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The Classroom

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Paddling Tinnsja

Time here in Bø is flying by already! Classes are now in full swing and being friluftsliv (outdoor life) students we are constantly packing and unpacking for trips. Our class has already been on two trips, the first one a four-day backpacking trip in the mountains at an area not far from Bø called Lifjell and the second trip a five-day canoeing trip. For the outdoor course, we spend class time in Bø preparing for trips and concluding previous trips. This includes learning some techniques, making a detailed trip plan and discussing goals for the trip. The course is focused on teaching us basic outdoor life skills and learning how to teach others to use these skills as well. For example, during the backpacking trip we spent time practicing navigation, learning about the environment (what berries, mushrooms and even moss we can eat), studying how Norwegian culture has been influenced by the outdoors, learning first aid and maybe most importantly learning how to stay dry and warm.

During the canoeing trip, we spent the first two days learning the strokes on lakes and practicing the techniques using games. It was important for us to have the ability to use the strokes properly because on the last three days we were on the river where we had to paddle through rapids, learn how to cross the river and catch eddys (calm water). Paddling on the moving water was quite a thrill! Luckily I made it through the trip (barely) without capsizing! It was a very rewarding trip because there were many opportunities to challenge yourself on the river. The canoeing trip was such a great experience because I went from being a beginner on the first day to paddling a class 3 rapid on the last 2 days and also the international students were grouped with the Norwegian students for this trip so it was so great to meet more Norwegian students and build a relationship with them during the trip. We still have a six-day coastline trip and also a ten-day study trip ahead of us, so exciting!

The other classes that I am taking are Norwegian Language, Ecophilosophy and The Individual, Environment and Society. Norwegian Language and Ecophilosophy are similar to classes back at Linfield. They are in a classroom setting and we have papers and tests; however, there is much less homework than classes at Linfield. The Individual, Environment and Society class is taught in a different manner. The class is focused on the concept of Friluftsliv, which translates in English as “free air life”. This idea is important to Norwegian culture. It doesn’t just mean spending time in the outdoors, it includes really being present in nature and using the time outdoors to revive and replenish yourself. It is a hard concept to define, but it is understood by Norwegians that it involves the body,

feelings and thoughts. To study this Norwegian perception in class we do different hikes around the area and study a new subject on each hike. On the first hike we looked at Norwegian cottages in the mountains, how they have changed throughout the years and whether they are a blessing or a curse for outdoor life. For the second hike we discussed the relationship that Norwegians have with nature, why it is so important to them and if there is a difference in this relationship in other countries. The scheduling of classes here is quite hard to get used to because every week is different due to the trips for outdoor life class, but it keeps every week new and exciting. Hopefully, this gives you a good insight to what this program is like! Time for me to go, farvel!

Sara