

# SUMMER LEARNING EXPEDITION Q & A



## THOMPSON ISLAND OUTWARD BOUND EDUCATION CENTER

The following are answers to common questions you may have about our Summer Learning Expedition.

### **Who can I contact for information about the program?**

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### **Who attends Thompson Island Outward Bound Summer Learning Expedition?**

Rising 7th and 8th grade students from across the BPS district are eligible to apply.

### **What does a typical day look like?**

A typical day starts with a “morning energizer,” tidying up your camp space, reviewing the plans for the day, and preparing and eating breakfast. During the day you will learn to climb, navigate, and orient yourself around Thompson Island and the Boston Harbor Islands National Park and engage in hands-on learning in one of the many ecosystems found in the Boston Harbor. You will play games, work on our communication skills, and challenge yourselves both personally and as a crew. You’ll explore the natural and cultural wonders of the islands. At the end of the day, you’ll cook dinner, debrief the day’s experiences, and hop in your tent to sleep out under the stars

### **What are the hours of operation for the Summer Learning Expedition?**

SLE will run from July 3rd to July 23rd. Thompson Island will provide transportation at the beginning and end of the course. Enrolled participants should expect to attend our program, overnight, for twenty-one days. Parents/guardians are invited to celebrate with their students on Thompson Island on July 23rd.

### **Is the program free?**

Yes! Our program is free for BPS students.

### **Are meals provided?**

We provide breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks for all students enrolled in our program. Thompson Island is a nut-free facility, and we monitor what snacks and meals we pack based on any food allergies present in the crew. It is important that if your child has any allergies, they’re noted in the enrollment packet.

### **What’s communication like before and during the program?**

Once your student’s enrollment is confirmed, you will receive a welcome email and Parent Letter from your student’s Course Director. This will include information about Program Start, Graduation, and provide contact information in case of an emergency.

There is a staff person at Thompson Island on call 24 hours a day. A Course Director is on call 24 hours for emergencies. Families are encouraged to write letters to students and Thompson Island will print and deliver these messages to your student.

### **Do we have to sign the risk form?**

For your child to participate in Thompson Island Outward Bounds’ activities, you and your child will need to sign our liability release form. This form lists some of the activities in which your child may participate and the risks of those activities. Outward Bound expends considerable energy assessing and addressing risks associated with its programs.

Outward Bound invests significant effort to care for your child's safety. The release form helps to explain the risks that you are assuming.

### **Do we have to fill out the medical forms?**

All participants must have a completed and approved medical form, and all questions on the form answered to participate in Thompson Island Outward Bound programs. Medical Forms should be returned to partner schools or Thompson Island by the due date given. Thompson Island Outward Bound's medical screener will carefully review each form and call parents/doctors with any questions. The medical forms are the appropriate place to state ALL medications and allergies, so our staff can make accommodations for them.

### **What about safety?**

Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (TIOBEC) meets or exceeds safety guidelines established by Outward Bound USA, the recognized pioneer in developing industry safety standards. TIOBEC conducts yearly safety inspections of all ropes courses and related climbing equipment. Additionally, a safety review is conducted each year, which includes an operational assessment of course elements and emergency procedures of specific programs. A bi-annual safety audit is conducted by Outward Bound USA's safety department, which assesses all aspects of Thompson Island operations. Each year emergency response plans and safety manuals are updated and distributed to instructors and other staff as part of a rigorous safety training program. There is a full-time Safety Director for the entire island. Safety is built into all our procedures and is our number one priority.

### **What is our policy on harassment or bullying?**

We do not condone harassment in any form by participants, guests, or from our staff. We adhere to BPS standards of harassment and bullying, including cyberbullying, in addition to our own Thompson Island Policies and Procedures. In instances of bullying, Thompson Island will contact the parent or guardian and if the behavior persists the student may be dismissed from the course.

Emotional safety refers to the emotional well-being of individuals or groups. In emotionally safe learning environments, students feel able to express their feelings and ideas, take risks and try new things. Emotional safety is critical to Outward Bound as the Outward Bound model is predicated on teamwork and group dynamics. When emotional safety is compromised, trust and communication breakdown, students can feel excluded and unable to participate on course. Further, students' ability to learn skills, follow instructions, assess hazards, ask for help, and take care of themselves is part of the Outward Bound safety system.

### **What is the electronics and mobile phone policy for students?**

Participants are asked to leave all electronic devices such as phones, tablets, e-readers (like Kindles), and gaming systems at home. Participants can bring a camera to take pictures. Thompson Island will not be responsible for any devices that may be lost, stolen, or broken. If a participant should bring their cell phone or other electronic device to the island, the item will be collected from the student. The device will be stored in a secure location for the remainder of the program. At the end of the program, the device will be given back to the student. If this situation arises, program staff will make a phone call home to inform the parent.

### **What is the supervision of the students like?**

All our groups are supervised by at least two Thompson Island Instructors (1:6 ratio). Thompson Island Outward Bound uses 100% sight and sound as a standard for student supervision, students will not be left alone or unsupervised at any point during their program.

### **What happens if there is a medical emergency?**

Thompson Island and the other Harbor Islands visited during the course are within the Boston, Hingham and Hull Emergency Medical Systems. Police, Fire, and Emergency Medical teams respond within 10 minutes for any emergency on Thompson Island or other Harbor Islands visited during the course. The emergency boats that come to the island are staffed with EMT's and equipped as ambulances.

### **What if there is inclement weather on Thompson Island?**

The weather is monitored by the Waterfront Director, the Safety Director, and the Program Director. In cases of thunderstorms on-island, all participants are mandated to seek shelter indoors for the duration of the storm. Instructors receive additional safety training for inclement weather and respond according to Outward Bound's Charter Operating Policies and Procedures.

### **What methods are being employed to mitigate COVID-19 exposure?**

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, the Summer Learning Expedition will be organized into 4 separate cohorts. Additionally, participants will practice good hygiene and hand washing, social distancing, mask wearing, and repeat testing. Current information can be found here: [www.thompsonisland.org/about/covid-19](http://www.thompsonisland.org/about/covid-19)

### **Are there mosquitoes and ticks on Thompson Island?**

As with any wilderness area in the Northeastern United States, Thompson Island is home to biting insects such as mosquitos and ticks. Health organizations refer to these insects as vectors, and the recent concern with vectors in this area of the country has been the transmission of vector-borne illnesses. Thompson Island wants to help educate and protect against vector-borne illness transmission and we are working hard every day to educate our families and students on protections against these illnesses. While vector-borne illnesses are rare and often treatable if identified early, you should be aware that there is no complete protection from a vector bite or the illnesses they may transmit, whether you are on Thompson Island or in your own backyard.

What you can do to help prevent vector bites:

#### **Before Thompson Island**

- Visit the CDC, WHO, and/or Mass.gov (Health and Human Services) websites for more information about vector species, prevention, and treatment.
- Educate yourself (if you are the participant) or your child (if you are a parent) about vector identification and the prevention methods suggested by the aforementioned websites.
- Supply yourself/your child with bug repellent (repellent will also be supplied by Thompson Island). The CDC and State Departments of Health recommend insect repellent between 20% -50% DEET which can be applied to the skin to repel ticks and mosquitos and most other vectors.
- Treat your/your child's clothing with Permethrin - commonly available and safe to use as a fabric application that repels and kills most vectors on contact. Thompson Island recommends wearing long-sleeved light-colored shirts, long pants, and socks.

#### **After Thompson Island**

- Check yourself/your child for vectors after their visit to Thompson Island.
- If you find a tick embedded in the skin or if you/your child is experiencing signs and symptoms of a vector-borne illness, call your doctor or local medical facility.

#### **What we will do:**

- Inform you/your child that Thompson Island is sometimes home to biting insects (vectors) such as mosquitos and ticks.
- Offer you/your child bug repellent containing DEET.
- Teach you/your child how to conduct a thorough tick check and allow time to conduct these checks.
- Choose break spots where wind, exposure, or terrain reduces the concentration of vectors.
- Being especially vigilant in areas where vectors are of higher concentrations (i.e., wooded areas, brush, nests).
- Remove embedded ticks from the skin, clean the bite area, and monitor your/your child's health according to the most current policies/practices of the CDC.