

August 22, 2022

Dear 12th Grade Parents and Students,

I hope you are all having a good summer so far and are staying safe and healthy! I wanted to take a moment to tell you about the Hermit Island Marine Biology trip that happens the second week of school. For the first block of the senior year, I will be teaching the course in Zoology. 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 marine biology.

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 from schools in New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Chicago, Atlanta, and Cincinnati. Overall, there will be about 100 students plus their teachers attending.

MORE ABOUT HERMIT ISLAND

I'd like to share with you a picture of the trip and what to expect. 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 at 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. There is an outdoor pavilion that we will use to hold classes when the weather is nice. The day is filled with Main Lesson and lab activities as well as social events. Main Lesson is a key part of this experience, where your teachers along with experienced teachers from other schools will be teaching about the main groups of invertebrate animals we will encounter. 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. 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.

Social experiences with the other schools and free time are also built in to the schedule. This will include several group campfires and free time at the beach. 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 Ms. Frerichs and Hannah Kagan, an alumna of RSHS who will be our chef, and Tracy Hillman (Calvin's mother).

COVID-19 MITIGATION

The pandemic is continuing (at a high level here in Washtenaw County as I'm writing) but we are working closely with other schools to have a common understanding around how we will mitigate the COVID-19 risk. To summarize, here is what we are doing:

- All schools will be COVID testing students and chaperones prior to the trip.
- We will be traveling by airplane, so everyone from RSSAA will have to be masked in the airport and airplane while traveling.
- Some classes will take place indoors, and therefore all students will be masked indoors.

- If any student from any school on the trip develops COVID symptoms, they will quarantine in their camp and be COVID tested.
- Everyone will be sleeping in an individual tent.

Other than these COVID protocols, the trip will be run in much the same way as in previous years. Last year we held many of the classes outdoors that had been indoors in previous years and will continue to do this. In the event that one of our students develops COVID-19 during the trip, they will not be able to return by plane until testing negative and completing the quarantine period. In this case, the most prudent course of action may be for a parent to drive to Maine to pick up their student and return them home.

TRAVEL DETAILS

To get to Hermit Island, we are flying from DTW airport to Portland, Maine, then renting minivans to get to Hermit Island. Food will be provided by the school except during travel to and from the island. Here are the anticipated flight times. Hopefully there will not be last minute changes to these flights.

Departure: from DTW airport, Sunday, September 11 at 10:05 am, Delta flight 4660

Return: to DTW airport, Saturday, September 17 arriving at 7:23 pm, Delta flight 1150 from La Guardia – we have to take a connecting flight for the return journey

Taking flights in a group is always more time consuming. **Therefore, we are requiring that students arrive at DTW airport by 7:00 am on Sunday, September 11.** We will meet in the Delta terminal at the international departure gates, where there is a meeting area for groups.

CAMPING

Hermit Island campground is very popular destination on the coast of Maine, but in September it is usually comfortable and quiet (though I will confess that last year was unusual as there seemed to be a lot of people there since other vacationing was difficult). There is a bathhouse within a short walk of camp with hot showers. The students will be walking to and from classes throughout the day. Though all are near the camp, there will be a fair amount of walking the students do each day.

In camp 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 me or Ms. Choberka directly and we will accommodate those. Students will be working on meal crews for preparation and cleanup. One night, we will have the opportunity for students to purchase fresh lobsters for dinner, and everyone should bring about \$10 extra for a fresh Maine lobster – best deal ever! Of course, we will be handling medication distribution and monitoring of student's medical needs as we usually do on these trips and will have a chaperone designated to support any student with COVID-19 symptoms.

ZOOM MEETING AND PERMISSION FORMS

At 7:00 pm on Thursday, August 31 we will have a Zoom information meeting to talk about the trip, then go into breakout rooms to do the required Behavior Contract conversations. You will receive a Parent Square post later this week with the permission forms, behavior contracts, and Zoom link.

Below is the packing list for the trip. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Warmly,
Mr. Banks

HERMIT ISLAND TRIP SUPPLY CHECKLIST

Please pack compactly and just bring one suitcase plus carry-on bag

- Photo ID for air travel (state issued ID or passport)
- Tent – either your own or borrowed from school
- Small day pack for notebooks, water bottle, etc.
- Warm sleeping bag with 30^o rating or better (we have some to loan)
- Thermarest or other compact camping pad
- Small pillow if desired
- Flashlight or headlamp and batteries
- 1-liter water bottle
- Insect repellent (herbal type without deet preferred!) – insects are generally not a problem during the day, but in the evening you can put on long pants and sleeves to protect from them.
- Lip balm
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher)
- Toiletries (Toothbrush and toothpaste, any other personal needs, glasses, contacts and cleaner, etc.)
- Ear plugs if desired for plane ride or sleeping
- Showering supplies (towel, soap, shampoo, etc.)
- Beach towel
- Any required medication (please give to Mr. Banks before getting on plane)
- Snacks for trip to Maine if desired
- \$30-\$50 spending money for meals on way to/from Maine + about \$10 for lobster at Hermit Island (optional)
- Pens, drawing supplies (field notebook will be distributed in Maine), personal journal or sketch book (optional)
- Wrist watch (not an Apple watch) to keep track of time on solo (you won't have your cell phone)

Clothing. Layers tend to work best for the variable temperatures we will have.

- Long pants
- Shorts
- Long sleeve shirts
- T-shirts
- Sweater or sweatshirt
- Swimsuit
- Underwear
- Socks
- Sandals or sneakers
- Clothing to sleep in
- Water shoes for walking in tide pools. Close-toed shoes a must. No flipflops! Shoes must protect against sharp, jagged rocks. Close-toed Keen sandals or water shoes work well.
- Mud flat shoes. Must have shoes with laces for mudflats or they will likely fall off. An old pair of shoes that can be discarded works well. You can also use the same shoes as for tide pools.
- Old long pants/shirt as mudflat lab clothing (will get very muddy) and trash bag to store
- Raincoat and rain pants (please bring good quality raingear - we will be outside rain or shine!)
- Warm jacket
- Hat for sun
- Stocking cap for colder days

Optional

- Book
- Camera
- Cards, games
- Musical instruments
- Journal
- Cell phones, headphones, and any other electronics will be collected on arrival at Hermit Island and stored in locked vehicles as explained in the behavior contract.
- Leave at home – computers, i-pads, video games, candy, junk food, etc.**