

Connections Summer Expeditions Q&A

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

Contact information prior to the program?

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Contact information 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 Course Start, Graduation, and provide contact information in case a family needs to contact the Course Director directly.

Is the program free?

Yes! Our program is free to participants.

Who attends Thompson Island Outward Bound Connections Summer Expeditions?

We work directly with our BPS partner schools to enroll students.

What does a typical day look like?

- Wake up with warm up activity
- Make breakfast and pack up camp
- Pack backpacks
- Move to the next campsite
- Make lunch and set up camp
- Afternoon group challenge element or lesson
- Afternoon solo or service project
- Make dinner
- Evening Meeting and reflection time
- Bed time after a very full day

Participants should expect to attend the program, overnight, for five days. The first day will include a course orientation and the last day a graduation event.

Where does the program start? How do I get to Thompson Island?

The ferry to Thompson Island, the Motor Vessel Outward Bound, leaves from the EDIC dock off Drydock Avenue in South Boston, 200 yards from the Black Falcon Cruise Terminal and Boston's Design Center, behind the North Coast Seafood Building. See our website for driving directions, as well as directions via the MBTA, at www.thompsonisland.org/visit.

Are meals provided?

We provide breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks for all students enrolled on our expeditions. 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's important to inform our staff of any allergies your child has.**

Can my child bring snacks from home?

We request that students do not bring snacks from their homes to the program. Safety is our utmost priority, and to ensure food safety for all of our Expedition participants, Thompson Island will provide all meals and snacks during course.

What type of communication should I expect from the program?

Expect frequent communication from Thompson Island staff prior to program start. Communications include (but not limited to):

- 1) Initial program application and outreach materials
- 2) A “You’re Enrolled” Packet (information on start and end time)
- 3) Outreach for Family Day Open House Event on Thompson Island and “Warming Up For Summer” events (flyers and phone call)
- 4) A Student Phone Call from your student’s instructors 48-hours before the start of their course

While your student is on course, you can expect email updates on how your student’s crew is doing, as well as a reminder about the Graduation Day details.

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 and youth programs. Safety is built into all our procedures and is our number one priority.

What is the supervision of the students like?

All of our Expedition crews are supervised by at least two Thompson Island Expedition Instructors. Thompson Island Outward Bound uses 100% sight and sound as a standard for student supervision, so students are consistently within an instructor’s line of sight and/or within hearing distance of an instructor. Students will not be left alone or unsupervised at any point during their program.

What happens if there is a medical emergency?

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

How can we contact our child if necessary?

There is a staff person at Thompson Island on call 24 hours for emergencies. With each course, a Course Director is on call 24 hours for emergencies. Contact information will be provided on the first day.

What are the provisions for inclement weather which either prevents the children from going to or returning from Thompson Island?

The weather is monitored by the Waterfront Director, the Safety Director and the Program Director. In case of a thunderstorm on-island all participants are mandated to seek shelter indoors for the duration of the storm. Instructors also receive additional safety training for thunderstorm procedures.

Are there mosquitoes and ticks on Thompson Island?

As with any wilderness area in the Northeastern United States, Thompson Island is sometimes 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.

Who are the instructors and what are their qualifications?

Thompson Island Expedition Instructors range in age from 21 – 35 years old and must meet rigorous industry and organizational standards for the skills and competencies required for the courses they instruct. Instructors are trained first and foremost to ensure the physical and emotional safety of program participants. At a minimum, all Lead Instructors are certified Wilderness First Responders, and hold a CPR/AED certification.

Do Instructors have background checks?

All instructors and island personnel have background checks. Thompson Island Outward Bound instructors have criminal background checks using the GIS system, which includes a seven-year nationwide background check. It is more extensive than the CORI check, which only covers Massachusetts.

Do the instructors have experience with this age group?

Instructors possess a wide range of experience working with youth in outdoor and educational settings. Some staff may have even worked with your child during the school year when they visited the island with their school.

We are so excited to work with your student this summer - we can't wait to meet them!