

Volcano Venture Camp

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by Nancy Keaton, Centralia

There are not a lot of places in the world that have volcanoes in their backyards. We are truly fortunate that we have a couple, and that there are opportunities for our kids to experience hands-on learning because of our location.

The Mount St. Helens Institute offers “Volcano Venture”, a camping experience for either one or two nights, for kids ages 8-12 to experience Mount St. Helens up close and personal. Kids get active learning about geology and biology of the beloved mountain. How was it formed? How does it constantly change? How did the big explosion affect the plants and animals? How does the volcano affect everyone and everything downhill?



Science Education Director Abigail Groskopf says the camp includes the basics of learning how a volcano works through activities such as a scavenger hunt geocache style.

“Kids learn to use a GPS to find the cache. They sign the cache and use clues along with observations of the landscape to tell the story of Coldwater Ridge. They do a volcano art project, they go to Johnston Ridge Observatory to see the visitor center, and watch the film on the story of Mount St. Helens. They’ll take hikes such as on the Hummocks Trail. They’ll do an ecology investigation, collecting data at places like the ponds in the hummocks,” says Abigail.

Rieva Lester’s 11-year-old daughter, Raegan, has attended the Volcano Venture camps for the past three years. “As a mom, I think it’s pretty impressive that we have something geared towards kids. Science, art, being outdoors – it combines all of those things. It’s a neat opportunity. You can see that the people who oversee it love what they do and love sharing it with the kids. They’re a great crew,” says Rieva.



Raegan loves the camp so much, she is going back again this year. “I love the crafts, like making a volcano out of paper, and all the hiking. I’m really surprised by how much we do in such a short time. We managed to learn a lot, and besides the hiking and crafts, we got to visit historical places. It has made me actually think about being one of the people who study volcanoes [volcanologist],” reports Raegan.

Not many young people get the chance to find out if they would like to grow up and study volcanoes. Pacific Northwest kids are indeed fortunate.

All photos by Brandon Chiasera

This Year

One-night camp: July 15-16 or July 19-20. Cost is \$175 **Two-night camp:** August 9-11. Cost is \$250
You can sign up online at www.mshinstitute.org/learn/for-parents/volcano-venture.html.
Camp is located at the Mount St. Helens Science and Learning Center, 19000 Spirit Lake Highway.



Other opportunities to get up close and personal with Mount St. Helens are also offered.

Family Camps
for parents and their kids
of all ages

Summer Ecology Program
ages 15-17

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