

THE SOURCE

Interview with Roger and Clare Sell

The UK has many regional 'hubs' for paddling and in the South West that is undoubtedly the River Dart. Visitors to the Dart and local paddlers will also undoubtedly have met the Sell family either on the river or running tree-top activities with their activity centre CRS Adventures based in the grounds of the River Dart Country Park on the banks of the river.





Q. You are very lucky to live and work in such a beautiful part of the country!
CRS: Yes, we love Dartmoor and when we are not working on it you will still find us walking, biking, paddling or whatever else is seasonally available!

Q. This is a great place to be for paddling when the river is open.
CRS: We definitely spend a lot of time on the river although not just kayaking. We have paddled the entire river from Dartmeet to Dartmouth at all different levels and even rafted the Upper Dart. With the centre we run kayaking and canoeing courses on the river and one of our more popular activities is running ducky trips on the Loop or Lower Dart sections.

Q. Do you get time off to explore the other rivers on the moor?
CRS: For sure we regularly head out to some of the other local rivers as work and family commitments make it difficult for us to travel around the country as much as we used to. Two of our other favourites are the Erme and the Plym although we also enjoy surfing at Bigbury and Bantham when the conditions allow.

Q. How did you get into working in the outdoor industry?

CRS: We both realised that suffering from dyslexia we didn't do very well in a traditional academic environment but got on really well working and being in the outdoors. Through a college course and several trainee positions we ended up working at the River Dart Country Park at the time when the Park ran their own centre. When the Simpson family who run the park were restructuring the business we made the proposition of taking over the outdoor centre side of the business and developed CRS Adventures.

Q. What do you do at CRS Adventures?
CRS: During term time our main business is running residential multi-activity weeks for schools but we also run various other specialist courses including a programme of management training solutions. In the summer we run day activities, which we call 'dare devils' and during the winter we also run lots of different activities on the river.

Q. What a great place to work!
CRS: Yes the location is stunning and we have a really great team and many of our instructors stay with us for several years before moving on, many of them into teaching!

Q. I understand that you are now

developing the business even further and starting an instructor training course?
CRS: From October this year the Dart Training Group will be running a 20 week intensive course to offer the skills and knowledge that you will require in order to obtain a good job in the outdoor industry as an outdoor activity instructor.

Q. What does this entail?
CRS: Working in the outdoors requires a multi discipline approach so a variety of different awards are needed as a minimum - these can include kayaking, canoeing, climbing, walking and first aid. With this in mind we are running training for the NGB awards that are essential for a career in the outdoors.

Q. This must be a good location for a course like that?
CRS: We are the only provider of such a course located within the National Park boundaries with plenty of activity locations on our doorstep. The moor offers great climbing, there is caving literally five minutes down the road and of course the paddling!

Q. I noticed on the way into the park that you also have lots of activities on site as well?



CRS: We have treetop activities located throughout the River Dart Country Park including an extensive ropes course and the training course will cover these as well.

Q. How will the course be taught?
CRS: There is a dedicated in-house team running the course as well as several visiting guest lecturers. Two evenings a week will be classroom based looking at various aspects of working in the industry as well as related theoretical teaching and presentations about various aspects of some of the locations in which we will be doing our practical training. As well as on Dartmoor there will be trips to North Wales, South Wales, Derbyshire and the Lake District. On days off students will be encouraged to 'get out' and continue to develop their skills and gain experience in order to get the most out of the course.

Q. Will the students stay at the park?

CRS: There is accommodation available at the park for the duration of the course and the students will have access to the river from the park.

Q. Who is the course suitable for?
CRS: Basically for anyone over eighteen looking for a career change. For younger people it could be a way of getting the qualifications you need to support your studies or travel during a gap year by working as an outdoor instructor. For others it is a way of making a career change or to take some time off from their normal employment.

Q. What are the chances of students getting a job when they complete the course?
CRS: We will offer some students the opportunity of working in our centre with CRS Adventures and we will offer careers advice to help the others find positions in activity centres many of which we closely with.

Q. Can you get a Student Loan to cover the cost of the course?
CRS: No, not a student loan - we are in the process of registering with the learning skills council so that students can apply for a career development loan and for those that are under nineteen there may well be other options available, which we will need to look at on an individual basis.

Q. It sounds although you are going to be really busy - we wish you the best of luck with the new venture!
CRS: Thanks, if anyone would like more information about the course or careers in the outdoors then please do get in touch for a chat.

For more information see:

www.darttraininggroup.com
www.crsadventures.com