

Catherine joined the field base team as an administrator for the Malaysia 2006 expedition.

Catherine Ahern was working as a PA in London and had been with the same company for six years. She had heard about Raleigh International from friends and work colleagues who had undertaken expeditions previously. Looking for a new challenge, she joined the Malaysia 2006 expedition as an administrator.

As an administrator, I was responsible for the day to day administration on the expedition. Amongst other things, this involved organising visas, changing flights, arranging induction, allocating volunteers to different project groups and covering the radio. My previous experience prepared me well for the admin tasks at field base but I learnt a lot of new practical skills (not much call for suspension bridge building in the bank!) and about managing the young volunteers in new environments. This was quite a challenge but was helped by the communication and leadership skills learnt during the induction phase at the beginning of the expedition.

My days at field base typically began at 9am with the morning meeting to address the days activities. The remainder of the day was spent in the office with frequent trips to the local town of Lintas to run errands.

From field base, I was then, as often happens, made project manager on the environmental phase, overseeing the construction of a suspension bridge at the research centre in the Danum centre. The transition from field base to project was challenging as they are such different environments. Spending three weeks in such a remote location was initially very daunting but I really enjoyed myself and got such a lot out of it.

Being on Raleigh as a volunteer manager has been an amazing experience. I have developed more confidence in dealing with new environments and situations and a great deal of satisfaction from seeing the ventures grow. It has also been great to see the contribution that is being made to the local communities that benefit from Raleigh's work. I would absolutely recommend others to join Raleigh as a volunteer.