

Summer Camp 2008 – Camp Suisse – Torgon, Switzerland.
1st Llanelli & 1st Kidwelly Scouts + Explorer Scouts

Fri 15/08/08

- Depart Wales on coach heading to Dover watching DVDs.
- We collect our main drivers Mike and Davy at a Service Station on the M25. Depart from Dover via Sea France at 10.30pm. We have a hot meal on board which had been agreed with parents before departure. Some of the Scouts were amazed to find what Sea France can turn ten pounds into (i.e. not a lot); luckily we had brought plenty of snacks with us.

Sat 16/08/08

- Driving through the night we stop once before entering Switzerland where we stop again.
- All passengers have heeded the advice and brought pillows and blankets and most sleep through the night's travel.
- We have a scenic trip through Switzerland going via Montreux by Lake Geneva before heading down the Rhône Valley and turning right at Aigle where we climb up the mountain to our base at the Gold Test Centre in Torgon.
- We arrive at 2pm and are greeted by Camp Suisse staff.
- Accommodation is in a large chalet which has en-suite bedrooms that hold 4 people in each. The snorers find that there is enough space for them to have a room each. The evening activities are looking around and a short dip in the outdoor pool.

Sun 17/08/08

- Rich from Camp Suisse informs me that there is a storm heading into the mountains at 5pm on Tuesday and therefore he is bringing our hike to Lake Tanay forward by a day.
- We set off at about 10am under the leadership of Dave and Nathan from Camp Suisse. It is lovely walking across green hills very similar to the "Sound of Music", apart from the last section of roadway which climbs 400 meters in 1 Km, phew - that was hard - but the sight that greets us at the top is worth it.
- We arrive at the stunning lakeside village of Tanay. The lake is fantastic and is surrounded by high mountains and overlooked by "Laura".
- We set up camp and the Camp Suisse staff are amazed at how quickly Scouts can put up tents (we were their first Scout Group), as they were used to children being sent for summer camps by their wealthy parents and having to be shown what to do several times.
- A BBQ evening meal was followed by a swim in the lake which was warmer than the pool. We then had a camp fire and story-telling. Alvaro from Camp Suisse told the story of the 'Lady of the Lake' - Laura - whose face could be seen in rock formation high above our camp.

Mon 18/08/08

- After breakfast we have challenge-style activities around the lake, then after lunch we walk around the lake followed by another swim in the lake. Rachel and Dave (Camp Suisse staff) impress us all by swimming the length of the lake. A chicken dinner is followed by more camp fire activities. The Camp Suisse staff and a couple of leaders stay at camp whilst the other adults take advantage of the opportunity to look around the various sights in the village.

Tues 19/08/08

- We pack up camp, again impressing the staff with how neat and tidy we fold the tents and the care we take to dry them even though they are not our own tents; and then (without being asked) we conduct a full litter sweep of the camp site and leave it tidier than when we arrived (of course we did - we are Scouts!!).
- We then leave Tanay and walk down the steep hill, most are surprised how hard it is to walk down a steep hill.
- Luckily we meet our coach drivers Davy and Mick at the base of the hill and do not have to walk all the way back to the resort.

- We then head for Europe's largest Water Park at Le Bouveret on the banks of Lake Geneva with awesome slides and pools. We enjoy a few hours there before heading back to the Gold Test Centre. Everyone is considerably cleaner than when they arrived at the Aqua park!!!.
- At 5pm a fantastic thunder and lightning storm hits the area, it is amazing to look down on the storm from our accommodation.
- We are so glad that we are not camping any more; they must have really good weather forecasters in Switzerland as this storm was not a minute late or a minute early.
- Food and DVDs see us through the night.

Wed 20/08/2008

- After breakfast we are split into groups according to our ability in mountain biking. The day is then split into a long mountain bike session on a variety of routes, the more experienced reported that it was very challenging.
- The bikes and safety equipment are all new and of a very good standard.
- There was also an archery session under "Camp Suisse rules" (similar to GNAS). Again the field was safe and flat and the equipment new and of a high standard.
- The third activity was a climbing wall. At first the explorers grumbled that they 'can do a climbing wall anywhere'; that was until they saw it - a brand new £180,000 climbing wall with a variety of routes, it was in a large hall above the main centre. The hardest route beat our most experienced climbers initially. They were even supplied chalk and stickies (climbing shoes) and failed.
- This was followed by a quiz night and then early to bed as we have to be up early tomorrow.

Thurs 21/08/08

- Early breakfast and then onto the coach for a trip down the mountain, across the valley and back up the other side where we catch a massive cable car that took us to Glacier 3000 at Les Diablerets.
- At the top they have a viewing point where you could see (and it was a very clear day) the edge of Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn and the Eiger all from the same spot. Simply amazing.
- We then had a go on a railed toboggan run that bills itself as the highest rollercoaster in the world as it is at 3000 meters to start with.
- After this we took a chair lift down onto the Glacier where we walked across it having lunch at a feature known as 'the skittle' which again had memorable views across and down.
- After lunch we walked across the glacial moraine stopping again at a restraint in the middle of nowhere- the uncooked food and staff arrive by helicopter.
- We then continue until we get to another smaller cable car which does 8 people at a time and each trip took 10 minutes so we all had a nice rest waiting to get down the mountain. It had been a safe but demanding walk.
- After the cable car there was a short walk to Gsteid (near Gstaad) where we caught the coach back to the Gold Test Centre. Then followed a late dinner and at 10pm there was a disco for all to take part in. It was meant to stop at 11pm and especially after the exertions of today I thought that all the Scouts would be in bed by 11pm. How wrong I was! Not only the children but several adults demanded an extension to the disco. This finally stopped for the children at midnight and they eventually went to bed. The adults then partied on as Nathan (one of the staff) was celebrating being forty.

Friday 22/08/08

- Some partied into the small hours. (Be assured that we had strict rules about no drinking in front of under 18's, and no one was to get drunk. There were always several fully sober leaders on hand to deal with any emergencies as well as Camp Suisse staff).
- Late breakfast followed by more archery and climbing wall. Some of the older explorers and leaders finally conquered the wall at their second visit. We were offered another hike from a mountain called "Tour de Don" but we were all 'hiked out' and chose the above activities instead. This was followed by a bit of shopping in the local shops (there were not many) and packing.

- Dinner was at 5pm followed by a closing ceremony and award giving. We left the resort just after 6pm. We watched more DVDs on route and again most sleep through the night.

Sat 23/08/08

- We arrive just in time for the ferry and head back to Blighty.
- We say farewell to Davy and Mick at the Chievely Services and then head back to Wales, arriving at 1.45pm at Llanelli.

Notes.

- The terrain for the hikes was safe for the age ranges taking part but it was at times very demanding and the Glacier walk was long. However our only injury (other than blisters) out of a party of 51 was a bruised heel sustained in the Aqua park!!
- The Camp Suisse staff were excellent. They were helpful, skilful and spoke appropriately to our young people. I can recommend Camp Suisse to other Scout Groups.
- The two drivers, Davy and Mick from Weardale Motor Services in Durham, were also excellent and it was no trouble for them to take members of the group who were not hiking on the coach so that they were not left in resort when the rest were out.
- Looking at the various photos of the trip I see many smiling faces and I am aware of several people, young and old, who are rightly proud of their achievements during this trip.
- Prior to the trip Camp Suisse were informed of Section 9 of POR and I was assured that all activity leaders had the necessary UK permits for the activities we undertook.
- Thanks also to Shan Cheesman and Chris Reed for finding generous businesses that provided us with snack foods free of charge for the journey there and back.

Ian Francis

Trip Organiser.