

## “10 days on the sunny side of the Alps”

Article written by participant Declan Stock for the “Summit” magazine about the Mountain Adventure Camp in Slovenia 2008



10 days on the sunny side of the Alps for a UIAA youth mountain camp; rather a treat really. Now I'd be a liar if I said it was what I expected, but it turned out to be all the better for that. We were based in a 'mountain hut' in the valley of Bavsica, high up in the Slovenian part of the Julian Alps. Now while I can agree it was in the mountains, I have never once seen a hut that palatial... And people from across the continent to fill it.

The camp was run by a team of seven Slovenian students. Urosh, an experienced mountain leader, ran the camp. “Dolly” cooked and organised three meals a day for us. Luka, a trainee medic, kept us all healthy and in touch with each other with his amazing linguistic skills in six languages. The rest of the Slovenes cajoled, chivvied, encouraged and entertained us throughout the 7 days and managed to ensure a smooth running and very enjoyable camp.



For a mountain camp, I was surprised how little straight mountaineering there was in the whole trip, but what there was, justified the whole expedition for me. On the first mountain day we climbed a 2,300m peak, and on the way back I had my first experience of scree running, which was really exhilarating. There was a little disappointment on our second and last mountain day as around 5am bad weather closed in (pretty much when we arrived) and a thunderstorm

established itself round the peak we were planning to climb, meaning that the ascent was out of the question. We traipsed back to the mountain 'hut' and climbed one of the numerous but far less dramatic peaks above it.



One of the evenings that surprised me was a rather unusual treasure hunt, followed by a night bivvying. In the dark of night we sought five candles left burning in and around an old, dilapidated fort high up above a mountain pass with a long and winding path leading up to it. Attached to each candle was a cryptic clue in a different language. Once we had found and deciphered all 5 clues we

finally found the treasure... A box full of snacks for our night.

The last of our activities was rafting. While not my favourite pastime, it was not difficult to enjoy. We spent a day paddling down a river which was mostly calm but had some more interesting patches of white water. It was most a slow and relaxed day with some frantic interludes.

On two days we did what was known as adventure racing, a kind of variant on orienteering. We still had to navigate to checkpoints but once we arrived, a task awaited us... when this was completed we were ranked on our successes and failures. I thought the most enjoyable of these challenges without doubt was the climbing based one, but that is not to say the rest were disappointing.

As for the people there, they were the icing on the cake. Although I was the only Brit it was not hard to get on with the people there, even though they came from far and wide (well some not very far, but others...). With Slovenians, Russians, Italians, Bosnians and Herzegovinians plus yours truly there were 5 languages spoken in the hut. Although this led to a few communication problems, what went on was all good natured.

For the ten days I was there, I was surprised to find myself doing new things, and also doing things long known to me but with a twist I wouldn't have thought of. So all told, I think it was a great trip, and I hope the first of many.