St. Conleth’s College Expedition Programme
Introduction

St. Conleth’s College started expeditions back in 2001. Former teacher Dr. Garret Campbell, along with company World challenge, brought a very small group on an expedition to Peru. The expedition is centered around students making the decisions in a controlled and safe environment. Most school trips are arranged by a travel agent, including the organization of all activities, accommodation and transport. However on these expeditions the students take on some of these tasks.

While in the expedition country, students look after the budget for the month, decide on where to stay, arrange transport, and pay for food and activities. The adults take a backseat and only step in on health and safety grounds.

The first trip was so successful that the school has continued with the programme. The following are some of our past expeditions:

2001       Peru
2003       Tanzania (Kilimanjaro)
2005       Mongolia
2007       India
2009       Zambia & Botswana
2010       Uganda
2011       Uganda
2012       Kenya & Uganda
2014       Tanzania & Uganda (Kilimanjaro)
2015       India
2016       India
2018       Tanzania, Kenya & Uganda (Kilimanjaro)
2020       Postponed
What's it all about?

The school believes the expedition is the equivalent of a year in school in relation to the students all round development. Students take on responsibility that they would normally not get a chance to. They make decisions every day and the adult team lets them make mistakes once these mistakes do not affect the health and safety of individuals or the team.

The list of skills acquired by students on the expedition is long; leadership, responsibility, organisation, communication, resilience and empathy to name a few. But more than that, for many it is the first time their eyes are opened to the wider world, helping them gain some perspective on what really matters.

Pre-Departure Phase

Pre-departure phase focuses on helping students in their fundraising efforts while also preparing students for the 4 week expedition.

Fundraising

In this phase students will have several workshops on how to fundraise, giving students ideas and past experiences from
previous students. The whole ethos of the expedition is for students to take on the responsibility themselves. That includes trying to pay for the expedition themselves. We believe that parents should not give their sons or daughters a blank cheque but instead discuss with them how they are going to fund this trip. Some students have raised all the monies before the expedition while others agreed with their parents a certain amount to have raised before and for the rest to be repaid after the trip.

**Training / Planning**

Throughout the Pre-departure phase students go on a variety of different hikes in order to get to know each other and also work on their fitness and teamwork skills. Students will also have to take part in the expedition training weekend; where students go camping and hiking for the weekend. This is treated as a mini expedition.

Students have a budget for the weekend and must arrange transport to the campsite, go shopping with a limited budget and cook for the weekend. The teachers and expedition leader (from our expedition partner) gets to know the team, go through health and safety issues and also helps prepare students for the challenge part of the expedition.

As mentioned previously, this is a student run expedition. During the pre-departure phase our expedition partners will arrange a workshop for the team. In this workshop students will be given options for what to do while on expedition sometimes choosing the trek, or rest and relaxation options. They will have to research these options and present them to the team before the team deciding on which activities to do.
Throughout the one/two years before departure there are a few parents/students meetings which include:

- Health and Safety
- Meet the leader / Kit talk
- Kit talk

**Departure**

Students will participate in a Buildup day prior to the departure normally a day before. This is where students' kit is checked, medical forms double checked, team rules and jobs written up.

The budget for the month is given to the students and the first accountants are appointed. The students are given all the money for the month on this day.

On each day of the expedition, one member of the team is appointed Leader and assistant Leader. Throughout the expedition students are given other roles for a certain length of time depending on what the team agrees. An example of a set of roles could be:

- Cooks / Shopping team
- Accommodation team
- Transport Team
- Accountants
- Rest & Relaxation Team
- Porter welfare team
- Environmental team
Project

Over the years we have developed the project and how we approach it. When the school first started, our teams would normally go to a school or orphanage and either help build or paint. After a few expeditions we felt that this was just tokenism and we were not using our student’s skills and knowledge to their full potential. We decided that instead of building and painting that we would get the whole school community to fundraise to pay for local builders and painters to do the work at our project site. This meant that money raised goes directly to the local economy. Our students however would teach the locals about Irish culture, history and their day to day lives, and vice versa. The whole interaction is a huge learning experience for both the Irish and local students.

One principal in Kitatia, Uganda said that after the interaction between St. Conleth’s and local students there was a massive improvement in their spoken English while also many students decided to stay on in school.

Achievements of St Conleth’s Expedition Teams

2001 Peru

- Supplied tools and building materials to a school in Lake Titicaca.
- Supplied stationary to the school.
- Helped build a playground in the school.
2003 Tanzania

o Supplied tools and building materials to a primary school near Moshi in the Kilimanjaro area.
o Supplied school books, stationary and toys to school children.
o Helped with construction work in the primary school.
o Taught English to primary school children.
o Played football with local teams.

2005 Mongolia

o Worked in an orphanage run by the Christina Noble Foundation, planted fruit trees, cleared land for vegetables, painted classrooms, played with children.
o Supplied stationary, tools, paint, toys, books to orphanage.
o Donated 5000 euro to the orphanage to fund specific projects:
  o § underground food storage facility
  o § new shower/toilet block
  o § new beds

2007 India

· Painted 3 primary schools.
· Supplied desks for the school.
· Introduced rugby to local children and donated rugby balls.
· Played football with local children.
2009 Zambia and Botswana

- Working in a centre for HIV orphans.

2010 – 2014 Uganda

- Working in Kitatya Secondary School with an exchange of skills programme.
  - Donated €30,000 to school to install solar panels for electricity, build staff accommodation, sponsor 8 students through secondary school.
  - Sponsored 2 children to attend school for 5 years in Kampala slums.
  - Sponsored a small-farming goat project through Self Help Africa.

2015 and 2016 India

- Painted mural in a primary school in Manali.
- Sponsored Evergreen School to purchase railings and donated paint and games.
- Mount Everest village primary school: donated school furniture, blackboards and school supplies.
2018 Uganda

§ **Bridge Light Secondary School:**
- Installed a water pump for running water.
- Financed building of a computer room.

§ **Ndeeba Secondary School:**
- Financed a new computer room.
- Working in both schools with an exchange of skills programme.

§ Sponsored 3 children to attend school for 5 years in Kampala Slums through Hands for Hope.
Trekking Phase

This phase is normally different on each expedition. The purpose of this part of the trip is to challenge the students physically, while also challenging them as a team. Some treks have included a summit while others it's about distance. With some, treks porters and cooks are provided whilst other treks students have to carry their full kit and also cook for themselves. Students interact with locals throughout their trek.

There are different trekking options depending on the country the team is travelling to. On some expeditions there might be one big trek while other there may be two to three small treks.

Previous examples:

India: Spiti valley - 5300m.
Tanzania: Kilimanjaro - 5895m.
Uganda - Mount Elgon - 4321m.
Zambia & Botswana -Okavango Delta, trek along the Zambezi.
Kenya: Trekking with the Maasai, Mountain Biking, Trekking through hells gate.
What have previous students said about the programme?

*How do you think the expedition helped with your personal development?*

“Provides exceptional perspectives of the world we live in that you’d never consider as a 16 year old in Dublin”

“Things don't always go to plan and sometimes you have to roll with the punches. It definitely helped me going forward knowing that it's okay if things don't always go to plan no matter how much you plan. It’s character building. How you react has an impact on the group and knowing when to carry on without complaining with a smile on your face goes a long way in keeping up
good team morale. Taking responsibility and standing up to be counted. There is no place for hiding on a 4-week trip in a new surroundings.”

“it taught me how insignificant the issues I materialise really are and how privileged I am. I also gained respect and empathy for my fellow teammates and teachers after seeing how we all reacted differently to the pressures, strains and responsibilities that were given to us.”

“I could write five pages on this but in short the expedition really gave me a much better perspective on a completely different part of the world and debunked some of the myths that I believed in pre expedition. Also going on the trip made me realise how incredibly fortunate I am to be in the position I’m in economically, academically, socially and that it would be such a waste to not take full advantage of the life I’ve been gifted...to do my best in school sports, socially family etc.”

“Instilled a sense of responsibility and broadened my awareness of the hardships of people around the world. Being the first time away without my parents for a prolonged period of time it definitely grew my confidence and gave me a greater understanding of the world outside my own bubble back in Dublin.”

“The expedition had a massive impact on my personal development, as it threw me out of my comfort zone and allowed me to experience and appreciate a culture completely different to ours, all the while learning how to budget for a group of students for a month and plan transport and accommodation along the way. Coming back I really felt like I had the necessary tools to travel and properly plan new experiences independently, and I gained a new appreciation for other cultures. Furthermore, climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro involved a number of challenges, both mental and physical, that taught me how to overcome problems even in everyday life!”
What advice would you give to a student who was thinking of going on the expedition?

“People who didn't go regret it and don't know why they didn't in hindsight. We often talk about our time in India and the stories all come back as if it was yesterday. That was 13 years ago.”

“Cost can be prohibitive but it is well worth putting in the effort to raise the money. Once on the trip enjoy it and seize unexpected opportunities”

“Be ready and willing to try new things, meet new ppl etc. Interact as much as possible with locals and get most out of it. It really is a once in a lifetime experience. I'd love to go back but other things get in the way and now is the perfect opportunity”

“Whatever reservations you may have, leave them behind. This is a chance of a lifetime and if you do go on one of these expeditions you will never regret it.”

“It is 100% worth your time, you will be stressed, you'll have days where you just want to go home but 10 years later I still laugh about some of the stuff we did together. It's such an unbelievable opportunity that you may never get to experience and I think it is incredibly eye opening and made me a lot more aware of the issues in the world today, it made me strive to do better!”
What advice would you give to a parent who's son or daughter is thinking of going on the expedition?

“Encourage them to go and build their independence from a young age. Seeing the rawness of life in a developing country is something most people live their whole lives ignorant to”

“Encourage them to go, support them as best you can, but let them go and for as much as you can let them do it on their own.”

“The expeditions are exciting and character building trips. Lifelong memories can be made during a formative time in a young person's development. The expeditions are physically demanding and the locations are exotic, but the real value comes from the various situations that the group has to negotiate and individuals and as a collective.”

“This is a really once in a lifetime opportunity for you child, it helped me grow alot as a young person and made me want to do better in the world.”

“It will be the best thing for them! They will spend a month learning about not only themselves but also what the world looks like outside of the bubble of Dublin. Not only will they learn how to budget their (and the groups) money over the month-long period, but also experience real challenges, both mental and physical, that they can learn to overcome together with the other students, and feel a sense of both empowerment and independence after having done so. This is also a chance for them to experience the amazing culture Africa has to offer, from tasting fruits you've never heard before to being taught how to dance "Ugandan style" in front of an entire school, but also to appreciate that not everyone was born as fortunate as we were here in Dublin, and learn what they can do to help!”