

CONNECTIONS SUMMER EXPEDITIONS DESCRIPTION

5-DAY BACKPACKING AND CAMPING EXPEDITION

A MESSAGE FOR PARENTS AND STUDENTS

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

We're looking forward to your participation in this 5-day Thompson Island Outward Bound expedition. To help you better prepare for your course, we'd like to tell you more about the program and its scope of activities.

You do not need prior experience to come to Thompson Island, but your expedition will be more enjoyable for you if you come prepared, both physically and mentally. Course activities are designed specifically for young people your age, yet much of it may be challenging for you. We employ a theory called, "challenge by choice," which allows for group members to challenge themselves on an individual level while supporting each other and recognizing these different definitions of success. In turn, for your efforts and willingness to challenge your perceived limits you will find a great deal of satisfaction, pride, and enjoyment on course.

Each group (known as a "crew") is made up of approximately 10 students from Boston Public Schools and Greater Boston. Our mission is to bring together social, economic, and cultural diversity in order to have the best possible Outward Bound experience. Led by two experienced instructors, your crew will explore the natural wonders of our Thompson Island.

The 5-day expedition encompasses a progression of three learning phases. The first phase of your expedition will be a *training* phase during which your instructors will teach you essential outdoor and technical skills, such as orienteering, camp craft, basic climbing techniques and the skills necessary for effective teamwork and communication. Next, during the skill application (or "*main*") phase, you will advance the skills that you have acquired and exhibit what you have learned. With the confidence and responsibility gained during the initial phases of your course, you will embark on a *final* expedition, or culminating experience, led and organized by your crew. You will demonstrate your ability to work together within the community you have built, making crew decisions and successfully taking on a final challenge.

Your course will include 5 days of backpacking, environmental exploration, lessons on sustainable practices and camp craft, and multiple climbing days with the various challenge course elements on Thompson Island. You don't need any prior experience to enjoy these activities. We will teach you everything needed to perform as part of a successful crew, from basic wilderness practices and climbing skills to communication, leadership, and conflict-resolution skills.

You will be living in the outdoors and camping each night in tents on Thompson Island, cooking your own meals and traveling to different activity sites each day. There is little access to running water, showers and flush toilets. Every day each student will have a chance to hold a different role in their community. Jobs and responsibilities rotate, so you'll have many chances to experience, teach, or lead a variety of activities. As part of your expedition, you will also help with a service project.

Throughout the course you will have time to learn about yourself and your crew. You will get the most out of your expedition if you come prepared to use and share your strengths with everyone in your group. You will have a chance to work as part of a team and there will be lots of time for laughing, playing games and having fun.

A Typical Day:

Your day starts with a “morning energizer,” making breakfast, instructional lessons, charting your route, and getting under way. You’ll learn, as a team, climb, and navigate and orient yourself around Thompson Island and the Boston Harbor Islands National Park. You’ll explore the natural and cultural wonders of the islands and at the end of the day, cook dinner, debrief the day’s experiences and hop in your sleeping bag to sleep out under the stars.

Becoming a Team:

Throughout the course you will learn and practice basic low-impact outdoor living skills, as well as environmental science and natural history. Your group will operate as a team of mutually supportive explorers. You will surprise yourself with what you are capable of. Your attention will be focused both on outdoor living and working as a team. Instructors will help on both counts, teaching practical skills, helping you work together, navigation with compasses and charts as you make your way. At night, discussions will review personal and group challenges and difficulties encountered in the day's activities. Topics will include leadership, decision-making, responsibility, and teamwork.

Group Living:

Living and working with a small group is an opportunity to make lifelong friends and enjoy memories that will last a lifetime. It is also a source of challenge. At times you may feel frustration or annoyance with your teammates as you and your group attempt to meet your goals and make decisions big and small. Students will arrive with varying levels of motivation, trust, confidence, or nerves. New experience can be hard, by trusting your crew, you will find that you are much more successful than if you do it alone. Investing in working out differences in your group, sharing insights from your challenges, and laughing your heads off are all part of why students walk away from their Outward Bound courses with a deeper understanding of life, living, themselves and each other.

Course Responsibilities:

Because students take ownership of their experience, all group members will pitch in to complete chores, including cooking, washing pots, setting up tarps and stowing food and gear. You'll find that as the expedition progresses, your mastery of camp craft will enable you to operate more efficiently and effectively around camp. Groups also contribute by cleaning their gear at course end.

Hygiene:

Your instructors will demonstrate any available bathing options and explain more about hygiene when you arrive. "Bathroom" situations are dependent on the environment your course takes place in. You will learn how to use latrines, head buckets, or other wilderness-appropriate methods. Groups carry soap and hand sanitizer for hand washing.

Food:

You and the other members of your group will learn to cook tasty and nutritious meals over portable gas stoves. Our meals are mainly vegetarian and consist of grains, pasta, beans, cereals, and other light, dehydrated foods. A typical breakfast might be granola or oatmeal; lunch would include cheese tortillas and sun butter with jam on crackers; dinner might be macaroni and cheese or beans and rice. Our diets often have more healthy fats and protein than what you are accustomed to. To prepare, we suggest that you cut down on soft drinks, caffeine and junk food.

We can accommodate some special food allergies and needs (such as nut and gluten allergies, lactose intolerance or vegan diets), please let us know well in advance.

Supervision:

We maintain high staff to student ratios (approximately 1:5) but due to the nature of living and traveling together, there will be occasions on your course when you are not directly supervised by your instructors (but will always remain within sight and/or sound of them). We expect that all students arrive with a willingness to learn skills, and after learning the necessary skills for wilderness living and travel, to follow safety instructions without close instructor supervision. Those situations may include: time around camp, cooking, setting up tarps, sleeping and the solo experience. Additionally, our staff does sleep separately from the students but in close proximity.