

# **World Federation of Independent Scouts WFIS**

## **Pathfinder Belt**



**International Project for Rovers and Scouts in WFIS worldwide  
The Pathfinder Belt**

**Introduction:**

The Pathfinder Belt is the challenge of a lifetime, which is open to Scouts aged over 16 and members of the Rover Section. It is a chance to take part in a ten-day expedition that brings a real understanding of a different country, its people and way of life.

The Pathfinder Belt is described as 'the antidote to the package holiday'. It is designed to help young people develop a real understanding of another country by travelling through that country, completing surprise projects, working as a small team and meeting local people.

**The Requirements:**

To complete the Pathfinder Belt, a Scout or Rover must:

- Be over 16 years old
- Plan and train for an international expedition as part of a small team
- Travel to another country and travel through that country over ten days
- Complete a self selected major project
- Complete about ten smaller projects
- Keep a Logbook during the expedition
- Take part in a debriefing after the expedition
- Make a presentation about the expedition

**Travel:**

Most Pathfinder Belt expeditions are undertaken on foot, although other forms of transport including canoe, boat, bicycle and horseback are equally acceptable. Some teams may wish to use local public transport as part of their expedition and, as long as this provides real opportunities to meet and talk with local people, then it is acceptable. Teams may wish to mix forms of travel. Please note that hitchhiking is not permitted by The WFIS.

**Duration:**

The expedition should last for at least ten days. The Pathfinder Belt is more of a marathon than a sprint! During this time, the team should spend at least 30 hours travelling from place to place and visit at least four different towns or villages. For a typical team travelling mainly on foot, this would suggest a route of about 100 miles (160km). However, it is important that the route and distance take into account the local geography, methods of transport, physical ability of the team members, daytime temperatures and likely weather. Time spent travelling to and from the country of the expedition should not be included.

**Training:**

Teams must complete training appropriate to the expedition they plan. For most young people, completing projects while on the move will be a new experience. A 'mini- Pathfinder Belt' in which teams undertake a journey over a weekend, near to home and with two or three surprise projects is excellent preparation. Training should cover expedition safety and emergencies, physical preparation and some considerable discussion about the best ways of approaching and meeting local people for help with projects.

It is essential that, by the end of the training, teams understand that the aim of the Pathfinder Belt is to 'develop a better understanding of another country, its people and way of life'. Teams that approach the Pathfinder as a purely physical challenge are unlikely to achieve the requirements.

**Where and When:**

Many Pathfinder belt expeditions are organized by a Country or Association. These expeditions benefit from the cost savings of group travel and the extra support that an experienced Country or Association team can offer. In this case the team may not have much influence over the destination and dates for the expedition. However, decisions about the precise route will always remain with the team.

Alternatively, Scouts and Rovers can organize their own Pathfinder Belt expeditions as a small team, perhaps as part of a larger trip or camp.

**Route:**

The route should be chosen with the following in mind:

- It should pass through at least four towns or villages
- It must not include any wild country
- It should support the major project and provide opportunities for completing smaller projects

In many countries, it will be easier to meet local people in villages rather than larger towns.

**Equipment:**

You will be on your own for at least 10 days; so all the gear must be reliable. Boots must be broken in, while adequate clothing for the conditions anticipated and suitable lightweight tents must be obtained.

Check what fuels are readily available in the country.

While you will be living largely on the food of the country being visited, ensure that you have dehydrated foods available as a reserve.

You should aim to carry no more than 16kg each or one fifth of your own body weight.

**Safety and Team Size:**

The safety of teams is essential. Pathfinder Belt expeditions should not be undertaken in adventurous country. Where it is necessary to pass through rough areas, the adventurous activity rules must be followed. Because it is essential to meet local people in order to complete the projects, it is much more effective to travel in semi-populated areas and in small groups. Teams should consist of no fewer than four people, but the size of team will depend on the hazards likely to be met.

In most areas where Pathfinder Belt expeditions take place, there should be good access to a mobile telephone network and this should be seriously considered as one of the emergency contact options, but not the only option. Teams should be clearly briefed about what to do in an emergency. Common-sense advice, appropriate to the country being visited, should also be given about approaching and meeting local people. Many teams have reported that wearing a Scout uniform at all times provides a quick and effective way of being recognised as a Scout.

**Budget:**

Most Pathfinder Belt expeditions operate on a tight budget. In practice, this helps because it encourages teams to eat local food, avoid large commercial campsites and to take advantage of home hospitality.

**Projects:**

Each team should choose a major project. The assessment team should approve the project before departure. A good major project is one that:

- Surveys of the leisure and recreation interests of young people and the facilities available to them.
- Investigates typical rural industries and crafts
- Makes a comparison of lifestyles in the villages and uplands
- Follows the course of a river and investigate the different communities it serves, their industry, agriculture and lifestyles
- Musician development of this Country
  
- Culture
- Food and drink
- Architecture
- Language

Each team should also complete ten smaller projects. Five of these should be surprise projects set by the other members of the Network or Unit. These projects should be given to the team 24 hours before departure. Teams should be able to choose projects from a longer list of around 20 projects, in order to provide flexibility and choice based on local circumstances.

**A good project is one that:**

- Needs help or information from local people
- Will prompt the team to try or do something that they might otherwise have missed
- Takes an hour or so to complete
- Is based around something unique or special about the area being visited.
- For example 'chat to the oldest person you can find in a village about the changes they have seen in the area during their lifetime' or 'in the UK, many people use the Internet every day. How important is the Internet to people in the area you're visiting?'

**Debriefing:**

As soon as the expedition is completed and, if possible, before leaving the country being visited, the team should hold an informal debriefing with a Leader. This is designed to help the team reflect on:

- What they have done
- The people they have met
- How their views have developed about the country visited
- How they worked as a team
- The appropriateness of their planning and training
- What they have achieved

The debriefing is not an assessment and no judgements should be made.

**Logbook:**

The logbook is assessed. Its purpose is to help teams keep personal notes about their expedition and to support the debriefing and presentation. The logbook could be kept on paper, dictated or completed as a video diary. Photographs or slides are also useful and can help to support the presentation.

**Assessment:**

The Pathfinder Belt is assessed by a team who will base their decision on:

- How much the team have developed their knowledge of the country, people and way of life
- How much the team members have developed personally and as a team from the experience
- The quality of the expedition

The members of the assessment team will normally include:

- Any expedition leaders.
- The Network Co-ordinator.
- Another person appointed by the District, Country or Association.

The debriefing, the presentation and a discussion with the team normally help to make the decision. Successful teams receive a certificate and the Pathfinder Belt, which is a belt with a special buckle and is available from the WFIS Supplies.

Pathfinder Belt expeditions may count towards the 'Other Adventurous Projects' requirements of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Gold Expedition, provided that a notification form is sent to the appropriate Association Headquarters at least four months before the expedition. The Pathfinder Belt can also be used to fulfil the requirements of the St George Award expedition or parts of the other Awards, but it may not be used more than once.