



DAVE HOLLINGER

38 YEARS OLD
QUALIFICATIONS
SPA ML MIA MIC
IFMGA
WORKED FULL
TIME SINCE 2001
DID YOU EVER
IMAGINE YOU
WOULD BECOME
A GUIDE?

No, in fact I was originally put off guiding by preconceptions based on getting trampled over in the Alps. Eventually I could see that becoming a guide would be a natural

progression that would allow me to work in most of the places I love climbing.

WHAT KIND OF WORK DO YOU CONCENTRATE ON NOW?

For me, the variety is one of the best bits of the job. My year is a mixture of rock and ice climbing, alpinism and ski work. It's also nice to still be involved in training and assessing for the UK awards - I feel I'm a product of that system, and it's a good source of work in the quieter guiding months.

GIVE US AN EXAMPLE OF YOUR PERFECT DAY'S WORK?

I'm lucky to have those on a fairly regular basis. Last season I got to climb *Postern* on Shelterstone for the first time (I've wanted

to climb it since I started winter climbing in the late 90's) so getting the chance to finally do that and get to lead all the pitches was brilliant.

ANY ADVICE FOR SOMEONE THINKING OF BECOMING A GUIDE?

Speak to lots of guides first to help decide if you can see yourself working as a guide in the long term.

Dave can be contacted via mountainpulse.co.uk and also is a director of peakmountaintraining.co.uk



HIGHER STANDARDS

FANCY CREATING A JOB OUT OF YOUR PASSION? IAN PARNELL LOOKS AT THE QUALIFICATIONS AVAILABLE FOR WORKING IN THE OUTDOORS, AND TALKS TO FOUR VERY DIFFERENT CLIMBERS TO SEE WHERE THEIR CAREERS HAVE TAKEN THEM

The dream of having a job doing the thing you love most is one held by many climbers. The idea that you'll get paid to take others climbing is a seductive one, but the reality is a little more complex. For a start, there are a multitude of possible awards available that will qualify you for a vast array of supervising, training and guiding roles from supervising lowland country walks and school top roping sessions at a climbing wall through to guiding someone up *Point Five Gully* on Ben Nevis.

Identifying your career path can be a tricky one, and you'll need to weigh up your ambitions, current skill level and time for the process of training. To apply for the Climbing Wall Award Scheme (CWA), which qualifies you to work supervising climbers in a non-leading situation at a climbing wall, you need a minimum of 6 months climbing experience and to have climbed on 3 different walls. The training typically takes two days and after an experience consolidation period a single day assessment.

At the other end of the qualification ladder becoming a British Mountain Guide is a major life commitment. 'It's a massive commitment in terms of time' says BMG Guide Dave Hollinger, 'I guess the scheme itself takes at least 3 years and costs about £8k and then there are well over a 100 days of formal training and assessment before you can qualify. But then there's all the experience that allowed you to apply successfully in the first place - it's hard to quantify that. In my case it was 10 years regularly climbing around the world. I was lucky to get started at uni where there was a good scene and you had lots of time to climb.'

Whilst many climbers are attracted by the idea of getting qualified, the attrition rate can be high. The Single Pitch Award for example, which

qualifies you to supervise climbers at single pitch crags, has had 44,000 climbers register on the scheme during its lifetime but only 13,000 made it through to assessment. For those willing to persevere, the rewards from working with people in the outdoors are tremendous. 'I get to meet a whole range of really interesting and fun people some of whom you stay in contact with' says Ruth Taylor, who holds the Mountain Instructor Award (MIA) and has been working in the field for almost twenty years. 'It's great when you hear how they're getting on and see them using the skills you've taught them, and progressing.'

There is a flip side, of course. 'The worst bits' says Taylor, 'are the cold, wet, miserable days with clients who have unrealistic goals for the day and the conditions.' Full-time guide Dave Hollinger adds, 'It is a job that requires time away from home, which I find harder now with a family.' Hollinger is also open about the pressure of ensuring clients' safety in what can be extremely hostile environments. 'Some of the work, particularly in the Alps, is not exactly risk free. I'm acutely aware that one poor decision could have disastrous consequences for me or my clients, so sometimes it's pretty stressful.'

Physio-coach Danny Brown puts it even more bluntly 'I still think it is the most dangerous job in the world; you have to be prepared to deal with danger every day; extreme environments and no safety systems other than your own judgement so you have to aim to be brilliant.' But Danny believes if you have the aptitude these stresses are worth it: 'It is a rewarding career and well worth the effort, but it is a lot of effort so be prepared to put in the hours.'

Despite the recent recession, the job market in the outdoors is far from bleak. Bryn Williams from Mountain Training, the body that oversees

DANNY BROWN

40 YEARS OLD
QUALIFICATIONS
SPA/MIA/MIA
'I STOPPED THERE AS I ENJOY WINTER CLIMBING BUT DON'T WANT TO WORK IN THAT ENVIRONMENT'
22 YEARS EXPERIENCE



WHEN DID YOU DECIDE TO PURSUE A CAREER ASSOCIATED WITH CLIMBING?

I grew up in an outdoor centre climbing, paddling and horseriding so never considered it a career, just something I did. When my colour blindness ruled me out of the RAF at 17, I fell back on my other skills.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST AWARD?

I was a boater first and had my Inland Proficiency aged 14. I went down the ML route which had a strong climbing element and when the SPA came out I had been working for 4 years and thought it unnecessary. I was soon proved wrong, and quickly jumped on board. My SPA Assessment was on the cliffs of Torbay and the Dewestone, lots of fun but not really within the scope of the award.

ONCE YOU QUALIFIED AS AN MIA, WHAT AREA DID YOU FOCUS ON?

Initially I was firmly into being in the mountains but when I broke my leg I worked at The Foundry and suddenly saw the potential of the climbers in the walls and concentrated on performance and coaching from then on, partly to improve my own ability as well as rehabilitating from years of injury.

YOU'RE CURRENTLY WORKING AS A PHYSIO, HAVING SPENT 4 YEARS RETRAINING. DOES YOUR BACKGROUND AS AN MIA INFLUENCE YOUR WORK NOW?

I am the only MIA/physio in the country so I do trade on that a bit. I also advise centres and walls as well as MTE coaches and squads on injury avoidance and management in performance climbing.

WHAT'S THE BEST AND THE WORST BIT OF YOUR JOB?

The best aspect is the many interesting people I have met. If there is a downside it would be the relatively poor remuneration compared to the level of skill, dedication and hard work that has to be put in.

Danny works at TCA and for Physio Impulse. He also runs MTE courses including the new coaching scheme. dannybrownphysio.com

THE AWARD STRUCTURE

BRITISH MOUNTAIN GUIDE

Qualified for all kinds of climbing and skiing work in the world's most challenging mountain terrain. A legal requirement for alpine guiding work in the European Alps

MOUNTAIN INSTRUCTOR CERTIFICATE (MIC)

Qualified to lead multipitch climbing and mountaineering anywhere in the UK, summer and winter

MOUNTAIN INSTRUCTOR AWARD (MIA)

Qualified to lead multipitch climbing and mountaineering anywhere in UK under summer conditions

INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN LEADER (IML)

Lead parties in international mountains where alpine techniques aren't required

WINTER MOUNTAIN LEADER (WML)

Lead walking groups in any of the UK mountains, summer and winter

MOUNTAIN LEADER AWARD (ML)

Lead walking groups in any of the UK mountains in summer conditions

SINGLE PITCH AWARD (SPA)

Supervise climbers on single pitch crags

THE CLIMBING WALL AWARD (CWA)

Supervise climbers at climbing walls

USEFUL CONTACTS

MOUNTAIN TRAINING UK: all the awards except the Guides scheme mountain-training.org
BRITISH MOUNTAIN GUIDES: bmg.org.uk