

- **Braces and Supportive Walking Boots**

Braces for your joints will be integral to keeping you in one piece. Ankle braces can be hard to fit under shoes though, so try to find boots which will support your ankles well and gradually wear them in. I found knee braces the most useful, along with wrist braces if using hiking poles. Compression leggings were also really helpful both for proprioception and for helping with POTS.



- **Pain Relief Methods**

Realistically you will be in pain for some, if not most, of your expedition so having ways to manage it will be key. Medication, heat patches, cool packs, compression leggings, mindfulness and an understanding team can all play an important role in reducing discomfort. Use what you know works for you and keep your team in-the-know about why you're doing certain things so they can be more understanding.



For me I used all of the above at different times, as and when needed. When I'm in pain I tend to go quiet and introverted so I let my team know that if I seemed like I was zoning out it was just because I was trying to mindfully deal with my pain.

- **Alexander Technique**



Some people find AT helpful for aiding proprioception and thus avoiding injury and joint pain. Furthermore practising the semi supine position in breaks and at the campsite can help realign your body.

I preferred to do this once back at the campsite in my tent because it was more comfortable (fewer rocks!).

- **Prepare Your Body**



Try to gradually increase your activity level before your expeditions and practice carrying things in the backpack you will use. This means your body will be better equipped to deal with the expedition as it'll have had some time to get ready for it.

I went to the gym and swam in the months leading up to my expeditions to increase my fitness level.

- **Equipment**



Think carefully about what equipment would help you on your expedition. Bedding is important to allow your body to rest for the next day's hiking, some people find inflatable pillows under the knees and head useful and inflatable roll matts can also help. A lightweight stool can be useful to avoid hip, knee and ankle subluxations/dislocations. Hiking poles are an essential for many for stability and taking weight off the knees when going downhill. A well fitted daypack (or backpack) is helpful for avoiding backpain and maintaining good posture. A back support whilst sitting can also be helpful to avoid back pain when there is a lack of supportive seating.



I used a fold up mattress and normal pillows as I found the inflatable mattress (when tested at a sleepover) was too hard when I slept on my side and my hips and shoulders popped out of place. The inflatable pillows were useful on my practice, when in the right position, but as I wriggle a lot they often ended up actually pushing my joints out of place halfway through the night! Thankfully I didn't need to carry my bedding as my supervisor was able to take it to each campsite in his van. Unfortunately I didn't have a well fitting backpack to start with, so I know all too well how important it is to get one that suits!