

North South Solo expedition in association with Sporting Equals

My life in a freezer

Introduction from polar explorer - Mark Wood

This year I am attempting a World First Solo Expedition to the North and South Geographic poles. The journey will be unsupported for a period of five months covering over two thousand kilometres of Antarctic ice and Arctic sea ice. Classed by the patron Sir Ranulph Fiennes as, "the toughest journey on the planet" this expedition is not only a test of both physical and mental endurance but it also aims to highlight an issue affecting us all - the impact of climate change.

Originally from Coventry, I have, over the past twenty five years worked in both the military and rescue services. Since 2002, I have led over twenty-five major polar and mountain expeditions within Alaska, High Arctic Canada and Norway - as well as guiding teams in the Himalayas.

Education through Exploration

With each expedition I have undertaken, I have connected with schools via satellite phone and social networking sites. My aim has been to communicate my experiences in real time so students can not only try to understand their own planet, but also experience the journey for themselves through my every breath, step and emotion along the way - to understand how modern day explorers now operate.

For the North south Solo expedition I want to extend this link with students so they can be a part of this incredible moment in history.

Educational Programme

My aim for the students involved is to highlight the importance of a healthy lifestyle, increase their awareness of the environment and improve their skills working within a team.

Working with teachers we have developed a programme that fits in with the teaching curriculum and is only open to a maximum of forty schools.

We have developed the programme for students in years 5-8 covering areas of teaching such as Geography, Citizenship and Sport. Pupils will have the opportunity to develop their questioning, teamwork and communication skills as well as raising awareness of the amazing planet on which they live.

This is free to all schools and all we ask is that you read through the brochure and sign your school up to the expedition as soon as possible, with the final date being the 1st June 2011. My solo walk to the top and bottom of the world will be an unbelievable experience. I hope your school can be a part of this.



The programme has three stages

Stage One –Teachers' open evening prior to the expedition – **November 2011**

Stage Two –school's joint open day - after the expedition – **May 2012**

Stage Three - school visit by Mark - **the date to be arranged with each school**

Stage one –Teachers' open evening

Once your school has signed up for the programme there will be an open evening held at in Coventry just before Mark leaves for the South Pole in November 2011. Further details will follow...

Overview

This is an opportunity, prior to the expedition, for the teachers of each of the schools involved to understand how the educational programme will work. To begin the event Mark will give a talk involving films and photographs about the journey itself, along with the logistics involved, so students can not only follow Marks progression but also contact him whilst he is on ice.

The open evening is designed so the teachers involved can ask as many questions as possible so they can get the best out of this unique opportunity. Mark's sledges and equipment will also be on display throughout the event and there will also be an opportunity to have a one to one with him.

School links that will be explored in the open evening are as follows;

Health and fitness

Part of the programme is to show how Mark needs to prepare for the world first event along with his day to day fitness on ice. The students will play a major part in monitoring this and creating their own data through a fitness and nutrition programme.

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Young explorers

As a recommendation, ten/twelve students would be selected to be part of the young explorer's team to work with Mark whilst he is ON ICE! The aims of the group will be to take the lead in school in highlighting the importance of exercise and healthy eating through practical and theoretical sessions. They will develop leadership skills in physical activity sessions under the guidance of the teacher for their whole class/ year group.

Film podcasts to link with the young explorers

Mark will use film podcasts as a way of communicating visually with the young explorers to guide them through the programme.

Follow the journey

Ipadio (voicemail satellite phone service that appears on the expedition blog) will also record Marks longitude and latitude co-ordinates so the students can follow the journey on a map.

Daily blogs

These will be written by Mark on ice giving a real insight to life in the extremes of the polar world. References to climate change, indigenous animals to the areas and other topical subjects like how modern day polar explorers operate in the extremes of the planet, will hopefully create interest in the classroom and become a part of the learning process.

A photograph to accompany a blog or Ipadio update will be taken each day to show the area he has been operating in. On occasions this will be a great opportunity to show the schools flag.

Answering Questions via the blogs

Students can post questions to the blog which will then be answered by Mark on the journey. He will highlight the best questions with his own expedition blog and Ipadio update.

Skype link

There will be an opportunity to arrange educational Skype links with Mark on route to both Antarctica and the Arctic as well as a live chat at base camp after the reaching the North pole.

Films

Pre - recorded educational films taken during Marks training on ice will be posted on the expedition site throughout the journey to highlight what it's like to live within a natural freezer!

Finally on Stage one;

The polar extremes Mark will be operating in does not allow for every day normal social networking. However his motivation for the expedition is to link with the schools and highlight issues affecting the planet and to also allow them to understand the need to lead a healthy life-style, so the above areas are designed to allow students a greater access into the world of polar exploring.

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Stage two – School's open day

On Marks return from the expedition he will be holding an open day for the young explorers and teachers from each of the schools involved.

The timings for the day will be;

Interactive presentation; 10am to 12noon

Lunch; 12 noon to 12.30pm

Interactive presentation and group challenge; 12.30 to 14.30 hours

Morning presentation outlined;

Using photographs and film Mark will talk about the North South Solo expedition and his experiences along the way. This will include how he managed the school programme from "the freezer end" and how he overcame the day to day existence in these harsh environments to reach his goal.

The young explorers will be part of this day and the data collected by them whilst Mark was on ice will be outlined in a Healthy Life Style Section of the morning.

Joint stage activity

With a view to the afternoon's programme Mark will invite a young explorer from each school on to the stage to be involved in a fun joint activity – this will involve using the expedition equipment in a challenging team building exercise.

Q and A session and look forward to the afternoon's activity

This will be a chance to ask as many questions as possible covering the journey, climate change, how the whole experience affected him both physically and mentally, or even about the next planned expedition?

During the afternoon session the students will be planning their own expeditions on ice. Mark will outline this activity to all the students to get the groups thinking, over their break, about how they will approach this.

Break

Tea, coffee, soft drinks and biscuits will be served so it is recommended that students bring a packed lunch with them.

The expedition equipment, sledges and tent will be on display for students to look around. There will also be an opportunity to taste the expedition food if they are brave enough!

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Afternoon presentation outline;

Phase one

It is now the students chance to plan an expedition. Mark will go through the areas they will need to cover and what goes into the planning stages to make an expedition successful.

Phase two

As the students plan their expedition Mark will mentor each group, giving advice when he feels it is necessary. At the end of the session each school will give a brief presentation to the other schools about their own planned expedition. The students' expedition will be part of the stage three programme.

Students work within their own groups of 10/12 and will cover the areas below.

They will need to decide on a project manager, spokesperson and team co-ordinator. Each team will need to cover the following and will also have to liaise with each other testing their communication and organisation skills.

Each team will also need to include the following;

Promotions officer will cover press - brand expedition logo

Expedition kit and technical equipment officer

Logistics officer will cover timings, flights and route plan

Fitness and dietary advisor will look into the preparation of the team members and food

Education officer will plan how schools could be involved in the expedition as well as plan feedback to the other groups.

Environmental officer will look at the affect the team and their expedition is having on the planet along with how climate change is affecting the areas they would be operating in.

Science officer will explore possible scientific studies whilst on expedition.

Team morale will also need to be considered, with a team celebration needed after the expedition, as well as plans for how they would keep their spirits up during the journey itself.

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Stage Three

School visit by Mark

venue - your school

dates - to be arranged

timings - this would be arranged to suit your own school timetable. A guideline would be two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon.

Morning activity

A talk would be given by Mark to an assembly or a class. This is flexible and can suit your own working schedule. The 10/12 'young explorers' who attended the stage two sessions would work with Mark as part of this presentation.

Using film and photographs Mark would outline the North South Solo expedition and explain the reasons why he set up the schools programme to coincide with his journey. This talk will last for approximately 40 minutes. The expedition sledges and equipment will also be on display.

A question and answer session following this would then lead up to the young explorers who will give a 15 to 20 minute presentation on their own planned expedition. This can be as imaginative and elaborate as they like, using maps, film and photographs if they want to. At this point Mark will be a part of the audience but will be happy to support if needed.

Commemorative framed photograph of the North South Solo expedition

To finish the morning session off there will be a final Q and A session for the young explorers and Mark.

A presentation would then be given from Mark to the teachers and students of the school. Only the forty schools involved will receive commemorative framed and signed photographs of the North South Solo expedition. This will be a picture of Mark holding the schools programmes flag at both the North and South poles. The frame would also have their own school's logo within it and a personal note of thanks.

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Afternoon activity

This will be based around outdoor activities and Mark will be joined on the day by friends of his from the sporting world. The emphasis will be on well being and physical preparation for an expedition.

To be held on a playing field the programme will begin with a brief talk by Mark and a chosen mentor for the day, on the importance of healthy eating and keeping fit. The mentors will range from fitness instructors to local sports' stars and sporting organisations such as the charity [Sporting Equals](http://www.sportingequals.org) - www.sportingequals.org

Now it's the students turn

A one hour activity would then be given by the sporting mentor on the day, along with Mark, based around exploring. A circuit has been designed to incorporate Mark's pre-expedition training with navigation – map reading and team work.

We would be testing strength, stamina, team work and thinking under pressure. During our sessions we stop the groups and give them thinking tasks to complete that are not related to their activity. In these situations they would need to work closely to complete the tasks correctly. This will also allow opportunity to evaluate pupil's progress in physical fitness from the start to the end of the journey.

All activities are monitored by Mark and the team for safety and enjoyment.

and finally...

The three stages of the North South Solo schools programme have been designed to involve local students in something quite extraordinary. As you have seen we have covered a wide range of learning disciplines within the guidelines of the teaching curriculum - we are not looking for students to go to the ends of the earth to be inspired but hopefully have an appreciation of who they are and what they can achieve with their own lives.

The North South Solo expedition schools project is FREE. Please make your school apart of it.



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Expedition Patron - Sir Ranulph Fiennes

"The North South Solo expedition is the toughest journey on the planet covering two of the most hostile and unforgiving regions on earth.

It is not only a test of both physical and mental endurance but most importantly the expedition will link schools around the globe - giving people a real insight into our ever changing world.

I wish Mark every success in his endeavour and encourage others to follow his journey"

Sir Ranulph Fiennes O.B.E



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Biography of Mark Wood – *explorer / educator / speaker*

Expeditions to date

- 2011** North South Solo training expedition - High Arctic Norway
- 2010** Island Peak expedition - 6184m - Himalayas
- 2010** Global Schools Project to the Himalayas - Warwick University
- 2010** Himalayan expedition for the Global Schools project
- 2010** A solo 30 day training expedition in Svalbard
- 2009** Led 3 expeditions involving over 60 people to Everest BC – Snowball Exp; schools project.
- 2009** Led a British first expedition from Resolute Bay to Gris Fiord in the Canadian High Arctic
- 2009** Alaskan dog sledding expedition – filming for an educational films programme.
- 2008** Led a team through the Himalayas as part of an educational schools programme.
- 2008** Led an expedition linking the two highest Inuit settlements in the Canadian high arctic.
- 2008** Filming for a documentary on how global warming is affecting the Inuit people.
- 2008** Led a dog sledding expedition in North America.
- 2007** Set up an expedition guiding company and educational programmes
- 2007** Arctic guide and operational support for the BBC Top Gear programme - 'race to the pole'.
- 2007** Arctic expedition technical support for the Magnetic North Pole Race (1996 pole position).
- 2006** Cycled across the USA – 3500 miles from Seattle to New York.
- 2006** Led an 8 person team on a successful Geomagnetic North Pole expedition.
- 2006** Instructor on an Arctic training expedition – Northern Canada.
- 2005** Instructor on an Arctic training program – Norway.
- 2005** Instructor on an Arctic training expedition – Northern Canada.
- 2004** A successful Geomagnetic North Pole expedition.
- 2003** 70 day expedition and research for Cancer Research UK (CRUK) - Canadian high arctic.

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Expedition timings

Geographic South Pole Expedition

Start date: November 22nd 2011

Estimated finish date: January 5th 2012

Time on ice: 45 days

Transitional period

Flight from the Antarctica continent to the Arctic Circle

Estimated time in transitional period: 20 days

Geographic North Pole Expedition

Start date: February 25th 2012

Estimated finish date: April 29th 2012

Time on ice: 65 days

Total amount of time on the North South Pole expedition

130 days

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