

Explorer Belt 2025 - Malta

Questions and Answers

Q: What is an Explorer Belt (XB)?

A: An Explorer Belt is an expedition like no other. The aim is to fully immerse yourselves in a new country and to learn about its culture and its people. While travelling, your team will have some small tasks and a project (chosen by you) to complete.

Q: How important are Explorer Belts?

A: The Explorer Belt is one of the 5 TOP awards in Scouting (along with the Young Leader Award, Kings Scout Award, DofE Gold and Scouts of the World Award). You have to be aged 16-24 to achieve the award.

Q: How long is the Expedition?

A: An Explorer Belt (XB) expedition is ten days long, however, we expect to be out of the UK for around two weeks, depending on travel time to and from Malta.

Q: What are the requirements of the XB?

A: HQ have laid out some specific requirements.

1. You must register with HQ to do an Explorer Belt (we will send you details later).
2. Be aged 16-24 on the first day of the expedition.
3. You must undertake a training program.
4. You must have First Response First Aid training
5. You must undertake a 10 day expedition in an unknown Country (with some restrictions on type of location and height – known as Terrain 1).
6. During the Expedition, the team must complete a major project.
7. During the Expedition, the team must complete ten minor challenges.
8. During the Expedition, the team must undertake 50 hours of travelling, going through at least 5 towns.
9. During the Expedition, a personal diary should be kept.
10. Immediately after the expedition (the day after), an in-country debrief must be completed between each team and the leaders.
11. A short while after return to the UK, the team needs to make a presentation of their XB to a group. This group should consist of parents, other Scout members (such as Network / Explorer unit), and to Scouting leaders (such as Leader, DC, CC).
12. A report is then sent to HQ for HQ to consider. HQ will then make the final decision on the awarding of the XB award.

Only after the award has been confirmed by HQ, can the Explorer Belt, Badge and Certificate then be presented to the team member (this can be 3-6 months after the expedition).

Q: Explorer Belt?

A: Yes, the award has a leather belt, with a special XB buckle.

Q: What are the dates for the Expedition?

A: At this point, we are provisionally saying Saturday 5th July 2025 to Sunday 20th July 2025. However, it will ultimately depend on the ability to travel (i.e. Flights etc.).

Q: Will I need time away from School / College?

A: It will depend on your School Year

Year 11 – GCSE Year	You should have finished your Exams by early June, and therefore, left school.
Year 12 – First year of college	Yes, you may need to request absence from College, depending on your college. It will be down to you to check your college policy. <u>We advise on doing this before applying.</u>
Year 13 – Second year of college	You should have finished taking your A-Levels in early June, and therefore left College
After College – At University	You should have finished your University term and any exams in mid-June.
After College / Working / Apprenticeships	You will need to request two weeks Annual leave. However, it is down to you to check your situation and to make the appropriate arrangements.

Q: What is the age range for the Explorer Belt?

A: Team members are put into two age groups

Under 18’s – Must be aged 16 or 17 provisionally on 7th July 2025

18 and over’s – Must be aged 18 provisionally on 7th July 2025, and under 25 on 16th July 2025

Our initial plan is to keep under and over 18’s in separate teams, however, we may end up with a mixed age team.

Q: Why 7th July 2025?

A: The date goes on Day 1 of the 10 day expedition. Assuming we travel on Saturday 5th July, we will start the 10 day expedition on Monday 7th July 2025.

Q: Do we have to walk a specific distance?

A: No, to complete an XB you need to travel for an average of 5 hours a day. You don’t have to walk it all, a big part of XBs is to learn to use local transport to get around. If you’re feeling really adventurous you might even consider travelling by horse or Kayak (with appropriate permits and risk assessments)!

Q: How big will my team be?

A: Officially, teams are 3-7 for 18 and overs, and 4-7 for under 18’s. We will probably be aiming for 18 and overs to be at a size of 4 to 5, and under 18’s to be team size of 5.

Q: Which country will we be going to?

A: We are going to Malta, which is in the EU. This means that if you have spent any time in Malta, you must declare it on the Application Form, and, you may not be able to go (as it has to be an “unknown” country).

Q: What’s the cost?

A: To put it simply, as cheap as possible! We are aiming for the trip to be no more than £1,250, but would like to keep it nearer to £1,150. A lot will depend on the airfares, which we will not know until we have booked them in March 2025. As a result, we are saying to expect a price range of £1,100 to £1,250, and we will set the final price in April 25. All above pricing is per person.

Q: How do we apply?

A: Complete the XB25 Application form, and send it in by E-mail or post. Applications will be processed in order that they are received.

Q: Leaders / DC References / Other Checks

A: We will need to carry out references with your Leaders and your DC (if part of a County Team, the CC). The results of these references are confidential. Once satisfactory references and checks have been completed, we will then look at all of the applications and select the members for the expedition.

Q: Will we have leaders escorting us during the XB?

A: No, during the ten days of the XB itself, you will be travelling, camping and exploring independently in your teams, **without adult leaders**. As a team, you will make your own decisions on where you are going, how you are going, what you are going to do, what food you buy, how to spend your budget etc. etc.

Q: Budget?

A: Each team will be given a budget to cover the 10 days. This covers your food, camping fees, travel and entrance to things. As a team, you will need to carry these funds, and decide how much to spend on what. You will also need to account for these monies. The budget will be designed to make you think about what you are spending, but will be enough to cover everything. For safety, you will not be given all of the funds on day 1, but the leader support team will top your funds up during the expedition.

Q: Will we be on our own out there?

A: No, you will have an in country support team who will be in contact every day, and will come and check on you every 3 days or so. This team consists of Jools Sore (Hampshire ACC(International)) and Jo Sore (Andover District Scout Network Commissioner), who have both led XB expeditions in 2010, 2014 and 2018, and Kathryn Fadli and Grace Peel, who both have taken part in numerous International expeditions.

Q: Will we just be travelling whilst out there?

A: No, you will have 10 minor challenges to complete that will be set by the leader team, i.e. visit a local church service, have a meal with a local family etc. You will also choose a major project that you can research out there. This will then create the basis for the presentation when you are back in the UK. The minor challenges and major project will be designed to encourage you to interact with the local people.

Q: Why do we do a presentation?

A: To complete the XB, you must feedback to parents, leaders, friends and more about what you got up to on your trip. Part of this feedback must include info on your project and your tasks. Take lots of photos to show everyone what you got up to.

Q: Do I need any specific skills before I apply?

A: You will need to be confident camping, carrying all of your own kit, and cooking on something like a Trangia. You will also need good map reading skills. Don't worry if you aren't strong in all of these areas, we will be practicing, and you will have team mates to help too.

Q: Do I need any pre-requisite training for the XB?

A: You must have completed a valid First Response First Aid training within 3 years before 20th July 2025. This is the same First Aid training that is required for Young Leaders and Adult Leaders. Whilst we do not do this training as part of the XB, if needed, we will help put you in touch with people in your District or County that can organise this if you need to do it.

Q: Do we always camp during the XB?

A: No, whilst you have to assume that you will be camping for the 9 nights, you may not. Part of the XB is to explore and get to know the local culture. This hopefully means you will meet and talk to local people, where you may get opportunities to stay in interesting places. This has included Scout Huts, Churches, Sports Pavilions, Castles as well as people's houses (18 and overs only). There are some rules and restrictions on where you can stay, and we will go through these.

Q: Do we stay with strangers?

A: Teams consisting of all 18 and overs, are allowed to take advantage of any opportunities that come up (including staying in houses of people they meet). Teams with under 18's have to follow safeguarding rules, which means that they will mainly need to use campsites or safe alternatives. We will be giving full training and guidance to the teams as to what the rules are. The leader support team will be contactable during the expedition if the team has any questions or concerns about opportunities that have been offered.

Q: Do they have Scouts in Malta?

A: Very much, Yes. Scouting is very strong in Malta, with several thousand members (which for the size of the Island, is significant). Malta also has at least 6 Scout Campsites of various sizes, so plenty of places to stay before even looking at commercial or other locations. There are also 2 Scout Campsites on Gozo.

Q: Gozo?

A: Gozo is a smaller Island to the North West of Malta (a bit like Isle of Wight and Hampshire). There are regular (every 30min) cheap ferries between Malta and Gozo (unlike the Isle of Wight). We are still looking into all of the aspects, but there is a reasonable prospect that teams will be allowed to cross to Gozo and explore Gozo as well.

Q: Do we need maps?

A: You will need some maps of where you are going to. However, please do not expect the map level to be the same as the amazing Ordnance Survey maps we have here in the UK. We are lucky in having 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 maps here in the UK. Quite often, European maps are only 1:400,000 or only even just basic road maps. The expedition will supply the maps.

Q: How do we prepare?

A: We will be having two single day planning meetings, where we decide on teams, going through route and project planning, safety, safeguarding and emergency procedures etc. We will also start planning routes and arranging who can bring what kit. We will also have two practice weekends where you will do a mini XB. This allows us to see if you can tell which way North is, travel from A to B, and gets you in the habit of completing your tasks and working as a team and budgeting. The teams may change between the training weekends, and the expedition as we settle everybody down. Each team member will also need to undertake First Response First Aid training (some may have this up to date already, or we can help point you in the right direction / organise a course for XB members).

Q: Do we have to take part in the training?

A: Yes, it is compulsory. It is a requirement of the XB, and is needed for team building.

Q: Do we know any dates yet?

A: The following are the dates that we currently have lined up (**THESE ARE COMPULSARY Dates, and need to be prioritised over ALL and ANY other activity**)

- a. 12th January 2025 – Initial Meet Up, team building, planning day.
- b. 28th February 2025 to 2nd March 2025 – Training Weekend 1
- c. 4th – 6th April 2025 – Training Weekend 2

- d. 22nd June 2025 – Final Check Day
- e. 5th July – 20th July 2025 – The Explorer Belt
- f. Afternoon of 7th September 25 – Report Back Presentations

Q: Why do we need two weeks for a 10 day expedition

A: Some time will be taken up travelling there and back. We also need a day in country when we arrive to purchase things for the start of the expedition. We also need a day after all of the teams have returned, to undertake an in-country debrief (a requirement of the award).

Q: Do I need to be physically fit?

A: Yes, you will need to be fit enough to carry your back pack for 10 days whilst carrying out 50 hours of travel and the minor and major tasks. This includes camping for at least 9 nights (and potentially 12 nights). You will also need to be able to cope with the Malta temperatures.

Q: Is it going to be Hot?

A: Yes, the typical daytime temperature for July is 31oC, and night time temperature is 22oC. If you can not cope with these temperatures, **then this expedition is NOT for you**. On the plus side, it will be dry!

Q: I have some medical conditions that impact my ability, can I still take part?

A: Please let us know about these on the application form (and also contact us to discuss). We are allowed to make reasonable adjustments to the XB requirements to accommodate. However, we do have to fundamentally ensure that the XB is a safe opportunity for you, and that it is a team event. This may limit the reasonable adjustments that can be made. There are a number of opportunities for Explorer Belts, and another trip may be better suited to your specific requirements.

Q: What equipment is provided and what do I need to provide?

A: We will not be providing any equipment, as hiking equipment is normally very individual. All participants will need lightweight clothing suitable for hiking in a hot climate, will need a lightweight cool bedding (such as a one season sleeping bag and an air mattress). You will also need cutlery and a torch. You will also need a suitable comfortable and good fitting rucksack. You will also need footwear that is lightweight, cool and comfortable.

As a team, you will need to provide compasses, lightweight tents and gas Trangia's. Individual team members may have these, or, you may be able to borrow these from your local Explorer unit (especially if they have a DofE provision). Whilst it is down to the team to organise tents and Trangia's, we are happy to talk to local leaders to help facilitate this.

Q: Who is the reporting authority for the expedition?

A: This expedition is run through Hampshire County Scouts, and falls under the County Program team. The Hampshire County Commissioner (or their nominee) has ultimate responsibility.

Q: Can we pay in stage payments

A: Yes. We have the following stage payment dates that will need to be met

- a. £100 – Non Refundable Deposit – December 24 (on acceptance of place)
- b. £400 – 2nd Payment – 28th Feb 25
- c. £400 – 3rd Payment – 31st Mar 25
- d. £200-£350 – 4th Payment – 30th April 25

Q: Where do we pay monies to?

A: All funds are held and managed by Hampshire County Scouts. We prefer electronic bank transfers, and will supply you with all of the information for these.

Q: Can we fundraise?

A: Yes, you can fundraise for the expedition, and you can approach your local Groups and Districts for Grants etc. You can set up on-line donation pages as well.

Q: Are there any grants available?

A: There are no specific grants available through ourselves. However, you may apply to the Hampshire County Scouts International Grant Fund, and also through your Explorer / Network groups.

Q: Where can I find out more about Explorer Belt Award in general?

A: You can always look at <https://members.scouts.org.uk/explorerbelt>

Q: What are the behaviour expectations?

A: The Explorer Belt is an amazing expedition, and due to the very nature of the expedition, we are allowing teams to travel and explore in an unknown Country, without direct leadership. As a result, **we expect and must have impeccable behaviour from all team members**. This includes following scout rules, and the scout laws, as well as all normal expected norms.

This is not just to the word, but to the spirit and the intention. **The requirement for the XB is at a significantly higher level than is usually required for general Scouting**. Whilst we want young people to have a fantastic time and to be themselves, we must have complete faith and trust that their behaviour is impeccable.

If anything during the application process, planning days, training weekends, social media, electronic communications or anything that comes to our attention, causes us to have concerns in this area, **we may unfortunately have to remove the individual (or individuals) from the expedition**.

As I am sure you can imagine, taking young people and letting them loose in a strange country, is a massive undertaking and therefore, the leader team are only prepared to take those that clearly demonstrate that they are ready and can be 100% fully trusted. This equally applies to those 18 and over, as to those under 18.

Q: How will we travel to / from the Country?

A: We will be flying, most likely on a low cost airline such as EasyJet, Ryanair. However, there are about 8 airlines that fly from the UK to Malta, and fly from numerous airports including Bournemouth, Heathrow and Gatwick. There is also a strong possibility that Southampton Airport may start flights as well.

Q: How do we get to from the UK airport?

A: It will be down to yourself to get to / from the UK departure and return airport.

Q: Where will we stay at the start and the end of the XB in Malta?

A: We will be looking for backpacking Dorm style accommodation (so this may be say 6, 12 or 20 to a room). Alternatively, it may be a campsite.

Q: Tent sharing?

A: As members will be in small teams (of around 5), it will be down to them to decide on if they want to have either single sex tents or mixed sex tents. This will be something that we will be discussing overall and with the teams, and will notify the parents if a team wishes to have mixed sex tents.

Q: Are we allowed to take phones?

A: Yes. To complete the Explorer Belt, you will need to take photos and video of your amazing journey. We will also need to maintain communication with the team – therefore at least two of the team members must have phones that can send and receive messages, be tracked, and make and receive phone calls with the in-country support leader team. Also, the phones can be useful to make arrangements with a campsite before arriving

etc. However, we do ban communication with home, and social media use. There are a couple of reasons for this, and one includes safety – if you are promoting generally what you are doing and where you are staying, it can invite the wrong attention to your team.

Q: Who covers the cost of using phones in Malta?

A: This will be yourselves. We strongly advise that if your phone is one of the main team phones, to make sure that it has a suitable payment plan that includes EU usage. If yours is not, then to make sure that you take some simple steps such as

- A. Turn off Roaming (so only use Wifi).
- B. Turn off Media Backup on Mobile Data (so that photo's and Video are not uploaded whilst roaming)
- C. Do not live stream etc.

Q: What is the Photo Video usage policy?

A: The leader team may take photos and video for "Scouting Purposes". This includes using on Scouting Social Media, and for items such as the annual review. In this use, individuals will not be named. If an individual should not have their image used in this way, please let us know. We have no control over any other individual and the photo's or video that they may take. We of course can not limit or control photo's or video taken by individual team members.

Q: How do the leaders know where the teams are?

A: Each team will need to have two phones that can be tracked by the leader team (and therefore, you will need to consent that for the period of the training weekends, and the XB, that mobile phones can be tracked by the leaders). The tracking will be done in a leader group (so no one to one tracking). The leader team will also expect at least two messages per day, one in the morning saying what the plan for the day is, and one in the evening saying that you are safely at X location, and what the provisional plan is for the next day.

Q: Comms between Leaders and Teams?

A: The Leader Team will use Whats App groups to communicate with each team. For each group, all of the leaders and all of the team members will be in the group, to avoid any 1:1 communication.

Q: Comms between Leaders and XB participants and Parents?

A: The Leader Team will use Whats App groups to communicate with all team members (i.e. all together in one group). We will also set up a Leader Team and Parents group to facilitate comms to parents.

We have tried other methods, but Whats App seems to now be the most dominate comms method, and has a minimum age of 13, which all of our users will be over.

Q: Can parents use phone trackers?

A: We do recommend that parents stop tracking their YP during the training weekends and the XB, and leave the leaders to run the events. We also ask for minimal direct communication as well.

Q: Can we go swimming in Malta?

A: There are some amazing beaches in Malta, that have Red Cross Beach Life Guards. Over 18's can go swimming. Under 18's will be able to go swimming if the in-country leader team are present (so we will organise this to be one of our "visit times").

Q: Will travel insurance be organised?

A: Yes, we will be aiming to take out the Unity Insurance in late March 2025. This will be when the outgoing payments significantly increase.

The insurance does not cover the full cost of the expedition. It only covers “non recoverable items” and “items not already received”. Therefore, cost of things like UK training weekends, equipment, food during the expedition are not covered under the insurance. If we need to make a claim on the insurance, we will need to do work to calculate what can be claimed etc.

Q: Will I need an E/GHIC Card (European / Global Health Insurance Card)?

A: As the UK has left Europe, the EHIC (whilst still valid), is being replaced by a GHIC card, which is available free of charge. Everybody will need to have one, and we will need a copy.

Q: Will you be using OSM (Online Scout Manager)?

A: Yes, as an expedition, we will be using the OSM system to register all of the team members, to capture details needed for the management and running of the expedition. This includes health data, next of kin data, management of planning days and training weekends etc. It will also be used for sending E-mails out about the expedition and all training events. Full access to this data will be limited to the XB25 leader team, home contact and immediate management.

Q: Will there be any other Electronic systems used?

A: Yes, we will be storing all of our documents in a Hampshire Scouts storage area on Microsoft 365. Access to this area will be limited to the XB25 leader team, home contact and immediate management.

Q: Will data be stored within a GDPR Policy?

A: Yes, the expedition falls under the Hampshire County Scouts GDPR policy (available upon request), and all data will be stored and processed under this policy. After the expedition, the data will be cleansed as much as possible, but some data will need to be retained for up to 9 years (for potential insurance claims).

Q: Will we need to have Passports?

A: Yes, each individual will need to have a valid individual passport. We are anticipating that there will be a requirement to have 6 months expiry from our return date, which would currently indicate an expiry date of at least 20th Jan 2026.

Q: Will you need a copy of my passport and E/GHIC?

A: Yes, the expedition leader team will need to hold an electronic scanned copy of the passport being used, along with the E/GHIC (and these need to show the same forename and Surname). This is normally collected before we book flights (March 2025). If a passport is in the process of being renewed at this point, we can make alternative arrangements.

Q: Will I need an ETIAS (EU Travel Authorisation)?

A: Yes, assuming that the EU ETIAS has started (currently due in Early 2025, but has been delayed many times), then all team members will need to have a valid ETIAS. The team member will need to apply and pay for this themselves (currently, an expected cost of €7), and confirmation details will need to be passed to the leaders. As part of this, please note, under the new EU rules, you can only spend a maximum of 90 days in a rolling 180 day period in the EU. Therefore, you need to make sure that the 15 day period for the XB in early July does not break this 90 days in a 180 day period for you.

Q: Can I be removed from the Expedition?

A: Yes. All places are granted by permission of the County Commissioner. The County Commissioner (or their Nominee), can remove any individual from the expedition at any time, and for any reason. The leaders and County, places a lot of trust in those taking part in the XB. As a result, we expect impeccable behaviour from those taking part, and anything that gives the leaders concern may result in the individual being removed. Likewise, we need to have confidence and ensure that we have minimised potential medical

and mental health risks. If we have any doubts over being able to run the expedition safely for all participants, we may need to make the decision to remove a member.

Withdrawal Policy

If a team member withdraws, or is withdrawn by the Hampshire County Scouts, then the following applies

- a. No refund will be made until after the expedition, and the accounts are completed.
- b. The non-refundable deposit is not included in any refund
- c. All costs incurred so far, and future costs that cannot be cancelled or changed, will not be included in a refund.
- d. The cost of withdrawing will include costs associated with another person taking their place, this includes possibly having to reduce the price to fill the place, and the cost of changing names over.
- e. If the withdrawal is covered by the insurance (such as death in family), then this will go towards the calculation of the refund. Please Note : Insurance only covers certain items, it does not cover the full price.

End of Expedition Refunds

Hampshire Scouts policy is to require a suitable contingency be built into every Expedition budget in order to cater for unforeseen expenses that may arise before or during the event. Where the Expedition final accounts show a surplus, the County will normally return surplus funds to participants, subject to a retention of up to £50 per participant. No refund will be issued for amounts under £20 per person, with the funds. Funds retained may be applied either towards its event contingency fund or for County Expedition / event grants.

Any other questions?

If you have any other questions, please feel free to E-mail us on XB25Malta@hampshirescouts.org.uk

Or give Jools a call on 07789 966440