

## **Basic Ski Course - Syrtveit**

Our first Cross Country Ski excursion took us to Syrtveit, where we stayed in the Trollaktiv Campside. Once we have moved into our rooms we went to Hogas for the first lesson in that typical nordic winter sport. But before we could start skiing we got separated into two groups of 12, my group stayed with Len and the other group got Tim as an instructor. After that we had to wax our skis with the blue grip wax, cause the temperatures were around minus eight degrees that day. So after we used the kork to get the wax as deep as possible into our skis, everyone was pretty warmed up. Then Len gave us a short introduction on how to put the skis on properly (and not the Donald Duck Style). After a bit of trying how to turn around and move forwards and backwards we were good to go for the first little 'Tour'. Even the more or less experienced skiers in our group (me included) found out that this is a different way of skiing than the 'boring' downhill skiing. We learned the telemark technique, one foot forward and bending your knees when skiing down a hill. After a few tries most of us started to feel quite comfortable with the Cross Country Skis, so we went to a bigger hill to test our limits in going downhill. The last half an hour of the skiing day was playtime, so we ended that session with a little race against Tim's group. Of course we lost... Back at the camp we had a very informative lecture from Tim about how to wax our skis properly in different weather conditions. After that we prepared our skis for the next day.

Day two started at 0930 in the morning. As Len was pretty unhappy about us being late on the first day, everyone was on time now. So we packed our skis and backpacks in the back of the car and off we went to Hogas again. The first technical part of the day was all about moving through deeper snow and how to get up a hill in different ways. After that we started our first actual ski tour. We tried to stay off the tracks most of the time to save our grip wax. Eventually we got to a big frozen lake where we practiced some sliding with and without the ski poles. Then it was time for a lunch break. We got a little bit up the hill so we could all sit in the nice sun. After lunch we kept going through forests, over lakes and up and down some hills. Back at the Hogas area where we had parked our cars, Len taught us how to downhill with different techniques (snowflake and parallel). Some of us stopped skiing earlier that day because of some injuries, so these ones started to become photographers for the rest of the day. Back at the camp we checked our equipment, swapped skis around and fixed whatever had to be fixed. After dinner, at about 6pm, we met for another lecture in the common area. This time we were talking about packing a rucksack and what has to be in a first aid kit. And before we went to bed we had our obligatory ski waxing party.

On Wednesday we started our ski day at the Bjorvatnet lake. The weather was amazing. Sunny, cold and no clouds at all - in Germany we would call it 'Kaiserwetter'. The plan for the day was to practice some map reading skills. So we got some maps and compasses and tried to find our way by ourselves. The tour took us along some tracks and we had to get up and down the hills quite a lot. For me it was probably the most exhausting day of the week. At lunch break we met the other group again. We were all sitting together in the sun, chatting with each other and having our hot chocolates. It really felt like holidays, but remember Len

get paid for that! After lunch break we waxed our skis again cause we all did not have much grip wax left on our skis after using the tracks most of the time. Eventually we got to a place that was perfectly for a little play session. So we created a few downhill slopes on some hills. Len told us how to slow down after going downhill and also how to turn left and right. We took some videos, some people fell in the soft snow and we had a few crashes (but no major ones). So basically everyone had a lot of fun. The way back was a lot easier cause we could just speed down the hills. It also got very hot in the sun so most of us ended up taking all the jackets off. That day we came back to the campside earlier cause we had some big plans for the night - Ski jumping! Some guys of our group were very keen to try some big jumps. So everyone got back in the car and went to the Trollbakkene i Evje Hoppanlegg. Most of us just wanted to do some sledging and watch the two crazy ones that wanted to jump. But in the end most of us tried the small jump. So we are allowed to call ourselves ski jumpers now. Our two hero guys even dare to do the one size bigger jump. Props to them!

On Thursday we went to Gautestad to start our ski tour. The weather and snow conditions were amazing again. So we took a quick group photo and then started our day tour. The task of the day was to practice even more our map and compass reading skills. So we choose someone as the veileder and let him guide us through the beautiful winter wonderland. Sometimes we changed the roles of the guides so that most of us could experience how to lead a group. On our way we have seen some elg tracks and also some tracks of hare. For our lunch break we built some benches in the snow. In the afternoon we made our way along some lakes, that we could spot on the map. When we went back to Gautestad some of us were practicing their downhill skills while others were just enjoying the sun and the view. In the evening we had an international evening where every country had to present a part of their culture. So we did some dancing, singing and played games. Later that night most of us started packing because it was already our last night at the camp.

The last day also started with packing and cleaning the rooms. At about 1000 we left for our last skiing day in Evje. We went to Gautestad again to build up a fun park in the snow. We made three groups and everyone build up a different obstacle. After building them up we had another downhill technique session. We learned how to stop by stepping uphill and also how to turn when going downhill. Then we had lunch break and afterwards we started playing on the parkour. Every group had around 30 minutes on each obstacles and of course the most popular one was the ski jump. On that day we had to go back earlier to catch the bus back to Kristiansand. Once the bus was on the way back, almost everyone fell asleep dreaming about the last days skiing.

### **What I have learned**

During the ski trip I have learned that there is a major difference between Cross Country Skiing and downhill skiing. For example there is a left and a right ski in Cross Country which is not in downhill. Also cross country the way we did was more about exploring nature and going besides the tracks. Apart from that I have also learned how to wax skis and that there are different kinds of waxes for different weather conditions. During skiing through deeper snow I also experienced that there is a difference between making your own tracks in the fresh snow and just following other tracks. So when I was in charge as a guide I did not just have to think about which way to go but also had to make sure to make decent tracks so the others could follow me more easily. Another technique that I have learned was the telemark. It felt very different not to ski down a hill parallel but with one foot in the front and one foot back. But in the end of the week even that felt quite comfortable. From the lectures we had during the week I also got to know some map and compass reading basic skills and some interesting ideas about packing my rucksack in a clever way. So I will recognize to pack the things that belongs together (like the avalanche pole and the shovel) in one bag.

### **Benefits from learning to ski in the wilderness**

As I mentioned before I did downhill skiing before, but only on prepared tracks. So it felt more free to go off the tracks and making your own way through the area. And also when you fall in the deep soft snow it does not hurt that much (as long as you do not land on your skis). Another thing I experienced were the different ground conditions. So sometimes we had very deep snow for example on the bottom of a hill and then we were skiing on a lake where it was more flat. It was also quite interesting how many tracks of animals we have seen as well. And in terms of waxing the skis it was more convenient not to use the tracks all the time cause that got the wax off more quick.

### **Group dynamics**

Even if we got divided into two groups of 12 we were still a lot of students in one group. So I felt that our group was also split into smaller groups while skiing. E.g. the people in the front and the people in the back. Or when we were looking at the few maps we had there we were also like smaller groups with people gathering together. But I felt like we were always mixing new groups so it was not just the same people together all the time (apart from some closer friends maybe). At the lunch breaks we most likely sit together with the people that we lived with but that was probably because of bringing food and meal prep together. It was still a bit sad that we barely spend time with the other people from Tim's group but at least we met in the evenings at the common area when we had our waxing parties or played some games together.

**How I can use these experiences in my future carrier, club and recreation time**

In my actual job as a swimming instructor for kids I found it interesting to learn about the different teaching strategies. For example Len let us explore the area and finding the ways by ourselves most of the time while Tim took over the lead more often. So I would say it always depends on the situation, the students and also the teachers personal style which teaching strategy to choose. So if the situation is more relaxed or the students (in my terms the kids) are already a bit more experienced I would rather choose the inductive teaching approach. If I had kids that are for example a bit afraid of the water and need more guidance to feel safe I would rather choose the deductive style. In terms of my future job I could imagine myself working in a sport tourism company that offers tours (like skiing or hiking) to kids or youths. So to make them experience the nature in an physical active way. Because for me it is also easier to learn new things in a natural environment than in a classroom. Especially when it is something that includes movement or physical activity.