

Raleigh International spices up volunteering with first ever expedition to India

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Officially launched this month, places on Raleigh International's brand new expedition to India are quickly being snapped-up, as details of the unique line-up of challenging projects are unveiled for the first time.

Departing in February 2008, volunteers of all ages and backgrounds from across the UK and abroad will join teams of young people from India to work on Raleigh International's new projects, in some of the most remote areas of the country – far removed from the well-trampled tourist trails.

Lasting four, seven or ten weeks, participants will find themselves working on environmental, community and adventure projects across the Southern states of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu – with a permanent base camp in the 'City of Palaces' Mysore.

Environmental projects will see volunteers assisting rangers in some of India's expansive National Parks, including conservation work in protected elephant and tiger reserves, as well as working in The Nilgiri, or 'Blue Mountains', undertaking scientific monitoring in one of the world's most beautiful and rarely seen wildlife habitats.

On community projects volunteers will be living and working alongside families based in some of India's poorest rural areas, installing safe drinking water facilities and sustainable sanitation, as well as developing organic gardens in schools, as part of long-term plans to improve health and educational services – all while gaining a unique insight into the lives of people living in extremely remote areas.

The adventure projects, meanwhile, will provide volunteers with an unforgettable challenge, trekking through some of the last undisturbed tracts of the diverse Western Ghats and camping in the wilderness, as well as canoeing through Kerala's renowned backwaters which are rich in flora and fauna and dense with coconut palm groves.

'As with all our expedition countries, India will offer the opportunity for volunteers to live and work in completely new and challenging environments, as well as contributing to projects that will make real and tangible improvements to the lives of people in rural communities,' commented Stacey Adams, Raleigh International CEO.

Celebrating 60 years of independence this year, India's rich history, vibrant culture and diverse environment continues to entice young people from the UK with increasing vigour. The popularity of Raleigh International's pioneering expedition not only reflects India's appeal as an inspirational travel destination, but also reveals how young people continue to seek adventurous experiences in remote locations, while aiming to make a positive contribution to worthwhile projects overseas.

While news of Raleigh International's exciting new projects have captured the attention of budding volunteers, organisers say February's first expedition to India is just the start of what they hope will become a long-term partnership between young people in the UK and India.

There are still a few places remaining for venturers, aged 17 to 24, and for volunteer managers, aged 25 and over, on Raleigh International's first expedition to India departing in February 2008. For more information visit www.raleighinternational.org or call 020 7183 1270.

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Notes to editors:

Raleigh International works with local NGOs, communities and government ministries in all of its expedition countries, and in India will be working in conjunction with WWF India, the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, UNESCO, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Mysore Resettlement & Development Agency (MYRADA) and New Entity for Social Action (NESA) – ensuring its projects have a real impact and are genuinely needed.

Raleigh International's expeditions are open to 'venturers' aged 17 to 24 and 'volunteer managers' aged 25 and over, from the UK and abroad. Young people from India will also join volunteers on the new expedition which will run for 10 weeks, 7 weeks, 5 weeks and 4 weeks at a time. Raleigh International runs approximately 10 expeditions a year – to Malaysia, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, as well as the exciting new expedition to India adding to the list of far-flung destinations from February 2008.

As a registered charity Raleigh International is completely dependent on fundraising activities and as such asks all venturers and volunteer managers to contribute towards the charity's work and expenses through fundraising. Venturers are asked to raise £2,995 for ten weeks, £2,250 for seven weeks, £1,750 for five weeks and £1,500 for a four-week expedition, while volunteer managers are asked to raise £1,950 for a 13-week expedition and £1,350 for an eight-week expedition.

Raleigh International is a leading expert in structured gap year expeditions and one of the very first organisations to self-assess and certify itself as BS8848 compliant, the new British Standard for overseas expedition safety.

Venturers, volunteer managers and members of Raleigh International's staff are available for interview and comment. High-resolution images are also readily available. For more information about Raleigh International or the charity's new India expedition, please contact Michelle Byrne on (01242) 210 330 or email michelle.byrne@raleigh.org.uk.