

Mound House Upcoming Outdoor Nature & Education Events: November 11 Through 20, 2021

By Gary Mooney

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With Thanksgiving right around the corner, now is the perfect time to take those early holiday guests to experience the iconic Mound House on Fort Myers Beach! It is even easier than ever to visit the Mound House as it is in its seasonal days of operation from Tuesdays through Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., though it does close on November 25 & 26 to observe Thanksgiving. One of Southwest Florida's most-beloved historic sites, the Mound House traces its roots to the ancient Calusa of over 2,000 years ago.

The Mound House hosts its signature event, the "Shell Mound Tour," every Tuesday through Saturday, at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., with the exceptions of Thursday & Friday, November 25 & 26, due to Thanksgiving. If you dig archaeology, the "Shell Mound Tour" is for you! Marvel at the underground 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.

Friday evening, November 19, is the unforgettable "Full Moon Kayak Tour" for ages 12 & up. This one-of-a-kind event offers kayakers the unique opportunity to experience the backwaters of the Estero Bay by the light of the full moon! Participants explore the estuary's tidal creeks, winding mangroves, and abundant wildlife illuminated by the full moon. The "Full Moon Kayak Tour" is \$45-per-person, with Mound House members \$15. The Mound House provides all paddling equipment, with Social Distancing guidelines in place. Advance registrations are necessary at www.moundhouse.org.

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. 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 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.

"Shell Mound Tour"

For all ages every Tuesday through Saturday at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.; no programs on Thursday & Friday, November 25 & 26, due to the Thanksgiving Holiday.

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.

FREE “Newton Beach Park Guided Beach Walk”

For all ages every Tuesday and Thursday weather permitting at 9 a.m.; no program on Thursday, November 25, for Thanksgiving.

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.

“Mangroves by Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up weather permitting on Thursday, November 11 & Friday, November 12, both at 9 a.m.; Tuesday, November 16, at 1 p.m.; Wednesday, November 17, at 9 a.m. & 1 p.m.; & Thursday, November 18; Friday, November 19; & Saturday, November 20, 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 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, November 11; Tuesday, November 16; Thursday, November 18; & Saturday, November 20, 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.

“Untold Stories Tour”

For adults on Thursdays, November 11 & 18, 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.

“Latino History Tour”

For all ages on Friday, November 12, at 10 a.m.; Tuesday, November 16, at 2 p.m.; & Wednesday, November 17 and Friday, November 19, both 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 \$5-per-person that does not include Mound House admission, with Social Distancing guidelines in place.

“Cool Calusa Tools”

For families with children ages 6 & older on Friday, November 12; Saturday, November 13; Wednesday, November 17; & Friday, November 19, all 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.

“Family Fun Kayak Tour”

For ages 6 & up weather permitting on Saturday, November 13, at 9 a.m. & Saturday, November 20, at 1 p.m.

This specially-designed guided kayak tour is perfect fun 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. The Mound House provides all equipment, with Social Distancing in place. Advance registration necessary at www.moundhouse.org.

“Full Moon Kayak Tour”

For ages 12 & up on Friday, November 19, at 4 p.m.

This unique tour offers kayakers the rare opportunity to experience the backwaters of the Estero Bay in the quiet of twilight by the light of the full moon! Participants explore the estuary’s tidal creeks, winding mangroves, and abundant wildlife illuminated by the full moon. Weather permitting and reservations required at www.moundhouse.org; \$45-per-person with Mound House members \$15. The Mound House provides all paddling equipment, with a maximum of 12 people per tour, and Social Distancing in place.