

A Philosophy of Peak Bagging

“Mountains are not stadiums where I satisfy my ambition to achieve, they are the cathedrals where I practice my religion” – Anatoli Bukreev.

What is the point of climbing mountains? Improve fitness? Getting outdoors? Achievement? The view? All these things sound good, but there are easier, cheaper and safer ways to all of them. The reality is, there isn't one. Not a coherent one that doesn't make you sound spiritual anyway. So why bother? Buying, borrowing or renting all the gear; learning the skills required to do it safely; sitting in the traffic because seemingly everybody else wants to be where you're going. And then once you're at the top, just turn around and go back? Surely if you're going to hike, hiking to somewhere makes more sense? Yet over a million people combined climb Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon each year, with around fifty thousand of those trying to string them together in one twenty-four-hour challenge! Climbing Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain, is a multi-million-dollar industry all on its own. Clearly, there is some inherent attraction to hillwalking/mountaineering. Even if it is ultimately pointless, that's not a good enough reason not to scratch the itch. 'The Great Outdoors' and all things included in that, is one of the cornerstones that Scouting is built on. We should be facilitating as many opportunities for Explorers to be exposed to all the different ways there are to enjoy being outside. Hillwalking and mountaineering are high on our list of priorities.

Where are we going peak bagging? In Britain there is a selection of mountainous areas. There are the Bannau Brycheiniog (Brecon Beacons, where the SAS train) and Eryri (Snowdonia) National Parks in Wales, the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales and the Peak District in England. Each of these three regions have some distinctions about their mountains. The Peak District has 'The Peak 75', the Dales has 'The Dales 30', and last but certainly not least, the famous Wainwrights of the Lakes; documented in Alfred Wainwright's incredible 'Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells'. These are 214 fells that Alfred deemed to be 'true peaks'. A good lifelong challenge for anyone to undertake. Finally, the jewel in the crown for any British hillwalker/mountaineer, the Munros in Scotland. Compiled by, and named after Sir Hugh Munro, a founding member of the Scottish Mountaineering Club. A Munro is classified as a Peak above 3000ft (914 meters) and there are 282 of them spread across the mainland and islands of Scotland. As you can see there are plenty of peaks to 'bag'. For weekend events, because of logistics, we will be focusing on the Lake District, Eryri and Yorkshire Dales (we will be leaving Pen Y Ghent, Ingleborough and Wharfedale alone because they are part the Yorkshire Three Peaks challenge, a separate annual event we run). We will be able to run single day events into the Peak district, and for Scotland and Bannau Brycheiniog, we will need bank holiday weekends or school holiday periods simply because of the drive time to get there.

What do we hope to achieve while on each event? Going to all these different areas presents the perfect opportunity for us to teach the vital skills required for mountain safety. So, while the focus of the event is to climb mountains, we will take time during the event to demonstrate skills and equipment. We will discuss appropriate personal equipment before the event as well sending out a detailed kit list with each event paperwork.

Why are we calling these events "Peak Bagging" and what does that entail? Because, in short, that's what we hope to do. Get Explorers stood on the summit of as many mountains as possible, in a variety of different environments and conditions. There are a few reasons for this, firstly, and fundamentally, we are facilitating an opportunity to get out hill walking for Explorers. Secondly, hopefully it will be a fun challenge. Third and most important, exposure to a broad spectrum of scenarios to learn how to be safe and independent while doing so. Lastly, we want Explorers to take their experience with them into adulthood so hopefully, they can pursue hillwalking as a lifelong hobby.