

A person is silhouetted against a bright sunset, standing on the edge of a dark, craggy rock cliff. The background is a vast, hazy valley with rolling hills and a small body of water in the distance. The sky is a gradient of orange and yellow.

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IT'S GREAT OUT THERE

INTERVIEW WITH ANDREW DENTON



IT'S GREAT OUT THERE

Can you tell us about yourself?

My name is Andrew Denton, secretary general of the It's Great Out There Coalition. I am hugely passionate about the outdoors and it has also been my career for over 30 years, first in education, then with major brands such as Mountain Equipment, Rohan and Sprayway, and latterly as CEO of the Outdoor Industries Association, and owning and running a group of climbing walls.

What is 'It's Great Out There' in few words?

Put simply, #itsgreatoutthere is a pan-European campaign that encourages and inspires people to become healthier and happier by participating in outdoor activities. Everyone who is involved in running the project knows about the positive impact that outdoor activities have on individuals and society. What we are doing is sharing that and persuading more European citizens

to find this out for themselves and appreciate the phenomenal effect of connecting with nature through outdoor sports.

Where did this idea come from?

The It's Great Out There Coalition was founded by the European Outdoor Group (EOG), the trade association for the outdoor industry. One of the EOG's key objectives is to play a role in combating the inactivity epidemic that is sweeping across Europe by persuading more people to head outdoors. The association started by launching the #itsgreatoutthere social media campaign, and then last year formally founded the coalition, which is now an International Non Profit Association based in Brussels. The organisation has 30 full members, including some of the biggest companies in the outdoor sector, all of which have contributed the funds that allow us to run the #itsgreatoutthere campaign.

How many people are in the team?

Our team is both small and huge! We have only two part-time staff – me, as secretary general and Arne Strate as marketing director – and we are supported by external experts in administration, website/social media management and communications. However, we also have a fully committed board made up of volunteers from among our membership. Our members themselves provide additional support when required, as does the wider membership of the EOG. In addition, there are now two #itsgreatoutthere ambassadors – Alastair Humphreys and Aline Bock – both of whom do a great job of sharing positive messages about the campaign. And absolutely everyone else who helps us spread the word about #itsgreatoutthere is a vital part of our team.

What kind of projects do you run?

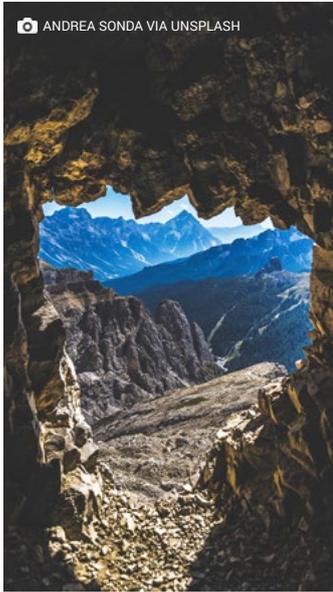
Our programme of activities is growing and broadening all of the time. As well as the continuing core role of campaigning and pushing positive messages using #itsgreatoutthere, the coalition also directly supports a variety of events and initiatives. On behalf of the EOG, we are an official partner of the European Commission's #BeActive campaign and the European Week of Sport, making sure that

outdoor activities play a major and central role in both projects. From our Brussels base, we also work closely with the commission on an ongoing basis, making the case for investment in the outdoors as part of wider political work to encourage active and healthier lifestyles.

The It's Great Out There Coalition offers grants to other not for profit organisations that want to run grass roots initiatives that take new participants into the outdoors. We have already supported a project that gave school children the opportunity to experience an Alpine hike for the first time and there are more exciting activities in the pipeline that will benefit from our grants. Organisations can find out more at itsgreatoutthere.com/grants.

Collaborations are a key part of our work. We recently completed a really successful project with the global

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ANDREA SONDA VIA UNSPLASH

photography community Unsplash and in the UK, #itsgreatoutthere is a partner of the #GetOutside campaign that is run by the national mapping agency Ordnance Survey. And of course, we're now working with KLIFBOX and your brilliant climbing community!

One of the key roles of #itsgreatoutthere is to spread the word about outdoor events that are happening around Europe. The combined social media reach of our membership and partners is many tens of millions of people,

so #itsgreatoutthere messages can go very far and very wide. We are very active on the main social media channels and our website – itsgreatoutthere.com – is packed with information about outdoor events being organised by coalition members and many other businesses and associations.

How can we join your community and help out?

We will always welcome organisations that share our goals and want to be new coalition members. They should get in touch with Arne Strate to find out more – arne.strate@itsgreatoutthere.com

However, anyone can get involved in #itsgreatoutthere by simply helping to spread the word about the enjoyment and benefits of participating in outdoor activities.

A message for our climbers?

Use the #itsgreatoutthere hashtag and share your stories, photos and footage on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Tell us about events that you are involved in, and tell others about our campaign. If you're reading this, you already understand the joy and rewards of participating in outdoor activities. Together, let's make sure that the rest of Europe – especially the younger generations – also find out through their own experiences why #itsgreatoutthere.



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