

Next Challenge News – July 09 – Update from Norway

Dear Friends

It has just gone midnight and it is dark outside.

This may not seem noteworthy to you but it is one of the first times that I have seen any darkness for some weeks. I'm writing from a wooden hut in Northern Norway on the penultimate day of my expedition with BSES. As a result there will be no flashy PDF this month. What we have instead is a live update on the road and off the cuff.

BSES Norway - <http://thenextchallenge.org/current-tim/bses-norway/>

I am tired. I haven't shaved for a month. I don't smell so good and I am very happy. This has been a month to remember. With 36 teenagers and a leader team of some of the country's most impressive outdoor instructors, it has been a real privilege to be here. I have spent the entire duration camped in a small tent except the few nights sleeping in a waterproof bivi bag beneath the glacier. The scene atop the ice cap here was like none I have seen before. A vast ocean of white breaking only for a horizon of jagged peaks.

We have climbed the highest peak in Arctic Norway and washed in the glacial flow. We have seen the midnight sun, the arctic eagle and even, so they claim, arctic monkeys. We have covered rope skills and ice axe breaking. We have lived off ration packs, corned beef and rice pudding. There have been tears and tantrums, cheers and thankful faces. The team, leaders and young explorers alike, have been a constant reason to smile throughout my stay in Norway and will keep me beaming all the way home.

Some other highlights include dodging jelly fish as I swam across the fjord above base camp, watching my friend Reg "The Omeleteer" float a stove on a life jacket to cook an egg at sea, getting kicked out of what we thought was an open hut but was in fact a guest house and sneaking out of base camp to have a secret leader team sauna.

I have dozens of photos, none of which do justice to the experience but I have attached just one. The rock in foreground is "Windy Alley" where I bivouaced for 6 nights. The fjord in the middle of the picture is the one I swam across, somewhere inbetween is our base camp and behind me is the glacial snout. That photo was taken around 9pm.



Cycling Home - <http://thenextchallenge.org/current-tim/cycling-home-from-norway/>

On Monday I will wave off my new friends at the airport and saddle up on my old friend Bob (the Beast Of Burden). I had planned to cycle some 1000 miles to Oslo over 3 weeks and then hitch a ride home with a friend. That plan has changed. My friend is no longer passing through when I am which leaves me with two

options: fly home from Oslo or keep cycling.

I think we all know which one I'm going for.

I still haven't got a map, route plan or much idea of the added distance but I would really rather start cycling than spend time working all of that out. I just Googled the ferries home from Denmark (Esbjerg to Harwich) and it was very expensive (£250) so if anyone has any bright ideas then please let me know. Text message is best.

The Next Challenge

Regardless of the above, I need to be back in the UK for September 14th when Rob Cousins starts his Coast-to-Coast Triathlon. I'm part of his support crew. We'll be driving up to the Lake District on the Monday and, weather permitting, he will run, swim and bike his way from the west coast to the east. We still need a kayaker to support his swim across Coniston and are also looking for accommodation in Robin Hood's Bay - <http://thenextchallenge.org/current-other/coast-to-coast-triathlon/>

Francis Charlesworth should be nearing the end of his attempt to walk the Sutherland Trail about now - <http://thenextchallenge.org/current-other/the-k2-kid/>

In October, I plan to ride a rickshaw from Lands End to John O'Groats. It seems even more farcical to type that out when I still have the small matter of 1,500 miles between me and my house (that's a guess, see above) but that is my plan. Although I still have to work out how the rickshaw gets to the start line and back from the finish... Any thoughts?

I will be updating my website with some diary entries and live updates as I cycle. But now, I am off to rest my legs ready for the long journey home.

Thanks for reading,
Tim.