

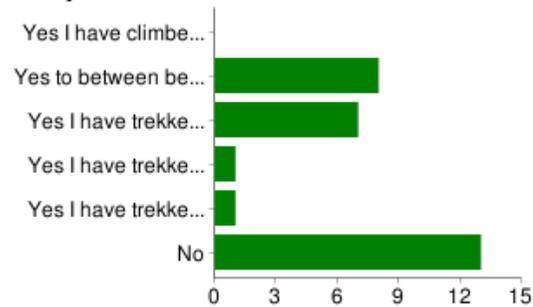
Medex Hidden Valley Expedition 2008 Feedback

Questionnaire sent to all 48 members and 30 responded

Responses From:

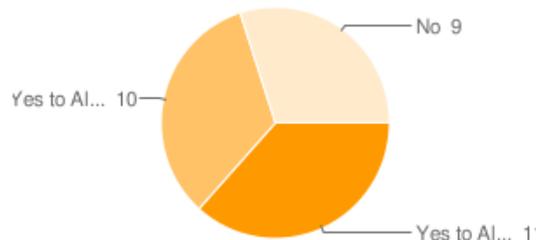
Sally Currin; Emma Stapleton; Katherine Talbot; The Bean; Petra Golja; Edith; Denzil; Chris Wolff; Chris Smith; Ed Roberts; Martin Curren; Sven Dietrich; Jenny Landerer; Maggie Hartford; Carol Darwin; Zoe Smith; George ; James Anholm; jo organ; Sam Oliver; Stuart; Emma Lloyd-Davies; Katharine Curren; Hazel Ginnever; Andy Shute; Danny Yates; Doug Thake; Refika; Jamie Macdonald; simon

Have you ever trekked in Asia or South America before?



Yes I have climbed >8,000m	0	0%
Yes to between between 6,000m and 7,999m	8	27%
Yes I have trekked to altitudes between 5,000m and 5,999m	7	23%
Yes I have trekked to 4,999m	1	3%
Yes I have trekked to 3,999m	1	3%
No	13	43%

Have you climbed in the Alpine regions before?



Yes to Altitudes of >4,000.	11	37%
Yes to Altitudes of > 3,000m	10	33%
No	9	30%

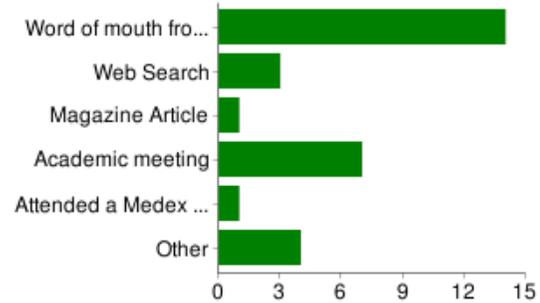
Have you ever travelled in an Asian country before?



Yes **21** 70%
 No **9** 30%

People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

How did you hear about the Medex Hidden Valley Expedition?

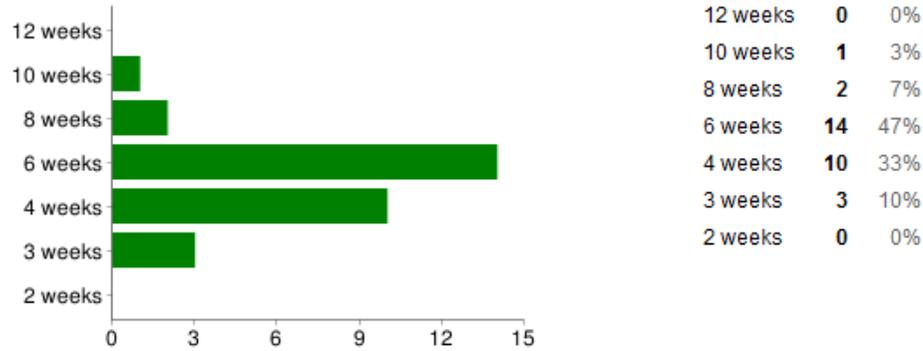


Word of mouth from a Medex Member **14** 47%
 Web Search **3** 10%
 Magazine Article **1** 3%
 Academic meeting **7** 23%
 Attended a Medex course or Diploma **1** 3%
 Other **4** 13%

If the answer above was "other" then please specify below.

My husband!; member of Medex; Medex member; founder

Duration

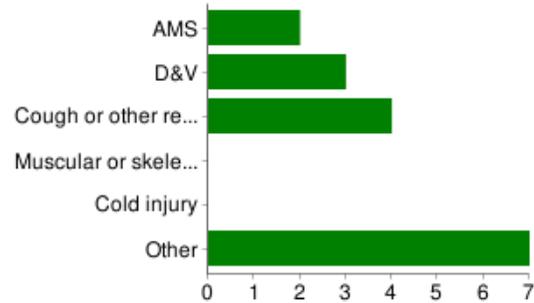


What was the single most important aspect of the trip to you in deciding to join?



If the answer above was "other" please specify
 Combination of Nepal, trek, climb, research, Medex & friendship

Did you get significantly ill on the trip?

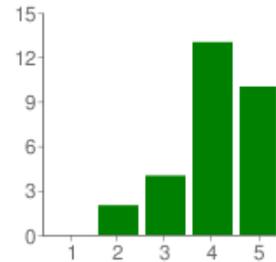


AMS	2	13%
D&V	3	19%
Cough or other respiratory infection	4	25%
Muscular or skeletal problems	0	0%
Cold injury	0	0%
Other	7	44%

If the answer above was "other" please specify.

Bruises from sledging
 No Headache but anorexia & periodic breathing
 AFTER the trip a lesion of the sciatic nerve developed
 D&V very early in trip & also upper resp infection
 No significant illness
 None
 None
 I got two lots of D&V at the beginning and end and also got mild AMS.
 Diarrhoea and resp infection separate times

Was the kit list on the Newsgroup helpful?



1	0	0%
2	2	7%
3	4	14%
4	13	45%
5	10	34%

Please suggest what should be added to the kit list and what should be taken off in the light of your experience

Just more detail - i.e. an idea of quality of equipment

I think too many medicines were suggested to be taken on the trip.

(I couldn't imagine it's necessary but..) stress that people should buy a map of the trek in KTM and read about altitude sickness. Maybe we can show the dvd "trekking healthy" during the research weekends.

Provide link to website such as psychovertical.com where less experienced people can look at options

Balaclava was useful

On - gaffer tape & cable ties!

iodine added

extra thermal insulation should be stressed incl footwear, long johns and extra thick down jackets

emphasis on importance of a super down jacket and sleeping bag for basecamp?!

pee bottle, sleeping bag liner, sponge for cleaning tent, warm buff (all personal items bit will be on next trip)

more specific info on gear such as boots and sleeping bags

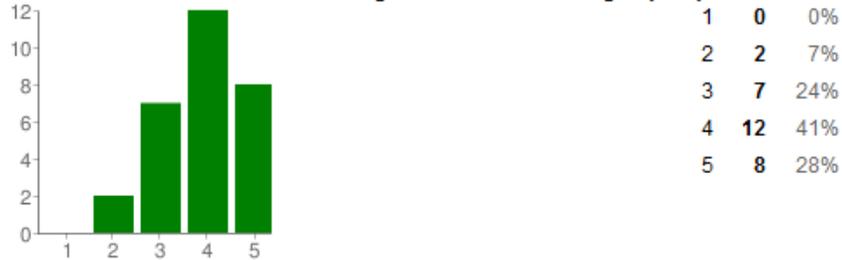
More emphasis on importance of individual medical kits

Nothing more than personal preferences

Add a flannel- useful for washing in a bowl!

RAB down socks with their over boots for outdoor use. Some form of heating for mess tents - Any ideas Denzil? -

Were the environmental and cultural guidelines on the Newsgroup helpful?



Please suggest what should be added and what removed from these guidelines in the light of your experience

We should definitely continue to give guidance on attire in remote regions

For the girls there were a lot of mixed messages regarding length of trousers and shirt tops. I was certainly very confused as to what would be acceptable.

Biased reply!

it was ok

We should have a barrel(s) for waste in each group that we bring down.

No real need to stipulate shorts

I think shorts are actually useful for women to wear so you can shower in rivers/hot springs and it doesn't take ages to dry.

Wearing full length trousers on very hot days is not ideal. Although I don't agree with wearing shorts, I didn't notice anyone getting offended by 3/4 length trousers.

They seemed to contain appropriate information and places to seek more if needed

Useful guidance, however adherence is another matter! Possibly discussion within groups prior to expedition

This was a trip to a remote part of Nepal and therefore there wasn't a lot of information to share prior to the trip. How could this have been improved?

Don't know, not part of news group

Advice to obtain a map/up to date guide book on arrival in Nepal, carry a compass etc

In my opinion, not knowing everything in advance is a part of the experience.

considering the remoteness, people should accept the lack of information

More sharing of the info which was available, plus info circulated on other similar trips

Establish a network in which e.g. the hired trekking organisation in the country of destination gives some additional information (acquired through guides/sherpas that have been in this area before.)

remote parts are the sense of expeditions

I'm not sure it could

I think most people managed to find the more specific information they required through the web etc. Info re peaks in the area was limited anyway, even in Nepal.

I enjoyed the remote location of trip

I found the Google earth maps useful. Possibly a ODG session prior with available maps and what's known from anyone who has been to the intended area of travel.

Ok as it was, gave us some surprises

I thought we get good information, short of having been there I don't think you could have known more,

Get a report from Sherpa Brothers about the trek we were planning to do, but it is expected to expect the unexpected when travelling overseas!!!

More communication about the itinerary before departure

I think that is part of the attraction

Expeditions are always enhanced by a degree of uncertainty

Did you feel that the pre-expedition information in general was adequate?

As I was responsible for some of it, difficult for me to comment

Fine given my background

Yes

more about Mustang

Brilliant.

Overall it was pretty good

Please suggest how pre-expedition information could be improved.

Will be interesting to see if people prefer electronic information as nothing was sent out in paper form

An email a fortnight before the start giving a brief round up of everything would have been helpful and reassuring. especially for someone coming by themselves for the first time

On hindsight, think I should have done more research on Mustang

maybe contact further expedition teams in this areas to inform yourself about specialities of the area

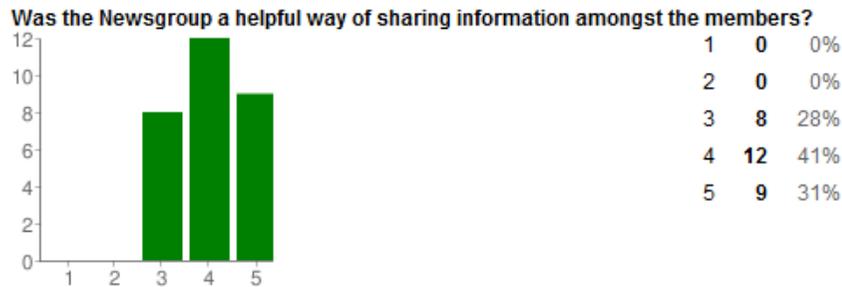
It would help if people read it but not sure how to get this achieved

more of it..

Stipulation of vaccinations

perhaps more info on how day to day things work like meals and washing of clothes and hair etc... I wasn't too sure what to expect from that point of view..

Further co-ordination/ consideration of all science projects



How could the Newsgroup have been improved?

incorporate a calendar with upcoming events and deadlines.

there is nothing more to improve, all important topics were discussed by the members

less duplication of info - that way people might read it.

No suggestions

not sure really, I tended to pick most stuff up from e-mail, maybe a face book group would have worked better??

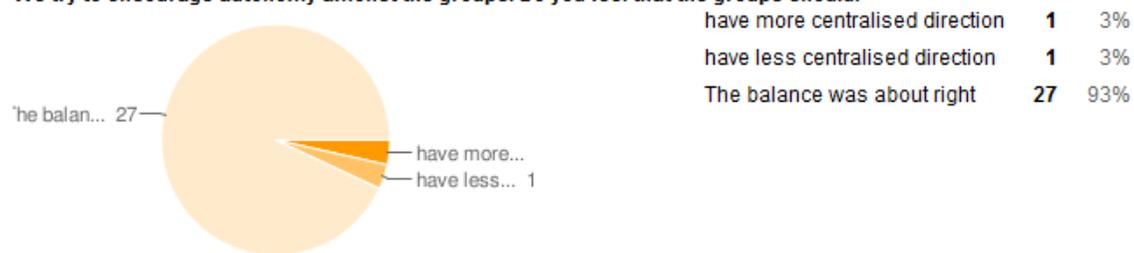
More entries

I don't know if it's possible on google groups to divide information up into sections rather than scrolling through pages of random conversations.

Removal of double postings/multiple copies of one email.

It always seemed an uphill battle to get people signed up and participating

We try to encourage autonomy amongst the groups. Do you feel that the groups should:



Do you have any suggestions as to how the structure of this Medex trip could have been improved?

It shouldn't have been centred around a particular research project, as this created an uncomfortable atmosphere and a sense of obligation for many participants. All research projects should have been deemed equal, and not allowed to be taken over by one particular person. Feelings amongst the expedition's experienced researchers were that the 'main' project was inappropriately demanding and expensive, and had poor methodology. However, pressure to take part in it was strong, despite the studies being unpleasant. This was not an ideal way to run a research project, but because of the nature of the expedition and the 'politeness' of the participants and researchers, the unpleasant studies with poor methodology were allowed to dominate. This created a very unpleasant undercurrent of bad feelings, especially amongst certain participants and amongst the expedition's experienced researchers. If the 'lead' researchers in the 'main' project had shown more respect to their participants and to other researchers, this may have helped.

In retrospect I don't think that placing all the undergraduates in one group was the right thing to do. For a start not all of us were undergraduates, 3 of us were graduates. Also none of us had undertaken a trip like that before and none of us had been really involved in the preparation of the expedition. This resulted in significant confusion and a slight sense of abandonment at points, e.g. were we allowed to have extra rest days, could we ammend the ascent profile etc etc.

It would have been nice to have come together with your own group in Bangor and again meet in KTM to speak things through, to make sure everyone has the right equipment etcetera.

Some confusion over weights on internal flights, and tipping structure created some friction when figures changed/increased

A better Sirdar and qualified doctor for group 4

Maybe staggering departures' slightly more to avoid congestion - but camping was tighter than previously

no, I think it was the perfect structure to reach everybody's aims, and keep people healthy and happy

The less experienced should have had at least one or 2 experienced members in their group

Groups of 12 works well. Only possible improvement could be that climbers got to know each other earlier in the trip - should Sita have been possible it may not have been the most cohesive group??

Group 4 is fortunate to not have had worse problems. They lacked a trained medic and needed a true leader

More mixed groups

Closer organisation with researchers to ensure participants have sufficient free time prior and following the trek.

I joined too late but would to have a (non medical) role on future trip

no - I thought our group worked really well and it was nice to see other people from the expedition on rest days etc - maybe group 4 felt a bit isolated?

Group 4 needed more experienced climbers with them to resolve some of their issues

Different forms of communication if groups are going to be split up by a number of days. Faster ascent at lower altitudes and slower ascent at higher altitudes or just longer days at lower altitudes

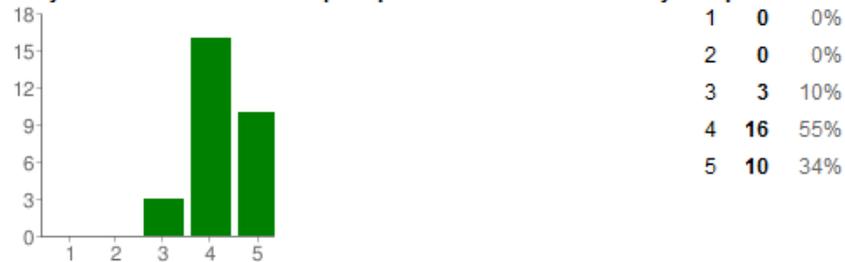
I think putting all the students together in one group was probably not the smartest idea (though do appreciate that time constraints etc made it difficult otherwise). Generally though things seemed to work quite well.

Process of allocating individuals to groups?

Shortest trek could have trekked in first/earlier to prevent them rushing to catch up

More involvement by members in pre-expedition planning and events

Did you feel that there was adequate provision to ensure the safety of Expedition members



How could safety have been improved?

We didn't check that Group 4 could use their radio and as they were the last group to start the trek it was difficult to communicate with them

Not sure this is in the correct box - but training for our groups radio operator. Had it not been for Jo and Jon being part of a mountain rescue team we would not have known how to work the radio.

Before the expedition, AMS info and safe ascent profile info could have been circulated to people who went to altitude for the first time.

I think the undergraduates would have benefit from someone with more experience with them

Extra medical support in group 4 would have eased their medic's role

more gradual ascent and provision for worst affected to stay or descend

We managed all difficult situations perfectly and don't know what to improve

duplication of all drugs in medical barrels

I didn't serve as physician to any group; however, the lack of IV fluids in medical barrels nearly led to disaster at Italian BC

No suggestions

it's a risky environment, you have to accept that!

More IV meds provisions

More contact with other groups (probably only relevant to group 4)

I think a qualified medical officer in each group would be sensible. Radio problems contributed to the communication difficulties but obviously this was difficult to predict.

Varied experience of group medics -

Each group should have a sat phone.

pre expedition radio training and improved skill mix in groups

Did you feel that the Expedition did its best to preserve the environment?



What could have been done better with respect to environmental impact?

Continue to stress with trekking agent importance of proper disposal of kitchen waste

Taking all camp waste with us instead of burning it

The sherpas could have had a toilet tent!

Group trash bags might be made available for each group.

Maybe a verbal briefing at start re. etiquette / toilet paper, etc in Nepal for those who didn't read / understand guidelines - including Sirdar

Telling people not to use the countryside as a toilet

more specific direction on management of loo paper between camps

Share knowledge in this area with other expeditions!

Empty barrels for kitchen/sherpa waste per group

education of porters and sherpas concerning litter

We need to carry a barrel for rubbish with us at all times, the porters need education on clearing their sites and not littering along the way.

Providing bin bags or similar to collect tent/camp rubbish

I think more rubbish could have been carried out rather than burnt.

All well and good proposing what should be done. Doing it / getting it done by staff in the field is a different matter and options are limited

could always do better! Perhaps include a budget to address some of the pre-existing trash along the route which would set an example to our own staff and other groups in the area

Was climbing a 6,000m peak an important facet of the Expedition?

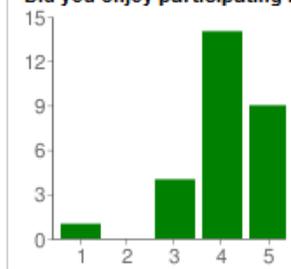
It became an important facet as the trip went on!

During this expedition it was clear that research was the major component. For some people it was a disappointment that climbing was second priority. It seemed that this was not made clear enough beforehand.

yes for those wanting to do it

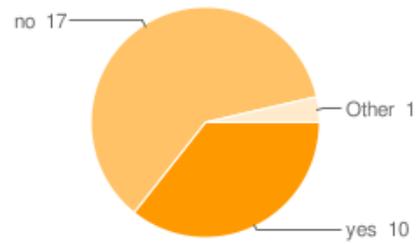
nice to have the option, but wasn't my primary focus

Did you enjoy participating in the research?



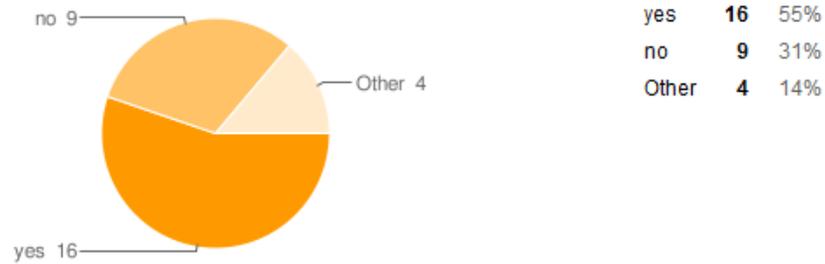
1	1	4%
2	0	0%
3	4	14%
4	14	50%
5	9	32%

Would you have come on this expedition if research had NOT been a major component?

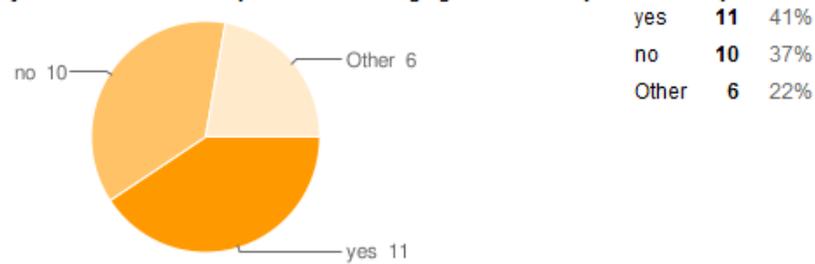


yes	10	36%
no	17	61%
Other	1	4%

Was climbing a 6,000m peak an important facet of the Expedition?



Would you have liked to attempt a more challenging mountain as part of this Expedition?



Other:

no wish to challenge an mountain

Maybe slightly more, but not necessarily

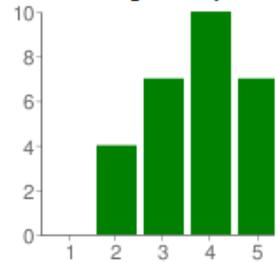
There aren't any more challenging peaks!

next time maybe - now I know more what to expect

Not on this expedition as I was seeing how I did but for future expeditions, certainly

Next time but not on this expedition

Was the blogsite helpful for keeping friends and relatives informed?



1	0	0%
2	4	14%
3	7	25%
4	10	36%
5	7	25%

How might the blog site have been improved given the difficulties of making postings over a narrowband connection which was unreliable in some of the narrower valleys?

The blogsite was good, I had a few friends and family following it, but they were disappointed that it wasn't clear which group or which people were being referred to. Pictures would have been good too, though understandably this may not be feasible!

I don't think much more could have been done.

With hindsight it would have been helpful to have clarified who was in which Group for relatives and friends at home. It was not always obvious.

the blogsite wasn't useful for me at all , sorry, because of the language problems

wider getting more people to post short articles on different aspects of the trip

no suggestions

??? far too technical

Have someone in the UK or in Kathmandu relaying msgs onto the blog by telephone

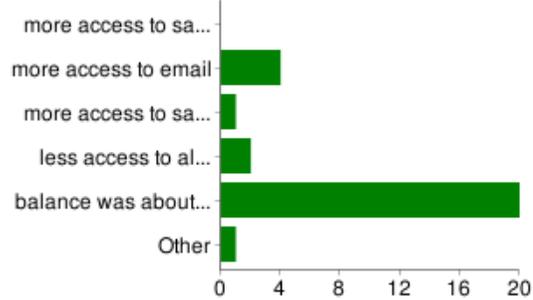
Difficult to get around that.

group 4 had minimal info which worried my parents as she could read about all but our group

Given the technology, it could not have been improved. However, TV stations broadcast live feeds so it must be possible some how.

More regular postings though this was limited by narrow valleys. Greater input from other expedition members.

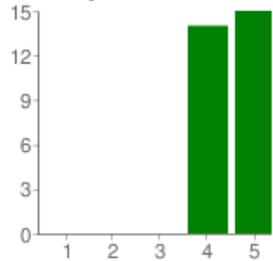
Would you have liked?



more access to satellite phone	0	0%
more access to email	4	15%
more access to satellite text messaging	1	4%
less access to all of the above	2	7%
balance was about right	20	74%
Other	1	4%

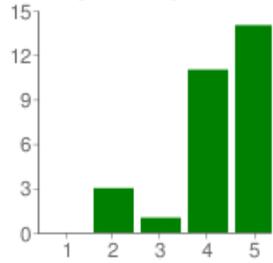
People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

How do you rate the Hidden Valley trek itself



1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	0	0%
4	14	48%
5	15	52%

Would you have preferred a shorter approach or was the long valley approach an important aspect of the whole Expedition?

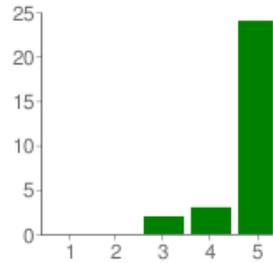


Prefer to start from high road head or air strip

Really enjoyed approaching through all climatic zones

1 - Prefer to start from high road head or air strip	0	0%
2	3	10%
3	1	3%
4	11	38%
5 - Really enjoyed approaching through all climatic zones	14	48%

Remoteness of the Hidden Valley?

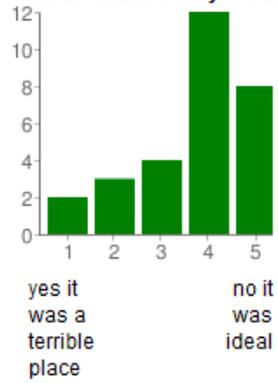


I would have preferred a busier base camp with lots more going on around

I enjoyed the seclusion & remoteness of the Hidden Valley

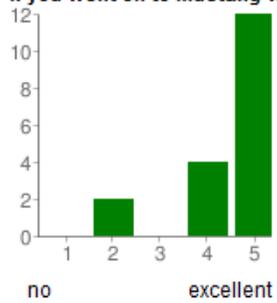
1 - I would have preferred a busier base camp with lots more going on around	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	2	7%
4	3	10%
5 - I enjoyed the seclusion & remoteness of the Hidden Valley	24	83%

Was th Hidden Valley too cold to use as a Base Camp ?



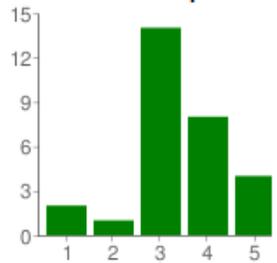
1 - yes it was a terrible place	2	7%
2	3	10%
3	4	14%
4	12	41%
5 - no it was ideal	8	28%

If you went on to Mustang was this a worthwhile addition?



1 - no	0	0%
2	2	11%
3	0	0%
4	4	22%
5 - excellent	12	67%

Time at Base Camp

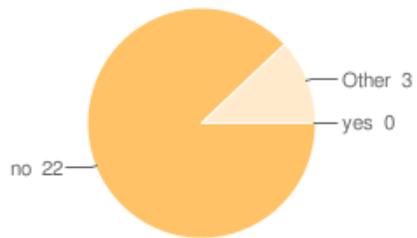


Had too much time at Base Camp

Would have liked more time at Base Camp

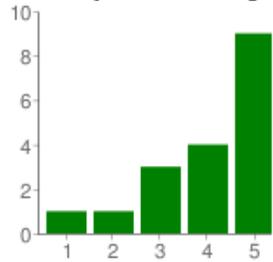
1 - Had too much time at Base Camp	2	7%
2	1	3%
3	14	48%
4	8	28%
5 - Would have liked more time at Base Camp	4	14%

Would you have preferred to have western guides when climbing on DAMPHUS?



yes	0	0%
no	22	88%
Other	3	12%

How did you find climbing with Sherpa Guides on Damphus?

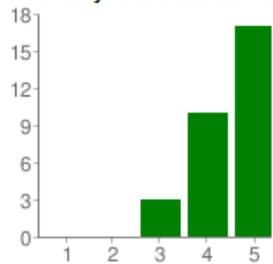


Would have preferred to have climbed alone without Nepalese guide

Really enjoyed and appreciated the support of a Sherpa Climbing Guide

1 - Would have preferred to have climbed alone without Nepalese guide	1	6%
2	1	6%
3	3	17%
4	4	22%
5 - Really enjoyed and appreciated the support of a Sherpa Climbing Guide	9	50%

How did you find the service offered by Sherpa Brothers - our Nepalese trekking Agent?



Terrible

Excellent

1 - Terrible	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	3	10%
4	10	33%
5 - Excellent	17	57%

Do you have any suggestions that might improve the overall service that Sherpa Brothers might be able to offer in the future?

1) Agree to pay good - fair salary and avoid nastiness of tipping. 2) Contribute to all staff clothing, not just porters.

no, it was perfect

More guides with trekkers

Speed of trekking was an issue early on - and route finding. The sherpa guides and sirdar could have divided into 3 1 to lead (fast) and one who is definitely at the back for slow and then the middle ones wander aimlessly around as they wish.

They coped well with the unexpected. Maybe a GPS reference for Hidden Valley, just as well there was no storm or white out
not unless they can stop me worrying about my barrel (just slightly) every day

A little more guidance on tipping so there it cuts out confusions/misunderstandings

Provide a written itinerary of the next day's activity. E.g. we did not know that a lorry was coming early am the next day to pick up all the barrels, and consequently had to carry unpacked equipment on internal flights.

Tenji's visit to the UK to meet the members was an excellent bonus. I guess even more emphasis on porter well being and trying to change the porter culture regarding trash management would have been good.



How, realistically, might the food have been improved?

A little more variety

I was looking forward to trying some Nepalese food, and was slightly disappointed that we were served stodgy Western food most days!

Perhaps less carbohydrate! We often had potatoes and pasta for our evening meals.

More protein and fat in the diet in proportion to the carbohydrate

Perhaps with some more fruit, where available.

muesli added to breakfast

more chocolate

Towards the end of the Mustang trip the food seemed to be getting a bit short and repetitive.

less deep fried food, more rice (daal bhat) or local food, in general.

Less fried and greasy food, more fresh veggies

less greasy food but more chips

More porridge less gruel

not much

Single pot stews, maybe less western food, shame plates were cold

more meat!!

In the mustang we had a different chef who could not cook porridge at all. Needed more muesli and no soggy cornflakes!!

Less fried food, although this is probably necessary at altitude

To be honest I think it was pretty damn good and aside from a brief rice shortage and lack of hot chocolate it was great

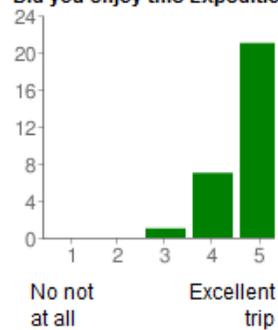
mayonnaise

A little more variety at times. No hot drinks provided other than meal times

More of it, portions often too small

Greater variety. Perhaps in the future we should be proactive about this and stipulate the menus?

Did you enjoy this Expedition?



1 - No not at all	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	1	3%
4	7	24%
5 - Excellent trip	21	72%

What could have been done differently to improve this Expedition?

An experienced altitude researcher should have overseen and validated the research projects. Data collection at Pokhara and research at Base Camp should have been overseen by an independent, mature researcher. Allowing one inexperienced researcher to dominate the research aspect of the expedition created a lot of bad feelings amongst the more experienced researchers.

A working radio

better tents in basecamp to make the stay in basecamp more comfortable. Plan more time in basecamp, so the researchers have time to leisure and go climbing as well.

We should all have thought in a bit more detail about the ascent profile and timing

Keep to 300 m average/d

i really don't know, i suppose it means i was content:-)

Not staying in Jomson airport area

I was glad to leave HV when we did, but more time there would definitely help the research

Daily communication during the expedition

Have been better prepared myself

I would have liked to have established the groups earlier so they could evolve themselves but this was limited by late booking. Maybe use the bus to Dhoban had we have known about it to maximise time at altitude? tWe should have booked Tukucho rather than Sita Chuchura in retrospect

Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Keep on the good work!

It's very hard to combine good research and at the same time plan for a major peak attempt. I think we should discuss this topic.

Medex is still doing good work on altitude illness & is great to be involved with - whether a medic or not! It's certainly been a positive part of my life since 1992 & I'd miss it!

congratulations, it was a perfect organisation, i have nothing more to add

Medex is a great model for medical research at altitude and encouraging junior investigators to work with more established ones

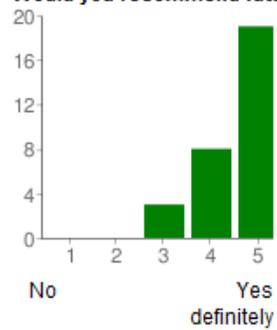
Everest would be ok if there was something for non-summiteers to do

If you go to a very cold basecamp again please ensure mess tents and research tents are on dry land not snow/ice as this most likely led to our team getting cold injuries

A fantastic organisation

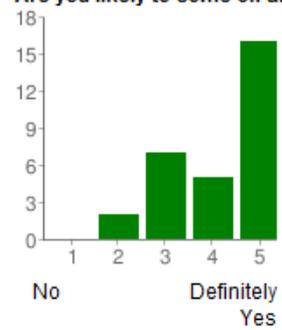
Those who participated in the Skype planning session probably got most out of the trip. This, or a similar technology, should be encouraged more extensively in the future. Some of the most negative feedback comes from those who were minimally engaged prior to the trip

Would you recommend future Medex trips to friends and colleagues?



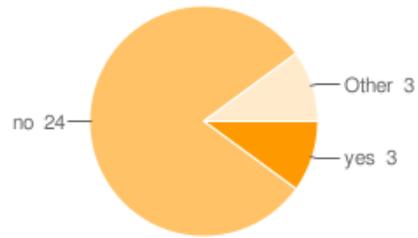
1 - No	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	3	10%
4	8	27%
5 - Yes definitely	19	63%

Are you likely to come on another Medex Expedition?



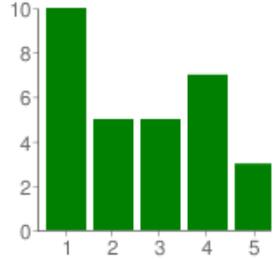
1 - No	0	0%
2	2	7%
3	7	23%
4	5	17%
5 - Definitely Yes	16	53%

If a future trip were to Tibet would the political issues there stop you from going?



yes	3	10%
no	24	80%
Other	3	10%

Would you be more likely to go on a future trip if it was associated with an ascent of a major peak

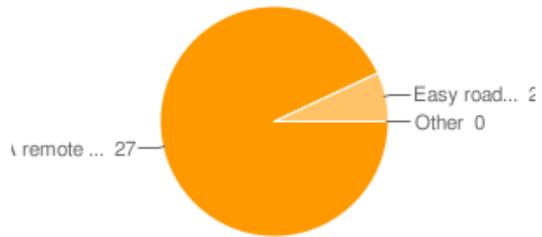


1 - No this is not important to me	10	33%
2	5	17%
3	5	17%
4	7	23%
5 - Yes this would definitely make it more appealing	3	10%

No this is not important to me

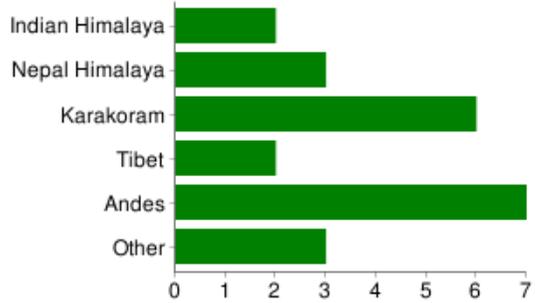
Yes this would definitely make it more appealing

For a future trip would you prefer?



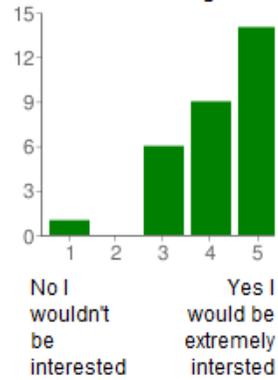
A remote and difficult destination	27	93%
Easy road or aerial access	2	7%
Other	0	0%

For a future trip would you prefer



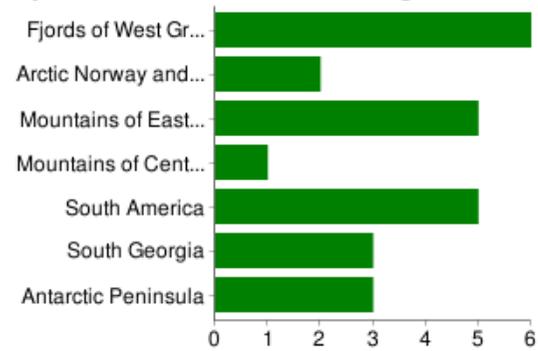
Indian Himalaya	2	9%
Nepal Himalaya	3	13%
Karakoram	6	26%
Tibet	2	9%
Andes	7	30%
Other	3	13%

If Medex were to organise smaller and shorter interim Expeditions to other remote & mountainous regions would this interest you?



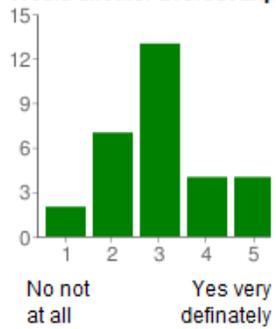
1 - No I wouldn't be interested	1	3%
2	0	0%
3	6	20%
4	9	30%
5 - Yes I would be extremely intersted	14	47%

If yes to the above which of the following would MOST interest you?



Fjords of West Greenland	6	24%
Arctic Norway and other regions of Scandinavia	2	8%
Mountains of Eastern Europe	5	20%
Mountains of Central Asia	1	4%
South America	5	20%
South Georgia	3	12%
Antarctic Peninsula	3	12%

Would another Everest Expedition be attractive to you?



1 - No not at all	2	7%
2	7	23%
3	13	43%
4	4	13%
5 - Yes very definately	4	13%

Should Medex call it a day and wind up?



1 - No I would be really upset to see it pack up	22	76%
2	5	17%
3	2	7%
4	0	0%
5 - Yes it has had its day and it's time it went	0	0%

The website is about to be completely re-written. Please suggest features that you would like to be included.

Photo-links from members of the expedition, if made available.

Laymans reports on research findings from past expeditions

If given permission, contact details of universities, institutions, work groups, etc that have been cooperated in the past or will do so in the future. Set up an internal MedEx scientific network such as "researchgate" where researchers are free to lead discussions, etc.

hm

perhaps a blog site

More photos, info about members? Newsgroup equivalent on the site??

are you sure!!!!

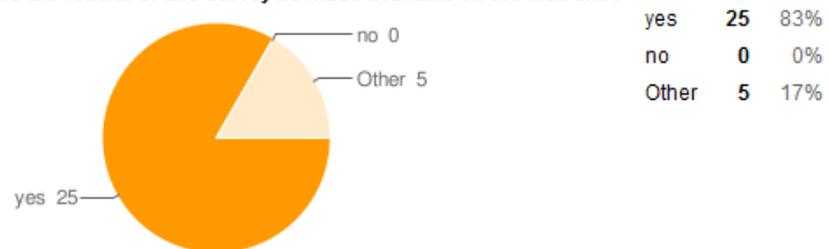
better links to the google groups, i can never find it. More photos.

Links to individual members blogs/photos etc

Possibly links to literature search engines

Newsgroups built in with academic, adventure and logistic subsets. If Newsgroups don;t boost prior communication then maybe facebook group or similar

Should the results of this survey be made available on the web site?



If you have completed this form then you qualify for the ODG prize draw which is a FREE MEAL AT THE ODG worth £30



People may select more than one checkbox, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

The following entered for the free meal at the ODG competition this weekend:

- Emma Stapleton
- Katherine Talbot
- The Bean
- Edith
- Denzil
- Chris Wolff
- Chris Smith
- Martin Curren
- Sven Dietrich
- Jenny Landerer
- Maggie Hartford
- Carol Darwin
- George
- jo organ
- Sam Oliver
- Stuart
- Emma Lloyd-Davies
- Katharine Curren
- Danny Yates
- Jamie Macdonald

