

Trollheimen 1993

This is the story about the experiences of a Norwegian with very little exercise prior to the struggle, backpacking in Trollheimen July 4 - 8 1993.

I did this in company with a group of well-trained people from Karlskoga who were active in the local club of "Friluftsrämjandet" (promoting out-door living). Well in advance, we had received a proposal for where we should go, stay overnight, what to see etc. I will refer to this itinerary later in my story.

The whole thing started when Bengt Gustavsson asked me if I would like to accompany him on a hike in the Norwegian mountains. That aroused memories of hikes I had done 20 years earlier. It seemed like a very good idea and I accepted the invitation with great expectations. Bengt and I started to plan for the trip months in advance.

At last the time for the departure for the mountains came. I stayed over night at Bengts place in Karlskoga. We tried to distribute the weight of the tent, cooking gear, food etc as evenly as possible and packed the clothes and things which should stay in the car while we were hiking in a separate bag. Early next morning we met some of the group at a meeting point in Karlskoga and agreed on travelling details like meeting points etc. Bengt and I went by ourselves. We



wanted to stop by with some friends at Gjøvik at Lake Mjösa but were not the last ones to arrive at Rønning. This was the place where all should meet and from where we should start the actual hike next day. The group of people we meet there was actually two different groups. One group should stay in the log cabin and do shorter walks in the surrounding while the other did the longer hike. The group staying behind should also provide transport to the starting point and fetch us at the end point of the hike. Very practical!

Sunday morning we went by cars to Jölhaugen where my camera immediately stopped working. It was a heavy thing with two objectives and it was just as well! It was one thing I did not have to carry. The 20 kg + backpack was more than enough! With the heavy backpacks well attached to our backs we started walking along the track leading to Jöldalshytta. The track was good enough for tractors and four wheel driven cars and bicycles. We were passed by several groups on mountain bikes. At Jöldalshytta we separated from our drivers who had accompanied us so far. We carried on for some kilometres through a few showers of rain. In the afternoon we found a very nice place to camp for the night. The ground was covered with low growing heather and brush on which we could raise the tent and roll out the sleeping bag. So far so good! I slept through the night like a log.

Monday wasn't old when the rain hit us. The clouds were hanging low over Geithetta. The itinerary said: "along the track over the edge of Geithetta to Slettåa. Fine view to the three peaks of Trollhetta and the gorge of Litlhelvete. We will camp above the tree line".

The reality was that we trudged in pouring rain through the vegetation at the bottom of the valley, splashing through stretches of swamps getting soaked by splashes from branches releasing the water when being shaken. The temperature was about 5 degrees centigrade and there was still snow on the northern slopes.



Towards the evening everything was soaking wet and we abandoned the plan to camp in the open. We needed to get all our gear dried so we went to the Mountain Lodge Trollheimshytta. That was nice! We had a nice three-course dinner with salmon and spent the evening in front of the open fireplace.

On Tuesday morning all was dry and we were prepared for the next part of the hike: "We stay at our camp...." Not a chance! We started on the Wednesday stretch instead: "Along the trail over the Mellomfjellet and Riaren past the Kamtjörnin to Tverrbekken....through dramatically mountainous scenery"

When we left Trollheimshytta the snow had started to fall. At 1000 meter the snowfall was steady and it was blowing. At 1250 meter there was a thick layer of snow. When we had passed the ridge and we had come a bit in on the Mellomfjellet mountains we encountered deep snow. Some was new and some was from last winter. The trail marks was only visible occasionally and some times we had to dig them out to make sure we were on the trail. The scenery was only a white blur of snow but we had the wind from behind and that was not so bad. It was quite tough walking and the ones who went up front had a hard job. We took turns in finding the trail and clearing the way for the rest. However, the better-trained guys did most of the job.

We had started at about half past ten in the morning. At ten o'clock in the evening we crawled over the edge of the Riaren using the last of the remaining energy and slid and staggered down the verge on the other side. We continued through what was supposed to be the "botanical field" we should have enjoyed on Thursday according to the itinerary. We did see occasional pins with names of the species but that was all.

We started to discuss whether we should camp in the snow or if we should continue further down below the snows. We decided to camp and started to look for suitable places for the tents. Bengt and I managed to get one of the better places even if it will never get any stars in any guidebook for campers. When we were working with raising the tent we managed to break one of the rods which is shaping the tent. Bengt's tent is a modern low profile, low weight, mountain-tent of the "tunnel" type. The rod consists of several sections fitting into each other in sleeves and one of the sleeves just split. We had a spare one but we were not really in the

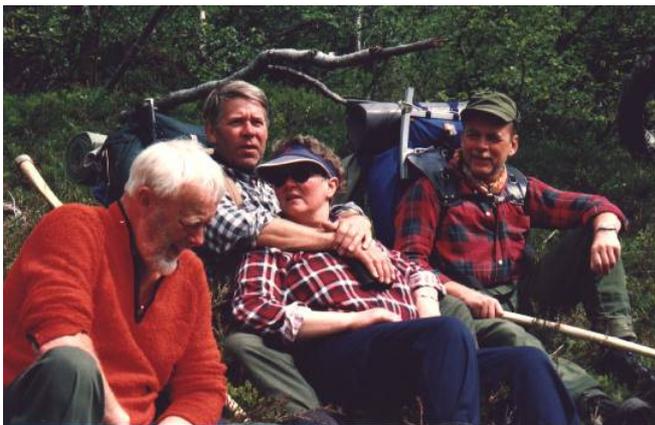


shape to exchange the broken piece of the rod with a new one in the cold and the wind. However, two of the guys with plenty of energy and well-trained bodies, Hans and Erik, helped us out. They fixed the rod and put up the tent and came to tell us when it was ready to use. All this while I could take shelter in Anita's and Erik's tent where I could change clothes to something more dry. That was service that was really appreciated!

When I entered our tent Bengt was already in his sleeping bag. I could not see any part of him since he was entirely inside the bag and had closed the little hole on top with his hat. We were quite warm inside the sleeping bags and I managed to get some sleep despite the wind that almost flattened the tent down on our bodies from time to time. The wind was hard and it was banging like cannon shots. I was sometimes wondering if we would just blow away with us all but we were still at the same place the next morning. One line had broken. Otherwise, the tent had managed extremely well to withstand the tough conditions.



I had to put on the same clothes I had the day before. My woollen long johns were steaming when I pulled them up my warm legs. Woollen underwear is fantastic. It keeps you warm even when it is wet. We helped each other to get packed for the departure for the last leg of our hike. I had had it up to here when it comes to winter summertime. I was starting to freeze before everybody was ready to go. So, I started a little ahead of the others. I had to get warmed up. Soon I was far ahead of the others but had regained the warmth and was feeling quite comfortable. We had had something to eat before we started walking, so I wasn't too hungry. After a while I arrived at gorge with a natural snow-bridge. I was uncertain if it would carry my weight, so I had to wait for the rest. Hasse was the first to arrive. We discussed the matter and Hasse thought he had found a safe way and was prepared to try it. It worked and followed. It was about 6 meters down to the cold water of creek at the bottom of the gorge.



The snow on the ground was soon finished as we descended. After a while we met three girls on the way up. When we had told them about the snow ahead they changed their mind about hiking to Trollheimshytta.

The trail became steeper. The wind wasn't so hard and not so cold any more. We crossed the tree-line again and nature became green. We started to believe in a life after this. After a while we could see

Gjevilsvasshytta lodge and Gjevilsattnet lake. I went on like I had all the energy in the world. I reached Gjevilsvasshytta first of all. I took off my backpack and boots. I stripped what was left of my ripped rain trousers and threw it in a dustbin together with my cap. They had done enough and now it was finished!

Bengt came as the next in our group just a quarter of an hour later. Now I was so enlightened I could give him a hand getting his backpack off and getting out of the boots and into something more comfortable. I was not in the mood to camp another night. I was taking a room at the lodge. Most of the people did as I, but Rune and Erik insisted in camping and so they did. They went back to Gravbekken (creek) and put up their tent. Some honest nature lovers!



Thursday morning came with wonderful weather, warm and dry. All our gear was dry. We had a lovely breakfast and suddenly, we were fit for fight again! I would never have believed that the day before! We had a wonderful day in bright sunshine walking along the lake Gjevilsvatnet and a bit up the mountains. We saw wild orchids, breathtaking scenery and a Norwegian "Seter".

In the afternoon we checked out and put up the tent at the place where Rune and Erik were camping since last night. We had a very nice evening in front of the open camp fire together with our companions talking about how fast weather can change in the mountains and what big difference it makes.

The next morning Bengt and I left the rest of the group. We should drive back via Röros towards places where we could enjoy summer. We had a look at Röros and we also managed to visit my cousin in Drevsjö.

The summer never became very warm that year. Perhaps, it was symptomatic that we had seen spring flowers, mid-summer flowers and syringes side by side. We later heard that the summer in Trollheimen hadn't been that cold in July in 70 years. We had surely picked the right time to go there!

Summing it all up, it was a fantastic experience to remember for the rest of my life. I would also like to thank all my companions on that trip for their friendship and helpfulness!

Many thanks to you all!