

Safer adventure holidays and field trips for British abroad

Whether exploring the Amazon, attempting to scale Mount Everest or taking part in a gap year in Africa, a new British standard has been launched today at the Royal Geographical Society (RGS) in response to increased calls to make overseas adventure activities safer. The British Standards Institution (BSI) has published, BS 8848: *A Specification for adventurous activities, expeditions, visits and fieldwork outside the UK*.

The new BSI standard has been developed for adventurous activities abroad with the aim of reducing the risk of injury or illness. It specifies requirements that have to be met by an organiser of adventurous trips conforming to good practice. It is aimed at expedition organisers, universities and other organisers of field trips, gap year travel companies and providers of adventurous holidays.

BS 8848 takes a start to finish approach requiring that one person or organisation is identified as the venture provider or expedition organiser with responsibility for all aspects of the trip including safety. If the organiser uses outside help for certain aspects of the venture such as transport, accommodation or an adventure element they need to ensure that their chosen suppliers follow the relevant requirements of the standard.

Meeting public concerns

BS 8848 was developed because of consumer concerns about the risks associated with adventurous holidays, fieldwork, expeditions and other visits and participants' variable levels of competence, training and fitness*. The idea was originally proposed to BSI by Peter Eisenegger, whose daughter Claire died of heat stroke on a gap year expedition in 1999. BSI discussed this with the RGS who helped bring together an extensive network of stakeholders and experts to develop the new British standard.

Mike Low, Director of BSI British Standards said "BSI is very grateful to the parents, travel operators, educational groups and adventure specialists who worked with us to develop this new standard. With their input, we now have a British standard that not only captures the very best thinking on good practice in managing overseas ventures that will give invaluable

guidance for trip organisers but also provide much needed reassurance to participants and their parents.”

Managing the risks

The new British standard will help companies to assess the risks involved in a trip abroad and take appropriate steps to manage them. It will also provide those organisations that use the standard with a way of being able to demonstrate to those going on the venture, as well as other interested parties, that their organisation is following good practice to manage the trip safely.

Nigel Gifford OBE explorer and well respected author on expeditions said “BS 8848 is applicable to adventurous people of all ages, no matter what their objectives and ambitions may be. The standard enables people to instantly recognise a professional operator that takes its responsibilities seriously in every aspect of the provision, management and delivery of the travel programme. BS 8848 will instill confidence in those looking for adventure, safe in the knowledge that their travel is organised by a responsible provider.”

Putting the principles into practice

The interest in this new standard is such that several organisations are already working on putting it into practice.

Imperial College London has put the standard into their management system for university fieldwork, the Young Explorers Trust is working with three member organisations that have submitted plans for expeditions in 2007 to trial how they could conform with BS 8848, Raleigh International is intending to adopt the standard and Girlguiding UK is reviewing their internal procedures against the standard for reasons explained by Jacky Ramsden:

“For those organisations who are new to offering ventures overseas, BS 8848 will guide them through all the essential stages involved. For other organisations like ourselves who have a long history of running ventures overseas, it provides a useful tick list against which to check our current operating procedures and guidance. BS 8848 is the culmination of a wide variety of organisations sharing their own good practice and offers something for everyone.”

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For further information, please contact:

Jonathan Mason
Public Relations Officer

Tel: +44 (0) 20 8996 7248
Email: jonathan.mason@bsi-global.com
Website: www.bsi-global.com

Notes to Editors:

1. **The launch** of the new 'Overseas venture' standard BS 8848 is hosted by the Royal Geographical Society and will be attended by [tbc]
2. **BSI British Standards** is the UK's national standards body, working with government, businesses and consumers to represent UK interests and facilitate the production of British, European and international standards to meet economic and social needs. For further information please go to www.bsi-global.com/british_standards.
3. **Mike Low, Peter Eisenegger and Nigel Gifford are available for comment as are Matt Davies of the Travel and Tourism Lawyers Association, Professor Robert Schroter of Imperial College London and the explorer Paul Rose.** Please contact Jonathan Mason on 0208 996 7248 to arrange an interview.
4. **BS 8848** gets its number from the height of Mount Everest and can be used for any adventurous travel overseas but is particularly aimed at the following groups: expedition organisers; universities, further education colleges and other organisers of field work and field research; gap year travel companies; providers of adventurous holidays; and voluntary groups organising overseas adventurous travel. It will help them to identify and manage risks when planning their ventures and therefore to reduce the likelihood of serious harm or injury to participants. The standard can also be used to investigate when incidents happen, and identify areas for improvement of safety management.
5. ***Research** carried out for BSI during the development of the standard last year of parents with children at school, on a gap year or at university showed that one in four don't know who's in charge when their sons and daughters are away and 82% think trips should comply with a safety standard.
6. **Case studies** setting out real examples of adventure venture scenarios in which BS 8848 would apply are available on request. Please contact Jonathan Mason on 0208 996 7248.
7. **Members of the BSI Technical Committee** responsible for developing this standard include representatives of: ABTA, Adventure Activities Licensing Authority, Army Accident Investigation team, British Association of International Mountain Guides, British Association of International Mountain Leaders, Commercial Expedition Providers, Expedition Advisory Centre, Expedition Providers Association, Imperial College London, Geographical Association, Girlguiding UK, Higher Education Academy Subject Centre, National Association of Field Studies Office, Summitreks Ltd, Royal Geographical Society with IBG, Travel and Tourism Lawyers Association, Year Out Group, Young Explorers Trust. Peter Eisenegger has been part of the BSI committee as a consumer representative.
8. **Copies of BS 8848** can be purchased for £80 and £40 for charities or BSI members from www.bsi-global.com/bs8848. For a free review copy of the standard please contact Jonathan Mason on 0208 996 7248.