



# MOUNTAIN TRAINING

CREATING A LIFE IN  
THE OUTDOORS

# INTRODUCTION

The events of the last three years have shaken up the look and feel of the outdoor sector. No longer is it the perceived domain of uber fit, bearded white men with flags on mountain tops. We are now seeing the amplification of the increasingly diverse range of voices you find in our outdoor spaces. There is a growth of new community groups that bring together existing outdoor lovers and introduce new faces to the joys and benefits of our shared green spaces.

With some newly finding a love of the outdoors, larger numbers of us are seeing the potential it offers for ourselves, our communities or as a serious career option—as a guide, instructor or group leader. All of these offer a lifetime of being in the outdoors, passing on outdoor knowledge, travelling to outdoor spaces, sharing the love of nature and having adventures. Sounds good doesn't it?

But there are a lot of unanswered questions for those wanting to embark on this journey, especially if your community doesn't have an 'in' or you live in the city where mixing with the traditional outdoor industry isn't easy.

So what do you need to do, where do you start, and how do you build on your current knowledge?

While there are numerous routes to creating a life in the outdoors, a tried-and-tested way to get your 'foot in the door' is by acquiring the right qualifications that communicate to potential employers or clients that you have officially gained the skills and experience of your chosen discipline. And that you can keep yourself and others safe, and having fun—even in the toughest of conditions.

@mtntraining

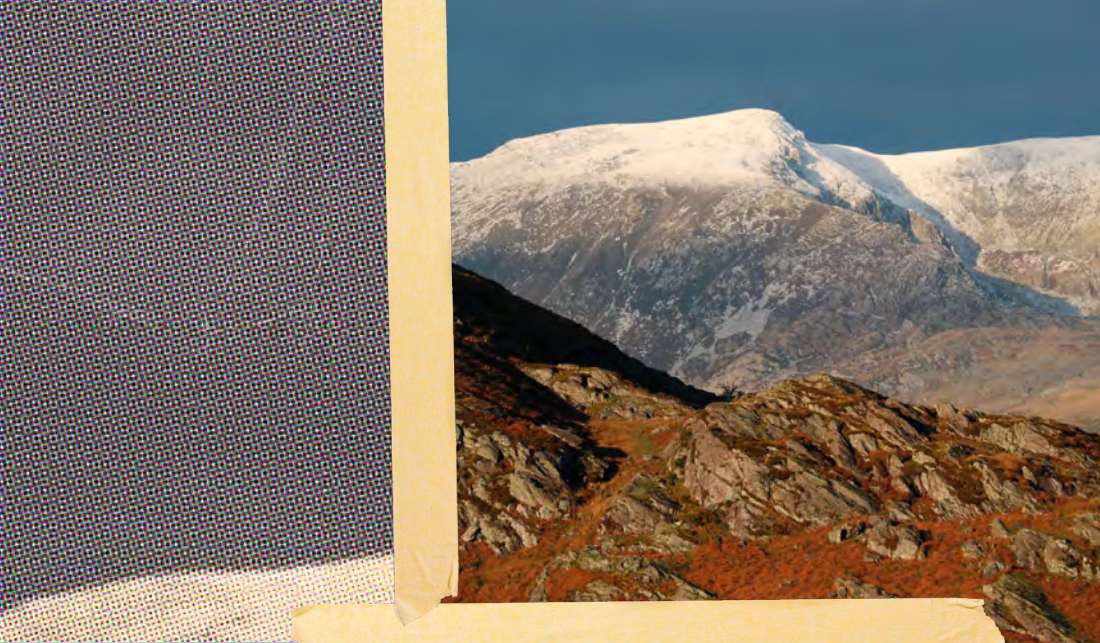
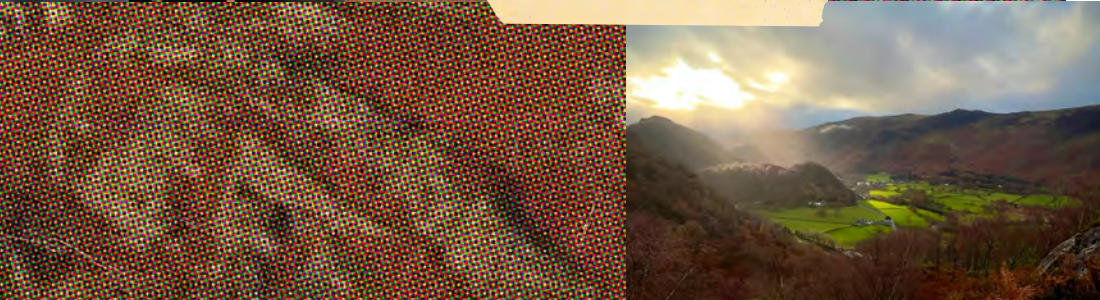


PHOTO: SUMMIT SPECIAL



PHIL YOUNG,  
OUTSIDERS PROJECT  
FOUNDER



I've always valued my time in the outdoors. I spent my youth in the outskirts of north London playing in the wastelands and forgotten plots of suburbia. In the summer I would sometimes go up to North East Scotland, taking the train to where my grandfather originated from. I'd soak in the landscape on the journey, rolling hills transitioning to mountains, wondering what sort of people lived in places like this. In the winter, I'd sometimes get to go to Europe and freeze on the side of an Alp, my cheap gloves and skinny frame doing nothing to protect me from the elements.

As my life and career progressed, so did my opportunity to spend time exposed to nature. Often in its raw form and occasionally hours from much in the way of immediate support.

I've been lucky, not just in the places I've managed to experience but also with the people I've had by my side. The people who know when it's time to turn back, who can predict the risk of avalanche or who know what's missing from my backpack. I've learnt quite a lot but it's all from bits and pieces I've picked up along the way. I admire those that have taken the time to acquire the knowledge in a professional setting, one that gives them the ability to be confident in their decisions and informed in their actions. These are the people you can trust, even when you're frozen up a mountain in five pound gloves. These are people who have made a life out of keeping us and themselves safe outdoors when nature isn't playing ball. For many of them, it has

afforded them lives of wonder and adventure.

In truth, when MOUNTAIN TRAINING approached us to help demystify their offering to new communities I didn't know much about it. I thought of the people who took these courses much as I thought of the people I had seen out of the window on a train to Scotland. Not real, but other people, not like 'us'. The reality is something different. Surprisingly I saw myself in the people we chatted to, the MOUNTAIN TRAINING courses not only offered a way to discover more about the world they inhabit but, in taking the courses available, they found out more about themselves and what they were capable of. Moreover, their individual achievements delivered a sense of justification for some of the other struggles that the UK sometimes throws up. A two-fingered thrust in the air to the doubters and a safe pair of hands to others that need them when taking on the unpredictability of nature.

MOUNTAIN TRAINING courses might not be for everyone but what they offer across the board are vital skills for those that want to gain confidence, test themselves or be a conduit of joy for people who want to go further and take other people with them. If you are reading this, it might just be for you.



@philskills @the.outsiders.project





PHOTO: SORAYA ABDEL HADI

## SORAYA ABDEL-HADI (she/her), ALL THE ELEMENTS FOUNDER



I had a town childhood. It had small parks. After school, we took our bikes 'up the woods'. On nice days we'd picnic by rivers and wade around playing at catching fish with our flimsy nets. At school, we had a wildlife pond and learnt about waterboatmen and tadpoles. I was regularly scooping up toads and returning them to the nature area. With my family, we'd go to the beach. And, while I'm wading around in this privilege I may as well out myself as a horse rider. It's a love affair that started as a child, and exploring on horseback is still my favourite way to be in the outdoors. There was no one much who looked like me in these spaces, but I didn't notice. After all, the dogs and horses and toads and waterboatmen didn't look like me either, but we were all coexisting in mutual enjoyment together.

Quite unexpectedly, I ended up working with horses when I left uni. Then later, while taking a break from horses, my best friend bought me a beginners' climbing course for my birthday. On the surface, this was the worst gift ever as I am chronically scared of heights, but it sent me on a trajectory that I never expected. I loved it—the problem solving, the trust you had to place in your climbing partner and the friendly community—and it wasn't long before I was teaching climbing at my local centre. But as a relatively new climber, I felt that even though I had site-specific training given to me by the centre that meant I could technically teach and keep people safe, I wanted more knowledge. To feel confident in other centres, gain different approaches and ways of teaching, and build on my personal climbing skills. My journey to gaining my Climbing Wall Award (now Climbing Wall Instructor) was where I learnt about MOUNTAIN TRAINING. It's also through Mountain Training that I received partial funding towards both my training and assessment.

Fast forward a few years and I now run All The Elements CIC—a nonprofit community for those creating change on diversity in the UK outdoors. Through this work, I have been able to reconnect with sector organisations like MOUNTAIN TRAINING in a different way, exploring together how we can support more people in understanding what a body like MOUNTAIN TRAINING does and why a qualification might be the right thing for them. Climbing changed my life and, although I don't currently instruct, gaining my CWA gave me so much more confidence in my work at the time and also plenty of additional skills that I still apply in group management and my personal climbing. It is a pleasure, through this project, to be able to share stories of others who have gained from formalising their experience and training, too.



@sorayaearth @alltheelements\_



# WHAT IS MOUNTAIN TRAINING?

MOUNTAIN TRAINING is an organisation responsible for the UK's most recognised hiking and climbing skill courses and qualifications. It offers a broad range of instruction and assessment from people just embarking on their first journey outdoors through to those that want to instruct in some of the harshest mountain environments internationally.

There are several reasons to choose an outdoor qualification. These include a desire to grow your own outdoor knowledge, more confidently lead your group, demonstrate competence for insurers, build a career in the outdoors or something else. There are MOUNTAIN TRAINING qualifications available that will help you reach your goals. Our planet hosts some incredible landscapes and wonderful people. MOUNTAIN TRAINING offers a route to experience it all with confidence... and bring others along for the ride.

CATH LUKE (she/her), GOVERNANCE & EQUITY OFFICER, MOUNTAIN TRAINING //We have partnered with Soraya and Phil on this project because we want to explain Mountain Training's leadership qualifications to a growing audience. We know an increasing number of people from ethnically diverse backgrounds are experiencing the benefits of the outdoors with their friends and family or through community groups. We believe our qualifications can support communities to continue growing participation safely and we recognise that the way the qualifications work and how to get involved isn't as clear as it could be. This document is part of our efforts to communicate more clearly and we hope you find it informative and inspiring. Interested? Read on...//



PHOTO: RACHEL SARAH



PHOTO: KATH JAMES

## PROFILE

# KIRSTY PALLAS

### Winter Mountain Leader (WML), Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (MCI)

Raised in Yorkshire and Scotland, Kirsty has been exposed to the outdoors since an early age, even though this wasn't the case for her parents. Her Indian mother wasn't offered the opportunity to participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme like the white children in her class and her father has no real formal outdoor experience other than what his brothers taught him. When they met, however, hiking was something they fell in love with together, so when Kirsty arrived it was a natural part of her family life.

A work experience placement at an outdoor centre was enough to help her understand that there were career options in the outdoor world, so Kirsty shelved plans for university in favour of an apprenticeship in an outdoor organisation.

She feels lucky that her parents understand the benefits of the outdoors and gave her the opportunity to follow her dreams. "As immigrants, spending time outdoors is not a priority. The priority is being able to make enough money, so that doesn't always leave a lot of time for doing something a bit

different. There's a strong work ethic that's passed down through the generations, working in the outdoors is still not seen as a proper job. Not like, say, a doctor," she explains.

As a climbing instructor in Scotland, she does not see much diversity in her clientele but this is changing - particularly in some of the school groups she works with. According to Kirsty, she feels a change in attitude from those leading in the outdoor world, but senses a nervousness in making real change.

"When you look at the majority of adverts, publications or films it's the same type of person all the time. It really frustrates me," she explains. "I'm seeing films advertised or I go to a talk and there's nothing new in the story. We've seen it before."

Representation is key for Kirsty and she often notices a difference when she teaches people with an Asian background, as she can show a deeper understanding of their heritage and experiences.

Qualification has meant a number of things in Kirsty's life, including gaining the self-confidence and belief that she can be part of the industry. But it has also provided multiple opportunities to meet new people eager to support her through her career, so she can continue to bring joy to people's lives and call it work.

@kirstypallas

**MOUNTAIN TRAINING** can provide you with outdoor knowledge through two categories of training: **SKILLS COURSES** and **QUALIFICATIONS**

## **MOUNTAIN TRAINING SKILLS COURSES**

There are six personal **SKILLS COURSES**, which are about helping you become more independent hill walkers and rock climbers in the outdoors. They focus on developing your own personal confidence and skill level, not how to look after other people. They're a great way to get outside, learn with other people and leave feeling confident to tackle your next adventure.

Reasons to take a **SKILLS COURSE**:

**EXPLORE WITH CONFIDENCE** No one wants to feel nervous stepping outside.

**FILL IN THE GAPS** We all need a refresher once in a while.

**EMERGENCY PROCEDURES** How to avoid common mistakes and what to do in a variety of emergency scenarios.

PHOTO: PHIL YOUNG



# SKILLS COURSES

## 1. HILL SKILLS

If you want the skills to plan your own walks along the coast, across the moors or anywhere in between without relying on someone more experienced, a HILL SKILLS course is the right course for you. No previous hill walking experience is required and the course will cover planning and packing, navigating with a map and compass, common hazards, minimising your impact and what to do in an emergency. If you're new to hiking or keen to brush up on your skills, a HILL SKILLS course is a great place to start. Courses are normally two days long.

## 2. MOUNTAIN SKILLS

The MOUNTAIN SKILLS course is for people who want to explore steep, remote or mountainous areas. Topics covered on the course will be the same as on a HILL SKILLS course, but with steeper ground in mind. There will likely be some simple scrambling (using your hands and feet to go up or over steep ground), an introduction to route finding in the mountains and an opportunity to explore mountain-specific hazards. Ideally, participants will have some basic hiking experience and a reasonable level of fitness. Courses are two days long.

## 3. ROCK SKILLS — INTRODUCTION

This is a one-day course providing an introduction to climbing outside on boulders and friendly crags (steep rock faces). The focus will be on maximum climbing time, how to move on rock, finding balance and using your feet. Basic ropework and belaying (holding the safety rope for your partner climber) is also included.

## 4. ROCK SKILLS — INTERMEDIATE

This course is about becoming a confident top-rope climber outside. It covers setting up anchors for top and bottom rope systems, as well as the skills required to be a competent second (following a lead climber up a route, removing traditional protection). Courses are two days long.

## 5. ROCK SKILLS — LEARN TO LEAD SPORTS CLIMBS

This course will introduce essential skills, such as choosing an appropriate route, resting and clipping positions, belaying a lead climber and rethreading the belay at the top of a climb. It will also cover common hazards, including how to check the safety of in-situ bolts and belays. Courses are two days long.

## 6. ROCK SKILLS — LEARN TO LEAD TRAD CLIMBS

For climbers who want to learn to lead traditional routes. This involves placing your own protection in the rock as you climb. You will have already seconded routes graded 'Very Difficult' or led sport routes indoors or outdoors.

**More about MOUNTAIN TRAINING'S SKILLS COURSES offer here: [www.mountain-training.org/personal-skills](http://www.mountain-training.org/personal-skills)**





## PROFILE

# TONY LEMBOYE

### Mountain Leader (ML)

Tony's life in the outdoors was initially sparked by his time in the army where he learnt not only navigational and survival skills, but also the power that the outdoors has for bringing different people together to work as a unit.

After leaving the army, a hike along the ancient Camino de Santiago pilgrim hiking route in Spain proved transformative. *"I learnt about the world around me and who I was, about some of the things that needed to change and what I needed to improve on."*

By the time he had finished the trip, he had formulated a plan and 'Young Star Mentoring' was born. Working with young care leavers, they support them in taking on the Camino as individuals and finishing as a team. *"The outdoors reveals the truth in you. There is no good or bad, it's just the truth and you can't hide from it, if you see it and don't like it, you have the opportunity to change. If you do like what you see, it allows you to make it even better."*

Even though many of the young people that Tony works with find the hike tough, they all return saying that it was an amazing life changing experience. For Tony, that's why he does his work.

The Mountain Leader qualification provided the confidence to take people out safely. But what Tony has had to learn outside of the formal training is how to manage the challenge of working with confrontational, sometimes vulnerable, young people.

*"Getting certified and qualified, and gaining the skills to lead gives me the encouragement that I'm heading the right way in my own life," he says. "Taking people out of the concrete jungle and to get away to beautiful mountains with no stress and fresh air. The psychological impact is incredible."*

@young\_star\_mentoring



PHOTOS: TONY LEMBOYE



**“It shows that someone has navigated their way through the system of the outdoors, and that means there exists a route for you to be successful too.”**

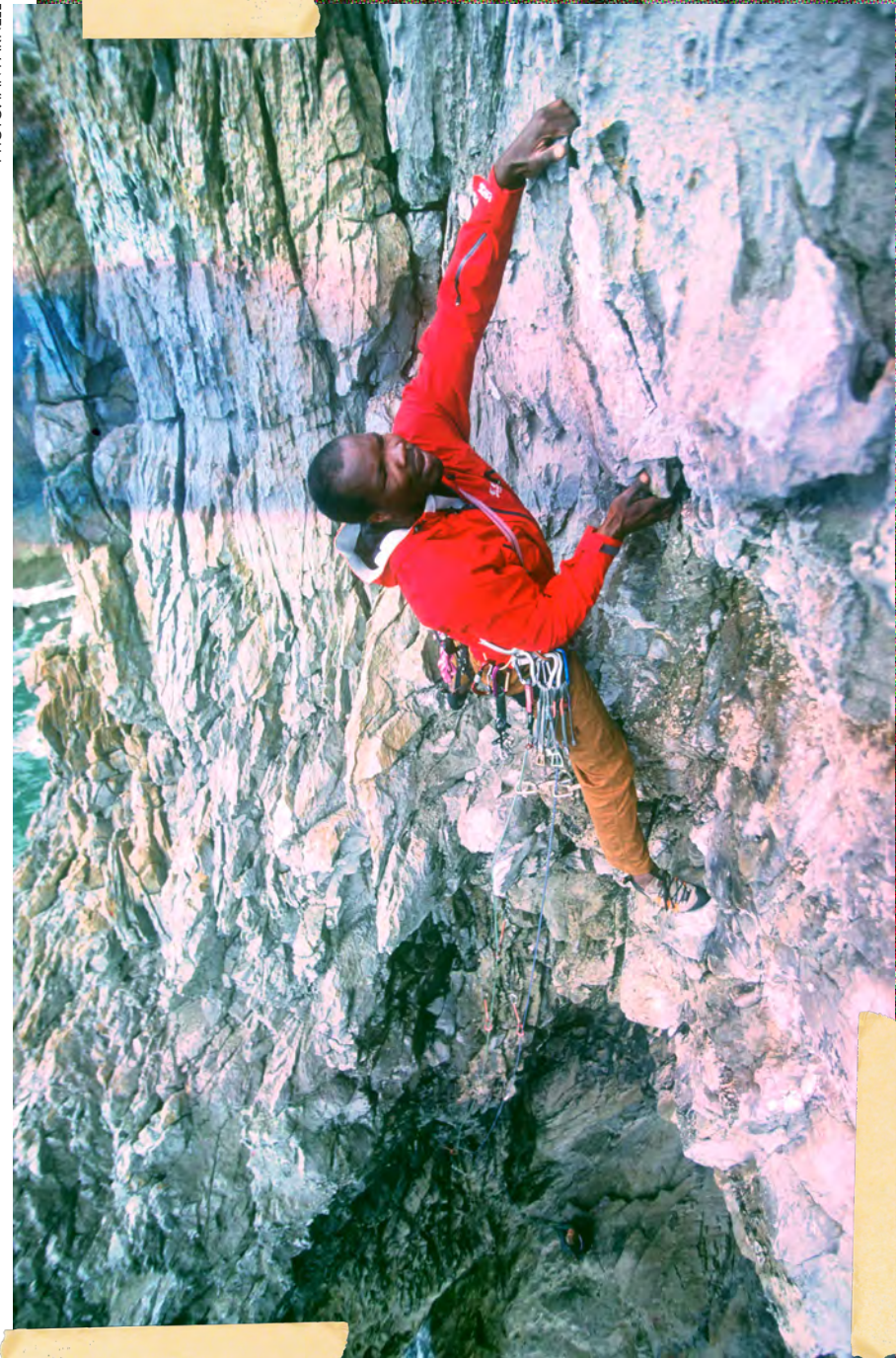
TREVOR MESSIAH

# MOUNTAIN TRAINING QUALIFICATIONS

Mountain Training offers 16 qualifications to support people who want to lead, coach or instruct others. The qualifications are universally recognised by the mountaineering councils and training boards of the UK and Ireland, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and other government organisations. Some of the qualifications are also internationally recognised.

They are designed to train and assess people to lead, coach or instruct others in walking, rock climbing and mountaineering. From assisting at indoor climbing walls to leading people in the mountains and teaching winter climbing. Those who have gained Mountain Training qualifications inspire, enable and develop people through these activities.

PHOTO: IAN PARNELL



# BENEFITS OF QUALIFICATION

- Build your group management skills
- Broaden your knowledge and skills in your chosen activity beyond your own personal experience
- Become more employable in the wider outdoor sector
- Boost your own confidence in your outdoor skills
- Gain an external endorsement that you are capable, experienced and qualified to be in the outdoor sector
- Have easier access to insurance and protect against legal issues, as you have a qualification from a recognised authority to prove your competency

PHOTO: PHIL YOUNG



PHOTO: KARL MIDLANE



“They have a minimum (of days) that you should do before your training and a minimum between your training and assessment, but in reality you should do a lot more. Skills like navigation really benefit from more practice.”

SAMEED ASGAR



PHOTO: SUMMIT SPECIAL

# HOW DO I QUALIFY?

- Registration >>
- Training Course (Prerequisite) >>
- Consolidation >>
- Assessment Course (Prerequisite)

# HIKING & WALKING QUALIFICATIONS

Hiking is one of the most accessible ways to experience the outdoors and many of us enjoy this activity without a qualification. Whether you would benefit from one depends on your particular circumstances. It can be helpful to ask yourself some of the following questions. Where are you walking—urban areas, mountains or somewhere in-between? Are you leading groups that include less experienced walkers over trickier terrain? Do you need insurance? Are you thinking that you might want to make leading walks outdoors your career (or part of it)?

There are a range of outdoor hiking leader qualifications available through MOUNTAIN TRAINING. These differ from the SKILLS COURSES because they also teach you group management skills.

PHOTO: JOHN HART



PHOTO: PHIL YOUNG

## INSURANCE

You have a duty of care to those you lead—both morally and legally. This means that if you are leading a group, you should be able to show you are capable of looking after them in your chosen environment. Gaining a relevant qualification can be the easiest way to prove you've met your duty of care.

This can be very helpful if you are seeking insurance or funding. Funders and insurers will need to be satisfied you can meet your duty of care so they are confident they can invest in you and your group safely.



## LOWLAND LEADER (LL)

**A LOWLAND LEADER can lead others safely on day walks in low-level countryside and woodlands in the UK and Ireland.**

Walks must follow paths or tracks that are both marked on a map and clearly visible on the ground, and that do not require navigation across untracked areas.

Throughout the walk the group should generally be no more than 3km away from a key access point such as a car park, lay-by or populated area.

Walks must use bridges or other recognised water crossing points.

Any escape routes should also lie within the scope of the terrain defined above.

- A QUALITY LOWLAND DAY (QLD) IS ONE WHERE YOU:**
- Plan and lead the walk
  - Use your navigation skills
  - Increase your knowledge and practice skills
  - Pay attention to safety
  - Do four hours or more of walking
  - Might have bad weather or muddy, slippery, uneven footing

**TRAINING PREREQUISITES:** 10 lowland walks  
**ASSESSMENT PREREQUISITES:** 20 lowland walks  
**LENGTH OF TRAINING / ASSESSMENT:**  
2 days / 2 days  
**AVERAGE TIME FROM REGISTRATION TO QUALIFICATION:** 1 year  
**COST\*:** £150 / £150–£200

## HILL AND MOORLAND LEADER (HML)

**A HILL AND MOORLAND LEADER can lead others safely on day walks in Hill and Moorland in the UK and Ireland.**

Hill and Moorland is defined as: Open, uncultivated, non-mountainous high or remote country—upland, moor, bog, fell, hill or down.

Areas enclosed by well-defined boundaries such as roads and rivers.

**“If you see people that look like you make a success of things, you can foster a great belief that it’s possible for you to do the same.”** TREVOR MASSIAH

Areas easily exited in a few hours, returning to a refuge or an accessible road.

Movement on steep or rocky ground not required.

**A QUALITY HILL AND MOORLAND DAY (QMD) IS ONE WHERE YOU:**

- Plan and lead the walk
- Use your navigation skills
- Increase your knowledge and practice skills
- Pay attention to safety
- Do four hours or more of walking
- Might have bad weather or muddy, slippery, uneven footing

**TRAINING PREREQUISITES:** 20 hillwalking days  
**ASSESSMENT PREREQUISITES:** 40 hillwalking days  
**LENGTH OF TRAINING / ASSESSMENT:**  
3 days / 3 days  
**AVERAGE TIME FROM REGISTRATION TO QUALIFICATION:** 1.4 years  
**COST\*:** £225 / £265

\*£ average 2023 prices, Cost training /assessment

## TIME AND MONEY

Mountain Training courses vary in terms of time and financial commitment, so make sure you check out the details to find the best fit before you make the leap.

If you live in London it will likely take longer to find the time, and will be more expensive in terms of travel and accommodation, to log the necessary days in the mountains than if you live in the Highlands of Scotland. And even if you have direct access to the spaces you want to work in, some of the courses can take several years to acquire the required quality outdoor days to qualify for assessment and certification.

## MOUNTAIN LEADER (ML)

**A MOUNTAIN LEADER can lead others safely in mountain, hill and moorland environments in the UK and Ireland.**

Mountainous environment is defined as 'wild country which may contain unavoidable steep and rocky ground where walkers are dependent upon themselves for immediate help'.

In the UK and Ireland this includes:

Snowdonia, Galloway Hills, Brecon Beacons, Cork and Kerry Mountains, Lake District, Galway and Mayo Mountains, Mountains of Mourne, Donegal Mountains, Scottish Highlands, Dublin and Wicklow Mountains.

**A QUALITY MOUNTAIN DAY (QMD) IS ONE WHERE YOU:**

- Plan and lead the walk
- Use your navigation skills away from marked paths.
- Increase your knowledge and practice skills
- Pay attention to safety
- Do five hours or more of walking
- May have adverse conditions
- Ascend a substantial named peak

If you have overseas experience to include as QMDs, it must be in terrain and weather comparable to UK and Irish hills and mountains.



**TRAINING PREREQUISITES:**

20 quality mountain days (QMDs)

**ASSESSMENT PREREQUISITES:**

40 QMDs, 8 nights camping including 4 nights wild camping

**LENGTH OF TRAINING / ASSESSMENT:**

6 days / 5 days

**AVERAGE TIME FROM REGISTRATION TO**

**QUALIFICATION:** 3.3 years

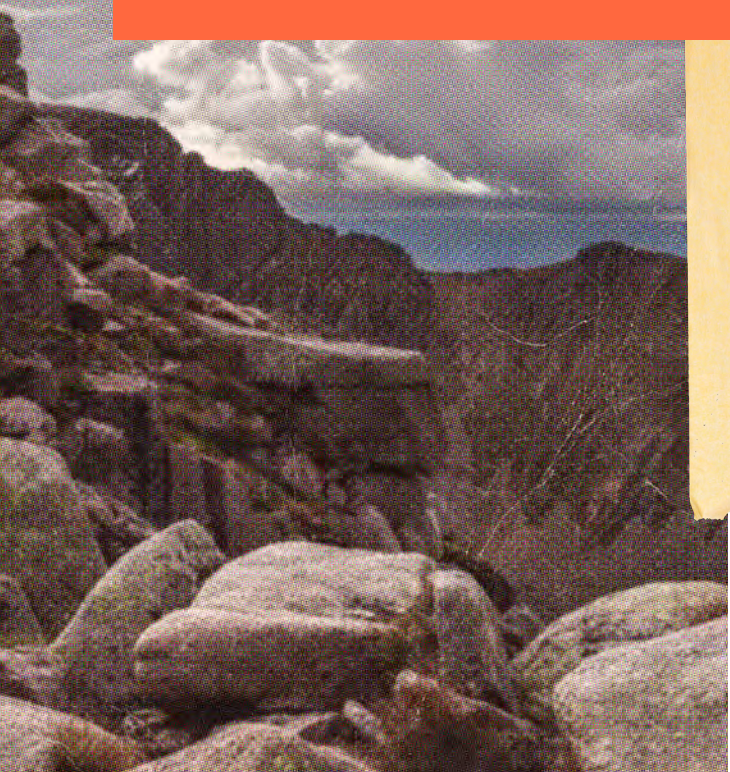
**COST\*:** £400/ £410

Other qualifications to consider:

## CAMPING LEADER

**A standalone qualification designed to qualify you to supervise group camping trips.**

PHOTO: PHIL YOUNG





PHOTOS: KLARA STEINWENDER

## PROFILE

# TREVOR MESSIAH

### Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (MCI)

Trevor was brought up in the rough part of Bristol as the son of one of the first Black families to move into a challenging working-class housing estate. *"They would look at me in disbelief, it had the reputation of being one of the most racist places in the whole city."*

It did have its benefits though, backing on to a field meant that although life was often difficult, he had exposure to the countryside from a very early age.

Living where he did he was forced to adapt and overcome the many barriers he faced as a matter of necessity. This served him well, as he picked up the skills to enable him to feel comfortable in an array of circumstances. As someone who chose to then make his career in the outdoor industry, he found a world where he could fit. *"My experience of the outdoor industry is one of inclusion and acceptance,"* he explains.

A turbulent school experience left Trevor with very few work opportunities and he was pushed onto a government youth

training scheme. Through a clerical error he somehow found his way onto a kayak-building course designed for ex-criminals. This course shaped what has happened since. He says: *"It just changed my life because I was around outdoorsy type people. People who were into kayaking, caving and climbing."*

After falling in love with the outdoors and achieving his Mountain Leader qualification, Trevor has travelled the world as an instructor working in the United States, New Zealand and Australia. He now runs a successful business—'Rock and Sun'—a tour operator that organises climbing holidays and courses in the UK and abroad (Spain, Kalymnos, Greece, Thailand and Sardinia).

Trevor is fully aware of how his background and colour can often be perceived, which is why the seal of approval that a Mountain Leader qualification gives him is so important. *"You carry a certain responsibility (as a Black man) with what you do, because people will judge you and they'll judge someone else who looks like you because of the way you are. That's just the way it is. So you take on that responsibility and I think that's one of the things that drives you to want to be better."*

*"I really value the (Mountain Training) qualifications because you know that the consistent level that you have within the Mountain Leader qualification is so much higher than some other courses. It provides confidence, not just for people that you are taking out, but confidence for yourself as well. To have a third party acknowledge your ability is really quite powerful, isn't it?"*

@rockandsun1



## CLIMBING QUALIFICATIONS

Climbing can be as simple as turning up at a climbing centre, hiring some shoes and jumping on a problem, but if you want to build your skills or if you want to introduce other people to the sport in a more formalised way or at scale, then a qualification can help you. Mountain Training offers different types of climbing qualifications—those that train you to be an instructor indoors and outdoors, and those that develop you as a coach.

If you are looking at developing a career in this field, then the logical first step is often to train as a CLIMBING WALL INSTRUCTOR (CWI).

## CLIMBING WALL INSTRUCTOR (CWI)

Climbing Wall Instructor gives you the skills required to teach roped climbing and bouldering indoors. It is the qualification that climbing walls would generally require if you wanted to work freelance at their walls and supervise more than two people at a time. Many walls also require it of their employed instructors.

### TRAINING PREREQUISITES:

Visits to 3 different climbing walls on 15 different occasions + 10 led routes at Fr4 on walls

### ASSESSMENT PREREQUISITES:

30 visits to at least 3 different walls + led a minimum of 40 climbs + assisted in the supervision of at least 15 instructed sessions on two different walls

### LENGTH OF TRAINING / ASSESSMENT:

2 days / 1 day

### AVERAGE TIME FROM REGISTRATION TO

QUALIFICATION: 1 year

COST\*: £150 / £100

“To be able to share moments and positive experiences, knowing that you have passed on skills that allow people to feel more confident in the space, is unbeatable.”

KIRSTY PALLAS



PHOTO: ADAM RAJA CAMPBELL



# ROCK CLIMBING INSTRUCTOR OUTDOOR (RCI)

This qualification trains and assesses experienced rock climbers to instruct climbing and abseiling on single pitch crags and artificial structures.

## TRAINING PREREQUISITES:

15 led trad routes + 15 led climbing wall routes + 5 led sport climbing routes with outdoor bolt protection

## ASSESSMENT PREREQUISITES:

40 graded trad climbs (20 graded 'severe' or above) + 10 sport climb leads graded at F4 or above + assisted in the supervision of 20 instructed sessions

## LENGTH OF TRAINING / ASSESSMENT:

2 days / 2 days

## AVERAGE TIME FROM REGISTRATION TO

QUALIFICATION: 1.1 years

COST\*: £240/ £180

See all MOUNTAIN TRAINING qualifications here: [www.mountain-training.org/qualifications](http://www.mountain-training.org/qualifications)

PHOTO: ALUN RICHARDSON



PHOTO: ROXANNA BARKY

Other courses and qualifications to consider:

## INDOOR CLIMBING ASSISTANT (ICA)

Designed for people who want to support qualified instructors with climbing sessions on artificial structures. People interested in this scheme might be parents, youth workers, young leaders or teachers and the focus is on assisting with core tasks within a session.

If you're still not sure which qualification is for you, check out "Which scheme is right for me?" ([mountain-training.org](http://mountain-training.org))

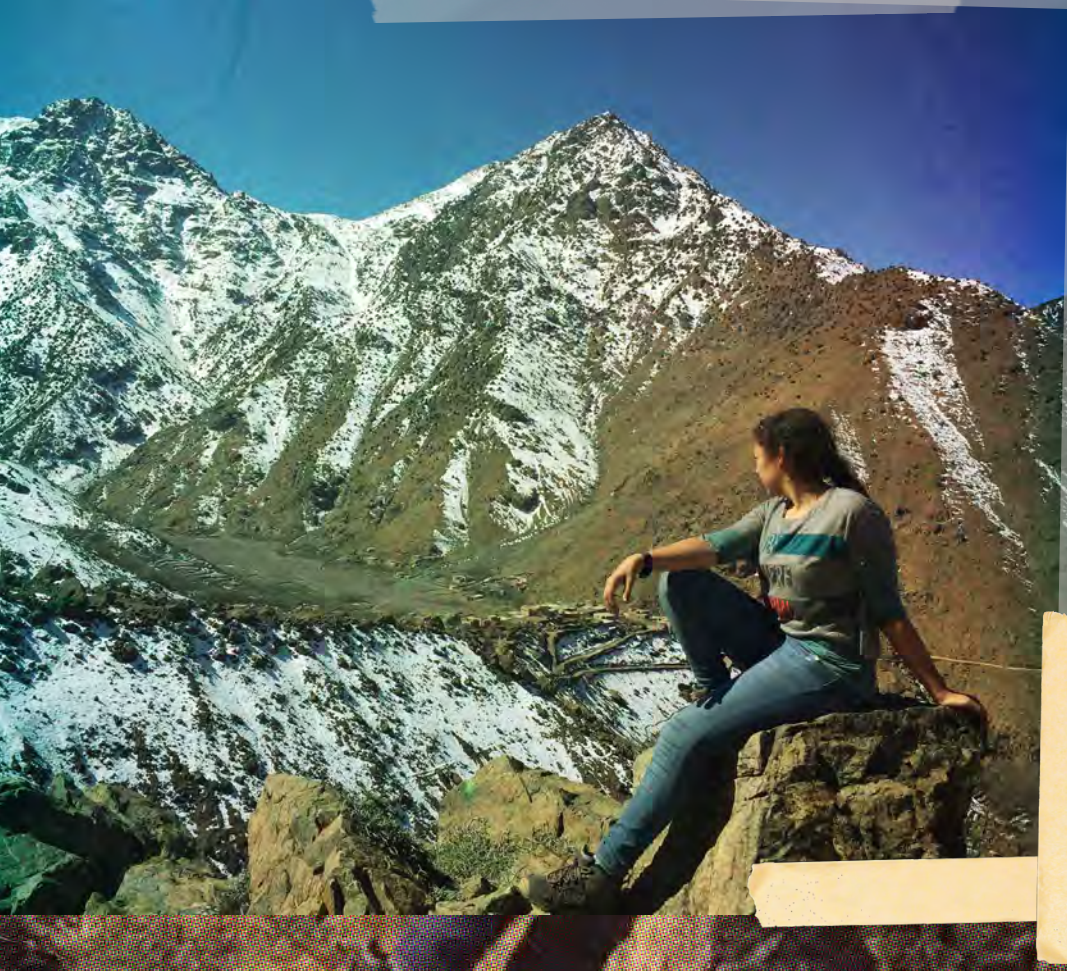
## TOP TIP

Gaining experience between training and assessment is easier, more varied and therefore more valuable if you have a relationship with a local wall. Climbing walls are used to people needing to shadow to gain qualifications, so most will be helpful.

NB: Some walls work on a site-specific training basis, which means that you could work for them as an instructor with or without your CWI provided that you go through their own on-site training.

If you are looking to be employed by a particular wall, make sure that you speak to them about their requirements. It is helpful to have a good working relationship with one or two walls because you will need to 'shadow' experienced instructors to get the experience you need before your assessment.





# THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW (FOR ALL QUALIFICATIONS)

Please check out the full qualification handbooks for all the details of experience needed before training and assessment.

You will need a first aid qualification and it must be completed by the time you take your assessment.

Registration for any of the Mountain Training qualifications is £49 (2023). Course prices are on top of this.

You do not need to work your way through the qualifications—each one is standalone—so, for example, if you want to work in the mountains you can go straight for MOUNTAIN LEADER (ML), you do not have to have completed LOWLAND LEADER (LL), and HILL AND MOORLAND LEADER (HML) first.

You can do the training and not the assessment if you want to simply build your skills, but we'd advise that you consider a SKILLS COURSE if you don't think you want to be an outdoor leader. There may be funding/support available

to help you gain qualifications.

Find out more:

[www.mountain-training.org/help/resources/funding-for-our-qualifications](http://www.mountain-training.org/help/resources/funding-for-our-qualifications)

MOUNTAIN TRAINING has also compiled some tips for keeping costs as low as possible while qualifying:

[www.mountain-training.org/help/resources/mountain-training-money-saving-tips?fbclid=IwAR3ooes\\_](http://www.mountain-training.org/help/resources/mountain-training-money-saving-tips?fbclid=IwAR3ooes_)

If you have any further questions, the MOUNTAIN TRAINING Customer Service Team can help with everything from logging into your account on the Candidate Management System to identifying the right course.

You can contact them on:

[info@mountain-training.org](mailto:info@mountain-training.org)

Find a course here:

[www.mountain-training.org/find-a-course](http://www.mountain-training.org/find-a-course)

## PROFILE

# SAMEED ASGHAR

For Sameed, mountaineering was originally just a hobby. "I used to work for a charity and in 2005, we helped organise an Everest basecamp trek," he explains. "Our training days were Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike etc and that's when I discovered that the UK has amazing places locally. After that I volunteered for other charities as well, because they wanted support for their guides. Then I got caught up in the rat race, and for years I didn't pursue it at all—as a hobby or professionally. Life got in the way for a good six or seven years."

The thoughts of returning to working in the outdoors came through a specific set of circumstances. "I was working for a bank and took an 18-month sabbatical. I wanted to travel and to learn a new language, but this also meant I had the time to go to the Lake District and to Wales, and to get all the Quality Mountain Days (QMDs) that I needed," he says. "The whole process of getting your QMDs is very time consuming but at the same time you're getting a great day out as well, so it's an enjoyable process. If I hadn't taken that sabbatical, I probably would have still qualified but it would have taken me much longer."

Even with all the experience, Sameed was nervous going into his assessment. "I did the assessment about a year and a half, to two years after training. I hate being assessed and with the Mountain Leader assessment it's five days so it makes it even more intense," he explains. "And with the UK outdoors being predominantly white and middle class, I found it a bit daunting initially but the assessors were great. They were really kind and helped me feel relaxed."

Sameed passed his assessment and now works for himself at his organisation Summit Special. He also freelances for others. "I didn't go back to the job at the bank after my sabbatical, instead I went to work for other outdoor companies and did some leading abroad in South America. Then I set up Summit Special with my wife. We work with charities and community groups—running trips in the UK and abroad. In our first year I was working half for my organisation and half for other outdoor companies. Now it's more like 80% of work for Summit Special and 20% freelance. I enjoy freelancing because you get a break from the admin you have to do behind the scenes for your own company—you just turn up and lead the group!"

"One of the top benefits of being an outdoor instructor is spending time in the beautiful mountains—it's my office. You are literally being paid to go for a walk. Also I'm into my fitness and exercise, and I can easily get my daily steps in on a work day! I don't watch my calories anymore because I know I'll just burn so many. The job definitely has its perks."

It sounds great, but no job is perfect. "These are the downsides. Freelance in the winter

can be pretty quiet—I still have trips but not as often and most of them are weekends. Summer is very busy—I can be working every weekend. It can be hard balancing family life and doing lots of expeditions, particularly if they are abroad. This year I've been to Kenya twice, Everest basecamp and Morocco."

"I choose when to run my own trips and if I have a gap in my diary there is a freelance instructors group on Facebook and I can pick up work there. Having said that, this year has been particularly busy even in the winter. I think post COVID everybody just wants to get out and explore."

"I took a pay cut when I left the bank but I expect that longer term, if my business keeps growing as it is, I will be able to earn similar or more."

@sameed.asghar @summit.special



PHOTOS: SUMMIT SPECIAL

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- What does an outdoor career really look like?
- What are the benefits of qualifications to your life?
- Can you see yourself leading in these spaces?
- Is the time and money commitment realistic?



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