

# LEARNING FROM EIGHT DECADES OF OF GLOBAL CHARACTER TRAINING:

Examining cultural adaptations within the  
Outward Bound International Network

## CASE STUDY HANDBOOK



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This project/ publication was made possible through the support of Grant 62329 from the John Templeton Foundation. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.



This research was led by The Pennsylvania State University (Pete Allison), Outward Bound International (Iain Peter and Sarah Wiley), University of Utah (Jim Sibthorp) and Clemson University (Theresa Melton). Thanks to schools in the Outward Bound International network for collaboration, project liaisons, and the project advisory group for guidance (Angela Duckworth, Kristján Kristjánsson, Chien Lee, James Neill).



# INTRODUCTION

This report presents insights from case studies of Outward Bound (OB) Schools across 11 countries: Brazil, Chesapeake Bay (USA), Croatia, Germany, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Oman, Romania, Scotland, Singapore, and Vietnam.

The case studies presented here are part of a larger project. Further information about the project can be found in the Outward Bound International (OBI) Resource Center and on the OBI website.



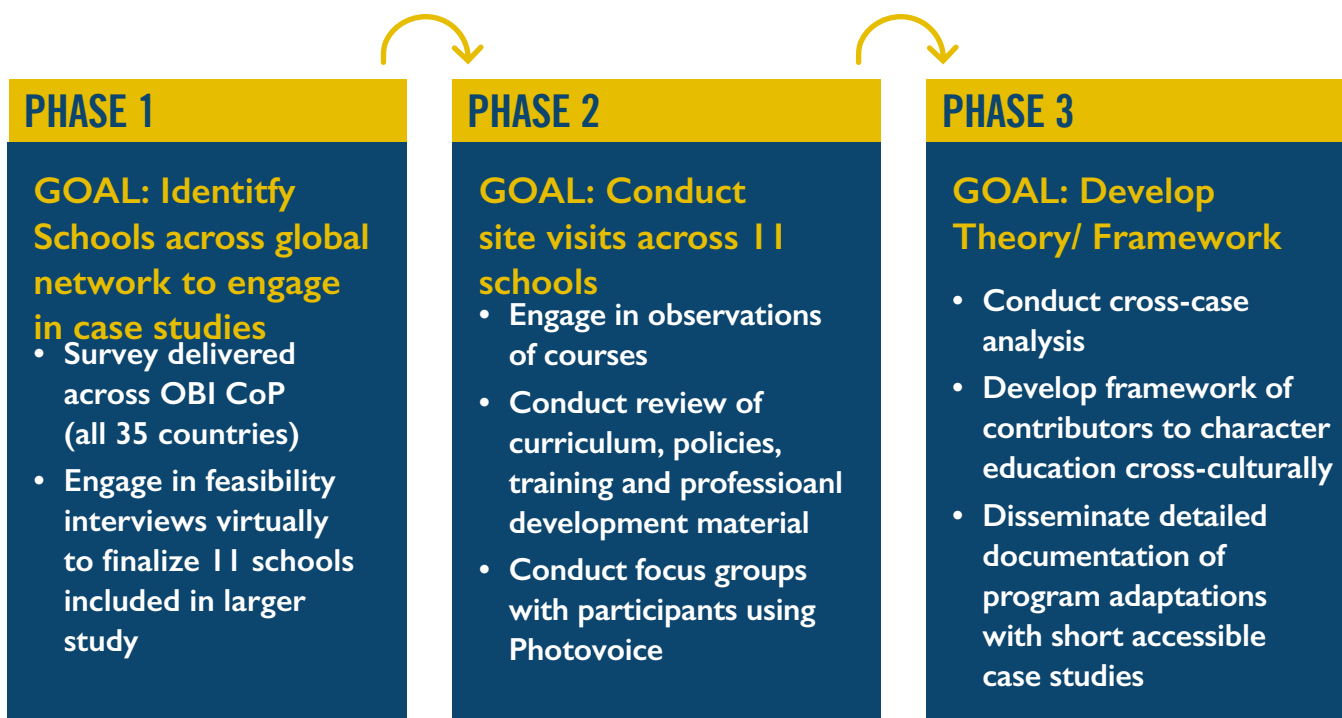
## PROJECT OVERVIEW

This four-year project ran from 2022-2026 and was focused on approaches to character education across the Outward Bound Network.

## METHODS OVERVIEW

The study used a three-phase mixed-methods design, starting with a global survey and followed by in-depth case studies at selected Schools.

**Figure 1:** Overview of Methodological Phases

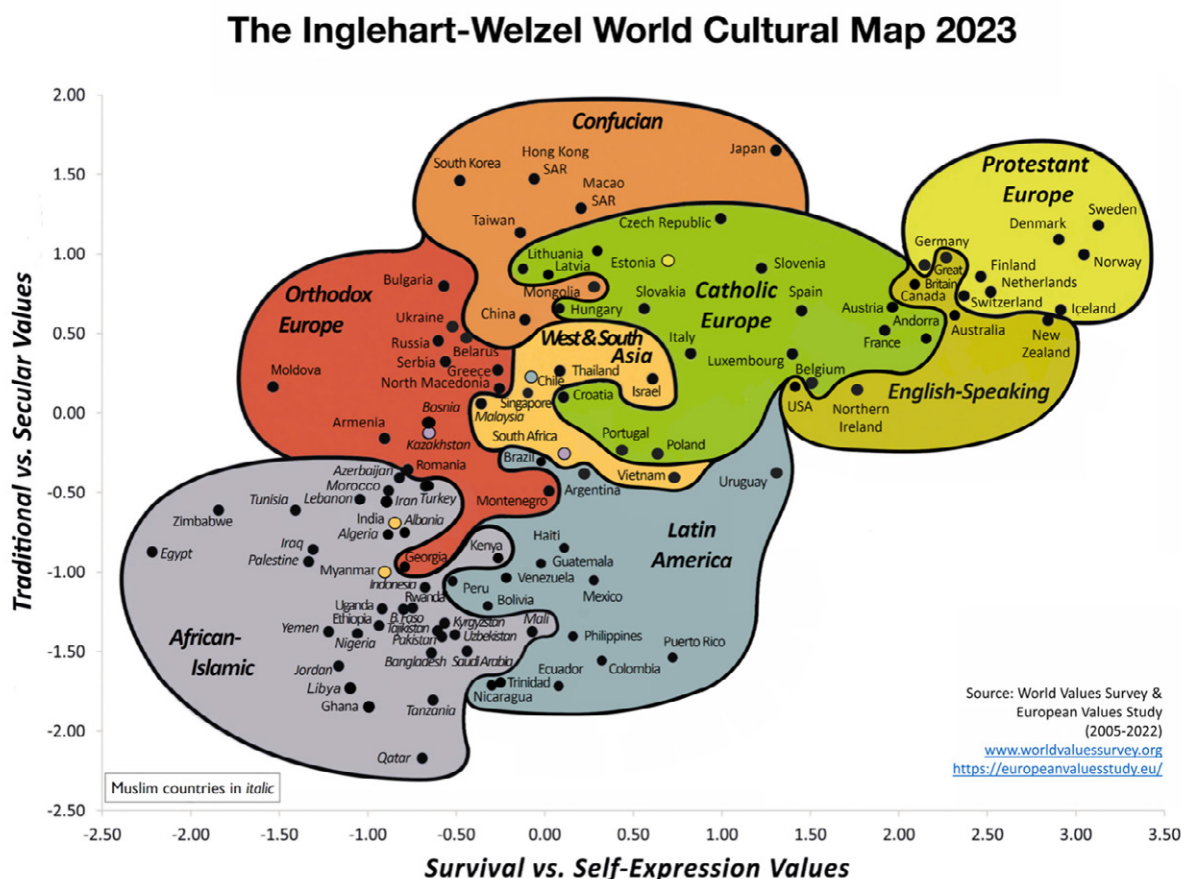


→ **PHASE 1**

**Global Survey and School Selection**

We began this study by sending a short survey to OB School Executive Directors. Through this survey we collected information about each School's language of instruction, student demographics, and course details. We then created a second survey and asked each Executive Director to share it with five staff members from different roles. This second survey asked how staff defined and taught character and about country-level values. In combination, these surveys were used for site selection. The research team identified 11 Outward Bound Schools that varied on multiple dimensions, such as definition of character, age of Schools (i.e. when it was founded), primary funding source, and that represented different areas in the Inglehart-Welzel World Cultural map (Figure 2) to ensure cultural variation.

**Figure 2: Cultural regions as presented by the World Values Survey (2023)**



## PHASE 2

### In-Depth Case Studies

Research teams, generally consisting of two researchers, visited each of the 11 Schools. These visits included interviews, program observations, and reviewing documents such as training guides and curriculum. We also used a photovoice technique, asking student participants to “take photos of character in action” to get a better sense of how they 1) defined character and 2) how the course promoted character development.



## PHASE 3

### Building a Framework

The research team met and reviewed field notes from each School visit. Through this process, we identified common themes that related to character development. These themes were developed into the five-lever framework that is discussed.

## THE CASE STUDIES

For each Outward Bound School, the report provides a brief overview of the ecological, social, and economic contexts in the respective country, followed by an overview of the Outward Bound programs operating there. The goal is to understand and describe the broader environments in which Outward Bound Schools are situated, explore how these Schools promote character, and highlight key levers and unique practices found at each School. We selected two levers to focus on for each School and have tried to represent the breadth of different practices that we identified. All Schools have many different levers but the two we selected are ones that we consider particularly interesting and/or illustrative of an observed lever.

The findings are based primarily on direct observations by researchers, conversations with staff and participants, and supporting artifacts. Each case study describes how Outward Bound helps young people build character through outdoor education and experiential learning.

### What this report includes?

- ✓ Country Context Overviews: Summaries of each country's geography, population, and economic factors relevant to Outward Bound programming.
- ✓ Detailed Information on Outward Bound Schools: Specific observations and program details for each country's Outward Bound organization.
- ✓ School levers: A sample of levers identified at Outward Bound Schools across countries. Across all Outward Bound Schools, five key levers were identified by the researchers as contributors to enhance character development: these are the ways Schools design and implement their programs/courses to increase opportunities for character development.

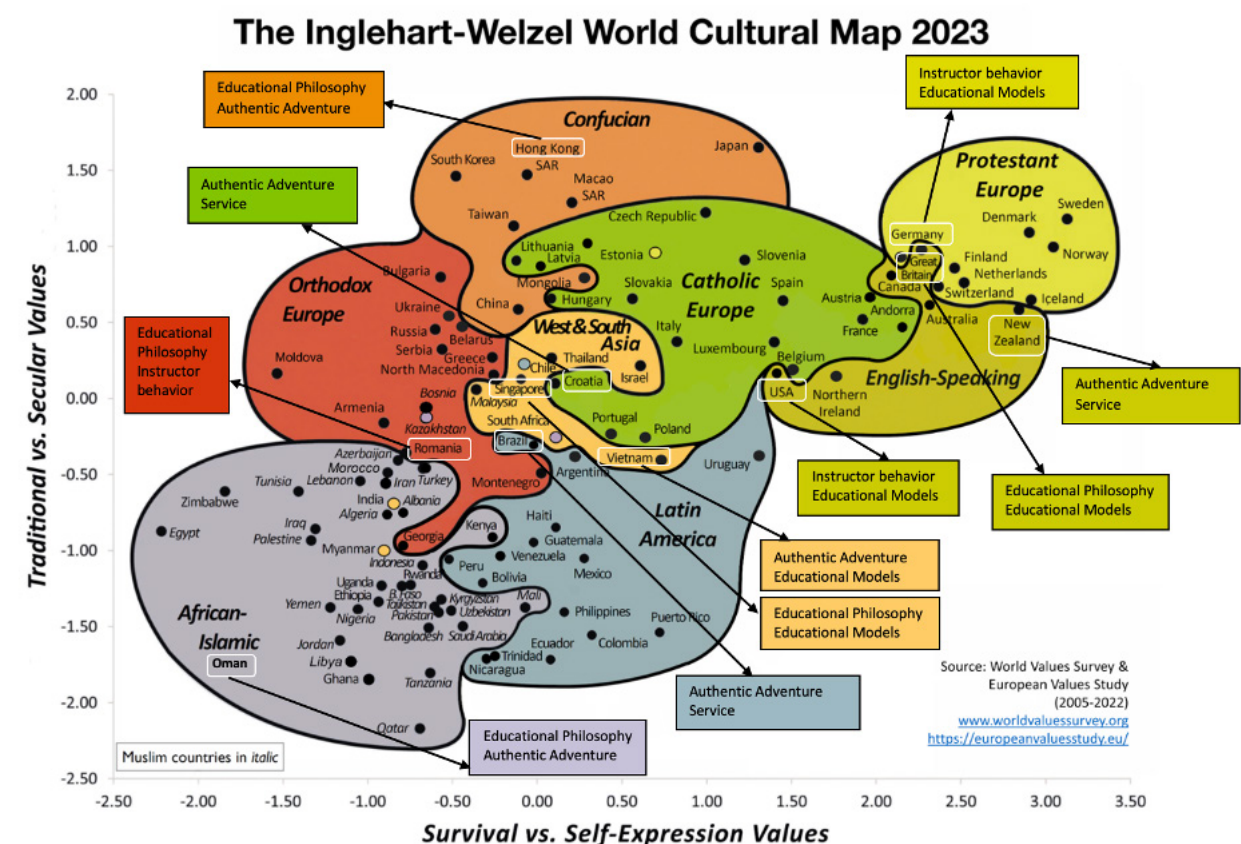
#### The five levers are:

- 1. Educational Philosophy:** Having a well-defined Educational Philosophy is incredibly valuable for Outward Bound because it provides a guiding set of principles that shape every aspect of the organization's approach to learning and development.
- 2. Authentic Adventure:** refers to the immersive, challenging, and meaningful experiences (not activities) that push individuals to work near the edge of their capabilities (not comforts). Authentic Adventure is rooted in real-world environments with natural consequences for the group, including instructional staff.
- 3. Service:** In the Outward Bound context, Service is a cornerstone of fostering personal growth, social responsibility, and community engagement. It stands alongside adventure, reflection, and personal development as a core tenet of Outward Bound's historical roots.
- 4. Instructor Behaviors:** The following are examples of successful practices used by OB Schools to implement their programs: shared mealtimes, instructor-student engagement, time management, solo experiences, program rituals, reflective activities, participant roles and chores, instructor autonomy, facilitation style, and use of framing and analogies.
- 5. Educational Models:** Educational Models serve as guides for designing teaching and learning of programs. Most OB Schools use a collection of models to inform their programs such as FFART (Frame, Frontload, Action, Review Transfer), Comfort Zones, Action Learning Cycle / Experiential Learning Cycle, and Training / Main / Final phases (TMF).

**Table 1: School levers.** If you are interested in one of the five levers listed above we suggest looking at the case studies where this is described in more detail and with examples.

HIGHLIGHTED LEVERS (CONTRIBUTORS)	SCHOOLS
Educational Philosophy	Hong Kong, Romania, Singapore, Oman, Scotland
Authentic Adventure	Brazil, Hong Kong, New Zealand, Vietnam, Croatia, Oman
Service	Brazil, New Zealand, Croatia
Instructor Behaviors	Germany, Romania, Chesapeake Bay
Education Models	Germany, Singapore, Vietnam, Chesapeake Bay, Scotland

**Figure 3: Cultural regions as presented by the World Values Survey (2023) annotated with levers highlighted in case studies.** Note: Oman is an Islamic country that is not represented in the World Cultural Map survey but we have added for the purposes of this research.



**Table 2: Case Study Site and Observation Overview**

OB SCHOOL NAME	POPULATION TYPE	POPULATION OVERVIEW (number of students, age, gender)	DAYS OF COURSE	FUNDING OF COURSE	COURSES FORMAT AND ACTIVITIES	INSTRUCTING FORMAT
<b>BRAZIL</b>	Social Program and Open Enrollment	14 students; 15-18 yrs.; mixed gender	10	NGO and Families	Expedition – Backpacking	2 instructors per group, always with group
<b>CHESAPEAKE BAY (USA)</b>	Public charter school	GROUP A: 6 students, 13-14 yrs.; all boys, 1 teacher GROUP B: 7 students, 13-14 yrs.; mixed gender, 2 teachers	5	Formal education	Expedition – Backpacking, rock climbing, solo	2 instructors per group, always with group
<b>CROATIA</b>	Social Program and Open Enrollment	11 students; 14-18 yrs.; mixed gender	7	NGO and Families	Expedition - Backpacking, rock climbing, ropes course, service, solo	2 instructors per group, always with group
<b>GERMANY</b>	Private high school	GROUP A: 11 students, 16 yrs.; mixed gender, 1 teacher GROUP B: 10 students, 16 yrs.; mixed gender, 1 teacher	6	Formal education	Center-based with one night hut expedition-Initiatives, hiking, solo, climbing,	1 instructor, generally with group 9am-6pm
<b>HONG KONG</b>	Public school	GROUP A: 11 students, 15-18 yrs GROUP B: 11 students, 15-18 yrs	5	Formal education	Expedition – hiking and kayaking, solo	1 instructor per group, always with group + activity specialists
<b>NEW ZEALAND</b>	Open Enrollment	GROUP A: 10 students, 18-25 yrs.; mixed gender GROUP B: 10 students, 18-25 yrs.; mixed gender	21	NGO and Families	expeditions (schemes) – backpacking, sailing, rock climbing, solo,	2 instructors per group, live at center, always with group

**Table 2: Case Study Site and Observation Overview**  
(continued)

OB SCHOOL NAME	POPULATION TYPE	POPULATION OVERVIEW (number of students, age, gender)	DAYS OF COURSE	FUNDING OF COURSE	COURSES FORMAT AND ACTIVITIES	INSTRUCTING FORMAT
OMAN	Education to Employment and Public school	GROUP A: 14 students, 24-30 yrs.; all women GROUP B: 20 students, 15-17 yrs.; all boys, 1 teacher	4	Corporate Social Investment	Expedition – initiatives, camping, hiking	2 instructors per group
ROMANIA	ERASMUS course and school	GROUP A: 28 students, 15-16 yrs.; mixed gender GROUP B: 17 students, 11-13 yrs.; mixed gender, 3 teachers	A:10 B: 3	NGO-nonprofit and Families	Center-based and expeditions – hiking, camping, rock climbing, initiatives,	1-2 instructors per group, live at center
SINGAPORE	Ministry of Education program	Group A: 14 students, 14-15 yrs; mixed gender Group B: 14 students, 14-15 yrs.; mixed gender	5	Government	Center-based – orienteering, dragon boating, camping, ropes course, kayaking	1 instructor, always with group
OB TRUST (UNITED KINGDOM)	Independent and Public school	Group A: 12 students, 13-14 yrs.; mixed gender; 2 teachers Group B 12 students, 12-15 yrs.; mixed gender; 1 teacher	A: 7 B: 5	Formal education	Center-based with one night hut expedition – initiatives, ropes course, gorge walk, hiking	1 instructor, generally with group 9am-9pm + high adventure specialist
VIETNAM	International school	10 students, 14-15 yrs.; mixed gender; 1 teacher	5	Families	Center-based and expedition – hiking,	2 instructors per group

## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# OUTWARD BOUND BRAZIL

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

After over three centuries of Portuguese colonial rule, Brazil declared its independence in 1822. As the largest and most populous country in South America, Brazil experienced a mix of populist and military regimes for much of the 20th century. In 1985, the military government peacefully transferred power to civilian leadership, ushering in a new era of democratic governance.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Brazil covers a vast area of 8,515,770 square kilometers, with 8,358,140 sq km of land and 157,630 sq km of water. The country's climate is predominantly tropical, though the southern regions experience a more temperate climate.



### POPULATION AND RELIGION

As of 2024, Brazil has an estimated population of 216,422,446. The nation is religiously diverse but predominantly Christian, with Roman Catholicism (50%) and Protestantism (31%) being the most practiced faiths. Other religions, including Spiritism, Afro-Brazilian, and non-religious identities, make up the remaining population (2022 est.).



### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Brazil is an upper-middle income economy and the largest in Latin America. It is a member of Mercosur, BRICS, the G20, and a candidate for OECD accession. Economic growth is driven by strong domestic consumption, and recent tax simplification reforms aim to address business inefficiencies and lagging productivity. Despite its size and resources, Brazil faces challenges with high levels of income inequality and disparities in healthcare and education access.



**POPULATION**  
**216,422,446\***

\*as of 2024

### OUTWARD BOUND BRAZIL

Outward Bound Brazil was founded in 2000. Currently the program operates from one base around 3 hours from São Paulo and 5 hours Rio de Janeiro. The courses offered are aimed at schools, social groups (primarily through NGOs) open enrollment and professional (corporate) courses from 2-20 days long. OBB is based in a house where all equipment is stored and courses are administered off-site.



#### CLIENT DESCRIPTION

Courses start and end from the centre but go into wilderness mountainous areas of which there are many to choose from. An average of half of the courses serve individuals aged 12 to 25. This program reaches approximately 300 participants a year. Participants either pay for their place or can earn a scholarship; the School itself offers scholarships as do several local organizations and the school works closely with NGO's to identify people who will benefit from an OBB experience.

Courses are currently all expeditionary based, although there are plans to build a small center which would permit center based courses to be offered. OBB has equipment to give participants including warm clothing and shoes as many people come without appropriate equipment.

Many of the young people who come on courses come from the Favela's in Rio or São Paulo and are identified as people who will benefit by a member of staff from one of the many NGO's that OBB partner with.





### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

One researcher attended OB Brazil base in July of 2024. During this time they observed the first 5 days of programming of a 10-day course serving participants aged 16 to 25. During this time they observed preparations and the first half of the wilderness expedition. The observed course had 10 young people (mixed sexes) from Favelas and 4 open enrollment students. Two male leaders and one female assistant leader.

#### 1- Authentic Adventure

OB Brazil has many examples of authentic adventure; given that the courses are expedition based and that there are expansive wilderness areas available for programming. In the first 48 hours of the course the instructors took on a great deal of responsibility creating a culture of care and of learning whether it be how to pitch a tent or how to light a stove. This approach also meant that days were long and involved pitching tents in the dark, when it was cold and rallying together to maintain morale.

Route finding and finding water sources on the plateau are examples of authentic adventure that were not experienced as contrived. Instructors encouraged students to engage to their own level of comfort and the students eased into roles in the group. The first day involved considerable ascent with heavy packs in direct sun. For some this was very challenging and the group adjusted accordingly with some energetic encouragers while others needed their support and assistance. Navigation also proved to be challenging leading to sub-optimal campsites on hillsides.

#### 2- Service

The whole course was framed around 'to serve, to strive and not to yield'. This was the focus for many discussions and for accountability regarding behavior. This focus made sense given that the majority of students were from Favelas and were not short of perseverance, GRIT and resilience. Thus, a focus on community and what kind of community they want to live in made sense.

This emphasis made for wide ranging discussion including their own group dynamics and led to early transfer of learning to wider contexts of their lives and their agency to influence the communities they are a part of. Much of the course was focused on the development of Civic character.

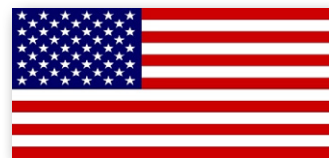


## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# OUTWARD BOUND CHESAPEAKE BAY USA

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

In 1776, thirteen of Britain's American colonies declared independence, and the United States of America was officially recognized as a sovereign nation in 1783 through the Treaty of Paris. Long before European colonization, however, the land was home to diverse and thriving Indigenous nations with rich cultural traditions and complex societies. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the country expanded across the North American continent, eventually adding 37 more states and acquiring several overseas territories. Baltimore City is centrally located in the Mid-Atlantic region, Maryland's largest city and economic centre, and constitutes the northeastern hub of the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan area.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

The U.S. covers a total area of 9,833,517 square kilometres, with 9,147,593 square km of land and 685,924 square km of water. The climate varies widely: mostly temperate, tropical in Hawaii and Florida, arctic in Alaska, semiarid in the Great Plains west of the Mississippi, and arid in the southwestern Great Basin. Baltimore City lies at the head of the Patapsco River estuary, 15 miles above Chesapeake Bay and has a humid subtropical climate.



### POPULATION

As of 2024, the U.S. population is estimated at 341,963,408. Baltimore City has a population of 565,239 residents with a regional metro (Baltimore- Columbia-Towson) population of 2,834,316 people. Based on 2020 data, Maryland's population is 6,055,802.



### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

The United States has the world's largest economy by nominal GDP, and a real GDP per capita stood at \$74,600 (2023 est.). It is the top importer and second-largest exporter globally, home to major financial markets and the issuer of the dominant global reserve currency. In Baltimore, major businesses include Exelon, T. Rowe Price, Morgan Stanley, Under Armour, and Amazon. The city's private sector industries generate more than \$51,151,033.



**USA POPULATION**  
**341,963,408\***  
**BALTIMORE CITY 565,239**  
\*as of 2024

## OUTWARD BOUND CHESAPEAKE BAY USA

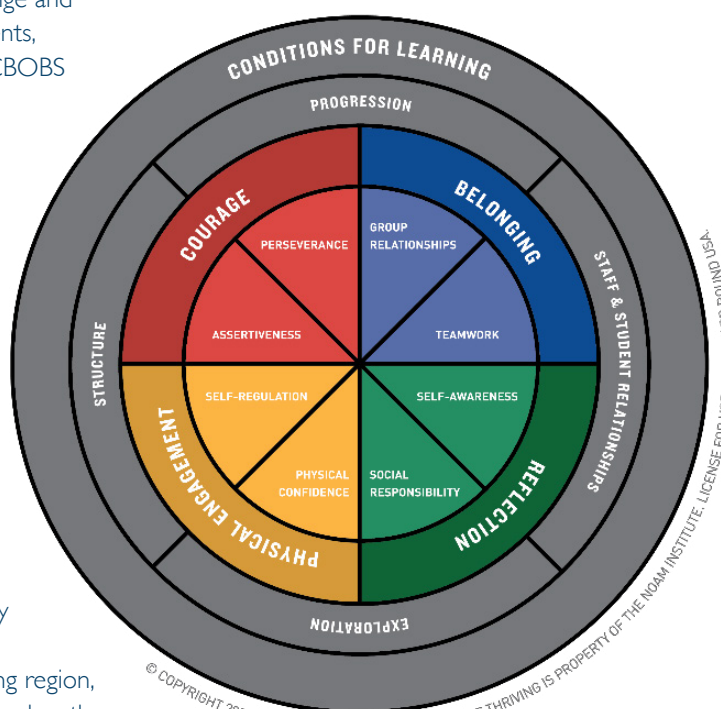
Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School (CBOBS) was established in 1986 as an urban-based Outward Bound program of the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, with the primary purpose of bringing Outward Bound to youth in the Baltimore area. CBOBS is now a separately licensed Outward Bound School within the OB USA network and has served nearly 100,000 students across the Washington, DC, Maryland, and Virginia region. Their primary center is in Baltimore's Leakin Park, a 20-minute drive from downtown Baltimore. In 2020, CBOBS began building relationships and programming with DC students. In 2025, they began a build on a physical campus in DC.



### CLIENT DESCRIPTION

The mission of CBOBS is to change lives through challenge and discovery, primarily serving middle and high school students, educators, veterans, corporate and community groups. CBOBS delivers a range of programs for both youth and adults, including wilderness expeditions and one-day challenge courses, focused on building social and emotional skills such as teamwork, perseverance, social responsibility, and self-regulation. The CBOBS base is situated about 20 minutes from Baltimore and just over an hour from Washington, DC.

This provides excellent access for school groups in both metro areas. With a strong emphasis on equity, over 70% of participants receive scholarships or attend at no cost. Programs are grounded in experiential learning principles and adapted to meet the needs of diverse participants, often in partnership with public schools, youth-serving nonprofits, and local communities. OB Chesapeake Bay reaches approximately 6,000 participants a year, with 80% or more aged 12-25. Relative to most other OB Schools in the English-speaking region, CBOBS serves a high number of youth. In terms of course lengths, OB Chesapeake Bay offers courses from one to 12 days. CBOBS uses the Domains of Thriving framework developed by OB USA for the US network schools to use. Domains of Thriving highlights the four areas of human development that are impacted on an Outward Bound course: Courage, Belonging, Reflection, and Physical Engagement.





### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

Researchers visited CBOBS in early June 2024 and were each attached to instructional teams of two as they prepared for their groups from the Sojourner Truth Montessori, a public charter school in Washington, DC. Both programs served 8th graders (13/14yrs) for a 5-day expeditionary program. One group consisted of all boys, and the other was a mixed-gender group.

The general route for both groups was 12-13 miles on the Appalachian Trail (AT), about a 90-minute drive from the center. Days 1 and 5 were full of logistics and involved minimal hiking. Days 2 and 4 were approximately 5 miles on the trail. Day 3 was shorter and included a rock-climbing camp (½ day) as well as an overnight solo (for the boys' group). Teacher chaperones accompanied both groups. The focus for the program was chosen by the client school. In this case, Truth Montessori chose the following goals from the Domains of Thriving Framework: self-regulation (Physical Engagement), self-awareness (Reflection), and teamwork (Belonging). Activities chosen by the instructor team were focused on these goals and these larger domains within the Framework.

#### I- Instructor Behaviors

At CBOBS, the “dual instructor” model worked well. It gave instructors the flexibility to trade off roles—one could take the lead while the other stepped in to support. It also created valuable opportunities for less experienced staff to learn from their more seasoned partners and allowed a bit of respite for one instructor while the other took the lead. The instructor team was consistent in their approach—firm but caring—and focused on building strong connections with students while holding them to fair expectations. Their motto was “Firm, Fair, Fun,” and it showed. Small actions made a big difference: instructors always ate with the group, played games and shared riddles on the trail, and made a real effort to connect. They were part of the group, not apart from it. Throughout the expedition, they gradually shifted responsibility to the students, starting with more guidance and stepping back as the group gained confidence.

Reflection was intentionally built into the program, with options ranging from solo time and journals to creative group activities like haikus, photo-of-the-day, and feelings wheels. Daily rituals played a key role in shaping group culture—everything from morning meetings to the “dinner circle dance” reinforced a sense of belonging and shared responsibility. Group Roles, such as leader, cook, and “influencer,” gave students a meaningful stake in the group experience. Overall, the instructional behaviors observed—intentional structure, creative facilitation, and consistent use of rituals—fostered engagement, reflection, and increased independence.

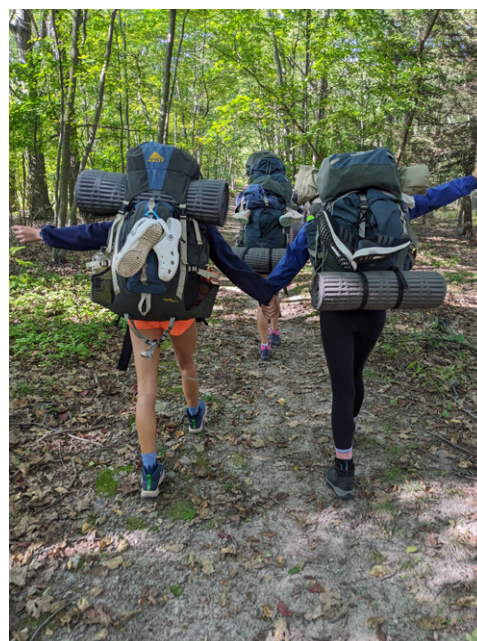


### 2- Educational Models

The CBOBS instructors used a variety of educational models effectively. An example was the TMF (Training, Main, Final) cards, which gave students a simple and visual way to understand and track their progress. Each day, students reviewed course elements—like cooking, navigation, or group decision-making—and decided together where each one belonged on the learning progression: Training (still learning), Main (practicing), or Final (ready to do on their own). This daily check-in helped build ownership, reflection, and a shared sense of growth, and using physical laminated cards, which the students could move around, created more engagement with the process.

CBOBS used the Expedition model effectively, with students heading into the field on Day One and returning only on the final day for gear de-issue, a BBQ, and closing reflections. This model created opportunities for authentic learning and leadership. Daily tasks like setting up tents, cooking, collecting water, and packing were repeated throughout, allowing students to practice, improve, and see their progress. The rhythm of expedition life builds confidence, competence, and a sense of purpose, and leadership emerges naturally as students step up to support the group. Tasks taught to a few students early in the course can permeate throughout the group via peer-to-peer collaborative learning, as students share their knowledge.

The Dual Instructor model complements this approach by creating flexibility and shared responsibility. With two instructors in the field, there's room for varied teaching styles, informal mentorship, and better support for group needs.



## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# OUTWARD BOUND CROATIA

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Croatia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the end of World War I. In 1918, Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes united to form a kingdom renamed Yugoslavia in 1929. Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, but it took four years of intermittent yet intense conflict to remove Yugoslav forces fully.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Croatia covers a total area of 56,594 square kilometers, comprising 55,974 sq km of land and 620 sq km of water. The country experiences both Mediterranean and continental climates. Inland areas are characterized by hot summers and cold winters, while the coastal region enjoys mild winters and dry, warm summers.



### POPULATION AND RELIGION

As of 2024, Croatia's estimated population is 4,150,116. The population is predominantly Roman Catholic, accounting for 79%, followed by those who are non-religious or atheist (4.7%), and Orthodox Christians (3.3%), based on the 2021 estimate.



### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Croatia is classified as an upper-middle-income Balkan economy with a real GDP per capita of \$ 41,100 (2023 est.). It became a user of the euro currency in 2023. Economic growth has been supported by increased investment from EU structural funds and a thriving tourism sector.



**POPULATION**  
**4,150,116\***

\*as of 2024

### OUTWARD BOUND CROATIA

Outward Bound Croatia (OBC) was founded in 2005 and was fully licensed by Outward Bound International in 2016. The School's Center is located outside Gospić, about halfway between Zagreb, the largest city, and the Adriatic Sea. At this central location, the Center can house 50 participants. However, most Outward Bound groups spend their time outdoors during multi-day expeditions. Due to partnerships with local community members, Outward Bound Croatia is within walking distance to woods, outdoor climbing walls, and even caves that instructors can build into their courses. Despite the benefits of this access, the location also provides a barrier to enrollment, as many people expect to vacation near the water instead of inland.

Although the center offers many programs that use components of Outward Bound, Outward Bound expedition programs take place during school breaks (during the summer and one expedition in the winter). Because there are not consistent groups, many resources are available to support programs (e.g., wood available to make fires).



### CLIENT DESCRIPTION

Outward Bound Croatia runs programs funded by the European Union and social and open enrollment programs for local youth. Funding is often from grants, allowing OBC to serve approximately 1200 youth (ages 12-25) annually. Outward Bound Croatia follows the values of cooperation, compassion, courage, and responsibility through all its programming.

Despite increased parental concerns over youth safety (instructors share a story about finding an Apple tracker on one of the youth!), the culture allows for risk. Family members understand that participants may come home with minor bruises and scratches, and in Croatia, litigation due to liability is less common than in other Western OB Schools.





### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

Two researchers arrived at Outward Bound Croatia in June of 2025 and observed a 7-day expedition course serving youth aged 14 to 18. The course included two instructors and a volunteer with around 11 participants (mixed genders and mixed enrollment with open-enrollment and scholarship participants that live in the foster system).

#### 1- Authentic Adventure

In Croatia, students experienced a high level of authentic adventure while on a 7-day expedition. Within this model, instructors leveraged authentic tasks that included real consequences. On the first day, the instructors taught the students how to use a map and compass, make fire for cooking, tie knots, and build shelters. These lessons progressed through the course with authentic consequences, including navigational errors and uncomfortable sleeping in suboptimal shelters. Students were expected to cook by fire every night. The instructors taught everyone on the first night how to make a fire strong enough to cook, and after that, students were expected to get to camp, delegate tasks, and have individuals responsible for finding wood and tending to the fire. If the group did not accomplish this task, they did not have a warm meal for dinner. There were numerous examples of authentic adventure and authentic consequence throughout the course.

#### 2- Service

The course had an underlying theme of community/service to the group, which some staff connected to the collectivist culture in Croatia. This was apparent in the way chores were delegated, and in the way that the group ensured that everyone had water, sunscreen, and insect repellent before leaving camp every day. Students even included the research team, checking with them regularly to ensure they had everything they needed and updating them on the process/goals of the day. Within this course, there was also a formal service component designed for the day: a day of trash pickup on their way back to the Center on the last day of the expedition. Students removed close to 10 large bags of trash from the woods near the center. Some students were highly invested in this activity and were dismayed that people would discard so much garbage in the forest; they even asked for more trash bags when they ran out, removing more than the instructors had intended.



## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# OUTWARD BOUND GERMANY

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Germany, Europe's largest economy and second most populous nation (after Russia), plays a central role in the continent's economic, political, and defense alliances. Following its division after World War II, Germany was reunified in 1990 with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, emerging as a unified democratic state.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Germany spans a total area of 357,022 square kilometers, including 348,672 sq km of land and 8,350 sq km of water. Its climate is temperate and marine, featuring cool, cloudy, wet winters, and humid summers with occasionally warm foehn winds from the mountains.



### POPULATION AND RELIGION

As of 2024, Germany has an estimated population of 84,119,100. The country is predominantly Christian, with 47.4% of the population identifying with various Christian denominations, including Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. Meanwhile, 43.8% of the population report no religious affiliation (2022 est.).



### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Germany is a high-income country with a real GDP per capita of \$63,600 (2023 est.), an export-driven economy, and a core member of the European Union and eurozone. It is globally recognized for its automotive, chemical, engineering, finance, and green energy industries. Recent years have seen economic headwinds, including an energy crisis and declining exports, while a tight labor market and aging workforce present demographic challenges. Fiscal rebalancing is underway, including the phaseout of energy price supports.



**POPULATION**  
**84,119,100\***

\*as of 2024

### OUTWARD BOUND GERMANY

Outward Bound Germany, founded in 1951, currently operates two centers, one in Baad and a second in Schwangau, in addition to a mobile program. Observations were made at Outward Bound Schwangau, which is located near the Alps. This center-based program is located near several attractions, such as famous castles, a large reservoir, a mountain creek, and a forest. In the center, there is also a climbing wall and zipline, which clients often request.

Mealtimes are set at the Center; students pack their lunch during breakfast and then meet for dinner every night. Most nights are spent at the Center; instructors work with youth from 9:15 am to 6 pm, when the teachers take responsibility for the students, and instructors can return to the staff house or their residence. There is often one overnight in a self-catering hut in the nearby Alps, though clients can pay for extra nights. This arrangement limits the amount of gear instructors have to check out, as the hut provides shelter, beds, bedding, and other comforts. This also helps overcome obstacles, as tent camping is illegal in many areas.



#### CLIENT DESCRIPTION

In a feature that is unique to OB Schools, Outward Bound Germany is separate from Outward Bound Germany Professional, which serves business and industry. This distinction allows OBG to focus on youth education and most commonly partners with schools. Through these partnerships, OBG serves around 6000 youth annually, commonly on courses that last around five days.

It is not within the culture of Germany to donate, especially to schools, which the government traditionally funds; thus, much of OBG's funding comes from the schools and the parents, skewing client demographics to those from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

The program manager works with the client (school representative coordinating the visit) to develop a "package." This process includes identifying the goals of the course (e.g., teamwork, communication, self-confidence) as well as some prioritized activities (e.g., zip line, raft building, overnight hut tour). The outline for the course is then developed for instructors and shared during the planning meeting. This model has benefits, such as the 30-year history with a local school system, but also some challenges. Participants treat the program like a holiday, and can rate the center online (such as a Google review). The center has pressure to ensure that participants have a good time and enjoy their accommodations, and that families and schools continue to support the program.





### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

Two researchers arrived at Outward Bound Germany in July of 2024 and observed a 5-day center-based expedition course serving 10th-grade students. The courses observed included one instructor and a school teacher of the opposite gender from the instructor. There were 10 and 11 students in each group, which the school mixed to improve relationships.

#### 1- Instructor Behaviors

Staff appeared to have a good rapport with students, but also kept some distance. Following the second day, the instructor stepped back to let students take over the course, allowing them to coordinate tasks and engage in their jobs without being near them. This was intentional as they sought to push the students to take the initiative in the course. This appeared to be designed into the day, as instructors are only with participants from 9:15 to 6, and don't eat with students while the group is at the center. Reflection was integral; development was not activity-driven but driven through reflection. The staff is incredibly skilled at "attention bending," ensuring that the discussion relates to the lessons and needs of the group. They are highly experienced at choosing appropriate activities for the group and using them based on group needs.

#### 2- Models

To facilitate discussion, instructors utilize several different models. During the prep time before student arrival, instructors review the client's goals and then develop activities to help foster those outcomes. To support this, instructors utilize several effective models. Several instructors discuss the role of comfort zones when framing activities and their instructional philosophy. The goal is to push students into their "stretch zone" without forcing them into "panic zones."

The courses are designed with a clear beginning, middle, and end, from self-assessment early in the course to trialing and reflecting on behaviors that will be necessary for the expedition. Much of the expedition planning, including provisioning, was turned over to the student group. The intention of building toward the expedition was explicitly discussed on the first day via a visual of the overall course arc. In this way, the expedition serves as a center point around which the lessons pivot. After the overnight, the students completed a brief solo as they transitioned to the final day, which focused on takeaways and transitions, allowing students to consider what they learned and how they will use it back at school or later in life.



## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# OUTWARD BOUND HONG KONG

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Hong Kong's history is a rich tapestry woven with threads of ancient settlements, imperial rule, and modern dynamism. Initially inhabited since the Stone Age, Hong Kong evolved from fishing villages into a part of various Chinese dynasties. Its modern history is defined by British colonial rule, starting with the cession of Hong Kong Island to the United Kingdom in 1842 after the First Opium War.

Hong Kong was transferred to Chinese sovereignty on 1 July 1997, becoming the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. The return of Hong Kong to China had some social unrest, and the Chinese government is now emphasizing the reintegration of Hong Kong into the Chinese mainland, linking nine nearby cities into a mega-hub for business and trade.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Hong Kong spans a total area of 1,108 square kilometers, including 1,073 sq km of land and 35 sq km of water. Approximately 40% of Hong Kong's land is designated as Country Park, and it has over 200 islands and a range of sheltered and coastal areas for sailing. The region experiences a subtropical monsoon climate, characterized by cool and humid winters, hot and rainy weather from spring through summer, and warm, sunny conditions in the fall.



### POPULATION AND RELIGION

As of 2024, Hong Kong has an estimated population of 7,297,821. Religiously, 27.9% of the population identify as Buddhist or Taoist, 6.7% as Protestant, 5.3% as Roman Catholic, 4.2% as Muslim, 1.4% as Hindu, and 0.2% as Sikh. Additionally, 54.3% identify with other religions or none (2016 est.).



### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Hong Kong is a high-income country with a real GDP per capita of \$64,500 (2023 est.). It has a tourism- and services-based economy. It is a global financial hub, though recent recessions driven by COVID-19 and political protests have impacted growth. While recovery is underway, unemployment remains high among lower-skilled workers. The government is investing in job reskilling programs.



**POPULATION**  
**105,758,975\***

\*as of 2024

### OUTWARD BOUND HONG KONG

Outward Bound Hong Kong was established in 1970 and has been accredited by the Association of Experiential Education since 2011. In 2025, OB Hong Kong has 75 full-time staff and reaches 6800 youth annually through three locations:

The Outward Bound Trust UK operates six residential centers located in areas of outstanding natural beauty:

- Lee Hysan Wong Wan Chau Adventure Base,
- Sai Kung Tai Mong Tsai headquarters and Ah Kung Wan Training Centre
- An offshore yacht named “The Spirit of Outward Bound Hong Kong”.

Through these locations, OB Hong Kong offers a range of programs, including community, corporate, individual open-enrolment, and school-based programs. About 20% of overall revenue comes from advancement efforts, and this is disbursed through community programs and via supporting local schools to attend.

OB Hong Kong also has an independent alumni association with several hundred active members, and a coastal clubhouse and waterfront facilities near Wu Kai Sha train station. Members elect their own board and maintain their own member database, and there are weekly activity interest groups focused on kayaking, sailing and mountaineering.



#### CLIENT DESCRIPTION

These initiatives are intended to “Future Proof” youth through a variety of activities, including sea kayaking, hiking, sailing, rock climbing, and/or high ropes activities. Courses operate in English or Cantonese and serve youth from a mix of socioeconomic statuses. Courses are led by one or two instructors, with specialists included to support more technical activities, such as climbing and sea kayaking.

Programs operate through several revenue streams, including participant funded programs and programs that are financed through school fees. The School also offers discounted or free programs for individuals from more disadvantaged backgrounds. School-based programs include a five-day expedition (Monday through Friday) that primarily takes place off-campus.





### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

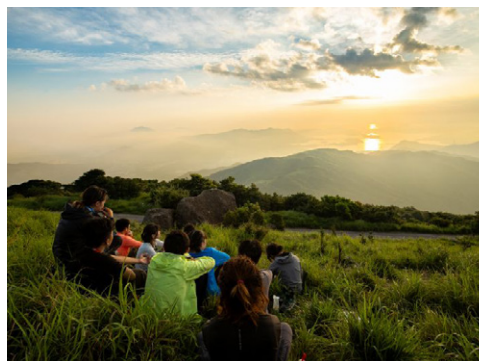
Two researchers observed a school-based five-day expedition serving youth aged 15 to 18. The courses were led by two instructors (one in training). Courses were conducted in Cantonese, and a translator attended to support research efforts. Two different groups were observed – one by each researcher:

#### 1- Philosophy

Course leaders worked with schools to identify the goals for each course. Instructors then worked to create a course that met the intended objectives. For example, if instructors knew that the schools wanted students to improve communication, they reverse-engineered the course design to ensure activities and debriefs were focused to meet those outcome objectives. There is a very clear philosophy within OB Hong Kong, and the course directors and instructors are not only familiar with that philosophy but also have the opportunity and ability to design and adapt courses to ensure that participants are experiencing the course as intended. Most instructional staff at OBHK come from Hong Kong/China, with a few from both South Africa and the UK. Some foreign staff visit for a year, while others stay for longer. This makes for a culturally diverse staff, which appears to facilitate constructive dialogue to inform course design and underpinning educational philosophy.

#### 2- Authentic Adventure

Although the observed course only lasted five days, an authentic adventure was apparent. During this time, students were asked to “find their edge” – they did not have to complete the challenge, but all participants had to engage at the level they could. For example, one participant was too scared to rock climb. However, the instructor challenged them to put the harness on and to put both feet on the mountain – that was a stretch, and it was fine if the participant didn’t complete the climb, but they had to push. Instructors have the autonomy to design a course within a few logistical parameters and also have the ability to adapt the course to ensure that participants’ needs are met and that everyone is finding a balance of fun and challenge. In a sea kayaking group, the route involved some challenging conditions, so the group stopped regularly to check in and discuss progress and share approaches to maximize resilience and confidence. Struggle is seen as a part of every course; it is assumed to be present, but instructors are careful not to let participants’ struggle slide into suffering.



## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# OUTWARD BOUND NEW ZEALAND

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

The original settlers of New Zealand arrived by ocean-going canoe in the late 1200s. Those people became the indigenous people of Aotearoa / New Zealand. In 1840, Māori chieftains signed the Treaty of Waitangi with Great Britain. Words in the treaty, presented in both English and Māori, including sovereignty, governance, authority and territory, have different cultural meanings and have become contentious, but the Treaty of Waitangi continues to be recognized as the founding legal document. New Zealand later became a British colony and achieved status as an independent dominion in 1907.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

New Zealand spans a total area of 268,838 square kilometers, comprising 264,537 sq km of land and 4,301 sq km of water. The country experiences a temperate climate, though with sharp regional contrasts.



### POPULATION AND RELIGION

As of 2024, New Zealand has an estimated population of 5,161,211. The population is religiously diverse: 37.3% identify as Christian (including 10.1% Catholic, 6.8% Anglican, and smaller shares in other denominations), 2.7% Hindu, 1.3% Māori spirituality, 1.3% Muslim, and 1.1% Buddhist. Other religions account for 1.6%, while a significant portion (48.6%) reports no religious affiliation (2018 est.).



### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

New Zealand is a high-income, globally integrated Pacific Island economy with a real GDP per capita of \$48,800 (2023 est.). Its economy is driven by strong agriculture, manufacturing, and tourism sectors and is notably reliant on the Chinese market for exports. The country is recovering slowly from a post-COVID recession and inflation, and continues to face challenges including fiscal deficits, below-average productivity, and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



**POPULATION**  
**5,161,211\***

\*as of 2024

### OUTWARD BOUND NEW ZEALAND

The primary courses offered include 8 and 21-day open enrollment courses serving individuals of two cohorts aged 16 to 18, and 18 to 26. Programs reach 1,849 participants a year. There are other courses offered, including courses with individuals with impairments or disabilities, a course for children aged 13-15 and their caregiver, adult-serving courses, and professional courses. Participants either pay for their spot or can earn a scholarship; the School itself offers scholarships as do several local organizations, and it is not uncommon for places of business to send their staff for professional development opportunities. Prior to attending the 21-day course, participants must pass a physical exam.

New Zealand is a bicultural country, with rich ties to the Māori community. Thus, one unique aspect of programming in New Zealand is the incorporation of different aspects of te ao Māori (Māori worldview / Aotearoa indigenous culture) into OB practice. This included honoring the Treaty of Waitangi, connecting with and respecting the wishes of local iwi (tribes), and incorporating indigenous principles into courses. Uses of te reo (Māori language) are seen all over campus, as many signs and staff resources use the language. Even the course plan has been translated into te reo. Staff also start meetings with a chant or a song sung in te reo. This commitment to the local culture is present within the courses, which are instructed in English and utilize Māori language and proverbs throughout.





### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

Two researchers attended OB New Zealand's Anakiwa base in May of 2024. They shadowed 5 days of programming of a 21-day course serving participants aged 18 to 26. During this time, they observed the solo experience, tramping, and center-based activities.

#### 1- Authentic Adventure

OB New Zealand has many examples of authentic adventure; given that there are 21 days in the course, participants have the opportunity to practice skills while the challenge increases. Staff highlight that the role of struggle (as opposed to suffering) is central to student experiences and identify that both the individuals and the group normally have breaking points at some point during the course. Conversations with staff confirmed that this is intentional and understood as a central tenet of a great deal of outdoor education provision. The struggle builds resilience in participants, and the cycle of going out for a few days to challenge themselves and then return to the comfort of base to recharge before leaving for another 'scheme' is an intentional feature and rhythm of the program design.

#### 2- Service

Students serve one another; setting tables and taking turns cleaning up after meals for one another. They also take turns with specific tasks that support the group. Throughout the course, there are repeated questions and emphasis on the impact of their behaviors on other people (such as arriving late, which means that colleagues are standing around getting cold). Each watch is also allocated a part of the campus area that they are responsible for caring for throughout the course. When they are at the base, they are expected to care for the area daily, and this service is framed as contributing to others in different watches and the OB community as a whole. This idea of serving others and highlighting their individual roles within the watch through the course is used as a metaphor for the communities they are part of in everyday life and how service can be used as a form of 'glue' to create healthy communities in society.

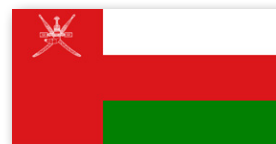


## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# OUTWARD BOUND OMAN

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

For centuries, the people of Oman have benefited from trade across the Indian Ocean. In the late 18th century, the emerging sultanate based in Muscat began establishing a series of friendship treaties with Britain. A major turning point came in 1970, when Qaboos bin Said Al-Said ruled the country. Over the course of his 50-year reign, he led Oman into a period of modernization and development.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Oman is located on the southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and spans a total area of 309,500 square kilometers, all of which is land. The country has no inland water bodies. Oman's climate is predominantly dry desert, characterized by hot and humid conditions along the coast and hot, arid weather inland.



### POPULATION AND RELIGION

As of 2025, Oman has an estimated population of 5,321,319 where 3,016,132 (56.68%) are Omanis and 2,305,187 (43.32%) are expatriates. The country is predominantly Muslim, with 85.9% of the population adhering to Islam. Other religious minorities include Christians (6.4%) and Hindus (5.7%).



### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Oman is classified as a high-income country with a real GDP per capita of \$38,300 (2023 est.). Its economy is primarily oil-based, which has historically underpinned national revenue and development. Oman also maintains a large welfare system, offering extensive social services to its citizens.

In 2024, real GDP grew by 1.7%, up from 1.2% in 2023, buoyed by non-hydrocarbon sectors like manufacturing, logistics, tourism, and renewable energy.



**POPULATION**  
**5,321,319\***

\*as of 2025

### OUTWARD BOUND OMAN

Outward Bound Oman (OBO) was launched in May 2009 (the first Outward Bound school in any Arabic-speaking country) and was further established in 2014 by Ministerial Decree.

OBO runs programming out of three centers, located in urban, mountain, and desert settings.

- Urban: Outward Bound Oman Muscat Center
- Mountain: Outward Bound Oman Jabal Training Center
- Outward Bound Oman Desert Training Center

These centers can host single-day groups or support larger mountain and desert expeditions. Outward Bound Oman operates year-round, and most of the instructors are full-time staff, providing a consistent and professional foundation for OBO programming.



#### CLIENT DESCRIPTION

All OBO courses are designed to help embed the key pillars of Vision 2040, the government's roadmap for the future of Oman. OBO also designs programming to align with the key skills for future jobs identified by the World Economic Forum, such as agile thinking, resilience, and creativity. As much of OBO's funding comes from Corporate Social Investment (40-50%) and the government (20-30%), OBO is well integrated with government and industry needs. OBO reaches approximately 4000 participants annually, with 80% or more youth (ages 12-25) through courses ranging from 1 to 5 days. Financial need is not usually a barrier to participation, as most interested students can access OBO programming through partnerships with government schools or by applying directly to OBO to enroll in subsidized courses.



#### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

In September 2023, two researchers visited the Jebel Training Center to observe two separate 4-day journey-based courses. Both courses consisted of 4 days and 3 nights of backpacking in the high desert of the Jebel Akhdar with a support vehicle, which was used to haul water and group equipment. As students arrived on the first day, they were immediately dropped in the field where they were issued backpacks and equipment. Cell phones were collected and locked away, and unwanted personnel effects and luggage were stored in large duffel bags in the support vehicle. The two observed groups were different courses with different clients.

The Next Generation Course, which focuses on employability and leadership for young adults, included 14 women between 24 and 30 years old, all of whom were working, some as entrepreneurs.

The Skills for Life Course included 20 10th-grade boys from a government school and their physical education teacher. Its focus was on life skills that might help the youth succeed in school and consider employment options.



Both courses had two instructors, with one also including an instructor in training. Days 2 and 3 involved a combination of hiking, backpacking, games, cooking, camping, structured lessons, and reflection. On day 4, the courses were picked up by buses and returned to Muscat after their course closings.

### 1- Educational Philosophy

OBO is built to support Oman's Vision 2040 and strategically align with Oman's government and industry priorities. This vision aligns well with employability skills and citizenship (performance and civic character respectively). Many of the discussions, even during breaks on the trail, tied back to ways to think differently and strategically as Oman seeks to diversify its economy from a reliance on oil to become a knowledge economy. For example, much of the discussion was on taking initiative and not relying on the government for jobs, considering how Omani youth might start a business or work for a company. Other discussions included how youth might make a difference through volunteering, with students working in small groups to propose hypothetical community projects.

The instructors carried laminated cards to discuss various aspects of Oman's Vision 2040, which they could use during downtime, a rest break, or a formally planned discussion session. Oman's Vision 2040 was a guiding theme for the course, and OBO has proactively used this strategic plan to inform the topical content of their courses. It was clear from our observations that Oman's Vision 2040 provides a throughline for OBO courses that is understood at all levels of the organization.

### 2- Authentic Adventure

The novelty of the context and the inherent tasks of a journey-based program allow OBO to effectively leverage authentic adventure to build character. By dropping students immediately into the field, learning how to work together to cook, set up tents, and travel off-trail forces the students to work collaboratively on novel tasks. The repetition of these tasks (packing a pack daily, setting up a tent, cooking meals together) allows the student who struggles with a novel task to see incremental improvement as the course progresses- to see that they are expanding their capabilities through practice, hard work, and repetition.

The route finding in the high desert was not easy, as while the students were given a GPS, there was no established route between camps, and the students had to problem solve to find their way across ravines or over hilltops. The authentic debates on which route was preferable necessitate teamwork and leadership practice. Journey-based programs are ripe with natural consequences that helped students to see cause and effect relationships.

Poor route finding resulted in a very late dinner in the dark; with group meals, these consequences are shared with students and staff. Traveling in the heat of the day with a heavy pack over rough terrain is difficult, yet desert nights are cold. The students were challenged yet provided opportunities to succeed. What was initially at the edge of their capabilities became easier; and their adventures with OBO will be remembered fondly.



## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# OUTWARD BOUND ROMANIA

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Once under the control of the Ottoman Empire, the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia gained autonomy in 1856. They effectively unified in 1859 and formally adopted the name Romania in 1862. In recent decades, Romania has taken major steps toward European integration, joining NATO in 2004, the European Union in 2007, and the Schengen Area in 2024.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Romania covers a total area of 238,391 square kilometers, comprising 229,891 sq km of land and 8,500 sq km of water. Romania has a temperate continental climate, with four seasons, cold, cloudy winters marked by frequent snow and fog, and sunny summers accompanied by regular showers and thunderstorms.



### POPULATION AND RELIGION

As of 2024, Romania has an estimated population of 18,148,155. The majority of the population adheres to the Romanian Orthodox Church (85.3%), followed by Roman Catholics (4.5%), Reformed Christians (3%), and Pentecostals (2.5%). Other religions make up 4.7% of the population (2021 est.).




### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Romania is a high-income European Union member with a real GDP per capita of \$40,700 (2023 est.). Having joined the Schengen Area in March 2024, its eurozone entry is still pending due to unmet convergence criteria. Despite persistent inflation, the economy is recovering, driven by domestic consumption and EU-funded investments. Key challenges include a shortage of skilled labor, regional disparities, and the need for fiscal reforms to address rising deficits.



 **Tîrgu-Mureș - Outward Bound Romania Office**

 **Sovata - Outward Bound Romania International Youth Centre**



**POPULATION**  
**18,148,155\***

\*as of 2024

### OUTWARD BOUND ROMANIA

Outward Bound Romania (OBR) was founded soon after the end of communist rule in 1993. There is one OB center near Sovata, with programming lasting between 3 and 10 days. Course activities vary by season. Given an ideal location near mountains and water, activities can include hiking, canoeing, and climbing.



#### CLIENT DESCRIPTION

OB Romania is a non-governmental organization, founded by civilians inspired by the German Outward Bound model. This allowed OBR to run programs in line with their own values. Most funding comes from participant fees and European grants.

OB Romania reaches around 2000 youth participants a year, though they do serve youth and adults. Courses take place in English, Romanian, or Hungarian, and courses can include one or two instructors depending on the design. OB Romania offers three-day school programs, seven- to ten-day courses, and exchange programs that bring youth in from other countries in Europe. Teachers accompany students to support instructors, but also to oversee youth during the evenings, as instructors sleep in separate quarters.



#### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

Two researchers observed OB Romania in July of 2023. They observed two programs: an ERASMUS+ program that served around 28 16- to 20-year-old students from five countries (Portugal, France, Hungary, Romania, and Ukrainian refugees) and a three-day program serving Romanian youth aged 11 to 13.

##### I- Educational Philosophy

In Outward Bound Romania, they believe that nature is the best facilitator. Youth are taken out of their everyday setting and live at the Center; leaving to engage in an expedition periodically as part of the program. All programs experience an expedition; the three-day course included an all-day hike, whereas the 10-day ERASMUS+ course spent three days camping and engaging in water activities away from the Center. OB Romania takes advantage of their surroundings, which include fields, forests, caves, lakes and rivers, and even opportunities for rock climbing.

These activities are designed to ensure students experience the sense that they have left the safety of civilization. Instructors suggest that this is intentional and important; that it allows individuals to drop any “armor” and to be vulnerable, engaging in the process more fully and being open to the change. Youth are given the opportunity to struggle, and to face genuine consequences. This underlying philosophy is understood by instructors, and



it is a key component of the courses. The philosophy is built into the course, and instructors also are trained to let natural challenges occur. One example occurred when a student's wheelchair broke during the hike – the entire team worked together to get them up the hill and back.

### 2- Instructor Behaviors

Many instructors have experience working in the field of education, and they bring that knowledge to their instruction. There is a friendly relationship between instructors and students, and instructors prioritize an active debrief that allows participants to reflect on their experiences, ensuring that experiences connect to everyday lives. This debriefing process deepens as time moves on. Instructors do not tell participants what they learned; they discuss values that are important but reflect on their own lessons that come from activities and failures.



## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST UK

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was formed through a series of unions: England and Scotland in 1707, Ireland in 1800 (with most of Ireland later gaining independence), and Wales earlier in the 16th century. With a long history of global influence, the UK played a significant role in developing parliamentary democracy and built a vast empire that peaked in the early 20th century. Following its decline after two World Wars, the UK rebuilt itself as a modern European power. Devolved governments were established in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland in 1997-1998. Scotland contains nearly one-third of the United Kingdom's land area.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

The United Kingdom covers 243,610 square kilometers, consisting of 241,930 sq km of land and 1,680 sq km of water. Scotland, which lies north of the UK, is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the north and west, the North Sea to the northeast and east, and the Irish Sea to the south. Scotland spans an area of 80,231 sq km, with 77,901 sq km of land. The country's climate is predominantly temperate and oceanic, characterized by frequent and rapid changes in weather.



### POPULATION AND RELIGION

The population of Scotland in 2022 was 5,439,842, and the majority of Scots (51.12%) report not following any religion. The most practiced religion is Christianity (38.79%), mainly the Church of Scotland (20.36%) and Roman Catholicism (13.3%).



### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

The UK is a high-income European economy, known for its global financial services sector, with a real GDP per capita of \$54,500 (2023 est.), and Scotland is the largest financial center in the United Kingdom outside of London. In 2024, Scotland's GDP per capita was reported to be \$54,800.



**POPULATION  
IN SCOTLAND**  
**5,439,842\***

\*as of 2022

### THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST UNITED KINGDOM

The Outward Bound Trust (OBT) UK is the original Outward Bound School. Founded in 1941 in Aberdovey, Wales, by educator Kurt Hahn and shipping magnate Lawrence Holt, its initial mission was to equip young sailors with the resilience and survival skills needed during World War II. Today, it primarily empowers youth by fostering confidence, self-belief, and resilience through experiential learning in the outdoors.

The Outward Bound Trust UK operates six residential centers located in areas of outstanding natural beauty:

- Lake District: Ullswater, Howtown, and Eskdale
- Snowdonia: Aberdovey and Ogwen Cottage
- Scottish Highlands: Loch Eil

These centers offer a range of programs tailored to different age groups and needs, including primary and secondary school residentials, summer adventures (open enrolment), and early careers courses for apprentices and graduates.



Lake District: Howtown, Lake Ullswater



Snowdonia: Aberdovey



Scottish Highlands: Loch Eil



Snowdonia: Ogwen Cottage



### CLIENT DESCRIPTION

The Outward Bound Trust UK partners with primary and secondary schools, colleges, and youth groups to deliver residential outdoor learning programs that foster confidence, resilience, emotional well-being, and a stronger connection to the natural world. Formal education clients are the primary source of revenue, contributing 60 to 70% of overall income. Importantly, financial need is not a barrier—over 80% of participants receive funding support to attend. In addition to working with schools, the Outward Bound Trust UK also runs apprentice and graduate development programs for employers, colleges, and training providers. Each year, OB UK reaches approximately 25,000 young people aged 12 to 25 through courses ranging from 4 to 5 days, with extended summer adventure options up to 19 days.

These programs use physically and mentally challenging activities—such as hill climbing, gorge walking, canoeing, expeditioning, and sailing—to stretch participants and help them discover their potential. The Outward Bound Trust UK delivers a high volume of participants and program days annually, superseded only by OBUSA and OB Singapore.



### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

In May 2024, two researchers visited the Loch Eil Center of the Outward Bound Trust in the Scottish Highlands to observe two separate 5-day residential programs. Students stayed in shared accommodations (except during expeditions). They participated in full days of activities, including team building, high ropes, canoeing, raft building, and a one-night expedition, ranging from an accessible riverside trek to a more strenuous overnight summit hike and bivouac. The two groups observed differed notably. Students from George Watson's College, an independent school in Edinburgh, took part as the first phase of a two-week final year project emphasizing teamwork and self-belief. Students were mostly engaged, and there was a high degree of familiarity within the group. Those from Wester Hailes High School, a state school in a more disadvantaged area of Edinburgh, showed mixed levels of engagement and group cohesion. Another key difference was phone use—George Watson's students did not have access to their phones. In contrast, Wester Hailes' students were permitted limited use, reflecting The Outward Bound Trust's policy of deferring such decisions to the client.

#### 1- Educational Philosophy

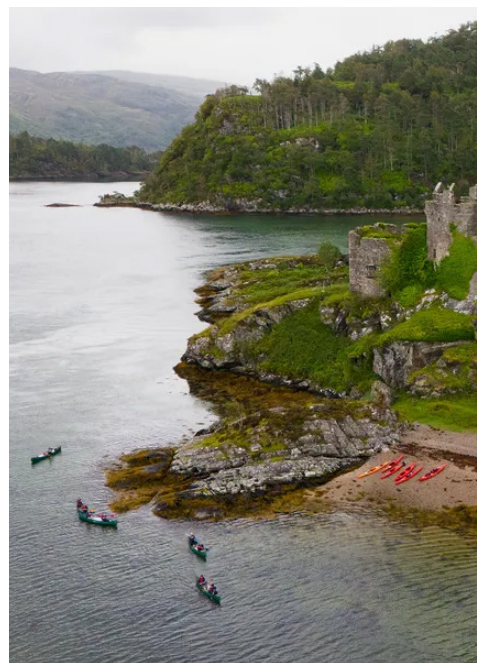
The Outward Bound Trust UK demonstrates a strong and consistent educational philosophy guided by the Hahnian belief that “there is more in us than we know.” OBT uses outdoor adventure to help young people build self-belief, confidence, and social skills that last. Their approach to partnerships also mirrors this philosophy, resulting in tailored courses with educational partners designed to meet the specific needs of young people and remove barriers to access through funding.

The approach is clear throughout the entire organization. Staff work as a team, model shared values, and create safe, supportive spaces where challenge and struggle are part of the learning process. The program is flexible, meeting the needs of different schools while staying true to core outcomes such as resilience, self-confidence, and social connection.

This philosophy is supported by a well-developed Theory of Change and validated through multiple layers of evaluation. Around 60% of OBT staff work full-time, with the remainder working a variety of flexible working options, and are well-versed in a consistent and coherent philosophical approach to learning and development.

#### 2- Educational Models

One of the key strengths of the Outward Bound Trust UK is its consistent use of well-established educational models to guide course design and delivery. The FFART Framework (Frame, Frontload, Activity, Review, Transfer) is a specific part of the OB Trust UK's Learning Process and features in every OB Trust course. Other models, such as Plan–Do–Review–Transfer; Comfort Zones, and the 5Ps (group roles), are used at the discretion of the instructors based on the needs /contexts of the participants. The various “frames” or educational models are displayed on large, laminated boards to be used in assisting course design and as teaching props, used interchangeably and intentionally throughout the course. Instructors adapt these models to fit each group, building on student strengths while aligning with the intended outcomes of the visiting school or client. For example, in courses like the one designed



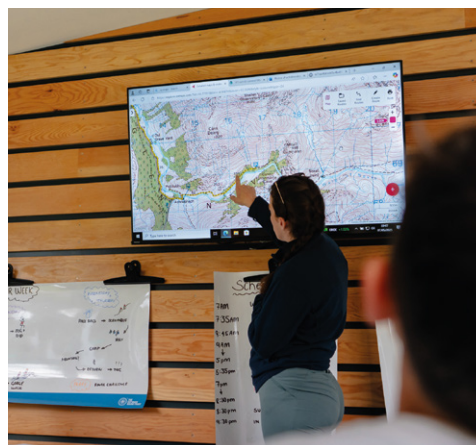
for George Watson's College, the instructor chose among several learning frames to best support development in areas like teambuilding, believing in yourself (stepping outside of your comfort zone), and supporting others. The client chose these themes in consultation with OBT.

An example of one of the frames used was the “**5Ps: Mindsets in Response to Challenge.**”

This is used to help students reflect on how their attitudes affect their learning and group dynamics. It can also help instructors adjust facilitation approaches depending on where individuals or groups are in the moment.

1. **Passenger:** Goes along with the group but stays passive. Avoids risk, avoids responsibility, and may disengage.
2. **Prisoner:** Feels forced to participate. Shows resistance, frustration, or resentment. May say things like “I didn’t sign up for this” or “Why are we doing this?”
3. **Protester:** Actively pushes back. Questions the activity or group process, sometimes constructively, sometimes not. Vocal about discomfort or disagreement.
4. **Participant:** Willingly engages. Might feel uncertain but chooses to contribute, try new things, and work with the group.
5. **Pioneer:** Leans into challenge with curiosity and initiative. Willingly steps into leadership or support roles and encourages others.

By introducing this educational model and language on the 2nd day of the course, the students and instructors could use this language and framing when the group encountered different challenges. This facilitated both dialogue and reflection throughout the course.



## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# OUTWARD BOUND SINGAPORE

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

By the 14th century, the island of Singapore was home to a thriving Malay trading port known as Temasek. After centuries of shifting control and eventual destruction in the 17th century, modern Singapore was established in 1819 as a British trading colony. It joined the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. On 9 August 1965, Singapore separated from Malaysia to become an independent and sovereign state.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Singapore is a city-state, spanning a total area of 719 square kilometers, comprising 709.2 sq km of land and 10 sq km of water. The country has a tropical climate characterized by hot, humid, and rainy conditions year-round. It experiences two distinct monsoon seasons—northeastern (December to March) and southwestern (June to September)—with frequent afternoon and evening thunderstorms during the inter-monsoon periods.



### POPULATION AND RELIGION

As of 2024, Singapore has an estimated population of 6,028,459. The religious landscape is diverse, with 31.1% of the population identifying as Buddhist, 18.9% as Christian, 15.6% as Muslim, 8.8% as Taoist, and 5% as Hindu. Other religions account for 0.6%, while 20% report no religious affiliation (2020 est.).



### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Singapore is a high-income, service-oriented economy with a real GDP per capita of \$127,500 (2023 est.) and a prominent global financial center. Known for its business-friendly policies and openness to trade and investment, the country has seen inflation easing, though it remains persistent in the services sector. Ongoing public investments in education, healthcare, and infrastructure support strong human capital development, though an aging population presents long-term challenges.



**POPULATION**  
**6,028,459\***

\*as of 2024

### OUTWARD BOUND SINGAPORE

**Outward Bound Singapore (OBS)** traces its origins to 1967, when it was established as the **Outward Bound School of Singapore (OBSS)** to provide education, leadership and character training for Singaporeans. In 1991, the **People's Association (PA)** took over the School and reoriented its mission toward building physical and mentally rugged youths, renaming it **Outward Bound Singapore (OBS)**. In 2015, OBS became part of the **National Youth Council (NYC)** under the **Ministry of Culture, Community, and Youth (MCCY)**.

OBS operates out of 4 campus across Singapore – 2 in Pulau Ubin, 2 on Mainland (East Coast Campus and Reception Activity Centre at Punggol). A new campus on Coney Island is scheduled to open in 2026, further expanding OBS's capacity to deliver immersive outdoor learning experiences. The use of offshore islands like Pulau Ubin highlights Singapore's strategic integration of natural spaces into youth development, despite its urban density. Courses include a mix of high and low ropes course elements, camping, water activities such as sea kayaking, hiking, and other activities such as dragon boat racing, city orienteering, and emergency response. These activities are designed to foster resilience, teamwork and leadership, mirroring Singapore's broader emphasis on cultivating future-ready citizens.

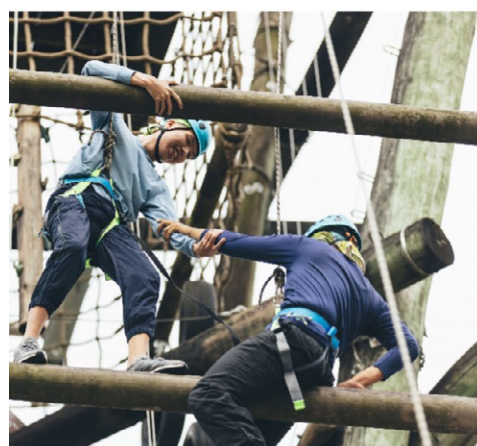
In 2016, the Singapore Government announced the National Outdoor Adventure Education Masterplan, providing youths a progressive outdoor learning pathway from primary to post-secondary education. Beginning with primary school camps for 10-11 year olds and lower secondary programmes for 13-14 year olds, the cornerstone is the MOE-OBS Challenge (MOC) Program—a 5-day expedition-based camp for all 15-year-old Secondary 3 students designed to build resilience, confidence, social cohesion and active citizenry. Beyond secondary school, youths can continue outdoor adventure learning through OBS programmes at Institutes of Higher Learning.



#### CLIENT DESCRIPTION

OBS serves approximately 23,000 participants annually (of which around 60% to 70% of them are youth aged 14-25 with plans to reach over 40,000 in the future. Program duration ranges from 2 to 21 days, depending on participant profile, learning objectives and partnerships.

Financially, OBS is predominantly government funded, with 80% or more of its annual budget supported by the government. An additional 10% or less of funding comes from corporate/ organizational clients, who engage OBS to run tailored programs for development and team building.





### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

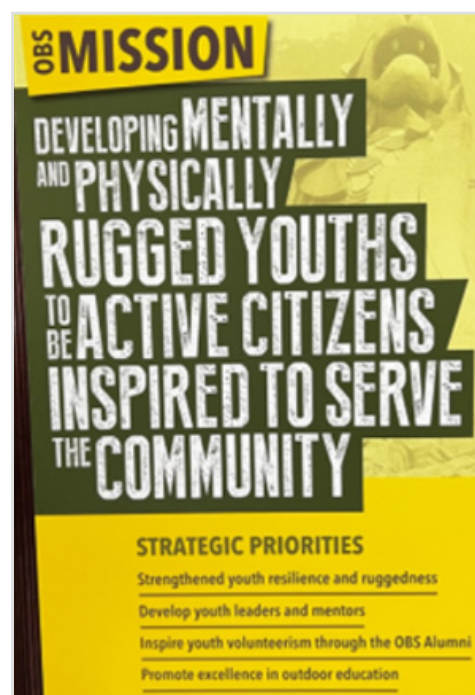
All four researchers observed programs in May of 2023. Two researchers attended programs on Pulau Ubin, and two observed programming conducted on the Mainland – namely the East Coast Campus. The Pulau Ubin course was more nature based, while the Mainland course involved urban hiking through residential areas, parks and park connectors.

#### 1- Philosophy

Outward Bound Singapore has a very clear educational philosophy. This is established by the leadership team and is consistently communicated through management practices and staff training. OBS plays a key role in nation-building, with a mission to develop “mentally and physically rugged youth and active citizens.” This philosophy is visibly embedded in the OBS culture, influencing staff recruitment, program design and implementation. The emphasis on resilience and civic responsibility aligns with Singapore’s broader national goals of fostering a resilient, cohesive society.

#### 2- Models

Outward Bound Singapore (OBS) has a rigorous staff training program, equipping instructors with a strong foundation in educational models and facilitation practices that enhance the participant experience. Given the scale of operations and the large number of youth served annually, the 185 instructors operate on a tightly structured schedule with limited flexibility. OBS leadership wants to ensure safety, and consistent quality across the many courses offered. To support students effectively through their journey, OBS instructors draw on several key educational models, particularly ASK (Attitude, Skill, Knowledge), the Experiential Learning Cycle, Challenge by Choice, Stages of Group Development, and Comfort Zones.



## OUTWARD BOUND CHARACTER PROJECT:

# OUTWARD BOUND VIETNAM

## COUNTRY OVERVIEW

Vietnam came under French control in 1858 and officially became part of French Indochina in 1887. After decades of colonial rule, Vietnam defeated French forces in 1954, when the country divided into North and South Vietnam. In 1975, Communist North Vietnam unified the country by conquering the South. The nation remained economically stagnant until 1986, when it introduced a more market-based economy.



### GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

Vietnam spans a total area of 331,210 square kilometers, with 310,070 sq km of land and 21,140 sq km of water. The climate varies by region: the south experiences a tropical climate, while the north has a monsoonal climate, marked by a hot, rainy season from May to September and a warm, dry season from October to March.



### POPULATION AND RELIGION

As of 2024, Vietnam's estimated population is 105,758,975. The population is ethnically diverse, with the majority being Kinh (Viet) (85.3%). Other ethnic groups include Tay, Thai, Muong, Khmer, Mong, and Nung, each making up 1–2% of the population (2019 est.).



### ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

Vietnam is classified as a lower middle-income socialist economy in East Asia with a real GDP per capita of \$13,500 in 2023. Since the implementation of Đổi Mới, the country has experienced rapid growth driven by strong investment, rising productivity, and an expanding manufacturing and tourism sector. Vietnam is a signatory of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and has significantly reduced poverty, although disparities remain among ethnic minorities. Systemic corruption continues to pose challenges. The real GDP per capita was \$13,500 in 2023.



**POPULATION**  
**105,758,975\***

\*as of 2024

### OUTWARD BOUND VIETNAM

Outward Bound Vietnam has been operating since 2016 and offers programming from two locations: Binh Dinh and Halong. OB Vietnam typically partners with local and international schools, offering a progressive framework that grows in challenge and length as youth age, with courses ranging from two to seven days. Younger students (Year 4 & Year 5) attend 2-day school-based course at their school, whereas older students will come to the base and might spend two nights outside on expedition. Courses are led by two instructors and a teacher from the school; the teacher supports youth in the evening and accompanies the expedition with instructors. Courses are offered in English and Vietnamese. In addition to these programs for schools and youth, OB Vietnam also offers corporate courses and workshops.

Adventure and experiential learning are paramount to OB Vietnam but is not always aligned with the educational philosophy of schools, so the staff work to educate teachers about experiential learning.



### CLIENT DESCRIPTION

Outward Bound Vietnam partners with schools to customize and design great outdoor learning trips. A progressive educational framework maps to your school curriculum and helps develop learning outcomes for different age levels. Each year level has a different program design, and there is a structured daily schedule for students. Supervision ratios are capped at 14 students and 2 Outward Bound staff per group, and they anticipate a schoolteacher will also accompany each group. OBV also offers a range of experiential courses and seminars for adults.

Besides some scholarship courses, all clients (schools or corporates) pay for their participants to undertake OBV courses. OBV reaches approximately 2300 participants per year of which 85% are between 12 and 25 years old, with most from Vietnam and some from overseas.





### SCHOOL STRENGTHS

Two researchers observed a five-day program in January of 2024 which served students aged 13 to 14. Students were led by two instructors and a teacher. The course was center-based with a two-day expedition. Although the groups hiked separately, they reconnected at the campsite each evening.

#### 1- Authentic Adventure

Students experience challenges that progress as their time continues on the course. The course observed included a two-night expedition that incorporated difficult weather and terrain. There were many challenges, including pouring rain, steep climbs and rocks that they needed to scramble over. Yet participants continued and found opportunities to laugh and have a good time. The staff embrace challenge, but when students seem to be struggling too much they will intervene. For example, during challenging terrain, the group might take an extended break where students can just enjoy themselves outside.

#### 2- Models

OB Vietnam has several models and tools that facilitate the participant experience. One of the models that is most unique to this School is a journal that helps students advance throughout the course. Instructors use it throughout the course, as the content offers students the opportunity to engage with some of the topics (e.g., guessing how long it takes for different trash items to biodegrade), and spaces for students to draw, and pages that can facilitate student journaling.



