

# The Professional **Mountaineer**

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Association of  
Mountaineering  
Instructors

British Mountain  
Guides

British Association  
of International  
Mountain Leaders

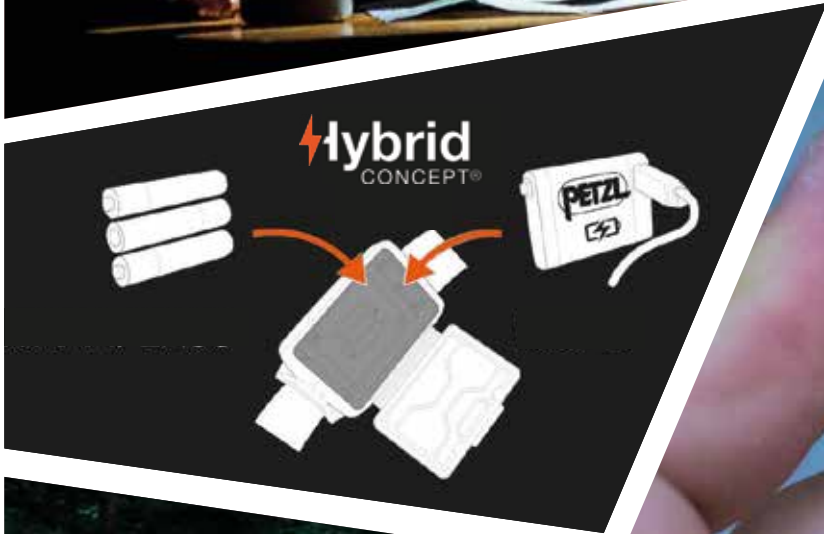
Mountain Training  
Association

## How to plan **A SKI TOUR**

**NESTING BIRDS**  
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restrictions

**HIKE to  
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# The Professional Mountaineer

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## NEXT ISSUE

**Summer 2023** Preparing for assessment, panic attacks and equity outdoors.

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### Our front cover

A summer micro adventure, overnight camping with some friends on Druim na Brien-choille, taking in the views and good weather.

© Zeemon Erhardt

### Woodland Carbon scheme



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# EDITORIAL

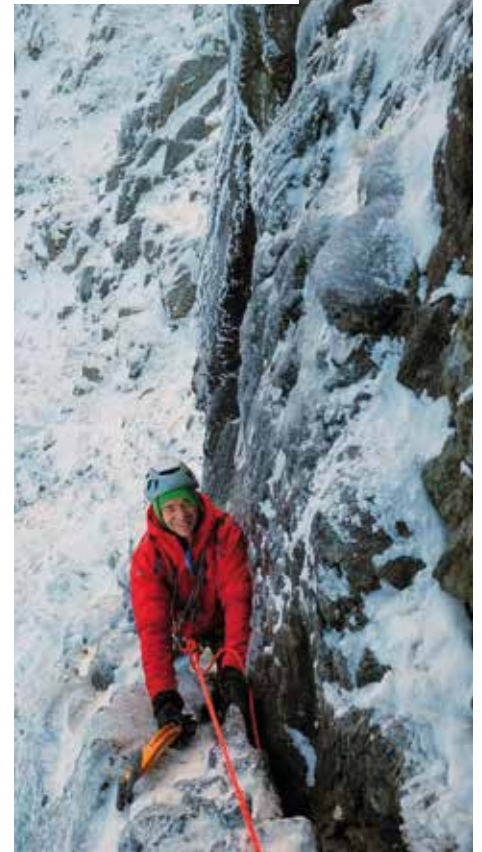
As the dust settles in Turkey and Syria, I reflect on the infinite power of nature, and its ability to wreak destruction on a monumental scale. There are no adequate words to describe the despair and destruction that have descended upon these nations, already reeling from years of struggle and exodus from civil war.

I have many friends among the Turkish climbing community: some of whom have been involved in the rescue operations. A tragedy of this scale forces one to reappraise the balance between freewill and determinism... fatalism and nihilism, ambition and altruism. *'As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods...'* (Shakespeare *W., King Lear, Act 4: Scene 1, 36*)

In early 2015 I delivered an assessor training course in Langtang, Nepal. Everybody that we met or stayed with was wiped out by an avalanche a few weeks later; the cause was the earthquake of similar magnitude to the Turkish tremor.

In the face of natural forces, what room is there for our risk assessments – or how “unlikely” do we probe when planning? there is unseen danger in everyday life, but the mountains add layers... conversely, we bear a responsibility to learn from our own and from cumulative experience to at least prepare for the foreseeable, and to learn from near misses.

Considering the philosophical issues raised above, this edition contributes some timely thoughts on wellbeing (to which we now dedicate a whole section) and on therapeutic intervention. Sustainability has long been a running theme, and this edition contains an inspiring example of low-impact mountaineering: all the Alpine 4000m



ABOVE The editor climbing in Snowdonia during the cold snap. © Calum Muskett

peaks in one season without motorised transport. The interviewer is himself a great example of the multiple talents that our members bring to the table.

Safety and sustainability naturally run throughout our magazine: in a difficult and sometimes scary world, the depth and breadth of our members' contributions always fill me with optimism and faith in human nature. Truly, we are Professional Mountaineers!

**Steve Long**  
Technical editor

## OUR COVER



### Zeemon Erhardt

Zeemon is a photographer and film maker based in Fort William. He is a Mountain Leader, Rock Climbing Instructor and member of **MTA**, as well as Level 3 Mountain Bike Guide, among other qualifications. When he's not working helping others share their passion for the outdoors, he runs *Coasteering.Fun*.

## OUR SPRING ISSUE CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE



### Dave Searle

Dave is a member of **BMG** and is an IFMGA guide based in Chamonix, France. Skiing most of the winter in the alps Dave has planned his fair share of ski tours over the years!



### Kevin Albin

Kevin is a member of **BAIML** and a Climate Reality Leader, find out more at <https://kevin-albin.com/>



### Deyna Hirst

Deyna is a member of **MTA**. She is a Hill and Moorland Leader who has worked within biopsychospire (body-mind-breath) therapy for many years, helping people to feel empowered and confident to make changes in their life.



### Tom Carrick

Tom is a member of **AMI**, **BAIML** and **MTA**. He is the Access and Conservation officer for the BMC and lives in North Wales. Tom is looking at how we educate more people to help protect our wildlife while we enjoy the outdoors.

# IN THIS ISSUE



8



11



14

## ENHANCE YOUR WALKING WITH THE NORDIC WALKING TECHNIQUE

17



20



22

### DESTINATIONS

**8** Mount Olympus – walking the home of the ancient gods

*Colin Berry*

**11** How to plan a ski tour

*Dave Searle*

### TECHNICAL SKILLS

**14** Teaching navigation – the value of using an orienteering map

*Nigel Williams*

**17** Enhance your walking with the Nordic Walking technique

*Liz Heyworth-Thomas*

### OUR PLANET

**20** Nesting birds and climbing restrictions

*Tom Carrick*

**22** Shout it from the mountain tops

*Kevin Albin*

### OUR REGULARS

**42** Book review

• *The Science of Climbing Training* by Sergio Consuegra

• *Highland Scrambles North* by Iain Thow

### WELLBEING

**25** Hike to health – inner and outer landscape exploration

*Deyna Hirst*

**28** Asthma outlined for the outdoor professional

*Daniel Grace*

### BUSINESS SENSE

**31** Pregnancy, motherhood and outdoor careers – Part 3 logistics, society and culture

*Mikaela Toczek and Samantha Evans*

**33** Therapeutic practice in the outdoors – a professional development approach

*Matt Groves and Heidi Shingler*

### GUIDANCE

**37** Coaching qualifications – what are the benefits?

*Pete Edward*

**40** A week in the life of a Mountain Rescue Volunteer

*Simon Duczak*





25

**Asthma outlined for the outdoor professional**

28



31



33



37



40

**Feeling inspired?** If you would like to contribute to the next issue, please contact **Belinda Buckingham** at [belinda@mountain-training.org](mailto:belinda@mountain-training.org)

**Fancy advertising?** If you would like to advertise in the next issue, please contact **Caroline Davenport** at [caroline@media-solution.co.uk](mailto:caroline@media-solution.co.uk)



# NEWS



## ASSOCIATION OF MOUNTAINEERING INSTRUCTORS (AMI)

It's pleasing to report that membership numbers are up again, to 897.

In recent events, AMI funded 2 Chris Walker Memorial Trust Avalanche Awareness workshops for members, and we've had 2 really successful CPD weekends: Plas y Brenin in November and Glenmore Lodge in January.

The AMI AGM weekend is at Plas y Brenin on 22nd to 23rd April. This will include the appointment of a new Communications Rep and Gear Deals Rep. A full programme of CPD workshops will be on offer; a great way to ensure you have your 3 CPD points before the 1st July renewal date.

If you are a Trainee MCI or Trainee WMCI and think you might benefit from being mentored through your assessment preparation, take a look at the updated guidance notes on the website, under the MCI and WMCI Trainee Information banner. Also on the website are the updated AMI Safeguarding Guidelines which offer advice for members who work with vulnerable people, including what to include in a safeguarding policy, and where to access training.

This year AMI is proud to be supporting the Climb Out LGBTQ+ Festival and the Women's Rock Festival in Ireland by providing AMI members as instructors. We will also soon be inviting tenders from members for funding that will enable them to undertake charity events of their own. AMI Charity funding is match funded by the Alpkit Foundation.

Enjoy the mountains this spring, whether for work or play!

**Rob Pugh** (Chairman)



© Kath James

The AMI is the representative body for professionally qualified Mountaineering and Climbing Instructors in the UK and Ireland and is committed to promoting good practice in all mountaineering instruction. Full members hold the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor's qualification or the higher qualification Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor.

T **01690 720123**  
[www.ami.org.uk](http://www.ami.org.uk)



## BRITISH MOUNTAIN GUIDES (BMG)

Following the severe buffeting of the Brexit and Covid years, 2022 was a time for the BMG to reach out. There has always been a small but significant number of mountaineering instructors who have joined our ranks. Becoming a Guide is an upward progression in the range and standard of professional mountaineering skills and offers the opportunity to work abroad in much more adventurous mountain terrain. A Facebook group and virtual meetings made it possible to engage with instructors interested in knowing about our work and provided opportunities to explain what's involved. We are keen to support and assist anyone interested and credit prior learning. We have also begun a round of informal evening meetings which is attracting more interest. One has already taken place in Chamonix and in spring there will be evening gatherings in Wales and Scotland.

It's really encouraging that in 2023 we have a cohort of 8, beginning our challenging training scheme, and we look forward to them all qualifying in around three years' time.

During 2022 we also produced a couple of short films showcasing the work we do and why it's a great career for some. "Why become a British Mountain Guide?" and "Why hire a British Mountain Guide?". Have a look at them on Youtube.

**Martin Doyle** (President)



© Tom Ripley

The BMG is a member of the International Federation of Mountain Guides (IFMGA), currently comprising 24 nations worldwide, with growing membership, it is the professional organisation that trains and assesses Mountain Guides in all disciplines. A British Mountain Guide operates to the highest recognised level throughout the world, in all terrain and in diverse roles.

T **01690 720386**  
[www.bmg.org.uk](http://www.bmg.org.uk)



## BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN LEADERS (BAIML)

A new year and new faces! When the last issue was going to print, we were in the runup to our annual conference in Buxton. This successful weekend is now just a memory, but the new Board of Directors are hard at work. It is a pleasure to welcome the new faces onto the team.

On behalf of the Association, I would like to thank Kelvyn James, who stepped down at the conference, for his massive efforts, culminating as President. The results from his membership survey in the autumn will contribute significantly to defining our Association and the new leadership team is already making sound headway on an updated strategy. Other board members who stepped down last year were Di Brooksbank, Helen Barnard and Ian Spare. All contributed in their own way to running the Association. Notably, Ian dedicated significant energy to our profession through his roles with BAIML and UIMLA. UIMLA have a key role in defining our profession and they are a growing umbrella for International Mountain Leaders, with Sweden becoming the latest addition to the family.

At the end of January, we sent out a newsletter to all members containing valuable information on a range of topics including mobility. If you are a member and are not receiving emails from BAIML, please check your email subscriptions on the CMS. Go to your profile and click the 'Settings' tab, then select the green 'Email Subscriptions' box. In the list of possible subscriptions, there should be a tick against 'BAIML Newsletters & General Information'.

Enjoy the spring season, wherever you are!

**Peter Chapman** [Chairman]



© Peter Chapman

The BAIML is the professional membership organisation in the UK and Ireland for holders of the International Mountain Leader (IML) award from MTUKI, and also for people from other nations who hold a UIMLA IML diploma and become resident in the UK or Ireland.

T **01690 720272**  
[www.baiml.org](http://www.baiml.org)



## MOUNTAIN TRAINING ASSOCIATION (MTA)

Our **All things winter** CPD weekend held at Glenmore Lodge was a great success and we wish our members going for Winter Mountain Leader assessment this winter the best of luck. Dates for next year's 2024 event are scheduled for 20th and 21st January.

Volunteers from the England, Central Region have organised an **Inclusivity, sustainability and mindfulness in the outdoors** day at the Alice Holt Forest, on Saturday 25th March. There is a great range of workshops on offer, from climate adaptation to forest bathing, and incident management with Surrey Mountain Rescue to plant lore. The event is bookable through CMS.

We have finalised the MTA strategy for 2023-2028 with a strong focus on volunteer support and development, and an ongoing drive to raise the public's awareness of the association and its members. The full strategy will be published soon.

We are enhancing the mentoring programme by creating online training and resources for both mentors and mentees with a view to continuous year-round enrolment in the future. Applications for this year's mentoring programme are now open and the programme is due to get underway at the beginning of June.

Our collaboration with the Met office, providing expert led mountain weather workshops to members across the UK, continues for the coming year. You can find details and dates of this year's programme on the website. These workshops prove popular, so book early!

Have a great Spring and stay safe.

**Belinda Buckingham** [Development Officer]



© Alan Halewood

The MTA is the membership branch of Mountain Training. Our mission is to build a community of confident and expert coaches, instructors and leaders by promoting good practice and continuing personal development opportunities in hill walking, climbing and mountaineering. Full members hold one or more of the Mountain Training qualifications.

T **01690 720272**  
[www.mountain-training.org/mta](http://www.mountain-training.org/mta)



## WALKING THE HOME OF THE ANCIENT GODS

# Mount Olympus

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY COLIN BERRY

**In Greek mythology, it was the home of Zeus and the Olympian Gods, site of their battle to overthrow Kronos, ruler of the Titans and also home of the Muses and the Graces. Mount Olympus is actually a complex of peaks including Mytikas, at 2918m the highest point in Greece.**



**Colin Berry** is a member of **MTA** and holds the Mountain Leader qualification. He has been walking in the UK and overseas since he was a teenager in the 1970s. Colin obtained his ML in 2017 and continues to develop his skills and experience. When not outdoors, he's a Professor of Biochemistry at Cardiff University.

The first ascent of Mytikas in modern times is credited to Boissonnas, Bovy and Kakalos in 1913 and to Kurtz and Kakalos in 1921 for the second highest peak, Stefani (2912m). Olympus is an iconic mountain and an interesting project for an ascent.

Here are some notes on my trip in September 2022, which I hope will be interesting and helpful to others planning to visit.

Anavasi produce good quality maps at 1:30,000 (with a larger 1:10,000 map of the northern part of the range on the reverse). They also have an app through which you can buy a copy of the map and download onto your smartphone to use with its GPS capabilities. Note, the contours on these maps are at 20m intervals (of which, more later).

I was fortunate that the weather was dry and bright throughout, but it can rain; and Olympus can be the home to severe thunderstorms (the thunderbolt was Zeus' weapon), so be prepared and, of course, check forecasts!

The most convenient airport for the mountain is Thessaloniki, well-served from UK airports. From Thessaloniki, it's an easy drive of around an hour and a quarter to the coast below the mountain and about another 45-minute drive to

Prionia, a common start point around 1,200m, above the town of Litochoro (from which longer walk-ins are possible). Various routes and itineraries can be followed on the mountain – see *Olympus classic ascents & hikes* by Miltos Zervas for alternatives. Prionia is easy to reach by car via a road that is windy but metalled; except for a few short stretches where it mysteriously degrades into little more than a gravel track before returning to a normal surface again, most notably just before the road terminates in a car park, leaving you wondering if you've gone the wrong way! The mobile phone signal is lost somewhere on the road from Litochoro to Prionia, so be aware of this if you are intending to let someone know when you are going to start your hike. There is a restaurant at the car park along with toilet facilities but be warned that (at least on the day of my trek) these do not open until around 8 to 8:30am, so be prepared for the absence of toilets if you intend to start earlier.

The path from Prionia is clear and straightforward as it ascends around 900m over 6km to the first of the refuges on the route, Spilios Agapitos (~2100m). Food and drink are available, and you can also eat your own food outside. The one (reasonable) rule is that if you buy it





MAIN PHOTO Stefani, Zeus' throne. 1. Touba and viewpoint at the end of its northern ridge – a great place to view the sunset. 2. The West side of the Mytikas-Stefani ridge. 3. Map of Mount Olympus. 4. Sign boards that have lost their written detail some time ago. 5. Profitis Ilias.

there, you can leave your waste for them to dispose of but if you brought it with you, there are no bins and it is your responsibility to carry the rubbish off the mountain. Above the refuge, the path soon divides, with the E4 route leading left to the high central peaks for those who want to tackle them in a single day. To the right, the path is marked by painted marks and occasional cairns but sometimes becomes less obvious as it leads to the Mouson Plateau (or Muses' plateau) and the location of two more refuges. On steeper sections some use of hands is necessary before a long, steady ascent – running below the slopes of Stefani, "Zeus' throne" with a wide, arching ridgeline (main photo), to the plateau and the Giosos Apostolidis refuge. An alternative refuge on the plateau, Christos Kakkalos (named after the local guide who participated in the first ascents) is also available (its path branches from the final ascent to the plateau). From Giosos Apostolidis there are easy ascents to the nearby summits: Profitis Ilias (2788m), home to the highest chapel in the Orthodox world (photo 5) and Touba (2801m) and the viewpoint at the end of its northern ridge – a great place to view the sunset (photo 1).

For day 2, the path from the Mouson Plateau to the major summits runs beneath the ridge through the Zonaria – the scree slopes running down from the ridge. The ascent points for the

various routes to the summits are indicated by painted marks but some need a bit of attention to spot (and sign boards seem to have lost their written detail some time ago (photo 4)). Ascending to Stefani from this path is steep and requires scrambling (grade 1, possibly grade 2, I would estimate) but leads fairly easily to a point with a cairn, just short of the actual summit. Reaching the final summit requires crossing an exposed section and, walking alone with no provision to protect the moves, I decided not to tackle this last phase of the peak and made my way back down to the Zonaria path.

Just a few metres on from the Stefani path, a second track leads steeply upwards to the highest peak, Mytikas. An alternative route to Mytikas is available from the south, by continuing along the Zonaria for around 150m before branching upwards to take the path towards the summit of Skala. The path climbs up across the slope through some scree and requires occasional use of hands to negotiate the route until it reaches a path junction just below the ridge in the col between Skala and Paramytikas. Here, the path on the right leads to the scramble up to the peak of Paramytikas. From there, a short downclimb, protected by a fixed via ferrata cable, can be followed by another scramble to the 2918m summit of Mytikas.

## DESTINATIONS

Returning to the col, a short, fairly steep ascent leads to Skala (2867m) where there are great views of the west side of the Mytikas-Stefani ridge (photo 2) and it is a short, easy walk across to Skolio (2905m). Skolio marks the end of the main ridge and from there it is around 2km with a 200m ascent to the most southerly peak in the northern part of the range, Agios Antonios (2816m). A shelter on the peak could be used for a no-frills bivvy (to take in further peaks in the southern part of the Olympus range the next day) but I descended back to Prionia.

The path from Agios Antonios runs down the eastern ridge then south-east, marked by a mix of red and green paint marks. Reaching flatter ground, the path takes several routes but somewhere after passing the spur coming down from Metamorfosi (2600m) in the southern peaks of the range, they seemed to disappear with no obvious path visible on the ground. Finding the path that descends ~1000m over 8km back to the carpark required returning to a clear attack point and some careful navigation. The topology in this area is complex with many small rises and depressions that the map's 20m contour intervals (rather than the 10m we're used to from OS maps) misses – making confident interpretation of position quite challenging and I lost quite a lot of time relocating the path. Plan for this (e.g., don't leave it too late, have GPS backup – with a UTM setting to match the map – not just latitude/longitude). The path downwards skirts, then enters, the forest and is generally well-marked with just a few occasions where exploration of options confirms your onward route. Occasional

reflectors on trees in place of paint markings is particularly encouraging after dark as you can confidently move ahead, knowing the route some way in advance.

### Summary

Overall this was a fantastic trip that I would recommend. As one final tip, I'd strongly recommend a good insect repellent for the days at lower altitude before and after your climb – otherwise, be prepared to give sacrifice in blood to the many mosquitoes!

### Useful links

**Spilios Agapitos refuge:** <https://www.mountolympus.gr/en/>

**Giosos Apostolidis refuge:** <http://www.apostolidisrefuge.gr/en/index.html>

**Christos Kakkalos refuge:** <http://www.olympus-climbing.gr/>

There are other refuges in the national park that serve other routes. Search the web or see the recommended reading for details.

### Reading:

*Olympus classic ascents & hikes.* Miltos Zervas. Anevenontas Pocket Guides, ISBN 978-960-88683-6-6 [www.anevenontas.gr](http://www.anevenontas.gr)

Alternative map, 1:25k and 1:50k, not currently available in paper copy but with app <https://www.geopsis.com/geopsis-eshop/olympus-pieria> ■



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# How to plan A SKI TOUR

ABOVE Fresh Tracks on the Wildhorn, day 2 of the Western Oberland Tour.

Throughout this article we will look at the famous Chamonix – Zermatt Haute Route to provide some practical examples.

We can break down the planning process into several key pieces of information that we need to gather to give us a better picture of what we will be up against. Once the information is gathered, the finalising stages of preparing equipment, checking weather forecasts and potentially adapting the route to the conditions will start to unfold. Let's start with...

## The route

Intimately understanding the route we have chosen will be the most important tool in reducing dependence on luck for having a stress-free time out on a ski tour. We need to know all the areas where there are potential hazards, as well as the escape routes and key navigation points when we are actually moving through the terrain. Examples of escapes from the Haute route could be descending down from the Prafleuri Cabanne rather than going on to the Dix hut or escaping over the Pas de Chevre from the Dix hut to Arolla. Tricky sections such as skiing down to the Col Des Ecardies (which is often quite crevassed) and the climb to the Col should be planned for.

Arguably, this planning stage can't be overdone but for some people knowing every little detail can detract from the adventure. I get that, but personally I would much rather have the route dialled into my mind, as well as saved in a GPX file on my phone (or GPS if that's what you use). Make sure you have the right mapping for the area you are visiting. Also, there is plenty of literature as well as blogs/videos out there to help you get a good

**Planning a ski tour can be an intimidating task, especially if it's to a new area, with a crew you don't know or if the weather forecast is less than ideal. This article aims to help you with some thoughts and ideas, as well as outlining certain tools to help you to easily plan a ski tour over a couple of days or more.**

feel for the tour. Multi-day tours often cover two, three or more maps so it could be worth making a map for each day and laminating it. That way you don't have to wrestle with a large unlaminated map on the top when you have suddenly stepped into the wind from the calm side of the mountain. Most folk opt for some sort of GPS based navigation tool because its surprisingly difficult (read 'impossible') to count steps when you are skiing. Having the route saved as days or sections on your device is a good idea. When planning, this gives you the chance to look at the route in more depth as you plot out the points. Mapping apps on your phone such as FatMap are incredibly helpful for visualising the route in 3D (photo 4), and they have other tools built in such as slope angle layers or a layer showing you the flat sections. I personally use it for most of my planning and when out on the hill. I bring a spare battery for my phone as well as a Garmin InReach mini that gives me a Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinate. Naturally, I'll always be accompanied also by a paper map and compass.

During the planning stage you should pay particular attention to dangerous or difficult sections. I'm talking about areas where you are skiing above a cliff, on slopes steeper than 30

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY DAVE SEARLE



**Dave Searle** is a member of **BMG** and is an IFMGA guide based in Chamonix, France. Skiing most of the winter in the alps Dave has planned his fair share of ski tours over the years! He mostly enjoys day trips around Chamonix with clients doing technical tours and steep descents. Check out his Youtube channel ([@DaveSearle](#)) and instagram ([@davejsearle](#)) for videos of his exploits and useful how to's.

## DESTINATIONS



1. Sunset at the Albert Premier hut whilst on the Haute Route. 2. Looking down on the final climb of the Col du Passon, Day 1 of the Haute Route. 3. Summit of the Rosa Blanche. 4. FatMap image of the route.

degrees or with overhead or underfoot hazards (such as seracs or crevasses) etc. Take notes on each day or section, which you can refer to in the hut to remind yourself of particular sections for example: "Haute Route Col du Passon: after crossing the Argentiere Glacier take care on steep section from glacier". Or "Haute Route Dix to Vignettes: Pay attention going through "Serpentine" often icy"

A 3D mapping tool can really help with seeing these areas but be aware they sometimes make things look more mellow than they are especially with glacier recession, and during lean-snow years.

### The weather

Having a broad view of the weather forecast from a variety of different sources in the upcoming days of your tour is obviously super important but remember that the most accurate forecast is the closest. Being flexible with plans and knowing escape routes or passages that can take you down and around rather than up and over, should the weather deteriorate, is very useful. A classic example of this could be skipping the highest and most exposed part of the Haute Route, the summit of the Pigne d'Arolla, by instead going over the Pas de Chèvres towards Arolla from the Dix hut and then going to the Cabane des Vignettes via the glacier de Piece. This keeps you in much lower and more straightforward terrain should the visibility be poor or the wind too strong. Many people have come a cropper on top of the Pigne in less-than-ideal weather over the years.

My tips when looking at the weather is to pay particular attention to the wind. Wind whipping up snow and wind chill is often the biggest factor that plays into conditions on the mountain as most of us know from working in the UK and Ireland. I would highly recommend including a paragliding forecast like Meteo Parapente into your repertoire of weather forecasting models: You can see specific wind at specific locations and altitudes, and this can help with the planning for the next day/s.

### Equipment checks and lists

Checking the equipment of everyone in the team 'with a fine tooth comb' can really help with avoiding difficult situations. Check skis for delamination, skins for glue health and waterproofness, bindings for damage or signs of fatigue. Having a comprehensive repair kit for multi-day excursions should definitely fall into the emergency equipment category alongside group shelters, first aid kits and secondary communication options. Items such as ski straps, skin wax, cord, jubilee clips, spare pole baskets and basic tools can really get you out of a tricky situation and building this kind of kit takes time and thought, not, for example, something you want to run around gathering in Chamonix on the first day of your trip.

### Plan to succeed but be prepared to fail

To sum things up, the eight p's that are "proper preparation and planning prevents piss poor performance and pain" is a good adage to live by when organising any trip. However, the correct mindset

going into a long ski tour is important. The more you prepare, the more chance of success you have but having said this, going for a 2, 3, 4+ day tour has a lot of variables. Be prepared to bail or cut the trip short if the conditions, group or weather dictate. Pushing on regardless is less of a good plan with ski touring as its dynamic nature means things can spiral out of control quickly. The Haute Route is perhaps not the best tour to start out on for your first multi day ski tour as there are quite a few tricky sections. Having said that there is lots of good information and experiences shared which can be very helpful: It would certainly be a good exercise to plan it out and start understanding how the process works.

As tricky as planning a ski tour can be, when it all comes together, there is seldom a better way to flow through the mountains taking in a multitude of views and terrain than on a long ski tour. Bonne Chance! ■

### Example blogs and online guidance

<https://www.mountaintracks.co.uk/blog/how-hard-is-the-ski-haute-route>  
<https://www.alpine-guides.com/ski/insider-knowledge-ski/haute-route-advice/>  
<https://www.wildsnow.com/7396/chamonix-zermatt-haute-route-1/>  
<https://www.skiweekend.com/blog/the-haute-route-your-questions-answered>  
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# Teaching NAVIGATION

## The value of using an orienteering map

Across the outdoor activity sector instructors use a range of controlled training environments to prepare or benchmark their clients prior to contextualising their navigational ability outdoors.

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY NIGEL WILLIAMS

This adds a level of safety and due diligence in assessing capabilities, reducing the consequences of an error in a more remote environment whilst helping people gain confidence and develop the skills in order to participate and enjoy the activity in its wilderness context. This might be summed up by a quote from Matthew Syed's book, *Black Box Thinking*.

**“Enlightened training environments maximise the quantity and quality of feedback, thus increasing the speed of adaptation”.**



**Nigel Williams** is a member of **AMI** and **BAIML**. His career has spanned the Military, Local Authority Outdoor Education, 20 years as Head of Training at Glenmore Lodge and the last 5 years freelancing. He is the author of the book *Teaching Navigation*, writes a regular navigation blog for Harvey maps, and is an associate member of the Royal Institute of Navigation. He is a Trustee of the National Navigation Award Scheme and The Polar Academy – a Scottish youth expedition charity.

When indoor climbing walls first appeared there were plenty of comments along the lines of it not being the real thing. Some viewed it simply as a training facility to climb harder or keep climbing fit during the winter months. 50 years on, I suspect most Mountaineering and Climbing Instructors would choose to start a novice off with an introduction to the basic equipment, movement and belaying skills in a climbing wall prior to an outdoor rock experience, or at least use one to benchmark a client claiming prior experience. Paddlers may use a swimming pool or pond to develop capsizing drills, boat control or work on a roll, prior to a more expansive natural water experience and adapting those skills to moving water. Mountain bike instructors use skills tracks, and skiers use dry slopes, snowdomes and rollerski tracks, all designed to develop basic skills prior to exposure to the natural environment.

So, what do we have for the walker to develop the core navigation skills? When it comes to teaching navigation there seems to be an aversion to using an orienteering map. Maybe it has been their lack of availability. In the last 10-15 years that has changed and makes them an accessible and significant tool for teaching navigation skills and strategies. Regardless of map scale and symbols, navigation skills require the same cognitive wayfinding processes. An orienteering map just allows a lot more opportunities to teach, learn and practice with rapid feedback in a short distance and time frame – Black box thinking.

British and Scottish Orienteering now have hundreds of downloadable maps of permanent orienteering courses around the UK. [www.goorienteering.org.uk](http://www.goorienteering.org.uk) and <https://www.scottish-orienteering.org/get-involved/pocs/> No need for membership or registration. Some maps are free, some cost a few pounds. Many more are being added, often in urban areas with the development of virtual orienteering using the Maprun6 and iOrienteering Apps.

There is a big difference between going orienteering and using an orienteering map for navigating a walk, developing or practising navigation skills. The map detail is very accurate and most of what the novice sees around them is on the map including more subtle underfoot and vegetation changes. This is a significant confidence builder before moving to a more traditional walking map and environment.

They are also excellent for benchmarking Mountain Leader and Hill and Moorland Leader training candidates. Quality Mountain Days reflect terrain confidence but not necessarily





MAIN PHOTO & 2. Using a 1:10,000 orienteering map to benchmark more experienced navigators understanding of contour interpretation and navigation strategies.

1. A map walk – using a 1:10,000 orienteering map with novices developing map setting and decision making confidence.

navigation competence. Knowledge of contours, compass skills, and strategies can quickly be reviewed and specific skills taught before putting them into context on the hill where environmental conditions may be less conducive to teaching and learning, and opportunities for teaching specific skills can be limited with long distances between them.

Some reasons given for avoiding them are that people struggle with the scale, or the symbols and colours are different to 'real' maps (sounds a bit like climbing wall hand holds). Yet many of us have got used to all of these as used by Harvey maps. A quick explanation of the colours is that white areas are "open runnable woodland" which is the perfect orienteering terrain, so anything that doesn't meet that criteria gets mapped. It saves ink and makes the map easier to read. Yellow is open grassland, yellowy brown is open heath land. A short walk usually unravels further symbols and scale.

**Map reading or navigation**

Map reading is sometimes defined as "the act of interpreting or understanding the geographic information portrayed on a map," it is an element of navigation but often delivered as an isolated series of indoor numeracy and planning exercises.

Navigation has been defined as "the process of determining and maintaining a course or trajectory from one place to another" sometimes described as "wayfinding" – finding our way. (The opposite, "waylosing" – losing our way, is appearing in some academic papers).

It is interesting that we talk about Satnav rather than Sat map-reading and Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS), also navigating our way through a process, or life even. It describes movement or a journey. It can't be replicated in a classroom.

Navigation is essentially an on the move decision making process with consequences, both physical and mental (mostly good). It also requires the development of terrain confidence, spatial awareness, the cognitive pathways and map memory – wayfinding skills.

**"The brain's navigation system did not evolve to use verbal signs, and does so only with difficulty".**

*Professor Kate Jeffery – professor of behavioural neuroscience and Chair of the Royal Institute of Navigation (RIN) cognitive navigation group.*

Our brains will look for short cuts, and is drawn to reading the written word on an

Ordnance Survey or Harvey map which can confuse map setting for the novice. Orienteering maps have no writing on the map so our brains have to learn to read the symbols any way up which helps the development of some of the spatial cognitive functions of navigation.

Over millennia our brains have developed cognitive pathways that feed our map memory function in the hippocampus part of the brain. In contrast, we have only had maps (and base plate compasses) for recreation for about 100 years so our brains are less likely to be tuned into them and they may be a less useful starting point for teaching the subject.

An alternative approach to building navigational confidence/developing spatial awareness is to tell novices they are going for a walk without a map, that alone can reduce apprehension, it becomes an exploratory experience. Novices initially observe things close by the path. Play a bit of 'I spy', point out features that you know are on a map you can use later. Ask them to point to where the car park is, maybe how far they might be from it. Very simple decisions in the outdoor environment but without consequences, often it gets the quieter people to start vocalising their decisions.

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

After a quick introduction to map setting and pacing, which helps get an understanding of the scale, repeat the walk with the map. An alternative is to get them to mark on a map the route walked earlier or even draw a map of the route from their memory. It demonstrates our cognitive navigation ability highlighting the value of developing spatial awareness.

My experience of this approach has been that folk tend to be less focused on the map, more on observation. They quickly gain confidence with the map and enjoy finding the features observed earlier. The orienteering map makes this process very doable with plenty of features on or near the path. Standard maps have less detail close to the path, it takes time for a novice's confidence to grow to look further afield and relate what they see to the map.

### Developing decision making

Do we teach decision making as a part of navigation? Above, I mention a gentle way to encourage this. Keeping to paths, the novice's first decisions (apart from how to escape the car park) are whether to go left or right at a junction. Decision making requires confidence and it grows as we make more successful decisions. The

orienteering map offers that opportunity, requiring an accumulation of information, usually from the observation of features around them, of which there are plenty, correlated with what is on the map.

However, decision making also comes with those familiar heuristic biases such as social proof – following others, etc. Using the map (figure 1) it would be possible to provide a group with ample opportunities for route choices, decision making, contour interpretation, cross country and relocation strategies: Whilst reducing the anxiety of becoming lost, making a poor decision, fitness, carrying a rucksack, etc.

A part of developing decision making and confidence is encouraging people towards going solo. One way of doing this is a leap frogging exercise: first in pairs, walking along a simple linear route, each pair goes to a different point anything between 50 – 200m apart. The instructor follows up behind to confirm each pair's location and sends them to another point past the others. Finally, they all have the same destination point. The next progression is going solo. As well as developing decision making and confidence it also develops map setting,

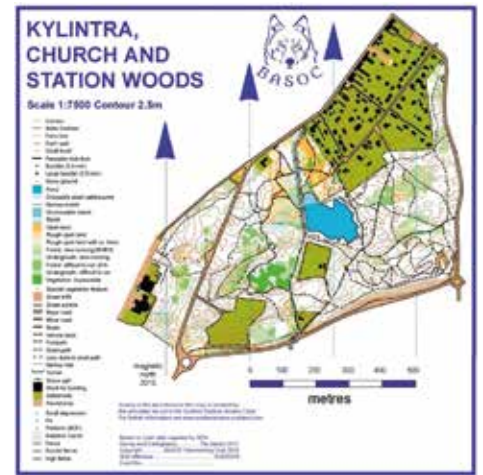


FIGURE 1 Orienteering map. Thanks to Badenoch and Strathspey Orienteering Club orienteering club for use of this map.

ticking off features, distance estimation and catching features.

Like climbing walls, orienteering maps are not available in every community but are often more accessible than the 'real' thing, enabling progressions and a quick transition between scales, which may not be as big a challenge as we sometimes think. So much of navigation is decision making and confidence built through steady progressive experiences and success. These maps offer an opportunity for accelerating that as well as being a useful bench marking tool. ■

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# ENHANCE YOUR WALKING WITH THE Nordic Walking technique

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY LIZ HEYWORTH-THOMAS

ABOVE A group of Nordic Walkers on a hike in Llangollen, North Wales.

Over the last two years, I have seen an increase in the number of people using poles across a multitude of landscapes. Whether in urban areas, hills, moorland, or mountains, walkers and runners are embracing the benefits that using poles has to offer. Benefits such as increased stability, and additional support for those who suffer from muscular aches or joint pain, particularly in the lower body. They can help keep us moving faster and for longer.

There are a variety of different techniques being used, developed by people using poles in their own way. This makes sense given we all have our own unique walking or running style.

As a Nordic Walking instructor, it will be of no surprise that my preferred technique is that of Nordic Walking. More specifically, the Nordic Walking technique as developed by the International Nordic Walking Federation (INWA) in association with sports scientists and biomechanics experts. This technique is represented in the UK by British Nordic Walking Community Interest Company (CIC). Once developed as a way of keeping cross-country skiers fit out of season, both the INWA and British Nordic Walking CIC share a wealth of research that highlights the benefits of Nordic Walking for all, including those living with chronic illness.

## What is the Nordic Walking technique?

Nordic Walking is a research-informed walking technique that utilises the benefits of walking with ergonomic poles, designed to fully engage your upper body as well as your legs when walking. This is perfect for maintaining and improving balance, gait, co-ordination, posture, and overall strength. Furthermore, whilst

Nordic Walking is a great activity in its own right, it is something that can complement an existing training plan for endurance or fitness. Research has shown that Nordic Walking can burn approximately 20% more calories than walking without poles, can release tension in your neck and shoulders, improve posture and gait, strengthen your back and abdominal muscles, and reduce the impact on your joints (British Nordic Walking CIC).

Research has also found that Nordic Walking is highly beneficial for rehabilitation from injury, adaption to walking post-amputation, and for those living with chronic conditions such as Cancer, Stroke, Parkinson's Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, and more (please see [BritishNordicWalking.org.uk](http://BritishNordicWalking.org.uk) for research studies).

## Isn't it just walking with poles?

Yes, though there is more to it than that. The Nordic Walking technique helps you to maximise the benefits of walking with poles. If you are going to use walking poles you may as well get the most out of them, right? To find out which size pole to use, use the following formula: your height in cm x 0.65 and round up to the nearest 5cm. Although I find that some people may prefer to go up or down a size so advise adjustable poles if you are not sure.

Overleaf are three images showing the Nordic Walking technique at a glance:

In *photo 1* you can see that using the Nordic Walking poles helps to maintain posture whilst walking uphill. I can also use my upper body strength to help with walking uphill, taking some of the pressure off my lower body. This does make walking uphill



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Stockists of Exel and Leki, two of the leading Nordic Walking brands in the UK. Exel are the original Nordic walking pole brand and are known for their

lightweight quality carbon shafts and their unique curve technology. Leki offer some of the best folding Nordic poles available and are a joy to use on any mountain or lowland adventure.

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For more information and to view our range visit [www.nordicwalk.store](http://www.nordicwalk.store)

## TECHNICAL SKILLS



1. The uphill Nordic Walk. 2. The downhill Nordic Walk. 3. Nordic Walking on the flat. 4. Leki Cross Trail FX Superlite Compact Nordic Walking pole. This 100% Carbon pole is extendable, foldable and weighs just 203g.

easier as I can shift the pressure from my legs to my upper body – perfect for building endurance.

Photo 2 shows the Nordic Walking technique downhill. The placement of the poles behind me supports my posture and balance. It is common to want to place poles in front of you whilst walking downhill but there is a risk this can tip you off balance. This technique certainly helps to take the strain off joints when descending downhill.

Photo 3 shows the Nordic Walking technique on the flat. You can see how the Nordic Walking poles almost push my shoulders up and back to promote good posture, engaging the back and core muscles. This can help improve and maintain overall balance. I find that this is so important when carrying heavy rucksacks too.

### What is the difference between Nordic Walking poles and trekking poles?

Nordic Walking poles have a distinctive strap and paw (rubber tip, which is removable to reveal a metal stud for off-road use).

The strap supports the Nordic Walking technique and means that you do not have to physically carry the pole, resulting in you being less stiff in the arm and shoulder whilst you walk.

I find Nordic Walking poles tend to be much lighter too, with options to buy them in Carbon Fibre. Nordic Walking poles also come in a variety of styles to suit each type of user. There are foldable, extendable, fixed length and curved.

### Can I use trekking poles to Nordic Walk?

It isn't impossible. However, Nordic Walking poles are specifically designed to enhance the technique so you may find over time that you prefer to purchase Nordic Walking poles. It is a 'good, better, best' type of scenario when it comes to which poles to

use, in that for some people, some poles are better than none. But if you want to Nordic Walk, poles designed specifically for Nordic Walking are best.

### How did you get into Nordic Walking?

I began Nordic Walking and later founded Berwyn Nordic Walking & Guided Walks in 2020 as I found, through research as an academic, that activities such as Nordic Walking are hugely inclusive and beneficial to supporting quality of life and wellbeing.

I Nordic Walk to support my endurance training, helping me to stay mountain fit. It has been great to welcome people to the Berwyn Nordic Walking community on regular walks as well as longer day trips. Becoming a Nordic Walking Instructor can be a great way to widen your client base too! British Nordic Walking CIC offer training without commitment and have been very supportive helping me in running my own business.

If you are interested in finding out more about Nordic Walking, please feel free to get in touch. You can check out the website: [BerwynNordicWalking.co.uk](http://BerwynNordicWalking.co.uk), or follow our socials on [@BerwynWalks](https://www.instagram.com/BerwynWalks). British Nordic Walking CIC is also a great source of information and has a very useful 'find an instructor' tool on their website where you can find the details of an instructor local to you. ■

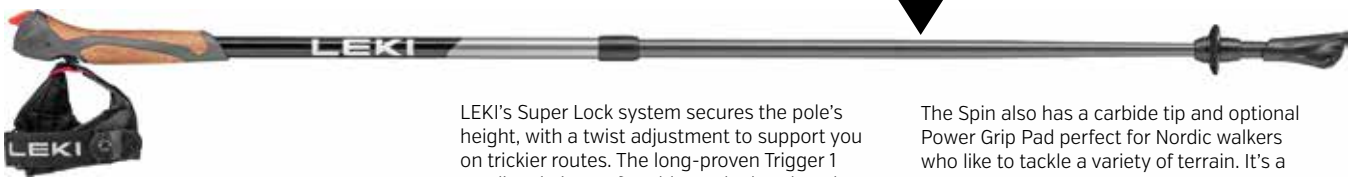


**Dr Liz Heyworth-Thomas** is a member of **MTA**.

She is a Principal Lecture at Liverpool Business School, Co-chair of the Academy of Marketing's Entrepreneurial and Small Business Marketing Special Interest Group, and founder of The Rambling Business Academic Ltd and Berwyn Nordic Walking & Guided Walks. Liz has expertise in marketing, entrepreneurship, sociology, and social policy.

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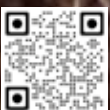
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# NESTING BIRDS and climbing restrictions

**Spring is on the way, and with longer daylight hours and better weather, climbers are starting to head back to the crags. This time of year is joyous with young lambs appearing, trees becoming green again and nesting birds rearing their young, some returning from the warmer climates of southern Europe and Africa.**



**Tom Carrick** is a member of **AMI**, **BAIML** and **MTA**. He is the Access and Conservation officer for the BMC and lives in North Wales. Tom is looking at how we educate more people to help protect our wildlife while we enjoy the outdoors.

Sadly, across the UK there are species of birds in decline, some of this is down to global warming, but loss of habitat, lack of food, changing seasons and a reduction in nesting areas are also causes.

The British Mountaineering Council (BMC), Mountaineering Scotland and Mountaineering Ireland work with national and local organisations such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) and other voluntary groups to help protect different species. Climbers can support this work by avoiding areas that are populated by nesting birds, whatever the species, which will give birds the best chance of successfully rearing their young.

The restrictions placed on climbing crags epitomises the balance needed between access and conservation, and these restrictions play a vital role during the nesting season. We all want to get out and climb again, however it is important to remember humans are not the only user group of many of our beloved climbing areas.

There are several bird species that we are trying to protect on the British Isles and the island of Ireland. On the sea cliffs we will often find kittiwakes, razorbills, fulmars, choughs and even puffins, in some areas, and when we look towards the inland crags: peregrines,

WORDS BY TOM CARRICK

ring ouzels and ravens are among the species we are trying to protect. In some locations we are incredibly lucky to be able to share some of the cliffs with these birds, as for example, there are only 433 breeding pairs of choughs in the UK and Isle of Man.

The legalities of disturbing birds can be serious. Raptor persecution is unfortunately still a major issue and only a few years ago an osprey nest was intentionally cut down at Llyn Brenig, and between 1991 and 2008, 36 chough egg thefts were reported (RSPB). There are different responsibilities depending on how endangered the species is, however, as a responsible climber and walker you should be aware that it is a criminal offence to interfere with the nest of **any** wild bird or obstruct a bird from using it. You may have heard the term “Schedule 1” which legally protects a bird from disturbance, so simply being too close to a chough or peregrine nest would be an offence. Both of these protections come under the Wildlife and Countryside act 1981; this also includes reckless disturbance, so if a climber was unaware of a nest they could still be prosecuted if they caused a disturbance. If it were proven by Natural England or Natural Resources Wales that a climber had disturbed a Schedule 1 species they could face a fine of up to £20,000 and six months in prison.

**Ring ouzel (photo 3)– this beautiful species is slightly smaller than your common Blackbird, for both male and female the most notable feature is the white crescent on their breast. The female plumage is slightly browner than the male’s darker black feathers.**



1. Pair of choughs at Penmaenmawr Quarry. 2. Peregrine. 3. Ring ouzel.  
 All photos © Jack Slattery, RSPB FLOWCHART Climbing and nesting birds flowchart.

It is incredibly important not to disturb a nest, by doing so there is a risk to the nest being abandoned, or the eggs not developing properly, young chicks can't thermoregulate and once hatched if a chick doesn't get food for a time there is a risk they will die from starvation.

There has been one known criminal prosecution of a climber who was caught climbing through a nest that was avoidable. So, it is important to think how you can make sure you don't end up in this situation.

Climbers must firstly research the crags they are going to visit. Seacliff crags often have a lot of bird restrictions, but that is not to say they are exclusive: ring ouzels will often be found on moorland crags such as Stanage Edge, so check your guidebook, and within England and Wales the Regional Access Data base (RAD). In Scotland you can find this information on the Mountaineering Scotland website. Guide books are great for this information but can go out of date, so the online versions tend to be more accurate. These websites are also updated if birds have left early or arrived late, so you might be able to climb on a crag that has previously had a restriction, and with the changing climate this is happening more often.

Secondly, once we are at the crag many of us will check the routes we want to climb anyway, maybe assess what gear we will need, identify any crux moves, work out how we descend; within this planning we should have a quick scan for nests, for anyone who has had a bird fly at you mid crux it's not a good experience anyway and it's even less of an enjoyable experience for the bird. It's worth pointing out here that not all nests are visible from the ground, and you may need to listen for any noise on the route, many of the same species of birds will behave differently when disturbed.

These simple checks are a quick and easy way to help protect wild birds and to give them the best chance to successfully rear their young; they should become a natural part of any climber's daily routine as well as something professionals within the industry should be promoting.

All of the representative bodies for climbing across the UK rely on the help of volunteers to keep these records up to date, so if you come across a nest that you think should be checked contact the relevant representative body and they will take it from there. The RSPB and BTO will be thankful for any records and it is very helpful in monitoring cliff-nesting birds.

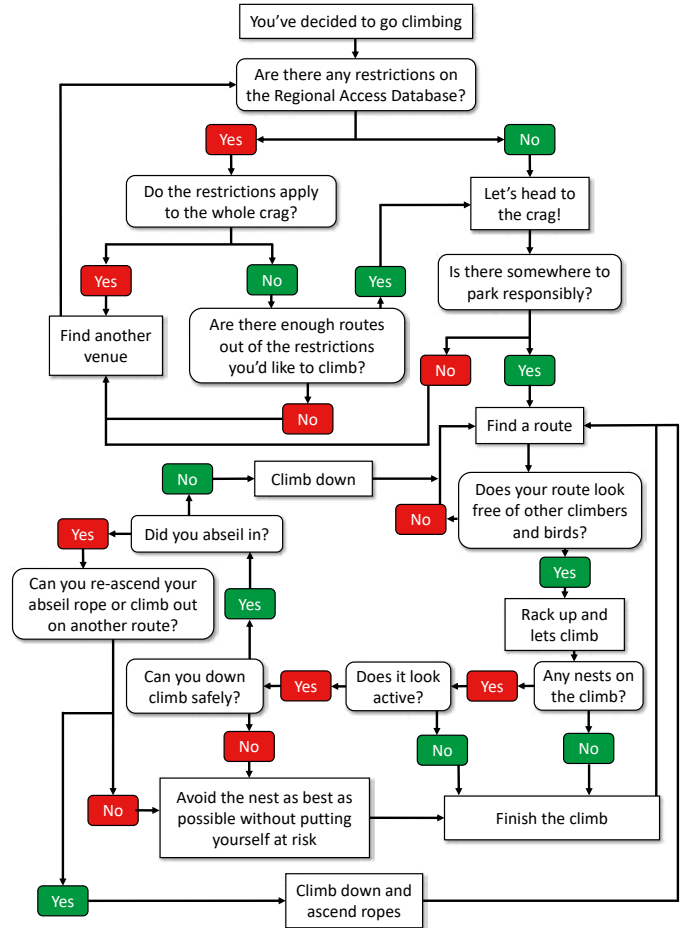
The flowchart shows best practice guidance. There are so many eventualities and scenarios that could occur, but hopefully this will give you something to work with to ensure a desirable outcome for your climbs and the protection of nesting birds.

This article hasn't looked at specific species as there are plenty of good articles and books for that, but instead has tried to promote good habits that will help protect our wonderful and wild birds, with an understanding of the legalities and how we should best act around protected birds.

Information on climbing restrictions for nesting birds can be found on the BMC's Regional Access Database and Mountaineering Scotland's Birds and Nesting page. These organisations will each have a method of reporting and updating bird restrictions. ■

**Websites**

BMC Regional Access Database (*thebmc.co.uk*)  
<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-regional-access-database>  
 Birds and nesting | Mountaineering Scotland  
<https://www.mountaineering.scot/access/birds-and-nesting>



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# SHOUT

## it from the mountain tops

### Making changes for a changing climate.

WORDS BY KEVIN ALBIN

As Mountain Leaders, we aim to engage with our clients. We've been trained to talk to them about the environment they are in, the flora and fauna, or the local geology. If appropriate, we'll cover technical skills or something to keep them safe. We are interested in their lives, whether training young people in leadership and other skills, and on occasions, providing a listening ear to their problems. So, what about the climate crisis, and how equipped are we to talk about that? With little evidence of urgent action from governments or the recent Conference of Parties in Egypt, should we be engaging our clients in climate conversations? Is it an opportunity to open the debate, or even, to lead the way? We are talking about our workplace after all.

Of 10,000 young people recently surveyed from 10 countries, 45% stated that they were anxious and distressed over the climate crisis. Climate anxiety is increasingly acknowledged as affecting mental health.

Last summer, Union Internationale des Associations de Guides de Montagnes (UIAGM) Mountain Guide, Roeland van Oss, from the Netherlands, decided he wanted to make a statement on the climate crisis. He wanted to set an example to state that we can and must change if we are to slow global warming, and that we should all be doing something. I had this conversation with him.

#### Can you give a brief snapshot of what you have just achieved, and why you did it?

During the summer of 2022, I climbed all the eighty-two 4000 metre peaks of the Alps, in 78 days, without using motorised transport or ski lifts between the mountains. I either walked or cycled. This was to inspire others to do big mountain projects with a small carbon footprint, and to show how we can all do something against climate change; small things add up.

#### Can you tell us something about the planning that went into this project? Were there any particular difficulties? Any unseen problems that you had to deal with along the way?

I planned to climb as many mountains as possible one after another to avoid descending to the valley each time. This created a

big plan with the different areas, and small clusters of mountains.

I then made two lists: those peaks that are always climbable such as Gran Paradiso, and those peaks that need special conditions, such as dry rock on the Matterhorn and snow in the Chamonix area. My decisions then changed according to the conditions.

I managed to do the easy/non-technical peaks in the Bernese Oberland and Valais in snowy conditions, but then the weather changed and the temperature rose quickly. So, I left and cycled to Chamonix to complete the peaks around Mont Blanc. This worked well as had I been any later, it would have been too dangerous. I then returned to Bernese Oberland and Valais to climb the technical peaks before my long bike journey to the Ecrins.

#### How have you become aware of the climate change issues, enough to undertake such a challenge?

During my climbing career of over 20 years, I have seen the mountain world change rapidly. I have seen glacier change, approaches to mountains getting more difficult, rock towers crumbling, television-size blocks hurtling towards me, seasons getting warmer and more unpredictable, route conditions changing. Mountains seem to be a magnifying glass for change, because here it is quickly visible and in much bigger proportions.

#### Do you think there is much global awareness of the climate situation, especially its seriousness and urgency?

No, I don't think so.

I am from Holland, and there's not much of climate change that directly affects us. It's warmer in the summer, no more ice skating in the winter, but nothing that makes life more dangerous. In the Alps we can see the change much more prominently, with glaciers shrinking, seasons changing, and mountains getting unclimbable.

I also think people don't want to be aware of the situation, because being aware means we have to act on it, and I wonder if people really want to do that.





MAIN PHOTO Col de Forclaz and having to travel light. 1. Climbing partner, Andreas, encouraged to run alongside. 2. Mer de Glace, Chamonix. All photos © Roeland van Oss

**I know you have made some personal lifestyle choices. Would you mind sharing those with our readers?**

Most of my European travel is by train, especially between the Netherlands and the Alps. I became a vegetarian 7 years ago, because that was something I could change in favour of the climate. I use a washable sandwich bag. I buy hardly any plastic bottles. I wash clothes at 30 degrees C, and dry on a drying rack. I try to take short showers. I try to keep my carbon footprint as small as possible. I pick up any rubbish I see in the mountains as I want to be a positive example to my clients.

**Was there a specific climate statement that you were making by this challenge, and do you feel you succeeded?**

Yes, that we can all do something, even when it is a small thing. Pointing at our neighbours or the government that they don't do anything is not going to help us. We have to do something and the example we give will be taken over by our children, colleagues, friends, etc.

But I don't feel I have succeeded. I might have set an example for some people, which is a win, but seeing how few people have actually done something for the climate during my project, or have changed their behaviour, and how much attention is on my performance instead

of the message I wanted to bring out; I believe we could have done much more.

**We are seeing dramatic changes in global weather. As a Mountain Guide, you have knowledge of weather systems and the consequences of warmer atmosphere and oceans. What can be done to help the general public understand the effects on the weather from a changing climate, and the need to act?**

I think we have to change strategy. Instead of being focused on the effects we should look at the cause – our behaviour and mindset. While we in the 'rich' Western world are not experiencing the dangers of climate change, we are unlikely to change. Many are interested in being the best, fastest or first, how big our car/house is, how many ski holidays we have, etc., So, we have to be more open minded, more self-reflective, more honest with ourselves and each other.

I had support from some big businesses, which I appreciate, but is that for their publicity or that they are actively doing things to help the planet, and do they encourage their employees to do the same?

Two other Dutch climbers completed all the sum mits ten days ahead of me, although they used cars and ski lifts. There was a difference in the media reporting, in that being first seemed

more important than reducing the carbon footprint and setting an example.

In order to solve the climate problem, we have to look at social change, our behaviour, the self-reflective capacity and the influence of our behaviour on others. I think this is where we have to focus.

**Those who work in the outdoor industry, like yourself, are lovers of nature who would want to protect the environment and its biodiversity. Your website quotes Albert Schweitzer that 'example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing'. What should we in the industry be doing to influence others in these subjects?**

Everything we do is an example for others, and as an industry, we must work together on this. I think there are still too many 'big words' without real commitment and real action. We have to make personal choices with the environment in mind. Also, most importantly, look around and take in all the beauty around you, and understand that our actions shape this world. ■



**Kevin Albin** is a member of **BAIML** and a Climate Reality Leader, find out more at <https://kevin-albin.com/>



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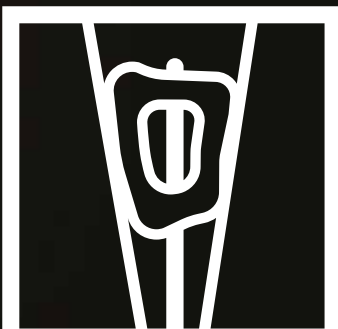
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# HIKE to HEALTH

## Inner and outer landscape exploration



MAIN PHOTO Peak District.

**Learning to interpret maps and then relate them to actual landscapes is a way to feel empowered and competent in the outdoors and use the exercise of hiking to build our physical and respiratory strength. We can also juxtapose these skills with personal considerations, and formulating internal coping strategies and resilience to cultivate mental and emotional health.**

We all have different life experiences, changing moods and a variety of relationships, and we all have the capacity to build supportive connections with ourselves. Using navigation analogies, we can adopt knowledge and wisdom to understand and mitigate an eclectic mix of factors and our response to them. Being able to adapt in the outdoors mirrors our potential to notice actions, reactions and interactions within our self and open up a world of possibilities for constructive inner change.

There are 3 stages in this model of hike to health: planning, adapting and immersing. We will explore these stages in a short series of articles.

In Part 1, we look at how to gain preparatory skills before we venture out. I've used 'we' throughout these articles to disperse any delusion of grandeur I may have of being a therapist guiding clients. We are simply all humans offering what we can to each other, hopefully with a light-heart and some laughter along the way.

Planning is an essential part of an enjoyable and safe day out. It is also key to long-term inner change of habits, patterns and unhelpful ways of being. For this we are using the guiding D's of hiking navigation; they are just as pertinent when looking at our life and taking stock of who we are and where we are going:

### 1 Departure

A simple rule of 'along the corridor and up the stairs' can be used to learn grid references – all outdoor leaders know this premise. But we can also use this simple rule to create a

timeline of the ways we have walked in life, stairs that we have climbed (challenges) – all those events, circumstances and relationships that have led us to be exactly where we are now (don't forget to include some 'positive' as well as 'negative' influences). It is a pragmatic, though never entirely objective, look at the road we have travelled, acknowledging our journey from past to present and arrival at our point of departure for the rest of our life, however we perceive it to have been.

Carl Rogers' 'unconditional positive regard' moves us to responsibility and acceptance of the self we are now, regardless of how we arrived at the present status.

### 2 Direction

During the planning stage the direction is related to the route which we are taking, according to any aims and objectives of the day. Any direction is possible and often is a hotchpotch of ideas and inclinations to formulate a day out or an expedition. We may be aiming for a circular route, a pub or café at the end, or towards a particular goal. At the planning stage it doesn't matter whether we are heading north, south, east or west as long as we have a healthy idea of our direction from departure to destination.

In life this can be considered as to where are we heading? What are my dreams and aspirations?

As Viktor Frankl said: ***"Life is not primarily a quest for pleasure... or a quest for power... but a quest for meaning. The greatest task for any person is to find meaning in [their] own life."***

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY DEYNA HIRST



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## WELLBEING



1. Duddon Valley, Lake District. 2. Wild Boar Fell, Howgills.

### 3 Distance and Duration

This needs to be realistic and achievable when considering a walk, according to ascent, descent and route choice. We need to compassionately take into account ability, capability and susceptibility.

Likewise, when we are planning our way forward in life, it needs to be according to our own quirks, strengths and susceptibilities so that we feel it is possible.

Pacing one's self in life can be paramount to success. If we put ourself under pressure to complete a task or a change within a limited time-frame, it can quickly lead us to being demoralised and feeling a sense of 'failure'. Time for rest, breaks, being curious and noticing the wonders of the journey are part of authentic exploration of places and of self.

The tortoise and the hare scenario is a wonderful tale of ambling rather than racing, plodding at an appropriate pace rather than striving to get ahead.

### 4 Description

Knowing what we can expect to encounter helps us to mark our progress and be prepared for our route. We may notice a steep incline which leads us to a viewpoint or over into a new valley; we may check passing bridges, rivers, railways or roads to help us.

This embraces our emotional journey: ups and downs, highs and lows – all part of being human! It also allows us to celebrate (or at least endure) our wobbles without feeling that we are going backwards or circling round to where we departed from.

**"A poor life this if, full of care, we have no time to stand and stare."** W.H. Davies

### 5 Destination

How do we know when we've arrived? On a hike, this may be arrival back at the car, a café or a pub.

In our life, it may be more subtle: anything from going one day without substance use to some accomplishment we have worked towards. Or it may be about changing habits and patterns of behaviour over time.



**"My destination is no longer a place, rather a new way of seeing."**  
Marcel Proust

**"We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time."** T.S. Elliot  
What are we going to do to celebrate?!

### 6 Danger

This 'D' reminds us to build enough coping strategies to ensure we are resilient and aware of dangers or pitfalls, naturally occurring along the way. In terms of navigation this may be a marsh, river crossing, scree slope, cliff edge or peat bog that we can avoid by carefully scrutinising the map.

Within life dangers are the triggers or all manner of distractions that can lure us back into unhelpful habits or thought patterns. Awareness helps us alleviate dangers in outdoor adventure, just as awareness can lead to mindfully side-stepping situations or relationships that are mentally unhealthy for us.

**"Security is mostly a superstition... life is either a daring adventure, or nothing."** Helen Keller

I also invite people to add any more D's that are helpful and healthy for them – some great additional D's that have been presented are:

**Delights** – favourite snacks or treats for the day

**Deviations** – allowing extra time for getting lost a little or looking at an interesting feature

**Daftness** – time to paddle in streams or have snowball fights

Please email me any other suggestions!

Planning can be done in a community setting or informally using an online platform and a navigation template. I use my own 'hike to health' planning tool either with groups or individuals to stimulate self-reflection, introduce coping mechanisms and invite movement towards conscious awareness. When we are aware, we can adapt... and that is part 2 – watch this space! ■



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1. Salbutamol inhaler with a spacer device. 2. Cold air at the lakeside.

# ASTHMA

## outlined for the outdoor professional

Asthma is a common condition that affects the airways and lungs of around 5.4 million people in the UK. This is the equivalent of 1 in 12 adults and 1 in 11 children, and therefore it is highly likely that you will be joined by one or more participant with asthma on your next activity.

WORDS BY DANIEL GRACE

### What is asthma?

Asthma is a long-term condition which is usually diagnosed in childhood, although it can present later on in life as well. In asthma, the breathing tubes (airways) in the lungs become narrow as a result of inflammation and tightening of the muscles that surround these tubes. This is what causes the typical symptoms of coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath and a tight feeling in the chest.

Asthma symptoms tend to fluctuate in severity, and different people will experience varying levels of symptoms. Many people with asthma can be symptom free for weeks at a time, however their symptoms will often deteriorate if they are exposed to a trigger such as pollen, cold air or exercise: Most tend to know which environmental factors will affect their asthma and avoiding these will be a key part of their “asthma action plan.”

### What about inhalers?

There is no cure for asthma, but effective treatment allows the majority of people with asthma to live a normal and active life. Inhalers are the most common treatment and these work by delivering medicine into the airways to relax the surrounding muscles. The most well-known and frequently used inhaler is salbutamol. This is a “reliever” medication, in that it is used when a person with asthma feels short of breath or tight in the chest. Some inhaler users, particularly children, may also have a spacer device: These are cylindrical clear plastic devices that help deliver the inhaled medication more effectively (photo 1).

### How can I decide whether someone with asthma should come on an activity?

Asthma is by no means a barrier to participating in outdoor activities, however it is important to know what a potential participant means when they say: “I have asthma,” as this covers a large spectrum, from someone who might never need

to use their inhaler to someone who has been admitted to intensive care.

This is not supposed to be alarming, but instead prompt you to consider two simple questions that can help you understand the risk and decide whether an individual can safely join your group. In the overwhelming majority of cases the answer will be yes, they can. In addition, participants with severe or more complicated asthma are often very clued up on its management and will usually have a well-developed strategy to manage this autonomously.

- 1 My first simple screening question to gauge severity and suitability would be “*how often do you need to use your inhaler?*” If the answer is never, or once a month, this suggests their asthma is reasonably well controlled. Alternatively, if they say they have to use it several times whenever they exercise, you might want to re-think summitting Ben Nevis with them until their asthma has been reviewed by their doctor.
- 2 My second question would be, “*have you been to the hospital because of your asthma?*” It is reassuring if someone has never been to hospital, whereas if they attended the emergency department with breathing difficulties last week, this would usually make you consider their suitability at that point in time. However, if such a visit was a long time ago, understanding what triggered that visit would be helpful to make a decision on suitability for the activity.

These two questions can give you a rough idea of an individual’s suitability, however the decision will also depend on the type of trip you are going on, the distance from a main road (for evacuation in a worst-case scenario), the distance from hospital and also your own knowledge and first aid skills. If at all in doubt, ask the participant to discuss any proposed activity with their own doctor. This is where sending medical screening questionnaires out in advance of an activity has obvious advantages as it allows adequate time for planning and discussion.



**NHS guidance**

- 1 Sit up straight – try to keep calm.
- 2 Take one puff of your reliever inhaler (usually blue) every 30 to 60 seconds up to 10 puffs.
- 3 If you feel worse at any point, or you do not feel better after 10 puffs, call 999 for an ambulance.
- 4 If the ambulance has not arrived after 10 minutes and your symptoms are not improving, repeat step 2.
- 5 If your symptoms are no better after repeating step 2, and the ambulance has still not arrived, contact 999 again immediately.

**How to manage an emergency?**

You have probably heard of people having an “asthma attack.” Sadly, severe asthma attacks kill 3 people every day in the UK, and prompt recognition and action can be the difference between a positive and negative outcome. When someone with asthma has an attack it is a bit like trying

**Disclaimer**

This article does not constitute medical advice and should not be treated as such. You must not rely on the information published here as an alternative to medical advice from your doctor or other professional healthcare provider. You should never delay seeking medical advice, disregard medical advice or discontinue medical treatment because of information published in this article. If in doubt, please advise all participants to see their doctor for a comprehensive assessment and asthma action plan.

to breathe in and out through a drinking straw, and it can be very hard for them to get enough air into their chest.

The most important thing is to remain calm and to try and encourage the participant to do the same. This may be easier said than done and counting to ten inside your head can be a helpful way of slowing things down. Next, remember where they keep their reliever inhaler and follow the steps below as advised by the NHS; it can be helpful to use a spacer device in this situation if the individual in question has one, and it is also important to note that some people with asthma may have a different management plan, in which case they should follow this instead of the standard guidance.

**In summary, asthma is common and in the vast majority of cases it need not be a barrier to participating in outdoor activities. It is nevertheless important to**

**ask a few questions if someone declares that they have asthma, so that you can gain a clear understanding of what they mean by this and discuss how you can safely support them during a day out hiking or climbing. This article has briefly introduced the topic and cannot comprehensively cover it in detail. If you want to find out more, please look at the following resources or consider purchasing the Oxford Handbook of Expedition and Wilderness Medicine.**

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<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/asthma> ■



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# PREGNANCY, motherhood, and outdoor careers

## Part 3 Logistics, society and culture

WORDS BY MIKAELA TOCZEK  
AND SAMANTHA EVANS

The things we often love about the outdoor sector, such as working in remote places and flexible days, can become difficult to navigate during pregnancy and also for primary caregivers. From creating individual risk assessments, to building networks and figuring out how you will manage childcare, part 3 of our series, will be exploring some of the wider issues for carving out an adventurous career that fits with pregnancy and motherhood.

### Logistics

Childcare flexibility and cost are by far the biggest logistical challenges for outdoor professionals who are primary caregivers<sup>1</sup>. In the UK, some financial support is available for those with children under the age of 3, such as the Government run Tax-Free Childcare scheme. This can be used for child-minders, nannies and/or nurseries, which for those in adventurous careers, may enable a more flexible approach.

For caregivers living outside the UK, the systems can be significantly different. For example, in France childcare is heavily subsidised by the state and more readily available than in the UK, partly due to the shorter maternity leave available. This stability of childcare enables some flexibility for self-employed professionals to pick and choose weekday work but does not solve the problem for weekends.

Weekends, vacations and overnights present the most logistical challenges for outdoor professionals operating beyond standard creche hours. However, 'tourist creches' in the ski resorts offer one option, where a subsidised rate can be negotiated for guides and instructors at weekends. Whilst this is not as cost-effective as the government creches in France and Switzerland, it does provide opportunities for primary caregivers to work the busiest vacation weeks and weekends.

A solid support group of friends can also be invaluable, especially if family do not live close by. Accepting help, doing child swaps, alternating weekends or evenings and trading family duties, are all creative solutions to finding childcare for overnights and weekends. It is also great fun for the kids, collapsing families together, forming friendships and assisting in parental duties to help relieve pressure.

### Legal

The UK Government website<sup>2</sup> and Maternity Action<sup>3</sup> contain numerous resources to help support applications for maternity allowance, particularly if you are freelance. If you are receiving Maternity Allowance, you are entitled to 10 'keeping in touch' days. Any work done during this period will count, even 1 hour would be rounded up to a full day. However, for self-employed instructors, routine minimal maintenance to keep your business ticking over is not counted.<sup>4</sup>

Once you have considered your options for work during pregnancy, it could be wise to inform your professional insurance provider to ensure maintenance of cover.

### Risk assessments

If you have one, you may find that your employer requires an individual Risk Assessment for work during pregnancy and early motherhood. This should be created in partnership with you and reflect any specific adjustments you feel are necessary to maintain safe working practices. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides a good starting point for consideration.<sup>5</sup>

Examples of adjustments could be:

- **Working at height:** Use a full body harness for climbing and avoid jumps over a specified height during canyoning/gorge walking.
- **Lifting and carrying (e.g., canoes/kayaks):** Extra assistance to be made available for loading/unloading/carrying kit.
- **Breastfeeding:** Where/how/when will you nurse or express and if expressing, how will you safely store the milk?

### Equipment and clothing

Technical outdoor clothing and equipment for pregnancy and early motherhood are becoming more available, here are a few options tested by ourselves:

- **Climbing:** The Petzl 8003 full-body harness is a popular option for climbing during pregnancy. Employers, centres and climbing walls could also consider adding a full-body harness to their kit stores, as they are not only useful during pregnancy, but can help more widely with accessibility.
- **Base-layers:** Cadenshae produces good quality, practical bamboo active base-layers for breastfeeding and pregnancy.
- **Softshell trousers:** Jozanek has a relatively technical option, suitable for use in winter mountains.
- **Hardshell outer layers:** Consider using salopettes-style waterproofs or ski trousers in your normal size, with the zip down to make space for your bump. Wearing a bandanna of stretchy fabric like a cummerbund over the top, helps to hold the trousers up and hide the open zip.
- **Jackets:** As mentioned in Article 1, borrowing a large size from a friend that zips over your bump is one affordable and practical option. Soft-shell and waterproof jackets from Mamalila<sup>6</sup> are also superb, with interchangeable pieces that can be zipped in for pregnancy and also separate attachments that can be added for the baby whilst carrying in a sling underneath.
- **Grow Wild Outdoorwear** is a newly developing UK brand, designing technical outerwear for maternity, breastfeeding and babywearing. You can follow their progress on social media.



ABOVE Support network during her IML winter assessment. © Mikaela Toczek

### Pay and conditions

Taking time to rebuild fitness, energy levels, skills and finding appropriate training or development will help you feel more prepared on your return to work and will help to improve confidence. This could be through your Keeping in Touch days, part of a phased return with your employer, CPD, training with friends or colleagues, or through connecting for days out with other parents/mentors.

A phased return or returning part-time gives space for you to explore a new balance as a parent, whilst giving you time to train/recover, attend skill courses, and recuperate from sleep-deprived nights, etc. Split shifts, earlier finish times and no overnights might all be considerations upon your return, to remove the stress and focus on reintegrating with work before taking on too much.

If you are in the position to be able to negotiate your pay then it is important to take into account your parental costs e.g., childcare. Champion your contribution and seek out pay that meets your needs.

### Culture and society

Attitudes towards pregnancy and motherhood in the outdoor sector, and wider society, are slowly changing, with an increasing awareness of the issues faced and more experiences being shared within the industry and at large. Inevitably, much of the focus is on professional athletes, such as ultra-runners Sophie Power and Jasmine Paris and climbers Shauna Coxsey and Emily Harrington, who have made headlines speaking about their journeys through pregnancy and early motherhood.

The narrative around professional athletes and pregnancy has no doubt contributed to positive shifts in attitude and understanding but there are also a number of wider initiatives, as well as developing community groups and new films on the subject, that have been steadily informing and supporting people around the world. There has also been some exciting progress in research and development.

Some of the groups and projects are:

**Mum's Gone Climbing (MGC):** Founded in Australia by Nell Gow, MGC is an online community with groups for meeting-up in Australia, Canada and Scotland. MGC have also released a film (available on Vimeo) and produce a regular podcast. Their mission is "to deliver high quality climbing and adventure resources to badass climbing mamas, and redefine motherhood, one episode at a time."<sup>7</sup>

**Adventure Mamas Initiative:** This US based organisation champions adventure mamas through social media, blogs and resources 'Supporting maternal wellness and having a damn

good time along the way'. Although they are US focused, much of their content can be universally applied.<sup>8</sup>

**Arcteryx Motherload:** Join Izzy Lynch and Tessa Treadway for their 'Adventure Parenting' film 'Motherload' and mini-series 'This is the Motherload'. They present an open and sometimes raw reflection on motherhood, loss, love, hope and creating an adventurous life with kids in all its messy glory.<sup>9</sup>

**Bump, Bike, Baby: Mummy's Gone Adventure Racing, Moire O'Sullivan:** An often hilarious, sometimes gruelling journey from child-free athlete to a reluctant stay-at-home mother. O'Sullivan's book is a refreshing narrative that puts some of the issues many adventurous would-be-mothers feel clearly on the table.

**The Palgrave International Handbook of Women and Outdoor Learning:** A collection of women's experiences in the field as Outdoor Educators globally. The articles, research and autoethnographies are written by successful and notable women in the industry. Some of the chapters are written by mothers which helps to highlight the issues therein and further provides a great resource for ideas and inspiration, as well as overcoming challenges and includes some practical solutions.<sup>10</sup>

We can also consider our collective potential for starting or supporting initiatives. For example, The Climbing Hangar in Swansea, enabled a group of mothers to return to climbing, with weekly use of one of their rooms, so that the mums could rotate climbing with helping to care for each other's babies and toddlers safely. Fondly named 'Mothers Rock', the group created a space for mums to support each other's return to climbing, build a community, and help with the logistics of some basic childcare.

We hope that this series has proved useful, not only for pregnant individuals, mothers and primary caregivers but also more widely in the industry. From Physical Recovery to Culture and Society, we have explored just some of the issues that the journey towards parenthood can bring alongside having an adventurous career. These issues have come from many diverse, enriching and sometimes difficult conversations and equally could provide the starting point for many more. ■

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# THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE

## in the outdoors

### A professional development approach

Outdoors practitioners are increasingly recognising and promoting the therapeutic benefits of being outdoors, and the subject of mental health is high in people's awareness in general life, as well as within the mountaineering community. Many of us may have personal anecdotes of the therapeutic benefits within our existing practice, and perhaps already invite participants to slow down and appreciate their natural surroundings. While it is great to celebrate the transformational potential that the mountains can bring to our clients and learners, it is also important to recognise that this practice is framed within a broader knowledge base. This is also beginning to offer new insights into ways of approaching professional development to work therapeutically with greater intentionality in our outdoor domains.

#### The big picture

There are many terms that are used to describe therapeutic outdoor work. 'Outdoor Therapy' offers an umbrella term for therapeutic practices that are outdoors, active and acknowledge nature as a key component of the therapeutic relationship. 'Adventure Therapy' can be used to describe therapeutic practices that include a meaningful engagement with activities, a novel environment, and an element of journey. These terms are grounded on theory and research formed since the 1960s when adventure programmes offered to therapeutic populations were in their early development.

These days, there is a large community of practitioners who may describe themselves as adventure therapists, outdoor therapists, nature-based therapists, ecopsychologists, forest bathing practitioners and many more. This diversity of terms reflects the multi-

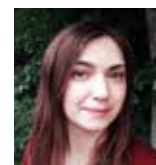
disciplinary roots and connections that exist within the community. While this provides fertile ground for a knowledge-rich community of practice, it can create confusion on the best route for training and development as well as the challenge of offering professional benchmarks and standards of practice.

#### An emerging profession

The community of practice, both within the UK and internationally, have dedicated much time to discussing the scope of practice and terminology used to describe practices. Johnson's (2015) definition of outdoor therapy was arrived at following a forum hosted by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN) with representatives of influential organisations such as the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and the Institute of Outdoor Learning (IOL). It states that an adventure therapist is someone or a practice that 1) adopts a process of supported self-discovery for wellbeing and change, 2) takes place *in*, *about* and *with* the outdoor environment, 3) actively uses the outdoors within the therapeutic process, and 4) recognises the importance of reflection as an integral part of the therapeutic process and relationship between therapist/practitioner and client/participant along with the relationship to the outdoor place.

More recently, in 2019, the IOL published a model of good practice, the 'Outdoor Mental Health Intervention model', which provides a structure that captures the diversity and breadth of work taking place in outdoor settings, built on a spectrum of competencies in both outdoor skills and therapeutic skills (Richards *et al.*, 2019).

WORDS BY MATT GROVES AND HEIDI SHINGLER, PHOTOS BY ZEEMON ERHARDT



**Heidi Shingler** MA, BSc, DipC, MBACP, is a member of MTA. She is a lecturer and researcher in Outdoor and Adventure Therapy at the School of Adventure Studies, University of the Highlands and Islands and is a qualified integrative and humanistic counsellor and outdoor therapist based in the Scottish Highlands.



**Matt Groves** BA (Hons), PGCE, MSc, is a Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor and a lecturer and programme leader at the School of Adventure Studies, University of the Highlands and Islands. Matt comes from a diverse professional background of outdoor working, and his teaching and research are focused on concepts and practice in Adventure Education and in human perceptions of risk and decision making.

**Knowing your limits**

With the recent work that has helped to offer statements of good practice, educational courses may help to create clear pathways into this type of therapeutic work and answer some of the questions that many practitioners may be musing on, such as “How can I get started in Adventure therapy?”, “What kind of employment is there in Adventure therapy?”, or “What training do I need to have to practice?”. Unfortunately, each of these questions may get the answer “it depends”, so for anyone wishing to expand into this field it is useful to understand more about therapeutic theory and practice and to enhance their knowledge of therapeutic interventions in the outdoors. This points to a need in the sector to consolidate knowledge and practice into professional development for an ethical basis of working therapeutically in the outdoor world.

As professionals with expertise in keeping our clients safe in the mountains, we have all followed a pathway of training and consolidation to embed a deep understanding of our physical space and of the knowledge, techniques, and decisions you need to make a successful trip. It is easy to think that the therapeutic benefits that come in that space are a given, and that “I’m a safe and compassionate professional, so the mountains will speak for themselves” (to coin a phrase). However, the emotional sword can cut both ways, and for vulnerable people whose mental or physical health may be disrupted, there is a risk that further emotional harm can come as an unintended consequence of our actions or through the conversations we have. Adding the therapeutic dimension gives us another important layer of

safety and trust to consider, to manage the complex relationship between you, the client, and their environment. Furthermore, insurance for outdoor activities does not readily include working therapeutically with clients, and practitioners would need to ensure they had the correct cover before taking on such work.

**Higher education and professional training for ‘Therapeutic Practice’**

Currently therapy in outdoor spaces lacks any accredited framework that would define professional standards and allow the practice to be widely recognised. Instead, practitioners may choose to transfer their skills from other modes of therapy into the outdoors or work therapeutically without any specific training in therapy or counselling. In both cases, what is lacking is a training and professional development route that integrates and intentionally blends the two disciplines.

In 2019, Stephan Natynczuk explored whether adventure therapy can claim to be a profession and what it means to become a ‘good enough’ practitioner in adventure therapy. He recognised there are many barriers to entry (cost, effort, time, dedication) to becoming a cross disciplined ‘Adventure Therapist’ (with a big ‘T’). For many, the ambition is not to become qualified to this extent but to gain expertise and confidence working intentionally with a little ‘t’. In both zones of practice, professionalism applies, and the status of a profession is something which we can aspire to and inhabit with opportunities for extensive training, practice based on an intellectual skill, and its services, which are all important (Natynczuk 2019).



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ABOVE Enjoying the collective experience of expediting. © Zeemon Erhardt

Work over the last few years has involved developing a new Post Graduate Certificate in *Outdoor and Adventure Therapeutic Practice*, within the School of Adventure Studies, UHI. This course aims to offer professional development for practitioners to learn how they can best provide therapeutic enhancement in outdoor learning settings and how to offer enriching outdoor experiences for groups with additional mental health needs. This development signals an important point in the emergence and maturing of this field of practice in the UK. Graduates from the programme will be able to combine their existing skills, experience, and qualifications to progress a career engaging in the therapeutic benefits that the outdoors and adventure can offer or provide therapeutic enhancement through focused interventions in outdoor programmes. The programme gives critical learning and professional development for people wishing to enter, or already employed, in the field, as well as enhancing and contributing to the wider community of practice.

To learn more about the course or to apply for September 2023, visit the website at PG Cert Outdoor and Adventure Therapeutic Practice ([uhi.ac.uk](http://uhi.ac.uk)) (<https://www.whc.uhi.ac.uk/courses/pgcert-outdoor-and-adventure-therapeutic-practice/>) and School of Adventure Studies – UHI West Highland (<https://www.whc.uhi.ac.uk/study/school-of-adventure-studies/>)

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- Natynczuk, S. (2019) Adventure Therapy Deconstructed: A Journey Towards the Good Enough Practitioner and Professional Practice. *Keynote GATE 2019* [online] Available from: <https://sparekrab.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/ATE-Adventure-Therapy-Deconstructed-A-Journey-Towards-Professional-Practice-.pdf> [Accessed 28th November 2022].
- Richards, K., Hardie, A. and Anderson, N. (2019) *Outdoor mental health interventions and outdoor therapy: a statement of good practice*. UK: Institute for Outdoor Learning. [Online] Available from: <https://www.outdoor-learning.org/Portals/0/IOL%20Documents/Outdoor%20Mental%20Health/Outdoor%20Therapy%20Statement%201.3%20-%202012%20Oct%202020.pdf?ver=2020-11-09-101048-717> [Accessed 1st December 2022].

### Further resources

#### Mental Health Resources ([mountain-training.org](http://mountain-training.org)):

<https://www.mountain-training.org/help/resources/mental-health-resources>

#### BMC Mental Health Webinar Workshops ([thebmc.co.uk](http://thebmc.co.uk)):

<https://www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-mental-health-webinar-workshops> ■

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# COACHING qualifications

## What are the benefits?

ABOVE Andy Swann during a FUNdamentals 2 course.

Mountain Training's coaching qualifications have been established for some time now and yet they still seem neglected by many traditional climbers and instructors. Here I look at how they fit in alongside the instructional qualifications and investigate how they can help to develop any instructor's skill base.

I'm sure it's not controversial to say that climbing can be somewhat dangerous if not done properly so when it comes to climbing, safety must come first<sup>1</sup>. However, one drawback of the current system for qualifications has been that the focus has previously been on teaching *hard skills* (safe climbing) that allow people to go and develop their *soft skills* in their own time.

For those more interested in engaging with the act of climbing itself, there is a different path. The coaching qualifications take a different focus but, although now eight years old, they still remain misunderstood for their purpose and much maligned as to their necessity. In Issue 33 (Spring 2021) of this publication, I wrote an article entitled *Coaching vs. Instruction* detailing the subtle differences between these distinct roles in climbing education. Many instructors and guides have been incorporating a coaching approach for many years<sup>2</sup>, albeit without formal training. Adding a coaching aspect through one of the recognised coaching qualifications or BMC workshops is an excellent way to broaden one's picture of education and to gain further CPD.

Here I'd like to run through what the coaching courses on offer are, how they all fit together and what benefits are on offer for those of us who are already well established in our work.

### The courses

Mountain Training currently run two courses: The **Foundation Coach Qualification** and the **Development Coach Qualification**. These courses are sequential, with the Development Coach Qualification building on skills acquired in the Foundation Coach Qualification but they are also pitched at two different types of coach:

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY PETE EDWARDS

- The Foundation Coach<sup>3</sup> is primarily aimed at coaches working with groups of individuals, often at the beginning of their climbing career but not necessarily. It involves being able to adapt to multiple students during a session and has a focus on delivering fundamental skills. The emphasis is on doing *the basics of coaching* as well as possible.
- The Development Coach<sup>4</sup> is more geared towards working with individuals over a period of time. Here we are more looking for personal development, with time to adapt coaching to individual members of a regular group. Development coaches also often mentor Foundation coaches

You may have also heard of the Performance Coach Qualification: however at time of writing, this qualification has yet to be finalised. While the Performance Coach appears on various literature, there has only been one pilot cohort; and development of this qualification remains ongoing. At the time of writing, available training courses are Foundation Coach and Development Coach.

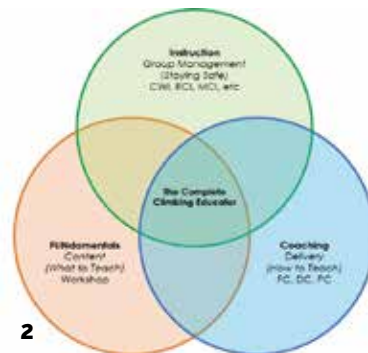
### Supplementary workshops

Alongside the coaching qualifications sit a series of workshops run by the BMC. There are known as the **FUNdamentals of Climbing<sup>5</sup>** and **Physical Training for Climbing**. Attendance is mandatory in order for candidates to complete their Foundation Coach and Development Coach assessments. Furthermore, coaches are strongly advised to attend the workshop prior to their Foundation/Development Coach training.

The FUNdamentals courses are not solely climbing movement (although this is a large contingent of the course). The workshops also include: motivation for participation; session structure; specifics of climbing with youths; and injury avoidance. As a coach, for example, understanding the motivations of my clients is crucial to me achieving success and it struck me that these workshops alone would greatly assist any existing climbing instructor working with any client on a climbing session.

## GUIDANCE

1. Both the Coaching Qualifications and BMC Workshops combine classroom work with practicals. 2. How the instructional/coaching courses fit together to give educators a more in depth ability to teach. [Point of note: it may be possible but would be strongly discouraged to operate with only Coaching and Fundamentals without an Instructional qualification.]



It is worth noting that while you can still find dates and providers for the Fundamentals and Physical Training workshops on CMS, these courses are *not* run by Mountain Training. As they are workshops and do not follow the typical training/consolidation/assessment process, there is no course handbook, although information is available on the BMC website.

### How do they fit together?

On the face of it, the traditional qualifications (CWI, RCI, MCI, etc.) are those that are required to find work, and therefore they tend to be the focus for most people. However, that does not mean the other courses lack merit as they teach other aspects of teaching rock climbing. The best way I have found to explain it to people is as follows:

- The instructional courses *keep people safe* in the climbing environment
  - The coaching courses teach people *how to teach* climbing
  - The BMC workshops contain solid content of *what to teach*
- This is shown in the Venn diagram above.

As can be seen, it would easily be possible to sit solely inside the green section. However, by adding in either the Coaching Qualifications (the green/blue overlap) or the FUNdamentals workshops (the green/red overlap), any instructor would broaden their knowledge base and their ability to deliver more effectively.

### Some further thoughts

It is worth noting, as I do with many mentees, that these coaching courses won't enable the holder to gain any extra work in the same way as a CWDI, RCDI or MCI will; they are not the next stage on the instructor pathway. What they will do is greatly enhance your ability to operate and make you significantly more employable than anyone without them.

Both the Foundation Coach and Development Coach follow the tried and tested method of background knowledge-training-consolidation-assessment; although the assessment for these

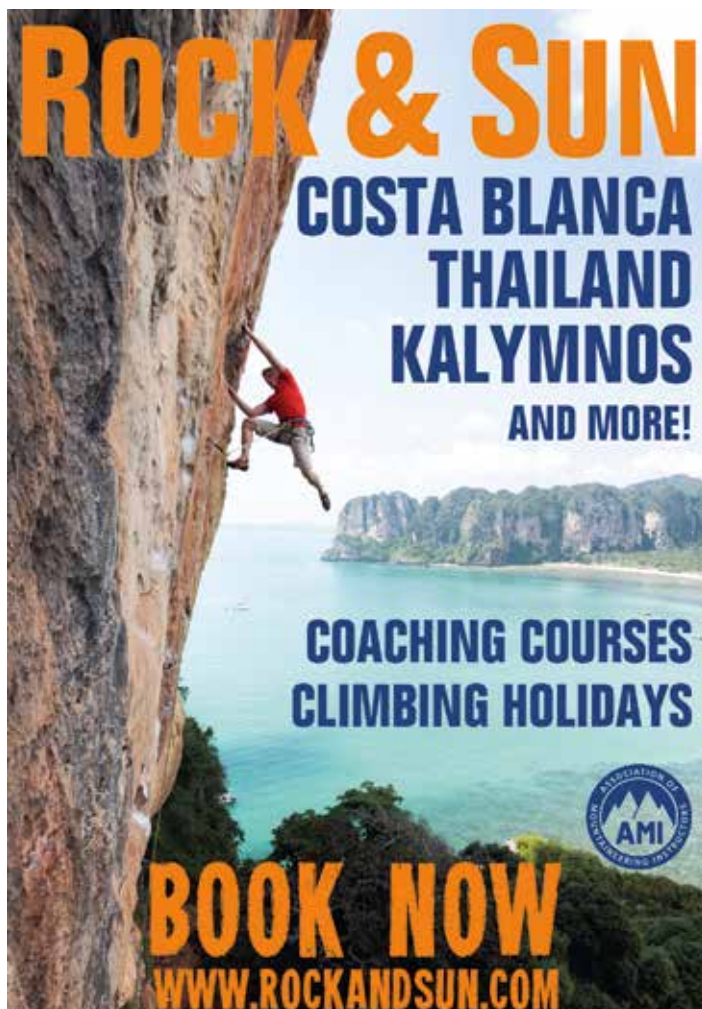
1. *Conceptualizing the Adventure Sports Coach* (Collins & Collins, 2015)
2. *The C Word* (Chester, 2009)
3. Further information, including course handbook and how to register available here: <https://www.mountain-training.org/qualifications/climbing/foundation-coach>
4. Further information, including course handbook and how to register available here: <https://www.mountain-training.org/qualifications/climbing/development-coach>
5. <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/fundamentals-workshops>
6. <https://www.climbforlife.me/>



**Pete Edwards** is a member of **MTA** and a qualified Development Coach. He runs Prowess Climbing Coaching, offering coaching sessions to groups and individuals. Pete is a British Mountaineering Council FUNdamentals provider with courses running throughout 2023. For dates, please search on the Mountain Training Candidate Management System (CMS), see his website [prowesscoaching.com](http://prowesscoaching.com) or contact him at [prowessclimbingcoaching@gmail.com](mailto:prowessclimbingcoaching@gmail.com)

coaching qualifications are significantly different to other qualifications. It is expected that candidates take a more active role in their assessment. Trainer and assessor Andy Swann, of Climb for Life<sup>6</sup>, sums the process up beautifully, saying: "Foundation Coach assessments are typically run with unknown beginners although there is some leeway here. Development Coach assessments measure the coach's ability to demonstrate how they can continue coaching long-term clients and also meet new clients, analyse their needs and start the coaching process".

Of course, there is merit in attending a stand-alone training course, and both the Training courses and BMC workshop act as excellent and highly relevant CPD. However, an increasing number of people are going on to both Foundation and Development Coach assessment which will provide feedback on working practices and often, further suggestions on how to continue to develop as an educator. Meanwhile, the FUNdamentals workshops hold as much merit for one's own personal climbing as they do for their professional development and being as the majority of us continue to climb on a personal level, it really is a win-win. ■





# Our way of life



Plas Y Brenin Staff  
Ogwen Valley  
Eryri National Park



# A week in the life of a MOUNTAIN RESCUE VOLUNTEER

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY SIMON DUCZAK

**If it's gone wrong while we're in the outdoors, we can be pretty sure that if we call for help it'll be Mountain Rescue that comes to our aid (or Coast Guard/RNLI in other geographical areas).**

There are currently 49 teams across England and Wales ([mountain.rescue.org.uk](http://mountain.rescue.org.uk)). Some of these areas may not be mountainous but they can be challenging when it comes to providing care for an injured person or looking for someone who's missing.

I was a freelance instructor when I joined my first team, and it was difficult to fit in work with the weekday and weekend training sessions. I was one of 10 new people and we were all from different professions: engineers, office workers, teachers, medical staff and more. Once operational we'd join the full team and to make up the 40-person strong team who would be called out as and when required.

Below is what a typical week could look like for me; other teams and members will have different experiences. All Mountain Rescue team operate 365 days/year, 24 hours/day so this could be any week of the year.

## Monday

Day off for me from my primary job, as an Emergency Medical Technician. I might be freelancing, relaxing or actually trying to get out and enjoy the outdoors, but as much as I love the outdoors after a block of shifts this is my downtime.

## Tuesday

Second day off, is planned to be a 'life admin' day, unglamorously it usually means laundry, tidying up, catching up on emails.

However, my phone goes off with a text message: Callout. It is approximately 10:00.

*Our callouts come in the form of text messages, we're lucky to get two messages, the first is a standby followed by a full team callout with details and meeting points. The idea is you can get your kit (uniform, rucksack, radio and boots) ready and prepare yourself.*

Text message reads:

**'Injured person, fallen in the woods, may have a lower leg injury. W3W: GO.GO.GO**

**GR: XXX XXX. Team vehicles required.'**

Quick check of the location on my mapping apps and I respond with an acknowledgement and estimated time of arrival (ETA)

for picking up a vehicle. A few of us arrive together, we each get on with prepping the vehicle, loading up and then rolling out to set off as quickly as possible, on blue lights.

10:34 En route we get radio messages with what equipment is required, in this case it's the Bell Stretcher and Casualty (Cas.) Bag<sup>1</sup>, and that there is already an Ambulance Crew on scene. The casualty has received some first aid and with the stretcher set up, the team get into position, take the strain and then lift, it's a 150m carry off through the woods, over tree roots and across a small stream. Thankfully it's an easy carry off back to the waiting ambulance.

With the patient loaded into the ambulance we can get back to base and clean the vehicles then carry on with the rest of our day.

## Wednesday

Training night, every week except for around Christmas time, usually starts around 19:00-19:30 and can be anything from lectures to hands-on training at base, kit checks on vehicles or the favourite – an outdoor exercise. This week it's ropework and back to basics, setting up anchors and equalising them.

## Thursday

Back to work for me, a 12-hour shift. After work I'm back on call, secretly hoping a late-night job doesn't come through.

## Friday

I've gone onto a night shift so that in the morning I'm free to sleep, and then get ready for work. In the back of my mind, I'm hoping a callout doesn't come through.

## Saturday

14:30 A text message, callout:

**'Injured person at GR XXX XXX, still awaiting more details.'**

A quick confirmation text that I'm responding and I'm on my way, like last time, at the base we grab a vehicle and set off. This time the person has called in themselves and we're the first on scene (see below how to call out Mountain Rescue). The vehicles rendezvous and in parties we set off to find the casualty. The story goes that they fell while descending a path and twisted their leg, the Casualty Carer (Advanced First Aid specific for Mountain Rescue) has been able to give some pain relief and immobilise the leg. Again, the Bell stretcher and Cas. bag are brought up and we can extract them to the roadhead just as the ambulance arrives.

16:35. Back at base giving everything a clean.



## Sunday

Text message:

**'MISPER Reported by the Police, last seen at location GR XXX XXX. Team members to respond and RV at location GR XXX XXX. Team Vehicles and Control Vehicle Required.'**

MISPER (Missing person)<sup>2</sup>, the person was deemed high risk due to frailty, medical history and vulnerability. They had gone missing from a place of residence in the early hours and had not returned, family and staff were concerned, and police were called. In the background there are a number of things that can be going on, police doing their own searches and some liaising with the Team Leader, they confirm the team is needed and we're sent to a rendezvous point, it's moorland and forested terrain.

I arrive with a few others, and we're quickly dispatched to search the immediate area in pairs. Nothing found and back to start, more members arrive, and a brief is given. There's a lot of information given; person details, clothing, medical history, place last seen, areas searched and areas to be searched and, in this case, we're told search dogs are on their way.

Divided into groups, we're joined by Police Officers to strengthen our numbers. Tasked with an area we set off to the entry point and get into a line to start the search. The nature of the search determines our methods: looking for a person who's likely to respond to their name we can stretch out and maximise the area covered; Looking for something like a lost phone (police evidence or maybe the lost person dropped it) we'll likely be shoulder to shoulder, as a general idea.

With areas searched we are narrowing down their potential location, and our party is successful! We find the person, they're well, a little cold, shaken, but able to walk with us back to the starting point to get warmed up, checked over and discharged back to their residence.

I've been in Mountain Rescue for 5 years now and recently transferred teams, over this time I've enjoyed every minute, there's great camaraderie and the best bit is that we all have a passion for the outdoors and want to help others who use it for their enjoyment too.

*All personal details have been removed for confidentiality and the examples are based around real jobs.*

## Calling out Mountain Rescue

- Call 999
- Ask for the Police, then ask for Mountain Rescue.
- Be able to provide some details such as your location by grid reference and details of what's happened. Do what you can for the casualty and others waiting (first aid, shelter, warmth etc.) We're all volunteers, and it might take some time to reach you if you're remote. ■

1. The Bell stretcher is one of the standard stretchers we use, it comes in two parts which we put together near the casualty. It's robust and big enough for up to eight people to carry. The Casualty (Cas.) Bag is a big sleeping bag, warm and insulated for the patient's benefit.
2. Missing people in search and rescue have a number of definitions; a walker who's lost and/or injured, someone intoxicated or under another person's influence, a person with health concerns (could be mental health), these are just some examples.



**Simon Duczak** is a qualified Mountain Leader and Rock Climbing Instructor and is a member of **MTA**. Simon is an Apprentice Paramedic with the Ambulance service, has been in Mountain Rescue for over 5 years and probably doesn't get out as much as he should.



## Training Courses

### Inspector Courses Include:

- RoSPA approved PPE Inspector
- RoSPA approved Wood Pole Inspector
- RoSPA approved Wire Rope Inspector
- Working at Height and Access
- RoSPA approved Operational Inspection and Maintenance Course

### ERCA Courses Include:

- Traditional High Ropes Course Instructor
- Rescuer
- Adventure Park Instructor
- Low Ropes Course Instructor
- Temporary Low Ropes Instructor
- Site Specific Instructor



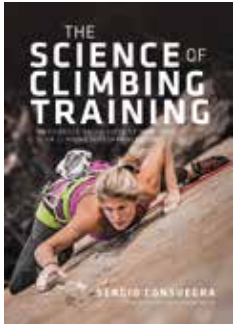
Courses can be run at **your own facility** - to ensure staff familiarity - or you can visit **our training venue** in Penrith Courses count towards CPD points for various associations including ERCA and MTA.

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# BOOK REVIEW



## **THE SCIENCE OF CLIMBING TRAINING: AN EVIDENCE-BASED GUIDE TO IMPROVING YOUR CLIMBING PERFORMANCE**

by Sergio Consuegra

Reviewed by Danny Griffith

*The Science of Climbing Training* is an informative and engaging book that makes for an easy read which is unusual for a book of this type. It cuts through

well embedded myths, common practices and assumptions of training, by giving easily digestible scientific research papers to back up the methods, exercises and training protocols suggested.

With a book of this type, it is important to understand who the author is and what their qualifications and experiences are: Sergio Consuegra has more than 10 years of professional experience as a personal trainer and has worked as a climbing coach for training both climbers and other climbing coaches. He has a degree in Sports Science from Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, his final masters project was "Effects of 12-week intervention to improve performance in bouldering", he also collaborated in the research project "Assessment of the critical force in climbers". Sergio has been a University Professor in "Mountain Sports and Activities" at INEF Madrid and delivered classes in "climbing training of physical activity and sports sciences" at European University of Madrid, Francisco de Vitoria University and Polytechnic University of Madrid.

The 14-page bibliography at the end of the book speaks volumes for the amount of scientific research that Sergio has referenced in the book. One note to consider when interpreting any scientific research is to look carefully at the research papers, the sample sizes, methods used and if it's been peer reviewed, these outcomes can often be interpreted to fit a brief with someone's synopsis of information conforming to confirmation bias. Sergio considers and is transparent with this in mind and

notes on two occasions, that the sample size of the referenced paper was small. Sergio's honesty on these two papers and his belief that "training must be based on the application of science: biomechanics, physiology, research. All action must be based on data, not beliefs" gives confidence in the book as a summary of detailed research from an expert in the field.

The book is split into: Understanding training; optimisation of training; and planning your training. The author guides you through physiology, anatomy and the biological requirement of climbing performance. He clearly lays out the importance of setting the intensity of your training sessions high for not only the obvious reasons, but also for injury prevention and for not putting on too much muscle mass that will weigh a climber down. I really enjoyed the research on measuring power output to regulate the intensity of your training and on the physiological factors of mobility with new techniques to help improve it.

The second part of the book looks at a variety of different training methods. Again, Sergio is led by the scientific research to guide the reader to the best protocols and exercises. There is quality information on training for climbing, for everyone from the elite end to those who have never done any physical training before. Although you will find more information for the advanced climber, this is partly due to the advanced climber being able to safely tolerate a wider variety of training styles. It's great to see not only what exercises to do but also ones not to do because they have a very high risk of injury or no transferability to climbing.

The final part of the book talks through how to plan your training, giving you some good, detailed example session plans for both elite and advanced climbers. Sergio discusses 3 main types of periodisation/long term planning of training. Their advantages, limitations and suitability for climbers of different levels.

The book leaves you feeling empowered to start or adapt your training with your new knowledge. Sergio's mottos of "More is not better, better is better" or "No pain, more gain. Don't train more: train better", are definitely something all climbers should follow. ■



## **HIGHLAND SCRAMBLES NORTH**

by Iain Thow

Reviewed by Mike Margeson OBE

Guidebooks play a central and important cultural role in climbing and mountaineering. We have witnessed a huge change and transformation in recent years in presentation, content and style. This new *Highlands North Scramblers* guide is no exception to that trend.

The guide covers a large geographical area and has been subsequently sub-divided into nineteen logical regions, which includes four Outer Hebridean islands. Each region has been conveniently colour coded for ease of use. There is a comprehensive introductory section, not only including the expected standard information on grading equipment and safety, but also additional chapters on wildlife, geology, and the human and mountaineering history, as well as a useful list of amenities.

I thought that the short section describing the different climbing properties of the five predominant rock types was particularly useful; especially for the less experienced scrambler or someone unfamiliar or completely new to an area.

There are high quality photo route diagrams complemented with clear route access and route description. The guide provides routes for all abilities up to some serious mountaineering adventures like the east buttress of Triple Buttress in Corrie Mhic Fhearchar; a 200m rock climb (graded Diff) in spectacular surroundings with a fair old walk in, albeit on a good stalkers' path. At the other end of the spectrum fast easy road access and an easy short scramble on Stac Pollaidh, and everything in between.

If there was ever any excuse required to explore new mountains this great scrambling guide provides plenty of ideas and inspiration. Lastly this guide is still small enough to carry in the top of your sack. ■



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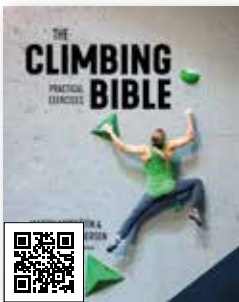
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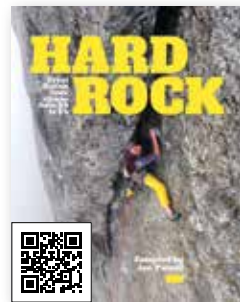
### The Climbing Bible

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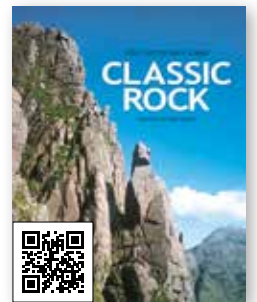
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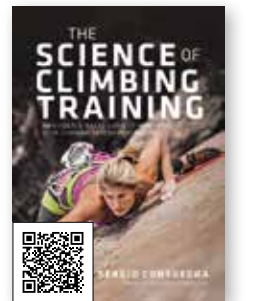
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