

Outdoor School Tips and Information for Parents

The three most biologically diverse and dense environments on planet Earth are a coral reef, a rain forest, and a kelp forest. One of the purposes of spending a week studying on Catalina Island is so that students can view first-hand the rich environment and biological diversity of the kelp forest. Students will be nervous in anticipation of the risks they will take during their week at the Catalina Island Marine Institute. It is perfectly normal for your son/daughter to not sleep very well the Sunday evening before departure. One of my goals for my students is to feel slightly nervous or anxious about some aspect of this field trip. When a student feels nervous or anxious about a task and then successfully completes the task that student experiences tremendous growth and maturity.

Since I am not a doctor or your son/daughter's parent, I cannot administer medication of any type to your child without a parent/doctor's medical release form. This includes both prescription and over-the-counter medication. If your child needs an over-the-counter medication like Tylenol, you and your son/daughter's doctor need to complete a medication release form. You'll find these on my teacher web page on the Eastshore web site or your son/daughter can ask for one at school. Some over-the-counter medication is available in the marine institute's health office, and if I have a medication release form, I may administer it. In the event your son/daughter gets sea sick, you may administer over-the-counter or prescription sea sickness medication prior to departure on Monday; however, I cannot administer any medication on the return trip without a signed medication release form. I recommend sea bands for sea sickness which are an elastic band that puts pressure on the pressure points of the wrists. Many people have good results with this product, and it doesn't have the drowsy side effects of sea sickness medication. Since sea bands aren't medication, students may use sea bands without a medication release form. In the event your son/daughter becomes ill during outdoor education, I'll contact you in order for you to fax medical release forms to the marine institute for over-the-counter medication.

Students need to have flip flops to prevent cutting their feet while walking from their dormitories to the dive area and beach. If your son/daughter hasn't worn flip flops in a while, he/she needs to wear them at home so he/she doesn't get blisters from the strap. If they prefer, students may also wear aqua socks.

This is probably the first time your son/daughter will be in the sun since last summer, so he/she will need sunscreen. Hats and sunglasses are also recommended sun protection. Chap Stick is another handy item to have in order to protect lips from sunburn, wind, and discomfort.

If your son/daughter wears glasses, he/she should know the prescription number as CIMI does have some masks with prescriptions built right into the glass of the mask. I would suggest bringing an older pair of glasses if your son/daughter still has them.

You'll soon begin the task of packing your son/daughter for outdoor school. I suggest packing four sets of clothes one for each day – socks, underwear, pants, and shirt in jumbo size (2.5 gallon) Zip Lock bags. Each day all your son/daughter has to do is grab a baggie of clothing.

Label all clothing with your son/daughter's name or initials if you want it back. We leave between 10 and 20 beach towels on the island every year because students don't seem to remember which towel was theirs. The low temperature in Catalina will be between 50° and 53°F so a sweat shirt and a wind breaker that your son/daughter could layer should keep him/her sufficiently warm. Students need a twin fitted bottom sheet to put over the mattress on their bed. Some students may want an underwater camera. Target usually carries disposable, underwater cameras a lot cheaper than what students would pay at the student store at the marine institute. The marine institute's drinking water comes from a spring on the island, so there is no need for students to bring or buy bottled water.

Students should be prepared for rain. In the event that the weather forecast predicts rain for Monday morning, I'll send a parent email on Sunday afternoon outlining procedures. Both Target and Big 5 carry rain ponchos for less than \$2.00.

Students enjoy receiving letters from home. We distribute student mail before bed each evening. If you want your son/daughter to have a letter on Monday evening, plan on mailing it the Thursday before departure. First class mail takes between two to three days to get from the mainland to the island. In addition, students will send a letter home, so please be sure your son/daughter has a stamp and an envelope or a stamped postcard. You won't receive the letter until Thursday or Friday. The marine institute's mailing address is on the packing list, and I've also listed it below.

Name of Student
Eastshore School
C/O Catalina Island Marine Institute
P.O. Box 796
Avalon, California 90704

Students will be writing in their school journals on the island. They will bring journals home on the Friday before departure, and they'll need to pack them. They will need the journals back at school the Monday we return. Students will also receive a CIMI Log Book. This log book is to be returned to school the Monday we return as a lot of the information in this book will be completed in our science classes. Students will use it in order to study for the next science test. Please be sure this does not get lost or thrown away.

In the near future, students will have completed a CIMI budget in math that will serve as a guide for spending money, and it will be sent home prior to departure. I suggest that any money your son/daughter brings to Catalina is money he/she has earned. Also, discuss keeping money in the same location in their duffel bags. Some students lose their money because they forget where they put it, and the lost money is usually found buried in the student's duffel bag.

Finally, you'll receive a letter the Thursday prior to departure that outlines Monday's departure and Friday's return home. Cellular telephone service does not work from the marine institute as there is no reception.

