

## A Coeliac on DofE

Having food allergies, intolerances and special dietary requirements should not be allowed to interfere with completing any DofE expeditions but as we all know food is the first thing on our mind and then immediately panic sets in thinking of the worst – what if I become ill in the middle of the countryside! Which in all honesty is the worst situation ever, however, with a bit of careful planning and conversations with your supervisors and other participants in your team there should not be any problems and most importantly you are kept safe!

I was diagnosed with coeliac disease in December 2017 and I had completed my Bronze and Silver awards before this so I based my food on what I'd typically have on expedition but found a gluten free version or close alternative. I don't have a diagnosis of lactose intolerance but any fellow coeliac will know the two can go hand in hand. I've noticed I feel unwell after eating dairy so I limit the amount I eat. By no means is mine the most ideal food to take with you and there are many different alternatives but I hope my experience will give you some ideas on what you can eat and how to keep safe and not get seriously ill all whilst walking long distances and taking on a big challenge in various locations across the UK.

Finding food to take on expedition was an expedition in itself! It can take some research and multiple trips to different supermarkets to gather all your food but it is definitely worth it. Usually you'd cook as a team on expeditions but there are two options:

1. Cook your own food and the rest of the team have a different option
2. All participants in your team eat your food if they are happy to do so (just bear in mind the cost as gluten free food is expensive)

### Things to think about:

- Separate cooking equipment – there will be no chance of cross contamination if you have a separate Trangia to cook your food on.
- You can have a variations form for dietary requirements. Speak to your supervisor for this as your separate cooking equipment is vital to stop you from becoming unwell and you will not have to carry this as group equipment because it's medical related.
- Pack a few sponges and tea towels that are used for you only
- Pack for emergencies in case you accidentally come into contact with something you shouldn't (if you know, you know!) like eucalyptus peppermint tea etc – whatever helps you!
- Set up a group chat to organise food arrangements. Some dietary requirements like being gluten free can be expensive so take this into consideration. Also if you have an allergy you can ask your team not to bring that food with them - It's only a few days without it for them!
- Shop at multiple places to get a variety of products – I ended up in Tesco, Asda, Morrisons, Sainsburys and Holland and Barrett
- Locate the pubs/restaurants in the local area you will be finishing in to see if they cater for dietary requirements to eat at once your expedition is over – don't leave it to end of your expedition and be disappointed when you can't find any dinner to eat! It's also worth booking a table at the place you wish to go to as they can get booked and panic set in when you don't know where else to go.
- Gain inspiration from social media – there are so many gluten free food influencers, Facebook groups which may give you ideas of other people's experiences and other products.





This is a list of all the food I took:

Breakfast:

- Tesco free from porridge oats multipack
- Quaker Oats gluten free plain
- Alpro Soya cream
- Genius gluten free pancakes
- Promise gluten free authentic brioche chocolate chip rolls
- Cadbury, Galaxy and Wispa hot chocolate powder sachets

Lunches:

- Genius gluten free plain wraps
- John west sandwich fillers
- John west gluten free lunch on the go Mexican style tuna salad
- John west gluten free lunch on the go Mild curry tuna salad
- John west creations – salmon with wild rice and lentils
- Various Tilda rice pouches
- Arla lacto free mature cheddar cheese stick

Snacks

- Nuts seeds and fruit bags
- Nakd bars
- Haribo
- Gluten free homemade flapjack
- Salted plantain chips

Dinner

- Dolmio pasta sauce pot
- Gluten free gnocchi
- Soya protein chunks – Holland and barret
- Soya mince – Holland and barret
- Tilde egg fried rice
- Asda free from hoisin stir-fry sauce
- Asda free from chow mien stir-fry sauce

Dessert

- Gluten free cakes – ideally the type that come individually wrapped
- Jelly pots
- Alpro soya custard – doesn't need to be refrigerated
- Dole fruit in jelly pineapple in raspberry flavoured jelly

Please make sure you check food labels!

There are other companies that create expedition meals in pouches of which some are gluten free. I didn't find this out till after my expedition but it is worth researching as they are a complete meal and also are lightweight if your supervisor requires you to carry all our food. They are easy to 'rehydrate' or cook in the bag and don't take very long to cook.



