

# Winter in the woods



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## 1. My winter experiences

This trip has been a total new experience for me, from the point of view of visiting a different place, and from the point of view of the education that I want to teach in the future. Staying in the middle of the mountains of Lifjell has been one of the most interesting activities that, in my opinion, we have done during the outdoor education course. In general, I have enjoyed all of them, but this trip has been one of the most important experiences of the Erasmus because several factors.

The first factor I would like to talk about is the link that this type of excursions reinforce between the people of the class. Even if the trip was just two days, being all together working, resting and eating makes us get closer to each other really quickly. Also, I think that, in my case, I have strengthened my relationship with some classmates I didn't have that much confidence with before.

After the trip there was a debate with the dates of it because some people thought that the experience would have been more beneficial for getting closer to each other, if we had gone earlier to Jonbbu during this course. It would have been a main help for our relationships, but the weather in January or February was not the ideal for the activities that we did in the trip. Nevertheless, the experience has changed the way of seeing my classmates from now on.

Another important factor has been the new world that this trip has supposed to me. I come from a place where it doesn't snow since 1960, and the people who wants to see the snow or ski need to go to other places in Spain or leave the country. In my case, I have only seen the snow twice and I was so small, so this winter trip and Norway, in general, have been new sensations for me. Feeling the temperatures, eating in a campfire or just being in the snow are those experiences that, maybe, if I was not from where I am, I would not enjoy them as much as I do it right now. But there has been an activity that, above the rest, has made me feel like if I was a child learning how to ride a bike. This activity is the cross-country ski.

Even if you have never done this sport before, with practise you can hold your own in the first lessons. This was not my case. It has always been difficult for me to do this type of sports were the balance is crucial, and in this situation, there was a new field where I was trying not to fall. Also, I had difficulties when a good technique was required for going up on a hill and for braking a descent.

Even though all the problems that I had to overcome with effort and the help of the classmates, at the end, it was an experience that I am glad to have lived. My conclusion of the trip is that the laughs, the persistence, the satisfaction and the knowledge learnt were worth it.

## 2. Didactic unit

This winter trip that you are going to make with your class is going to be in the youth centre called Jonnbu in the middle of the mountains in Lifjell. The trip is going to last two days and it is going to be during the first week of March, because the temperatures in these dates are not that low, but there is still a lot of snow on the area. This gives the opportunity to make activities and teach knowledge that is related to the snowy places in the nature.

In this case you are in a 5 years old class with 20 children. They are not used to this type of excursions, so it is something new for them too. You will arrive to the centre around 10 o'clock in the morning and, the second day, you will leave the place around 2 o'clock in the afternoon. There is time enough for preparing different activities that can be done during the day or during the night, and outdoor or indoor.

The first thing to do when you all arrive is going into the centre and divide the children in two groups of 10 students. With each group there is going to be one adult with all his/her winter clothes organized on the floor of the room. As the teacher, the children do the same with their clothes and stay in front of him. Then they will start an assembly where the teacher will be the one's who says who can or cannot speak. The teacher will ask the children which clothes goes first and they will put on their clothes.

This is a small activity to do before going out, that helps the children to learn what is required for winter areas and, also, it is the safest way of knowing that all your students are prepared for being outdoors in the snow without any cold problem. After doing it, it is time to go outside.

When you are all outside, it is time to do one activity with the snow. Before starting to build with the snow you can tell them a riddle of an animal that is in the area, so they must guess it. When all the children know the animal that you are talking about and they have an idea of how it is in their mind, you can divide them in 4 groups of 5

children. The objective of the activity will be to create the winter animal that we are talking about with the blocks of snow and the plastic tools that you can supply to them. In this situation your role will be guiding them to have the same idea on mind and to help them in anything that they can have difficulties during the process. And when they finish, you can ask the different groups some questions about what they have done and what their classmates have done.

The activity is going to help them to cooperate (something that at these ages is difficult to find), to be creative, to get closer to some characteristics of the snow and to create a link between the area and its nature life being.

When this activity is finished you should take a break for having lunch with the children in the area. This is an important opportunity to be do a campfire with them and teach them the different types of it and how some food is done in a fire like this. This is a good way of teaching them, while they are relaxed after working and enjoying their meal outdoors.

After letting them to play freely in the area for 30 minutes you can introduce some activities where they can practise their motor skills. For example:

- Sliding a slope with mattresses individually, in pairs or in small groups. Promoting the balance

- Dividing the class in two groups that will not be competing between them. Each group must be also divided in two rows that should be in parallel, and where the children should look to their groupmate in front of him. The game will consist in making arrive different elements of the environment from one point of the row to the other. They must cross with the other row of the group elements like snowballs, pine cones or small rocks. Promoting the launch and the reception.

- Jumping into a deep snowy zone where they can't be hurt by the ground and try to create an angel with their body. Promoting jumping and displacement.

After having a warm and energetic dinner inside de building at 6 or 7, you must prepare them for going out again -now they can start to remember which clothes they need, and which one go first- and go out to see the sky during the night with you and another teacher. They will be calmed, so you can use that time to tell them a short story where some of the characters are the one's who give life to the constellations.

For example, the Ursa Major and the Ursa menor are two bears, or Leo and Taurus are a lion and a bull. While telling the story, they can be lied on the snow watching the stars in the sky and searching for any figure or shape that they can imagine. Also, you should introduce the figure of some of the constellations that you have talked about and can be seen in the night in that moment.

This activity introduces the children in the astronomy world and teach them some concepts of this subject that will probably be new for them because their young age, without being boring or too heavy for them. Also, it is a didactic way of using the outdoors affordances that a poor illuminated area can give you.

The second day starts with a powerful breakfast that gives the students the energy for carrying through the last hours of the winter trip. After it, you must stay indoors with them for create a small debate that will help the excursion that you are going to do in the area. The debate will consist in asking about which animals they think can we find in the mountains that they are right now. While writing all the examples that they will say, you have to be sure that all the children know the different creatures that the rest are talking about. It is important to make them all have the visual idea on their mind of each animal.

When you finish the debate, it is the time to prepare the class for going out like the day before. In this case, the excursion will be done with small snow shoes for making their walk easier throw the snow around the area next to the youth centre. They should be divided in two groups again for making the small trip more relaxing. It should be the most noiseless that it could because the objective will be to find some small or big animals that live wildly in the area. It is a small walk through the woods where the children have to search different animals and the tracks or marks that they leave in the nature. While they try to find these, you should explain them some of the animals that really are in the area, and the routine actions that can be seen or followed in a place like the one the children are right now.

This activity is going to promote their exploration in the area and their skill of concentration in a topic that they really enjoy and live in real life. At the same time that they improve their motor skills with the snow shoes, they learn new knowledge linked with the wildlife in this nature area.

After the excursion, for finishing the day, they can have lunch with a campfire again and you can motivate them to try to explain the animals and tracks that they have seen to the other classmates. It is a great opportunity to remind what they have seen and, also, what they thought that they were going to see, and it wasn't there.

The whole winter trip is a new outdoor experience for them that can teach them new scientist knowledge, while it also promotes their motor, creativity, exploring, safety, and cooperating skills. It is an extraordinary opportunity that can improve their education in a way that a traditional indoor methodology can't. Using a lot of the affordances that this nature area in Lifjell offers.

There would be needed some materials from your own place and some from the same youth centre. And you would need the help of another teacher that would support you or one of the workers of the centre, that are more used to the area and could help you with the knowledge needed for the different activities.

