

MY JAMBOREE EXPERIENCE

BY AMY RYDER

On the 25th July 2011 at 3am, thirty six Greater London South West Scouts and Buckinghamshire Guides along with four committed leaders, left bleary eyed and tired but very excited for the 22nd World Scout Jamboree. The climax of two years of fundraising and training had arrived. Next stop: Copenhagen.

4000 scouts and guides converged in Copenhagen for the UK contingent pre-event. This involved taking part in a programme called Discover Copenhagen and included exploring the city, going on a power board ride and visiting Tivoli Gardens; the oldest theme park in Europe. The program also included sportsorama where we were able to take part in activities such as body combat, bowling and human table football. Copenhagen didn't know what had hit it! On the final night in Copenhagen we went to the UKC party. This was a chance to meet other participants from the UK and celebrate the Jamboree which we would depart for the next morning.

The Jamboree site; Kristianstad in Southern Sweden, had a coach arriving minute for 24 hours! With 40,000 people, the site was the fourth largest town in southern Sweden. Here we would spend the next eleven days of our Jamboree adventure. The camp was split into four towns, named after the four seasons. Each town was split into six sub camps with around 2000 scouts living on each sub camp. My unit, called the 'District Line' unit were part of Kivik a town in Southern Sweden famous for its apple market. The whole site took about an hour to walk from either end. While at the Jamboree we took part in module activities; People - learning about ourselves and others; Global Development Village - learning about human rights and developing countries; Earth, which had four modules soil, water, wind and oxygen; Quest - going back in time to learn about Vikings and lastly; Dream - a night activity about our lives.

The whole population of the Jamboree came together three times whilst on camp - at the opening and closing ceremonies and on culture day. These were amazing experiences where you really felt part of worldwide scouting/guiding. We had shows about Sweden through the ages and a visit by Bear Grylls, the Chief Scout (he signed my jacket!) and the King of Sweden.

Another part of the Jamboree was 'camp in camp'. This was a new feature of a world Jamboree and involved patrols (nine participants/one leader) from units going to different Swedish camps outside the main camp, experiencing traditional Swedish camping and local nature. My patrol joined a scout groups' summer camp and participated in their programme. Their camp was by a lake so we went swimming and canoeing. In the evening we went on a night light trail and had a campfire by the lake as the sun set.

When we arrived back on the main site we prepared for cultural day. As a unit we had brought with us, hard boiled sweets, tea, tea pots and tea cups. Each unit set up a stall to show their countries culture. This was a really interesting day as we got to experience different cultures. Cultural day concluded with a festival down in the main arena.

Unfortunately at the closing ceremony it poured with rain and we got drenched! We left the next morning to catch the overnight ferry to Poland where we were staying for home hospitality. Each UK unit got to participate in home hospitality. We stayed in Szczecinek in North Poland, where we stayed in the homes of Polish scouts. I stayed with one other girl from my unit and our host and her Mum. They spoke very little English, so communicating was difficult! We went on a bike ride, a hike and wake boarding. We were surprised at how alike we were with the Polish scouts, proven by the conversations about the recently released Harry Potter Seven part Two. It was very interesting to hear what Scouting is like for them and how the scouting system works in Poland. On the last night we had a fire show put on for us by the scout group and a disco. We had a tearful farewell that night as we would be leaving early the next morning for our long journey home - a seven hour coach journey and two flights later we touched down in Heathrow to be greeted by our cheering parents with 'Welcome Home' banners. We had another tearful farewell at Heathrow as the District line unit numbered off and chanted their songs for the last time. We knew we'd meet up soon and sure enough the first reunion was only a couple of weeks after we returned to England!

The whole experience has been amazing for me and now I've caught the Jamboree bug, I want to go to as many Jamborees as possible, as IST (international service team, helping to run the camp) and eventually as a unit leader.