

Glencoe Photography

Karl Griffin is offering unique photography safaris of the Highlands. He takes people to some of the most remote and rugged environments in the country and teaches them the techniques and skills needed for landscape photography.

Glencoe Photography was set up with the help of Business Gateway and allows both new and long term camera enthusiasts to explore and capture the stunning local scenery.

Background

Karl said: "I worked in the oil industry for 15 years, travelling all over the world, and it was during my time abroad that I developed an interest in photography.

Initially I just enjoyed taking pictures of sights as mementos but, as the years went on, I became more and more interested in cameras, equipment and photography in general.

I moved to Glen Coe, met my future wife Pamela and fell in love with the area. The scenery was outstanding and I loved getting out amongst the hills taking photographs. After so long working on the oil rigs I felt like I needed a change. I wasn't sure what to do but by that time photography was a major part of my life. After talking it through with Pamela, I decided I would follow my heart and become a professional photographer."

The business

After leaving his job, Karl completed a Diploma in Digital Photography and started the business, primarily focusing on wedding photography. Offering a relaxed and modern approach, Karl slowly began to attract clients.

Whilst enjoying one of his regular hill walking trips he then came up with the idea of photography safaris and decided to add this to his services. The half or full day trips consist of visits to some of the Highlands' most spectacular scenery, from the iconic mountain view of Buachaille Etive Mor to the remote and boggy moorland of Rannoch Moor.

Worldwide market

Karl added: "The safaris are proving to be extremely popular with people from all over. As well as Brits, we have had tourists from Holland, Germany, Spain, Singapore and Hong Kong. The feedback has been great and some have already made repeat bookings. It doesn't matter if someone has picked up a camera for the first time, or if they have been taking photographs for years, the safaris are designed to be an enjoyable and educational experience for all.



"I am still doing weddings and portraits but the safaris combine two passions in my life; photography and the outdoors, and I love going out on them. It has been great watching people's reactions to the scenery and to see them so pleased with their photographs. I'm hoping that we can get the safaris fully booked throughout the year and show many more people the unique sights of Glen Coe."

How Business Gateway supported Karl

Karl had never run his own business before and decided to approach his local Business Gateway office to seek advice.

Karl said: "When I first came up with the idea to start the business I looked around for some outside support and Business Gateway was the obvious choice. The advice they gave me has been a great advantage to the business and they have assisted me in accessing funding that I couldn't have done without. Pamela and I also attended many of the free workshops, including the start up and book keeping courses, as we felt they were relevant to us as individuals and the business overall. The skills and knowledge we have learned will help us as we take the business forward."

Karl's top business tips

- You need to be patient when starting up and do not get too worried if business is quiet for periods as you need to be focused on the long term.
- It takes time to get noticed so market yourself as much as you can but beware of spending lots on non-targeted advertising.
- Use social media to aim your marketing at your client base.

What he would do differently

Karl commented that: "Due to the high cost, I held back on getting my website and branding professionally done, which initially may have cost us some business. Leave this to the professionals as it is so important to get it right from the off. If you look like a proper business, and not a part time hobby, then people treat you like a proper business".

Business Gateway says

Simon Purdon, Regional Development Officer for Lochaber said: "Karl approached us seeking advice on how to go about setting up his photography business. He took full advantage of our programme of free workshops and from these he has learned new skills that he can put into practice. We look forward to supporting Glencoe Photography as it expands and develops.

Business Gateway provides practical help, advice and support for new and growing businesses in Scotland. To find out how Business Gateway can help your business, visit www.bgateway.com or contact your local office on 01463 713889 or 01343 563634.