



Having worked in the same place for twelve years, Eleri Evans wanted to take a career break and joined Raleigh's ten week spring expedition in Borneo as a Project Manager and Medic.

Before joining Raleigh I was working as a sister in a children's intensive care unit. I had been working for twelve years in the same place and had been in the same role for ten years. I did Raleigh to take a career break.

After doing my diploma in 2008 & 2009 I wanted to consolidate my learning and wanted to try a different aspect of nursing or medical work. During my diploma course there was a careers fair and I met a Raleigh representative. It sounded interesting and I followed this up with a visit to an Open Event one Saturday at their head office in London.

What attracted me to Raleigh over other organisations was when I met the Raleigh representatives they seemed to have clear goals about what they were hoping to achieve with the young people who joined Raleigh. Joining Raleigh also gave me an opportunity to work in a different environment. Two of my friends had been on Raleigh and they came back and told me about their amazing experiences.

On expedition I had a dual role as a Project Manager and also as Medic. The role that takes up most time is the Project Manager role, supporting young people to develop, as well as to maintain their health and safety. The medic role is dependent on injuries and they are treated as appropriate.

My responsibilities were two-fold. Firstly I was a Project Manager which involved getting the kit ready and getting people who don't know each other to work together well. I had other responsibilities including writing in each venturer's development journal and visiting the project sites looking at risk assessments and the cultural impact of these projects.

My second role as Medic involved ensuring the health of the group was at the highest standard possible and making sure that any illnesses were treated early to ensure that venturer stayed on expedition. Prevention comes first and treatment comes second. At 'changeover' the medics run drop-in clinics reviewing those people who have been sick during expedition phases and during changeovers. I loved it; I worked with four different Volunteer Managers and I loved seeing all the different ways of managing a group. It is a challenge to see different styles but it is great to be swapping groups and seeing the different parts of Borneo.

New hard skills I've learned include wood craft (making bracelets), camp craft and learning how to dive. I am constantly using my medical skills and the soft skills I use to do my job at home including coaching, active listening, team bonding, empathy, and sympathy. I am accustomed to being a listener and a sounding board at work and I was able to use those skills on expedition. It's great that I was able to use the skills from work in a different environment.

One of my best moments on expedition was on Dive Island. Finishing in the classroom and getting ready to start the course was very exciting and also a bit daunting because of certain aspects which the diving instructor made us do on the first day such as taking off the mask and regulator under water. Finishing the dive and realising how much I'd achieved, then being told I had passed the dive exam and was now a qualified diver was very exciting.

One of my most challenging moments on expedition was during my time in Imbak Canyon during the expedition phase one. There was an incident with a burn due to boiling water and it was challenging because it was at night and this made getting the individual to hospital difficult because

the capital city was a day and a half away in normal time. I realised I had to look after the individual with what I had. Due to the remote location of the project it was safer to care for the individual at the site with a safe evacuation to be carried out the next morning. I found it very challenging because of the limited contact with field base and also because in the UK hospital treatment would have started within an hour of the injury occurring. The situation turned out well and said individual stayed on for the rest of the expedition.

I have learnt that I am able to deal with situations much more calmly than I thought and I can control large groups. I've found it easier to interact with 18-24 year olds than I thought I would. I've also found that I have a lot more in common with young people and other cultures than I thought I would. I have learnt a lot from young people and also from other cultures.

My immediate plan is to go back to the UK to do an expedition and wilderness medicine course. After that I have no immediate plans but would like to carry on doing similar work.

To sum up my Raleigh experiences: An exciting, unpredictable, challenging and worthwhile experience.