

Organised Challenges

There is a hugely competitive market for organised challenges, from mass participation fun runs to overseas treks. Once you have decided that either an established event or a packaged challenge is for you, look carefully at the options and find organisers and operators that do things well.

Single-Day Events

Mass participation challenge events must conform to very strict legal guidelines to ensure the safety of participants, but they can be organised with vastly different degrees of professionalism. There are so many single-day events for each discipline and level of endurance that you can afford to shop around. Consider the following:

- Cost of registration and what you get in return (support, facilities etc.)
- How available are the places? Places in some major events can only be obtained through charities.
- Level of health and safety support at the event (fluid stations, medics etc)
- Access – What is done to ensure that everyone can get to the event?
- Facilities – Can you change at the event? What refreshments are available? What is there for spectators?
- Administration – What do they do to prevent large registration queues? What do you have to do on the day?
- Extras – Medical and equipment checkpoints, information and advice stations, massage areas, 'try and buy' stalls, discounts, family areas etc.
- Reputation of the event – Talk to someone that has participated and find out if they had any problems.

How to get a 'Golden Bond' Place

Golden Bonds are distributed by major events, most notably the London Marathon, to charities, which gives them a guaranteed number of places in the event. Each place is then distributed by the charities at their discretion. Follow these steps to give yourself the best chance of getting a secured place through a charity:

- Apply early for a place in the event through the ballot system
- Let your chosen charity/ies know that you have applied through the ballot system, but that if unsuccessful you would like to be considered for a Golden Bond place
- A charity distributing places wants to know that you will raise at least the minimum sponsorship and that you will collect and send in that money on time. The following will help reassure them of this:
 - ♦ Evidence of fundraising success
 - ♦ A brief breakdown your main intended areas of fundraising
 - ♦ How you will ensure money collection
 - ♦ That you are organised, competent and determined
 - ♦ A realistic ambition to raise more than the minimum target

Expeditions

The number of organised treks or cycles grows every year, as do the number of people who have wonderful experiences through participating in them. Similarly, every year charities and adventure travel operators are becoming increasingly aware of the need to plan challenges which are environmentally and ethically sensitive, with the cause as the focal point rather than simply the funds.

However, this does not mean that there is a universal standard of practice. It is sensible to try and match what you want to achieve and how, with the policies and practice of the charities and operators.

The Choices Section (More info on pages 25-56) will have given you an idea as to the cause and means of your organised adventure. From this point there are two choices.

- To register with your charity of choice on one of their overseas challenges

- To register with an independent, third party charity challenge operator and participate in the name of a particular charity

For either of these decisions you should try and take into consideration some of the following:

Participants

If you are going to be on the expedition with a group of total strangers, which can be immensely rewarding, then it is worth finding out how they have been assembled. Will you all be travelling at the same pace or divided up into different ability groups? How big is the expedition group?

Reputation & Experience

Find out as much as you can about the operator who is organising the challenge. They will undoubtedly have a long list of positive quotes from participants, but what has gone wrong on previous trips? Have they run this trip before? What qualifications and experience do the guides have? What local operators are they linked to and what is their experience and reputation like? Do they know the area and the route well, or do they specialise in a particular area?



A team of Cancer Research UK Trek Peru participants

"The relationship between the charity and their tour operator is a really good sign of how well previous trips have gone, so look out for strong and long standing partnerships."

Nicola Hanna, Shelter