

Welcome to the Montana Natural History Center's Summer Outdoor Discovery Day Camps!

We are looking forward to exploring nature with your camper this summer! Below, you will find information about our camps—what to pack, when to arrive, and other logistics. We hope this information helps you prepare. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact us!

Emergency phone number

MNHC office: 406.327.0405. Please use this number for camp communications! A field cell phone number for emergency use will also be provided at check-in on Monday of your camp week.

Pick-up/drop-off location

Montana Natural History Center at 120 Hickory Street in Missoula.

- On nice days, pickup is usually in our Nature Adventure Garden, located at the east end of our building along the bike path.

Time

Monday - Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

- The camp day and activities end at 3:30. Guardians are encouraged to pick up their campers at that time. If a camper cannot be picked up until later, our staff can supervise campers until 5:30*. During this time, campers will engage in independent free play, and planned activities will not be provided. This option is also available before the camp day starts from 8:30 - 9:30.
- *A \$1-per-minute fee may apply if a child is picked up after 5:30.

Pick-up and drop-off procedures

To ensure the safety of our campers, children must be signed in each morning at drop-off and signed out each afternoon at pick-up. **Only those who have been given permission will be allowed to pick up the camper at the end of the day. Please bring a photo ID to pick up.** We allow primary contacts and emergency contacts to pick up campers. You can give pick-up permission to additional adults by adding them to your "authorized pick-ups" form on the UltraCamp online registration system, telling your camp instructor in person, or calling/emailing MNHC ahead of time.

If you would like your camper to walk, bike, or bus home, you must contact Alyssa Giffin, Camp Coordinator, at agiffin@montananaturalist.org before camp starts to give permission and make arrangements.



Absences and late arrivals:

Please call/text Alyssa Giffin at 406.544.9791 or email agiffin@montananaturalist.org as soon as possible if your child is going to be late or miss the day.

If your child is sick, please keep them home from camp until they are no longer contagious.

COVID-19 protocols

While we're thrilled to be holding our traditional summer camps again this year, we remain committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for our campers and staff. As the COVID-19 pandemic situation continues to change in 2024, so may our protocols for safe camper experiences. As these change, we will notify you via email before starting your camp. At the time of registration, these are our current protocols. All campers and staff are responsible for the following at all times:

- Use hand sanitizer before and after eating
- Washing hands frequently with soap and warm water as resources allow.
- Should a camper begin exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 while at camp, they will immediately be isolated and quarantined under supervision at the Montana Natural History Center and will need to be picked up by their parent/guardian.
- **If you, your child, or anyone in your household are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, do not bring your child to camp. Please notify Alyssa Giffin, Camp Coordinator, by calling 406.544.9791 or emailing agiffin@montananaturalist.org**
 - Symptoms of COVID-19: fever, loss of smell or taste, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle aches and pains, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- If any campers or MNHC staff test positive for COVID-19 during your child's camp, MNHC will take appropriate measures to communicate with parents/guardians to ensure the safety of those exposed. This could result in MNHC canceling or pausing camp, if necessary.

In Case of Illness or Injury

In the unlikely event that your camper sustains an injury or becomes ill during camp, you will receive notification from the Seasonal Naturalist or the Camp Coordinator. In the case of an emergency and your child needs immediate professional medical attention, you will be informed of where to go to meet your child.

Illnesses that may cause us to call you are COVID-19, flu-like symptoms, severe cold, vomiting or diarrhea, or if your camper is requesting to talk to you about their illness or symptoms.

Injuries that may cause us to call you: broken limbs, severe bruising or swelling, or head injuries.

Restroom policy

All registered campers must be able to use the restroom facilities independently, without the assistance of MNHC staff. Should a camper have a restroom accident, the camper's parent/guardian



will be notified at pick-up time. If the camper does not have clean clothes to change into, their guardian will be required to bring them for their child to continue that day's programming. If a camper has regular/routine accidents during programming or is unable to use restroom facilities independently, the camper will not be able to resume camp activities for that week.

Required forms

Your camper's required camp forms must be completed online before camp starts. You can access them through our UltraCamp online registration system using the same link you used to register for camps. If you have not yet done so, please log in and complete the required forms online. **If you have any questions or problems completing the online forms, please contact MNHC as soon as possible. Camp forms must be submitted online by the end of the day on the Wednesday before your child starts camp.**

Preparing for adventure

During your child's week of camp, we will be exploring our local natural areas, taking field trips, playing games, using our creative talents, visiting scientists in the field, and making all kinds of amazing discoveries! Each camp varies by theme; a specific schedule, including field trip locations and planned activities, will be available at check-in on the first day of camp. Campers can expect to be outdoors most of the time, and lunch is almost always eaten in the field.

What to bring: PACKING LIST

We recommend that your child bring these items to camp each day; however, some may be left in the classroom in the interest of making backpacks as light as possible (i.e., rain gear if it's sunny, swimsuit if we're not going to do water activities, etc.).

Please label all items with your child's name!

- two clean masks
- Hand sanitizer
- Lunch (including snacks) that can be eaten outdoors
- Snacks to last the entire camp day
- Filled water bottle
- Sunscreen
- Backpack
- Outdoor clothing for the weather (suitable for outdoor exploration, art activities, and play!)
- Sun hat
- Rain gear
- Insect repellent (optional, but we go to a lot of places with mosquitos!)
- Water shoes (must have back/heel strap; closed-toe is preferred)
- Swimsuit or other clothing that can get wet (be sure to provide a change of clothes)
- Towel



What NOT to bring: electronics and irreplaceable things

Please do not send your child to camp with electronics (iPods, phones, smart watches, video games, etc.) We spend most of the day outdoors, often in wet or dirty areas, and we cannot guarantee the safety of these items. Also, we want our campers to be able to “unplug” and experience the world around them! If campers bring electronics with them to camp, they will be asked to leave them in a secure location during the day. Our staff is equipped with cell phones to contact parents/guardians in case of emergencies.

Please do not send expensive or irreplaceable items to camp with your child.

Absolutely no weapons will be permitted in camps.

Snacks

We'll take snack breaks throughout the day; please send your child with extra snackable items in their lunch box to eat at snack time.

Medications

MNHC does not administer medications, including over-the-counter medications, without a signed doctor's note and instructions. Parents must note any medication that needs to be administered during the camp day on their camp forms and should bring the medication and documentation to Monday camp check-in. If your child is taking or needs to carry a prescription (including epi-pens and inhalers), the prescription should be labeled with the date and instructions and sent to camp **with a signed doctor's note**. MNHC staff is not responsible for lost prescriptions or medications.

Special accommodations

We do our best to make camp accessible. If your child requires special accommodations (or even if you just want to let us know more about them!), we encourage you to contact Alyssa Giffin at 406.544.9791 or agiffin@montananaturalist.org as soon as possible before camp starts so we can be adequately prepared.

Cancellations/refund policy

The program fee is refundable ONLY if a cancellation is made 30 days before the start of camp, **minus a 25% non-refundable administrative fee per camp session**. Withdrawals after this deadline forfeit the full registration fee. Membership fees are non-refundable. Purchased t-shirts are fully refundable.

Camp Family Smug Mug Photos

Want to know the amazing stuff your kids are doing during the day? At the end of the camp week, Alyssa Giffin will email you a Smug Mug link that will take you to all of the photos taken from your campers' camp week!



Field trips and activities

Our summer camps participate in a wide range of nature-based activities. Your child can expect to be outside every day. We take time to explore natural areas from a naturalist's perspective: a scientist, artist, and writer. Each camp will also include games and time for play outdoors, which research shows is important. Kids can expect to learn a lot while having fun! Activities are tailored to be appropriate for camper age groups.

All camps will walk, use public transport, or use our activity buses for field trips. Preschool camps can expect to stay in town for field trips, but older camps may travel as far as the National Bison Range, Seeley Lake, or Beavertail Pond. Specific field trips and activity information will be provided for you on your first day of camp.

Buses

All MNHC buses are equipped with safety belts, and the staff is trained, have passed required certification tests, and is evaluated for safe driving. Parents may provide a booster seat for their child though they are not required. One of our buses has a lift to accommodate wheelchair users. Campers are required to wear a seatbelt and follow bus rules and the directions of the bus driver and other staff while riding on MNHC buses.

Volunteer opportunities

Parent volunteers are welcome to participate with advanced notice and planning. Contact Alyssa Giffin at agiffin@montananaturalist.org to let us know if you would like to attend part of the camp, and we will get you set up to join us.

Montana Natural History Center camp goals

The mission of the Montana Natural History Center is to promote and cultivate the appreciation, understanding, and stewardship of nature through education.

Based on our mission, our summer camps have three main goals:

1. To provide quality outdoor education experiences to all participants through exploration, guided discovery, and hands-on learning experiences.
2. To teach stewardship concepts through daily activities.
3. To provide kids with the opportunity to develop a positive, respectful, long-term relationship with nature that will stay with them throughout their lives.