

## Summer camp 2009

Friday 24/7

Everyone drives to Dover to meet at ferry terminal. Surprisingly we all meet on the M20 motorway.

Meet outside Dover east docks and check in at 6:30 am

Check in for LD hydrofoil 7:45am crossing

7:20am Bus driver arrives at wrong door and we have to shift all the gear back to main entrance

Bus eventually waved through traffic by police to board ship

Say goodbye to damp English weather as soon as we drop our gear on car deck the boat leaves!

Wind clocks forward one hour and arrive in very smelly Boulogne harbour with tide out. – Local time 10:00am

The ferry bus drops us off in the harbour area without even waving goodbye! We look for bus station to take us to the Indian campsite. Sunshine surrounds us all as well as the smell.

Lots of fun at bus station as scouts have no idea how to look for a bus stop. Tony changes sterling into euros for the first introduction to French!

We get on the number 1 bus to Wimereux.

Dropped off by the campsite bus stop we make a change in route and take the bags on a path rather than the road. Our bags are not as strong as we thought!

Checking in at the Indian campsite we meet Deter who tells us about a water polo match at 3:00pm. No competition – tents up and off go the scouts for England vs France

The new dining shelter is a hit with Sharon and Tony and our campsite is so conveniently located by the toilets, showers and water point. You can even see the sea if you are tall enough.

After an initial trouncing by the whole French population adding the leaders to the mix puts England in front on the water polo.

An evening hike to Wimereux for pizza, with a visit to the beach and a shop for breakfast shopping.

Saturday 25/7

First continental breakfast for our heroes. After a slow start we get our act together and head across country to Boulogne on Sea to see the Nausicaa sealife centre. We travel through some run down areas

of Boulogne being rebuilt and manage to avoid all the shops. We arrive at the Nausicaa which is fabulous stuff with sealions, sharks, micro marine environments, 3d theatres, environmental information and hands on interaction with rays.

A walk around the market is a bit late but we discover Carrefour and a shopping centre.

We make up a barbeque of home made kebabs on the cliffs and wander down the landslides to the beach before walking home to the campsite.

Sunday 26/7

Another slow start. We make a trip to the market in Boulogne and a visit to the walled city and cathedral of Notre dame. On our way home we find that brits are not universally appreciated by the French young who hurl coke bottles and threaten scouts that dither behind the rest of us. We visit the British war cemetery and are amazed at the variety of people buried there including Germans. We go swimming in the pool for the last time today.

Monday 27/7

The first early start for us. We have to get the bus at 6:15am to get to Boulogne for the 7:45 inter city train to Paris Gare du Nord. Everyone does a blinding job of getting up early and getting down to the bus stop just as the bus arrives. Goodbye Boulogne!

By 10:20am we arrive in Paris and transfer to Gare de Lyon. This takes us hours! And cuts short our day in Paris – thank goodness that it is not a pretty day in Paris.

We leave our kit at left luggage (costing a fortune) and book a TGV bound for Marseilles to make up time. We take the local train to Isle de la cite where we have lunch at a French street café. We walk to Notre Dame and pose! Time evaporates and we all run to Gare de Lyon only to miss the train by a few minutes. We change our TGV reservations and after just a few minutes board the TGV south.

The TGV is awesome! Travelling at nearly 400km/h we fly south and arrive in Marseilles late afternoon. The journey blows you away with fantastic views and comfort. The TGV is bound for Nice, our final destination for the next day. So we stay on and head for Nice.

At Les Arcs Draguignan somebody jumps in front of the train – splat! We are delayed for ages. Just as we decide to get off the train it is all aboard and the train heads off for Nice again. We arrive in Nice central at 11:15pm. Fast food in our bellies we go to wait for the night bus to the campsite. It does not arrive! We have to spend a few hours outside the station until the waiting room opens. Scouts bed down outside the station while our leaders watch.

Tuesday 28/7

After some hours sleep in the waiting room we deposit the heavy stuff in herbie in left luggage and take the tram for the beach. Even at 9:00am the beach is heaving with sunseekers and we all get a swim in

the Med. It is gorgeous. We look around the old town and buy lunch in a SPAR. The scouts find Cadburys chocolate! It is HOT!

At lunchtime we take the train to Monaco Monaco is heaving with money. The scouts watch the world go by while the leaders get to meet tourist info and find a campsite at Eze.

We travel to Eze and wait for a bus to the site. We meet some dutch cyclists that tell us that they are lucky enough to get a campsite place – It was ours! After sounding off at tourist information we have no choice except to return to Nice and to campsites south west of Nice at Gagnes-Sur-mer. We are told that the campsite is 10 minutes from the station unfortunately they mean 10 minutes drive. We walk nearly 5Km and burn out the wheels on Herbie. We arrive in a campsite where the owners turn away a party in front of us but let us camp in the overflow car park along with several colonies of ants and an army of cicadas. The temperature soars but there is a pool. We arrive on Pizza nice and are treated to the best in local pizza.

Wednesday 29/7

After a light breakfast we phone for a bus to pick us up that takes us back to the station for only 1euro a head. The temperature is over 40 degrees and brilliant sunshine again.

Now that we are so far west again we cannot get a train to Milano to get us to the disco at Kandersteg. After another visit to Nice we find that we are stuck until the next day. We get another train back to Villeneuve Loubet to a campsite that really is 10 minutes from the rail station. No pool but a spa and great showers. No ants but lots of dust. The beach looks gorgeous and we shop for a real meal. We call Kandersteg so they don't worry and book the train to Milano for Thursday

Thursday 30/7

Another early start to the local train then Nice once more. We take an earlier train to the Italian border at Ventimiglia so that we can get ahead of the TGV. Callum has an international meeting with a platform cleaner. We cheer as we escape Nice.

We get the express from Ventimiglia to Milano where we get lunch Italian style before running for the train again to Brig. From Brig it is an easy hop to Kandersteg. We are met by Phil who ferries our bags to the site whilst we walk into camp. We do not smell very nice.

It seems that our delay in Nice has worked to our advantage since Kandersteg had been flooded with several groups and sites washed out. We managed to miss our tobogganing, but that might have been washed out too. We manage to convince the coop to stay open long enough for us to buy food. Michael the camp manager takes us to our site and warns us off the wet bits that were a river the day before. He tells us that we have a visitor on site that has camped in the wrong bit. He shows us temporary toilets, emergency shelters and marquees. The scouts explore and play football against the world! Real food again!

Friday 31/7

We head for the mountains after filing a route plan. We head up to Allmanalp via the 1700m route above Kandersteg. We take the cable car down. On our return the girls are tasked with dinner. The leaders have to book for the National Swiss day. We are panicked by staff that say we can't shop for food until Monday and book in for the BBQ provided by the site.

We join in the international campfire and participate by doing the pray for a donkey skit. The campfire has more than 1200 people attending but they mainly come from the UK. We find that there are some huge contingents and we really are the only independent UK group onsite.

Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August

Fraser's birthday. We join the international day as Robin Hood after making our hats. At the last minute we perform the stick routine devised at home. After the BBQ we change for the parade. Nearly all the site takes part in the torchlit parade down to the village for fireworks and traditional Swiss entertainment. Some groups made fire balloons, one of them crashed and burned in a tree! Fraser got his cake and cards.

Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August

Toboggoning was on the schedule again but thunderstorms and lightning put pay to it. Sharon had the great idea of heading to Interlaken. We took the train and left the rotten weather behind. In Interlaken we came across Mystery park, a themed park based upon Erik Von Daniken's ideas. It has been broke several time and we know why. Even the camel looked bored in the pyramid exhibit. Interlaken looks like it has looked the same for hundred of years. The rail journey was stunning and of course we saw the mountain snow.

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> August

Last day at Kandensteg. We head for Oeschinensee and the toboggan run. Sadly it rained and was closed. Led by Jake we jump in the lake – it is cold. The clouds lifted occasionally to see the waterfalls. We get hot choc in the hotel. The boys are charged with cooking sausage and mash. This takes a little longer than expected.

Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> August

The gear gets on the bus to the rail station with the rest of us chasing after with a lost bag. We get the train to Brig. We arrive at Brig with 90 minutes to spare. At Brig the train to Gare de Lyon via Lausanne appears at a different platform to the timetable and our schedule goes to the wall. Tony is told it is impossible to get to Boulogne again by station staff but computes an alternative route via Basel and paris Est station. We make up so much time that we nearly catch our original TGV to Boulogne. A heavy discussion with the train conductor costs 100 euros but gets us to Boulogne by 9:00pm. We try to get a ferry home since we were told of a problem with customs on the 5<sup>th</sup> August. No dice ; we were not allowed on. We walk to the public overnight campsite and get a great night sleep.

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> August

After a light breakfast we walk down to the beach and spend a chill day on the beach. The weather is fantastic. We make a swift retreat to the ferry terminal and travel home. At customs we are given a hard time by UK customs.

Trip over. Statistics to follow.