

My World Scout Jamboree Adventure

I was lucky enough to have the trip of a lifetime, visiting four countries and making many new friends and experiencing different cultures.

Having had 5 training weekends over the last 20 months with my unit of 40 people (36 Scouts and Guides and 4 leaders), we were ready to leave. We left on 25th July at 6.30am from Phasels Wood campsite and flew from Heathrow to Copenhagen.

When we arrived, our first activity was travelling on a speed boat at 80 mph which was so much fun. In the evening, we went to Tivoli Gardens, the theme park in Copenhagen. All 4000 of the UK participants were there and I saw many people from other units whom I knew. I also made some new friends from Australia.

The next day, we did Sportsarama where I did bowling and a Brazilian martial arts called capoeira. Capoeira was very interesting (and funny!) to learn and when the professionals performed, it was very graceful and beautiful to watch. That afternoon, we explored Copenhagen, visiting the town hall and walking down the Stroget, the main shopping street in Denmark. My favourite place we visited was the cathedral; it was beautiful and so peaceful and we all lit a candle.

That evening was the UK contingent party which was absolutely incredible!!! It lasted 7 hours and many different acts performed such as Alphabeat, who were fantastic. I was very lucky to meet up with some Northern Irish friends whom I had met two years ago at a different international jamboree in Scotland. I also made several more friends from around the country.

One of the most amazing things about being in Copenhagen was that everywhere we walked, we saw people with scout neckers on and so as we'd pass scout groups, we'd all hi-five each other. Many locals asked us why there were so many people in scarves because they were baffled as to what had descended on their city!

The day after, we arrived at the actual Jamboree, crossing the bridge from Denmark into Sweden by coach. Our campsite was between some Americans from New England and some Swiss Scouts. We set up our camp and then had our first proper meal since we had left England – it tasted like heaven!

Exploring the camp site, I met up with some friends in another unit and then we taught some Belgians and Swedes how to play cricket which was quite amusing. Every evening in our campsite, we had story time when our leader would read children's books so that people from other countries would be able to understand more easily. Gradually over the Jamboree, more and more people came to our story time and at times, it was a squeeze to fit everyone into our dining shelter.

The next evening was the opening ceremony which was great! My unit all put on our England Viking hats and, armed with an England vuvuzela, we made our way down to the stage, singing and chanting patriotically. The National Anthem, Build Me Up Buttercup and Bohemian Rhapsody were the most frequent. The Japanese scouts were especially taken by our unit and I have never seen such excitement as when a member of my unit gave one of them the spare England hat! In the opening ceremony, Bear Grylls came down on a wire from the top of the stage and handed over the Jamboree to the Swedish, since the last World Scout Jamboree was in the UK in 2007. All the flags from each nationality present came down through the audience to the stage. We cheered very loudly for the United Kingdom as well as for Slovakia, as we were going there after the Jamboree. After many music and dance acts, everyone there helped to set a new world record for the largest number of people doing the 'blop' (where you put your finger in the inside of your cheek and pull it). At the end of the ceremony, we all sang the Jamboree song before an amazing fire display.

Whilst at the Jamboree, I learnt a Scouting tradition called pegging that I was unaware of prior to the event. You take a peg, write your contact details on and try to put the peg on someone without them noticing. It was really fun and throughout the week, I managed to peg many people from different nationalities and I even managed to peg a sombrero in the Mexican pavilion!

Our campsite was really cool and was admired by many passers-by because we had built our own kitchen, complete with a washing up station, which balanced the washing up bowls and then had a chute which the water flowed down into our wet pit. We also built our own shower cubicle because one morning, my friend and I had to queue for an hour and a half for a shower. We had a bag with holes in so you could heat up some water and put it in the bag, and then the water would spray out – a proper shower with no hassle of queuing!

The supermarket was quite strange as there were no sweet things apart from Nutella, which became a luxury. The Americans in the campsite next to us made their birthday cake out of bread and Nutella and banana! Because of the lack of sweet foods, we were even more inclined to visit the food pavilions. The English pavilion was an English castle and served jacket potatoes and chips and traditional English puddings. I visited many of the food pavilions of which the Danish one was my favourite because their Danish pastries were divine!

There were also pavilions for each country. Most of them had stamps so I got a collection to show which pavilions I had visited. The UK pavilion had crazy golf inside with famous landmarks and when completed, you could collect a stick of rock and a UK branded spork. Outside was an old-fashioned police box, Doctor Who-style, which was actually a photo box. I managed to swap quite a few badges in the pavilions as well as try different things, such as maple syrup sweets in the Canadian pavilion, or try on sombreros in the Mexican one. However, my friend and I fell in love with the Liechtenstein pavilion. It takes just 25 minutes to travel from one end of the country to the other, and there were more people in total at the World Scout Jamboree than there were people in their country!!

There were six modular activities at the Jamboree: Quest, Earth, People, GDV, Dream and Camp in Camp. On completion of each module, we received a bead each to put on a leather bracelet. Our entire unit managed to attain all six beads.

We completed Quest on the second proper day of the Jamboree. We had to do an obstacle course which was great fun, various challenges about balance and trust, then problem-solving challenges and finally a giant maze with challenges along the way. Earth was the next day and there were four sections: Water, Wind, Soil and Oxygen. In Oxygen, we had to create a poster about a natural disaster near where we lived. Then we compared it with other posters and reflected on how lucky we were that we have not had really severe droughts or hurricanes recently in our country, even though other countries have. In Soil, we had to filter water to make it pure and in Wind, we had to create our own windmill which had a turbine to create electricity. In Water, we had to dig a mini river in the sand and observe erosion and the devastating effect of pollution on the landscape and animals.

In People, we did an activity where we created a new culture and then people from another patrol, who knew nothing about it, came to 'live' in our new culture. We then discussed our thoughts when they arrived, with some people feeling annoyance and others pity. My patrol then went on to discuss which Rights of a Child were the most important. We had a heated discussion, unable to decide between Healthcare and Food. So the meditation, named Qi Gong, which we did next, was much needed to calm us all down. We then did an activity which was a timeline through our lives up to that point so that we could see how the world had changed around us as well as how we had changed ourselves as we had grown up. We then went into the crafts section where the first activity we were given was to sit our patrols in a circle with a selection of photos and we had to choose one which represented our life at that point. We all ended up crying and we really bonded as a patrol, especially as we saw different sides to some people. So we went from a heated discussion to crying with each other that day!

In the Global Development Village (GDV), we chose to do Peace in the morning and signed up to do a simulation refugee camp. We were so keen to do the activity that my patrol arrived an hour early!! It was definitely worth it and I personally think that it was the best activity that we did because it was so insightful and made me realise how difficult and unpredictable life must be as a refugee. We take our safety for granted but others cannot and this activity really hit that home to me. After lunch, we chose to do Human Rights where we discussed Human Rights for children. We all had different ideas which was interesting. Some people's first choice was my last and vice versa, which just showed how complicated a subject human rights is. We then learnt a few different songs and games.

Dream was at midnight and it was a journey backwards through one's life, starting with death and finishing with birth. I felt it was really enlightening, especially at the beginning when we did various activities with at least one of our senses removed. It made me more aware of how hard it must be when you are older and made me appreciate how lucky I am to have all 5 senses. Another of the activities was to create a whole life for this man so that we reflected on our interests and how we could take them further. As we 'grew younger', it brought back many memories that I had completely forgotten.

Camp in Camp was amazing! We went in patrols and my patrol were taken to a campsite situated right next to a lake, where we swam a lot because it was 30 °C and so the water was very refreshing. However, because there was iron on the bottom of the lake, the water was orange and so if you put your arm under the water, it looked as if you had had a fake tan disaster! It also turned all our hair ginger! Our campsite was

separated into 'villages'. Each village had a small Swedish scout group with about 12 scouts aged between 8 and 13. There were two patrols from the Jamboree per village and so we camped with an Austrian patrol. In the afternoon, we did activities in groups, made up of people from all around the camp site. I made stompa, a traditional Swedish bread, as well as doing many other activities. In the evening, we played football with the Swedish scouts from our village before dinner and then had a Swedish quiz, which we completely failed at! Then we had a campfire with the whole campsite, where we learnt a Slovenian kissing game and an Italian game plus many songs. The whole experience was brilliant as we learnt how Swedish scouts camped and we learnt more about other cultures. It was also relaxing to be in a less busy environment!

Towards the end, we had a Cultural Festival Day, where people dressed in national dress and we all served traditional food from our country. My unit made multiple batches of honeycomb, toffee and coconut ice to serve. They were very popular! In the evening, there was a show to celebrate all the many cultures in the world. It was also a thank you to the Camp in Camp hosts and so with our extra guests, there were 48,412 people there at the show. There many different acts such as cyclists and as a thank you to the Camp in Camp hosts, we all did the 'blop'.

Having struck camp, we went to the closing ceremony and we managed to get on the big screen with our unit dance. There were many music acts and although it unexpectedly poured down, we all had a great time and I realised at that point how close our unit was because it felt like one big family. We sang the Jamboree Song for the last time which was quite sad as the Jamboree was ending. Then we had the most spectacular fireworks which were absolutely brilliant.

We left for Copenhagen Airport at 2.30am and luckily, we managed not to be outside during the massive thunderstorm that erupted. That day we were in 4 different countries: Sweden, Denmark, Austria (although admittedly only Vienna airport!) and Slovakia.

When we arrived in Bratislava, it was really hot so when we were offered a dip in the pool, we were all thrilled! We were put in pairs for our Home Hospitality (HoHo) and all placed with Slovakian people either in Bratislava or in a town about an hour's drive away called Trnava. My friend Nikki and I went to Trnava to stay with Lucia (a 16-year-old scout) and her mum and her dog, named Rocco. She also invited her friend named Gi, another scout who was aged 18, to stay for the duration of our stay. Although Gi knew virtually no English and Lucia had only been learning for a year, we managed to get over the language barrier most of the time and their English improved dramatically.

We had the perfect balance of being able to see 4 of our unit during the day, as well as being able to spend time with our hosts. We did many amazing things, such as visiting a castle, going on a 6 hour walk to visit some castle ruins and a dilapidated old monastery that was being repaired by volunteers. One evening, we visited a tea house which had every sort of tea in the world. It was a great evening and we all laughed a lot. They also cooked us the traditional Slovakian meal of potato dumplings and cubes of bacon fat which was extremely different but so tasty!

The best thing that we did was to do 'prepat', a real life version of the game Capture the Flag. There was a Slovakian scout camp going on and so we rang them up to ask for permission for us 6 English scouts to play the game. We went at 11pm and there were two guards patrolling the campsite. At midnight, we all charged at once, however we were unsuccessful at taking the flag. Despite my efforts at escaping by jumping right into a patch of stinging nettles, I was caught along with another girl in my unit. However, I managed to escape but, in my attempts to free my friend, I was caught again. Because I tried to escape *again* and I was helping one other friend to escape as well, I had to be tied to a separate stake! My hands were lashed seven times behind my back and the my feet and legs were gaffer-taped together. The rendition the National Anthem that my friend and I gave at the top of our voices resulted in having hands clapped over our mouths. I was facepainted as well with "Slovakia is great" in Slovakian, with a heart and the Slovakian flag. The end of the game was set to be at 1.30am and if I had had five more minutes, I would have been able to undo the gaffer tape on my legs and maybe made a last effort at taking the flag, even though my hands would still have been tied behind my back. Unfortunately, we didn't win but I had so much fun and all the Slovakian scouts were so kind, even if they were torturing us at 1am!!

On the penultimate day, we did some community service at a school back in Bratislava, which was a very rewarding experience. Even though I only did seemingly small jobs such as weeding between the cracks of the playground and clearing the race track of grass, our unit's combined efforts helped to make their school a lot nicer. I hope that the school children enjoy the cleaner and happier environment.

Over the Jamboree, I made many friends ranging from people from Bedfordshire to people from Indonesia. I hope that I will keep in touch with many of them and some of my friends and I are already planning our own 'mini-Jamboree' with people from all over the country that we met to come and meet together.

I learnt so many things through this experience, the most important of which is the value of family and friends. I now realise that I should appreciate them a lot more and something that pleases my mum is that I realise now that I should do more chores around the house!!

To everyone who has supported me through this experience, especially through my fundraising, I would like to thank you enormously. I had the most amazing 19 days of my life and it really was unforgettable. There are many memories that I will treasure for the rest of my life and I could not have done that without your help. This report only covers parts of my experience and there are so many more stories to share and jokes to tell. However, I hope this report begins to show you how much enjoyment I got from the experience and how much fun I had. I have been able to make friends for life and understand other cultures and ways of life. I deeply wish that I could relive the whole experience again.

Bethany Scott
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