

## Escape stories...

**Nikki and Jason Channon** had often discussed how they'd like to move to the middle of nowhere. The question was how to fund such a lifestyle.

"We were both professional singers and our base near Weston-super-Mare, Somerset, was perfectly placed for the regular holiday centre work, but we hankered after the Welsh countryside, where we had enjoyed many holidays.

"Come 2009, we were desperate to hang up our microphones, but to make the big move we had to find a way to make our new home work for us. First of all we looked at what would make us happy: mountain biking for Jason and cooking for me. But how on earth could we encompass these passions into a viable business? Both of us are keen skiers, and the result was inspired by how catered chalets operate. We set about finding the perfect property to create a similar experience for mountain bikers – all-inclusive breaks with 'off piste' guiding – a chance for riders to get away from the trail centres and experience the rugged Welsh terrain in the safe hands of a fully qualified guide.

"We had a long list of requirements and not much money but appearing on *Escape to the Country* helped. We found the perfect place – a farmhouse with large barn ripe for conversion into two separate units, right on the edge of Brechfa Forest in Carmarthenshire. Just one problem – we couldn't sell our house. Six months later, my father saw what we were trying to achieve and bought our existing property to enable us to make the move.

"Starting the business was a huge leap of faith, involved a big risk and massive change. Moving to a new country, converting a property at great expense with no experience and then marketing a brand new business concept in a rural area with no budget has definitely been the most challenging time of our lives. Finally, last year, MudTrek Mountain Bike Breaks ([www.mudtrek.com](http://www.mudtrek.com)) was born and has been a huge success.

"Although hard work, we have the life we dreamt of: our own slice of rural heaven in amazing countryside with incredible views, stunning walks and fantastic beaches not far away."



Nikki Channon left the life of a Somerset-based singer behind to run a guided mountain-biking business in Carmarthenshire

PHOTOS: GERRY