

8th Grade Class Trip to Pathfinder Island Student Reflections 2026

What part of this experience do you feel made the biggest impression on you or was the most memorable?

- "The most memorable thing was how I came out of my shell by talking to people I don't usually talk to and made new friendships."
- "What has stuck with me the most after this trip was learning how to become a team and getting to know my fellow classmates without our phones being an obstacle. When the teachers were preparing us for Pathfinder, they said 'You'll find so many new friends!' I thought they were just bluffing and I would just stay in my circle, but man was I wrong. I talked to so many interesting, kind, and hilarious classmates that I would never have guessed I'd speak to."
- "The part of this experience that made the biggest impression on me was the food. I really enjoyed the meals we had together, and I also enjoyed the company of my friends. I really liked the vibe and interactions I had with everyone."
- "The experience of walking out of my tent and looking out into the beautiful forest was absolutely memorizing. It was so beautiful, because at home you don't really care about the view around you, some people (like me) wake up and instantly reach for their phones. So it was beautiful and cool, although some days very cold. Scenery was a 10/10."

What is the one thing that you feel you learned or noticed about yourself while you were at Camp Pathfinder?

- "Something I think I noticed is that hard things can become easier the more I do them. An example of this is when I woke up early to do the polar plunge. At first, I was pretty nervous about it, but once I did it, it wasn't that bad, and I ended up doing it multiple times. I realized that the scariest part about most things is the buildup to it."
- "I feel that I noticed that I can live without my phone for a while. While I was at Camp Pathfinder, I rarely thought about my phone and when I did, it was for a very short time. I preferred spending time with my friends in real life rather than through a screen. I also noticed that I started making new friends and began talking with people I don't normally talk to."
- "I learned that I really enjoy getting to know new people. When I was at Pathfinder, I talked to a bunch of people that I normally wouldn't talk to, and it was really fun!"
- "I have more upper body strength than I thought I did."

What insights into effective teamwork did you gain from this trip? How might these affect your future work in teams or groups?

- "This trip taught me to be a bit more patient with people and stay more calm. This will help me get along with people in team assignments later down the line."
- "When you trust your teammates and build off each other's ideas, you get the best results. During the low ropes exercise, our team was struggling, and that's because we all thought that our own ideas were best. Then, we finally compromised and completed it!"
- "I think canoeing really helped bond us and made us work together because of how coordinated you need to be to go straight. Canoeing showed me that sometimes you need other people because doing everything yourself isn't always good. This will affect future work in teams because it makes us have a sense of teamwork instead of selfishness, making us better people to be around overall."
- "From this trip I saw amazing cooperative communication. One thing that interested me the most was how despite some of my activity group members having just learned something they were already trying to teach others what to do in archery. I didn't see anyone trying to bring a peer down. One example was that during rock climbing everyone was cheering me on despite the fact I was quite literally trembling in fear, and I only got to like four rocks at most. Nobody booed me or said I sucked, which I am glad for, but I wouldn't blame them if they did since I was absolutely horrible. In future groups; I firmly believe that encouragement and supportiveness is what helps us grow the most. Which will significantly improve our future work by tons."

Did you experience anything on the trip that helps you to see your home life/culture differently?

- "I feel like the stars were really different from home because U.S. has a lot of light pollution so there aren't that many stars at night, so it was really cool to see that many stars."
- "The lack of a phone and internet on the island made me realize that face-to-face communication and exploration are more important than constant connection. For example, if I ever was looking for somebody on the island, rather than shooting them a text or snapping them, I would go around to the various groups of people and find my way towards them through exploration and communicating with other people."
- "Walking around on the island helped me realize i should go outside more, nature is a wonderful and beautiful thing, and once you take that step, a little goes a long

way. Connecting with nature helps you become better; it brings more peace than you realize."

- "On the trip I saw my friends in a different light and my mom and made me realize how much I appreciate her so I can be nicer to her moving forward."

What is something you were worried about before the trip that turned out to not be so big of a deal?

- "I was really worried about going three days without my phone but with all the activities going on and so much to do during free time, it wasn't so much of a big deal."
- "Something I was scared of was not being able to be in contact with my parents, but I soon realized that I could do daily check ins with them if I needed to."
- "I was worried about my activity group that I might not get along with them but turns out I was completely wrong. I had a great time with my group whether we were working as a team or cheering somebody on. "
- "At the beginning of the year, I was almost adamant that I wasn't going on this trip, because there was not a clean bathroom and a place to shower. The thought of being smelly and my schoolmates seeing me with greasy, flat hair absolutely horrified me. However, such things didn't happen to become that big of a deal. I honestly didn't smell that bad and I can say the same for others around me, and I had too much fun to even care about how my hair looked."

What advice can you share with next year's 8th graders before they embark on the same journey?

- "Dear future campers, cherish this trip with your whole heart! This is a once-in-a-lifetime experience that you shouldn't take for granted. I cannot stress to you enough how much fun you will have. Whatever worries you have will disintegrate once you step on that island. You will learn new skills, make new friends, have some great food, and just have an all-around good time."
- "I would advise next year's group to bring warm clothes and materials because it can get really cold at night. I would also advise next year's group that it is okay to hang out with different people throughout the trip and that you don't have to hang out with the same people the entire time because that makes it boring. This trip helped me enjoy nature a lot more. I wasn't used to being in the wilderness without being able to text anyone but by the end of the trip I am so happy I went to pathfinder and I wish I could go again. My favorite part was being with all of my friends and making new ones. I loved playing kickball during our free time as well."

Next year's group should definitely go on this trip because it can make you a lot closer with people, it can help you develop new skills and arts, and it can also help you learn new things. I think this trip impacts the 8th grade students a lot, making them better human beings. It sparks new interests and puts you through things you may not be used to, but it was so fun and taught me so much I wish I could go again."

- "Be prepared to try new things and you might be nervous, but you got this. This trip was definitely one of the most fun things I have experienced in my life so far. If you are going to go, don't worry about the phone policy. Once you get there, you will have a blast! This trip shows you the benefits of working as a team, and you will work with people you probably haven't talked to very much before and end up becoming good friends with them! I loved the team-building activities and I loved the high ropes. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Who wouldn't want to go! It is also so much fun with your whole class. I think it helped a lot of people in my grade work as a team and become closer in general. I think more people talked to each other than they do at school. I would definitely recommend you go. It's such a fun-filled trip to take with your classmates."
- "Don't let fear hold you back. Let loose- it's not every day you get such an amazing opportunity as great as this. It helped me expand my horizons- and I'm sure it'll do the same for you. Ziplining, canoeing, archery, rock climbing, and so much more. These are not regular occurrences; don't be afraid to take risks! I personally enjoyed spending the night with my tent-friends and sharing experiences. I think people should consider going because it is a great chance to push yourself out there and adventure new things; you might find interests that you would've never had if you didn't go. It honestly has a huge impact on students because we're so used to being in our comfort zones and having our phones 24/7. And, honestly, when I first found out about the trip to Camp Pathfinder, I was a bit upset at not being able to bring my phone. It's perfectly understandable to react in the same way because technology brings us entertainment, and phones are our safety net. People don't like to go out of their comfort zone anymore when bored because all they have to do now is scroll to keep themselves content. But this brings a great chance to reconnect with nature without artificial interference."