

Seasonal Jobs: Encore Careers with a Twist

By Elyse Umlauf-Garneau

Mike Fitzpatrick spends summers leading raft tours for Mad River Tours on Wyoming's Snake River in Jackson Hole. It's a seasonal gig that he's been doing since 2011.

The work can be intense. Days sometimes last 10 to 12 hours, he's lifting boats in and out of the water, and he's responsible for the safety of passengers. During the winter he switches gears and works a ski instructor.

The 66-year-old has been living this life for about five years after a career as a civil engineer.

Plentiful work, sweet perks

Though college students once had a lock on the ski-bumming lifestyle, more plum jobs at national parks, golf courses, and resorts are being filled by retirees.

Seasonal work is plentiful, there's a wide variety of job types, and employees enjoy unique perks.

The work ranges from physically demanding gigs, like Fitzpatrick's, to tamer assignments as greeters, front desk employees, Segway guides, and shuttle drivers.

Depending on the venue, perks can include Tibetan yoga classes, ski passes, and access to award-winning golf courses. And those working in national parks spend their off hours in spectacular nature. Think Denali, Yellowstone, and Acadia.

"I love being on the river. The feeling of floating down the river and the scenery and the wildlife are soothing," says Fitzpatrick. "Plus, I like to turn people on to the love of the river and the importance of keeping rivers pristine."

Summer camp for grown-ups

Seasonal workers' motivations and financial situations vary too. Some are well-to-do corporate retirees, some are supplementing Social Security income,

and for others such jobs are a break on their RV route.

No one gets rich doing seasonal work, warns Kari Quaas, HR recruiting specialist and pied piper/ess of Cool Works, a niche job board for seasonal work that features an “Older and Bolder” page geared to those seeking encore careers. But many jobs include housing and food at a cost of about \$15 per day and there’s a unique satisfaction that comes with the work.

“It’s a lot of fun, keeps life interesting, and it’s an adventure. Plus, it’s a unique bonding experience and you never know who you’ll meet,” she says.

“People support one another and they share a bit of that dream mentality and the idea that tomorrow isn’t promised.”

For some, it’s a little like getting to go back to summer camp.

Employers’ expectations

That said, employers do expect employees to bring skills and a commitment to the job.

If you want to be a ski instructor, emphasize that you’ve been a lifelong skier, for example. Or if you’re applying at a ranch, employers will want to know that you’ve had experience working with horses.

“It’s key to communicate that you’re looking for new experiences and that you’re willing to try anything – something new,” says Quaas. “Those willing to jump in and give it a try will be well rewarded. There’s a large

community of people who do this kind of work and everyone can find something interesting.”

And employers appreciate older workers. “There’s a maturity level that’s not there when you’re 19 years old. Having all kinds of people and people of different ages working together creates a good team and it brings a new dimension to our company,” observes Mary Bess, general manager of Mad River Tours (<http://mad-river.com>). “Young guides look up to Fitz (Mike Fitzgerald) as a mentor and he brings a sense of professionalism.”

Good for the soul

Such jobs also return a sense of adventure and excitement to people’s lives.

Bess points out that there are riches to be had beyond financial rewards. “As you age, your experiences become more valuable to you.”

She ticks off some side benefits she’s seen among mature workers, including the camaraderie of belonging to a team, finding a new peer group, and learning new skills.

“It keeps you young. Being retired doesn’t mean sitting at home stagnating. There can be a next phase and it can be anything that you want it to be. What do you want to do with your day? It’s an open door,” she says.

Fitzpatrick probably would agree.

“I used to get stressed out when I was working as an engineer. The river isn't that way,” he says. “I'm satisfied with life and more at peace.”

Resources:

If you're game for an adventure, here some jobs sites where you can jumpstart your research. Also search favorite resorts and vacation venues and check the employment section of the sites.

- Adventure Jobs (<http://adventurejobs.co>)
- Cool Works (www.coolworks.com)
- Indeed (www.indeed.com)
- Mountain Jobs (www.mountainjobs.com)
- Seasonal Employment (<http://seasonalemployment.com>)

Real Estate Matters: News & Issues for the Mature Market
(Company)
(Address)
(City, State, Zip)
(Agent Name and Designations)

