From a Hiker’s Journal

Tasha Wright - Hike Group 6

I was assigned to hike group 6, the least intense of the full pack hikes. I really wanted to do a full pack hike, but my knee had been acting up the last couple days so I got it taped and chose my easiest option.

The first day of the hike was only uphill, and looking back, I found it the hardest. We broke for lunch in the middle of the road and took a nap. If anyone had walked by, they would’ve seen 9 teens and 2 adults sacked out in and beside the road. I kept reminding my group that, had I been the traveler, I would’ve robbed us, but they assured me that the Swiss are good, upstanding folk.

For dinner we had cheesy garlic rice. The hike meals are often pasta-based, but because I couldn’t eat gluten, we actually got some more exotic meals. We camped in this massive dent in the rock, like an enormous alcove. There was a small river, and the view looked out on a massive valley and another mountain across from us. It rained quite fiercely that night but our tents held, and nothing important got wet. I had a nightmare I left my stuff outside and woke up at 1 or 2am to check that our shoes were alright. According to my tent mates I was actually talking about it in my sleep.

It was freezing and windy in the morning, and we all huddled like penguins around the camp stove. Then Johannes saw a human creeping along the rocks by the alcove above us. A little while later we realized it was a hunter stalking a goat. Slowly the hunter stopped moving and then the goat was falling before we even heard the shot. It was like watching a movie, it all happened right before our eyes. We saw the hunter spot, stalk, and then shoot a goat. The goat fell a couple meters and then we saw a bit of red as the hunter gutted it, then carried the massive goat, the size of the guy himself, away on his shoulders.

Most of us took another nap that lunchtime while Mike tried, without success, to hunt the marmots. Our second campsite was just as amazing. It was this little dent in these large rolling hills with knee-high grass overlooking a lake and beyond that, mountains. That night we had coconut lentil curry.

The third day was very chilly as well. We walked up to one of the lakes and dipped our feet in. The lake was beside a gondola and large hotel, and it was a Sunday, so there were many tourists around the lake as well.

We claimed a spot and the tourists gave us a wide berth, either because we smelled or looked like real rough-and-tough hikers. Johannes told us if we managed to catch a duck he would cook it for us, so we tried to hunt it with hiking poles. We failed, of course.

Our third camping spot was as breathtaking as the first two; it was right below a massive cliff, at the end of a valley full of grassy hills surrounded by mountains. We drew our water from a small lake, so we had to boil it before we could drink it.

That night it was insanely windy, but I love extreme weather so I actually slept really well. It was very exciting to watch the tent shake and bend but still be very warm.

The last day was supposedly the most difficult, but we found it easy. There was a steep ascent in the beginning, but we mostly walked along the ridge of the mountain. There were times where we were walking on a path maybe a meter wide with sheer drops on either side, and wind strong enough to knock a small child over. Most of the time we couldn’t see more than 20 feet because of the clouds.

It was terribly cold on the mountain, but that didn’t stop us from getting ice cream at the end of the hike. All in all, it was an amazing hike. I didn’t go into detail about the people on my hike in this, but they were the ones that made it so incredible.