



# MY JOURNEY INTO THE INDUSTRY

## JAKE HARMER, APPRENTICE WITH SKERN TRAINING & SKILLS, TELLS US ABOUT HIS JOURNEY INTO THE INDUSTRY



AUTHOR  
Jake Harmer

Jake is 22 years old, from the south east of England and works as an outdoor activity instructor for Kingswood at their Grosvenor Hall site in Kent. He has been with the company for just under a year and aspires to pursue a career in delivering outdoor activities and promote education in the outdoors.

### Forward by Steve Randles, Head of Education and Quality – Skern Training & Skills

*An apprenticeship allows people to combine theoretical training with hands on experience. The level 3 outdoor activity instructor standard is the perfect entry level into the outdoor sector, allowing people to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to become an outdoor instructor and progress their personal career within the sector. Skern Lodge has been an independent training provider in North Devon since 1976, offering excellence in its courses and services. In 2019, Skern Training & Skills became a main provider and now offers a number of standards across different sectors including – Outdoors, Leadership and Management, and Agriculture and Hospitality. It has been a privilege to develop the curriculum for the Outdoor Activity Instructor standard and, through Skern Training & Skills, support over 70 apprentices through their end point assessments in 2022. It's great to see how apprenticeships can support individuals such as Jake progress and develop in the outdoor sector.*

### Jake's Journey

Working with children and young adults has always been the direction I wanted my career to take. However, the outdoor industry had never crossed my mind as a career path. After numerous hours of work experience at local primary schools, I decided a degree in education would be my best course of action to achieve this goal, but due to the state of the world during the pandemic, my dreams of a degree had to be put on hold. Looking back at this, I believe this to have worked out in my favour as I would never have come across the advertisement for an outdoor activity instructor apprenticeship at Kingswood. Several of my friends had pursued the apprenticeship route across different trades and professions and the response I got from them was mixed; some said it was

better than a degree and others swore they would never do one again, but I had to try for myself to find out.

Following a successful interview process, I was offered a place to start in January 2022 with a full month of induction and training at the West Runton site in Norfolk along with almost 30 other apprentices. I can say with confidence, I made some amazing friends and had one of the best months of my life. We started with a week of fun activities and time to get to know each other with some role model members from Kingswood and Skernat at the helm, guiding us through the backbone of what would eventually become our everyday job. The rest of the month was focused on getting a better understanding of what the job actually entails and gaining some necessary qualifications such as first aid, safeguarding and all the in-house activity training my brain could hold. This month left me feeling confident about stepping into my role as an instructor as well as teaching me plenty of transferrable skills that don't just benefit my job, but my personal development too.

Sadly, that month came to an end faster than I hoped and I had to say goodbye to the majority of the people I had been living with and spending almost every waking hour with for the last month while we all split to travel to our different sites and progress with our apprenticeship. I was not sad for long, however, as upon arriving at Grosvenor Hall I was greeted by an extremely friendly team who, over the last 10 months, have become more like a family than colleagues. Straight away I knew that no matter what challenges I was to face over the months to come, I would have an amazing support system to aid me through the busiest part of the year and beyond - and I'm glad I did, as peak season proved to be a real challenge!

Throughout my time as an apprentice, I have been given many opportunities for training that can aid my career development as well as give me a better footing if I choose to develop my career somewhere else. So far, I have been able to complete a GB qualification in fencing as well as my full ERCA ground belay and accessing ticket. The next step for me will be completing the Paddlesports instructor course in the next month and then onto my end point assessment for the apprenticeship. To anyone who may have an interest in pursuing a career that isn't your everyday office job, the outdoors is full of so much opportunity that's just begging to be taken. I haven't looked back since entering this industry and would highly recommend it to anyone. I have had the most amazing 10 months; met lifelong friends, overcame fears and really started to make an impact on young people. Give it a go, you might be missing out on the best job you've ever had ▲

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