

Mound House Upcoming Outdoor Nature & Education Events: August 5 Through 14, 2021

By Gary Mooney

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With Southwest Florida officially in the dog days of Summer, visit the iconic Mound House on Fort Myers Beach! One of the region's most-beloved historic attractions, the Mound House traces its roots back to the ancient Calusa of over 2,000 years ago. The Town of Fort Myers Beach operates the Mound House as a museum complex and cultural and environmental learning center that offers numerous educational programs each month, including for children.

The Mound House debuts two brand-new programs this week! The "Untold Stories Guided Tour" focuses on the crazy cast of characters who called the Mound House home during its long history; this adults-only program is on Tuesday, August 10, at 11 a.m. and Thursday, August 12, at 2 p.m. To celebrate Friday the 13th, the Mound House hosts the "Spooky Kayak Tour" at 9 a.m. What better way to celebrate Friday the 13th than hearing folklore legends about pirates, mermaids, and other tall tales while experiencing the natural beauty of the mangrove estuary, but leave those broken mirrors and black cats at home! There are three different kayak programs as well as the Mound House's signature event, the "Shell Mound Outside Guided Tour," six times.

The Mound House, the oldest standing structure on Estero Island, is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. It practices Social Distancing guidelines and encourages all unvaccinated guests to wear masks. It is at 451 Connecticut Street with overflow parking at 216 Connecticut. Admission is \$10 for ages 13 & up, \$8 for students with IDs, \$5 ages 6 to 12, and 5 & under free, with Town residents receiving a 50% discount. For information, reservations, and a monthly programs schedule, call 239-765-0865 or see www.moundhouse.org.

FREE "Newton Beach Park Guided Beach Walk"

For all ages every Tuesday and Thursday weather permitting at 9 a.m.

This twice-weekly free outdoor program is different every single time, as the "Guided Beach Walks" have a simple premise – walk roughly a half-mile down the beach and back, discussing whatever you find that particular morning. Meet at the thatched hut closest to the beach, with Social Distancing in place. Bring sunscreen, shoes to get wet, sunglasses, and hat. No reservations necessary; while free, parking is \$3-per-hour, with one hour generally enough. Newton Beach Park is mid-island at 4650 Estero Boulevard.

"Garden Outside" Guided Tour

For all ages on Thursday, August 5, at 11 a.m.; Saturday, August 7, at 1 p.m.; Thursday, August 12, at 11 a.m.; & Saturday, August 14, at 1 p.m.

Stroll through the Mound House gardens to discover how its unique plants conserve water and protect wildlife, while learning how the Calusa and other Native Americans used them in their daily lives. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free, with Social Distancing guidelines in place.

“Shell Mound” Outside Guided Tour

For all ages on Thursday, August 5, at 1 & 2 p.m.; Saturday, August 7, at 11 a.m.; Tuesday, August 10, at 1 p.m.; Thursday, August 12, at 1 p.m.; & Saturday, August 14, at 11 a.m.

If you dig archaeology, the Mound House’s signature program is for you! Tour the 2,000-year-old Calusa Indian Shell Mound led by the interpretive staff as you explore the site’s archaeology to unearth clues about this ancient society. \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission; Mound House members free, with Social Distancing guidelines in place.

“Mangroves by Kayak” Tour

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Saturday, August 7 & Wednesday, August 11, both at 9 a.m.

Explore the winding mangrove creeks and hidden waters of the Estero Bay Aquatic Preserve as only a kayaker can on this Environmental Educator-guided tour of the ancient realm of the Calusa! Witness birds, fish, manatee and dolphins as you paddle through the natural beauty of Estero and Hell Peckney Bays in a tandem kayak. \$45-per-person; Mound House members \$15 with the Mound house providing all paddling & safety equipment. Advance reservations necessary with Social Distancing in place.

NEW “Cool Calusa Tools”

For families with children ages 6 & older on Saturdays, August 7 & 14, both at 2 p.m.

Learn to hunt, fish, and make masks and pottery, just like the Calusa! The Mound House interpretive staff leads this exciting hands-on tour of the Mound House grounds where they demonstrate Calusa tools and artifacts, then help you make Calusa-inspired artwork where your imagination runs wild! \$2-per-person that does not include Mound House admission. The Mound House enforces Social Distancing guidelines and recommends that all unvaccinated visitors wear masks.

NEW: “Untold Stories” Guided Tour

For adults on Tuesday, August 10, at 11 a.m. & Thursday, August 12, at 2 p.m.

The Mound House is the oldest standing structure on Fort Myers Beach, with an intriguing cast of characters who called it home, ranging from farmers to casino owners;

scientists to developers! Learn about their individual stories along with a good dose of island history on this guided tour through the Mound House Museum, native gardens, and majestic grounds. Adults \$15; Mound House members free.

NEW “Latino History” Outside Guided Tour

For all ages on Tuesday, August 10, at 2 p.m.

Perfect for Florida history buffs! Learn about the Latino fishing village known as a “Rancho” that existed on the shell mound between the ancient Calusa and Anglo-Pioneer eras. Explore the site’s archaeology and history through unearthed clues about this multicultural society. Advance registrations necessary at \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission, with Social Distancing guidelines in place.

NEW: “Junior Explorers” at Newton Beach Park

For children 2 to 5 with their adult guardians on Wednesday, August 11 & Friday, August 13, both at 1 p.m.

Your Junior Explorer will investigate Newton Beach Park to learn about the natural environment, culture, and early life skills such as language, numbers, fine motor, and socializing during this 30-minute program, featuring topics like “Counting With Nature,” “Animals of The Estuary,” “Paint Making,” “Calusa Masks,” “Calusa Pottery,” and “Sorting Shells.” \$2-per-child, with adult guardians and Mound House members free; no reservations necessary. Newton Beach Park is mid-island at 4650 Estero Boulevard.

NEW: “Spooky Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Friday, August 13, at 9 a.m.

What better way to celebrate Friday the 13th than hearing folklore legends about pirates, mermaids, and other tall tales while experiencing the natural beauty of the mangrove estuary, but leave those broken mirrors and black cats at home! \$45-per-person, with Mound House members at \$15; advance registration necessary at 239-765-0865 or www.moundhouse.org. All paddling equipment provided so c’mon out if you dare!

“Family Fun” Kayak Tour

For ages 6 & up weather permitting on Saturday, August 14, at 9 a.m.

Fun for the whole family on a specially-designed Environmental Educator-guided kayak tour for families with children age 6 & up! See birds, dolphins, manatee, and other wildlife while paddling through the Estero Bay mangroves. \$25-per-person ages 13 & up; \$15-per-person ages 6 to 12 that includes Mound House admission, with advance registrations necessary. All equipment provided, with Social Distancing in place.