

Thank you for expressing an interest in the forthcoming Borders Exploration Group expedition to Cuba. The proposed departure date is likely to be mid July 2012 for 3 to 3½ weeks, depending upon final flight arrangements. The final team will consist of about ten leaders, two doctors, and about 25 venturers. All successful venturers must be between 16 and 25 years old by the date of departure and must be resident within the Borders area.

We are a local organisation run by volunteers. The group has been on the go for some 20 years, in which time we have achieved a range of highly successful activities i.e. local activity days, survival weekends, challenge days for schools and businesses, European expeditions lasting two weeks and the major biennial expeditions, which have travelled to Lesotho, Ecuador, Kenya, Mongolia, India, Peru, Vietnam, Zambia and Chile.

The format of all major expeditions follows a similar pattern, where the expedition is split into four phases. These phases can be separate or run alongside each other.

- **COMMUNITY**, in the past, we have assisted in constructing schools, community centres, health centres and repairing roads under the guidance of the local community we are visiting.
- **ADVENTURE**, whether trekking, white water rafting or horse riding is your thing, we have undertaken challenging activities in some of the most spectacular places in the world.
- **SOCIAL**, each member of the team, either individually or a part of a small group will observe and research a particular aspect of life in Cuba i.e. schools, healthcare, housing, religion or festivals, so that a report or booklet can be compiled for use by schools or organisations on our return.
- **SCIENTIFIC/ENVIRONMENTAL**, one of the best ways of really appreciating the environment you are visiting is to get involved with it. Previous expeditions have collected plant samples for the Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh, planted trees to try to reverse deforestation, repaired paths in National Parks and worked with organisations to help endangered species.

We will be looking for a range of skills and experience from potential venturers but in particular the qualities of; cooperation, commitment, enthusiasm, versatility and a good sense of humour. Experiences of camping, navigation, and first aid etc are not necessary as a full and varied training programme will be undertaken. However a reasonable level of fitness would be advantageous.

When completing your application form please be honest, we do not expect everybody to have done everything. This expedition is about providing young people of the Scottish Borders with an opportunity to do something new and challenging. The closing date for application forms and references is the 1st of May. A short-listing process will be undertaken and the venturer selection day will be held on Sunday the 15th of May. All short-listed applicants must be able to attend this day.

All successful team members will be expected to attend training days/weekends over the next 14 months. The final cost to each individual will be in the region of £2000 (mainly dependant on flight costs / fuel surcharges etc.) and all venturers will be expected to undertake fundraising activities to cover this amount. Advice and support will be given on fundraising and the best way to go about it.

If you have access to the internet we would recommend looking up our website at www.borders-exploration-group.org.uk where there are some great pictures and written reports about the most recent expeditions to Chile, Peru, Vietnam and Zambia.

Thank you for your interest so far and we hope to hear from you soon

Ruth Longmuir, Christine Anderson and Lisa Norman
(The Cuba 2012 planning team)