Education Programs

The Mount Rainier Education Program offers a variety of free, curriculum-based programs within Mount Rainier National Park. We are committed to providing quality educational experiences related to the resources of Mount Rainier National Park and the National Park Service. Our focus is on in-park, ranger-led education programs; however we also offer limited classroom programs. Working closely with teachers and youth leaders, it is our hope to provide a learning experience that is best suited to your students and one that will ultimately result in a greater understanding and protection of the natural and cultural resources of our country's national parks.

In-park Field Trips

Ranger-led field trips are offered on the southwest side of the park (Nisqually Entrance). The park's education rangers will provide the educational programming. Each ranger will work with one classroom-sized group at a time (30 people maximum). Programs begin at the Mount Rainier Education Center with an orientation to the park. From there we begin our exploration up the mountain. The program will be limited to one topic and must be related to the curriculum the students have been studying in class. The outdoor lessons are designed to be hands-on. The role of both the teacher and the adult chaperones is a vital component of the success of this educational experience. Chaperones are an extension of the teaching staff and also need to be thoroughly prepared for this adventure. The role of the entire team is to ensure the students have a safe, fun and educational experience.

Educational Programming

A variety of education program options are available. Please be aware that each individual program has a specific length that will vary with the format, location and topic. Program formats include guided walks and hikes, talks, inquiry-based experiments, demonstrations and PowerPoint presentations. Guided snowshoe walks are also available between January and May depending on the snowpack. Please allow a minimum of 2.5 hours per class. Our current program topics include:

- **Grades 1, 2, and 3:** Discovery and animals of Mount Rainier
- **Grades 4 and 5:** Watersheds and animal habitats
- **Grades 6, 7, and 8:** Geohazards and geological processes
- **Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12:** Life zones and climate change

Fees

All of our educational programs are free of charge and are scheduled on a first-come first-served basis. National Park Service regulations allow for school groups and other *bona fide* educational institutions to obtain a waiver of park entrance fees, provided that the visit is for educational or scientific purposes. Fee waivers must be applied for at least one month prior to your planned visit. Completed fee waiver applications must be mailed to:

Mount Rainier National Park
Attn: Revenue and Fee Business Manager
55210 238th Ave. E.
Ashford, WA 98304
Tel: (360) 569-6622
Fax: (360) 569-2174

Mount Rainier Education Center

Most education programs begin with an orientation to Mount Rainier at the Mount Rainier Education Center. The Education Center located at park headquarters (between the towns of Elbe and Ashford) is a new, fully-accessible facility. It includes a large classroom with lab sinks, a small galley kitchen, bathroom facilities and a covered porch. The Education Center can serve as a teaching facility and education program staging area to serve visiting school groups as well as non-formal learners such as Elderhostel, youth groups, etc. Surrounding the Education Center is a trail system that explores the surrounding forests and meadows, and is connected to Columbia Crest Elementary School.

Scheduling a Field Trip

Education programs are offered Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. While no two school programs are exactly alike, typical programs begin at the Education Center at 10:30 a.m. and end up on the mountain around 1:30 p.m. Make sure to consider adequate travel time (especially during winter weather). It is recommended that groups eat a hearty snack before the program, and then lunch after the program is finished. Group size is limited to 60 people per day (minimum of 15). Fall programs are offered between mid-September and the end of October. Winter programs are offered on Fridays, mid-January through mid-March. Spring programs are offered between early April and the end of May. For schools with a restricted travel budget, there are a limited number of travel grants to assist with busing. In order to make a registration, be prepared to discuss your field trip objectives. You will need to provide a contact name, phone number, email address, group size and grade.

Contact

For more information, or to schedule an education program or field trip, please contact the park's Education Program Manager, Fawn Bauer, at 360-569-6591 or fawn_bauer@nps.gov.