

LOVE HER WILD'S OUTDOOR ACADEMY

ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO BE OUTDOOR BEGINNERS AND LEADERS



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Love Her Wild's Outdoor Academy was inspired by countless stories of women feeling they are not fit/fast/brave/skilled enough to get outdoors or have adventures. This grant-funded adventure weekend aimed to give female outdoor beginners the skills and confidence to make the outdoors part of their everyday lives. Part 1 of this series explored why Outdoor Academy was set up and Part 2 went behind the scenes of running such a project. Part 3 delves into how it went...

Outdoor Academy: What we did

Our 12 outdoor beginners had all had the opportunity to share what they felt they needed the most help with during their applications to be part of Outdoor Academy. The leadership team balanced these answers against their wider experience of Love Her Wild's community and delivering outdoor learning when designing the workshops. Our final workshop programme included:

All the gear and lots of ideas!

What to take outdoors and how to pack it.

Tent-tastic!

What features to look for in a tent and how to put one up!

Nature-inspired wellbeing

How the outdoors can support the 5 ways to well-being.

Nurture Nature

How to leave a positive impact when adventuring.

Redefining adventure

Trialling the concept of micro-adventures.

Navigation skills

Exploring and planning with maps.

Inspire others

Creating resources to help other beginners take their first steps outdoors.

All of our workshops were designed to be achievable for the team to replicate independently (thus, encouraging transferability of learning). There were developed to challenge the definition of what 'outdoorsy' might mean, be adaptable for different abilities and means and have a positive impact on the environment.

We deliberately planned the timings of workshops, using active workshops to generate momentum or re-energise and avoiding more discussion-based ones in the post-lunch slots! Each workshop included a reflection task and was followed by a break (or meal!). We found both of these things really important for allowing the team to digest their learning and pace their energy across the weekend.





Despite having only met once on Zoom, the team bonded quickly, reassured by the emphasis on learning together. We very quickly saw people chipping in to help each other and there was a great willingness to have a go and ask questions, even on things which had previously been described as unknown or challenging.

The impact

We asked the Outdoor Academy team to complete a questionnaire before and after our adventure together to assess their skills and confidence in engaging with the outdoors. We saw a huge increase in the confidence rating and 81% of the team said they would “Definitely” attend a future Love Her Wild event after being part of Outdoor Academy, compared to just 30% before. The team listed 26 outdoor skills they felt they had by the end of the weekend including camping, navigating, planning and teamwork. We encouraged the team to share stories of their experience both to help them reflect upon their learning but also inspire other outdoor beginners within the online Love Her Wild community:

“All the other wilders I’ve met this weekend have the same fears. We all knew more than we thought we did. We’ve supported each other, pushed our comfort zones and laughed more than I ever expected to.” - Carrie

“It really got me thinking about adventures I can have at home. I don’t need to go climb a mountain or jump out of a plane. Adventure is a state of mind. It’s everywhere and anywhere and what I make of it.” - Claudia

Of course, actions speak louder than words, so we have been thrilled that several team members have already sent photos or messages about outdoor adventures, attended or booked on to other Love Her Wild events and even signed up to volunteer with the community.

What next?

We collated the team’s stories, ideas and the bits they enjoyed and found most useful into an outdoor beginners’ inspiration webpage to help others: discoveryouroutdoors.co.uk/outdooracademy-getoutdoorstoo.

By the time you have read this, we will have hosted a Zoom session in June where other female outdoor beginners can hear from our team, learn about other opportunities to get started outdoors and ask questions in a supportive space ▲

In the next issue, we’ll hear from the Outdoor Academy Leadership Team about how the programme has influenced their personal and professional development.