

Nature Exploration Classes

ART IN NATURE

Students will explore nature through the lens of an artist. They will learn about nature artists, develop an innovative approach to creating art, and present and share their creative expression. This class will be a unique experience for students to understand that art surrounds them in all places.

Time: 1.5 or 3 hours

Distance: Varied, 0.5 - 1 mile

Activity Level: Can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Create art using natural and/or found elements and materials
- Learn about nature artists such as Andy Goldsworthy, and understand how their art is an expression of themselves as well as how it affects those that observe what they have created
- Students will be able to identify how nature art can be used to bring significance to a place, person or experience

CLEAR CREEK HIKE

*Students hike through the forest on a favorite trail of their instructor's choosing. On the trail, open exploration and inquiry are highly encouraged and students can practice their observation and interpretive skills on plants, animals, insects, and tracks! May include the use of field guides, dichotomous keys, hand lenses, and nature journals. **Learning goals vary based on chosen activities, but are integrated with those from other classes. Each experience is unique and tailored to the interest of the field group.***

Time: 1.5 or 3 hours

Distance: Varied, ranging from 0.75 - 1.5 miles

Activity Level: Can be modified for universal accessibility with notification

TRAIL OF DISCOVERY

*Students have an immersive, full day experience in nature. Aspects of MEC courses on forest ecology, geology, and local history as well as those selected by the teacher, are highlighted on a full day hike. Students practice Leave No Trace, enjoy a picnic lunch, and, because of the full day nature of the course, have opportunities to engage more fully with chosen concepts. **A sack lunch will be provided. All participants need to bring a backpack, 2 water bottles, and comfortable hiking shoes.***

Time: 6 hours - full day (morning and afternoon class block, with lunch on trail)

Distance: 3+ miles

Activity Level: Moderate to strenuous hike; including a ladder/stream crossing, rocky terrain, etc.

Students will:

- Recognize the behaviors necessary for thriving long-term in an outdoor situation
- Discuss how humans can protect the environment around them
- *Additional learning goals are dependent on the content choices of the teacher and other courses taken during the students' trip*

WELCOME TO THE WOODS

Not every person gets outdoor experience from a young age. For some students, this will be their first time out in the woods. This class is a gentle introduction to exploring the outdoors here at McDowell Environmental Center. We will start small and work our way bigger as we practice observational skills, walking on the trails, and experiencing what Camp McDowell has to offer.

Time: 1.5 hours or 3 hours

Distance: less than 0.5 miles

Activity Level: Can be modified depending on group needs

Students will:

- Grow their comfortability in the natural world
- Know how to prepare for an outdoor adventure
- Practice observation skills while out on the trail