

# Discovery Programs



## *Charting Courses for School and Community Youth Groups*

“I’ve yet to see a youngster step off the boat from Thompson Island and back onto the mainland whose learning curve has not soared off the chart. And that, after all, is what good education is all about.”

—Roland Barth, *Founder of the Principals’ Center at Harvard, author, principal*



**THOMPSON ISLAND**  
OUTWARD BOUND EDUCATION CENTER

THOMPSONISLAND.ORG ♦ BOSTON HARBOR

**THOMPSON ISLAND  
OUTWARD BOUND  
EDUCATION FRAMEWORKS**

**CORE VALUES**

*We teach to and work by these values:*

**Compassion**

- Demonstrating concern and acting with a spirit of respect and generosity in service to others

**Integrity**

- Acting with honesty, being accountable for one's decisions and actions

**Excellence**

- Being one's best self, pursuing craftsmanship in one's actions, and living a healthy and balanced life

**Inclusion and Diversity**

- Valuing and working to create communities representative of our society that support and respect differences

**DESIGN PRINCIPLES**

*We use these principles to design and deliver programs:*

**Learning through Experience**

- Facilitating engaging, relevant, sequential experiences that promote skill mastery and incorporate reflection and transference
- Learning from success as well as failure

**Challenge and Adventure**

- Using unfamiliar settings to impel students into mentally, emotionally and physically demanding experiences
- Utilizing and managing appropriate risk

**Supportive Environment**

- Designing an experience that supports physical and emotional safety
- Developing a caring and positive group culture

# Making Lasting Change

## Discovery Programs

Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center's Discovery programs are designed to use adventure, challenge, and experiences in the natural world to help students transform themselves into better individuals, team members, and leaders.

Discovery programs utilize Thompson Island's unique facilities and features. A 204-acre Island in the Boston Harbor Island National Park area, Thompson Island features four challenge courses, a campus that includes dormitories, dining hall, classrooms and laboratories, as well as salt marshes, beaches, forests, and meadows in the most ecologically diverse island of all the Harbor Islands.

Through Thompson Island Outward Bound's Education Framework, Discovery programs use physical challenge and hands-on learning activities to help students realize their potential by working together, problem solving, and communicating effectively. Discovery programs are designed for schools, community based organizations, and teams serving youth from 10-19 years of age. Students of all physical levels are able to participate in our programs. Activities are "challenge by choice", meaning that students are encouraged to participate, but the level of participation is based upon how much they choose to challenge themselves.

Activities on a Discovery program may include: group problem-solving initiatives, low and high ropes

challenge courses, environmental science activities, camping, night hikes, and community service projects. Discovery programs enable students to discover more in themselves or in their teams than was thought possible, while developing a deeper appreciation for the natural world.

## Serving Youth Since 1988

Since 1988, Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center has been serving students from metropolitan Boston and beyond, and the adults and institutions that support them.

## Safety

Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center is committed to "relentlessly pursue incident free programs." We believe that safety starts with employees who think critically about every activity, who weigh the risks and hazards against the preparedness of their participants and their own capabilities, who expect the unexpected, and who act with prudence and humility. There is no substitute for the good judgment of staff and the constant watchfulness of all supervisory and support workers.



Discovery programs can include trust building activities, problem solving initiatives, low or high ropes challenges, environmental exploration, and guided reflection.



## Instructional Staff

Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center hires an extremely qualified and mature staff of college graduates, teachers, social workers, and outdoor professionals that are dedicated to working with students. Instructional staff are between 21 and 40 years of age, are extensively background checked (including CORI and SORI screening), and all participate in intensive training (including CPR and Wilderness First Aid). The staff to student ratio is low (typically 6:1) and students always remain within 100% site or sound of staff.

## Thompson Island Mission

Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center is a not-for-profit organization whose primary purpose is to provide adventurous and challenging experiential learning programs that inspire character development, compassion, community service, environmental responsibility and academic achievement. Our organization principally serves early adolescents from all economic and social communities of greater metropolitan Boston, and the institutions and adults who support them.

**“There is more in us than we know. If we can be made to see it, perhaps, for the rest of our lives, we will be unwilling to settle for less.”**

**-Kurt Hahn, Founder of Outward Bound**



## Thompson Island Outward Bound Programs

Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center programs change lives, build teams, and transform schools. We deliver adventure and challenge in the outdoors, wilderness, urban settings, and classrooms to help students achieve their possibilities, and to inspire them to serve others and care for the world around them. Thompson Island Outward Bound practices Experiential Education, based on the educational philosophy of Kurt Hahn, who founded Outward Bound in 1941 in Wales. Outward Bound came to the United States 40 years ago.

## Boston Harbor Islands National Park area

Thompson Island is located in the Boston Harbor Islands National Park area and is owned and operated by Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center.

## Natural Features

A short 25-minute ferry ride from Boston, Thompson Island consists of 204 acres of meadows, forest, fields, salt marsh, and beaches. The island's natural features include a drumlin and a moraine; oak, tamarack, maple, and birch trees; open fields, wild flowers, and berry bushes; a pond; a 40-acre pristine salt marsh and a smaller, restored salt-marsh. Thompson Island is home to many animals, including killdeer, herons, and hermit crabs.



## THOMPSON ISLAND OUTWARD BOUND EDUCATION FRAMEWORKS

### OUTCOMES

*These are the outcomes common to all of our programs and what we measure:*

#### Character Development

- Demonstrating increased self-confidence and self-discovery
- Demonstrating compassion toward others and living a healthy and balanced life

#### Leadership

- Demonstrating the ability to set goals, and inspire and guide others to achieve them
- Demonstrating the ability to collaborate, communicate, solve problems and resolve conflicts effectively

#### Service

- Demonstrating social and environmental responsibility
- Actively engaging in service to others

## THOMPSON ISLAND HISTORY

### c. 8000 BC

Native Indians visited and gathered on Thompson Island

### 1626

David Thomson establishes a trading post on the island.

### 1832

Boston philanthropists purchase Thompson Island for \$6,000, with the intention of establishing a work program for boys.

### 1833

The Boston Farm School is founded on Thompson Island.

### 1835

The Boston Asylum for Indigent Boys, an orphanage in the North End, merges with the Farm School.

### 1837

On August 27th, Nathaniel Hawthorne visits Thompson Island.

### 1850

Headmaster William Morse establishes the first school band in America.

"I regard the foremost task of education to insure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising spirit, indefatigable spirit, a sense of duty, a willingness for sensible self-denial, and above all a sense of purpose."

**THOMPSON ISLAND HISTORY (continued)**

**1881**

In keeping with changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution, carpentry, printing, blacksmithing and painting shops are built.

**c. 1900**

School enrollment is limited to boys aged 10 to 14. Electricity, telephone and water systems are installed. Boys begin woodworking and start a newspaper. They build and run a weather observatory and telephone data to the U.S. Weather Bureau. The school is renamed The Boston Farm and Trades School.

**1941**

In Europe, renowned educator Kurt Hahn develops the first Outward Bound course, emphasizing character development and hands-on learning. His vision leads to the eventual establishment of more than 50 Outward Bound Schools in 35 countries.

**1956**

The school becomes a six-year secondary school and is renamed Thompson Academy. The farm program is eliminated. Students begin wearing coats and ties.

**1961**

The first Outward Bound school in the U.S. is established in Colorado.

**1975**

Thompson Academy closes and the school becomes Thompson Island Education Center, hosting short-term educational trips to supplement Boston Public Schools' curriculum. Girls and women are welcomed for the first time.

**1988**

The island's Board of Trustees selects Outward Bound as a partner to operate the island, creating a new entity—Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center. The island continues its mission to serve underprivileged Boston youth with programs that instill teamwork, self-confidence and compassion, and that encourage learning by doing.

# A Moving History

## Native American History

Native Americans first occupied Thompson Island as early as 10,000 years ago. Today, Thompson Island is listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places, in its entirety, as a contributing element of the Boston Harbor Island Archaeological District, for its Native American archaeological sites and land use.

## Early Settlement

The first colonial settlement on Thompson Island was established in 1626 when a trader named David Thomson established an outpost on the island for trading with the Neponset Indians. This was four years before the Puritans arrived in Boston and the island that now bears his name. Thomson, a Scot, was born in Clerkenwell, London, England. He sailed from England on the ship Jonathan arriving in May 1623 at the mouth of the Piscataqua River (now Rye, NH), where he became the first settler in New Hampshire. David Thomson was "Acting Governor" of New England from 1624 until his death in 1628 on Thompson Island.

## An Educational Legacy of over 175 years

An educational institution was established on Thompson Island in 1833, when a school for orphaned boys was built on the island. The Farm and Trade School was the first vocational school in America and taught farming, woodworking, and civics. In 1857, Headmaster



## DISCOVERY PROGRAMS

<b>Elementary</b>	grade 5
<b>Middle School</b>	grades 6, 7 & 8
<b>High School</b>	grades 9, 10, 11 & 12
<b>Transition Years</b>	grades 6 and 9
<b>Colleges/Universities</b>	freshman, sophomore, junior, senior
<b>Teachers, Youth Workers</b>	
<b>Ages Served</b>	5th grade through undergraduates, plus teachers and youth workers of all ages

**For more information or to schedule your Discovery program on Thompson Island call 617.328.3900 x137 or email [Discovery@ThompsonIsland.org](mailto:Discovery@ThompsonIsland.org)**



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P.O. Box 127, Boston, MA 02127 (617) 328-3900 Ext 137  
[www.thompsonisland.org](http://www.thompsonisland.org)