

*Samantha, Chloë and Minke*

## Blog Post

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# Preparing for the Winter Hike Using One's Previous Knowledge/Experience



Picture by Minke Verburg

### **Hello Fellow Adventure Seekers,**

Welcome to the blog of your fellow Canadians plus our favourite Dutchie. We are here to help you combine past personal experiences and recall the new knowledge you require to be better prepared for our final winter trip to Lapland.

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## Recap what we learned before the first hike

Before going on the hike everyone relies on their own personal knowledge and experience. Even when mixed with the information we're given on how to best prepare for such an excursion, we still learn most by doing and actually experiencing the trip for ourselves. Some of the knowledge that we were taught before the hike was how to properly prepare for an autumn hike with layers. Our upper layer includes a base layer, an insulating layer and a shell layer. It is also important to have a fleece/synthetic jacket/down jacket for rest stops. The bottom layer contains your long underpants, hiking pants, and water and windproof pants depending on the conditions. Layering is important for hiking because it allows you easy access to change clothing depending on body temperature and the environmental conditions. It is also important to keep your head, hands and feet warm. We were taught to bring a neck gaiter, half gloves, mittens, a fleece hat, waterproof hiking shoes and insoles. These are necessary things to keep you warm and happy when hiking.

The gear that you take on the hike include a sleeping bag, a sleeping pad and personal hygiene products. Everyone should have gear to eat including a water bottle, a thermos bottle, a thermos cup, a bowl/plate, spoon/fork/knife, matches, hand sanitizer and a garbage bag. These small things make your hiking experience much better. Other gear that is nice to have includes a first aid kit, a map and compass, a knife, head lamps, GPS, a watch, and extra batteries.

The backpack is an important part of the gear. If you have a good, proper fitting backpack it makes carrying your belongings much easier. On top of packing your own gear, it is important to consider what you may be responsible for carrying for the group. Each team must have the tent including the tent poles and pegs, a tarp, a Trangia stove including the burner, handle, fuel, stove base/under board, and a group spoon. You should also consider needing a toilet shovel.

Before the hike we learned some tricks to deciding and preparing the food that we were bringing. You should bring food that is; light to carry, can pack small and you can repack it, food that is simple and fast to prepare, food that can survive cold and warm temperatures, contains lots of energy, and taste good. Food is an important part of a hike. If you are eating well, your mood will be good. That is why it's valuable to try to make the best decisions when preparing food.

During the hike there were opportunities for individuals to take leadership roles. The leader was responsible for guiding the group and could decide where to go and when to take breaks. They heavily relied on the map and the compass to get the group to the destination. It was a valuable skill to learn some basic knowledge on how to read a map and navigate before we went on the hike. We learned how to read maps, identify basic landmarks, and the colour coordination system. Before we went we practiced using a compass by recognizing the compass parts and how to take a bearing on the map. These are skills that we learned before the hike and during the hike we further developed them. It is important to know the basic skills before you go on a hike. If one has previous knowledge it is easier to expand on those skills and improve. We were taught knowledge that was valuable to our overall learning process before the hike that will help us become good adventure educators.

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## Learning Points from the Autumn Hike

The physical opportunity to test our skills on the hike provides us with an opportunity to learn of all the things you cannot be fully prepared for. This includes learning by doing, combining old and new knowledge and constantly reflecting on the experience during the activity and afterwards.

Our reflection sessions, especially in a group setting, allowed for many topics to emerge, a few of which were constant across the entire trip. Using the most recurring reflection topics such as leadership, group cohesion and teamwork we can highlight which elements are most important to change or improve for the winter hike. Combining our past experiences from the winter trip and the group dynamics that emerged, we also now can think about the leadership quadrant and our group studies in Schools on the Move to better the roles that emerge within a group. Coming to realizations such as whether you are a driver, a thinker, or someone who considers the emotions in a group, you can really optimize the role you play to create a well-functioning group. In a group who works well together comes positive energy, increased group cohesion and a greater chance of achieving the task.

Reflecting in an open and comfortable environment allows for many truths and ideas to be bounced around amongst individuals. These shared ideas often help individuals to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses within a group. For the purpose of better preparing for the winter hike, ask yourself: what do you personally need to survive this next trip? What skills and qualities do you bring to the group? What do you recognize as personal weaknesses and wish to strengthen for the second trip? Samantha quickly recognized the importance of taking proper precautions when planning for a good night of sleep in the tent. To better her experience, she will wear long underwear and a fleece layer on both the top and the bottom. She will also plan for an extra pair of socks to sleep in and make small detailed adjustments such as rolling the bottom of the sleeping bag to better trap the warmth within the sleeping bag. Minke suggests that the hot water bottle in your sleeping bag may be enough to keep you warm throughout the night. Exercising before bed has its benefits in terms of creating body warmth, however it also increases adrenaline and can interfere with your ability to fall quickly to sleep while you are still warm from the exercise. So in this last busy week of organizing and planning our trips home, spending time with the friends we have made and making our final memories, be sure to take some time to reflect on what worked for you in order to really make the most of this second week in Lapland.

The weather was another frequent topic in our group reflection. It is important to consider that it will be cold and may be harder to become motivated and active on those days. In these cases, food, small luxuries such as hand/feet warmers, a good, warm meal to look forward to or one hot chocolate packet per day may be just what it takes to get you through the day. With a good mindset, however you choose to achieve this, makes it much easier to lead and motivate the group whether you are the leader or not and allows you to better overcome any personal challenges that present themselves.

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Unlike the weather and other unpredictable factors that you can try and prepare for, certain aspects of the excursion are completely in your control and can make a huge difference in the success of your trip. The importance of proper food preparation was also an important topic and has a growing importance in our winter trip planning. The importance of providing your body with the energy it requires to maintain its warmth grows indefinitely, especially when planning for a week in the cold. You've had one chance to test whether the food you brought on the fall hike was sufficient. Consider that if it'll be colder, your body will require more to maintain energy levels and stay warm. We may also not be walking all day long but taking part in more vigorous types of physical activity that require very different energy demands. In addition, for those who use nutritional breaks or the snack stops we make as a physical goal throughout the day, when you have poorly prepared the food that will give you the energy to continue, it could make for several long days. In conclusion, although we have the wilderness huts to depend on at night and we may not be walking for 6 or more hours a day, it is important to not become lazy in your planning and to use this opportunity to better our second experience in Lapland.

### Transferring the Learning for the Winter Trip

So now what? It's time to apply all of our knowledge and begin preparing ourselves for what is many of ours' last excursion in Finland. Below, find a brief summary of what we've gathered to be most important to remember:

- Sini's hot bottle tip; in our opinion, THE most effective method of trapping the warmth at night.
- Do NOT mentally settle on having wilderness huts available. Whether or not in the event of an emergency, it is important to be as prepared as possible for the cold.
- Review the gear Azzura had us consider taking and mix this with your reflection of what worked for you last time.
- Extra warm insoles and/or new socks for at camp/night.
- Double gloves; maybe the big mittens aren't flexible enough to suit the activity.
- Be aware that the weather can play a big role in individual and group processes. Not letting rainy days or the cold ruin your day.
- Don't pack lightly for convenience but use your resources to the best of your ability. Layer properly and in accordance to the activity you want to participate in (depending on sweating, exposure to the cold, etc).
- Take the time to prepare your food as this is your fuel. Eat well and pack food to prepare warm meals.
- Keep in mind that this is our last opportunity to function as a team. With all of the above in mind, let's make the most of our last week together.





Thermos bottle, Water bottle, Hot water bottle, Hiking boots, Insoles, Insulating insoles, Thermal shirt, fleece/synthetic layer, down/synthetic jacket, wind+rainproof jacket, Sleepingbag fit for freezing temperatures, Inlay for sleeping bag, Well insulated sleeping pad, High ski socks, Hiking socks, Woolen socks, Thick waterproof gloves, Thin gloves (which fit in the thick ones), Thermal pants, Hiking pants, Rain pants, Ski pants, Backpack + rain cover, Thick hat, Thinner hat, Buff, Ski goggles, Sitting pad, Knife, Powerbank, Handsanitizer, Hand-warmers, Compass, Tissues.