



**The Specialist**  
Travel Consultancy



## Giving your travel direction

Schools and Colleges



# Making your trip easy

The STC provides an independent travel consultancy service based on an extensive knowledge of expedition planning and the adventure travel industry. Our role is to provide our clients with expert, impartial advice on all aspects of the planning, booking and execution of cultural tours, adventurous expeditions, and educational travel experiences.

This brochure will illustrate the potential and variety of adventurous trips on offer to schools these days. It is by no means a definitive list of destinations or possibilities. Contact the STC if you would like to discuss the many opportunities available.





# Why use our service?

We are here to help. With so many expedition companies and travel providers in the market place today, it can be difficult to know where to turn and who to trust. From years working within the adventure travel industry and our own extensive travel experience, we have built up a distinguished reputation for our knowledge of tour operators' strengths, weaknesses and areas of specialism.

We are your guide and sounding board, enabling you to find the operator and itinerary that are the best suited for your particular requirements.

## Support

Whether you want to arrange a cultural tour of classical Egypt, a short adventure break in France, or a full blown ascent of a Himalayan peak, we provide a fully supportive service from beginning to end. We will be on hand every step of the way to ensure that the planning and execution of your trip goes as smoothly as possible, and that the experience is one you will want to repeat.

## Flexibility

Flexibility is the key to travel planning with the STC. Through our network of tour operators, we are able to design and implement a complete package that is tailored to your requirements. We do not ask you to conform to a pre-arranged itinerary. One group's requirements for an expedition to Peru, for example, will undoubtedly be different to another's, and therefore necessitate a different tour operator's approach. We regularly help organise a wide variety of trip styles, all of which have different goals and emphases.

## Added Value

The cost of planning and arranging travel itineraries through the STC is the same as if you went directly to the companies we deal with, neither do we charge separately for our services. Our fees are paid for by the companies we use to arrange your travel plans. The STC is an independent company and not tied to any particular operator. This enables us to find the most cost effective and appropriate provider for your requirements.

## Responsible Tourism

It is our firm belief that tourism can and should be both sustainable and beneficial to all concerned. We are committed to working only with those companies that have environmental and ethical policies in place, and we are proud to be able to work side by side with these companies. Many of our suppliers have reached 3 Star Responsible Tourism status with AITO (The Association of Independent Tour Operators). This is the highest achievable grade awarded by AITO, and represents a dedicated approach to responsible travel. In addition, a number of our operators have in previous years won the coveted "Best Tour Operator Award" in the Responsible Tourism Awards.

## Safety

Safety is our top priority. The expedition providers we use are specialists in their own particular fields and they have been arranging travel to the most remote corners of our planet for many years. Some have global coverage in a niche market, others have chosen to specialise in one country or region. Their systems, safety measures and contingency plans have developed into some of the most rigorous in the industry.

Many of our operators work with established and highly respected overseas agents to provide the necessary logistics and overseas support. This has many benefits, most notably that the resources of an expert, professional and experienced team are on hand to react quickly in the unlikely event of an incident.

## Risk Management

There are many things that go to make up effective risk management, but the importance of local knowledge cannot be underestimated, both in the planning stages and "in the field".

In conjunction with their overseas ground agents our operators can provide a detailed risk assessment of your itinerary, or help you complete your own risk assessment by providing answers and advice where needed. We appreciate each LEA or board of governors' requirements for risk assessment vary, and we are flexible in accommodating these differences.

## Financial Protection

The STC is an approved agent for ATOL protected tour operators and travel providers. For your peace of mind and total financial security, we will only ever recommend you to arrange travel that includes flights from the UK as part of an ATOL protected package.

Payment for the travel services we arrange is made directly to the ATOL licence holder and you are therefore fully covered by their ATOL bond. The STC does not handle any client money. This arrangement entirely satisfies the strict guidelines of the UK travel industry regarding consumer protection. ATOL protection extends primarily to customers who book and pay in the United Kingdom.

## Leaders

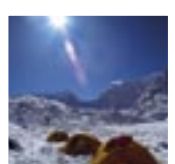
For adventurous and remote itineraries, an experienced leader and guide is vital in ensuring your trip runs smoothly and safely. We can arrange experienced local or international guides to accompany your group, whatever the destination or terrain being visited.

For more adventurous activities, such as mountaineering or diving, the guides naturally hold the appropriate qualifications. For less adventurous trips closer to home, it may not be deemed necessary to have a leader in addition to the staff members already travelling. However, if you would like the services of a leader, then we would be able to provide one.



# Mountain

On foot, bike, horse or raft, mountain environments provide not only physical challenge, but also a means to experience the scenery, people and culture of a country close up.



## The Himalaya

Duration: 15 – 35 days

India, Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan: each offers a unique and culturally challenging arena from which to experience the Himalaya. Whether after a trek as short as six days, or a challenging high altitude expedition, you will be guaranteed an unforgettable experience.

The highlights will undoubtedly be the welcome from local people and the immense backdrop of the world's biggest mountains.

Opportunities abound for cultural, wildlife and relaxation extensions elsewhere on the Indian subcontinent.

## South America

Duration: 15 – 35 days

South America offers a diversity in mountain experiences that is hard to beat, from lush cloud forest on the Inca Trail in Peru, to the harsh realities of exploring the Patagonian ice cap in Chile.

Add to this snow capped volcanoes, ancient civilisations, glimmering salt lakes, colourful markets and extraordinary wildlife, and you have a destination that offers everything that goes to make up a varied and challenging expedition.

## Europe

Duration: 8 – 21 days

The cultural melting pot that is modern day Europe means that pupils can experience breathtaking scenery and diverse cultures all in a short haul destination.

Classic long distance footpaths such as the Tour of Mount Blanc or the GR20 in Corsica, certainly offer demanding trekking, but there are many other unfrequented, hidden corners of Europe that are more than worthy of exploration. The Tatras in Poland and Slovakia, for instance, the Picos de Europa in northern Spain and the Julian Alps in Slovenia are all good examples.

Educational visits to mountain environs are not necessarily about scaling high peaks or walking for days on end. The STC can develop a programme to suit your particular needs and requirements, be it an easy introductory day walk as part of a wider itinerary or the ascent of a 6000m peak.

We have the knowledge, contacts and experience to enable your pupils to get the most out of any active trip abroad, whatever the length or difficulty required, or region of the world to be visited.



# Desert

Of all the habitats on offer, deserts often create the strongest preconceptions. More often than not, however, visitors are astounded by the sheer beauty and diversity that is to be found in this challenging environment.

## Morocco

Duration: 8 – 21 days

Morocco is a classic travel destination in all senses of the word and only a three hour flight from the UK. East of the mighty Atlas Mountains lie the western fringes of the Sahara, and while Morocco has its share of spectacular dunes, as you would expect, it offers so much more as well. It is a land of contrasts with deep gorges, bustling markets, spectacular Kasbahs and lush oases. Venture by foot into the wild desert landscape of the Jebel Saho or by camel into the Draa Valley. At night, you will have Tuareg for company under a blanket of stars.

## Namibia

Duration: 15 – 30 days

The name itself means “place of great arid plains”, but Namibia offers much more than you might imagine. Its stark landscape is tempered by a surprising beauty, with towering ochre sand dunes at Sossusvlei, barren salt pans in the Kalahari, and extraordinary wildlife in Etosha National Park.

The Waterberg Plateau and also Fish River Canyon in the south of the country provide excellent trekking opportunities, while relaxation in the form of sand surfing or quad biking abound. It is also possible to link Namibia with time exploring the Okavango Delta in Botswana or South Africa.

## India

Duration: 15 – 30 days

Culturally, India is as challenging as they come, but the experience is certainly one to remember. The Thar Desert stretches across India’s north west region of Rajasthan and offers an altogether different desert experience from those in Africa. In contrast to the usual image of an area devoid of life, the Thar Desert is interspersed with great cities, oases, rock shelves and impressive forts such as those at Jaipur and Jodhpur. November sees the desert host one of the greatest spectacles in all of India, the Pushkar Camel Festival. Here pilgrims, travellers, camel traders and holy men attend the Festival and the accompanying religious “Mela”.

Travelling in a desert environment, whether for the entirety of an itinerary or only for a few days, is an exceptional experience. The habitat covers a multitude of terrains, ecosystems and climates which never fail to surprise or delight.

It is a harsh habitat, so planning, preparation and an expert tour operator are essential for the safe and responsible running of any trip.



# Water

Remote river systems, spectacular coastal scenery or thrilling white water? Expeditions by canoe, sea kayak or raft offer unique opportunities to experience areas of the world otherwise inaccessible to humans.



## Canada

Duration: 15- 28 days

Discover the wilds of the Yukon River by canoe - an extraordinary expedition that heads deep into the forests, lakes and mountains of one of Canada's most beautiful and remote regions. Covering some 400km over 8 days the team will camp on remote beaches and pass historical gold rush sites. Black bears are commonly spotted along the route, as are moose, beavers and eagles too. It is often possible to combine this river trip with time trekking in the Rockies further south.

## Fiji

Duration: 15 – 21 days

The coast lines of Australasia and in particular the Pacific Islands are ideally suited to exploration by sea kayak. The Yasawa Islands in Fiji are certainly an alternative destination for a school expedition, but the destination and mode of transport have everything from physical challenge and remote communities to breathtaking scenery. We can tailor-make the paddling sections according to need, and arrange a community project if required.

## Chile

Duration: 15 – 30 days

Chile's spectacular southern fjords offer the perfect setting for a sea kayaking expedition. Well away from the usual tourist haunts, the water is teeming with dolphins, seals, sea otters and bird life, whilst the dramatic mountain backdrops add a real sense of adventure and exploration.

The diversity in Chile's landscape means it is possible to include other elements as well, such as trekking in Patagonia or time exploring the Atacama Desert.

There is a distinctly different feel to expeditions based around water: they offer a freedom that is rarely found with other forms of travel. Both fresh and salt water expeditions are possible and it is often feasible to link water with other habitats and cultural explorations, making for a more varied trip.





# Forest

Tropical forests are a challenging, but highly rewarding habitat in which to travel. The potential for unique and extraordinary experiences makes them an ideal environment for more adventurous school trips.

## Borneo

Duration: 14 – 28 days

Malaysian Borneo offers one of the most diverse destinations for a school expedition.

At 4101m Mount Kinabalu in the north east of the country is a challenging but achievable summit. This short trek can be followed by an extended period in the rainforest discovering the largest caves on earth, unique "head-hunter" tribes, hot springs and stunning wildlife. The islands off the north east corner of Borneo offer excellent opportunities for a rest and relaxation phase.

## The Amazon

Duration: 16 – 28 days

The Amazon, nearly always associated with just Brazil, also extends its tentacles into the eastern fringes of Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. It is here, where the waterways are narrow and overhung by thick vegetation, that the best of this mighty rainforest can be found. Ample opportunities exist for river journeys, wildlife watching and conservation projects too. Other treasures abound in these Andean countries as well, and often only a short distance away: world class trekking, ancient civilizations, vibrant cultures, deserts and Indian markets to name but a few.



## Papua New Guinea

Duration: 17 – 32 days

Papua New Guinea is one of the most challenging of destinations for a school expedition.

However, those that make the effort to come here will be richly rewarded by encounters with colourful tribes, views of smouldering volcanoes, beautiful sunsets, exotic wildlife and a fascinating Second World War history. The famous Kokoda Track, which traverses dense jungle and crosses the Owen Stanley range, is renowned as one of the world's most challenging of all jungle treks.

Less than 6% of the world's land is covered in tropical forest and yet more than half of the world's biodiversity can be found within its margins. The potential for a varied expedition itinerary is second to none, with opportunities for trekking, river journeys, wildlife watching and unique cultural encounters. Community and conservation projects have added interest and beach or diving breaks are often possibilities to round off a memorable trip.





# Polar

The sheer size, beauty and majesty of the Polar regions is often hard to appreciate fully. However you travel, whether by ski, dog-sled, snow-mobile, or expedition vessel, it is undoubtedly a privilege and a humbling experience.



## Svalbard

Duration: 12 – 30 days

The Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard lies high above the Arctic Circle and is an ideal location to view Polar Bears in the wild – one of the natural world's greatest spectacles.

The islands are also home to whales, seals and arctic foxes as well as vast numbers of seabirds that cling perilously to the vertical cliffs. Expedition vessels, zodiacs and sea kayak are ideal ways to explore this spectacular coastal region, while the mountainous and glacial interior can be accessed by the hardy on a pulk-hauling expedition.

## Greenland

Duration: 15 – 35 days

Greenland offers the potential for true exploration in a spectacular destination for an adventurous school trip. Opportunities for all grades of trekking and mountaineering are possible with alpine ascents of unclimbed peaks, 24 hour daylight, diverse flora and fauna and unique project possibilities amongst the Inuit. With only a short distance to fly from Europe and no altitude issues, Greenland is an ideal destination for a school looking to venture into remote Polar regions for the first time.

## Antarctica

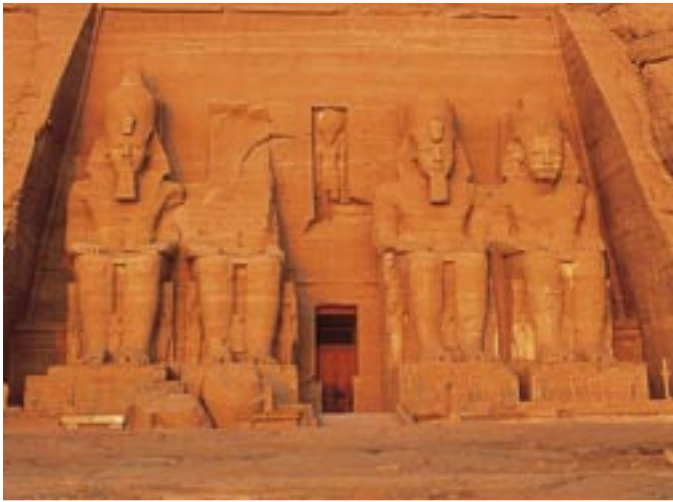
Duration: 15 – 27 days

From Shackleton's explorations to the present day, Antarctica captures the imagination like nowhere else on earth. An educational visit here has much to offer in terms of history, adventure, geography, climate change issues, and responsible travel. The majority of visits are on expedition cruise vessels operating out of Ushuaia in southern Argentina. After crossing the infamous Drake Passage the expedition will encounter huge vistas, incredible wildlife, and without doubt a sense of wonder. It is also possible to visit the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. For the intrepid and well prepared, there is the chance to follow in Shackleton's footsteps and cross this spectacular island.

Polar travel instantly evokes images of harsh windswept ice fields and an isolated team pulling pulk sledges. Although we can certainly arrange this type of expedition if required, there are many less demanding options available in northern Scandinavia and Antarctica. The draw of the Polar environment lies not only in its geographical grandeur and physical challenge, but also in its unique place in historical exploration.

# II. Culture & History

Ancient temples, colourful markets, festivals, dancing and music: the cultures of the world are a feast for the senses, and an integral part of any trip abroad.



## Egypt

Duration: 7 – 21 days

It can be difficult to grasp the depth and richness of Egypt's history; after all, it spans some five millennia from the Pharaohs to the Assyrians, Nabataeans to the Greeks, Romans, Turks, French and finally the British, before returning to independence. The classic sites of the Pyramids of Giza, the Temple of Karnak, and Abu Simbel are quite rightly magnets in their own right, but Egypt offers so much more, with trekking in the "Painted Desert" of the Sinai peninsular and world class diving in the Red Sea. As an educational adventure destination, Egypt is hard to beat.

## China

Duration: 14 – 30 days

Modern day China is an eclectic mix of new and old. The big cities of Beijing and Shanghai are as modern as any in the world, but step away from the hustle of city life and cultures have changed little over the centuries. Provinces such as Yunnan and Tibet are far removed from the eastern cities and can be visited as destinations in their own right, or incorporated into a wider itinerary. The famous Terracotta Warriors at Xian and less frequented areas of the Great Wall are sure to be highlights of any trip.

## Turkey

Duration: 8 – 21 days

Ottoman, Greek, Roman and Seljuk civilizations have all left their mark on this beautiful and intriguing country. Whether you are interested in the Roman sites in the west of the country or a more general overview of its ancient and absorbing culture, Turkey has endless opportunities for learning, adventure and relaxation.

Whilst the country is undoubtedly huge, transport links are good and it is possible to combine many different aspects and areas into an itinerary. There is excellent walking and trekking, as well as sea kayaking, rafting and canyoning, not to mention great beaches and the traditional Turkish gulets to unwind on before heading home.

The World's cultural and historical marvels need no introduction. However, how they are presented to pupils will largely determine the level of enthusiasm and curiosity with which they are received. We are able to provide a huge range and diversity of cultural tours, tailored to individual requirements, that will show the world's civilizations and traditions at their very best.

# Projects

Including a project phase in any trip abroad gives a sense of purpose and reward to those taking part. Typically the options fall into either community or conservation projects but within these bounds lie many different possibilities.



## Vietnam

Duration: 15 – 29 days

With its stunning scenery, Vietnam is a real joy to explore. The people, however, make it even more special and in that respect it is an ideal location for a community project.

After trekking into the highlands west of Hanoi, spend the best part of a week constructing a new school building in a small hill tribe village under the watchful eye of local tradesmen. After completion and the “opening ceremony” a short trek returns the group to Hanoi before perhaps embarking on the famous “Reunification Express” to see the treasures of southern Vietnam.

## Ecuador

Duration: 14 – 30 days

Although small when compared to many of its neighbours in South America, Ecuador offers an extraordinary diversity in habitats. Conservation work in the Amazon basin is a popular and rewarding choice for many groups, with time involved in reforestation programmes, collecting, cultivating and replanting native seeds, or perhaps building walkways through the forest. With snow capped volcanoes, traditional Indian markets and the amazing wildlife spectacle that is the Galapagos Islands, the remainder of your time in the country is certain to be inspiring.

## Tanzania

Duration: 15 – 30 days

Aside from the luxurious safaris and idyllic beach resorts, one of the main draws for tourists in Tanzania is the challenge of climbing Kilimanjaro. At 5895m it is the highest free standing mountain in the world, and a very popular summit. This causes problems, however, most notably with erosion and litter.

Allowing for essential acclimatisation on neighbouring mountains, embark on a “clean up” trek on one of Kilimanjaro’s many routes. After the tough final ascent to the top to see the sunrise and the world’s longest view, return to the plains for some wildlife viewing or relaxation by the coast.

Projects can take on many guises, from building or restoration work, to teaching, wildlife conservation projects, language schools, clean-up treks, scientific data collection, or ecosystem management. Some schools have established arrangements with long term projects or partners abroad and we are flexible enough to be able to incorporate these into your travel plans. For those looking for new projects, we are able to suggest some interesting and distinctly different ideas that are both worthwhile and sustainable.



# Sustainable travel

In addition to working with and recommending responsible tour operators, the STC is committed to further reducing the environmental impact of the expeditions and tours we arrange. We encourage all our clients to compensate for the impact of their travel by offsetting their carbon emissions.

'Carbon Offset' involves making a donation to a charity or company which supports projects aiming to reduce the atmospheric levels of CO<sub>2</sub> – recognised as having a major effect on climate change.

Air Travel is the single most significant contributor of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in any overseas trip. As a whole, it presently accounts for some 3% of greenhouse gas emissions. This may not sound much, but on a typical return flight to India from the UK, each passenger is responsible for the release of nearly 1.9 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere.

The STC supports international wildlife conservation charity, Friends of Conservation, (FOC). Amongst other activities, FOC promotes rainforest regeneration and fuel efficiency programmes, helping to mitigate the environmental 'cost' of air travel. For information on carbon offsetting, please visit the FOC website: [www.foc-uk.com](http://www.foc-uk.com).

As an encouragement to our clients to offset their emissions, the STC will contribute 50% of the offset donation, provided that the school or pupils wish to donate the other 50%.

Please visit our website for more information: [www.thestc.co.uk](http://www.thestc.co.uk).



## So where will you go?

The destinations and ideas in this brochure are really only a taster of what is possible in educational travel. Wherever you are interested in visiting, we would be delighted to talk with you in more detail about the style of trip you have planned and how we can help make it happen.

If you haven't yet decided on a country, region or trip style, then we can help make the decision a little easier by offering advice, suggestions and the benefit of our knowledge. We are here to help you make an informed decision and to get the most out of any trip abroad.

**Contact us: 0845 838 7667**

**Or visit: [www.thestc.co.uk](http://www.thestc.co.uk)**



# Pre-trip training

## Activity Specific Training

Pre-trip training is an essential part of the preparation for more adventurous itineraries and expeditions. Time spent training in the UK beforehand will encourage teamwork, foster strong relationships, promote skills and safe practice, build confidence and prepare the pupils for the tasks they will face abroad.

However, training is only beneficial if it is relevant to the challenges pupils will encounter abroad.

The STC has established close ties with a range of leading Adventure Activity Licensing Authority (AALA) registered providers within the UK. These providers are all experts in their field and are able to offer appropriate training whatever the expedition or trip you have planned.

If your school is unable to provide the specific training required for the trip, we will put you in touch with an approved AALA centre that will design a skills and preparation course to suit the expedition we are organising.



## Personal Safety Training

For more general travel safety training, we have teamed up with the experts at Objective Travel Safety Ltd. The company specialises in training journalists and industry professionals operating in war zones and other hazardous areas, but also caters for pupils and students travelling on GAP years and expeditions.

In contrast to the training provided by AALA registered companies, the Objective team concentrates on the personal safety and awareness of individuals. Courses can be tailored from a two hour introduction to general travel awareness, up to a full day course covering preparation, personal safety, basic first aid and crisis management. Please contact us if you would like to receive more details on the courses available at Objective.







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