you think you will be arriving late on Sunday evening, simply notify our office in advance and we will provide you with the contact information for the summer RA, who will meet you and show you to your suite.

*How do we get there?*

You will find a link on our website with directions to Bar Harbor, Maine and College of the Atlantic's Family Nature Camp from just about any starting point in the country.

## **Miscellaneous**

*We have a four-year old – can we still sign up for camp?*

The hiking, climbing and “listening” components to our program can overwhelm young children, and are generally not appropriate for children under five. That said, we would be happy to talk more with you to determine whether Family Nature Camp might work for your family with a four-year-old.

*What is the weather like?*

Weather in Maine can change in a minute. However, July and August are usually warm and pleasant with temperatures generally in the 70's and 80's. Nights are generally cool. However, the past few summers have been very hot, even at night, so we recommend that you bring a fan with you if you have difficulty sleeping in a non-air-conditioned environment.

*How should we dress for boat trips?*

Keep in mind that the temperatures on the open ocean are VERY different than they are on dry land, even on the hottest days. If you are planning boat trips, particularly on the Whale Watch, you should always be prepared to wear several layers of clothing for optimum comfort.

*Do you have wireless internet? Do we have access to school computers?*

We do have wireless internet. We will provide you information here on how to download the software needed to sign on when you arrive. We also have a few public computers that you will have access to if you would simply like to check your e-mail.

*Can we receive mail while we are at camp?*

Yes, you can both receive and send mail during your visit. Our mailing address is College of the Atlantic, 105 Eden Street, Bar Harbor, Maine 04609. Make sure to have people who are sending you mail address it to you in care of Family Nature Camp at the above address. There is a mailbox for summer programs in the Blair Dining Hall where you check for incoming mail daily. The reception desk in the lobby of Kaelber Hall is where outgoing mail can be sent. We have a limited number of stamps available, so it is wise to bring your own.

*My child is interested in marine biology – is there anything special that he/she should see while we are at camp? Can we have a campus tour?*

The staff of Allied Whale would love to talk with you. Feel free to ask if we can arrange a visit for you while you are here. The Admissions Office runs campus tours all summer and would love to have you join them. If you are interested in knowing more about what brings students to COA and if to find out if this might be the right place for your child, this will give you an opportunity to ask all the right questions.

*We referred a new participant to camp – how do we get our special discount?*

When new families register for camp, they are asked how they heard about us. If they select "referred by a friend," they will then be asked to indicate who that friend was. If your family also signs up for camp, you will either be given a discount code to use with your registration, or we will mail you a check in the amount of \$100 for each new family that you referred. (You do not need to attend the same week as the family you referred to receive your refund. They simply need to be a first time family).

*What materials will we receive from COA before we arrive at camp?*

Approximately one month before the start of your camp you will receive a welcome letter outlining everything you need to know about attending the camp - how to find us, what to bring, what to expect, how to sign up for wireless, etc. We will also attach a copy of your field trip schedule for the week so that you will have ample time to plan your free time while you are at camp. These documents will be sent to you via email.

*What is the latest date we can add or cancel boat trips and order t-shirts?*

May 18<sup>th</sup> is the last day that you can add or cancel a la carte boat trips. This is also the last day to order t-shirts for your family.

*What else will be happening on COA's campus while we're there?*

Summers at COA are very busy. You will be sharing the campus with others while you are here, either teachers who are taking summer enrichment courses, COA sponsored day camps for children, multi-week programs for high school juniors and seniors, or any number of conference groups - including music or art programs, academic conferences, etc. Feel free to ask us or your coordinators if you'd like to know what other programs will be happening on-campus during your session.

### **Family Nature Camp at Schoodic**

*What is Family Nature Camp at Schoodic? How is it different?*

In 2012, we are piloting a session of Family Nature Camp at the Schoodic Education and Research Center (SERC) in collaboration with Acadia National Park and the SERC-Institute. The Schoodic Peninsula is home to a remote and beautiful part of Acadia National Park, approximately an hour drive from Bar Harbor and Mount Desert Island. The Schoodic week will include many programs led by park rangers and educators – hiking, tide pool exploration, citizen science, and much more. SERC is right inside the national park. Here, families will stay in newly renovated two- and four-bedroom apartments and will eat in SERC's dining facilities. For more information on the week at Schoodic, please contact us or visit the SERC web page [here](#).