



Susan Trinnaman was working as a neonatal nurse in London when she decided to take a career break and joined Raleigh's ten week spring expedition in Costa Rica & Nicaragua as a Medic and Project Manager.

Before I went on expedition with Raleigh I was working as a neonatal nurse at Guy's & St Thomas' NHS Trust – London. I decided to take time out because I needed a break from nursing in the NHS and I wanted to see more of the world.

My role on expedition was Advanced Medic/ Project Manager and I had a variety of different responsibilities: At the start of the expedition my key responsibilities were to prepare the medical room, run a full stock check, and provide health & hygiene training to Project Managers and venturers.

During the community and trekking expedition phases my role was to manage the day to day running of projects, interact with the community and project partners, oversee the welfare of venturers and fellow Project Managers, provide first aid and medical support to venturers & Project Managers and general role modelling.

I loved the interaction with the community; sometimes I found it difficult to be patient with the venturers but I learnt that I really enjoy trekking and I need to appreciate the outdoors more. I also learnt that you actually need very little to live life.

The induction phase gave me a good idea of the types of situations we would find ourselves in and the practical risk assessment. It was very useful and helped reassure me about what I was getting myself into.

New skills that I developed while out on expedition include: setting up tents, basher beds and jungle camps, using Trangias and making the most of Raleigh rations, tool use, working with 18-24 year olds in a supervisory capacity, working with large groups of people from very different backgrounds and cultures, teaching with a translator involved and finding safe river crossings.

Old skills that I used while out on expedition include: counselling, taking medical histories and adapting solutions to different situations.

I learnt a lot on all three phases and enjoyed the experience tremendously.

To describe a typical day on expedition would go something like this: Waking up, walking against a beautiful sunrise, working and walking in the sun, laughing, bantering and singing with venturers and fellow Project Managers as well as the local community. Then we would enjoy the spectacular scenery, keeping a beady eye out for wildlife and wild fruit, work out what sort of wash or shower to have, play games, read, and then drift off to sleep under a mozzie net.

For me the highlight was realising I was enjoying the long walk, realising there were three buildings on a remote hilltop in Costa Rica that I had had a hand in putting up, the hospitality of the Ticos, the incredible wildlife and beauty of Costa Rica and laughing with venturers and project Managers about all sorts of things.

The biggest challenges were getting a balanced interaction with the venturers, coping with venturers not heeding repeated first aid advice and finding time and space for myself.

The expedition helped me to remember that there's potential to see and learn from unexpected places and people, and that there's still gumption in me to harvest.

To sum up my Raleigh experience: A huge mix of people, places, sights, sounds, exciting.

Spending 3 ½ months in somewhere as beautiful as Costa Rica spurred my decision to leave my city life and replace it for life somewhere quieter and involving the outdoors more.

I would recommend joining Raleigh as a volunteer manager to others as it is a way to liberate yourself out of your ordinary life and have access to incredible places and experiences that you normally wouldn't get the chance to have.

