



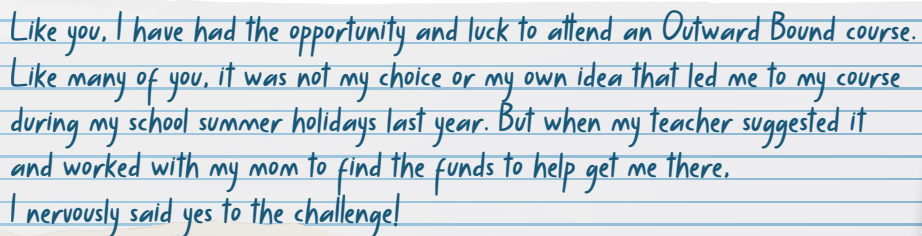
**Do you have a few minutes? I want to tell you about Liam.**

Liam has asked me to tell you his story, and to thank you and other valued Outward Bound alumni for enabling him to share it.

Liam completed his 19-day expedition-based Outward Bound Pinnacle course last year as part of our Summer Adventures programme. His experiences there have had a profound impact on him.

When he discovered he could attend because of charitable funding from the alumni *Look Back and Pay It Forward* campaign last summer, he felt compelled to write.


Why not grab a brew and have a read. I think this may resonate with you.



*Like you, I have had the opportunity and luck to attend an Outward Bound course. Like many of you, it was not my choice or my own idea that led me to my course during my school summer holidays last year. But when my teacher suggested it and worked with my mom to find the funds to help get me there, I nervously said yes to the challenge!*



How did you find out about Outward Bound? I know there have been many pathways to a course in the past. Often schools, employers or family members who had benefited from Outward Bound before went on to sponsor young people to attend. Some attendees were helped by their local authority, local youth groups, or Outward Bound Associations.



*I must explain that I live in the Midlands, in a place as far away from the sea in the UK as you can get! The highest local point is the rubbish tip in Cannock! Without the support of my school and Outward Bound, I would not have been able to think about completing the 19-day Pinnacle course last summer. I was taken to a train station to make my own way there. My teacher insisted this was the best way for me to start the course. This was a plan for me to go on my own journey and leave my local area behind. I was, possibly as you were, very worried, to say the least! I had only been on a train once before, which was only into Birmingham.*



Do you remember your journey to your Outward Bound centre? I understand that making your own way there was part of the experience, whether you travelled in a bespoke Outward Bound train carriage or had to rely on the kindness of a local for a lift!

I had never been to Scotland before, and I had never left my mom and brothers for that long, either. Home was one of my biggest worries. How would mom cope with my younger brothers without me being there? What would happen if she had one of her down days? As I sat on that train heading through Staffordshire, Lancashire, Cumbria and into Scotland, the world around me changed. People on the train smiled at me. A lady sat opposite asked where I was going and what I was doing, and I think she sensed I was nervous, so she chatted with me about adventures to come in the next few weeks - and the mighty midges of Scotland that I would soon find out about! I think she was more excited than I was!



Many of the young people who attend Outward Bound today come from diverse backgrounds, different levels of academic achievement, and where poverty of opportunity and financial disadvantage are prevalent. We believe Outward Bound should be for everyone - four out of five of our participants require funding to come to our incredible centres, making the charity the biggest provider of outdoor residential experiences for under-represented groups in the UK.

Scotland wasn't what I expected at first. Glasgow was a lot like Wolverhampton. The next stage of the journey made the change as we headed over the moors and mountains to Loch Eil. There seemed to be a lot of solo travellers heading to Outward Bound, all not speaking, just sitting - earphones in, silent and avoiding eye contact. Or, in my case, staring out of the window. When I think about it afterwards, it was a lot like how my friends and I are back home - we always have earphones in, we hardly ever go out, and we often have one hand on our phone and one earphone in. We don't talk to each other or share what we are seeing, or see what is going on.



Outward Bound helps build confidence, resilience, teamwork, and leadership skills amongst our participants whilst providing a huge boost for physical and mental wellbeing and a love of our natural world and environment. The wellbeing benefits of being outdoors, during these days when young people spend so much time on screens indoors, are immensely powerful. Young people in the UK today spend less time outdoors than the UK prison population - a shocking statistic.

For the next three weeks, I experienced highs and lows. I learnt to bond and speak with my team and tent buddies. I helped motivate them but also accepted help and support for myself. I lost my earphones within the first few days, but I learnt to play cards. We played cards a lot! After the first week, I stopped thinking about home, but not in a nasty way: I was too busy. My world revolved around what we had to achieve each day. The wow factor of the mountains and the lochs, and the tastiness of the flapjacks and brownies!





According to my clan, I became an 'outdoors person'. Though, I think it was just the smell from the lack of a shower that made them say that! If I were to explain every detail of the three weeks on the course, it would create a book, and probably a book that only has any resonance with the people I was with, or like you, the people who have been to Outward Bound before, and hopefully, those that will follow us".

Over 1,500 young people will travel via train, coach, or car this summer to walk through the doors at Outward Bound centres across the UK. They will journey to the awe-inspiring lochs of the Scottish Highlands, conquer the Welsh mountains, or explore the Lake District. Like you, they will experience the majestic power of the outdoors – some being away from home for the first time. They will soon stand on the shoulders of giants, following in your and other alumni's footsteps. They will experience something powerful, transformative, and enduring.

The journey home was not like the journey to Scotland. On the way back to Glasgow, the bus was noisy, different people mixed, and everyone talked about what they had done. I don't think anyone had their phone out or was listening to music. Some, like me, were more apprehensive about going home and what would await us. I smiled at people on the train as I travelled south. I was the one who spoke to a person on the train and probably bored them stupid with my adventures and proudly showed off my midge bites like medals!

As I approached the station near home, I knew that the person sitting on the train now was different from the person who had departed weeks before. I was stronger, fitter, and mentally more resilient, but most of all, I wanted to do more. I felt impelled and courageous. Not to do more walking, hiking or outdoor stuff, but more than that. That night I sat to eat at home with my family. I had no phone out. I took away everyone else's and put them out of reach. I told them about my adventures and what I wanted to do in the future.

Later, I taught my little brothers how to play cards. We don't now have phones out when we eat, we talk more, and I am trying to persuade my mom to take us all to Scotland or even just out to Shropshire to play in a stream or walk in the hills.

As you may well attest, an Outward Bound experience will have an immediate and longer-term effect. Our recent research suggests that as former participants progress through life, their perspective on and application of their learnings and experiences gained from Outward Bound, evolve in relevance and meaning. Liam is a real participant, and his words are his own. We can only hope that the empathy and practical skills he learnt at Loch Eil last year will be carried forward as he grows and develops.

I don't know you or when you went to Outward Bound, but maybe my journey to and from my course was like yours. I can only thank my teacher for helping me apply for the funding I received from Outward Bound, which came from when older alumni donated last year, and of course, the instructors who helped me. For a short time, I was not a person from the Midlands trying to do my best at school and home. I was an explorer and adventurer, a leader, and a friend.





*My instructor snuck a message into my bag, saying, 'Go for it every day - dream big and be true to yourself. Thanks to Outward Bound and your help. I will'.*

The most striking thing about Liam's letter for me was that he didn't linger on the nervousness he felt or the fact he had missed several days at school through anxiety and some ongoing trouble with peers, nor that he hadn't felt right since the disruption of lockdown when he became a full-time carer to his mother. Neither did he go into detail about the activities at Loch Eil: the hiking, climbing, kayaking and gorge walking were all new experiences for him; he focussed more on how this opportunity and the course made him feel, what the experience did for him and his mindset – how he will take his learnings back home, to school, and into the future.

Liam had fun on his course and experienced freedom, independence, and adventure. He asked me to share his story with you, as he wanted to know that his experiences wouldn't have been possible without your support.

Last year I asked you to contribute to the *Look Back and Pay It Forward* campaign, designed to help support young people dependent on charitable funding to attend their Outward Bound courses. Over **180** of you dug deep, and the campaign raised over **£60,000** for the alumni scholarship fund, which we immediately put to work. This was amazing. **Thank you!**

**For this year's Summer Adventures programme, there is a bursary need of £370,000. So, I ask you again to join Outward Bound alumni and invest in this fund to give young people like Liam the chance to undertake a journey to experience something life changing.**

Could we double the alumni contribution to the fund this year? Our summer courses are underway now, and it would be wonderful to think participants are supported by people who have already trod the path they will walk. It is not an overstatement to say that a gift to this campaign could give someone you may never meet **strength** and **courage, resilience** and **confidence, curiosity** and **perseverance**. Liam's teacher told me that he is more able to deal with challenges and solve problems and has shown emerging leadership skills. I am told he is more aware and empathic and that this change has been seen since his course.

To learn more about our Summer Adventures or make a Pay It Forward donation, visit [www.outwardbound.org.uk/pay-it-forward](http://www.outwardbound.org.uk/pay-it-forward) or **scan the QR code here** using your mobile phone. Alternatively, let us know if you'd like to donate using the enclosed pledge form.



Once again, we are asking for donations of £500, £1,000 or £1,500 (the maximum level we would donate to one person). However, this may not have been clear last year, but every pound given will make a difference. If you want to discuss the campaign in more detail, please do not hesitate to contact me. **Thank you.**

Yours sincerely,

**DYLAN CARROLL**  
**HEAD OF PARTNERSHIPS**

**The Outward Bound Trust**  
4th Floor, 207 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8XD  
M 07841 462 146 E [alumni@outwardbound.org.uk](mailto:alumni@outwardbound.org.uk)

