

Explorer Belt

Going your own way

Factsheet 2 of 6 in the Explorer Belt Series



Item Code FS452031 Apr/09 Edition no 2

0845 300 1818

Introduction

Both Network Essentials and Unit Programme provide outline requirements on what needs to be done to organise an Explorer Belt expedition. Your County/Area Scout Network Commissioner or District Explorer Scout Commissioner can provide you with that information.

The purpose of this fact sheet is to assist members, especially Scout Network members, in planning a small, locally organised expedition.

It will cover the following topics:

- Organising a Visit Abroad
- Where and When
- Route Planning
- Expedition Safety
- Equipment
- Recording the experience
- The Explorer Belt Fund
- Debriefing
- Presentation
- Explorer Belt and Girlguiding UK
- Duke of Edinburgh's Award

In addition, an outline planning checklist is provided to assist you in your preparations.

Organising a Visit Abroad

Planning for any expedition abroad takes time. You should consider your outline plans at least six months in advance. As early as possible, talk with your Explorer Scout Leader/District Explorer Scout Commissioner or Area/County Scout Network Commissioner about your plans.

General information and advice on planning visits abroad is available from your AAC/ACC/ARC International or Area/County/Region International Adviser and from the International Office at Gilwell Park.

Although there are no formal requirements for training exercises, a good level of fitness and some expedition experience will obviously be of use.

Where and When

Many factors will affect your choice of country. You should start by selecting a country of interest to you, which can be visited in the time that you have available and is within your financial scope. Your expedition should last about ten days but the longer you can devote to it, the greater the value for money, because transport to and from the country will probably represent the largest item of expenditure. At this stage, you will need to draw up a budget and investigate various travel options.

Then collect as much background information as possible on the country and select an appropriate subject for your major project. Alternatively, you may already have determined to investigate a specific subject, and this may indicate your choice of country. The topic selected should not be too specialised – it should enable you to conduct a meaningful study on the strength of chance contacts with ordinary people.

Route Planning

Your choice of country and region will naturally influence your route. It is not envisaged that expeditions will take place in remote, hazardous terrain since the projects will necessarily involve

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contact with local communities. Thus, a ten-day high mountain traverse would not be appropriate,

Your route must provide a test of your skill and initiative whilst enabling you to make a study of your selected main project. Teams should normally expect to camp at night, but chance offers of home hospitality may be accepted.

The expedition should take place over ten days and should involve about thirty hours of travel. Travel can be by foot, horse, canoe, cycle and, exceptionally, by public transport (although this is only recommended for a small part of the total expedition).

Expedition Safety

The usual activity rules of The Scout Association apply to Explorer Belt expeditions (See Policy, Organisation and Rules).

Other special hazards, which might involve risk, range from extremes of climate to political instability, and would make some areas unsuitable for Explorer Belt expeditions.

Explorer Scouts and Scout Network members taking part in an Explorer Belt expedition are also required to complete the usual requirements for permission to camp abroad. These are detailed in the Visits Abroad folder, available from your AAC/ACC/ARC International.

Equipment

At an early stage give serious consideration to your equipment. You will be on your own for around ten days, so it should be reliable. Boots should be well worn in, whilst adequate clothing for the conditions anticipated and suitable lightweight tentage should be obtained.

Living largely off the food of the country being visited greatly enhances the experience, but you may also need to be prepared to take some dehydrated expedition foods as a reserve. Check what fuels are readily available in your chosen country. Your total pack should aim to carry no more than 16kg or one-fifth of your own body weight.

Recording the Experience

You are required to keep a notebook during the expedition. A small notebook or loose-leaf file may be suitable for use on the expedition. The purpose of the notebook is to assist you during the preparation of your presentation, and it won't be assessed. You will want to make notes on projects completed, together with a daily diary, details of routes, personal impressions, details of expenditure and so on. It is surprising how soon you will forget these details if you do not note them! Plan for the type of presentation you will make before you go. You may wish to make sketches en route, or record your journey on slide, film or video or audiocassette. Any of these may help you to report back on your expedition.

Explorer Belt Fund

The International Office at Gilwell Park manages a fund for individuals undertaking Explorer Belt expeditions. Applications to the fund are made on an individual basis and should be made using the form, which can be found in fact sheet BP260006 - 'Fundraising and Grant Aid for Exchanges and Visits Abroad' which can be downloaded from ScoutBase or obtained from the Information Centre.

Support normally takes the form of a grant, which is paid to a local Explorer Scout Unit or Scout Network on behalf of the applicant.

Debriefing

With a large group expedition, a de-briefing with Leaders on the expedition can be achieved quite easily. On a small expedition, this can be a bit more difficult. Ideally, on your return home you should aim to meet with your local Leaders who will be interested to hear how the expedition went – whilst all the information is still fresh in your memory. More information on this provided in factsheet 6 in this series – Explorer Belt – 'The end game'

Presentation

On return home, you are required to give a presentation on your expedition to a suitable

audience. Where possible, this should be done as a team.

Explorer Belt and Girlguiding UK

Members of the Senior Section of Girlguiding UK can be invited to join a large Explorer Belt expedition. A mixed Scouting and Guiding expedition can provide participants with a greater understanding of each other's organisation, perhaps leading to more joint activity at a local level before and after the expedition itself.

The Core Team should be aware of differing practices that should be accommodated. These can be reviewed in The Guiding Manual (4th Edition) on page 200.

Early co-operation between Scout and Guide counterparts is essential if considering an expedition with Guide involvement.

Explorer Belt and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Explorer Belt expeditions may count towards the 'Other Adventurous Projects' requirements of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Gold Expedition, provided that a notification form is sent to the appropriate National Headquarters at least four months before the expedition.

Conclusion

Remember that to a large degree your ultimate enjoyment will depend on your prior planning. This is especially so in relation to your main project – meaningful observation and understanding is only possible on the basis of thorough background preparation.

Factsheets

The factsheets in the Explorer Belt series are:

1. Explorer Belt – Introduction
2. Explorer Belt – Going your own way
3. Explorer Belt – Organising a group expedition
4. Explorer Belt – Project suggestions
5. Explorer Belt – Useful contacts
6. Explorer Belt – The end game

Useful Checklist

- Choose the country to be visited
- Discuss your plans with your Explorer Scout Leader/District Explorer Scout Commissioner or Area/County Scout Network Commissioner
- Research on the country chosen
- Obtain information from the tourist office of the country chosen
- Obtain information and advice from AAC/ACC International
- Select your main project
- Carry out background research on your main project
- Obtain local maps/information
- Plan a route
- Establish the budget
- Obtain approval of your plans...
- Make travel bookings
- Book any accommodation/camp sites necessary, mainly for before and after the expedition
- Obtain passports (and visas if necessary)
- Prepare equipment, tentage etc.
- Learn some of the language
- Complete Form PC (Abroad) and obtain an International Letter of Introduction
- Undertake relevant expedition training
- Arrange a home contact
- Send news releases and arrange for local publicity
- Plan fundraising
- Arrange travel insurance, currency, travellers cheques etc.
- Complete any health precautions required
- On return, complete a camping abroad Report Back form