

Expedition Medicine Course Overview

Overview

What can you expect on an Expedition Medicine Course? Well, it is not your average first aid course and it certainly is not like your average medical conference or workshop! You can expect an 8-day residential course that stretches you mentally, physically, and maybe even emotionally.

The week starts out relatively simply with teaching on fundamental topics: accident management plan, primary and secondary survey in an expedition medicine context, teamwork, and search and rescue, to ensure that all participants have the basic knowledge required. We throw in some practical sessions to allow you to develop skills in patient management, use and improvisation of splints and stretchers, and basic relevant field skills including navigation and rope-work.



The days do not finish early: we continue into the evening, cementing your knowledge and skills. You will get progressively more tired throughout the week, as exercises get longer and more complex. After all, in the real world accidents do not usually happen when you are well rested, relaxed, and ready for them! It is likely that you will have one exercise run late into the evening or even overnight. All exercises have set learning objectives and are carefully debriefed.

By the end of the week, you will have been involved in a (successful!) realistic search and rescue exercise, provided pre-hospital care to multiple casualties, and learnt enough rope skills to get you and your friends out of trouble.

Courses also involve specific environmental medicine and technical field topics depending upon the theme of the course: high altitude medicine and physiology, cold injury, medical aspects of avalanche rescue, marine envenomation, pre-expedition health care planning, and motion sickness to name a few.

A high instructor to participant ratio allows us to break the group up to focus on specific learning needs, and that program allows us time to re-visit or add topics as required. Expect an eclectic mixture of people on the course.

Expect to learn from other participants and to make your own contributions too. You do not need to be a hero or a superstar to come along: as long as you have a basic level of fitness and a willingness to get involved and have a go!

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Our Aim

We aim to provide innovative courses that are fun, useful, interesting, challenging and educationally sound. Our courses are designed primarily to health care professionals and experienced outdoor professionals to manage a wide range of injuries and illnesses in outdoor settings. The course also teach related field skills, as "you cannot look after others if you cannot look after yourself".

Our Philosophy

The philosophy espoused through our courses stems from the long standing and deep interest that we have in the natural environment and the recreational activities that we enjoy there.

We place a strong emphasis on respecting and caring for our natural environment, and by extension, the local people to be found in the remote areas of the world where we travel.

We value the notion of taking responsibility of our decisions and actions, and also the concept of inter-dependence that is fundamental to expeditions and other wilderness travel.

We aim to provide as authentic an experience as possible through carefully constructed scenarios and other activities.

These values translate into courses that have a very different "feel" from most other courses on offer to doctors, and other health professionals.



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Risk Management

To live is to accept (even if unconsciously) some measure of risk. It is often thought that expeditions (and perhaps by extrapolation, courses such as these) are risky. One UK based epidemiological study looking at illness and accident rates on a large number and variety of expeditions found no significant difference between mortality and morbidity on these expeditions and a control group that stayed at home.

All courses involve scenarios that are run in the bush. Sometimes these are held at night, sometimes the ground is steep, loose, and uneven and sometimes the weather may be inclement. In order to provide authentic experiences and realistic environments for the application of skills, there are some activities that might, by some, be regarded as risky. Risk is mitigated however by ensuring all activities and scenarios are carefully prepared and supervised by the instructors to reduce, as far as possible, any risk to participants. Equipment is maintained according to outdoor industry standards.

All aspects of the course are subject to a very thorough risk assessment conducted by experienced instructors with appropriate outdoor instructing qualifications.

The Instructors

Instructors are drawn from varied backgrounds to provide a complementary blend of experience and skills on each course. Typically, there will be a blend of doctors, rescue paramedics, and outdoor instructors. All our instructors have extensive real world experience.

All the instructors also have extensive teaching experience and understand the importance of creating a supportive learning environment in what can be difficult situations.

The Participants

This is not your average medical course. We expect participants not only to work with each other, but also to “look out” for, and help each other. The longer courses are, by necessity, physically, mentally, and sometimes emotionally demanding and even our shorter courses can be tiring. You will not be wrapped in cotton wool!

We require participants to declare that they:

1. Are physically fit, at least to a standard equivalent to a half day’s bush walk carrying a 10kg pack;
2. Can swim at least 50 metres unaided (for courses that involve marine or waterbased scenarios);
3. Are comfortable and capable of moving unaided on steep or loose ground, and;
4. Either have no medical problems or allergies, or have informed us prior to the course commencing.

Our oldest participant was 74 years old! Age is no barrier to attending the course.



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Insurance

As providers of these courses we have public liability insurance that covers all the activities that we undertake. It is conceivable, though very unlikely, that a participant may suffer an injury, that is not due to our negligence, and that prevents him or her from working for a period of time. It is in your best interests to consider your income protection requirements.

To put this in perspective however, the instructors have been running these courses since 2006 and no participant has ever had more than a scratch or a bruise.

Course Locations

Context is everything. The locations for our courses are determined primarily by their ability to offer realistic training environments. Our courses are not held in 5 star hotels and accommodation, teaching venues, and meals are therefore relatively simple.

The Weather

Whilst there are many things we can control, the weather isn't one of them! Sometimes we can adapt the program to suit the weather. In many instances, we actually relish adverse conditions as they lend an air of authenticity!

