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FAMILY

When I Grow Up, I Want to Be . . .

At area day camps and museums, kids get to be marine biologists, archeologists, artists, engineers and even puppet creators.

By BRENDA REES, Special To The Times

In past summers, Lisa Hestin Lerner's two children, 9-year-old Alison and 11-year-old Jonathan, have experimented with being a cardiac surgeon, a Web site designer and a robotics creator. But Jonathan keeps talking about the time he dissected a sheep's brain--something Lerner was glad he did away from home.

"I think we have done it all," Lerner says with a laugh as she describes the other activities her children have participated in at various summer programs offered at museums and other places that are more typically considered family or tourist day trips.

Even though she fights traffic in the summer months to drive her kids to such destinations as the California Science Center, the Los Angeles Zoo and the Natural History Museum, Lerner, who lives in Encino, says it's all worth it.

"The access our kids have to education and fun here in the Los Angeles area is amazing," she says. "And unlike school classes, kids can go in depth on topics they really want to explore."

Indeed, fun and education are hallmarks of successful summer camp programs. Parents appreciate that their children are participating in hands-on programs that oftentimes are led by professionals. Children, like Jonathan and Alison, say they like such programs because they offer experiences they don't find every day, sheep's brains just one.

So don't assume this summer will mean a loss of brain cells for out-of-school kids. And while the season may be a couple of months away, now's the time to start planning.

Note that most camps offer limited scholarships for underprivileged children and that most preschool programs require that an adult participate with the child.

Our rundown of nontraditional camps:

- **Skirball Cultural Center, 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles.**

Children will unearth more than dirt and worms when they attend the Skirball's Adventures in Archeology Summer Camp. During the weeklong program, participants will get the chance to write like an ancient Babylonian, build a Viking boat or discover local artifacts of the Chumash and Gabrielino Native Americans. The center also will host a series of Saturday Archeology Dig Workshops this summer that can include the whole family.

The summer camp sessions take place in August and cost \$120-\$150 for the week. The Archeology Dig Workshops are \$7 per person. Call (310) 440-4684.



The Science at the Seashore extended workshop, offered by the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, lets kids explore tide pools for marine life.

GARY FLORIN

- **Kidspace Museum, 390 S. El Molino Ave., Pasadena.**

In addition to the regular roundup of science and entertainment-based workshops for big kids, Kidspace is launching a new summer camp program for 5- and 6-year-olds. Kinder-Kampers will be introduced to the marvels of mud or an exploration into the five senses.

Big brother and sister, however, will have a variety of workshops to choose from--they can learn tricks from Magic Castle magicians, work on acting skills with Shakespearean actors and extract DNA from split peas.

KinderKamp takes place July 16-20 and is \$85 per workshop. Kamp Kidspace runs from July to August. Half-day sessions are \$130 a week, full day \$205. Call (626) 449-9144.

- **Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino.**

During the month of August, the Huntington introduces children to the finer arts and sciences as part of the Huntington Explorers program. In the art galleries, they can learn the secrets to creating a masterpiece and later can paint one of their own. Budding botanists will dissect flowers and study plant cross-sections in the lab. Bookworms can craft their own handmade books, while shutterbugs learn landscape photography.

Cost for the Huntington Explorer program is \$110 a week for half days or \$195 for five full days. Call (626) 405-2127.

- **Descanso Gardens, 1418 Descanso Drive, La Cañada Flintridge.**

Organized hikes throughout Descanso Gardens, including some off-the-beaten-path spots, will bring youngsters nose to nose with butterflies, frogs and other woodland flora and fauna. After participants in the Summer Adventure Camp explore the garden, they will head back to the Sycamore Science Center Terrace for some nature-inspired crafts.

The day camp begins in July. Cost is \$140 for the weeklong morning sessions. Call (818) 949-7980.

- **Los Angeles Zoo, 5333 Zoo Drive, Los Angeles.**

This year, the Los Angeles Zoo has revamped its Zoo Camp programs so participants can choose between weeklong morning, afternoon or full-day sessions as well as single-day workshops.

Preschoolers can explore creepy-crawlies, take a jungle journey or discover animal noises. Older kids can pick classes that focus on animal homes, airborne creatures and zoo careers that includes a field trip to Moorpark College. One workshop will teach kids to see what kind of "zoo" exists in their own backyard.

This summer, families will get behind-the-scenes tours of the zoo at nighttime during the popular overnight Sundown Safaris. Bring your own tent or rent one from the zoo.

Zoo Camp sessions start in June and run until the end of August. Single half-day classes are \$35 for preschoolers, \$76 for all others. Weeklong half-day classes are \$145; full day is \$300. Sundown Safaris are \$75 for adults, \$50 for children 3-12. For registration information, call (323) 644-4211.



- **Natural History Museum, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles.**

The Adventures in Nature Summer Science Classes have something for all age groups. Pint Size Adventures (3- to 4-year-olds) offers workshops in butterflies, bullfrogs and tide pool treasures. Older kids can learn about rain forests, arctic animals, dinosaurs and sea horses. Even older kids can take a mission to Mars, discover the

Youngsters examine a toothy fossil at L.A. Natural History Museum.

origin of the human species and have a look at myths and monsters.

Sessions run from June to August. Half-day sessions are \$105 per week, full days are \$205. Call (213) 763-3534.

- **California Science Center, 700 State Drive, Los Angeles.**

Even the most indifferent child should find something of excitement at the Hands-On Science Camp at the California Science Center. More than 35 summer classes run the gamut from conservation and physics to life sciences. Kids can become junior astronauts, model airplane builders and weather watchers. Preschoolers can attend workshops where they can explore solids and liquids, amazing animals and the five senses.

Running from mid-June to mid-August, the summer camp programs are available as weeklong half-day and full-day workshops. Prices range from \$92 to \$100. Call (213) 744-4444.



Students take a close look at bugs at the California Science Center.

- **George Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits, 5801 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles.**

During the month of July, 7- to 13-year-olds can step back in time when they enroll in one of the weeklong Page Museum Adventures. Various workshops will feature fossil hunting in the tar pits, where they can learn more about mammoths, saber-toothed cats and other prehistoric creatures. Kids will also get a chance to play a Mayan ballgame and create their own Olympics in a special class on ancient sports.

The weeklong sessions cost \$105 half day, \$205 full day. Call (213) 763-3534.

- **Museum of Television & Radio, 465 N. Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills.**

Watch out Miss Piggy and Kermit. During the "World of Jim Henson" workshops, kids will learn the fine art of puppet (à la Muppet) making. The program will give kids a chance to create their own puppet characters as well as view special screenings of vintage Henson programs. In one workshop, participants will videotape their puppet creatures in action and take home a copy of their "show."

Cost is \$5 per child per session. Weekend sessions, which run from July to August, are held mornings. Call (310) 786-1035.

- **Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, 3720 Stephen White Drive, San Pedro.**

Kids will discover a watery world at their fingertips when they participate in a Science at the Seashore extended workshop this summer. Little ones can hear stories in between the tides; older kids will watch snails gallop, hold crabs and feed barnacles. High schoolers will be able to investigate sea spiders, moon jellies and join in a floating lab boat expedition around Los Angeles Harbor.

Together, families can explore animal behavior after dark when they bring sleeping bags for a Sleep With the Fishes camp-out.

Fees vary for the Science at the Seashore extended classes that run from July through August. Family sleepovers are \$28 per person. Call (310) 548-7562, Ext. 5007.

- **Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific, 100 Aquarium Way, Long Beach.**

From investigating the tropical reefs to the chilly northern waters, kids will become mini marine biologists during the weeklong Ocean Adventure Summer Day Camp. The camp has two sessions; one focuses on the ocean world and the other on underwater predators. Viewing baby creatures, participating in photo scavenger hunts and collecting plankton are among planned camp activities.

In addition, the aquarium offers Lifestyles of the Fish and Famous sleepovers where families can

curl up next to a 350,000-gallon tank teeming with exotic fish.

Beginning in June and running through August, the weeklong camp is \$120 for half days, \$250 full days. Family sleepovers are \$50 per person. Call (562) 951-1630.

● **Santa Ana Zoo at Prentice Park, 1801 E. Chestnut Ave., Santa Ana.**

Wild animals will be put under the microscope at Santa Ana Zoo's Zoo Camp. The weeklong camp introduces younger kids to animal science labs and the variety of animals that are found in the zoo. Older kids will learn about caring for zoo animals, with special attention to primates and birds.

All zoo camp participants will also go on a one-day field trip to the San Diego Wild Animal Park.

Junior Zoo Camp (kids 5-7) is held in the morning and costs about \$90 while Zoo Camp I and II (kids 7-11) involves full-day sessions that cost about \$170. Call (714) 836-4600.



Ivory, a long-horned goat, is among the animals children care for at the Santa Ana zoo camp.

CRAIG Y. FUJI / For The Times

● **Bowers Kidseum, 1802 N. Main St., Santa Ana.**

Big and little kids will explore their artistic sides at a series of summer camp workshops at the Bowers Kidseum.

In "Art Round-Up: Exploring the American West," kids will study artists such as Remington and Russell, as well as craft their own brand of cowboy folk art. For fun, they will also learn how to play spoons and washboards. Kids who opt for the "Egyptian Odyssey" will unwrap a "mummy," create golden jewelry and write in hieroglyphics on a handmade scroll. Junior archeologists in the final camp session of the summer will dig up ancient artifacts, learn how to identify them and then create prehistoric relics.

Little ones (ages 3-5) can participant in the Preschool Summer Music and Art Camp, where they will learn about various musical instruments as well as playing music and playing art games.

The weeklong preschool program is \$65 per child. With sessions running from July through August, the summer camp costs \$175. Call (714) 480-1523.

● **Discovery Science Center, 2500 N. Main St., Santa Ana.**

Science and technology are on the menu for older kids who participate at Camp Discovery at the Discovery Science Center. Among the fare offered are classes in which kids can create computer animation, perform chemistry experiments and build their own robots. In the Crime Lab 101 class, kids will unravel their own murder mystery and learn from actual forensic scientists, detectives and a district attorney. In another class, kids will build bridges, make electrical circuits and watch a dissection of a cow's eye.

Camp Discovery runs from July through the end of August. Weeklong sessions cost \$150. Call (714) 913-5012.

● **San Bernardino County Museum, 2024 Orange Tree Lane, Redlands.**

The museum's Summer Science Day Camps, run by Science Adventures, offers a wide range of science-based sessions for kids in grades K-6.

In "Wings & Flying Things," children will earn "pilot wings" as they build and fly their own electric airplanes. Those enrolling in "X-Treme Science" will conduct experiments with sour tastes, build a microscope and create giant bubbles that seem to defy the laws of physics. "Space and Rocketry" will teach participants how to build their own telescopes and space shuttles.

Summer Science Day Camps run from June to the beginning of August. Costs for the weeklong sessions are half days \$130, full days \$220. Call (800) 213-9796.

● **Ventura County Museum of History & Art, 100 E. Main St., Ventura.**

Participants in the Chumash Youth Program sponsored by the museum will get a hands-on experience about the Native Americans by grinding their own seeds, creating arrowheads and playing musical instruments. Snacks will feature foods that the Chumash might have eaten.

In the museum's Art Start sessions, kids will explore different mediums of art, from watercolors to sculpture. Campers will be encouraged to find inspiration for their sketchbooks by viewing the museum's permanent collection. Weeklong sessions for the Chumash Youth Program are in June and cost \$30. Art Start, held in July, is \$75. Call (805) 653-0323, Ext. 14.

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