

Museum of the Rockies Summer Paleontology Field Program 2010 Volunteer Application

The Museum of the Rockies maintains one of the largest field programs in the country, conducting fieldwork at multiple sites in the Judith River, Two Medicine, and Hell Creek Formations of Montana each summer. Research at each site is led by museum staff and graduate students under the direction of Dr. Jack Horner. We accept dedicated, hardworking volunteers to join us for a minimum of three weeks of fieldwork. This minimum time can be reduced for returning volunteers. Volunteers must be between 16 and 60 years old, provide their own transportation to Montana, and bring a tent, sleeping bag, and other personal supplies. All food and tools are provided by the museum, except for your food on town day once a week. This is a research-oriented program designed for college-age paleontology students; although other ages are welcome, note that this is not merely a summer camp or vacation. This is not a formal internship through Montana State University, and no stipend or class credit is offered. However, your time can count for volunteer service hours, and in some cases students have arranged internship recognition through their home institution.

You will spend 6 days each week quarrying one or more associated dinosaur specimens and making plaster jackets to protect the fossils for transport back to the MOR. Crew members camp in tents or personal trailers, and take turns cooking dinner, washing dishes, and performing other chores around camp. Evenings are spent compiling data, relaxing, and bonding with your new friends. Once a week the crew spends the day in a nearby town to buy groceries, do laundry, visit the library, and maybe watch a movie.

Fieldwork is physically demanding and potentially dangerous if you are unprepared. Overburden removal can last for weeks of constant jackhammering and shoveling. You must be strong enough to hike over a mile, often while carrying heavy tools and plaster jackets, and swing a hammer in the quarry for 9 hours a day. Weather conditions are often extreme, with cold snaps of below 30°F at night and 50° during the day at the beginning and end of the summer, and heat waves of over 80° at night and 120° during the day in July and August. Thunderstorms can bring several inches of rain and wind gusts over 50 mph. You must be willing to live in rustic conditions. Although our camps are relatively luxurious by fieldwork standards (many have electricity and running water), during the day you will not have access to air conditioning or bathrooms, and will have to go find yourself a nice bush. You will only be able to shower once or twice a week. Hoses are usually available for rinsing off in the evenings. The purpose of these details is not to scare you, but to ensure that you are prepared for the worst possible conditions. Overall, the weather is quite pleasant, and although for brief periods the labor is very physically demanding, generally it is not too difficult for most people.

No prior fieldwork or academic experience is required. The purpose of this application is to familiarize us with your experience and abilities so we can place you at the camp best suited to your talents. Please be honest about your abilities. You do not need to be a bodybuilder or expert backpacker as long as you understand the physical conditions you will experience and are prepared to work as hard as you are capable of doing. We hope that you will join us for an exciting summer that will give you excellent experience in paleontological fieldwork.

All questions, comments, and completed applications should be sent to Liz Freedman at morpaleo@gmail.com. Please cut and paste the following, with your answers, into the body of your email, with the subject line "Your Name Fieldwork Application." If you prefer, you may paste the application into a Word document instead, and attach it to your email (file must be saved as a .doc, NOT a .docx). We generally receive more applications than we have volunteer positions, so preference will be given to paleontology students (studying geology and/or biology in college) and volunteers able to dig for at least one month.

All applications are due by noon (MST) on Monday, March 1, 2010.

General Information

Name:

Current job, university, or high school:

Degrees earned or in progress (degree, school, major, year):

Briefly list any relevant coursework or other academic experience, such as sedimentology or anatomy:

Briefly list relevant and/or long-term work experience (employer, position, years):

Travel Dates

Fieldwork begins approximately May 24 and lasts until around August 16. Exact dates are subject to change by up to one week. At least three weeks are required for new volunteers; you are encouraged to stay longer. Returning volunteers may dig for less than three weeks. If you arrive by plane, train, or bus, we will pick you up at the airport/station on our town day, once a week (Saturday or Monday, depending on which crew you are assigned). If you are arriving by personal car, you can drive directly to camp any day of the week.

Preferred dates (general dates, like "first 3 weeks of June" are fine):

Total weeks:

Mode of transportation:

Outdoor Experience and Abilities

Level of camping experience - A: never camped before, B: a few nights, C: several weeks at a time, D: I lead trips and/or sell equipment. If C or D, please briefly describe.

Level of hiking ability – A: 1 mile is a lot, B: can hike a number of miles without problem, C: 2 miles uphill with a full backpack – no problem, D: I love backpacking 10 miles a day.

Physical strength – can carry over 50 pounds in arms A: 10 feet, B: 1/4 mile, C: 1 mile or more, D: can't lift 50 pounds

Physical strength – can carry over 75 pounds on back A: 10 feet, B: 1/4 mile, C: 1 mile or more, D: can't even stand up with 75 pound backpack

Rattlesnakes, spiders, scorpions – A: terrified, B: fine as long as they don't get close, C: I enjoy handling poisonous creatures.

Weather tolerance – A: sensitive to heatstroke or hypothermia, B: should be fine if I'm dressed properly, C: born in a desert and/or Antarctica.

First aid – list any training and certification:

Tool Use and Fieldwork Experience

Please describe any paleontology, archaeology, geology, or biology fieldwork experience:

Briefly list any experience, such as carpentry or construction, working with tools or heavy machinery:

List which of the following tools and equipment you A: have used occasionally, or B: have extensive experience with – jackhammer, ATV, shovel, Paleopick/maddock/pickaxe, rock hammer, mallet, chisel, awl, dental pick, burlap and plaster.

Quarrying delicate fossils requires patience, fine motor skills, and attention to detail. Please briefly describe any relevant preparation or artistic experience.

You must also have good eyesight, naturally or with glasses or contacts. Can you read the date on a U.S dime (~8 point font size)?

Personal Statement

Please briefly summarize why you would like to join the Museum of the Rockies field program, and why you would be a valuable addition to our crew. (150 words maximum)

Health Insurance

No health insurance is provided by the Museum of the Rockies. Due to the potentially dangerous nature of fieldwork, all volunteers must have proof of health insurance.

Insurance provider name:

Insurance provider phone number and address:

Policy number: Will be requested if you are accepted to join our field program.

English Language Proficiency

Our field program is open to residents of all countries. The official camp language is English. Even if there are other camp members that speak your native language, you are expected to speak English at all times. If English is not your first language, please briefly describe your training and ability to understand and speak English.

Reference

A formal recommendation is not required for college students and adults, but please provide the name of a professor, boss, or former crew chief that we could contact if desired.

Reference contact information (name, relationship to applicant, email address):

Recommendation

A letter of recommendation is only required for 16- and 17-year olds. High school students must be exceptionally mature and responsible for their age. The rest of the crew will be in their 20s or older; high school students must be as self-reliant and independent as the rest of the crew.

The source of recommendation should be a teacher, boss, or former crew chief, not a family member. The letter should include specific evidence of the student's maturity and ability to participate in a physically demanding scientific excavation with crew members much older than themselves. The author should email the letter directly to morpaleo@gmail.com.