



Y Camp Thunderbird

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Five-Day Quest Family Information Package

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Dear Camp Thunderbird Family,

Welcome to Camp Thunderbird! Summer will be here before we know it and soon it will be time to start preparing for camp.

Information in this booklet is updated every year, and all of the information is vital for your camper to have a successful experience. Please read carefully even if you have been to camp before!

Life at camp is different from the routines and patterns of home. Taking the time to talk with your camper about their upcoming experience is an important step in preparing. Setting a positive tone and clarifying expectations can really help your child make the adjustment. In doing this, your child will take the most out of their Camp Thunderbird opportunity.

If you, or your camper, have any questions about their upcoming experience, we encourage you to contact our Program Coordinator at acrouch@vancouverislany.ca

We look forward to having your child join us at Camp Thunderbird this summer.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island commits to our core values of respect, honesty, responsibility, caring, and inclusiveness. These values guide us in everything from our everyday decision making, our programming choices, and how we build and guide our camp community. In our commitment to these values, we recognize that we have room to grow and improve.

Camp Thunderbird is situated in, and benefits from, the territories of the T'Sou-ke and Scia'new Nations, who have lived in harmony with this land since time immemorial. We recognize the history of colonization and systemic racism that has shaped the world we operate in today, and we commit to increasing our awareness of where improvement is needed. We are dedicated to continuing to do the work of listening, learning, and making changes so that Camp Thunderbird a place for everyone. A place where people who are Indigenous, Black, racialized, or may experience discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, age, health status, neurodiversity, or ability are truly welcome and included.

We recognize that this critical work will take time, may be uncomfortable, and will ultimately be a great benefit to the Camp Thunderbird community and those we serve and interact with.

Camp Commitment

Camp Thunderbird strives to be a fun, safe and nurturing environment where everyone has a chance to be their best. All camp participants, staff and volunteers pledge to treat each other with dignity and respect. If necessary, parents will be required to collect their camper early. Inappropriate behavior including the use of offensive language, aggression, or use of prohibited items such as but not limited to tobacco, cannabis products, vape juice, alcohol, non-prescription drugs or offensive materials will not be permitted.

We recognize that conflict between program participants is a normal and inherent aspect of summer camp programs. It is important to note that **we address these challenges through conflict resolution; not conflict elimination.** This means we recognize that conflict is a reality in our work and that there are multiple stories to each conflict. We take the time to facilitate our participants working out their conflicts with each other in an age-appropriate way. We do not simply remove the conflict for our participants. This is a part of our overarching program goal of helping our campers learn and develop positive and lasting conflict resolution skills that will stay with them for life. The process is more challenging for the campers, but the outcomes are far more beneficial for the development of everyone involved. If one of the campers involved in the conflict does not live up to the commitments made through conflict resolution, we then will take steps to remove them from the program. The Camper's Commitment is a very important aspect of Camp Thunderbird's philosophy and speaks to our core values of respect, honesty, responsibility, caring, and inclusiveness. We ask that you take the time to read and discuss the Camper's Commitment with your child.

You will be asked to acknowledge and agree to the commitment during registration.

Camper Commitment

I want to be a camper at Camp Thunderbird. I agree to behave respectfully at camp. I will do my best to make this a great experience for myself and my fellow campers. If I get into conflict with other campers

at camp, I commit to working it out with the other camper and my counsellors. I understand that failure to live up to my Commitment may mean that I am sent home from camp early. I also understand that by making this Commitment, I can look forward to fair treatment from my cabin mates, fellow campers, and staff.

Parent/Guardian Commitment

I have discussed the Camper's Commitment with my camper and confirm that they agree to cooperate in the camp experience, to follow safety instructions, participate actively in conflict resolution, and refrain from behavior that is harmful or disruptive to themselves or others. I understand that by supporting this Commitment, my child may look forward to fair treatment from their fellow campers and the camp staff.

I also understand that camp prohibits the use of offensive language, inappropriate behavior, and the use of tobacco, vape juice, alcohol, or non-prescription drugs. I acknowledge that their use, or the failure by my camper to abide by this commitment is cause for my camper to be sent home early without refund of camp fees.

Risk Awareness

Participant Safety and Risk Management

The YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird is committed to providing quality outdoor experiences that support healthy growth and development of young people. The camp environment and programs provide unique opportunities for children, youth and adults to challenge themselves, learn new outdoor and interpersonal skills and make new friends. We invest significant resources to create programs that provide these benefits to our participants without exposing them to unacceptable hazards.

Participants and their families should be aware of the risks involved in participating in camp programs and accept that by participating they are taking those risks. Please take the time to review this summary of risks and our risk management approach. Risks will vary for each program, so we ask that you also take the time to review the information provided about each program [on our website](#). We are happy to speak with you should you have any questions or comments.

Risk Management, Planning and Safety

The unique nature of an outdoor education or summer camp experience comes with risks called "inherent risks". This means that we cannot eliminate the risk without destroying the unique character of the activity – the aspects that make it beneficial for the participants. Although we cannot eliminate those risks, we actively take steps to reduce or control them, with the intent of bringing them to a tolerable level. For example, riding a bicycle has certain risks, and most people would agree that by wearing a helmet and obeying traffic laws, the risks are tolerable.

At the Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird, we manage the risks specific to our environment and programs by being experts in our field, providing thorough staff training, and buying and maintaining quality program and personal protective equipment. While these measures do not guarantee safety, they allow us to offer programs that provide the many documented benefits of outdoor education and summer camp experiences, such as personal growth, connections to nature and a sense of accomplishment.

Risk Encountered at Camp Thunderbird

Activities we encounter in our everyday lives, and those that take place at the Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird involve risks. Risk may vary based on the nature of the activity. Any of the activities at the Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird involve certain emotional and physical risks, and many of them include the risk of disability, psychological trauma or even death, in the event of a serious incident.

Some of the hazards encountered as part of Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird programs may be familiar from our home communities: inclement weather and storms, motor-vehicle accidents, uneven ground, treefall, fire, hot liquids, infectious illnesses such as COVID-19, and equipment failure. For more information of the risk of COVID-19 please see our [COVID-19 FAQ page](#).

Some hazards may be more unique to the Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird programs and settings. These hazards include, but are not limited to: lake and ocean water, marine traffic, boat capsizes, wildlife encounters (including bears, cougars, wolves, mice or other rodents, and stinging insects), hypo- or hyperthermia, fall from heights, including falls while hiking in steep terrain, falls or injuries due to equipment failure, error in judgement, or natural rock or tree fall on our real-rock climbing areas or High Ropes challenge courses, remoteness from emergency medical or evacuation services, including the failure of communication technology.

The hazards listed, and other hazards not listed, can pose a risk to even a well-trained and highly certified instructor, leader or guide. Any of the Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird programs or activities can, due to an error in judgement or factors beyond the leader's control, become hazardous and potentially life-threatening.

Participants and their families must weigh the risks that may be encountered with the strengths of the Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird's Risk Management approach and plan as well as with the benefits of an outdoor education or camping experience.

Risk Management Plan Summary

The following is a short list of examples of the types of procedures and policies that are part of our larger Risk Management Plans:

- All staff and volunteers have a Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Screening.
- All staff and volunteers have program-appropriate first aid training, with a minimum of Standard First Aid and CPR-C.
- Camp Thunderbird sea kayaking programs are led by guides certified by the [Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of British Columbia](#).
- The Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird is accredited by the [British Columbia Camping Association](#). This accreditation ensures compliance with stringent training, health and safety protocols and auditors regularly visit the site for inspections.
- Camp Thunderbird cooperates with land managers and permitting authorities.
- The Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird are supported by the YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island Health and Safety Committee.
- The Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird staff team inspects, maintains and reviews all safety equipment, particularly emergency communications devices, regularly.
- The Outdoor Centre and Camp Thunderbird staff team reviews all family and staff surveys.

Contact Us about Risk Management

We encourage participants and their families to share questions or comments concerning risk management with us. Please contact General Manager Luke Ferris lferris@vancouverisland.ca about any aspect of the inherent risks of camping and about our risk management plan.

Camp Programs

Y camps across North America have found that activities focused on a small group of peers encourage the development of close friendships as campers play and meet challenges together. We do our best to foster an atmosphere of cooperation rather than competition. If we run an activity containing some element of competition, we focus on challenging campers to achieve their own goals, rather than encouraging them to measure their accomplishments against the achievement of others.

Activities are designed to engage campers, providing opportunities to learn and grow with staff skillfully balancing challenge and support. Junior (Grades 3-5) campers learn and build basic skills in outdoor adventure, nature and creativity. Senior (Grades 6-8) campers try more challenging activities such as our hike-in climbing area, longer and more spectacular hikes and advanced paddling skills.

Experiencing Nature

Campers will spend time exploring, learning and connecting with nature... this is a chance to let the imagination run wild, and to enjoy unstructured play.

- Nature Hike
- Newt Observations
- Nature games

Creative Programming

Campers will join ranks with eccentric heroes to find clues, complete challenges and save camp from visiting villains!

- Arts & crafts
- Teambuilding

Outdoor Adventure

Campers will learn basic skills, or build upon existing knowledge through creative games, obstacle courses and races. Every camper sets their own challenges, and can keep track of new skills on their Thunderskills Achievement Card.

- Canoeing
- Kayaking (grade 3+)
- Archery
- Stand Up Paddle Boarding
- Rock Climbing
- Orienteering

Swimming

Campers must complete a swim challenge to assess their swimming level. Regardless of level they achieve they will be able to enjoy swimming, either in a life jacket or without, and different water activities each day. For campers who are not swimming, there will be newt observations, crafts, and games.

Typical Day at Camp

7:00 am	Wake-up
7:30 - 8:00 am	Morning walk or run around the lake (a great start to the morning), and optional Polar Bear dip.
8:15 am	Table setters, two campers from each cabin group set their cabin's table in the dining hall.
8:30 am	Breakfast
9:15 am	Cabin clean up - Campers return to their cabin to clean up and prepare for day.
10:00 am	Morning Activities (e.g., canoeing, archery, orienteering, kayaking)
12:15 pm	Table setters
12:30 pm	Lunch
1:15 pm	B.O.B. (Bodies on Bunks) - Everyone is given time after lunch to sleep, read, or write letters home
2:30 pm	Afternoon activities
5:15 pm	Table setters
5:30 pm	Dinner
7:00 pm	Evening Program (e.g., group games or other camp activities)
8-9:00 pm	snack/bedtime prep/check-in/lights out.

Quest Program Out-Trips

Campers registered for Quest programs will participate in out-trips – they hike a short distance on Camp Thunderbird property and sleep out overnight. They leave after lunch on Wednesday afternoon and return before lunch on Thursday morning. The group works together to set up sleeping tarps and prepare meals with close supervision of counsellors. Campers will use either pit toilets, or portable “luggable-loos” for bathroom needs.

Before leaving for trip campers will discuss what it means to be on out trip with their counsellors. Campers will share carrying the gear and food. While on the trip, campers will participate in setting up camp and taking responsibility for “No Trace Camping” while they are away. During their trip, campers rely and depend upon each other for their success and many develop stronger friendships as a result.

What to Bring

The following checklist is a good guideline for packing for camp. We encourage you to wear old clothes you won't mind bringing home dirty or getting lost. We do not recommend that you bring expensive clothing to camp. Label everything! We suggest sew-on labels for clothing items, and an indelible marker for other items. Include the camper's full name. Try to ensure that your camper can recognize the items that belong to them.

General Packing List

Clothing

- 5-day supply of underwear
- 5-day supply of socks (wool socks are best)
- 2 pairs of shorts
- 2 pairs of pants (sweatpants are warmer than jeans)
- 3 to 5 t-shirts
- 1 long-sleeved shirt
- 1 warm pullover (wool or fleece)
- 1 sweatshirt
- Warm jacket
- Hat (for those rainy or sunny days)
- Raingear (needs to be 100% waterproof, jacket and pants are both required)
- Toque and mitts (for cool nights on out-trip)
- Pajamas
- 2 pairs of shoes (1 for daily wear, athletic shoes or sport sandals, close-toed preferable)
- 1 to 2 bathing suits (easy to move, paddle, and swim in)
- Sunglasses

Personal Items

- Soap and shampoo
- Toiletries, comb, toothbrush, etc.
- A watch and/or alarm clock
- Sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher)

Out-Trip Items

- Larger backpack for overnight out-trip (50L backpacks work well – you do not need to go buy one if you do not already have one. We have a few to lend.)
- Sleeping mat
- Bowl, spoon, fork
- Sturdy close toed pair of shoes (hiking shoes work well, but are not mandatory)

Other

- Water bottle
- Sleeping bag (synthetic preferable, with stuff sack)
- Pillow
- Towel
- Day pack
- Flashlight (extra batteries)
- Breathable laundry bag
- Stuffy toy (optional)
- Book (optional)

Please do not bring:

- Cell Phones or Smart Phones
- Portable music devices
- E-Readers
- Hair Dryers
- Expensive clothing
- Hatchets
- Money
- Tobacco
- Food
- Video games
- Other valuables
- SPOT or other emergency communication devices

Cotton vs. Synthetic Fabrics

Cotton is a great choice for hot summer days – it is breathable and does not insulate. However, cotton does not insulate when it becomes wet and it takes a very long time to dry. Synthetic fabrics such as polyester, polypropylene, nylon, spandex and fleece are better suited for spending lots of time outside in different elements. These fabrics keep the wearer warm even when wet and they dry very quickly. Wool takes a long time to dry but insulates relatively well even when wet. Having some cotton for hot days and non-cotton base layers for cooler or wet weather is a good practice.

Packing

A Rubbermaid bin, duffel, or hockey bag work well for organizing clothes and keeping them dry and secure in the cabin. We recommend a max size of 68L for the Rubbermaid tub. Anything larger is difficult to carry and does not fit well into the cabins.

Laundry

A breathable laundry bag is helpful to keep dirty clothes separate from clean clothes.

Campers do not have the opportunity to wash clothes when they are at camp.

How do I get all this stuff?

Getting everything you need for camp together can be a long process. The out trip gear list is necessary and important. Everything else is just a guideline. If you feel one bathing suit or one towel is all you need please don't feel like you need to go buy a new one.

When getting out trip specific gear try borrowing things first. Someone you know might have a backpack they don't use anymore or a sleeping bag they can lend for your time at camp. If you start keeping your eye out early you might find a good deal. Some families have found it more affordable to rent certain gear*. Facebook marketplace and VarageSale are other online sources for used gear. For those things you do have to buy, here are some local Victoria stores to consider:

Mountain Equipment Company

www.mec.ca

1450 Government Street
(250) 386-2667

Robinsons Outdoor Store

www.robinsonsoutdoors.com

1307 Broad St
(250) 385-3429

Sportchek/Atmosphere

www.atmosphere.ca

2955 Phipps Rd Unit 109, Langford
(250) 478-1551

***Sports Rent**

www.sportsrentbc.com

3-1950 Government Street
Victoria, BC V8T 4N8
(250) 385-7368

Contacting Your Camper

Telephone

No phone is available for campers to regularly make or receive calls while at camp. If parents want to speak to their child, they are more than welcome to do so. Calls must be organized through Camp Thunderbird's supervisory staff. If you would like to speak with Program Manager for any reason, please feel free to phone the camp: 250-642-3136.

Writing to your camper using Bunk Notes

In the time your camper spends at camp, they are connecting with other campers and their counsellors and learning new skills and independence. Letters from home using the Bunk Notes system can help them along this journey, as well as help with homesickness, when they are crafted carefully. Conversely some common mistakes can hinder this process or make homesickness worse. We have provided some tips below. Trust that even if your camper was feeling anxious about going to camp, they are doing well.

Things that are helpful:

- Talking about how proud you are of their growth and independence.
 - "I'm so proud that you're trying something new! I can't wait to hear about how archery went!"
- Mentioning all the fun things they will do at camp
 - "Have you tried canoeing yet? When I was a kid, canoeing was my favourite."
- Giving examples of things that happened at home that are funny or will make them smile.
 - "You'll never believe this! Your brother forgot his sandwich on the coffee table and the dog ate the entire thing except the tomatoes!"

Things that are not helpful:

- Projecting/anticipating their negative feelings about their experience
 - "I know you didn't want to go to camp, so I hope you have made some friends and are not too sad."
 - "Don't worry, only 2 more days of camp and then you will finally be back home with us!"
- Focusing too much on how you are missing them
 - "I miss you soooo much! I don't know what I'm going to do this week without you."
 - "Your little sister was crying last night wondering where you were."
 - "Your dog has been sleeping on your pillow every night, he really misses you."
- Talking too much about what they are missing at home
 - "Grandma made your favourite cookies last night and then tomorrow we are all going to the waterslides – wish you could come!"

Bunk Note delivery timing

Bunk Notes are received by camp through the system, and then printed daily at 11am and distributed to campers at lunch or dinner time. Campers do not receive bunk notes while on out-trip. **Bunk Notes sent after 11am on the last Thursday of the program will not reach the camper before they leave.**

The first priority of all camp staff is the wellbeing of campers, therefore there may be times when staff are unable to deliver Bunk Notes daily, and some Bunk Notes may be missed. We do our best, but we ask for your patience and forgiveness in times when we've put a higher priority on ensuring all campers are happy, safe, and having a good time at camp.

How to send a Bunk Note

Visit bunk1.com and register for a parent account or to log in to your account. Look for us as **YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island: Camp Thunderbird** (there is another Y Camp Thunderbird in North Carolina that is NOT us). Our invitation code is THUNDERBIRD23. You will be prompted to select a bundle for access to your Parent Portal. Bundles include credits for you to send Bunk Notes and enhance your notes with borders, photos, sports scores, and puzzles. You can select a bundle based on your needs and how often you want to communicate with your camper.

Bunk Notes for Families: Purchase Bunk Notes Express and receive a unique email address for your camper. Edit this email address under the Bunk Notes tab. Anyone in your family can directly email your camper at this address, and the note will be delivered as a regular Bunk Note. A credit is deducted from your account for each note. These notes can also be confirmed as sent under Bunk Notes > View Sent. You can also select to Invite Family Members, and that will allow others to set up accounts (but not access your account/bundle/credit).

Why do we use this service?

Bunk1 is a 3rd party service that is quick and easy to distribute. All families receive at least one free bunk note per child, per camp. Bunk1 is a for-profit venture, and they charge for any additional bunk notes. 50% of profits from bunk notes sent to Camp Thunderbird campers are donated to the Strong Kids fund, which helps send kids to Camp Thunderbird programs who otherwise could not afford it.

Mail

Thunderbird's Mailing Address:

Camper Name (and dates attending)

c/o Camp Thunderbird

5040 Glinz Lake Rd, Sooke, BC V9Z 0E3

Our mail service is inconsistent and sometimes slow, due to our remote camp location. Sending the letter so it would arrive at our mailbox by the first day of camp is your best bet to ensure your camper can get it. When writing to your child, focusing on positive and encouraging messages ("I'm so proud of you! You can do this!") will help ensure the letter uplifts them. See above section on bunk notes for more examples.

Camper Wellness

Preparing Your Child for Camp

Camp is an exciting and fun filled place: new friends, new adventures, new skills, stories, songs, campfires and games. It's also a very different place: different washroom, different schedule and different people.

Along with the excitement of all these new experiences, there is bound to be some anxiety. Here are a few things you might do to keep the anxiety low and anticipation high.

- Read this package, camper and parent together, and talk about preparing
- Talk about what it's like being in a group with up to 9 other children, and the ways they can go about making new friends
- Talk about ways to solve problems at camp—talking with a counsellor or other camp staff
- Focus on the positives like all the new skills they will learn and build confidence in the skills they already have

Camper Health

You have provided all necessary medical information during the registration process. Please feel free to provide us with more information if you think it would be beneficial.

Medications

Medications, vitamins, and supplements Must be signed in and given to the Team Leader at the bus or at camp; **puffers and epi-pens are to be kept with the children.** Either way the Team Leader needs to be given or informed about medication on the first day. Please make sure that any medications your camper may have are in the original package and are labeled clearly with the camper's name and instructions for use.

We stock basic over-the-counter medications including: ibuprofen, acetaminophen, antihistamines, throat lozenges, and upset stomach relief medications. We encourage families not to send these medications to camp with their campers unless they take them on a regular basis. We will always do our best to make contact with guardians to get permission before administering medications, however if we are unable to make contact we may decide to administer the medication under the advice of our medical staff or Managers.

Homesickness

It is reasonable to assume that until they become adjusted to camp life, your child might go through a period of homesickness. It is natural for children to experience homesickness when they come to camp. Our counsellors are people who enjoy being with kids and will take the time to listen. Our Team Leaders, who oversee the counsellors, have years of camping experience and excellent counseling skills.

If your child is homesick, we will take the following steps to ensure a positive experience:

- Your child's counsellor will comfort and work with your child to overcome the negative aspects of homesickness
- If your child continues to show strong signs of homesickness, the Team Leader will become involved
- Staff may contact guardians to discuss options and strategies for working with your child
- After the above have been tried, may ask you to talk to your child to help him or her through the experience. We often try the above first because sometimes talking with guardians at home can make homesickness worse.

In most cases these steps will allow your child to overcome their homesickness and enjoy their remaining time at camp.

Supervision at Camp

It is our goal to provide a safe, comfortable and supportive environment. Our staff are trained in providing high quality care for our campers and ensuring that the needs of each individual are met. A Day Camp group will always have at least one counsellor present. Some activities may involve groups of campers being out of direct sight-line of staff; however, someone will always be within earshot and campers are given clear directions on what to do if they need assistance. These activities are only run with groups where all campers are able to interact positively together.

Camp Behavior Policy

Our staff are trained in respectful, child-honouring and evidence-based behaviour guidance practices. This includes staff observing and supervising campers, setting clear boundaries and limits, and helping campers work through conflict in a supported way. We believe that negative behaviour often stems from unmet needs and we work to meet needs of campers through respect and caring. If a situation arises where a camper threatens the safety or security of another camper, or if a camper shows disregard for camp guidelines, we will use our practices to encourage and support safe behaviour and we will contact the parents. We commit to keeping parents as part of the support team for their campers, keeping them in the loop about challenges and progress. In some situations, however, **we are not successful in supporting appropriate behaviour, and in those cases the child will be dismissed from camp at the management team's discretion. Camp will not be held responsible for any costs associated with a dismissal on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour.**

Final Administrative Items

Lost and Found

Lost and Found items are displayed outside the dining hall during the session and are available for review by parents if they wish to come and check for any items. Lost and Found items are kept at camp for 14 days after the session ends and are then donated to charity.

Please fill out our Lost and Found request form (found on our website) and a staff member will check the Lost and Found for you. If the item is found, we will contact you and make arrangements to hold it for you at camp until September 15, 2023. This will give you time to get to camp during our office hours for collection. **We do not transport Lost and Found items.** The best way to help us reduce the amount of lost and found is to talk to your camper about keeping track of their belongings before getting to camp. Put your camper's name on anything brought to camp.

Your Privacy

The YMCA-YWCA is committed to maintaining the confidentiality, privacy, and accuracy of personal information it collects, uses and discloses about its participant, members, donors, parents/guardians, staff and volunteers. At the YMCA-YWCA of Vancouver Island your privacy is and always has been very important to us. We are dedicated to providing you with superior service, while protecting your privacy and safeguarding your personal information.

Camp Office

Camp Thunderbird

5040 Glinz Lake Road, Sooke, BC, V9Z 0E3

Program Coordinator: Alex Crouch acrouch@vancouverisland.ca,

May 1 – Sept 2, 2023: (250) 642-3136

For questions prior to May 1st please contact our Program Coordinator 9 am to 4 pm Monday to Friday at acrouch@vancouverisland.ca or 250-896-7336