



Course Brochure

Caribbean Marine Ecology Camp (CMEC)

Contact:
Education@reefresearch.org
www.reefresearch.org





Overview

CCMI's week-long Caribbean Marine Ecology Camps (CMEC) are open to high school students (14-18 years old). The course introduces students to tropical marine biology, ecology, and conservation at one of the world's most beautiful coral reefs. CCMI's aim is to change students' attitudes and behaviors about the ocean while having fun exploring Little Cayman. The CMEC gives students insight into the marine science industry, allowing students to live at an active research station, learning from an expert team of marine biologists and educators. The programme also includes all the fun activities of a summer camp with beach games, kayaking, biking, beach bonfires, and exploring Little Cayman's environment.

During the course, students spend their days out in the water and on the beach, applying the knowledge they learn in the classroom and undertaking challenges - all while making friendships and memories for life!

Camp cost: \$2395 USD (all flights and DAN insurance for scuba divers separate)

Programme fee covers:

- All room and board (3 meals/day)
- Instructor fees
- All classroom and field equipment
- Scuba diving (if certified)
- Little Cayman ground transportation

Programme fee does NOT cover:

- Flights to and from Little Cayman
- DAN insurance for scuba divers

Example CMEC Schedule

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| Morning flight arrival | BREAKFAST 7:00AM | BREAKFAST 7:00AM | BREAKFAST 7:00AM | BREAKFAST 7:00AM | BREAKFAST 7:00AM | BREAKFAST 7:00AM |
| 11:00am Settling in Welcome games on deck | 8:00 - 9:00 Dive Safety Brief & Prepare Gear | 8:00 Boat Dives x2 Buoyancy Challenge (mission impossible, nose dive & thread the needle) Snorkelers - Fish ID Bingo Challenge | 8:00 Boat Dives x2 Coral ID Bingo Challenge (Meadows) & Fish ID Bingo Challenge (Mixing Bowl) Snorkellers - AGGRA Fish Survey | 8:00 Boat Dives x2 Research dive data collection & Fun Dive | 8:30 Ocean Olympics! Paddleboard frisbee, kayak relay race, newcomb... | Morning flight |
| LUNCH 12:30 | LUNCH 12:30 | LUNCH 13:00 | LUNCH 13:00 | LUNCH 13:00 | LUNCH 13:00 | Nature Trail |
| 1:30 - 2:30 Snorkel & Kayak @ Grape Tree Bay | 1:30-2:30 Talk - Fish ID Lecture & AGRRA Survey method | 2:30 - 3:30 Talk - Threats to Coral Reefs | 2:00-3:00 Talk - Research at CCMI | 2:00-3:00 Talk - Marine Plastics & Pollution | 2:00-3:00 Pack & Tidy Station | PICNIC LUNCH 11:30 @ Point of Sand, Beach Clean Up, Games, Snorkel Cars: N. Van (VM) |
| Free time & Shower | 2:30-3:00 Dive Log Book & Creature Book ID | Free Time | 3:30 - 4:30 Little Cayman Museum & National Trust Booby Pond | 3:00- 5:30 Campers Choice: Nature Trail, Mangrove Snorkel, Beach Clean, Snorkel, Kayak, Bike Ride, Games at Point of Sand, Reef Lecture Series, Art Workshop | 3:00-4:00 Talk - Lionfish Lecture & Dissection | |
| Afternoon flight arrive | 3:15-5:00 Bike Ride to Salt Rock Dock & Snorkel! | 4:30-5:30 Talk- Reefs At Night Intro & Dive Log Book/ Creature Book ID | 4:30 - 5:30 pm Seahore Café | | 4:30-5:30 Beach clean up | Afternoon flights |
| 4:30-5:30 Station Tour & Welcome Talk | | | | | | |
| DINNER 6:00 PM | DINNER 6:00 PM | DINNER 6:00 PM | DINNER 6:00 PM | DINNER 6:00 PM | BBQ 6:00 PM | |
| 7:00-8:00 Evening Games and Free Time | 7:00 - 8:00 Evening Game | 7:00-8:00 Night Snorkel @ CCMI | Movie Night | 7:00- 8:00 Evening Games | Campfire, Songs, S'mores & Coconut Awards | |
| | Lights Out 10:00pm | Lights Out 10:00pm | Lights Out 10:00pm | Lights Out 10:00pm | Lights Out 10:00pm | |





Why CCMI?

CCMI's vision is a world with vibrant oceans and healthy coral reefs. Since our inception in 1998, we have been making this vision a reality by undertaking cutting-edge, impactful research and transforming our results into conservation and education initiatives that bridge the gap between knowledge and action. As a non-profit organization, we rely on research grants, donations, corporate sponsors, and education programmes for funding to continue our mission to sustain marine biodiversity through research, education, outreach, and conservation.

CCMI currently hosts upwards of 25 education groups every year with visits from primary schools, high schools, citizen scientists, and university groups from all over the world. Staff are well trained and experienced in teaching students of all ages, both in the classroom and out in the field with our specially developed curriculum.

Our fully operational research station can house up to 24 students in dormitories. The classroom can comfortably seat 24 at desks and contains an extensive marine library, computer, projector screen, and a beautiful view of the Caribbean sea!

Why Little Cayman?

Little Cayman is the smallest and least populated of the three Cayman Islands (Grand Cayman, Cayman Brac, and Little Cayman). The island is 10 miles long and one mile wide with around 160 full-time residents. Though Little Cayman is a tropical paradise with limited human development, it is only a short 30-minute plane ride from Grand Cayman.

The coral reefs of Little Cayman are arguably the best in the Caribbean with diverse coral and fish assemblages and large populations of megafauna, including spotted eagle rays, Nassau grouper, sea turtles and sharks. This is why Little Cayman has been rated one of the top diving destinations in the Caribbean and in part why it was named a Mission Blue Hope Spot in June 2020!



What will students gain?

This exceptional trip will not only allows students to gain exposure to new cultures and a fully operational research institute; it also provides them:

- An understanding of the current threats facing our environment and how they can act against them
- Marine animal identification
- Scientific fieldwork techniques
- Improved snorkelling / diving experience
- Experience of living at an active research station
- Certificate of completion for their CV
- And much more...

Activities

A number of possible activities are listed below:

Snorkelling & Diving

Little Cayman has been designated a Mission Blue Hope Spot, with some of the healthiest reefs in the Caribbean. There are many opportunities for your child to explore Little Cayman's pristine reefs as they are guided by CCMI's education team who are experts on the reef, have a minimum of rescue diver certification, and are first-aid trained.

Tour Little Cayman Museum, Little Cayman National Trust

These tours will give students the chance to learn more about the terrestrial ecology and history of Little Cayman. The National Trust provides a talk on the fascinating array of bird species at the Booby Pond Nature Reserve.

Beach clean-up

An essential component for any marine camp is to participate in a beach clean-up. This helps students to visualize the scale of the plastic problem.

Lionfish dissection

We can arrange to catch lionfish on the cull leading up to the course. A live dissection may be demonstrated to the students in conjunction with a discussion about why they are a problem species in the Caribbean.

Nature trail

Students will explore the unique landscape of Little Cayman by walking the Nature trail, which cuts across the island. On this trail students explore some of Little Cayman's endemic terrestrial species. Sturdy, closed-toed shoes are strongly advised.

Beach bonfire

An essential camp tradition on the last night. Students gather around a beach campfire and play camp games, sing songs, and make s'mores under the incredible starlight.

Classroom

There are a planned number of lectures based on CCMI's latest research findings and conservation efforts. Students learn underwater field research methods and conduct mini surveys on the reef. These talks are designed to be interactive, and students are encouraged to ask questions and participate in discussions.

Note: Activities may vary based upon weather and schedule changes






Food

CCMI provides three meals a day as well as fresh fruit for snacks. You may wish to pack additional snacks as the days are long and action-packed.









We strive to provide meals that meet the fundamental needs of all students; however, it is important to remember that there are natural limitations when provisioning in remote places and cooking for a large group. All supplies are shipped in on a barge, the timing of which is weather-dependent. Please let us know of any special dietary needs as far in advance as possible. The registration packet has space provided to note any allergies or dietary requirements.

Mealtime is often a highlight of each day! Students answer questions as they enter the ocean-view dining area. This is a perfect opportunity for everyone to bond as we do not allow phones during meal times, and all students and CCMI staff have communal lunch, which provides a perfect opportunity for students to ask questions to our expert researchers.

Please find below an example menu to provide an idea of the food provided during the CMEC:



Sample Menu

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Breakfast Buffet | Sides | |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p><u>Breakfast</u> Breakfast Buffet</p> <p><u>Lunch</u> <i>Build your-own sandwich</i> </p> <p><u>Dinner</u> Fried Chicken</p> | <p><u>Breakfast</u> Breakfast Buffet</p> <p><u>Lunch</u> Black Bean Burrito</p> <p><u>Dinner</u> Vegetarian Coconut Curry</p> | <p><u>Breakfast</u> Breakfast Buffet</p> <p><u>Lunch</u> Chicken Tenders & Fries </p> <p><u>Dinner</u> Spagetti Bolognese</p> | <p><u>Breakfast</u> Breakfast Buffet</p> <p><u>Lunch</u> Black Bean Soup & Grilled Cheese</p> <p><u>Dinner</u> Veggie Fritters</p> | <p><u>Breakfast</u> Breakfast Buffet</p> <p><u>Lunch</u> Pizza! </p> <p><u>Dinner</u> BBQ Ribs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bagels • Toast • Cereal  • Yogurt  • Fruit  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salads • Coleslaw • Baked Beans • Chopped Fresh Veggies • Potato Salad • French Fries | |
| <h3 style="margin: 0;">Fri-yay!</h3> | | | | | <h3 style="margin: 0;">Saturday</h3> | | |
| <p><u>Breakfast</u> Breakfast Buffet </p> <p><u>Lunch</u> Red Bean & Potato Soup</p> <p><u>Dinner</u> Braised Pork Chops</p> | | | <p><u>Breakfast</u> Breakfast Buffet</p> <p><u>Lunch</u> Lasagna </p> <p><u>Dinner</u> BBQ Night! Hamburgers Hotdogs & Black bean Burgers</p> | | | <h3 style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">Desserts</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Lime Pie • Banana Bread • Carrot Cake • Chocolate Chip Cookies • Oatmeal Raisin Cookies • Pineapple Upside Down Cake • Brownies • Chocolate Cake | |

- All meals can be customized to fit dietary requirements
- Snacks are available anytime for students
- All meals subject to change dependent on barge shipment



Packing List

Please keep in mind that Little Cayman is remote, with only one small grocery store. While basics are available there, they are often very expensive. Don't forget the essential things that you/your child need to use on a daily basis. There is limited Flow and Digicel mobile service on Little Cayman and free Wi-Fi at the field station; however, we require programme participants to leave phones/tablets in their rooms during the day, except in limited free time. Local businesses accept credit and debit cards as well as cash (US\$ and CI\$). There is a 24-hour Cayman National Bank ATM near the general store.

We highly recommend you pack the following items:

- Any necessary medications (there are first aid kits at CCMI and a clinic on Little Cayman, but supplies are limited and expensive to replace)
- Toiletries
- Reusable water bottle - essential!
- Mask, fins, dive booties, and snorkel (fins with an open heel back to wear with dive booties are recommended but not compulsory - shore entries for snorkel outings are often more easily navigated in booties). Very limited spare snorkel equipment (mask, snorkel, fins, booties, and wetsuits) is available; please pack personal snorkel (and dive) equipment if you/your child has their own as we don't have enough gear for every participant.
- Water shoes (water sandals or dive booties that can be used in and out of the water)
- Clothing changes for six days of active learning, including at least one long-sleeved shirt and one pair of long trousers for evening activities
- Closed-toe shoes or trainers for sports or long walks on rocky terrain
- T-shirts or rash guard that you can wear in the water and in the sun
- Wide-brim hat
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen, 45+ SPF and reef safe
- Swimsuits
- Bug spray
- Beach towel and shower towel
- Backpack and/or mesh bag for snorkel gear
- Light rain jacket

Extras:

- Pocket money (there will be opportunities to purchase items at the Seahorse Cafe, National Trust and CCMI such as souvenirs, sweet treats, and CCMI merchandise)
- Field notebook and pencils
- Disposable or digital underwater camera
- A couple of your child's favourite snacks including items for s'mores



Testimonials



“There was never a dull day here, we had many thrilling adventures. During the CMEC camp you meet and connect with so many incredible people. You are always surrounded and supported by the amazing staff that make sure your camp is the most spectacular experience you can have. Definitely a priceless and unforgettable experience for me.”

Janelle Smith - Cayman Islands (CMEC 2021, 2024)

“Aside from the great knowledge I gained by attending CCMI’s week long CMEC, I also gained unforgettable experiences from the warm-hearted staff, who felt like more than just instructors...they are really cool role models and definitely now my friends to say the least!”

Jacob Whewell - Cayman Islands (CMEC 2017)

“I really enjoyed the whole week of diving and conducting research, but one of my favorite things throughout the week was going out and planting staghorn coral on the reef. I know this kind of restoration will be a great benefit to our local economy in a few years time and I just can’t wait to come back to CCMI in the future to see how the outplanted corals are doing. I hope to leave Cayman to get a higher education so that I can come back and do more diving and research on all of our corals and help cull the lionfish.”

Jesse Jackson - Cayman Islands (CMEC 2015, 2016, 2017)

“A very educational and very beneficial course. Thank you CCMI!” Alessandro Ursini - Cayman Islands (CMEC 2020)

“My favorite experiences each year during CCMI’s camp is getting to swim with the incredible animals and fish in the sea. This year we saw lots of eagle rays and even got to watch a relationship called ‘nuclear hunting’ which is when other fish join the ray to eat leftover food it’s done with while swimming alongside it.”

Anna Symens - USA (CMEC 2017, 2018, 2019)

“Best summer camp ever! This is an opportunity more Caymanians should experience. I want to attend next year, because I want to experience it with my cousin.” - Adrian Tibbetts (CMEC 2023, 2024)



It’s a place they you can meet new people, learn new things, and explore new interests.
George Reichardt - USA (CMEC 2022)