

Mound House Upcoming Outdoor Nature & Education Events: October 28 Through November 6, 2021

By Gary Mooney

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You can see Fall colors all over Fort Myers Beach – the different-colored license plates from across the nation on cars driven by seasonals and tourists! With visitation rapidly increasing, the iconic Mound House is boosting its hours of operation from three to five days a week, beginning on November 2, from Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. 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.

With rainy season winding down, the Mound House on Friday evening, October 29, presents the popular “Sunset Kayak Tour” for ages 12 & up. People travel from all over the nation and world to marvel at Fort Myers Beach sunsets, but not many get to do so by kayak! In addition to catching a breathtaking sunset, explore the tidal creeks and winding mangrove tunnels that extend into the hidden backwaters of Estero Bay while experiencing the estuary’s abundant wildlife in the quiet of twilight. The “Sunset Kayak Tour” is \$45-per-person, with Mound House members \$15. The Mound House provides all paddling equipment, with advance registrations necessary at www.moundhouse.org. There are three different kayak programs this week, as well as the Mound House’s signature event, the “Shell Mound Tour,” that it presents 10 times.

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 every week, including for kids. The oldest standing structure on Estero Island 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. The Mound House enforces Social Distancing guidelines at all programs and recommends that all unvaccinated visitors wear masks. For information, reservations, and a monthly programs schedule, call 239-765-0865 or see www.moundhouse.org.

FREE: “Newton Beach Park 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.

“Mangroves by Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Thursday, October 28 & Friday, October 29, both at 9 a.m.; Tuesday, November 2, at 1 p.m.; Wednesday, November 3, at 9 a.m. & 1 p.m.; & Thursday, November 4, 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; \$45-per-person with Mound House members \$15 that includes Mound House admission. Advance reservations necessary at www.moundhouse.org with Social Distancing guidelines in place.

“Garden Tour”

For all ages on Thursday, October 28; Saturday, October 30; Tuesday, November 2; Thursday, November 4; & Saturday, November 6, all 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.

“Shell Mound Tour”

For all ages on Thursday, October 28; Saturday, October 30; Tuesday, November 2; Thursday, November 4; & Saturday, November 6, all at 11 a.m. and 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.

“Untold Stories Tour”

For adults on Thursdays, October 28 & November 4, both 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.

“Sunset Kayak Tour”

Ages 12 & up weather permitting on Friday, October 29, at 4:45 p.m.

People travel from all over the nation and world to marvel at Fort Myers Beach sunsets, but not many get to do so by kayak! In addition to catching a breathtaking sunset, explore the tidal creeks and winding mangrove tunnels that extend into the hidden backwaters of Estero Bay while experiencing the estuary’s abundant wildlife in the quiet of twilight. The Mound House provides all paddling and safety equipment, with Social Distancing in place. \$45-per-person; Mound House members \$15, with a limit of 12 paddlers per tour. Advance registration necessary at www.moundhouse.org.

“Family Fun Kayak Tour”

For ages 6 & up weather permitting on Saturday, October 30, 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 at www.moundhouse.org. The Mound House provides all equipment, with Social Distancing in place.

NEW: “Cool Calusa Tools”

For families with children ages 6 & older on Saturday, October 30, 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, with Social Distancing guidelines in place.

“Latino History Tour”

For all ages on Tuesday, November 2, at 2 p.m. & Wednesday, November 3, at 10 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 www.moundhouse.org at \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission, with Social Distancing guidelines in place.