

## Winter Mountain Skitrip - Hovden

Our Winter Mountain Skitrip took us to Hovden right at the border between Agder and Telemark. The bus arrived on Monday at around 12:30pm at the Bjåen Turisthytte. It was a beautiful spot between two lakes. We got separated in two groups of 12 to move into the two houses there. At 2pm we met again ready to go for the first half day Skitrip. My group went with Tim up a small mountain. We had to use glister ski wax that day because it was pretty warm and the snow was slightly wet. It was still slippery on our way up and some of us really struggled to make their way up the hill. We eventually arrived at the top of the mountain and had a little snack break and checked our location with the maps and compasses. On our way down we practiced downhill techniques and telemark style. Back at the hut we build snow obstacles and had some playtime on them. After dinner at 8pm we had a briefing about the next day in the common area.

The next day we changed groups again so my group went with Len that day. We first had to walk for one kilometer along the road. So we attached our skis to our backpacks and started walking. When we reached the interception we checked our maps to see where to go. Our destination for that day was a gap between two mountains on the border to Telemark. So we put our skis on and chose the first person to be the veileder for that day. On our way up we saw many tracks of different animals. Once we reached the saddle between the two mountains we had our lunchbreak. On the right we could see Agder region and on the left we had Telemark. After the food and sunbathing break we continued with our trip. We were skiing along and then all of the sudden some people stopped. Then we have seen them - reindeers! They were a few hundred meters away and it was very impressive to see them in the wildlife. Eventually we got our focus back on the skiing. After the next hill we found a spot where we could practice building snowholes and avalanche rescue. So we started digging in the snow and after like half an hour everyone already had a little snowhole/snowshelter. After that one of us got halfway buried under some snow so we could use the avalanche probes to "find" him. For our way home we chose three new leaders to guide us to our cabin. In the evening we had another meeting to discuss the plans for the next day - building snowholes!

The Wednesday started with a good breakfast, meal prep and packing. We were all pretty excited about what the day is going to be like. We started skiing and realized pretty quick that skiing with our big backpack is way more difficult. So we made our way up a mountain very slowly. Once we arrived at the top of the mountain Tim and Len explained the different type of igloos and snowhole that you can build in these snow conditions. Then we made teams of six and started looking for a good spot with deep snow. We used the avalanche probes to check how deep the snow was. It had to be at least 1.50 meters deep. When we found a spot we started digging a hole which had a one meter diameter. While two people were digging the others started to build a tunnel into that hole. Once that was done all of us helped group 2 to build the roof of their igloo. Therefore five people of that group went inside their hole and put tarp above their heads. And then all of us started shoveling snow

on their backs and heads for 15 minutes. Eventually we build a big dome of snow on top of their heads and the others could crawl out of the tunnel again. Once that was done we used snowsaws to cut snowblocks to build the roof of our igloo and to create more room from the inside of our holes. It took us about six hour to finish our houses for that night. At around 8pm we cooked our dinner and then went to bed in our selfmade igloos.

At 9am the next morning Tim and Len came back to the igloos to pick us up for the next daytrip. We started the day with a little downhill session and took lots of photos of the igloos. Then we split up in two groups again and went to the bottom of a mountain. There we dropped our sacks and skied up the hill. It was quite windy and the way up was pretty steep. We stayed close together and also practiced our quick turns uphill. When we almost reached the top we took our skis off and walked up the last 100 meters up to the top of the mountain. Up there we had an amazing view over the area but it was very windy. After a couple of minutes we walked back down again to our skis. Then we skied back to our cabin where we got three hours to have food and to prepare ourselves for the next night outside. We met up at 3.30pm again with our tarps and everything else that we would need to build shelters with. We skied for about ten minutes around a little hill till we found a nice spot with some trees. Then we started in groups of three to build our "emergency" shelter for that night. After that was done every group could vote for the best shelter. Later in the evening we had a bonfire together before we went to bed for the last night on our winter mountain trip.

The next day started with removing the shelters and packing everything. Thank we skied back to the cabins where we just cleaned up and packed our backpacks. One that was done we met in front of the bus to announce the winning the shelter competition. Then we loaded up the bus with our skies and backpack and left Hovden with new memories.

### **What I have learned**

On this Skitrip I could improve my Cross Country Skiing skills even more and also got used to ski with an even heavier backpack than my usual day sack. Especially my uphill quick turns got way better when we went up that mountain on Thursday. Apart from skiing skills I learned how to build snowholes/snowshelters and igloos and also the different techniques to build the roof of an igloo. And that one of the most important things to do beforehand is to make a plan and try to stick to it. We had some issues in between the building because we were not sure how to make the roof and how many people we need for a specific task. So we got some tips and help from Tim which helped us in organising the tasks again. One of the advices was the "power play" where we all just focused on one task for one hour straight and did not let us get distracted by anything. Another thing that I have practiced even more

was the packing and the preparation for a day trip plus overnight outside. I got more routine with what to put in my backpack, which things I really need and what just takes up space. And also the Meal prep got easier so that I did not have too less food but also not having to take any food back with me.

### **Benefits from sleeping in the wilderness**

We already skied in the wilderness and also slept outside on our self organised camping trip but we never combined these two things before. So as I already mentioned it was a different experience to ski with the big backpacks that contain all the stuff you need for a night outside. One of the big benefits when sleeping in an igloo is for sure that you do not have to take the tent with you. Also the temperature in an igloo is way more comfortable than in a tent because it is better insulated and you are more protected from wind and rain inside. But it takes a lot of time to built a proper igloo and also a few more people. So if you do not have a lot of time because of bad weather conditions or you are just a few people you can still built a snowshelter. If you are in a forest area you can also built a normal shelter with a tarp, a rope and whatever you have with you (skipoles, skis etc.). Sleeping outside is very handy when you are on a bigger skitrip in the wilderness so you are not depend on cabins or huts in that area. And it also gives you a different perspective of the area when you see it in different weather condition or even just the difference between darkness and daylight.

### **Group dynamics**

On this Skitrip we changed the groups more often so we got to work with different people every time which was very nice. When we build the igloos we were in groups of six because we needed more people for the building. Compared to the smaller groups the communication and organising the tasks was a bit harder. Also we did not make a specific plan beforehand and because we did not built such things before we were a bit lost in the beginning. After a while when we had a little help from our instructors it got better and everyone got more routine in their task. I also felt that because we were a group of six girls we might have overthought things a bit too much in the beginning where the boys in the other teams just started digging and cutting out snowblocks straight away. But in general the communication in our groups worked pretty good and we did not have major issues with the group dynamics.