

# Notes and Thoughts on the NUIGKC Alps Trips

*This is a compilation of opinions from paddlers who went on the 2010 trip. Several of the paddlers have been on more than one of these trips before. The idea is to build on previous experience to ensure that subsequent trips get even better and that are not hindered by problems that have been experienced already. — Ross Lynch, July 2010*

## Goals

It is important to get an idea of each member's goals and expectations for the trip. These might include working on a particular aspect of their paddling (e.g. want to get experience with waterfalls); doing some hiking, mountain biking, etc.; chilling out and having a holiday; hardcore paddling holiday (e.g. two rivers every day); getting some professional coaching, etc.

These should be written down during the planning phase and things should be geared towards suiting what the group wants to do.

## Coming for a Portion of the Trip

There is general consensus that anyone joining the group for part of the trip should do so at the start. Because of the intensive nature of the paddling (i.e. every day), progression is quick. People joining the trip mid-way through are unlikely to be at the same standard as those who have several days boating under their belts.

## Minimum Standard

A minimum skills level must be decided during the planning phase. In the trip's current format, a solid moving-water roll and successful experience on grade III water (e.g. dry-head runs of the Boluisce on medium-high water) should be a bare minimum. Some rescue experience is also necessary.

## Van Hire

Van drivers should be organised before the rest of the group buys flights. The more people insured on the van, the more flexibility the group has. And it costs nothing extra.

The club now has van roof racks.

## Car Hire

At least two people should be insured on each car. Injury is a real possibility and it could be disastrous to have a car out of action.

It is everyone's responsibility to keep the vehicles clean and tidy – not just the drivers'.

## Locations

Obviously this will change year to year, but it has been suggested that the Soca in Slovenia would be an ideal place to start the trip, with maybe four or five days spent there. The Soca has had reliable levels for the last few years, and is the perfect place to ease into Alpine paddling,

with everything from grade II-IV+. After this the group can move to France or Italy as is suitable.

Italy does not have a lot of lower-grade runs, so this would be best for the second half of the trip. France has had very high levels during this season for the last three years. If the levels are right in France, it has enough variety of runs to start the trip there, or to spend the entire trip there.

It is imperative that all hired vehicles are free to travel through Italy, France and Slovenia.

## **Group Size**

It has been suggested that in its current format, the trip can best cater for 12 people. If the size is to increase, the model will need to change, with specific roles being assumed by people and rotas for tasks. In brief, it will need much more organisation and commitment by individuals.

## **Safety and Rescue Practise**

Due to the lack of rain at the time of year, and because people will have been busy with exams, it is a good idea to devote at least half a day (more if necessary) to safety and rescue skills early in the trip. Generally speaking people are paddling pushier water than they're used to at home – swims are likely. People should get in plenty of practise: swimming in fast water and turbulent eddies, roping, tethered rescues, boat chasing, etc.

## **Food**

To avoid waste of food and to ensure that people eat well (very important with so much exercise), two or three people should be assigned to buy the food and keep an inventory of it. Others can cook and wash up, but only this small group should buy the food.

Everyone needs to be ensure to put away food when they're finished using it and keep the general food stuff clean. More containers (e.g. Tupperware boxes) for storing food would be valuable. A coolbox would also be an excellent investment.

Everyone coming on the trip should be able to cook a meal for 12 people on a camping stove. An awareness of basic food safety is also important. The potential for the entire group getting food poisoning is significant. This is as much a minimum requirement as being able to roll, and is not a big expectation from an adult.

Recycling of waste should be done. Campsites cater for this.

Gas cans should be full leaving Ireland. It's a lot easier to do this here than when you run out of gas in the middle of nowhere.

## **Paddling Preparation**

The group should have a few copies of maps, river guides, etc. for Italy, Slovenia and France in advance of going and these should be available to all members of the group.

## **Phones**

Meteor pay-as-you-go phones did not work in Slovenia this year. If this is the case in the future, it would be advisable to look into buying some SIM cards over there. A mobile phone per group on the river is essential. One for every member is preferable.

## **Group Booze**

The consensus is that this doesn't work well. The group size is too big to cater for everyone. Maybe the food-buying group could buy individually for people. This will need to be worked out.

## **Money**

This year money was paid into the group account in installments. This worked well.

## **Tarp**

The large tarp we now have should be inspected before being used next and any necessary minor repairs made. It is heavy-duty and expensive and will last for years if looked after. It is invaluable for bad weather. Strong, good-quality bungy cords need to be used.

## **Eating Out**

It is suggested that where the whole group goes out for a meal, a discount could be arranged with the restaurant in advance.

## **Camping**

People need to have basic camping knowledge – how to put up your tent properly, stake a tarp, etc. Also, people need to have respect for other campers. Try not to sprawl all over the campsite. Try to find an area away from other campers – a big group is going to be noisy. Keep the area clean.

## **Music**

A musical instrument like a guitar is great to have, since most of the socialising is around a bonfire. Speakers and MP3 players are also good to have.

## **Coaching**

This year eight members got professional BCU 5 Star coaching with Tom Parker. Everyone who did it thought that it went very well. It seems to be financially beneficial to wait until you arrive and see what coaches are around, rather than to book in advance.