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WITH THE KIDS

Nothing to do? Not here

Camps take the worry out of keeping kids busy during the summer.

By Brenda Rees
Special to The Times

SOME procrastinating parents are probably waking up this week realizing that the end of the school year is breathing down their necks — if it hasn't breezed by already.

Summer? Kids? Plans?!

Well, summer programs abound in the Southland, a region blessed with a diverse sampling of fare offered by museums, science centers, aquariums and cultural institutions. There's something for almost every taste — art, nature, sociology, drama and music for preschoolers up to the teen set.

Some new offerings this year include a Catalina Family Camp getaway sponsored by the Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific in which families can spend either three or five days on the island with a marine scientist kayaking, snorkeling, exploring tide pools and star-gazing.

In addition, the aquarium hosts an Ocean Adventure Day Camp in which 7- to 10-year-olds can spend their days collecting plankton from the harbor, meeting aquarium staff and helping care for critters. Participants in the Junior Biologist Day Camp (ages 10 to 12) will get behind-the-scenes privileges to explore ocean life up close and personal.

In conjunction with its current Marvel Super Heroes Science Exhibition, the Hands-On Science Camps at the California Science Center will feature inquiries into the workings of the human body, the use of chemicals and materials to defeat villains and an analytical dissection of the scientific accuracy of comic-book stories. Naturally, many other camps are offered for preschoolers to high schoolers involving biology, art, gizmos and even skateboards.

And finally, this year's art camp at UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History — Peace! Art! Action! — coincides with the current exhibition "The Missing Peace: Artists Consider the Dalai Lama."

Children ages 6 to 12 will explore how to make the world a more peaceful and compassionate place by contributing to a traveling "peace wall," sculpting portraits from clay, exploring culture and life in the Himalayas and flying doves around the campus grounds.

- Aquarium of the Pacific, 100 Aquarium Way, Long Beach. Catalina Family Camps, July 24-28 and Aug. 4-6, \$1,850 and \$1,450 for a family of four. Ocean Adventure, June 19-Sept. 1, and Junior Biologist, July 10-Aug. 18. \$140 half-day session, \$270 full day. (562) 951-1630, <http://www.aquariumofpacific.org>.
- California Science Center, 700 State Drive, Los Angeles. Hands-On Science Camp, June 26-Aug. 25. \$120 to \$140 half days, \$240 to \$280 full, extended care available. (213) 744-7444, <http://www.californiasciencecenter.org/camp>.
- UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History, North Campus, UCLA. July 24-Aug. 4. \$140 weekly session. (310) 825-7325, <http://www.fowler.ucla.edu>.

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HERE'S a list of other summer camps around the Southland. Certain sessions fill up quicker than others; you can check some websites for availability.

Science at the Seashore

Kids ages 3 to 17 will investigate the life aquatic, with tots watching hoe snails gallop and teenagers exploring oceanography with sophisticated tools. Plenty of field trips to the nearby ocean are scheduled for crab fishing,

bioluminescence exploration and plankton collecting.

Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, 3720 Stephen White Drive, San Pedro. July 5-Aug. 25. \$39 to \$85 per week. (310) 548-7562, <http://www.cabrilloaq.org>

Science Adventures

Kids ages 5 to 11 will get plenty of sunshine in these outdoor camps — located at 18 sites around the Southland, including the Arboretum of Los Angeles County and South Coast Botanic Gardens. Campers will learn thematic science concepts by building hovercrafts, electric race cars, telescopes and robots from scratch. Be prepared for animal encounters, science-orientated games and nifty experiments galore.

Science Adventures, June 19-Sept. 1. \$125 half-day sessions, \$205 full day. (800) 213-9796, <http://www.scienceadventures.com> .

Summer Camp at the Autry

Youngsters can step back into the past to learn traditional crafts, folk dancing, cattle roping and how to make their own tepees, in addition to taking nature hikes. Teenagers can discover the ins and outs of photography, create a newspaper or flex their acting and producing muscles in a theater or film camp.

Autry National Center, 4700 Western Heritage Way, Los Angeles. June 26-Aug. 18. \$135 to \$230 per week, some two-week sessions \$400 to \$425. Extended care available. (323) 667-2000, Ext. 340; <http://www.autrynationalcenter.org> .

Summer Art Camp

Through art and imagination, youngsters will journey around the world to explore cultures such as Africa, South America and ancient Rome. Make papyrus paintings, go on an archeological dig, create Japanese Noh masks and discover how to wrap a mummy.

Bowers Museum's Kidseum, 1802 N. Main St., Santa Ana. June 26-July 28. \$165 per week. Extended care available. (714) 480-1522, Ext. 1520, <http://www.bowers.org/kidseum/kidseum.asp>

Explorers Summer Camp

The gardens and galleries at the Huntington are the backdrops where children ages 5 to 12 can become environmental artists, scientists, chefs, poets and puppet-makers. Older campers can get a new perspective on history while younger ones can learn how to decode riddles.

Huntington Gardens and Library, 1151 Oxford Road, San Marino. June 31-Aug. 18. \$135 half-day sessions, \$245 full day; extended care available. (626) 405-2128, <http://www.huntington.org> .

Summer art programs

Creative teens with an eye toward careers in art can participate in a month-long workshop to build their art portfolio with emphasis on color theory, self-portraits and figure drawing. Other weekly sessions involve working with artists to learn and refine techniques of cartooning and illustrating, silk screen, sculpture and printmaking.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles. June 26-Aug. 18. Four-week workshop, \$600; weekly sessions, \$135. (323) 857-6010, <http://www.lacma.org> .

Adventures in Nature

The Earth's features, creatures and cultures will be under the microscope for preschoolers up to eighth-graders. Participants can choose programs that involve touring a paleontology lab, examining live fossils, sampling Aztec chocolate or going on bird-watching field trips.

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, 900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles, July 24-Aug. 25, and the Page Museum at the La Brea Tar Pits, July 10-21. \$119 half-day sessions, \$238 to \$299 full day; extended care available. (213) 763-ED4U; <http://www.nhm.org> .

Zoo Camp

Offerings for kids ages 4 to 12 revolve around critters: Younger tykes can learn about farm animals, cats and dogs as well as local backyard wildlife. Older kids will investigate primates, monsters and dragons, learn what it takes to be a worker

bee and take exploratory hikes in nearby Griffith Park.

Los Angeles Zoo, 5333 Zoo Drive, Los Angeles. June 26-Aug. 18. \$300 weekly session; extended care available. (323) 644-4211, <http://www.lazoo.org> .

Zoo Keeper Camp

Budding zoologists will get hands-on experiences in taking care of exotic animals through a variety of science labs, animal presentations, crafts and games. A more advanced camp lets participants become junior zoo keepers as they learn how to personally train and feed animals. Weekly field trips to the San Diego Zoo are also planned.

Santa Ana Zoo, 1801 Chestnut Ave., Santa Ana. June 26-Aug. 25. Weekly session, \$185 to \$200. Ages 7-11. (714) 953-8555, Ext. 13, <http://www.santaanazoo.org> .

Dual Immersion Art Camp

Art and language skills are on tap at this camp designed for nonnative and native Spanish-speaking children. Kids 6 to 10 years old can enjoy music and storytelling sessions as well as a walk through the galleries with oodles of time for drawing, painting, sculpture and dramatic performance.

Museum of Latin American Art, 628 Alamitos Ave., Long Beach. July 10-Aug. 4. \$175 weekly session; \$600 for four weeks. (562) 437-1689, Ext. 107, <http://www.molaa.org> .

Take a Closer Look

Junior high and high school students are invited to sharpen their visual skills as they explore the galleries in an interactive tour that involves on-the-spot observations, hidden meanings and discussions followed by an art project.

Norton Simon Museum, 411 W. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. 2 p.m. July 1 and 8, Aug. 5 and 12. Free. Limited enrollment. (626) 844-6980, <http://www.nortonsimon.org> .

Petersen Summer Camp

Campers ages 7 to 9 will explore the museum's exhibitions through arts and crafts activities and hands-on discovery projects, tying the worlds of art and science to the automobile.

Petersen Automotive Museum, 6060 Wilshire Blvd., L.A. July 11-Aug. 11. \$190 a week. (323) 964-6373; <http://www.petersen.org> .

Archeology and Art Camps

"Remarkable Romans" camp invites kids 5 to 8 years old to uncover clues about the lives of the ancients as they excavate a simulated dig, interpret and reconstruct artifacts and create mosaics and fresco paintings. Young artist workshops — in partnership with Otis College of Art and Design — are for 9- to 12-year-olds who want to learn more about photography and how to create illustrated books.

Skirball Cultural Center, 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles. July 24-Sept. 1. \$140 to \$250. (310) 440-4636 (archeology) and (310) 665-6950 (art), <http://www.skirball.org> .

Wide World Summer Camp

In this half-day program, kids ages 6 to 12 explore the interconnections of art, stories and music of Asian and Latino cultures as well as from the Palestinian territories. Camps will culminate with a display of children's artwork; field trips to Hancock Park are planned.

Craft and Folk Art Museum, 5814 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles. July 24-Aug. 4. Weekly session, \$125. (323) 937-4230, Ext. 28; <http://www.cafam.org> .