

Mound House Upcoming Outdoor Nature & Education Events: September 9 Through 18, 2021

By Gary Mooney

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With Labor Day in our rearview mirror, Summer winding down, and all kids now back in school, the next two months are officially the slowest time of the year on Fort Myers Beach, making this the perfect time to visit the iconic Mound House! One of Southwest Florida's most-beloved historic attractions, the Mound House traces its roots 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 kids.

One of the Mound House's most unique and best-attended events each year is its annual partnership with the Fort Myers Beach Film Festival to present the FREE outdoor family "Movie On The Mound" for all ages on Friday evening, September 17, with activities beginning at 8 p.m. This year they present the new Disney classic, "Raya & The Last Dragon," released earlier in the Spring. This computer-animated fantasy action-adventure follows a warrior princess who searches for the fabled last dragon to banish the evil spirits known as the Druun from the land of Kumandra. With most theaters closed last Spring, this may be your family's first opportunity to experience this film! Bring your own blankets and lawn chairs to enjoy this outdoor movie on the Mound House grounds, with Center for Disease Control guidelines in place. No coolers please, as refreshments will be for sale, with all proceeds benefitting The Friends of The Mound House. For information, call 239-765-0865 or see www.fmbfilmfest.com. The flick starts at 8:15 p.m., with no advance registration necessary, so c'mon out as there is nothing like catching a free family film under a starlit night!

If you like to combine a healthy breakfast with expanding your natural and environmental knowledge about Fort Myers Beach, attend the new "Conservation Café" for all ages on Wednesday, September 15, at 9 a.m. The Mound House educational staff provides an entertaining program on Fort Myers Beach while you savor a light breakfast including coffee and juice. \$20-per-person; Mound House members \$10, with advance registration necessary at 239-765-0865.

The Mound House continues two new programs this week: it offers on three occasions the "Untold Stories" Guided Tour that focuses on the crazy cast of characters who called the Mound House home over its long history, while "Cool Calusa Tools" has four presentations to show you how to hunt, fish, and make masks and pottery, just like the Calusa! There are two different kayak programs as well as the Mound House's signature event, the "Shell Mound" Outside Guided Tour that it showcases five times. The Mound House enforces Social Distancing guidelines at all programs and recommends that all unvaccinated visitors wear masks.

The oldest standing structure on Estero Island, the Mound House is open Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. 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, please 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 nature program is different every single time, as the “Guided Beach Walks” have a simple premise – the groups 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.

“Family Fun Kayak Tour”

For ages 6 & up weather permitting on Thursday, September 9 & Saturday, September 18, both 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. The Mound House provides all equipment, with Social Distancing in place.

“Shell Mound” Outside Guided Tour

For all ages on Thursday, September 9, at 10 a.m.; Saturday, September 11, at 2 p.m.; Tuesday, September 14, at 11 a.m.; Thursday, September 16, at 2 p.m.; & Saturday, September 18, at 1 p.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.

“Garden Outside” Guided Tour

For all ages on Thursday, September 9, at 11 a.m.; Saturday, September 11, at 11 a.m.; Thursday, September 16, at 10 a.m.; & Saturday, September 18, at 10 a.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.

NEW: “Cool Calusa Tools”

For families with children ages 6 & older on Thursday, September 9, at 1 p.m.; Saturday, September 11, at 10 a.m.; Tuesday, September 14, at 2 p.m.; & Saturday, September 18, 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.

“Latino History” Outside Guided Tour

For all ages on Thursday, September 9, at 2 p.m.; Tuesday, September 14, at 10 a.m.; & Thursday, September 16, at 11 a.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.

“Mangroves by Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Friday, September 10; Saturday, September 11; Wednesday, September 15; & Thursday, September 16, all 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. All paddling & safety equipment provided, with kayak tours in accordance with Florida Society of Ethical Ecotourism guidelines. \$45-per-person; Mound House members \$15. Advance reservations necessary with Social Distancing guidelines in place.

NEW: “Untold Stories” Guided Tour

For adults on Saturday, September 11; Tuesday, September 14; & Thursday, September 16, all at 1 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: “Conservation Café”

For all ages on Wednesday, September 15, at 9 a.m.

What is better than combining a healthy breakfast with expanding your natural and environmental knowledge about Fort Myers Beach? Join the Mound House educational staff as they provide an entertaining program on Fort Myers Beach while you savor a light breakfast including coffee and juice. \$20-per-person; Mound House members \$10, with advance registration necessary at 239-765-0865.

NEW & FREE: “Movie On The Mound!”

For all ages on Friday, September 17, at 8 p.m.

Lights; Camera; Action – outside right on the historic Mound House grounds! The Mound House partners with the Fort Myers Beach Film Festival to present a FREE family outdoor movie for all ages. This year they present the new Disney classic, “Raya & The Last Dragon,” released earlier in the Spring. This computer-animated fantasy action-adventure follows a warrior princess who searches for the fabled last dragon to banish the evil spirits known as the Druun from the land of Kumandra. Bring your own blankets and lawn chairs to enjoy this outdoor movie with the Mound House that employs Center for Disease Control guidelines; no coolers please as refreshments will be for sale, with all proceeds to The Friends of The Mound House. The flick starts at 8:15 p.m., with no advance registrations necessary, so c’mon out as there is nothing like catching a free family film under a starlit night!