



British Sub-Aqua Club

Expedition
Leader
Guidelines

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Introduction

The purpose of these guidelines is to help BSAC expedition leaders organize and run safe and successful BSAC diving expeditions.

The BSAC expedition leader is the person who is appointed to control and supervise the activities of a BSAC diving expedition. They should also be a willing volunteer rather than someone who has been press-ganged into taking on the job.

Clearly, the expedition leader needs to have an appropriate level of training and experience for the expedition they wish to organize and so these guidelines are not a substitute for proper training and experience.

For the expedition to be a success the expedition leader will need to do most of the following:

- Putting together and managing an expedition team
- Thorough planning and preparation in advance of the expedition including backup dive plans and emergency evacuation plans.
- Liaising with boat skippers and providing advice on dive planning and marshalling during the expedition.
- Providing organization, direction as required and drive the expedition forward.
- Ensuring all diving is carried out within the BSAC's 'safe diving' practices.
- Setting a good example.
- Taking on the role of the expedition participant's 'branch diving officer' for the duration of the expedition.

Purpose of the Expedition

A BSAC expedition is simply a group of "BSAC members going diving for a purpose". By this definition almost any BSAC dive is an expedition, but most divers would probably agree that they are usually a little bit more special than just another diving holiday.

Once an expedition leader has clear idea of the purpose of expedition, it is then simply a case of figuring out the what, where, when, who and how it can be achieved. The expedition leader should have a rough idea of the answers to these questions to help assess whether it is likely to proceed and to answer the queries likely to be asked by prospective members of an expedition team.

Planning the Expedition

A successful expedition requires proper planning. For major expeditions this can mean starting to plan a year or more in advance of the actual diving itself.

For large or complex expeditions it is recommended a team be put together to help the expedition leader.

Typical Tasks

Some tasks that may need to be undertaken include:

- Finding appropriate accommodation.
- Obtaining access permission / permits.
- Organizing travel arrangements to / from the expedition location.
- Researching gas filling stations, refreshment facilities, toilets, etc.
- Selecting dive managers for each stage of the expedition.
- Ensuring appropriate equipment is available during the expedition.
- Controlling the expedition finances income and expenditure.
- Carrying out risk assessments

When looking for sleeping / living accommodation it is worth taking the following into account:

- Male / Female mix of the group
- Minors (under 18) in the group
- Storage / drying area for wet / dry suits
- Cooking / catering facilities
- Secure car and boat parking

Note: Whether sleeping accommodation is split male / female or mixed will depend on the attitudes of expedition members. However, never mix adults with minors (except parents and their own children) or minors of mixed sex.

In the UK and at most locations around the world land and resources are owned, either by the state or individuals. During the planning of an expedition access requirements need to be defined for:

- Camp sites
- Car parking
- Launching / Recovery of boat(s)
- Storage of boat(s) / equipment
- Wrecks
- Marine parks

When organizing the transport arrangements remember to consider

- Location of the expedition and route to get their
- The equipment that needs to be taken
- Numbers of divers and non-divers to transport
- The mode of transport itself
- Location of accommodation in relation to the dive sites
- Where are food / meals being obtained

- Where can gas be obtained
- Where can fuel be obtained

The Expedition Plan

It is useful to collate the output of all these tasks into a written expedition plan and issue to all the participants before the expedition. Allow as much time as possible so that participants have time to read and understand the plan, put together their equipment and make comments.

The level of detail required will depend on the nature of the expedition. For some expeditions, the expedition plan may simply consist of joining instructions for which an example is given in Appendix 1.

Financing the Expedition

The expedition leader needs to ensure that there is sufficient income to pay for expedition expenditure.

Most BSAC expeditions are financed by the expedition team sharing the costs. The expedition leader should make it clear what costs are included in the expedition and which aren't.

Usually deposits are payable by expedition members to secure places and in turn go to pay deposits to confirm for example, accommodation and charter boat bookings.

Larger expeditions may require additional financial support external to the expedition team.

The BSAC Expeditionary Grants Scheme (BEGS) and the BSAC Jubilee Trust are two sources of grant funding geared towards diving expeditions. There are of course many others who would sponsor or provide grants for expeditions.

Obtaining external funding can require a significant amount of work including form filling, compiling expedition costs and accounts and producing reports.

Choosing the Expedition Team

The expedition leader needs to know all the expedition team's diving qualifications and experience to make sure that they meet the requirements of the expedition.

Be aware that qualifications may not match experience. For example, a BSAC sports diver with 600 dives may require less attention than an advanced diver with only 100 dives.

It may be that the expedition also requires people with particular non-diving skills. Examples include qualified doctors, technicians capable of servicing expedition equipment, qualified marine biologists, archaeologists, sonar operators, photographers etc.

A check-out dive may be necessary prior to the expedition assess the diving experience of potential expedition team members for the expedition.

If the expedition leader needs to decline applicants a place on the expedition (e.g. expedition full, insufficient experience, looking for someone with different skills) they should make the reason clear to the applicant, tactfully and politely.

Ensure that all the participants everyone is comfortable with the diving goals and suitable diving is available for everyone.

Equipment Required

The expedition leader needs to make the expedition team aware of equipment and paperwork they require. A detailed checklist is a good way of helping ensure all relevant equipment is required.

Make it clear what equipment is being provided by the expedition team itself and what equipment individual participants must bring. An example equipment list is provided in Appendix 2.

Pre-expedition Meeting

Where possible the Expedition leader should arrange for a meeting of the entire expedition team beforehand in order to get to know each other, run through the plans and sort out equipment and any issues arising.

If this is not possible it is advisable for the expedition leader to make contact with each member of the expedition team. A quick phone call is sometimes more effective than a blanket email in making sure there the participant is fully aware of the plans and if they have any issues that need attention.

Expedition logistics

Expedition leaders need to communicate the plan effectively to the expedition team and also stay within the timetable.

This can be achieved by but not limited to, the following:

- Ensure all the information required to plan a dive is available, in particular up-to-date weather and tides information.
- To encourage everyone to take an active part in 'making it happen' and ensure everyone is aware of his or her duties on a daily basis. It is important that everyone shares duties and responsibilities for the duration of the expedition in accordance with their training and abilities.
- Ensure all diving is pre-planned, agreed between pairs and the group before each dive.
- Liaise with the boat skipper on behalf of the expedition team, ensuring that the skipper knows who in the team decides what and to avoid the skipper receiving contradictory information.
- Support the daily dive manager.

- Provide advice and encouragement throughout the expedition.
- Ensure all planning and management sheets are filled in correctly and available throughout the duration of the expedition.

During the expedition

Introductions

The expedition leader should introduce themselves at the start of the expedition, reminding the expedition team that the expedition leader should be the first point of contact for any issues that arise during the expedition.

The rest of the expedition team should introduce themselves informing the rest of the expedition team of their diving experience, why they are on the expedition particularly if they have a role to perform and what they want from the expedition and diving

The expedition leader should encourage the culture of 'helping each other' as this will make for a successful and enjoyable expedition.

Ensure domestic arrangements are understood by everyone covering such things as:

- The accommodation arrangements and house rules.
- The daily rota, checking that everyone understands their roles.
- The sleeping arrangements are acceptable ensuring that everyone is happy with whom they are sharing a room. (People who snore may be an issue)
- The dive planning and management arrangements,
- How the catering will work. Ensure those who are preparing food for the expedition team are competent and willing to do so and that everyone adheres to basic food hygiene procedures.

Shakedown dives

There may also be particular equipment or procedures that expedition members may need to be familiar with. Some expeditions therefore may require a series of build up dives before the expedition to ensure that the divers are dived up, fully acquainted with equipment and procedures and working as a team.

Other expeditions may not require such rigorous preparation but it is still recommended to carry out a relatively easy dive on the first day of the expedition or immediately prior to the expedition to check that the equipment is working and provide an opportunity to resolve problems.

Daily Routine

The expedition leader should ensure a daily brief is given so that the expedition team is fully aware of the plans for the day.

A written daily rota is a good way of clarifying who is responsible for what. An example is given in Appendix 3.

A written timetable to the day's activities is a very effective tool for helping the expedition run to time.

Ensure diving buddies are suitably paired in terms of qualifications and experience or the dive and interests. Check with everyone that this diving is within their experience and is also within BSAC's 'safe diving practices'.

Expedition reporting

An expedition report is a requirement for some expeditions, particularly if there the expedition needs to inform sponsors about the outcome of the expedition.

Most expedition leaders do not really enjoy report writing particularly at the end of the expedition. One way to minimize the burden is keep a diary throughout the expedition; perhaps delegating someone different each day to write a paragraph on how the day went.

For most expeditions, a diary will form the most of the report content. Examples of reports can be found on the BSAC website.

Post Expedition

Once the diving is complete there are will still be a number of items to be completed.

All log sheets to completed if necessary and retained with the expeditions' records.

The expedition leader should get feedback from all of the expedition members. An example feedback sheet is given in Appendix 5.

Write up an expedition report and consider submitting it for the BSAC Expedition Trophy Award. Do this whilst it is fresh in your mind. It is easier to write the final report during the course of the expedition rather than writing it up all at the end.

Distribute copies of the expedition as required.

Thanks all those who contributed to making the expedition happen. E.g. sponsors, skippers, accommodation providers.

Make notes so that expeditions can be improved next time.

Appendix 1: Typical Expedition Joining Instruction Contents

Joining instructions should include as a minimum:

What:

Details of what to bring including for example dive equipment, money, paperwork (qualifications, passports, medical and insurance documents).

The total costs and in particular what is not included in the cost of expedition. For example, road tolls, ferry costs, flights, departure taxes.

Where:

A suitable map showing the expedition rendezvous point.

When:

The participants should be aware of the earliest and latest arrival time of arrival at the rendezvous.

Who:

The participant should have the relevant contact details. As a minimum this should be the expedition leader's contact details but it is also a good idea to have other relevant details such as:

- Rendezvous accommodation address, contact name and telephone number.
- Or charter vessel name and details, including a contact number.
- List of other expedition members and their contact details/numbers.
- List of emergency contact numbers.

How:

The amount of information required by the Expedition team will depend to some extent on the nature of the Expedition.

As a minimum it should include details of the transport, accommodation and food arrangements and also an overview of the diving planned.

Members may have specific roles to perform on the expedition and may need to be briefed on what is required of them (e.g. towing the boat, collecting other expedition members, wreck researcher, radio operator, cook, medic etc).

For most expeditions a copy of the latest expedition plan should be more than sufficient.

Appendix 2: A Example Equipment Checklist:

Personal Kit	Personal Diving Kit	
Passport and Visas	Hood	
Joining instructions and contact details	Dry suit	
Diving qualifications	Gloves	
Boat handling qualifications	Bottles for two dives	
Travel documents	Pony bottle	
Diving emergency insurance documents	Regulators	
Travel insurance documents	Stab jacket / Wing	
Medication (and any supporting paperwork)	Weight belt	
Mobile phone	Fins	
Money	Woolly bear	
Sleeping Mat	Computer	
Sleeping Bag	Net cutter/knife	
Towel & tea towel	Torch (chargeable/bring batteries)	
Toiletries	Talcum powder	
Water proof coat	Spare kit	
Hat & Gloves	Boat coat, hat and gloves	
Warm clothing		
Suitable stout walking footwear	Personal location aids	
Sun block	Collapsible hi-viability flag*	
Dry-bag	Delayed SMB and reel*	
Thermos flask	Spare SMB	
Drinks container	Reserve torch	
Lights/torches & batteries	Whistle	
Plastic plate, plastic cup, knife, fork, spoon	Personnal flare	

Boat Equipment	First Aid Equipment	
Boats (fully operational)	Expedition member details (sealed)	
Spare fuel tanks	Oxygen First Aid Kits	
Engine oil for 2 stroke engines	RFA Equipment	
Trailers (fully operational)	First Aid Equipment	
Third party boat insurance	Advanced Medical Equipment	
VHF Radio	Satellite phone	

Gas Blending Equipment	Diving planning	
Oxygen / Helium bottles	Charts	
Decanting equipment	Tide Tables	
Oxygen Analyzers	Decompression Tables	
Helium Analyzer	Laptop with decompression software	
Laptop with Software	Laminator	
Blending tables	Extension Leads and plug adaptors	

Site location and marking	Transport	
Laminated GPS Co-ordinates	Breakdown insurance (inc. trailers)	
Magnetometer	Maps	
GPS and Echosounder		
Side Scan Sonar		
Shot lines and buoys		
Decompression trapeze		

Appendix 3: A typical Daily Rota Sheet

Name	Dive Manager	Deputy Dive Manager	Navigaor	Boat Crew	Wake up Call	Prepare Breakfast	Prepare packed lunch	Prepare dinner	Gas filling
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									

Appendix 4: Local Information

Emergency and evacuation procedures:

**In case of Emergency contact HM Coastguard.
At sea VHF Channel 16. On land dial 999 and ask for 'Coastguard'.
The coastguard will advise course of action to take.**

Nearest coastguard co-ordination centre: Tel

Nearest Hospital with Accident and Emergency Department

Insert address and telephone number here.

Nearest Recompression Facility

Insert address and telephone number here

Weather Forecast

Insert details obtaining weather forecasts for the expedition.

Navigation

Insert details of local charts, maps, sailing directions required

Insert details of an particular navigation hazards

Local Dive Clubs

Insert details of local Dive Clubs who are able to assist the expedition.

Local Gas Supplies

Insert details of obtaining gas supplies

Local Equipment Servicing

Insert details of obtaining gas supplies

Boat Chandlery

Insert details of local boat chandlers

Appendix 5: Typical Expedition Application Form

Title: Mr/Miss/Mrs/Other :

Name:

Permanent Address

..... **Postcode**

Telephone Number (Home):

Telephone number (Mob):

E-mail address:

BSAC Membership No **No of UK Dives**.....

Diving qualifications

.....

What Skills or resources can you bring to the Expedition?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oxygen Administrator | <input type="checkbox"/> Side scan sonar operator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> First Aider | <input type="checkbox"/> Can draw wreck layouts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Underwater photographer | <input type="checkbox"/> Prepared to help write report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Underwater videographer | <input type="checkbox"/> Diver Coxen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marine biologist | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to 4 x 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wreck research | <input type="checkbox"/> Access to RHIB |

Other

Your equipment configuration (e.g. single 12lt + pony, rebreather, twin 10lt etc)

.....

Next of Kin (and relationship e.g. Wife, Husband, Father, Mother):

Name: **Relationship**

Telephone Number (Home):

Telephone number (Mob):

THIS APPLICATION FORM IS SEALED IN AN ENVELOPE AND TAKEN ON THE EXPEDITION FOR OPENING IN CASE OF EMERGENCY.

I confirm that the information given in this application form is correct, to the best of my knowledge, that I am fit to dive and that I will dive in accordance with the BSAC Safe Diving Practices.

Signature:..... **Date**

Appendix 6: Example Expedition Feedback Form

Name

1) How did you rate the dives we completed (5 – excellent, 1 - poor)?

1	Dive site 1		5	Dive site 5		9	Dive site 9	
2	Dive site 2		6	Dive site 6		10	Dive site 10	
3	Dive site 3		7	Dive site 7		11	Dive site 11	
4	Dive site 4		8	Dive site 8		12	Dive site 12	

2) Which ones of these did you think were challenging and adventurous?

.....

3) Did you think the briefings for the dives were adequate? (Yes/No + Comments)

.....

4) How did you rate the skipper? (5 –excellent, 1 - poor + Comments)

.....

5) Are there any aspects which you thought were unsafe?

.....

6) How do you rate the accommodation? (5 – Excellent, 1 - Poor + Comments)?

.....

7) Were the arrangements for food adequate (Yes/No + Comments)

.....

8) Do you think the weekend was well organised? (Yes/No + Comments)

.....

9) Did you enjoy the expedition and what did you learn?

.....

10) Would you recommend a similar expedition to others?

.....