

Norway expedition 2010 – or ‘Pasta, porridge and roup’

by Emily Giddings



Photo: Emily Giddings

Fact: *Over the course of the expedition we travelled 72 km trekking and 44 km canoeing.*

What you begin to read may surprise you. A group of six 17-year-olds, left to their own devices for twelve days in the middle of the Scandinavian wilderness, may sound like a recipe for disaster. But to us, not only was it the challenge of a lifetime, but it was a haven of independence.

For the first day, after our flight, we were transported to *TrollAktiv* – a rafting centre which World Challenge uses as a base camp. Here, we purchased all our supplies for the duration of our expedition which was a task in itself – to fit all this into our 75-litre rucksacks, along with our tents and other equipment. That night, we slept at the centre in teepees which, what we didn't realize at the time, was a luxury.

The second day was when the real hard work began. We left the centre and began our trek in the Setesdal Valley, trekking on the Eastern side of the river so that water was always readily available. What surprised us all was how clean Norway was as a country. The water, at points, was clean enough to drink without having to add any solution such as iodine. After 5 days of exhausting trekking up and down mountains, camping in the wilderness and being eaten alive by insects, we began our canoe phase. At first, the idea of rowing down a river without anything heavy on our backs seemed idyllic. But the muscles used, teamwork involved, and unpredictable weather conditions soon hit home. However, it all

became worth it as we reached our chosen campsite – an untouched, unmanned beach. It truly could have been Paradise Island.

After three days of canoeing, it was back to trekking, with the aim to trek back to the *TrollAktiv* centre for our last day. This is what, I feel, was the most challenging part of the trip. After climbing and camping at the top of a mountain one day, on the last day, we had to come down into the village. However, after a night of torrential rain, the morning was so misty that it became easy to lose each other within a space of 5 metres. Not only this, but we had to tackle the rocky, now slippery, pathless way down. On numerous occasions, the dominoes effect came into mind. With the rucksack being so heavy, it dictates entirely where you go, and so when one of us falls down onto another, the whole group end up rolling on the ground like helpless upside down tortoises! Despite the continuous diet of pasta, porridge and *roup* (our own inventive recipe of rice and soup), spirits were kept high and even when we were at our lowest, we knew we had a goal to achieve by the end of the day, and that motivation kept us going.

The skills I learnt from the expedition were invaluable: I *could* survive by myself. I am honestly proud of myself and honoured that I was given the opportunity to experience something that will stay with me for years to come. So, I'd just like to say a huge thank you to the CoScan Trust Fund for the contribution towards the costs of my trip. It was the hardest, yet most brilliant thing I have done.



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