



The School Travel Consultancy



A guide to planning exceptional
educational adventures & school expeditions
Part 1



Welcome!

We are delighted that you have chosen to download the first part of our Safer Travels planning document. While we would be pleased if you arranged your adventure through The School Travel Consultancy (The STC) we view this document as an aid to help you with whomever you decide to travel with. As you look towards arranging an adventure for your students, we hope it will be a useful tool.

Adventure travel is exciting. It can teach your students (and you) much about the world, having the potential to change viewpoints on the cultures, environments and religions we encounter along the way. Experiential learning is a powerful tool and one which makes the trips we arrange so rewarding – for you and, more importantly, for your students.

Whilst the benefits are great, adventure can also be an intense experience – particularly for teachers and group leaders with concerns over safety and their responsibilities. We have put together this guide to help you with preparing, planning and undertaking your trip. We have included personal tips, recognised good practice advice and a variety of sources of further information. This document is designed to provide a comprehensive source of advice and inspiration.

Our team here at [The STC](#) is highly experienced. We have a wealth of knowledge built up over years arranging adventures and expeditions for ourselves and students. We have qualifications ranging from International Mountain Leader to MIA to IFMGA Mountain Guide to Off-site Safety Management trainers. We have travelled and adventured from the South Atlantic to the Himalaya, from Patagonia to Tibet! Our careful planning of itineraries and a commitment to dealing only with the best in country guides contributes to ensuring that any risks inherent in a journey are kept to a minimum. We do not expect any problems and neither should you! But nothing is risk free, and so reducing and minimising risk is important, so too is ensuring that parents and other stake-holders know the risks and have the necessary information at their disposal to make informed decisions.

Whilst not all of our expeditions and educational journeys involve climbing we love this quote from one of Britain's greatest alpinists. We follow it and we believe if you do too, you won't go too far wrong!

“...remember that courage and strength are nought without prudence, and that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime. Do nothing in haste; look well to each step; and from the beginning think what may be the end.” Edward Whymper, *Scrambles in the Alps*

We hope you find this guide useful in the build up to your trip. Should you have any questions regarding any of the information here, or anything specifically to do with your own itinerary, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Adrian Ferraro
adrian@thestc.co.uk
013912 790010

Chris Sainsbury
chris@thestc.co.uk
013912 790011

Antony Barton
antony@thestc.co.uk
013912 790012



Download 1: Pre-trip Planning & Preparation

Contents

Responsibilities and Objectives:	5
Passports & visas	8
Travel Insurance	10
Pre-travel medical considerations	11
Group meetings	12
Establishing Expedition / Tour rules	13
Kit, Packing & Luggage	14
Flights: Planning ahead	15
Day of departure	15

Objectives and Responsibilities

As the teacher in charge of the trip, you have to be clear about why you are planning this trip, and who it is for.

Objectives:

The most important aspect to planning any expedition or tour is CLARITY OF PURPOSE. Start with the “why” – if we get this right, then everything else follows and the organisation is easier and the outcome more successful.

- Why is it you are planning this trip?
- What do *you* want to achieve?
- What do you want to achieve for your students?
- Are you starting with a geographical objective (e.g. a summit or a journey?) and finding a team to achieve that, or starting with the team and then defining your objective based on that team?

Spend a few minutes and get it crystal clear in your mind as to why you’re running this trip.

Responsibilities

Once you know why you’re planning the trip, you can start defining who’s going to do what. Clear role identification and the identification of an overall tour or expedition venture provider (be that the school, a charity or a commercial company) is the vital first step.

You will be very busy over the months leading up to your trip – mainly with teaching – so good planning will keep the wolf from your door and make the process of arranging your trip as smooth as possible.

There are various roles and responsibilities which must be fulfilled for the build up to run smoothly, just as there are various people and processes to manage, and you will need to be on top of information, documentation and communication when necessary.

- What role are you going to play?
- How about your colleagues accompanying you on the trip?
- What responsibilities are the students going to have?
- Is the school applying for visas or are you giving parents that responsibility?
- What, if anything, are you outsourcing to external providers?

If using an external company, your relationship with them is going to be the single most important aspect of ensuring the pre-trip build up goes smoothly. For our own part, we encourage our clients to call us at any stage should there be questions or concerns. Being open and frank (on both sides) enables us to know about any issues or problems and to address these immediately.

STC's responsibilities:

We book all of your logistics, transport and accommodation, as well as provide the leader(s), in-country support staff for your trip and crisis support.

Our main responsibilities include:

- Running our operations in accordance to British Standard BS8848.
- Providing all transport, accommodation and activity logistics from when you depart the UK until when you return.
- Providing a suitably experienced trained leader (and support staff if necessary) to effectively manage the safety of the tour/expedition.
- The overall health & safety whilst overseas.
- Destination and activity specific risk assessments.
- Financial protection – provided by our ATOL licence No 11054.
- Emergency & crisis response management.
- Providing detailed pre-departure information tailored to your tour or expedition.
- A parent's information evening which enables them to make an informed choice.
- Providing trip specific training to ensure all those travelling are properly prepared for the adventure ahead.
- Monitoring Foreign & Commonwealth Office travel advice and running your trip in accordance with that advice.
- Reviewing feedback from previous clients and adjusting operations if necessary.
- Providing a professional service pre-departure, ensuring you are well prepared, happy and relaxed about your forthcoming venture.
- Ensuring that our documentation and services match what you have booked and all information is forwarded to you in a timely manner.
- Finding solutions to issues that may crop up before they are brought to your attention.
- Fighting your corner – using our close relationships with airlines and in-country personnel to ensure a positive outcome, if issues do arise.

On or soon after booking:

- ATOL Certificate & confirmation receipt
- Guidance and advice on responsible and ethical fundraising for your trip
- A suggested kit list
- Pre-departure information specific to your journey. This varies slightly depending the type of trip you are undertaking, but the information usually includes:
 - A detailed itinerary
 - Cultural considerations tailored to your destination
 - Staying healthy & being open about health issues
 - An online booking form
 - A completed medical questionnaire

- Packing & luggage tips
- Climate & currency information
- Advice on tipping
- Language guidelines
- Visas and Vaccination information
- Generic group travel risk assessment
- Destination specific risk assessment

Prior to departure

- A student's guide to Responsible Tourism
- Crisis contact sheets for all teachers & home contacts
- E-tickets and luggage labels and trek bags (if needed)
- Expedition training if needed
- T Shirts
- Teachers Survival pack including windproof top
- Accommodation list
- Teachers leadership and travel manual

The Teacher's responsibilities

Your main responsibilities include:

- Acting as first point of contact between us and the school/students.
- Thoroughly checking all documentation that may be sent to you.
- Booking rooms for presentations / planning evenings as necessary.
- Communicating to parents any updates or progress on the trip.
- Ensuring that booking forms (for collection of passport details, personal medical information & allergies) and any other necessary documentation are completed by students & staff, uploaded or collated and sent to us within the required time scales.
- Ensuring that all those travelling receive the pre-departure information supplied by The STC.
- Liaising with the head teacher / EVC / bursar to ensure payments, risk assessments, travel insurance, crisis plans and authorisations are completed/in place when and where necessary, and that they confirm to the school's own guidelines.
- Ensuring staffing for the trip is appropriate and that all school staff/adults travelling have CRBs, know their responsibilities and the chain of command within the staff.
- Risk-assessing any known behavioural or relationship issues between individuals in the group, and how these may affect the safety of the group.
- Encouraging and motivating the student team with fundraising (if applicable)
- Being an active member of the leadership team when on tour/expedition by acting in loco-parentis and with overall pastoral care responsibility.
- Knowing the school's emergency response protocols and your responsibilities in such situations.
- **Above all: ensuring you act in accordance with your employer's trip rules/guidance.**

Passports & visas

Passports

All participants and teachers must have their own passport.

We strongly recommend you to obtain photocopies of passports (these should be black and white not colour, for security reasons), so that you can personally check all names and expiry dates.



Top Tips:

- Check that all passports remain valid for the entirety of the trip, including any validity that may be required by the destination authorities **after** your return home. Many of the countries to which we arrange trips require passports to be valid for **6 months after your return date**.
- Do you have enough blank pages? Some visas require two clear pages.
- Renewing passports: If you apply before your passport expires, you can add the remaining validity onto your new passport (up to a maximum of nine months).

Visas:

If a visa is required by British nationals for your destination(s), we will inform you and provide any relevant supporting information / documentation in advance. If you have other nationalities within your group, we will do our best to provide accurate information, but it is often best to ask the relevant embassy / consulate directly.

Visa Central:

Visa Central is a specialist in obtaining work and travel related visas. Our web-portal on the Visa Central website gives up to the minute information on visa requirements and application procedures and is a useful resource in the planning of visa applications. Visit: www.visacentral.co.uk/stcvisas for more information.

Please note it is your responsibility to ensure that all participants hold the necessary visas to enable them to join the tour or expedition.

Remember:

Double check all passport expiry dates and, if applying for a visa prior to departing the UK, double check the visa entries once your passports have been returned to you.

Visas on arrival:

In some countries, (e.g. Thailand, Nepal) it is very easy to arrange visas on arrival in the country. This is often cheaper and easier than applying in the UK. Requirements vary between countries, but if planning to arrange a visa on arrival, make sure all group members have the number of required photos and any necessary supporting documentation.

Visiting or travelling via the United States?

If travelling to, or stopping over, in the US en-route to another country, you will need to apply for an 'ESTA' (Electronic System for Travel Authorisation) in advance.

You MUST apply on-line at:

<https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>



WARNING: If you Google 'ESTA', you will find other sites that pretend to be the official webpage but charge you an additional fee (over and above the usual) to process your application.

If you have not applied for an ESTA before, you need the left hand blue box on the above link. Also check you have a machine readable passport (most are these days).

More details on passport requirements can be found here:

https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/WebHelp/ESTA_Screen-Level_Online_Help_1.htm#WP4

Already got an ESTA?

If you or someone in your group has already got an ESTA – take a moment to check it is still valid. You can update it or make a correction on the ESTA website. There's no fee - just scroll down and put in your application number, date of birth and passport number.

If you have lost your ESTA number you can also find this online. Just scroll down to 'Retrieve your application number' and enter your name, passport number and date of birth. This is also a handy way to check if you're still covered by a previous ESTA, as the site will also tell you when your ESTA expires.

If you have lost your passport, it was stolen or is significantly damaged and had to be replaced, your new passport will have a new passport number, so you must apply for a new ESTA. Similarly, if you are renewing your passport between now and when you travel, wait until you have the new passport number before applying.

Finally, make sure you print the confirmation / ESTA number, or make a note of it, and take it with you when you travel.

Travelling within the EU – non EU passport holders

If non-EU passport holders are travelling with your group, they may not need a visa to enter EU countries. Instead, register your school with the British Council's 'list of travellers' - this is a group of EU member states that accepts school party 'lists'. It has recently been extended to include Iceland, Norway & Switzerland. See this link for more information:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-information-centre-list-of-travellers-scheme.htm>

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a vital part of your safety management plan. We insist on all participants being covered. We will collect information about your policy in the run up to your departure.

“It is best practice for the entire group to travel on the same insurance policy. In the event of an emergency or claim, this minimises time and the potential issues of dealing with multiple insurers.”



If not taking our insurance, your policy must satisfy the minimum standards laid down in our terms and conditions. It is also vital that you take copies of your insurance details with you when you travel, and leave a copy with your emergency contact at home.

Don't forget: Travel insurance covers you and the group prior to your departure, as well as whilst you are away. If an individual has to pull out for medical reasons, or the death / illness of a close relative, then any cancellation fees would usually be covered under travel insurance. Therefore, make sure your insurance is in place at the time of paying a deposit.

Top questions to ask yourself regarding insurance:

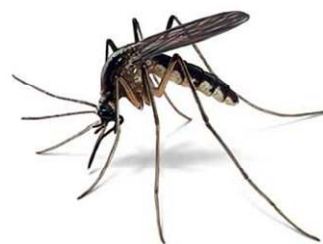
- Does my policy cover my destination and all the activities I will be undertaking?
- If trekking, does my policy have an altitude limit?
- Have all pre-existing medical conditions of those travelling and those on whom travel depends (i.e. close family) been declared to the insurer?
- Does the policy have a claim limit per group? If you have a large group, is the limit enough if everyone was involved in a coach crash and required hospital treatment and/or repatriation.
- Is there a maximum value per item? Consider whether expensive cameras / kit are over this limit and ask if they really need to be taken abroad. Could important items that 'must' be taken be covered by extending an individual's household policy?
- Does the wording of the policy limit how teachers/students can act? You should consider this when drawing up rules and responsibilities that will govern the trip. (Consider the phrase "claims will not be considered if any accompanying staff are under the influence of alcohol". Clauses such as this might mean that the school employs a no-alcohol policy for staff across the board, including staff not on duty).
- Does your policy cover personal liability? (i.e. if you or a student accidentally causes harm / injury to someone or property)

Foreign Office Advice: We adhere to Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Travel advice. To check the advice for yourself, visit: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

Pre-travel medical considerations

Pre-existing medical conditions:

The teachers and The STC must be made aware of any pre-existing medical conditions and any special requirements for their management or treatment well before your departure date. We collect this information on a booking form. In some circumstances, a doctor's approval may be sought prior to the operator agreeing to take an individual.



Remember:

- The disclosure of pre-existing medical conditions is a requirement to keep everyone fit, healthy and safe on your tour or expedition. It is NOT an exercise to try and stop people from travelling.
- The vast majority of conditions can be easily managed whilst in the field with the appropriate advanced warning and medication.
- Depending on the condition and the nature of the trip undertaken, The STC reserves the right to refuse to allow an individual to travel if they deem it not to be in the individual's best interests.
- Teachers MUST be notified of students taking prescribed medicines and all medicines should only be carried in their original packaging.

Dietary requirements, allergies, phobias:

Our in-country partners are used to dealing with even the most complicated diets and allergy considerations. However, they can only do this with proper advanced warning. Please ensure we are made aware of any allergies, dietary requirements or phobias well in advance of the trip (at least 6 weeks prior to departure).

Vaccinations & Malaria prophylaxis:

All participants and leaders should visit their GP or local travel clinic at least 6 weeks prior to travel to discuss relevant inoculations and malaria prophylaxis, if applicable. Some countries can refuse entry if you do not have the necessary evidence of vaccinations. For an overview of possible vaccinations along with malaria risk and country by country malaria maps, visit www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk - a public access website provided by the NHS. It gives travel health information for people travelling abroad from the UK. Remember that you should always discuss your particular needs with your own doctor or nurse. STC clients get a comprehensive trip-specific medical information brief from our medical advisor.

Behavioural Screening:

You and your colleagues know your students the best. As part of your risk assessment process, it is important that you give consideration to known behavioural or relationship issues between individuals in the group. Consider how these may be affected / develop under the often intense pressure of an adventure in a different culture.

Dental check up

It is a good idea to encourage all those travelling to visit their dentist one to two months prior to travel. A thorough check up, allowing time for any treatment that might be required, will prevent any unsavoury visits to dentists overseas.

Group meetings

In the months prior to your departure, it is vital that the group meets regularly – this enables everyone to air their expectations, goals for the adventure and ideas for fundraising (if being used). It also provides the opportunity for you to check everyone is on track and pulling their weight in the group.

If your trip is more of an educational tour than self-development expedition, then not all of what follows may be applicable, but some will.

What to cover in group meetings?

Encouraging students to take 'ownership' of the trip has many benefits – for them and you! It gives students more responsibility and enables teamwork and self-development to start before you depart. It also allows you to take on more of a delegation and overseeing role, rather than an organising role.

Some items you might like to delegate and/or discuss at a group meeting, (perhaps asking each team member to take on a different role or area of responsibility) include:

- Establish an expedition/trip Facebook and/or Twitter page as well as an trip specific email address (ensure you set rules as to what is published, by whom, and who has overall editorial control)
- Create a website or blog (*see marketing section for more information*)
- Vaccination requirements and a vaccination time line
- Visa requirements for your destination and the application process
- Fundraising (*everyone should be involved in this*)
- Cultural awareness and appropriate behaviour in your destination
- Establishment of expedition / tour rules (*see next section*)
- Responsible travel – what can be done to reduce the group's impact on the environment and local cultures? (*this could be a good angle to get some PR, see marketing section for more information*)
- Trip photography and video (*during build up and the trip itself*)
- Marketing and promotion (*everyone should be involved in this*)
- What people should take in their personal first aid kits
- Kit lists (*a general kit list would be provided by The STC, but see also the packing/kit section of this guide*)

Getting the group to establish a check-list of everything that needs to be done before departure helps make sure nothing is missed.

Establishing Expedition / Tour rules

Rules and boundaries play an important part in ensuring a safe trip. They help develop the expectations of individuals and the group and create clear guidelines to students as to what is, and what is not, acceptable behaviour.

Top tips:

- Involving the group in the development of the rules prior to departure is highly recommended and will help ensure that everyone sticks to them.
- Discuss the risk assessments with the group and, based on that, decide what is acceptable behaviour and what is not.
- Discuss how the rules will be enforced and what the consequences will be if they are broken.
- Consider a yellow / red card system. Some rules may warrant a 'straight red' – decide what these are and ensure that everyone is aware.
- In Red Card situations, repatriation at a student's (or parental) own expense must be an option (this must be made clear to all, including parents, in advance).
- Once a set of rules has been decided, get the group to draw up a written copy and sign them to say they will agree by them. This is also a good opportunity to notify parents (if not already done) of the potential cost implications of repatriation if warranted, should the rules be broken.

Suggested topics to cover in your discussions on rules include:

- General conduct
- Respect for local cultures, the environment and each other
- Noise in public areas / at night
- Evening curfew time
- Clothing / attire
- Conduct around water
- Emergencies & the use of mobiles
- The importance of time keeping
- "Free" time
- Sun protection
- Alcohol & Drugs
- Sex (both between members of the group and outside the group)
- Health & Hygiene
- Being open about problems
- Water (hydration) & Food
- Exploring in small groups / buddy system
- Personal safety & looking out for one another

Kit, Packing & Luggage

We will supply a detailed kit list tailored to your journey and destination. Please ensure all teachers and participants have read (and understood!) the suggested kit requirements. If you are at all unsure, contact us, or an outdoor retailer, for advice.

To buy or not to buy

In nearly all cases “group” equipment such as tents and stoves etc will be provided by our in-country partners. However, there are always personal items that need to be brought with you as they are not supplied. Some items, such as a good pair of boots, are worth buying outright. However, the majority of the rest of your personal gear can be hired at a fraction of the cost of the usual selling price, should you not wish to splash out. Students may also be able to borrow items from friends/ family.

Kit:	To Buy:	To Hire:
4 season sleeping bag:	£200 approx	£35
Gortex Jacket	£180 approx	£20
Headtorch	£25 approx	£7



Trekhire UK www.trekhireuk.com specialise in the hire of a wide range of outdoor equipment, both personal and technical in nature, from waterproof jackets and sleeping bags, to first aid kits, ice-axes and even socks!

Top tips for packing

- Ensure belongings are packed in a **sensible rucksack or hold-all**, NOT a suitcase!
- Separate items into plastic bags within your main bag (e.g. socks / underwear, T-shirts, trousers/shorts) – this will make packing and re-packing easier and keep things dry and dust free.
- Wear your boots / jacket on the plane – (and take in hand luggage any other important bits of kit that can't easily be replaced should your bags go missing).
- Consider sharing / splitting gear between two participants' bags – you will have at least some of your things should one bag go missing.
- Ensure all luggage is labelled with the name and phone number of your in-country contact (we provide this prior to departure).
- Remember: A little co-ordinated thinking goes a long way. You don't want to end up with 15 Lonely Planet guide books amongst the group – how about some Rough Guides and/or Footprint guide books as a comparison?).

Hand luggage REMINDER: DO NOT pack the following items in your hand luggage

- Water bottles (even if empty)
- Toys / replica guns (metal or plastic)
- Catapults
- Household cutlery
- Knives with blades of any length
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Razor blades
- Tools
- Hypodermic needles (unless required for medical purposes, in which case bring a letter from your doctor)
- Darts

Flights: Planning ahead

For long haul flights, planning how you might spend the 8 to 12 hours in the plane can mean the difference between arriving fresh and ready for the off, or feeling groggy and jet lagged.

Consider how many different activities you might usually do within an 8 – 12 hour period at home. When you are sitting in the same place for all that time, it takes some planning to make the time pass.

Top tips for happy flying

- Take your shoes off once you are in your seat. Your feet will swell when in the air, so removing shoes helps avoid restriction.
- Take a good book.
- Aircraft are dry environments, so ensure you remain hydrated.
- For overnight flights, consider taking ear plugs and a 'do not disturb' sign to hang around your neck.
- Consider a neck pillow.
- Take some cards and/or travel games.
- Ensure your iPod (if taking it) is fully charged.
- Get up and walk around every hour.
- Dress comfortably in loose-fitting clothes — no skinny jeans or anything that could impede blood flow or cause your ankles to swell.

Sensible ways to help avoid DVT (deep vein thrombosis).

- Hydrate well the night before the flight.
- Do not drink alcohol during the flight.
- Avoid diuretics such as coffee, soft drinks and even chocolate (all of which contain caffeine), during the flight.
- Aisle seats or exit rows are good as you can get up and walk around whenever possible.
- Follow the guidelines in the in-flight magazine for exercises to do in your seat.

Day of departure

The waiting is over. The group is well prepared. Everyone's excited. But what if...

- Your colleague forgets to set his/her alarm?
- Someone in the group forgets his/her passport?
- The school minibus runs out of petrol?
- A teacher suddenly comes down ill?
- There is an accident on the motorway?
- You go to the wrong airport terminal?

It pays to expect the unexpected. Ensure you have considered the above examples in your departure day 'risk assessment'. Can you think of any others? Anticipating some common mishaps can make all the difference. In all likelihood, everything will go absolutely fine with no incidents, but it pays to be prepared.

That's all folks. Look out for our next instalments which will run you through:

Section 2: Communications and Crisis Management

Communication Structure

Student mobiles:

Crisis Management Overview

What if?

Notification & receiving 'the call'

The crisis team and planning ahead

Incidents at home

Dealing with next of kin

What to do at the scene:

Non-emergency Communications Diagram

Crisis or Emergency Communications Diagram

Section 3: Educational Opportunities

Maximising the educational benefit

Communicating the adventure experience

Section 4: Marketing & Fundraising

Marketing your expedition/adventure

Fundraising

Fundraising: keeping it Legal & Safe

A to Z of fundraising ideas

Section 5: Whilst you are away

Money Management

Tipping Guide

Personal Health & Hygiene

Safety management abroad

Water Safety

Returning home

Section 6: Responsible Tourism

Introduction

Environmental Considerations

Ethical Awareness

Cultural Awareness

Section 7: Sources of Information & Sample Forms

Useful links

Sample forms

Got a question?

Get in touch:

The School Travel Consultancy

11-15 Dixs Field, Exeter, EX1 1QA

Tel: 01392 660056

Email: schools@thestc.co.uk

Web: www.thestc.co.uk