

Press Release



Adventure grant supports project to document forests along the Via Dinarica

March 2025

Mountain leaders in training Megan Bellamy and Miles plan to walk the Via Dinarica trail, following the Dinaric Alps between Slovenia and Albania.

Megan and Miles aim to explore the untouched forests found along the Via Dinarica trail and document them in an effort to preserve and promote native forest conservation and restoration in the countries they pass through.

With Scotland as an example of a county that has lost most of its native forest, the duo hope that this project will not only aid forest conservation in the Western Balkans but also inspire further restoration of Scotland's forests.

The Via Dinarica is not well-travelled so Megan and Miles will need to carefully plan their route, taking into consideration access to water and resupply points for food.

Along the trail, they will document the landscape and their experiences through photography, film, paintings and sketches. They plan to catalogue and present these in the form of a photo book that will include photographs of Scotland as a contrast.

Megan said: "We are happy and honoured to have been offered the **Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant**. This funding will not only support the practical aspects of our expedition, but we hope that being associated with the John Muir Trust will also help amplify the impact of our project. We are excited to get going, to get into nature, and create a body of work dedicated to celebrating the protection and restoration of native forests"

The John Muir Trust, which administers the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant, said: "The grant panel is delighted to support Megan and Miles exploration of forests along the Via Dinarica and look forward to hearing about their adventure and how they plan to inspire restoration of Scotland's woodlands."

Megan is one of four successful applications to the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant in 2025. This grant was established to give people the opportunity to seek out life-changing experiences in wild places in ways that will benefit both the person, and the wild places themselves.

Editor's Notes

About the John Muir Trust

The John Muir Trust is a UK-based conservation charity dedicated to protecting and enhancing wild places. The Trust owns and cares for some of the UK's most iconic landscapes, including Ben Nevis, Schiehallion, Sandwood Bay and areas within Skye, Knoydart and Assynt. The Trust also runs the John Muir Award, an inclusive environmental award scheme that encourages people of all backgrounds to connect with, enjoy, and care for wild places.

About the Des Rubens and Bill Wallace Grant

The grant commemorates two former Presidents of the Scottish Mountaineering Club, who each led inspiring and adventurous lives. It was set up to give others an opportunity to follow in their adventurous footsteps and experience wild places. Projects should have an educational or scientific component and benefit wild places.

Bill Wallace died of heart failure in February 2007 while skiing in the Alps at the age of 73 with two artificial hips.

Des Rubens was a popular teacher at Craigroyston High School in Edinburgh was killed in June 2016 in an Alpine climbing accident at the age of 63.

Grants are for £200 to £2,000 and open to UK applicants of all ages. Closing date for applications is 15 January each year. Further details on how to apply: <https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/whats-new/grants/des-rubens-and-bill-wallace-grant>

johnmuirtrust.org