

A wide-angle photograph of a majestic mountain range under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, a hiker wearing a red backpack and black gear walks along a narrow, winding path that cuts through a lush green slope dotted with patches of white snow. The mountains rise steeply behind, their peaks partially covered in snow, with more distant ranges visible in the background.

Expedition Planning

UBES Development Series



University of Bristol
Expeditions Society

Workshop Outline

- Your initial idea
- Building a team
- Funding
- Logistics
- Decisions, risk, group dynamics
- Coming home



LY PRESS AND BRISTOL MIRROR, WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24

HOW?... WHY?... WHERE?... WHO?

Secrets revealed of plan to visit Bolivia and Indian village

For more than one reason "six of one and half a dozen of the other" could be the motto of the University of Bristol Expeditions Society trans-Continental expedition (1960-61), which will leave Bristol next week.

In the material sense, the sites and half-dozen of equipment, stores and personal baggage are making a mountainous heap (surely too much for our two vehicles?), and metaphorically speaking we often find ourselves tending to edge between alternative explanations for the reasons of our project.

This must not be taken as an indication of an apologetic attitude. The whole trouble is that the expedition has almost as many reasons for its existence as the individual members have reasons for being with it.

Scientific observation? Adventure? Curiosity? Commercial inquiry? A little of everything.

crossed the Indian and Pacific oceans at the right time and which was reputedly full. This 20th century desperate ride was typical of the expedition.

But there are times when no amount of brisk and business-like negotiations can persuade the university administrator to curtail his normal working methods, that is five days' consideration of what he has put his signature to a document.

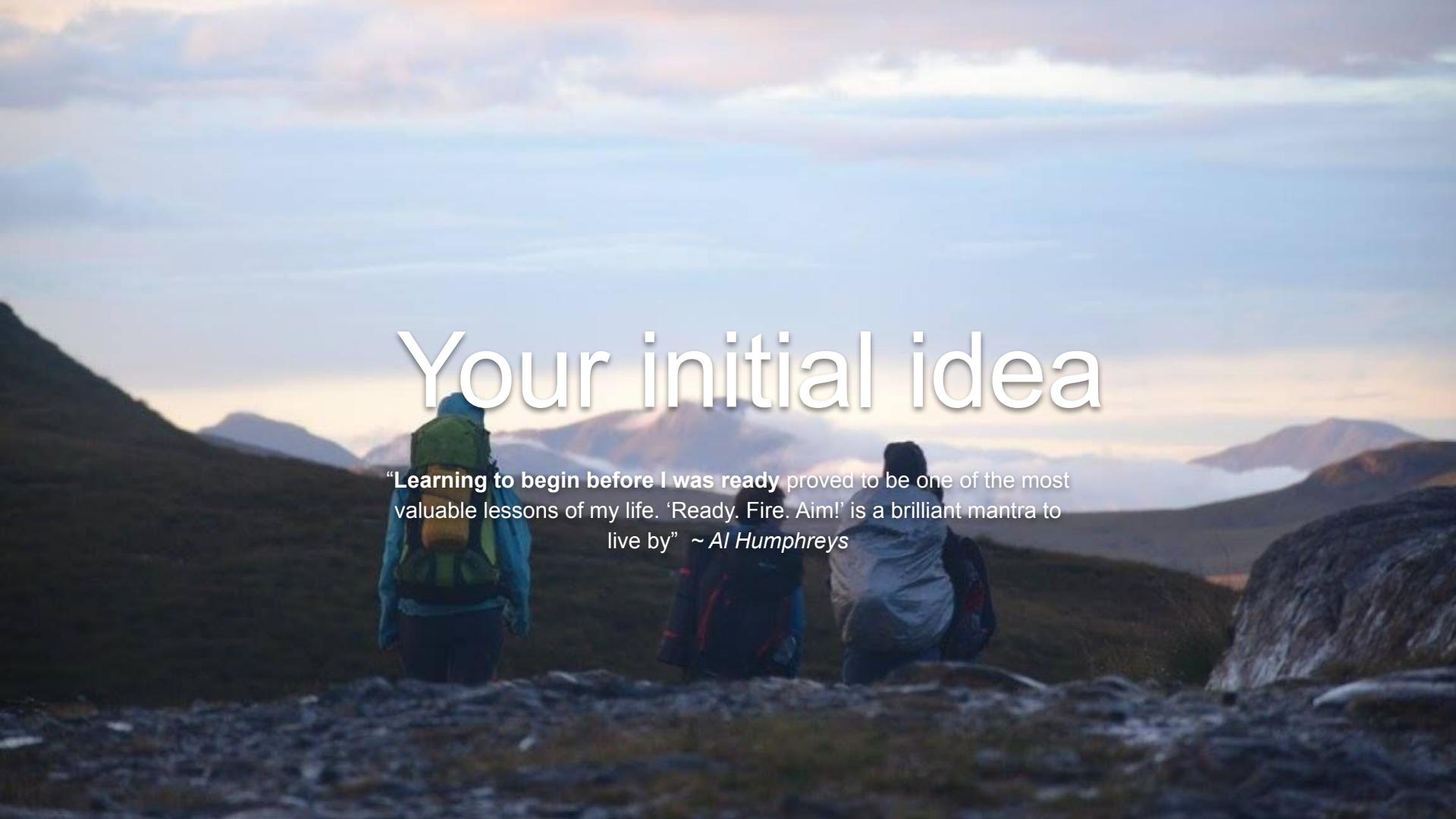
So too much time is spent locked out of some office due to a lack of understanding of international situations, or seeing frustratingly, an argument awaiting a great man's pleasure. Time is fair chief currency, to waste it is to be spendthrift; to use it for one's own purposes almost becomes embezzlement.

Objectives

"What do you hope to achieve?" Well, one friend at the Medical Research Council also thought that to bring back



Your initial idea

A photograph of three people walking away from the camera on a rocky mountain trail. They are wearing backpacks and outdoor gear. The background shows a vast mountain range under a sky with scattered clouds, transitioning from blue to warm orange and yellow hues of a setting sun.

"Learning to begin before I was ready proved to be one of the most valuable lessons of my life. 'Ready. Fire. Aim!' is a brilliant mantra to live by" ~ Al Humphreys

Where do you want to go?



I don't know where to start 😞

- Talk to people! In UBES (outdoors and in the pub), at Redpoint and Bloc, at the Wilderness Lectures...
- Spend an hour (or 3 or 4) checking out the maps and books in Stanfords
- Start with something small and doable (then watch as things escalate ridiculously)
 - Pick a cool destination, pack your bivvy gear, and cycle there
 - Head to Dartmoor, Snowdonia, Lakes, Scotland...Take your pick and get outside :D
- **Come to Explore!** ([RGS Explore conference](#) in London, November)
 - If you can't afford a ticket, ask RGS if you can volunteer; ask friends/UBESTers for a floor to sleep on
 - Check out their free expedition lectures [here](#) and [here](#) and watch the main Explore 2016 lectures for free ([Friday](#) - skip 25 mins in, [Saturday](#), [Sunday](#))

Shameless plug

Consider hiking or route scouting for the Transcaucasian Trail!

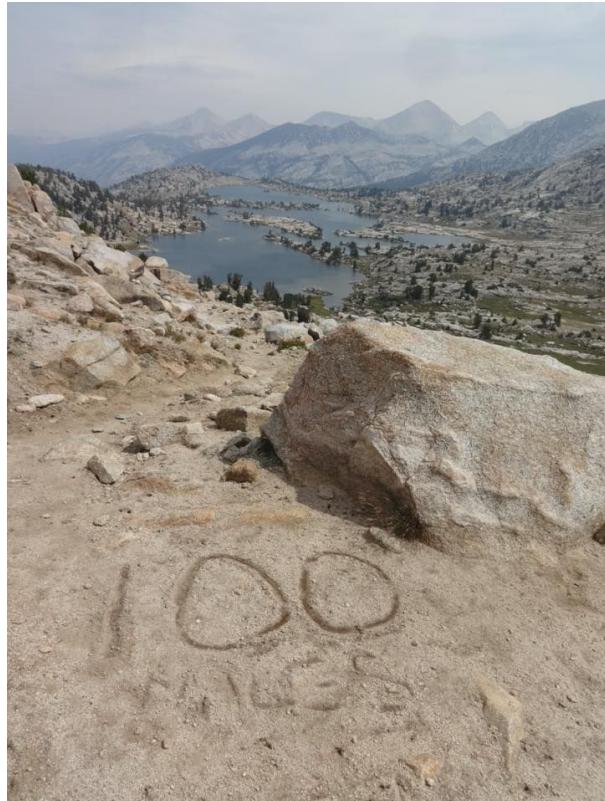
<https://transcaucasiantrail.org/en/home/>

Talk to Georgia trip veterans for info on hiking there, Cat and Val for more info on Armenia + route scouting



Mountain expeditions

- This is UBES' speciality - ask us ALL the questions!
- Long-distance trails
 - [PCT](#), [CDT](#), [AT](#), [TA](#), [TCT](#)...
 - [GRs in France](#) and [“E-paths”](#), Camino
- Trekking
 - Traumpfad, Adlerweg, John Muir Trail, Cape Wrath Trail, Alta Via...
- Route planning: consider ascent, terrain, potential camp spots, lakebags, river crossings, water sources, food resupply
- Is it legal to wild camp / have a campfire here? Do you need a hiking permit? Is there a risk of wildfires?



Mountain expeditions

- What do you want to do?
 - Hiking (wild camping? hut-to-hut?)
 - “Trekking” peaks
 - First ascents <5000m
 - Big wall climbing
 - Ski touring / ski mountaineering
 - High-altitude mountaineering
- For classic mountaineering - start with UBES Scotland and a [Jonathan Conville Memorial Trust](#) alpine course.
- Also see: [AAC](#) and [UCPA](#) courses, Alpine Club (UK) aspirant meets, [Arc'teryx Alpine Academy](#)



Cycle touring and bikepacking

- Environmentally friendly - and can be very cheap
- On road or off road?
- Getting started
 - There are some awesome options in the UK, e.g. bikepacking the South Downs Way or heading up to Scotland for the [North Coast 500](#) (road)
 - Check out Tom Allen's amazing [cycle touring guides](#)
- [Warmshowers](#) (Couchsurfing for cyclists)
- [Adventure Cycle-Touring Handbook](#)



Polar exploration

- **MONEY:** expensive transport, lots of specialist kit
- Unique challenges of extreme cold (these **must** be trained for)
 - “Generally speaking, polar travel would be quite pleasant if one didn’t have to breathe.” ~ *Ranulph Fiennes*
- Cross-country skiing, sled pulling - start practising now (roller skiing, tyres)
- Arctic
 - Polar bears - gun training, polar bear dog, and/or a guide
 - Melting ice (Ben Saunders brought a dry suit to swim!)
- Antarctic
 - Glacier and crevasse rescue skills



Polar exploration

- Recommended:
 - **Oxford University Spitsbergen Retraced expedition report** - incredible amount of useful detail
 - Fantastic [article](#) by the New Yorker about Henry Worsley and the history of Antarctic exploration
 - Ben Saunders has lots of [useful videos](#) about his expeditions and life on exped
 - [Terra Glacialis Facebook group](#) - talk to like-minded people, discover training courses and polar races
 - [Job vacancies in Antarctica](#) with the British Antarctic Survey



Other expeditions

- Conservation and scientific fieldwork
 - [James Borrell's blog](#) is fantastic (start with [Citizen science and how expeditions can leave a lasting legacy](#))
 - Integrate citizen science into your expedition, e.g. [Adventure Scientists](#) projects; also see [Guilt trip: marrying research into Greenland's disappearing icecap with first descents](#)
 - As obvious as it sounds - ask in the relevant uni department!
- Social research (anthropology, documentary...)
- Extreme environments: jungles, [deserts](#), caves ([UBSS](#))
- Overland (car or motorbike)
- Canoe and kayak ([UoB Canoe](#)), [packrafting](#)
- [Ocean rowing](#) or sailing ([UBSC](#))
- Scuba diving ([UBUC](#))
- **Ask Cat for RGS resources** (PDFs - old but still useful):
 - Expedition guides: Bicycle, Caving, Desert (+vehicles), Underwater, Polar and Tropical Forest
 - General: Expedition Handbook, Expedition Medicine
 - Field techniques manuals: people-oriented research, educational projects, bats, bird surveys, fish, insects, primates, reptiles and amphibians, small mammals, surveying, YET fieldwork guide

Building a team

A wide-angle photograph of a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, several hikers with backpacks are standing on a rocky path, looking towards a large, dark, craggy mountain peak. The sky is filled with white and grey clouds. The overall scene conveys a sense of scale and challenge.

“Hell is alone”

~ T. S. Eliot

“Hell is other people”

~ Jean-Paul Sartre

(kudos to Al Humphreys for this glorious juxtaposition)

WHO TO GO WITH?

On most of my travels I have been by myself. But I have also had many great experiences when travelling with a friend. So which is better? Here are a few thoughts to help you weigh up the pros and cons.

WITH A FRIEND:

- It's safer
- It's cheaper (sharing rooms, taxis etc.)
- It's less stressful (you share the haggling with touts and answering the same questions a million times from curious locals. You can keep an eye on each other's bag while one of you nips into a shop or toilet)
- Shared memories to reminisce over when you are old
- Someone to laugh with
- Less daunting and scary heading to strange and unknown places
- Less gear to carry (share a tent, guidebook, medicines)
- Easier to ignore the weirdo on the 24-hour bus ride who is determined to sit next to you and tell you their life story
- Less boring or lonely



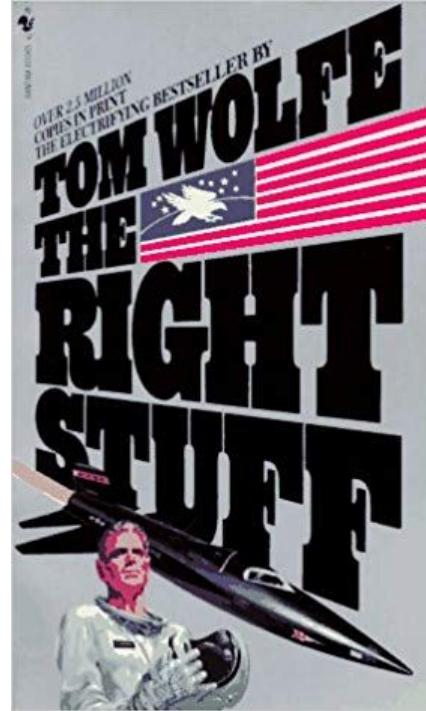
SOLO:

- More of a challenge
- You meet more people
- Less bickering
- You can do what you want when you want
- Less time talking about Eastenders: you're more immersed in the experience
- Great for self-confidence – you realise you are capable of more than you imagine
- Solitude
- Strangers are kinder to you
- Real freedom. Arriving in a place where nobody knows a thing about you is liberating
- Greater sense of achievement.
- More peace and quiet, time to think, read, write, take photos
- Easier to tell outrageous lies about your adventures in order to impress girls or boys...

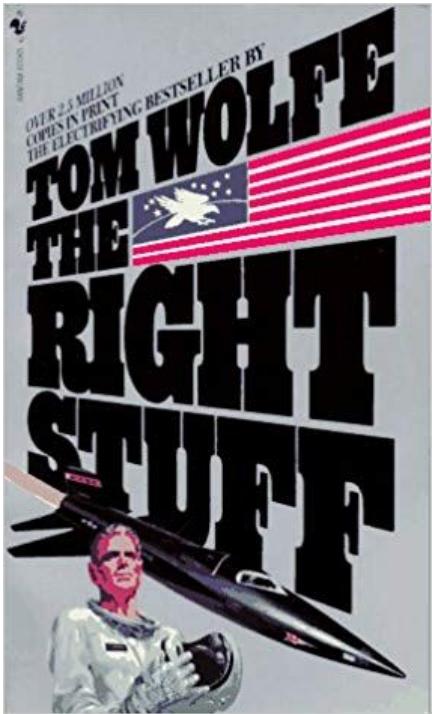


[Adventures for Young People](#) (free!), Alastair Humphreys & Elise Metcalf

What makes a good team member?



What makes a good team member?



- ISS competency model
 - Minimising and resolving conflicts (pick your battles!)
 - Situational awareness
 - Self care and self management
 - Communication and cross-cultural skills
 - Teamwork and group living
 - Leadership
- ‘Selection’ more important for more technical/dangerous expeditions or very long expeditions
- But still worth considering **individual personality differences** for shorter expeditions - what role might someone be best suited to? What might they need extra help with?
- Don’t fall into the “oh, but we’re all friends” trap - this is a very different setting

Building an expedition team

- Pick team members with distinct skillsets
 - *But* whole team needs a basic shared skillset
- Leader should (ideally) be older and/or more experienced than rest of team
- Pre-expedition training is crucial
 - Test out kit, food, daily routine; test out the *people* (fitness, skills, mindset, teamwork)
 - Build team cohesion - microadventures!
 - Specific skill training: skiing, WFR, gun handling, GIS...
- Assign distinct roles / duties and enforce these (don't rely on volunteers for chores)
 - E.g. same person should not be navigating AND noting route data just because no-one else will volunteer - can't be at the front and the back simultaneously!
 - "we wasted our man-power in one way which could have been avoided....volunteering was relied on not only for emergencies, but for a good deal of everyday work that should have been organised as routine; and the inevitable result was that **the willing horses were overworked**...They should not have been allowed to do too much." — Apsley Cherry-Garrard, *The Worst Journey in the World*

How can I be a good leader?

- Reading expedition books is a fantastic way to learn from others' mistakes (and yes, your heroes did make tons of mistakes)
- Talk to UBESTers who've led trips! (We've also made tons of mistakes...)
- Get experience on UK trips first
 - You'd be surprised just how challenging group management can be
- Consider doing ML training (UBES subsidies available)
- The biggest burden you take as a leader is your **duty of care**
 - Legal and (more importantly!) **moral responsibility**
 - Assess, mitigate, manage risks (more on this later)
 - Manage and support people in potentially some of the most stressful situations of their lives...

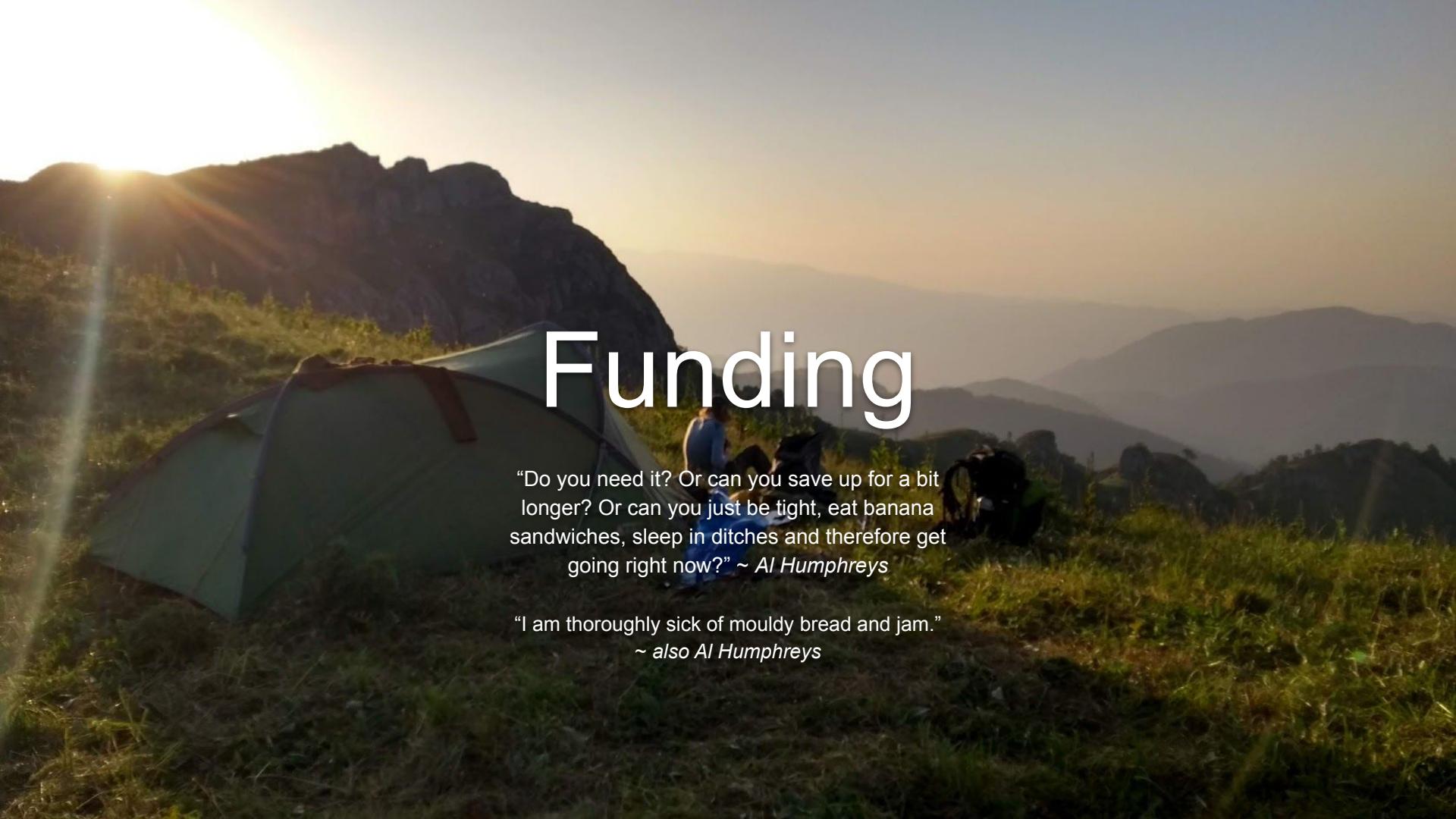
'I advertised whenever free newspaper space was available. A young civil engineer, Simon Grimes, was hooked in this way. "**Whilst drunk and eating chips at one a.m. in a friend's flat**", he wrote in his diary, "my eye caught an advert: 'Wanted, sixth person to join...' With impending unemployment and no better ideas, **it seemed like a good idea at the time**. Interested in polar regions, have itchy feet and am mad enough."

...

I sat him down for the 'black talk'. "...and I must be honest. I'm not the easiest of people..." I paused. "If you're looking for a democratic outfit, you're in the wrong place. I believe a leader should lead."

Simon grinned. "You don't need to give me all that guff. **I've been warned you're a ruthless bastard.**"

~ *Sir Ranulph Fiennes, "To the Ends of the Earth"*

A photograph of a mountainous landscape at sunset. In the foreground, a green tent is pitched on a grassy slope. The sun is low on the horizon behind a prominent dark mountain peak, casting long shadows and a warm orange glow across the scene. Distant mountains are visible through a hazy sky.

Funding

“Do you need it? Or can you save up for a bit longer? Or can you just be tight, eat banana sandwiches, sleep in ditches and therefore get going right now?” ~ *Al Humphreys*

“I am thoroughly sick of mouldy bread and jam.”
~ also *Al Humphreys*

Do you really need funding?

- Oli Broadhead
 - Two months spent walking coast to coast across South India - **living on 75p a day**
 - 1300km cycling through Norway to the Arctic Circle. Borrowed a bike from a friend!
- Al Humphreys
 - 4-year, 46,000 mile cycle ride around the world after uni, total budget £7000
 - A lot of the cost was new bike parts - 5 wheels, 15 sets of tyres, 3 frames
 - Raised £13,000 for charity
 - [Crossing the Empty Quarter](#) - 1000 miles through the desert for £1000 each
 - Walking across India - £500
 - [How to save £1000 for an adventure without really noticing](#)

"First things first. It did not occur to me to try to earn my living from adventure until I had already spent a year in Africa, done three separate expeditions each of three months duration, spent three months working and travelling in Asia, written for my university travel magazine, written two books (only one of which got published), done a night-school photography course, and given more than 300 talks. And spent four years cycling round the world with every penny of my £7000 life savings.

In other words, like in every other career (except for Being-a-Celebrity or Going-on-X-Factor, which too many people aspire to as shortcut solutions), I'd served some sort of apprenticeship and built up some useful experience. **It always worries me when people email me asking "how do I become an adventurer" before they've even done any sort of adventure."**

~ Al Humphreys

Purpose

- For major funding, you **need a purpose**
 - **FIRSTS:** first ascent, first traverse, first solo crossing...
 - **Fieldwork:** mapping, conservation, research - biology, geology, anthropology, geography, history, archaeology...
 - **Media:** Producing a film or TV series (+ book); raising awareness of a cause (e.g. climate change, charity)
 - **Many successful expeditions combine all three**
- Why are you (or your team) the best person (people) for this?
- For smaller grants, you *still* need a purpose...
 - But you don't need to change the world - the purpose can be your own development
 - Plus ideally helping others in some way or promoting a cause

“In February 1972 my wife suggested we travel around the world.
‘Ginnie, we can’t pay the mortgage. How the hell can we go round the world?’...
‘Get a contract from a newspaper, a book publisher, and a TV company.’...
‘They won’t be interested,’ I replied. ‘Everybody goes round the world.’
‘They all do it horizontally.’”

~ *Ranulph Fiennes, “To the Ends of the Earth”*

Grants

- **UoB Knowlson Trust travel awards and Global Opportunities scholarships** (£100-500)
- **£5000 for the journey of a lifetime** (make a BBC Radio 4 documentary!)
- **£650 Wilderness Award** (give a Wilderness Lecture in Bristol!)
- **Winston Churchill Memorial Trust fellowship**
- **National Geographic Early Career grant** (\$5,000-10,000)
- **Neville Shulman Challenge Award** (£5000 - exped abroad / at-desk research!)
- **Lord Mayor's 800th Anniversary Awards Trust** (Londoners - up to £1000)
- **Captain Scott Society Spirit of Adventure Award** (£2000 for 'firsts')
- James Borrell has a **gigantic list of scientific and general grants**
- **Focus your application closely on the applicant/exped qualities each grant is looking for**

Mountaineering Grants

- Crux Expedition Award (£500 cash and £2000 Crux mountaineering kit)
- Alpine Ski Club and Eagle Ski Club grants for ski touring or ski mountaineering expeditions and training courses
- Austrian Alpine Club UK expedition fund (~£150pp) and alpine/ski training course grants (up to €700, 2yrs membership required)
 - If you do any skiing or mountaineering abroad, AAC membership is worth it just for the insurance
 - They also have very cheap trips and courses in the UK
- Montane Alpine Club Climbing Fund grants (£575-1725)
- Many more!

Case Study: George Cave

“Do you want to come climbing in Russia? There's this range called the Altai, it's near the border in the South somewhere. I think it's a bit like the Alps”

- Russian Altai 2012 (first British expedition to the South Chuyski range): £1183 each + £2750 grants from Alpkit, Alpine Club, Berghaus Live for Adventure, BMC and MEF
- Djangart, Kyrgyzstan 2013: £629 each + £4450 grants from UoB Alumni, Alpine Club, BMC and MEF (ft. helicopter!)
- Muzkol, Tajikistan 2015: £357 each (+ flights mishap) + £3550 grants from Alpine Club, AAC, BMC, MEF
- Shimshal, Pakistan 2017: £1231 each + £4800 grants from Alpine Club, AAC, Karabiner Club, BMC and MEF



Case Study: Spitsbergen Retraced

Income

Grants		£18,231.00
Andrew Croft Memorial Fund Grant and Swithinbank Award		£2,000.00
Arctic Club Award		£2,000.00
Gino Watkins Grant		£4,000.00
The Irvine Travel Fund		£4,600.00
Oxford University Expeditions Council		£1,300.00
The Queen's 650th Anniversary Trust Fund Grant		£500.00
Alice Horsman Scholarship of Somerville College		£350.00
Wallace Wason Award of St Catherine's College		£2,481.00
The Friends of Adam Thurston Trust		£500.00
OM Lodge Bursary fund		£500.00
Crowdfunding		£11,114.08
Crowdfunding Campaign and Donations		£11,114.08
Sponsorship		£11,500.00
Sponsors		£11,500.00
Personal contributions		£2,312.60
Personal contributions		£2,312.60
Grand total		£43,157.68

Expenditure

Item	Description	Cost
Insurance	Oxford University Insurance	£180.00
Boat transport	Spitsbergen Guide Service	£6,105.79
Guide	Remuneration for Endre's time, firearms & ammunition, costs associated to Bris (the dog)	£7,004.30
Fundraising	Sponsors' rewards	£161.72
Food	Freeze dried meals and snacks	£3,144.00
UK training	Gun training, weekend with Ice Warrior, travel etc.	£2,936.14
Norway Training	Flights, ski hire, train	£743.32
Film production	Music copyrights, editing software etc.	£19.81
Administration	Visiting archives, image copyright, carbon offset and research costs	£560.84
Longyearbyen logistics	Accommodation, food, car	£1,096.43
Kit		
Personal kit	Sleeping bag, jackets	£1,264.10
Group kit	Tents, all safety equipment etc.	£9,680.80
Medical Kit	inc. prescription drugs	£755.25
Pulk	With Harness, pulk bag and poles	£2,369.81
Skis, boots and skins		£2,451.06
Electronics	Drone, cameras and power generation etc	£4,442.64
Satellite device	Subscription for DeLorme Inreach	£241.67
Grand total		£43,157.68

Case Study: UBES Georgia Grant Application

"The Transcaucasian Trail (TCT) project aims to create a new long-distance hiking trail through Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, split into two intersecting sections (approximately 1500km each) crossing the Greater and Lesser Caucasus mountain ranges respectively. Work to establish the trail began in earnest in 2016, including route exploration, mapping (there are **no recent topographical maps available** for many areas of the proposed trail) and trail building. The project's vision is to **provide long-term benefits for the peoples and environment of the region** by boosting the local economy with income from tourism, raising the profile of historic sites and national parks, and **connecting and uniting historically divided communities**. The project is being run in partnership with local tourist boards and organisations, but is still primarily **dependent on the work and funding of volunteers**.

Our expedition aims to support the project by both hiking established sections of trail (to promote the trail and gather additional route data such as good wild camping locations, water sources, and GPS tracks of side trails), and by **exploring and gathering data for unestablished sections of the trail...[ROUTE DETAILS]**...we hope to also stay at village homestays along the way **in order to learn more about Georgian culture** and support the local economy...**[LOGISTICS DETAILS]**"

Why us?

- Project is dependent on volunteers
- We learn about Georgian culture, deal with challenges etc
(Knowlson Trust aim to promote self-development)
- Emphasise wider benefit to society and physical challenge

Total grants: £1950
[Exped report](#)

Give me *ALL* the expedition reports

Well, seeing as you asked so nicely...

- Find more in the [RGS expeditions database](#)
- And the BMC/MEF's [reports database](#)
- UBES has a small exped report collection
- UBSS have a large collection of [caving expedition reports](#)
- Long distance cycle journeys [database](#) and Crazy Guy on a Bike [touring diaries database](#)

Logistics

"We've got to have the underpants"
~ Ranulph Fiennes



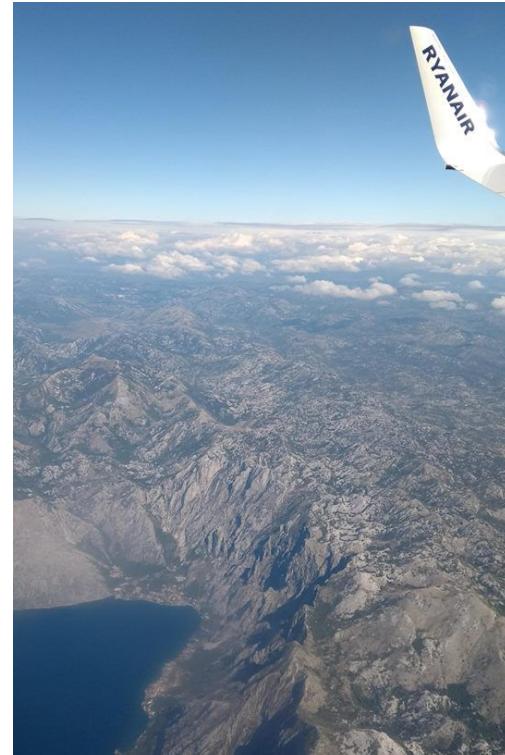
General

- Use Monzo/Revolut for payments and ATMs (but remember mountain villages tend to be cash only)
- Sort visas + permits as far in advance as possible
- Get a local SIM card
- Bring petrol stoves, not gas
- Allow time for logistical chaos before/after main part of trip
- Don't panic about transport
 - As long as roads do exist in the area...



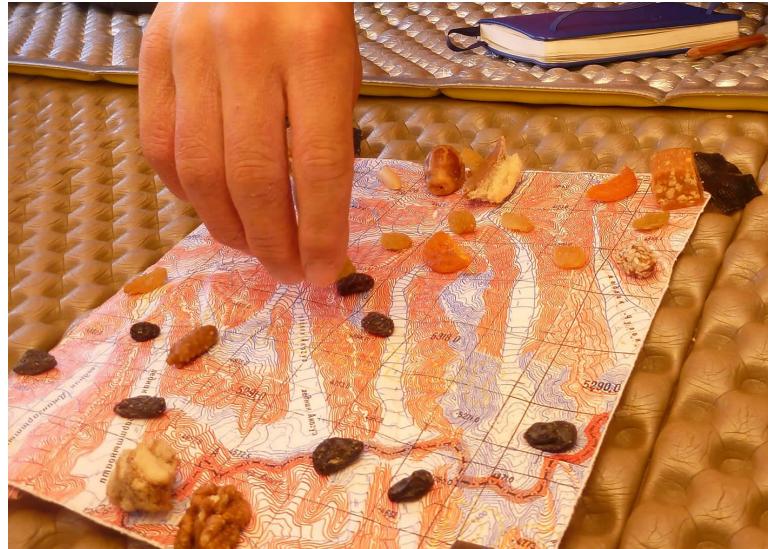
Transport

- Flights
 - Fly with budget airlines whenever possible (**no overbooking!**): Ryanair, Easyjet, WizzAir, WOW Air, etc
 - Mummify rucksacks in clingfilm if you're worried about them, but they'll be fine
 - Checked luggage - crampons, ice axes and climbing gear are fine, but no gas/fuel/lighters - you can carry one lighter on your person
- Do you really need to fly?
 - Estimated impact of UBES Georgia 2017: 13 people flying return Luton <-> Kutaisi = **14.45 tonnes of CO₂** ([climatecare calculator](#))



Route Planning and Mapping

- Digimap in the UK - free OS maps!
- George Cave has extensive [advice on expedition mapping](#) (including a TED talk about finding unclimbed peaks!)
- GPS + OpenStreetMap is the only feasible option for many countries
 - Viewranger, OsmAnd+ on your phone or a dedicated GPS
 - **Contribute to OSM**
- UBES Garmin inReach Explorer+ for loan
 - GPS, satellite messaging, SOS services (monthly fee)



Food

- Backpacking trips - 400kcals/100g is the gold standard
 - Tortillas, nutella, peanut butter, squirty cheese, chocolate and sweets, protein bars, cereal bars, nuts, dried fruit, cake
 - Dinners: instant mash, instant noodles, couscous, freeze-dried soya mince, tuna, chorizo, parmesan, cup a soups (**ready-made meals generally not worth it**)
 - Cheese lasts longer than you'd expect in 35°C!
- Consider availability of local food
 - Bringing your own (recommended max 11 days) makes pricey countries like Norway feasible
 - In other places it may be very cheap, infinitely superior to backpacking food, and available even in remote mountain areas (Caucasus, Balkans)
- More flexibility for other trips (canoe/kayak trip, trips with a base camp)



The background image shows a rugged mountain range. In the foreground, there's a rocky path with some sparse green grass and small patches of snow. The middle ground features a steep, rocky mountain face with more snow. In the background, a large, jagged mountain peak rises, partially obscured by a thick layer of white and grey clouds. The sky above the clouds is a clear, pale blue.

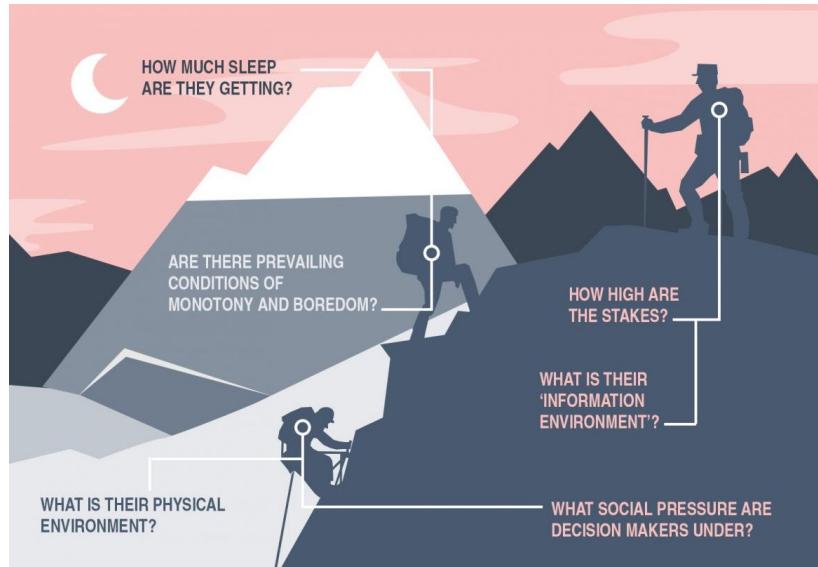
Decisions, Risk, Group Dynamics

“What’s the worst that can happen? You probably won’t drown or get eaten by a shark.”

~ Al Humphreys

Expedition psychology crash course

- “Derisk” the expedition - discuss potential stressors and risks beforehand. What’s your plan for dealing with each one?
- Challenge vs. threat - framing (stress isn’t always bad!)
- Sharing struggles - get the balance right (evening group discussion?)
- Pick your battles (minimise conflict with teammates)



Expedition psychology crash course

- Beware of externalising stress/anger and the **effect of distance**
- Sensory deprivation affects your reaction speed, perception of time, working memory - as does sleep deprivation and exhaustion (!!)
- Monitor mood
 - “Bouncing back” - good/bad days or constant decline?
 - PANAS/POMS
- Third-quarter phenomenon



Expedition psychology crash course

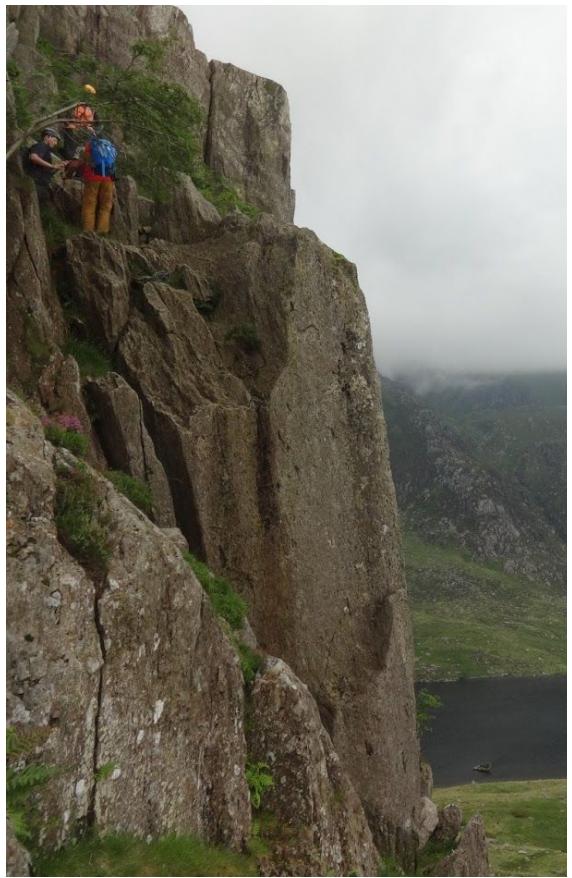
- Beware **groupthink!** The group get too comfortable, or too tired, or just blindly place trust in the leader, and don't speak up when they identify a potential mistake
- *"He says the route's this way...He's done ML, he knows what he's doing"*
- Stress (or heatstroke, hypothermia) can make people behave **extremely** irrationally

WHEN ALL **THINK** ALIKE,
THEN NO ONE IS THINKING

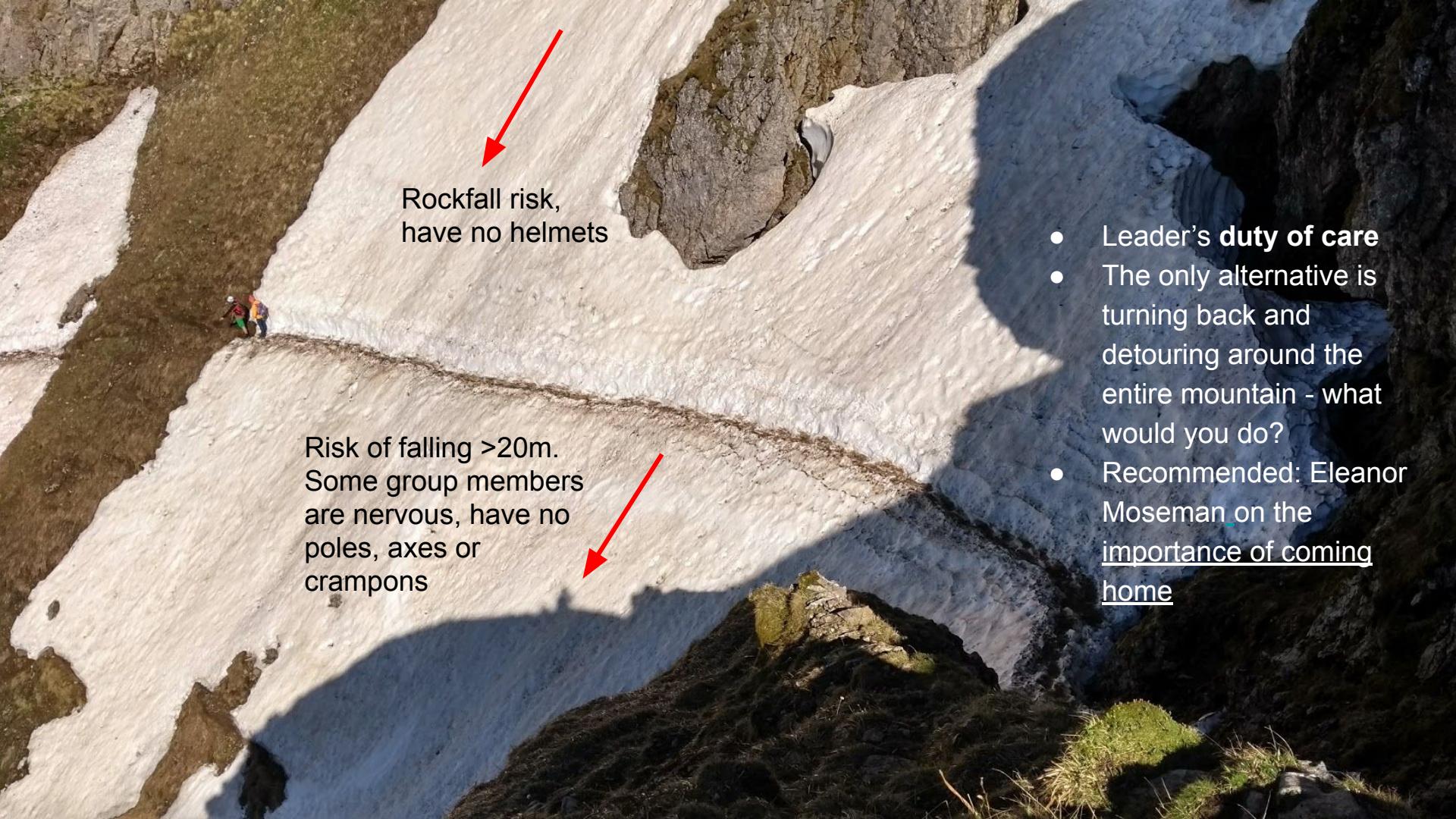
-WALTER LIPPMAN-



For much more on this topic check out Nathan Smith's excellent [introduction to expedition psychology course](#)



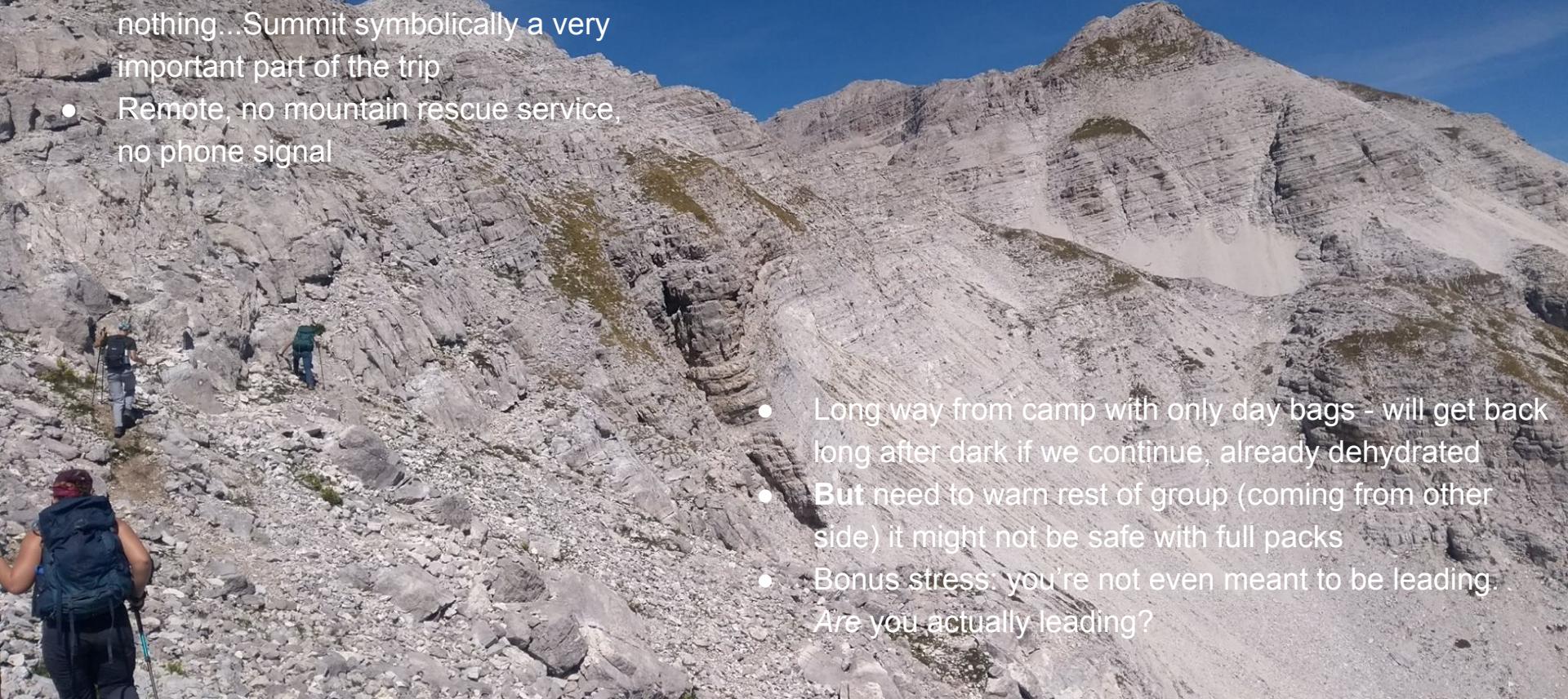




- Leader's **duty of care**
- The only alternative is turning back and detouring around the entire mountain - what would you do?
- Recommended: Eleanor Moseman on the importance of coming home



- Group members are nervous (including you!). Huge drops and very loose, unstable rock
- But we came all this way for nothing...Summit symbolically a very important part of the trip
- Remote, no mountain rescue service, no phone signal



- Long way from camp with only day bags - will get back long after dark if we continue, already dehydrated
- **But** need to warn rest of group (coming from other side) it might not be safe with full packs
- Bonus stress: you're not even meant to be leading. Are you actually leading?

Health and hazards on expedition

- **BLISTERS + infections**
- Sunburn, heatstroke
- Hypothermia
- Altitude sickness
- Women's health issues (boys cover your ears a sec)
- Running out of food or water
- Sheer exhaustion
- Dangerous plants, snakes, insects, animals
- Rockfall, landslides, avalanche, falls, river crossings, glaciers
- Vehicle / bike / boat breakdown
- **Road safety**, food poisoning / traveller's diarrhea, theft, political instability

Don't underestimate simple things like blisters! They can and will ruin your expedition if you're not careful...

Health and hazards on expedition

What might affect you or your teammates emotionally?

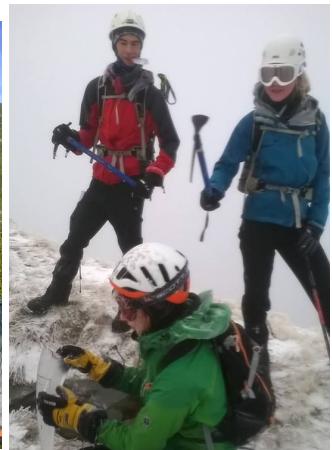
- Stress: culture shock, river crossings, storms, aggressive dogs, exposed ridges/climbs, getting lost...
- Boredom, bad weather, disappointment, feelings of failure
- Conflict within the team
- Sickness or injury
 - Especially if it's worsening and you're far from help, or if they *don't admit they're struggling*
- Often forgotten about:
 - Going on expedition immediately after a stressful exam period
 - Bad news / fear about exam results
 - **Insufficient physical and mental rest** before/during an expedition
 - Missing friends/family/partner at home, or bad news from home

Emotional first aid

Guy Winch on [How to practice emotional first aid](#)

- During the expedition
 - Look after your teammates!
 - SEALFIT on [Emotional resiliency and mental toughness](#): don't quit in darkness, ***emoting about a problem is not solving a problem***, short-term goals are crucial ("I'm going to make it through the next 10 minutes, and then I'll get a break")
 - Kelly McGonigal on [How to make stress your friend](#)
- Long-term resiliency building
 - "Bad companies are destroyed by crisis. Good companies survive it. Great companies are improved by it.' **What if you could be a person who is improved by crisis?** ~ Tim Ferriss, ["How to Succeed in High-Stress Situations"](#) and Ryan Holiday, ["The Obstacle is the Way"](#)
 - Stoicism - Tim Ferriss' [free ebooks of Seneca's letters](#) are a good place to start.

A UBESter's guide to stress responses



Risk Assessments

Mild altitude sickness (AMS)	Low	Moderate	The effects are likely to be mild as we will be trekking below 3000m, but we will ensure we acclimatise thoroughly by increasing the altitude of our camps gradually. All expedition members will be informed of the symptoms and group leaders will monitor members of the group. If symptoms occur, the affected persons should rest, and descend to lower elevations if the symptoms worsen or do not improve within 24hrs.
Lack of food	Low	Moderate	All expedition members should carry extra food in case of unforeseen delays during the trek, particularly during remoter sections of the route where villages are far apart.
Wild animals (bears, wolves) and snakes	Low	High	Encounters with bears and wolves are relatively uncommon and are especially unlikely when travelling in a large group, as groups make enough noise to ensure animals are aware of their presence. Local advice should be sought along the route regarding the risk and whether it is necessary to store food away from the camp, as bear presence varies by valley. Poisonous vipers are present in Svaneti but the noise of a large group, particularly a group using trekking poles (causing lots of vibration in the soil), is likely to scare them away. A viper bite is unlikely to be fatal but medical attention must be sought as soon as possible.
Shepherd dogs	High	Low	Flocks of sheep should be avoided wherever possible, as the dogs that guard them can be very aggressive towards strangers, although rarely attack without provocation. If encountered, shouting and use of trekking poles can keep the dogs at a distance.
Giant hogweed	Low	High	This is a plant native to the Caucasus that grows to 2-5m in height. Its sap is phototoxic and if it comes into contact with skin, subsequent exposure to sunlight can cause severe burns. All expedition members will be informed about the plant and necessary diversions will be made to avoid it.
Rabies (from animal bites/scratches)	Low	High	All expedition members will be recommended to have a full course of the rabies vaccine before departure, as we will be in remote areas where it will be difficult to obtain the post-exposure vaccination within 24hrs. All contact with animals will be avoided if possible. Following a possible exposure, the wound should be thoroughly cleaned and medical treatment sought as soon as possible.

The FCO advises against all travel to the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where there are risks of terrorism, landmines, and unexploded ordnance, and to the Russian regions bordering Georgia which have a high risk of terrorism (Dagestan, Chechnya, Ingushetia, North Ossetia). We have been advised by the TCT team that there is no significant risk of terrorism, conflict, or political violence in Svaneti, but as our planned route takes us close to the borders with Russia and Abkhazia, great care must be taken by group leaders to avoid navigational errors leading to mistakenly crossing the borders (this could cause legal difficulties as well as threaten safety). Political demonstrations (for example in Tbilisi) should be avoided, and trip plans should be amended to keep away from affected areas if rising tensions make such demonstrations seem likely.

Coming home

A wide-angle photograph of a mountainous landscape. In the foreground, there's a large, craggy rock formation on the left and a person sitting in a field of tall grass on the right. The middle ground shows rolling green hills. In the background, there are several mountain peaks, some with rocky outcrops and others with more vegetation. The sky is overcast with white and grey clouds.

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
~ T. S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

“When I got back from the Amazon, everyone was saying: what is your next big expedition? What are you going to do next?

I still find it extraordinary that you can do something that no human has ever done before, and people just consume that bit of information and then move on to what you’re going to do next. Who said I’m going to do anything next? I might just go home and have a cup of tea.”

~ *Ben Saunders*

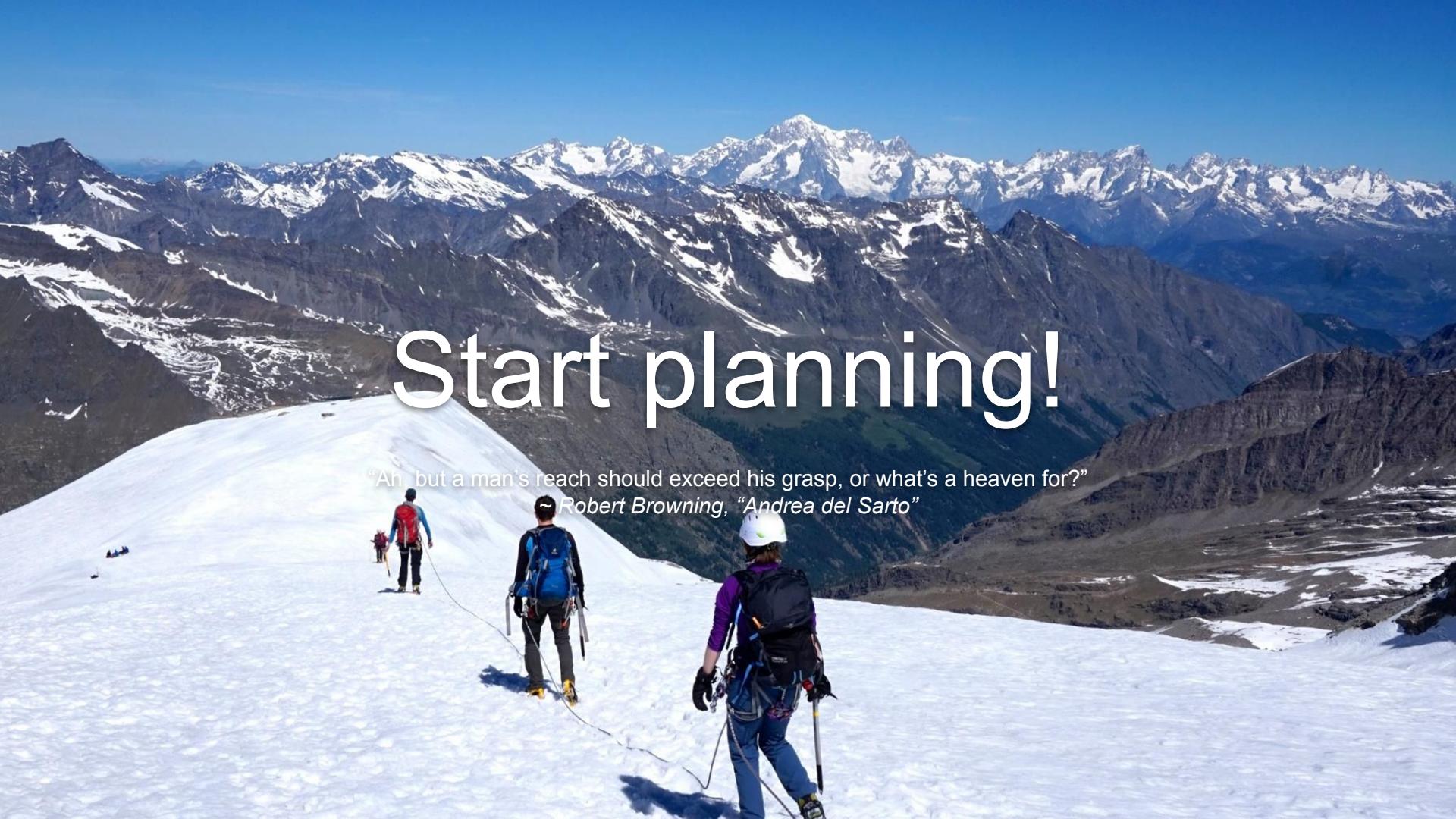
“As I write this I have been home from the Andes Mountains for almost three weeks. There I pedalled for 6 months - covering 9,000km through three countries and tackling over 100,000 metres of ascent. But I know full well that the challenges of the road pale in comparison to the challenge of returning home.

I'm rather proud of how I've done on the blues front so far. Alas, this week they have proudly announced their arrival. Characterised by a desire to lock myself away and not speak to anyone, bouts of frustration, teariness, feelings of hopelessness and an overwhelming sense that I am wriggling in a pool of quicksand, and could go under at any minute.”

~ Anna McNuff, “[Riding the Rollercoaster: 10 Tips to Cope With The Post-Adventure Blues](#)”
(recommended read - she links to lots of other adventurers' experiences too)

So I'm back...Now what?

- Debrief and spend time with your team
 - **Redefine success** if needed
- Rest, be patient...it's going to take a while
 - Some people cope best by throwing themselves straight into the next challenge - but what is the next challenge? Your whole outlook on life may have changed
- Build a narrative
 - Write, talk, share photos, edit together a film about your expedition
 - An **exped report** can be part of this - help others by providing useful beta
 - Doesn't all have to be public, build a narrative *for yourself*
 - Important coping mechanism - not just self-promotion!
 - Although obviously getting a book deal would be fab...
 - Focusing on anecdotes beats diary-style (for public stuff)

A wide-angle photograph of a majestic mountain range under a clear blue sky. In the foreground, three climbers are walking on a snow-covered slope. One climber in a red jacket and blue pants is further up the ridge, while two others in purple and black gear are closer to the camera. The middle ground shows a valley with a winding road and some buildings. The background is filled with numerous snow-capped peaks of varying heights.

Start planning!

"Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"

~Robert Browning, "Andrea del Sarto"