



# SKY WAVE GIN

**“ We couldn’t find the perfect gin – so we made it! ”**

**Sky Wave Gin, is a multi-award winning gin distillery based in Bicester Heritage, in the heart of Oxfordshire. It’s founders Rachel and Andy have been life-long gin drinkers, seeking out unusual and flavourful gins. But they couldn’t ever find that perfect gin for their taste – the one that just ticked every box. So, they decided to distil their own.**

Rachel tells us Sky Wave’s incredible story “We began in 2018. It was a happy accident. I took Andy on a gin making course, because he loves gin, and he literally created the world’s best gin that day without realising it. We came back from the course and it seemed that everybody wanted to buy our gin. Even before we’d reached home, Andy had ordered a still. We got all the licenses in place, and after 3 months, 40 recipe variations, and about 300 expert testers Sky Wave Gin was launched in October 2018.

The name ‘Sky Wave’ is a fusion of the big skies and big waves that have characterised our past travelling adventures. It’s also a term used in radio; in our former lives, I was a BBC radio reporter and Andy was a Royal Signals Army Officer. It fitted together perfectly.”



## Officially the World’s Best Gin!

Rachel shares the wonderful news of Sky Wave – scooping the top international award “As a small company we had very little marketing budget. We realised that entering competitions was the best way for us to gain recognition. We were entering international blind tasting competitions and won some of those. But it was 18 months after launch, that the very first gin Andy created, was named the World’s Best Gin at the World Gin Awards. This was our golden ticket to getting our foot in the door and gaining brand recognition. It was pretty amazing.



But, then 3 weeks later the country went into lockdown. Every, restaurant, hotel and shop we were going to approach closed. We couldn’t believe it. But, it wasn’t all doom and gloom. We soon realised that during lockdown everyone was drinking. They would start drinking earlier in the day as they didn’t have to commute or get up early the next day. So, we actually went through a great growth period. We offered free delivery in a 5 mile radius which was really popular. We were incredibly busy and the business grew.”

## OxLEP and Skywave, the perfect blend

Rachel explains how the relationship with OxLEP Business developed and the key role their support played in their business success. "Not long after we launched I was looking locally for business support and funding and discovered OxLEP. They were running a programme called eScalate, which was helping scale-up businesses in Oxfordshire. We connected with them and gained some one-to-one support with one of their experts. It was brilliant in making us think about our business. We put mechanisms in place so we could work on the business, not in the business. We now have a staff of 10 which freed us up to focus on the strategic side of things. The great expertise and encouragement we received really made us think about the future – and think BIG. And, we were awarded a grant through eScalate too, which was excellent. This helped us fund additional consultancy to work towards being investment ready."

Rachel continues "The support didn't stop there. In January 2021 we moved into a purpose designed distillery at Bicester Heritage. As there were still strict rules in place about social distancing, we wanted to open a small space within the distillery where we could offer public events in a covid-safe way. OxLEP were once again amazing and we successfully applied for a Kickstart grant to support this. We later also successfully applied for a Cherwell District Council's Business Adaptation Fund which was delivered by OxLEP Business. This meant we were able to invest in new still and new equipment for visitor experiences. We had a big screen and audio installed which allowed us to tell the story of visitors in a compelling and immersive way. We diversified from being a solely production distillery to being one that also offered experiences. This meant everyone coming into the distillery was effectively an ambassador for our gin! And we couldn't have done that without OxLEP's help."



**“ I would say to anybody with a business in Oxfordshire to contact OxLEP. They're a great organisation and an incredible resource. They really do tailor their support to each business. ”**

### It's time for world domination!

Sky Wave Gin continues to scale-up and expand their business into other revenue streams. Rachel gives us the low down on where they are now and what the future holds "Over the past few years Sky Wave has gone from strength to strength. We now have 7 different gins, all internationally medalled. We've just launched our first non-alcoholic distilled spirit. We've expanded our revenue streams. We sell public facing events, distillery experiences, gin tastings and cocktail master classes. More recently we've opened a shop and experience space so we can take more visitors. And just last month we opened a gin and cocktail bar. We've even produced Blenheim Palace's first bespoke signature gin. All our gins use Blenheim Palace natural mineral water, so there's a lovely connection there.

So now, it's time for world domination! Export is the next arm to develop for our business. We've just come back from 4 days in with the Department for International Trade in Japan. Speaking to numerous importers, supermarket chains, hotels and bars who want British Craft Gin. We're also launching a brand new, bespoke bottle and appointing a new PR agency which will expand our reach internationally. It's an incredibly exciting time for us."

Rachel closes with some key advice for other businesses "I would say to anybody with a business in Oxfordshire to contact OxLEP. They're a great organisation and an incredible resource. They really do tailor their support to each business. They will look at your business and tell you what support is available, specifically for you. There's always someone helpful, friendly and supportive at the end of the phone or on email. And if they can't help you on that occasion, they will point you in the right direction to someone that can. For us they've played a crucial role in our success, and we'll be forever grateful."

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON SKY WAVE GIN  
PLEASE VISIT THEIR WEBSITE:  
[skywavegin.com](https://www.skywavegin.com)**

**If you are looking for support for your business get in touch with us to find out how our team of specialists at OxLEP Business can help you.**

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