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Dear 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Parents and Students,

I hope you are enjoying your summer and having some wonderful adventures. School will be starting soon, and I wanted to take a moment to tell you about the Hermit Island Marine Biology trip ("Maine Trip") that happens the second week of school.

For the first block of the senior year I will be beginning the course in Vertebrate Zoology and Evolution. The marine biology field trip to Hermit Island, Maine, is a part of the block. During the trip, we primarily delve more deeply into the study of Invertebrate Zoology, introduced by Ms. Choberka in 11<sup>th</sup> Grade. In October, we will reflect back on some of the themes in the remainder of the Vertebrate Zoology and Evolution block.

The Hermit Island trip is a tuition funded trip, and all expenses except for food on the way to and from Maine are covered. Seniors from U.S. Waldorf Schools will attend this trip over two different weeks. We attend the first week of the trip, which includes schools from Washington D.C.; Boulder, CO; Chicago and others.

Hermit Island (really a peninsula since a sand bar was built to connect the island to the mainland) is a naturalist's treasure. This protected area has miles of rocky shoreline which teem with the marine invertebrates the students will become familiar with: anemones, sea stars, dog whelks, sea urchins, crabs, moon snails, and many more organisms. The island also has several sandy beaches appropriate for swimming, a mudflat where we do one of our labs, and a forested interior where one can encounter deer and other woodland creatures (especially skunks, which love to eat food students keep in their tents!).

During the week, students attend Main Lesson in a building called the "Kelp Shed," which is an old building once used for storing kelp that was used for vitamin production for soldiers during World War II and now serves as a café in the summer. Main Lesson is only one part of this experience. The remainder of the day is spent doing labs with lab groups composed of students from all schools. These lab groups visit the tidal pools during low tide and do workshops in ecology, microscopy, art and poetry. Because of the variable nature of the tides, the schedule is built around the times of the low tides.

Social experiences with the other schools and free time are also built in to the schedule. This will include several group campfires and dancing at a popular New England style Contra Dance on the last evening. Of course, we will be preparing meals and camping together, so the students will have plenty of class bonding time. Ms. Choberka will be co-leading this trip with me. Also joining us will be our new Science and Math teacher, Noelle Frerichs, High School parent Sabrina Carlson, and two alumni, Gus Tasker and Hannah Kagan, who have both chaperoned on trips for us before.

During the week, students will be creating a field journal about their experience. A bound notebook will be passed out for this purpose at Hermit Island. Students should bring colored pencils

and writing implements, as they will be working on this for part of the Zoology block course requirement.

To get to Hermit Island, we are changing our mode of transport this year for the first time to be by air. We will fly from Detroit Metro (DTW) airport to Boston, then take a charter coach for about 2 ½ hours to get to Hermit Island. On the bus ride to and from Hermit Island, we will be stopping for food, which the students will need to purchase. As explained further below, students should bring some money or other means of paying for meals on the way to and from the island.

Though only a brief introduction, I wanted to give you a sense of what the trip holds and what a magical experience it is. Here are a few practical details to be aware of so we can all be prepared since the trip starts on the Sunday right after school starts.

### **DEPARTURE AND PICKUP TIMES**

We will depart from Detroit Metropolitan Airport McNamara Terminal. Families are responsible for getting their students to the airport. Feel free to coordinate rides. Students will need to bring a drivers license, state-issued ID card, or passport. Our flight is DL 1492, departing at 10:00 am on Sunday, September 8. **We expect that all students will be dropped off at the airport by 8:00 am.** We will meet as a group in the domestic check-in area and begin the check-in process at 8:00 am. Going through the check-in process as a group can be time consuming, so two hours is considered the minimal time to complete this process.

Note on baggage: Delta does not allow free baggage check. If possible, consolidate all of your gear into a carry-on bag, or combine baggage with another student in the same tent so we can minimize this expense. The school will pay for only one checked bag per student, if needed.

Our return flight is DL 2163, arriving at 7:22 pm on Saturday, September 14. You should make plans for meeting your student curbside in the passenger pick-up level. Check the Delta website for exact flight arrival time information, and please realize that the chaperones who have spent a week on the trip will have to wait until the last student is picked up before leaving. Please be on time.

### **PERMISSION FORMS**

Attached to this letter are several documents, which must be signed and returned to the office by Wednesday, September 4, at the very latest, and preferably before. Since it is still summer, feel free to snail mail the completed forms to the school office (2230 Pontiac Trl, Ann Arbor, MI 48105) or email forms only to [hsofficemanager@steinerschool.org](mailto:hsofficemanager@steinerschool.org) and not to any of the teachers.

Please find attached:

- Equipment List (please print and keep handy – remember the trip takes place right after the start of school, so obtain needed items before school begins)
- RSSAA Permission Slip
- RSSAA Delegation of Parental Powers form
- RSSAA Student (Behavior) Contract
- Release of Liability Form and Behavior Contract from Hermit Island Organizers (both in the same document)

If you have any questions regarding these documents, please contact Ms. Shope or the office. *Also, please make sure your student's medical card and emergency information card are current in the office by the start of school.*

## **BEHAVIOR CONTRACTS**

For school trips, behavior contracts are signed in the presence of Ms. Shope or a full-time faculty member with parents present. Please find a copy of this contract attached but do not sign it until you set up your meeting. You will receive an email from Ms. Shope about times when teachers will be available during the first week of school for behavior contract conversations.

There is also a special behavior contract required by the Hermit Island trip organizers. The teachers and organizer of the trip have all agreed that we need to have a consistent set of rules that apply to all schools. The consequences of students who break the contract will be decided by the teachers from all the schools involved.

## **EQUIPMENT LIST**

Attached is an equipment list, which you should review and prepare to acquire before the trip. Ms. Choberka and I will organize who sleeps in tents together during the week back to school. The school will provide the tents. We will survey the students about their tent requests during the first week of school.

Everyone should pack compactly, taking the clothing and supplies that will make you warm and comfortable through the week. This is a working trip, and fashion statements are perhaps less important than dressing practically for various weather conditions. As mentioned above, we will have to pay for checked bags, so, if possible, consolidate your clothing into a carry-on bag or share a large bag with another student. The school will cover the fees for one checked bag per student if needed.

## **CAMPING ARRANGEMENTS AND FOOD**

The campground is comfortable and quiet. There is a bathhouse within a short walk of camp with free hot showers. The students will also be walking to and from classes throughout the day. Though all are in relatively close proximity to the camp, there will be a fair amount of walking the students do each day.

Sabrina Carlson (parent of Sophie in 10<sup>th</sup> grade) will be our lead camp chef this year. She is excited to be joining us for the first time, and I feel confident she will be serving us wonderful food. Vegetarian meals will be available, and we will make sure that everyone's food needs are met. We will do a food survey when back at school to help us in this process. If you have serious concerns about food allergies, please contact Mr. Banks or Ms. Choberka directly and we will accommodate those.

Students will be working on meal crews for preparation and cleanup. I'm sure most of them will remember this from previous class trips. One night, we will have the opportunity to purchase fresh lobsters for dinner. Students will need to bring some extra money for this if participating. Lobsters cost between about \$7 and \$12, depending on size and market value.

## **MEDICAL NEEDS**

Please contact the office, Ms. Choberka or Mr. Banks with any unusual medical needs, such as food restrictions or allergies, or medications that you need to take. We will also be doing a survey about this the first week of school.

**WEATHER**

Be prepared for anything. Temperatures may be as low as the upper 30s at night and will typically be in the 60s or 70s during the day. Students will be outside much of the time. Many days are clear and sunny, but rain is likely, and effective raingear is a must.

**CELL PHONES AND ELECTRONICS**

There is very limited cell phone reception on Hermit Island. Generally, students won't need phones or all the other joys of electronic life, so I would suggest leaving them at home. For those who bring music players and/or cell phones (etc.) for use on the plane and bus ride (see the student contract for guidelines), Mr. Banks will collect these items when we arrive at Hermit Island. Please understand that this is an academic course, an experience of nature, and a social experience with classmates and students from other schools. Our experience is that an overly-electronic environment takes away from the experience we are trying to create. Also remember that you are responsible for your electronic equipment, and the school will not be responsible for loss or damage. Any electronics collected when we get to Hermit Island will be stored safely, as indicated in the behavioral contract.

**SPENDING MONEY**

Everyone will need some money to purchase food while traveling. Purchasing food at the airport will be an option if time permits. We will stop at Panera Bread restaurant for lunch after the plane ride. On the way home from Hermit Island, we will stop in Freeport, Maine, home to the LL Bean headquarters, for a lunch stop. There are quite a few inexpensive restaurants in this bustling but touristy town. There are a few LL Bean and other outlet stores there, and discounted items are often found for a good price. If you wish, you may bring food from home for the trip to Maine. All in all, I would suggest that everyone bring a credit or debit card or \$30-\$50 in spending money so you can eat comfortably and perhaps pick up a few souvenirs.

After reading to this point, if you still have any questions please feel free to contact me. We will spend some time during the first week of school discussing the trip with students and will meet with 12<sup>th</sup> grade parents to answer any questions you may have at the back-to-school night.

I wish you all a joyful end to summer and look forward to seeing you for the Rose Ceremony!

Warmly,

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