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Postcards from Abroad

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Bø, Norway: Outdoor Life, Culture, and Eco-Philosophy

Mikhayla Crawford
Linfield College

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Bø, Norway: Outdoor Life, Culture, and Ecophilosophy



*Top L: larger sail boat-Rival. Top R: Enjoying some sailing.
Bottom L: Island Village Lyngør. Bottom R: Lighthouse in the bay.*

I am back in Bø after a seven-day coastline trip for outdoor life. We explored an island on the southern coast called Risøya and made a base camp for seven days. During our time there, we learned knots, how to rig a sailboat, how to fish and harvest food from the sea, nautical navigation, and so much about the culture and history of the Norwegian coastline. The boats we were using are traditional style *ferrings*, like what the Vikings had used.

We started every day at 9 am and met on the rocks by the water where we had the boats moored and did a warm-up to get our bodies moving and then had a lesson about local plants and their uses. One of the days we focused solely on harvesting food from the ocean and cooking it. We rowed out to where we had set fishing nets the evening before in the bay and brought them in. They held crabs and some fish for us!

We also did some fishing with drop lines that have hooks at various levels of the line, and we caught a few more fish with that as well. We harvested sea snails and seaweed. From the few fish we caught, we made a delicious fish soup for dinner. The snails we cleaned and then fried in butter, garlic, and onion. The seaweed we deep fried in oil and ate like chips for a snack. We boiled our crabs, but decided to save them for the next day because we simply had too much food to eat.

Another day we left on the larger boat in our fleet and attempted to sail, though the wind was just not very strong. We sailed nonetheless to a small island village called Lyngør. We had our lunch there and enjoyed a lecture about some history of this village and the area and took a walk around. Later in the afternoon we rowed around the island and then to another island where we would make dinner and learn about night navigation. Some of us went for a swim in the ocean, which was much needed after not showering for 6 days. After the sun had set, and we had cleaned up from dinner, we loaded up the boat and set off for our nighttime row back to camp. At this time of the year, some of the algae in the water become bioluminescent, so every time there is movement in the water it glows and lights up. Each stroke with our oars lit up the water. It was absolutely amazing.

The following week, we started our ten-day trip with four full days in the mountains. Our teacher Simon has a theory about the weather on trips that it acts as a weather bank, so if you have really terrible weather on a trip, you are owed some nice weather. Since we had terrible weather on all of our trips so far, we were owed some pretty nice weather this trip, and I think we were paid in full. We enjoyed amazing weather the first two days, but woke up the third day to thick fog, wind and snow.

We had established a base camp at this location and decided we would stay here like we planned and continue on the next day. We camped close to the city of Seljord on the Thursday night because we needed to be there to pick up our canoes at a certain time the next day. The Friday we headed out onto Lake Seljord, which is rumored to have a monster lurking in the lake much like the Loch Ness monster. There was a leaky canoe among our fleet so we had to take some time to fix that with duct tape. We paddled to one of the larger islands on the lake and made a base camp there. We made tasty calzones over the fire for dinner at this camp and played games in our canoes. We moved on down to the Bø river where we met up with some second-year students who joined us for the next two days. The highlight of the next few days had to do a portage through Bø. It was quite a sight seeing seven people push canoes through town, but we aren't allowed to paddle the middle part of the Bø River because the rapids are too much.

The hardest part of the ten days was just being around people 24/7. I could have easily been outside for days more, but I was craving some alone time by the end of the trip for sure. There were many moments on this trip where I felt really overcome with happiness and just emotion because it was so beautiful and I was so happy. I'm getting to do something I am passionate about in an educational environment, and it is absolutely amazing, every second of it. I am totally in love with Norway!

Mikhayla