We hope you will join us for this fun, varied and adventurous expedition to Poland’s fantastic Tatra Mountains. The Tatras are one of eastern Europe’s most spectacular mountain ranges and this is an action-packed, testing 9-day expedition.

Initially, we will fly into Krakow and drive to the alpine resort town of Zakopane, the gateway to the Tatra. Our exhilarating mountain trek traverses the beautiful Tatra Mountains National Park, culminating in a tough ascent of Rysy (2499m), the highest mountain in the Polish Tatra. After 5 days of trekking, some of which will be based from remote mountain huts, we head north to visit the notorious Auschwitz Nazi concentration camp and then relax and totally unwind exploring the enchanting old quarter and famous square of the city of Krakow.

You must come prepared for an adventure, with sometimes basic living conditions in multi-shared dormitories in mountain huts, physical trekking and a culture different from our own, but nevertheless rich and varied. The rewards for those up to the challenge, promise to be immense.

**Planned Itinerary**

**Day 1  London – Krakow – Zakopane**
Fly from the UK to Krakow. On arrival we meet our Polish Guide and travel by bus south to Zakopane (2 ½ hours). This is a major ski resort in winter and an exciting, fun place to wander along the bustling pedestrian-only town centre. Try Oscypek, the roast sheep’s cheese speciality and get lost in the labyrinth of shops and cafes where you can spend your first zloty!

**Day 2  Caves, Gorges and Highlanders**
A short drive from Zakopane and we enter the National Park at Kiry. Our first day of trekking takes us across meadows and follows trails across bubbling mountain streams with the occasional bobbing Dipper. The Park is extremely well cared for but was originally common land, worked by the local mountain people. They are known as the Highlanders and make a living today maybe giving rides in horse-drawn carts to the tourists or making sheep's cheese in rural dairies. They still wear their traditional clothing and we will come across them working in some of the scattered farm buildings in the meadows. We reach our first mountain lodge at Ormak and stow our packs in the dormitories. We now head off a little lighter to explore one of the extraordinary cave systems nearby. It is pitch black and at times narrow, getting narrower. Be prepared to crawl and you will definitely need your head torch.

**Day 3  Red Ridge and Kondracka Kopa 2,005m**
Our trek takes us through heavily forested rolling hills towards the pass to TomaNOWA PRZEL. We emerge from the tree line onto the superb Red Ridge with fantastic views of the whole Tatras, down over the forests towards Zakopane. Our route works its way up to the top of Kondracka Kopa, our high point of the day before we take the long winding descent to our hotel in Kalatowki. For those with energy to spare you can always add an ascent of Giemont for good measure!

**Day 4  Kasprowy Wierch 1,987m**
A more relaxing day. We leave the beautiful grass pastures of the high alp and climb steadily up onto the superb ridge. The top of the ridge marks the border between the Slovak republic and Poland and there are occasional small border markers to prove it. If excellent weather there is a possibility of climbing up Swinica (2,301m), one of the most imposing peaks on the ridge but this would add a good 4 hours to your day.

**Day 5  Valley of the Five Lakes**
A really exciting day, our first foray up into the High Tatra. We head up through the dwarf pines on a winding trail to the Black Lake. The waters are crystal clear and the reflections of the surrounding peaks are like photographs lying on the water. Up to our left we can see the jagged tops and the famous 'Via Ferrata' Eagle’s path. Our path heads up to a tiny notch on the skyline by what looks like an impossible route up cliffs and gullies. As we gain height the route becomes exhilarating as we work our way upwards. There are chains attached to the rock to aid our progress and after a lot of effort we reach the top. As we crest at Kozia Przel (2,291m) the views open up an incredible panorama across the High Tatra and in Slovakia.
Planned Itinerary (continued)

Day 6  Ascent of Mt Rysy 2,499m: Today we trek for the ascent of the highest peak in the Polish Tatras. We skirt the lake before heading up for an hour to the higher, smaller lake through dwarf pines. Moving above the second lake we start to climb up a steep zig-zag path into the heart of the mountains. There are a couple of patches of snow tucked away in the permanent shadows of the cliffs, even in July! The trail steepens and becomes a scramble. The route is easy to follow and there are many lengths of chain securely attached to the rock face. It’s a good place to practice your hellos and good mornings as you allow people to pass you or come down from above you. The top becomes more airy with fantastic views down both side of the mountain. You finally turn the last corner and find yourself a position on the small summit. It is an exhilarating challenge but well worth the effort. Now it’s time to retrace your steps and those chains come in handy for a more comforting descent. Finally we get back to our guesthouse in Zakopane for a well deserved rest.

Day 7  Auschwitz: We say goodbye to Zakopane and drive to Auschwitz. Our guided tour will be an emotional and sobering experience for everyone where we will see the museum and then visit Birkenhau to see first-hand the living quarters and try to imagine the conditions in which they survived. Then it’s off to Krakow.

Day 8  Krakow: Krakow is an enchanting city. Around 400 years ago it was the Polish capital and has a beautiful cathedral and Royal castle high on the hill above the river. The favourite area is the old quarter with lots of tiny streets, shops and handicrafts, singers and musicians. Our hotel is right in the heart of the old quarter and within minutes of the fabulous square which will draw you like a magnet in the evening.

Day 9  Krakow – London: Time to leave. Transfer to the airport for our flight to London.

Stuff you need to know

Price: £995 per person - subject to final group numbers.

Includes:
All flights & in-country transport, airport taxes, accommodation, expedition leaders, local guides, half-board meal arrangements, park entrance fees, activities as mentioned.

Excluded:
Travel insurance, Visas (not required for British passport holders, but other nationalities may vary), drinks, vaccinations, tips, items of a personal nature, spending money.

Staffing:
Far Frontiers Expeditions will provide an experienced expedition Mountain Leader to lead this trip for us. We will also be accompanied by passionate and qualified local staff throughout. Abingdon staff members will also travel with the group.

Accommodation:
The accommodation is a mix of hotels and mountain huts which often have multi-share dorm style sleeping arrangements.

Passports:
All participants require a full passport.

Kit Lists:
A full kit list and a detailed pre-departure information pack will be provided.

We have enlisted the services of The Specialist Travel Consultancy (STC) to help us arrange this trip. The STC is an independent niche travel agency specialising in educational tours and expeditions for schools, as well as adventurous and tailor-made holidays for individuals and families.

Using the STC helps ensure that the arrangements are of the highest order, and that we get the best possible value for money. Based on our requirements and their knowledge of the market place, the STC are recommending that we arrange this expedition through the specialist operator “Far Frontiers Expeditions”. For more information on the STC, visit www.thestc.co.uk

About Far Frontiers Expeditions: Far Frontiers are a specialist school expedition provider with a proven track record of operating in Poland’s Tatra Mountains. They will provide us with a quality expedition operation including experienced and qualified UK and local expedition leaders and all the back up and support required to run this expedition well and safely.

Far Frontiers are also the official provider of tours for the Royal Geographical Society and have arranged numerous military expeditions including Everest in 2003 and a Joint British Services Expedition to Makalu (8463m) in 2008.

For more information on Far Frontiers Expeditions, visit: www.farfrontiers.org