OXFORD CENTENNIAL ARCTIC EXPEDITIONS

April 2026: Kungsleden Long Trail by Oliver Sutcliffe • Expedition Medicine Weekend May 2-3 • Arctic Preparations on Wisconsin's Frozen Lakes by Lukas Krone

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The Kungsleden Long Trail by Oliver Sutcliffe

Lisa at Campsite

Oliver Sutcliffe is a medical doctor from New Zealand, currently studying a DPhil in primary care health sciences at Balliol College, Oxford. He is a medical officer for the Greenland 2026 expedition. He was joined on this trip by OUEC (Oxford University Exploration Club) members Jacob & Lisa.

As an opportunity to practice our winter camping skills for our upcoming arctic expeditions, a group of us recently undertook a two-week cross-country ski trip in Lapland, Sweden. The plan was to follow a section of the Kungsleden, a popular long-distance hiking trail. But instead of staying in the STF huts, we aimed to be entirely self-sufficient and camp every night.
As a result, we carried much more gear than usual - tent, winter sleep systems, puffers, and a mountain of dehydrated food (5000KCal/day). Since it wouldn't have been possible to carry this all on our backs, we spread most of the weight into two pulks - a kind of sled used for transporting gear. This had the added advantage of reducing the weight on our skis, allowing us to float better on the soft snow, and glide forwards much smoother. On the flipside, we now had a trailer, which frequently had a mind of its own going downhill - veering off or even overtaking us. Predictably, this often ended in a tumble.

Gear and Pulk Setup

Besides the falls our biggest challenge was gear - and this trip proved an invaluable testing ground for many items in our collection. Despite a relatively short trip, we somehow managed to snap poles, lose a sleeping mat, splatter ski wax everywhere, buckle brakes, snap a ski binding, and tie & re-tie the pulk cord more times than I can count. Fortunately, we had enough repair kit or assistance to make it through - like the makeshift ski binding we fashioned out of a spool of wire, paracord, and tape. These unexpected challenges called for creative solutions and teamwork, especially in freezing and exposed conditions, where we would lose heat fast.

Jacob tinkering with his broken binding by the river crossing

The first lake crossing

But it wasn't always that trying! Across the two weeks we crossed amazing and varied landscapes, spotted reindeer and ptarmigan, and had several stunning aurora encounters. There is always something magical about being immersed in a world of snow, and learning to distinguish the upcoming terrain in its subtly varied sheens.

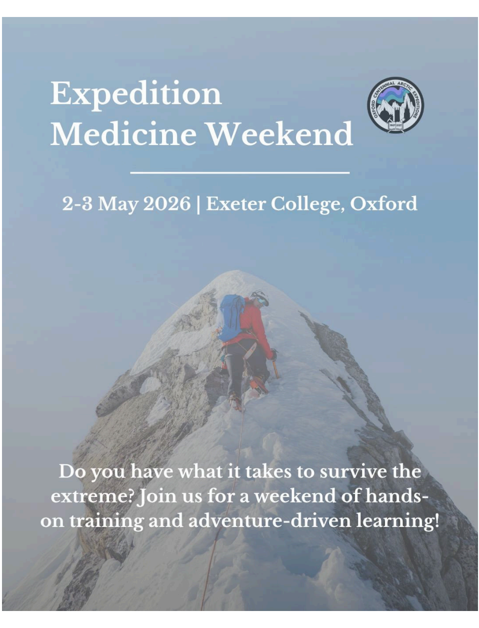
Unedited Northern Lights

Night-time Navigation

Now that I am home the entire experience feels very long ago, but I am grateful for the patchwork of moments it has left me - the dull patter of snowfall on the tent fly, the red raw stiffness of cold fingers, the crunch of hoar frost, and the way in which expeditions shrink your sense of luxury - so that every bite of chocolate, every sweet apple tea, is the best you've ever had. Winter in the arctic isn't a season, it's another world - and within hours of leaving I could already feel that familiar welling of wanting to go back.

Members of the Team

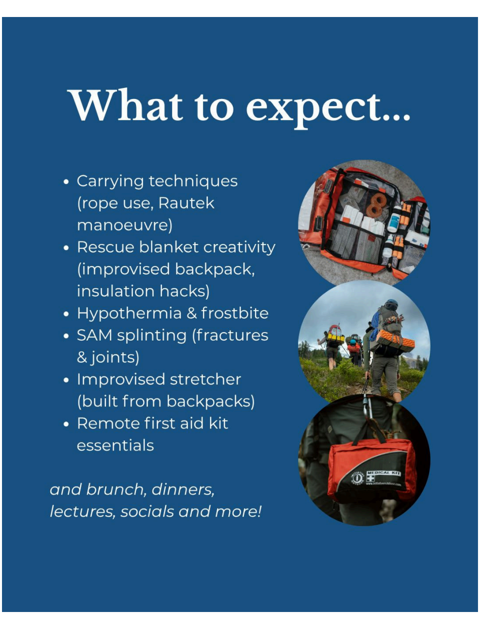
Expedition Medicine Weekend



Expedition
Medicine Weekend

2-3 May 2026 | Exeter College, Oxford

Do you have what it takes to survive the extreme? Join us for a weekend of hands-on training and adventure-driven learning!



What to expect...

- Carrying techniques (rope use, Rautek manoeuvre)
- Rescue blanket creativity (improvised backpack, insulation hacks)
- Hypothermia & frostbite
- SAM splinting (fractures & joints)
- Improvised stretcher (built from backpacks)
- Remote first aid kit essentials

and brunch, dinners, lectures, socials and more!

We are thrilled to invite you to the Expedition Medicine Weekend hosted by Oxford Expedition and Extreme Medicine Society and Oxford Centennial Arctic Expeditions (Ox.100).

Join us on May 2nd and 3rd for an immersive experience dedicated to wilderness medicine and global exploration. This event brings together world-class experts to provide hands-on training and inspiring stories. Whether you are a medic preparing for the field or an outdoor enthusiast looking to level up your safety skills, this weekend is designed to equip you with the mindset and techniques needed for any expedition.

Saturday, 2 May

Afternoon, starting at 2pm - Expedition Medicine Workshop: Led by HEMS physician Dr. Melina Tatalias and the Ox.100 medical team, this practical circuit at Merton College features 4–6 stations designed to build essential outdoor skills. You will learn hypothermia management, SAM splinting, improvised stretcher building, and how to pack a basic medical kit for your adventures, as well as creative uses for the rescue blanket that go far beyond just keeping a patient warm. Please wear outdoor clothes and bring a hiking backpack if you have one. **£45 Standard | £35 for OUEC Members**

Early evening - Keynote Lecture: "Crew Resource Management (CRM) – Why I Wish I Had Known This Concept Earlier." Melina shares life-saving insights from her decade of experience in Helicopter Emergency Medical Services and mountain rescue. Hosted at Merton College.

After the Lecture - Evening Social: Join us for dinner and drinks to connect with fellow attendees and the Oxford Expedition and Extreme Medicine Society.
Location: Central Oxford (Final room details to be sent via email).

Sunday, 3rd May
Afternoon, 2pm - Public lecture: "Across Wilderness and Ice: A Family Journey of Exploration" by Markus Blum. From horse-packing in the Canadian winter to traversing the Australian Outback with camels and crossing Greenland's ice caps, Markus shares a family-friendly, inspiring account of life on the edge. Sponsored and held at Exeter College Cohan Quad. (Coffee and tea provided). Staff members and non-university members of the public are very welcome to attend. This is a family-friendly event.

Deadline to register: Sunday, 26th April. This event is free and open to all except for our Expedition Medicine Workshop **£45 Standard | £35 for OUEC Members** however, registration is required. Please let us know which events you will be attending. Click here to register.

Arctic Preparations on Wisconsin's Frozen Lakes by Lukas Krone

Frozen lake in Wisconsin

Exeter's Staines Medical Research Fellow, Dr Lukas Krone, is currently preparing for his deployment as expedition medic with the Svalbard team of the Oxford Centennial Arctic Expedition during his research visit at the Centre for Sleep and Consciousness at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Lukas resting on frozen lake

Living in Wisconsin during the winter provides a unique training opportunity in cold-weather conditions. During the Arctic blast in late January, temperatures dropped to –28°C, university courses were cancelled, and some public services were suspended – yet the unusually cold weather provided an ideal simulation of conditions in a polar region. Training on the frozen, snow-covered lakes Mendota and Monona in Wisconsin's capital, Dr Krone practised long-distance travel on skis and snowshoes, building both physical endurance and experience in assessing and safely crossing cracks and pressure ridges between the ice floes. Reflecting on his experience, he said:
"The human body struggles to adapt to temperatures so far below freezing. It is astonishing to experience how difficult it is to find the right pace at which the body stays warm, while the breathing rate remains slow enough to allow the air to warm up before it reaches the lungs. One also quickly learns the importance of covering every square centimetre of skin, especially on the face, as frostbite to the nose and cheeks is not uncommon when individuals underestimate the effects of these temperatures — something you don't experience on a normal winter holiday."

Crossing the cracks and pressure ridges

Dr Krone will support a team of five scientists conducting climate research in Svalbard this summer. Following approval of the project by the Expedition Council, the team has been invited to begin their work from the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) station in Ny-Ålesund, the world's northernmost permanent civilian settlement, starting on 6 August 2026. The project, which investigates the interplay between seasonal seabird populations and the freshwater ecosystem in the Kongsfjorden region, has recently received a Gino Watkins Award from the Royal Geographical Society. To cover the remaining costs for safety training, equipment, and travel, all team members are currently engaged in fundraising activities, please consider donating to our Gofundme below.

We are fundraising for our 2026 expeditions. To learn more please click the button below.

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2026 Expedition Members with Polar Explorer Dr. Kat Burford.

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