

A walk on the WILD SIDE

Residential trips can deliver some unexpected lessons – and not just for the students, as these teachers reveal...



“The best lesson I’ve learnt is to treat each visit as an adventure and to show as much enthusiasm as the students – whether it’s their first time away from home or their fifth. By showing passion and curiosity for outdoor learning, students forget their anxieties and engage with new people and places. This can form the foundations of life-long interests which have the potential to be continued. During a Year 10 visit to the Holderness coast, many students were so amazed at the changing coastline, they returned later to do their own trip!”

Anna Wajszwilli, geography teacher, Thurston Community College

“A few weeks into my new role, I said yes to accompanying the school ski trip – even though I am the wrong side of forty, have never skied before, and am afraid of heights. I stacked it time and time again. On the blue slope, I had a big fall; it was filmed and went viral before lunchtime. With the support of the students, we all learned to ski and even managed red runs. Instead of role-modelling failure, we all learnt it was good to struggle and get back up again in order to succeed. The real highlight was not the great views or the skiing; it was in the thrill of success through failure.”



Adrian Price, principal, George Salter Academy



“I volunteered to join the Duke of Edinburgh team and I was blown away by the students’ ability to persevere with a grin on even the rainiest of days. Throughout the expedition we had the worst weather the school had seen but this did not deter the students, provided they were fuelled by snacks, Disney singalongs and the idea of beating the boys’ team back to camp. Given the opportunity to step outside of their comfort zone the students surprised even themselves with their resilience and capabilities. This was epitomised by one student who managed to successfully carry eggs for an omelette dinner despite the risks.”

Ella Perry, teacher of humanities, Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy

“A personal highlight for me stems back to when a group of students, who had been struggling to engage with school, expressed an interest in participating in our annual Duke of Edinburgh Award programme. I had some reservations about how they would handle the expedition, however the girls displayed a level of resilience, teamwork and navigation skills that I never imagined possible. I learnt never to underestimate what young people are capable of.”

George Dean, Duke of Edinburgh co-ordinator at Priory School, Bohunt Education Trust



“The main thing I’ve learnt is never be afraid to take them; young people’s resilience and strength of character will overwhelm you. I recently accompanied children from inner-city Portsmouth who had never sailed before on a 72ft ketch for a week in the toughest conditions that even adults would struggle with (force 8 gale in the Solent). They inspired me with the risks they took and the independence they gained. I was filled with pride when one child said ‘thank you for showing me something I want to do for the rest of my life, if I hadn’t been chosen I’d never have found my biggest passion.’”

Kirsty French, head of geography, The Portsmouth Academy

“I learnt never, ever to go on a residential without antibac gel. Don’t ask.”

Anon

“It took five years – but I finally learnt it’s ok, sometimes, to say ‘no’, and let someone else go!”

Anon



“A trip can be intense for teachers, but even more for the young people who are together all day, every day, throwing themselves into activities. I spent a brilliant week in Spain on a residential with 100 year 9s. They had a pretty solid programme of all-day activities, games after dinner and then a disco in the evening. By day four, they were exhausted, tempers were fraying and we realised that while the staff had actually had a pretty relaxing week, the students had been on the go all day, constantly surrounded by other people, and even at night were living in tents close together. It made me realise it’s important to build in down time for them and give them a chance for a break from each other.”

Cheney Payne, head of humanities, Linton Village College