

Profile: Justin Stewart



Hometown:

Upper Hutt, Wellington, New Zealand

Program:

Adventure UK

Tell us in a few hundred words what you got up to at Adventure UK?

I was based in Stowmarket, Suffolk which is about an hour and a half by train north east of London. It's a country area surrounded by farms and small rolling hills.

When I first arrived we had 3 weeks of full-on training and team building with the staff for the year. This was a lot of fun and we got to try every single activity out! We got to know what we were doing and how to do it, so that it was 150% safe.

During term time (school time) we would have school groups come in and we would run the activities – archery, abseiling, rock climbing, quad biking, air rifles, mountain biking, kayaking, canoeing, raft building, low ropes, camp fire and some other team building activities. We also got a lot of international school groups. We had French, German, Dutch, Italian and Spanish groups come in and most could speak some English. If not, after a fair bit of jumping up and down and waving our arms we always managed to get the message across.

The type of groups changed during the Summer and Easter breaks. We would get individual kids that come in for a holiday from around Europe, which was awesome! We got to meet some really interesting kids.

During our free time we would do trips away to visit places nearby and I always jumped at the opportunity to leave site, as it always ended up feeling like a small bubble. It's amazing how exciting a supermarket can be.

What was your role at camp?

I was an activity instructor. I instructed the kids on the activities and afterward we would be cleaners and have the place spotless for the next group that comes in. Once a week we would be on duty and relieved from activities, which means we would be the last person onsite asleep and make sure the meals are all served up. During our spare time we would be doing maintenance work like fixing up arrows and general site stuff.

Top 3 memories of Summer Camp?

1. Meeting some great new friends.
2. Taking international kids on a tour of London and being a tourist with a camera myself.
3. Building a 3m high snow man during staff training.

Was there a camper that stands out in your mind? If so why?

It's always good to think back about the kids that I managed get out of their comfort zones and to see a huge smile from their sense of achievement was very rewarding.

What are some of the experiences that you had which made an impact on you?

The amount of learning that can be gained from a small activity like low ropes and how it can be reflected back on real life examples.

Were there any times that were hard?

Yes, of course there was. The one thing that stands out would be the training. It was a full on intense 3 weeks, during the middle of winter. Coming from NZ where it was about 25 degrees to a winter in England and learning to kayak in a river that was near freezing and have to learn to do rescues. I'm not going to complain about going in cold water again!



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Did you have a good experience going on Adventure UK with IEP and BUNAC?

I had an awesome experience. At the beginning I had a bit of trouble with my visa. I applied while they were changing the whole system over to a new scheme. But IEP was there to relieve the stress and having the support and re-assurance was great.

How was the camp food?

It was better than home! Home made bread every morning, dessert with lunch and dinner. Hot food with every meal... mmmm.

What was your accommodation like?

It was good. We had all the essentials; TV, couches microwave, comfortable beds. The staff were staying in a house on-site and most of us had two people to a room.

Do you have any advice for someone who to go on Adventure UK?

Make the most of it, have fun, work hard, party hard! Don't be worried about money.

Did you gain anything from Camp that will benefit you in what you do next?

I gained a whole lot of qualifications and experience in the outdoor industry and I'm now instructing back in NZ!

How did you found employment after camp? Did you use the BUNAC office?

I've got three jobs that I'm juggling. Yes, I did use BUNAC while in London. They helped me understand how their tax system works and signed me up for a bank account, which is quite difficult in the UK without an address.

Did you find the UK a good base to travel throughout the rest of Europe? Where did you go and what bargains did you find?

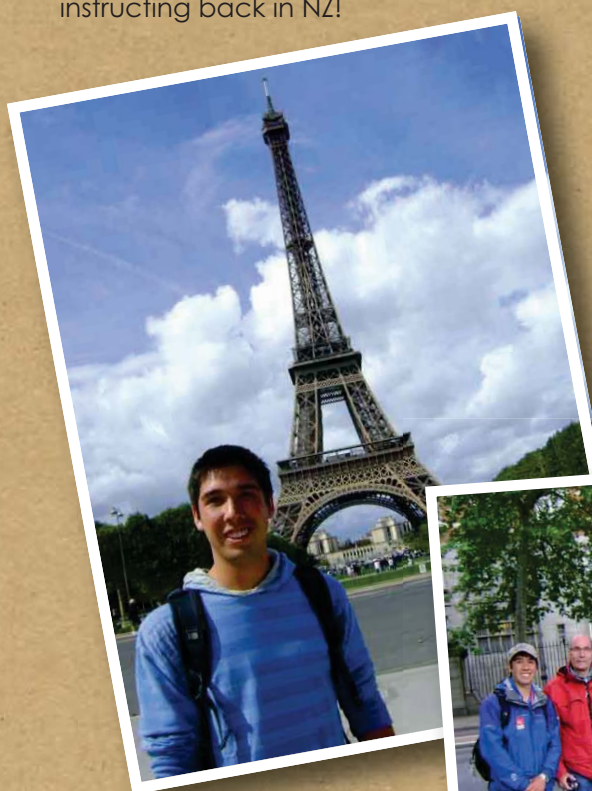
Yes, it's nice and central. They speak English and the great thing about Western Europe is that you can get away with speaking English all around there too.

I got a 4 week train pass for unlimited travel around Europe for only 400 Euros. I visited Wales, Jersey, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Germany, The Netherlands and Greece. Plus on the way there and back I went to Australia, Singapore and Malaysia.

Take advantage of the cheap flights! I flew to Germany for only 25 pounds including luggage! The UK has a really good extensive train network that goes around the whole country.

What is next for you?

I'm at Victoria University now doing a Commerce Degree, while saving up for my next trip overseas.



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