

Questions and Answers

Q: What is an Explorer Belt?

A: An Explorer Belt is an expedition like no other. The aim is to fully immerse yourselves in a new country and to learn about its culture and its people. While travelling, your team will have some small tasks and a project (chosen by you) to complete.

Q: How long is the Expedition?

A: An Explorer Belt (XB) expedition is ten days long. We expect to be out of the UK for around two weeks, depending on travel time to the chosen country for the expedition.

Q: What are the requirements of the XB?

A: HQ have laid out some specific requirements.

1. You must register with HQ to do an Explorer Belt (we will send you details).
2. Be aged 14-24 on the first day of the expedition (although this has been temporary extended to 25 due to Covid-19)
3. You must undertake a training program
4. You must have First Response First Aid training
5. You must undertake a 10 day expedition in an unknown Country (with some restrictions on type of location and height – known as Terrain 1)
6. During the Expedition, the team must complete a major project.
7. During the Expedition, the team must complete ten minor challenges.
8. During the Expedition, the team must undertake 50 hours of travelling, going through at least 5 towns.
9. During the Expedition, a personal diary should be kept.
10. Immediately after the expedition (the day after), an in-country debrief must be completed between each team and the leaders.
11. A short while after return to the UK, the team needs to make a presentation of their XB to a group. This group should consist of parents, other Scout members (such as Network / Explorer unit), and to Scouting leaders (such as Leader, DC, CC).
12. A report is then sent to HQ for HQ to consider. HQ will then make the final decision on the awarding of the XB award.

Only after the award has been confirmed by HQ, can the Explorer Belt, Badge and Certificate then be presented to the team member (this can be 3-6 months after the expedition).

Q: Explorer Belt?

A: Yes, the award has a leather belt, with a special XB buckle.

Q: What are the dates for the Expedition?

A: At this point, we are provisionally saying Saturday 3rd July 2021 to Sunday 18th July 2021. However, it will ultimately depend on the ability to travel (i.e. Flights etc.), once we know where we are going. If we have to postpone at the review point in March 21, we will look at Easter 2022.

Q: Will I need time away from School / College?

A: It will depend on your School Year

Year 11 – GCSE Year – You should have finished your Exams by early June, and therefore, left school.

Year 12 – First year of college – Yes, you may need to request absence from College

Year 13 – Second year of college – You should have finished taking your A-Levels in mid-June, and therefore left College

After College – At University – You should have finished your University term and exams in mid-June

After College – Working / Apprenticeships – You will need to request two weeks Annual leave.

However, it is down to you to check your situation and to make the appropriate arrangements.

Q: What is the age range for the Explorer Belt?

A: Team members are put into two age groups

Under 18's – Must be aged between 16 or 17 provisionally on 5th July 2021

18 and over's – Must be aged 18 to 25 provisionally on 5th July 2021

Q: Why 5th July 2021?

A: The date goes on Day 1 of the 10 day expedition. Assuming we travel on Saturday 3rd July, we will start the 10 day expedition on Monday 5th July 2021.

Q: Do we have to walk a specific distance?

A: No, to complete an XB you need to travel for an average of 5 hours a day. You don't have to walk it all, a big part of XBs is to learn to use local transport to get around. If you're feeling really adventurous you might even consider travelling by horse or Kayak (with appropriate permits)!

Q: How big will my team be?

A: Officially, teams are 3-7 for 18 and overs, and 4-7 for under 18's. We will probably be aiming for 18 and overs to be at a size of 4 to 5, and under 18's to be team size of 5-6.

Q: Which country will we be going to?

A: That's up to you to decide. We need to go to a country that no one has spent much time in and we want to stay in Europe. We do also need to consider safety, security and Covid-19 issues, and ease and cost to get there and back. Aside from that, it's entirely your decision.

Q: What's the cost?

A: To put it simply, as cheap as possible! We are aiming for the trip to be no more than £950, but would like to keep it nearer to £800. It could also be nearer to £600. It depends what country you end up choosing and how much it cost to get there, and the living costs in the country.

Q: How do we apply

A: Complete the XB21 Application form, and send it in by E-mail or post. Applications will be processed in order that they are received, until we have filled the expedition team.

Q: Leaders / DC References / Other Checks

A: We will need to carry out references with your Leaders and you DC (if part of a County Team, the CC). The results of these references are confidential. Only once satisfactory references and checks have been completed, will we confirm a place on the team. You will then be sent an acceptance form to complete and return with a £100 non-refundable deposit.

Q: Will we be on our own out there?

A: No, you will have an in country support team who will be in contact every day, and will come and check on you every 3 days or so. This team consists of Jools Sore (Hampshire ACC(International)) and Jo Sore (Andover District Scout Network Commissioner), who both led an XB trip in 2010, 2014 and 2018.

Q: Will we just be travelling whilst out there?

A: No, you will have 10 minor challenges to complete that will be set by your support team, i.e. visit a local church service, have a meal with a local family etc. You will also choose a major project that you can research out there. This will then create the basis for the presentation when you are back in the UK.

Q: Why do we do a presentation?

A: To complete the XB, you must feedback to parents, leaders, friends and more about what you got up to on your trip. Part of this feedback must include info on your project and your tasks. Take lots of photos to show everyone what you got up to.

Q: Do I need any specific skills before I apply?

A: You will need to be confident camping, carrying all of your own kit, and cooking on something like a Trangia. You will also need good map reading skills. Don't worry if you aren't strong in all of these areas, we will be practicing, and you will have team mates to help too.

Q: Do we always camp during the XB?

A: No, whilst you have to assume that you will be camping for the 9 nights, you may not. Part of the XB is to explore and get to know the local culture. This hopefully means you will meet and talk to local people, where you may get opportunities to stay in interesting places. This has included Scout Huts, Churches, Sports Pavilions, Castles as well as people's houses (18 and overs only).

Q: Do we stay with strangers?

A: Teams consisting of all 18 and overs, are allowed to take advantage of any opportunities that come up (including staying in houses of people they meet). Teams with under 18's have to follow safeguarding rules, which means that they will mainly need to use campsites or safe alternatives. We will be giving full training and guidance to the teams as to what the rules are. Jools and Jo will be contactable during the expedition if the team has any questions or concerns about opportunities that have been offered.

Q: What equipment will we need?

A: Each individual will need all of the normal items for hiking for 10 days. I.e. lightweight clothes, sleeping bag, mat, torch, eating items, water bottles, well fitted rucksack, and comfortable walking shoes etc. Each team will then need things such as tents, lightweight cookers (such as Trangia's) and compasses. As an expedition, we will not provide this team kit, but we will help guide the teams to borrow these items (may be from a local Explorer unit etc.).

Q: Do we need maps?

A: You will need some maps of where you are going to. However, please do not expect the map level to be the same as the amazing Ordnance Survey maps we have here in the UK. We are lucky in having 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 maps here in the UK. Quite often, European maps are only 1:400,000 or only even just basic road maps. The expedition will supply the maps.

Q: How do we prepare?

A: We will be having three single day planning meetings, where we will decide a country, an area and decide your teams, going through route and project planning, safety, safeguarding and emergency procedures etc. We will also start planning routes and arranging who can bring what kit. We will also have two practice

weekends where you will do a mini XB. This allows us to see if you can tell which way North is, travel from A to B, and gets you in the habit of completing your tasks and working as a team. The teams may change between the training weekends, and the expedition as we settle everybody down. Each team member will also need to undertake First Response First Aid training (some may have this up to date already, or we can help point you in the right direction / organise a course for XB members).

Q: Do we have to take part in the training?

A: Simply – Yes. It is a requirement of the XB, and is needed for team building. We are happy to allow some flexibility on Planning days for some members to Virtually connect if they simply can not be present (such as older members at University hundreds of miles away). However, the training weekends are not optional.

Q: Do we know any dates yet?

A: The following are the dates that we currently have lined up

- a. 5th September 20 – close of Applications (if not full already)
- b. 12th September 20 – confirmation of places, and request for deposits
- c. October 20 – Virtual planning day – Decide Country and initial teams
- d. Jan 21 – 1st Training Weekend (see Covid 19, could be delayed to March 19)
- e. Mar 21 – 2nd Planning Day
- f. April 21 – Training Weekend 2
- g. June 21 – final planning day
- h. 3rd July 21 – 18th July 21 – Expedition
- i. Sept 21 – Report Back Presentations

Q: Why do we need two weeks for a 10 day expedition

A: Some time will be taken up travelling there and back. We also need a day in country when we arrive to purchase things for the start of the expedition. We also need a day after all of the teams have returned, to undertake an in-country debrief (a requirement of the award).

Q: Do I need to be physically fit?

A: Yes, you will need to be fit enough to carry your back pack for 10 days whilst carrying out 50 hours of travel and the minor and major tasks. This includes camping for at least 9 nights (and potentially 12 nights).

Q: I have some medical conditions that impact my ability, can I still take part?

A: Please let us know about these on the application form (and also contact us to discuss). We are allowed to adjust requirements accordingly and appropriately. However, we do have to fundamentally ensure that the XB is a safe opportunity for you, and that it is a team event.

Q: Who is the reporting authority for the expedition?

A: This expedition is run through Hampshire County Scouts, and falls under the County Program team. The Hampshire County Commissioner (or their nominee) has ultimate responsibility.

Q: Can we pay in stage payments

A: Yes, we very much encourage deposits. We have the following stage payment dates

- a. £100 – Non Refundable Deposit – Sept 20
- b. £300 – 2nd Payment – Mar 21 (after 1st training weekend, and confirmation of budgets etc.)
- c. £300 – 3rd Payment – Apr 21 (after 2nd training weekend)
- d. £0-£250 – 4th Payment – 1st June 21

Q: Where do we pay monies to?

A: All funds are held and managed by Hampshire County Scouts. We prefer electronic bank transfers, and will supply you with all of the information for these.

Q: Can we fundraise?

A: Yes, you can fundraise for the expedition, and you can approach your local Groups and Districts for Grants etc. Opportunities for public fundraising may be limited due to Covid 19 restrictions. You can set up on-line donation pages as well.

Q: Where can I find out more about Explorer Belt Award in general?

A: You can always look at <https://members.scouts.org.uk/explorerbelt>

Q: What are the behaviour expectations?

A: The Explorer Belt is an amazing expedition, and due to the very nature of the expedition, we are allowing teams to travel and explore in an unknown Country, without direct leadership. As a result, we expect and must have impeccable behaviour from all team members. This includes following scout rules, and the scout laws, as well as all normal expected norms.

This is not just to the word, but to the spirit and the intention. The requirement for the XB is at a significantly higher level than is usually required for general Scouting. Whilst we want young people to have a fantastic time and to be themselves, we must have complete faith and trust that their behaviour is impeccable.

If anything during the application process, planning days, training weekends, social media, electronic communications or anything that comes to our attention, causes us to have concerns in this area, we may unfortunately have to remove the individual (or individuals) from the expedition.

As I am sure you can imagine, taking young people and letting them loose in a strange country, is a massive undertaking and therefore, the leader team are only prepared to take those that clearly demonstrate that they are ready and can be 100% fully trusted. This equally applies to those 18 and over, as to those under 18.

Q: How will we travel to / from the Country?

A: The most likely method of travel will be flying. However, depending on what country, it could be via coach, minibus or train.

Q: Are we allowed to take phones?

A: Yes and No. To complete the Explorer Belt, you will need to take photos and video of your amazing journey. We will also need to maintain communication with the leader team – therefore at least two of the team members must have phones that can send and receive text messages and make and receive phone calls with the in-country leader team. Also, the phones can be useful to make arrangements with a campsite before arriving etc. However, we do ban communication with home, and social media use. There are a couple of reasons for this, and one includes safety – if you are promoting generally what you are doing and where you are staying, it can invite the wrong attention to your team.

Q: What is the Photo Video usage policy?

A: The leader team may take photos and video for “Scouting Purposes”. This includes using on Scouting Social Media, and for items such as the annual review. In this use, individuals will not be named. If an individual should not have their image used in this way, please let us know. We have no control over any other individual and the photo’s or video that they may take.

Q: How do the leaders know where the teams are?

A: Each team will be asked to carry a small tracker device, that will inform the leader team where the team is. This will be provided by the expedition. The leader team will also expect at least two text messages per day, one in the morning saying what the plan for the day is, and one in the evening saying that you are safely at X location, and what your provisional plan is for the next day.

Q: Can we use our phone trackers?

A: Charging of phones can be intermittent, and using trackers on phones are very power hungry. Therefore, we request all phone trackers (including those within Social Media) are turned off.

Q: Will travel insurance be organised?

A: Yes, we will be aiming to take out the Unity Insurance in late March 2021. This will be when the outgoing payments significantly increase.

Like all Insurance policies, the Unity Insurance will NOT cover a cancellation due to Covid 19. Transport and accommodation expenses will be incurred from late March 2021. While we will endeavour to commit expenditure only when it is necessary to do so. We will have to pay deposits and stage payments for some items which may not be recoverable in the event of cancellation due to Covid 19 or other events out of the control of Hampshire Scouts.

Also, the insurance does not cover the full cost of the expedition. It only covers “non recoverable items” and “items not already received”. Therefore, cost of things like UK training weekends, kit and equipment, food during the expedition are not covered under the insurance. If we need to make a claim on the insurance, we will need to do work to calculate what can be claimed etc.

Q: Will I need an EHIC Card (European Health Insurance Card)?

A: As the UK will have fully left Europe by the time of the expedition, the EHIC is technically invalid. However, there has been various reports that it will be either extended, or an alternative scheme put in place. Whatever is done by the UK Government, all team members will need to take out / sign up to.

Q: Will you be using OSM (Online Scout Manager)?

A: Yes, as an expedition, we will be using the OSM system to register all of the team members, to capture details needed for the management and running of the expedition. This includes health data, next of kin data, management of planning days and training weekends etc. It will also be used for sending E-mails out about the expedition and all training events. Full access to this data will be limited to the XB21 leader team, home contact and immediate management.

Q: Will there be any other Electronic systems used?

A: Yes, we will be storing all of our documents in a Goggle Docs storage area. Access to this area will be limited to the XB21 leader team, home contact and immediate management.

Q: Will data be stored within a GDPR Policy?

A: Yes, the expedition falls under the Hampshire County Scouts GDPR policy (available upon request), and all data will be stored and processed under this policy. After the expedition, the data will be cleansed as much as possible, but some data will need to be retained for up to 9 years (for potential insurance claims).

Q: Will we need to have Passports?

A: Yes, each individual will need to have a valid individual passport. We are anticipating that there will be a requirement to have 6 months expiry from our return date, which would currently indicate an expiry date of at

least 18th Jan 2022. However, this may change with us fully leaving the Europe so will depend on any changes in rules. Likewise, we may need to apply for a visa, only time will tell.

Q: Will you need a copy of my passport?

A: Yes, the expedition leader team will need to hold an electronic copy of the passport being used. This is normally collected before we book flights (due March/April 2021). If a passport is in the process of being renewed at this point, we can make alternative arrangements. This passport copy will be stored on Goggle Docs.

Covid 19 Risks and Issues

This is a whole significant area. We are launching the expedition, whilst we are still dealing with the Covid 19 outbreak. This is obviously in the anticipation that things will continue to improve. However, we have to have various plans in place.

Return to Scouting levels of Red – Amber – Yellow – Green

The Scout Association (with the National Youth Association), have developed 4 levels of return to scouting. England has recently moved to Amber – Virtual Scouting or meeting outside in groups of a maximum of 15.

Green is Scouting has returned to normal (and allows camping, residentials and Internationals with HQ permission).

Looking at the various activities that we need to complete for the Explorer Belt, we essentially need to be at the following levels

Recruitment – Can be completed as Virtual, so minimum of Red

Planning Day 1 – Can be completed as Virtual, so minimum of Red (it would be good to meet, but would need Green to do so due to numbers, and almost certainly will not be in place in time).

Training Weekend 1, 2 and Expedition - need to be at Green.

Training Day 2 and 3 – For the whole team, would need Green. However, we could meet with under 18's on Saturdays and over 18's on Sunday, which could be done at Amber or Yellow.

This means that the expedition can be continued to run whilst we are at Red or higher, until the first training weekend, scheduled to be in Jan 2021. We can delay Training Weekend 1 to March 2021, if we need more time to get to Green.

Go / No Go Decision – March 2021

We have agreed with the Hampshire County Scouts Management, that we will have a major review in March 2021. This review will include a full budget for financial approval, and a Covid-19 impact assessment and risks for both the UK, and any Countries being visited.

The outcome of this review could be

- a. We need to be at Green (or have a date to be going to Green). Acknowledging that there is still some risk, but generally considered acceptable, and we can proceed as planned for July 2021. After this point, we will start committing expenditure on Insurance, Flights / Transport, Accommodation etc.
- b. Not at Green or the risks to continuing are too significant, and therefore we cancel for July 2021. There are then two options
 - a. Cancel Completely – We would request that the County Refunds the deposit (less cost incurred to date – likely to be £2 - £25 per person).
 - b. Rework and Postpone the expedition to Easter 2022 (acknowledging that some members may have to withdraw due to turning too old, or other issues with a change of date). If team

members need to withdraw, then we would request that the County Refunds the deposit (less cost incurred to date – likely to be £2 - £25 per person).

Assuming we proceed for July 2021

There will still be some risk after this check point. At any point, the expedition may need to be cancelled due to a Covid 19 outbreak, or a change in Government or Scouting advice. If this occurs after we have started committing funds to booking items, we may not be able to retrieve these monies.

Whilst we will have taken out Insurance by then, as you can imagine, all travel insurance now excludes any cancellations which are linked in any way to Covid 19. Therefore, the expedition may incur un-recoverable and un-insurable costs through no fault of Hampshire County Scouts, and these will be passed to participants.

Withdrawal Policy

If a team member withdraws, or is withdrawn by the Hampshire County Scouts, then the following applies

- a. No refund will be made until after the expedition, and the accounts are completed.
- b. The non-refundable deposit is not included in any refund
- c. All costs incurred so far, and future costs that cannot be cancelled or changed, will not be included in a refund.
- d. The cost of withdrawing will include costs associated with another person taking their place, this includes possibly having to reduce the price to fill the place, and the cost of changing names over.
- e. If the withdrawal is covered by the insurance (such as death in family), then this will go towards the calculation of the refund. Please Note : Insurance only covers certain items, it does not cover the full price.

End of Expedition Refunds

Hampshire Scouts policy is to require a suitable contingency be built into every Expedition budget in order to cater for unforeseen expenses that may arise before or during the event. Where the Expedition final accounts show a surplus, the County will normally return surplus funds to participants, subject to a retention of to £50 per participant (which may be applied either towards its event contingency fund or for County Expedition / event grants).