

## **A Critical Reflection on Microadventures in 2025**

**By Max Stafford**

In 2020, Susan Houge Mackenzie and Jasmine Goodnow wrote a paper called “Adventure in the age of COVID-19: Embracing Microadventures and Locavism in Post-Pandemic World.” (Mackenzie, Goodnow, 2020.) In this paper, Mackenzie and Goodnow propose that microadventures are an “enticing alternative for current and post pandemic conditions.”

In this essay I will Critically reflect on this statement, with a new perspective 5 years after this paper was written, and from a post-pandemic perspective as an outdoor adventure practitioner.

*But what is Locavism? And what is a Microadventure?*

Defined by Humphreys (2014), Microadventures are “rewarding short-term adventures completed close to home in normal places for normal people”. Essentially to seek a microadventure is to seek adventure close to home and complete adventurous activities without venturing to exotic locations far from home and/or breaking the bank financially in the process. Microadventures have an inherent emphasis on sustainability in their nature, keeping everything close to home and on a smaller scale.

Mackenzie and Goodnow state the concept of a microadventure proposes that there are similar if not the same physiological and psychological benefits as traditional adventure experiences, such as going on a major expedition somewhere far away or overseas (Goodnow and Bordoloi, 2017, Roberts, 2018). Among other obvious advantages such as cutting down on costs like travel, having lower-level planning to arrange, and shorter time frames for adventure allowing for microadventures to be much more accessible for people- it's easy to see why Mackenzie and Goodnow are such big cheerleaders for this concept.

As stated by Mackenzie and Goodnow “Pre pandemic, adventure travel was experiencing significant global growth” (2020) and therefore there was a boosted interest in adventure from more mainstream audiences. This carried on into the pandemic and into 2025. Before we talk about microadventures, it's important to talk about traditional adventure pre pandemic. Back in 2019 there was a big movement in all industries with a focus on reducing our carbon footprint and reversing the impact of global warming. Figures such as Greta Thunberg and Joe Biden were encouraging sustainability and research, and the world was finally beginning to take notice. People were also much more financially comfortable, so it was more feasible to travel and participate in traditional adventure activities. This was encouraged on social media as well as mainstream media as well, with the 2019 film ‘1917’ becoming the first large scale Film (particularly in the UK) to achieve Albert Certification meaning that it was completely sustainable and mitigated its carbon footprint entirely (Albert, 2020).

*People were Participating in Adventure, and they were doing it sustainably.*

During the Pandemic, Worldwide lockdowns were put into effect, times changed and most of the world put emphasis on convenience over sustainability. Governments and the general public threw money at the problem with little regard for long term effects on the environment. This was in an effort to try and combat COVID-19 as quickly and efficiently as possible. For example, the Conservative Government in the UK at the time spent 8.7 billion on protective equipment with a large amount being spent on unusable equipment, equipment going out of date, and money being overpaid for the value of the product sold. (BBC, 2022) all of this PPE was single use, or had single use packaging. With people struggling to leave the house there

was also a shift in commerce. Less people supporting local businesses or shopping locally, instead choosing convenience in online shopping (Dalglish, R. 2020), with companies such as Amazon or Major Supermarket Chains who deliver directly to your door at your chosen time.

Combine this with a war in Ukraine and Russia, A new Trump Administration with Policies that directly oppose Global warming and sustainability and record high Inflation, there is a need more than ever to be local, cost efficient and sustainable. In 2025, post-pandemic, Microadventures and Locavism seem more enticing than ever.

### *But does it work in Practice?*

Since the Pandemic I have participated in both Micro adventures and Traditional Adventure experiences. And i can say that both have their respective merits and drawbacks.

In 2023 I went to Jordan where i participated in adventure activities such as hiking through Wadi's (canyons), Desert Camping and Cooking, Dune boarding, and Jeep rides through the desert. As an Adventure filmmaker, it also allowed me to capture new and exciting images that i had never seen before and furthered both my portfolio and skillset, allowing me to set myself apart in my career from others who might have similar ambitions as me. All these things are experiences I cannot do with microadventures and provide me with countless opportunities for physical, mental and cultural enrichment. The novelty of Going to a foreign environment as well as the perceived risk and uncertainty of being in a place I have never been before are opportunities that are valuable and unforgettable as a member of the British public, however there are drawbacks. It's important to consider the carbon footprint and financial hurdles posed by this kind of adventure and whether you as an individual deem it to be worth it.

My Experiences with microadventures have always been positive ones. Recently I embarked on a 3-day Canoe expedition down the Brecon Canal in South Wales from Brecon to Cwmbran. On this expedition I experienced firsthand similar benefits to my time in Jordan. I experienced a similar level of physical fitness benefits, and my mental wellbeing was in a positive state not too dissimilar to how it was in Jordan. I was able to camp, build my photography portfolio and participate in an activity that wasn't common for me. Key differences were observed though. Firstly, it was cheaper than in Jordan, with my financial outgoings stretching as far as purchasing gas for my camping stove and acquiring food for aforementioned stove. Throughout the trip I had the opportunity to source my food locally, and sustainably in small shops in towns along the canal and eat food sourced from South Wales. The trip was only 3 days and was around 1 hour away from my residence, this allowed for transport costs to be low, we also arrived in a minibus which kept cost and our carbon footprint even lower.

Obviously, it can be said that due to the local environment that the novelty and conditions is not as extreme or external as they were in Jordan. It is clear though that there still was adventure, thrill and novelty to be found.

All of this being said, as mentioned backed up by my experience and further backed up in Mackenzie and Goodnow's Paper, microadventures rely on "Activity, novelty and participant mindset" (2020). While it is easy for me to advocate for microadventures locally when as I am writing this, the weather in the UK is experiencing a heatwave, with temperatures consistently at around 20 degrees Celsius. The weather in the Uk is not always as glorious as this and can be a huge factor in the effectiveness of microadventures being positive psychologically and novel over the traditional alternative with perhaps more stable conditions of favourability.

Personally, I believe that Traditional Adventures are important for all of us to experience for all of their unique benefits, however they should be infrequent and considered with the upmost care for the environment around you and how you interact with the said environment. Microadventures are not only an enticing alternative for post pandemic life, but also an important and unique way to engage with local areas, economically, ecologically, socially and with benefit to the individual. However, it is NOT a replacement for traditional adventure, but a tool for us to improve ourselves and our planet, appreciating our local spaces. Saving money and finding value in our own environments that we previously overlooked for ideas and activities as something that should be done elsewhere.

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