

# Loch Etive

We drove up after school on the Friday, arrived after 6 hours and stayed in a youth hostel.



On Saturday we woke up at round 7 and had breakfast, which consisted of bread for me and a toasted piece of toast heaped with beans and mushrooms for Craig and Tom. Quite a while later we started to pack up and pull on our base layers, my base layers were some thermal trousers, long sleeved thermal top and a jumper, as well as my wetsuit on top of it. The plan was (I think) to get on the water at 10, but I'm not sure if we managed that. Once we had driven down, we packed, I carried sleeping bags and some clothes in my Explorer LV (my parents paddled a Nigel Dennis Triton). Once everyone was ready we eventually got on the water!



It was absolutely beautiful! The soft rushing water, pulled slightly by the current, surrounded by massive white capped mountains. There was also a low cloud which floated low above our heads, looking a little like a heavenly bridge! The boats all created small ripples in the shape of a V when they moved forwards, looking very pretty. Though it was FREEZING, it was all lovely. After the first 10 minutes, I have to admit, I was almost in tears. My fingers felt frozen to the bone, I was wearing neoprene gloves, which weren't doing a good job. Luckily somebody had some spare pogis that I could borrow, and if you don't have a pair-get some. It had almost an immediate effect! The pogis trapped in all the heat and kept my fingers warm. After that, everything was fine. The whole trip was about 8 miles, so not too long.



At around 3 O'clock we arrived at a snowy bay nestled in between a forest. It looked lovely, but to be frank I just wanted to get warm. So, after running on the shore, I threw on all my spare warm clothing and cocooned myself in my down sleeping bag and watched everybody else unpack. I must have stayed there for half an hour! But the snow was just too tempting, because it was perfect sticky stuff. So I started rolling out a ball for my snowman. My dad, Björn, helped me after a bit, and we turned it into a kayaking snowman! We made a short kayak underneath him and gave him a stick for a paddle (we did debate about sitting him in Tom's kayak).



By this time, the sun was setting and everything dimmed, and I returned to the warmth of my tent. After a dinner of sausages and rice, we joined everyone else in the big tent. We all sat on the ground in a big circle with just a couple of headlights to illuminate the proceedings. It was really nice! Eventually we went down and lit the wood the men had collected and put together before, and circled around the bright fire, though we went to bed not soon after. The tent was nice and warm and I slept well!

### Sunday

Sunday started in the same way, we got up (our snowman had paddled off and was no where to be seen), went into the big tent and ate some breakfast which was left over sausages. Then we packed up our wet equipment (because it was pouring and snowing, it couldn't make up its mind). Me and my mum actually huddled underneath the emergency shelter to escape the rain till the others had packed up. Once we had set off, it was again beautiful, we were quite lucky once we were on the water, because it didn't rain much! This paddle felt shorter than the way there, but maybe that was because it was familiar. Equipped with some yummy Scottish fudge tablet, Pogi's and reed socks, I was comfy! Once we had reached our cars, we went through the normal routine and then most of us went along to the robin's nest café for hot chocolate (with cream!) and a lovely cheese and ham toasty. (which was so tasty!) Then we started our long, long, long, long journey back!

This was a wonderful trip, and I totally recommend it! A family trip! Its on every year so you have no excuse.....

*By Shoam Backe, 13 (14 next week)*