

## Tour planning for trips on lakes and waterways

Longer trips on lakes and waterways and outings with pedagogic objectives require tour planning. One purpose of a tour-plan is to insure that a trip in an area will be compatible with the abilities of the participants. A tour-plan may also serve to ensure that pedagogic objectives are achieved.

Tour planning should include the goal of the trip, the group of participants involved and the waterway chosen. The planning may be conducted together with the group, if the group is mature enough to become involved in this task. Allowing the group to share the responsibility for planning will strengthen the individual's identification with, and motivation for, the tour.

A tour-plan should not be so inflexible and detailed that it determines how everything will be done underway. A good tour-plan is, rather, an agreement between the excursion participants on common objectives and intentions. *What do we hope to achieve with the trip, and what expectations can we reasonably expect to fulfil?* The plan should be used to insure that a trip will be successful, safe and educational.

Tour planning starts with familiarising oneself with the waterway. To do so, one should preferably use the most detailed maps available. Additional information may often be found in books <sup>1</sup> and articles, or through conversations with people possessing local knowledge. If the trip involves paddling on a river, it is highly advantageous to have a guide who is well acquainted with the stretch of river concerned. Ideally, the guide should have navigated this part of the river personally. If this is not possible, the guide should have familiarised himself with the river as well as possible from the shoreline. Familiarising oneself with the waterway also involves checking that the water level is acceptable. We must be able to predict periods of flooding or extremely low water levels. Both conditions are pertinent when choosing the area for an excursion. Before departure, one should also consult the weather forecast and check for possible flood-warnings. <sup>2</sup> If the forecast is for heavy precipitation or flooding, the trip should be postponed or an alternative area should be selected.

The tour-plan itself begins with studying the map. The plan should ensure that the intended distance is suitable for the physical condition of the participants and the educational and experience-related objectives of the expedition. Planning the paddling tour from the map is, additionally, the first step in evaluating any potential dangers that might be encountered during the trip. *Which shoreline of a lake should be followed under specific wind situations? Where will we encounter the steepest gradients in the river? Where might we encounter conditions in the river which require extra vigilance?* We are thinking, in this case, of narrows, sharp bends, joining waterways or places where the river splits into two or more channels. The place-names along the river, such as "Herefoss" (which contains a term meaning rapids), may also contain important information.

The plan should also ensure that we take along enough food, clothing and equipment. The plan ought to cover possible changes which might result from altered circumstances during the trip. Last but not least, the tour-plan should ensure that we are prepared for any accidents or illnesses that may occur.

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<sup>1</sup> For paddling trips in Norway, we can recommend the book *Hundre padleperler* (One hundred paddling trips) by Øystein Kjøhn. J.W. Cappelen Publishing AS, Oslo 2003.

<sup>2</sup> For weather forecasts, see the website of the Norwegian Meteorological Institute, <http://met.no>. For flood-warnings, see the website of the Norwegian Water Resources and Energy Directorate (NVE), <http://www.nve.no>.

If a situation requires that others need to know of one's whereabouts and extended plans, the tour-plan can be helpful. Remember to give a copy of the tour-plan to someone reliable before departure. Make arrangements for confirming your return in order to avoid unnecessary searches.

With respect to the organisation of the tour-plan, we have positive experience with dividing it into three parts: the tour-plan itself (plan A), an alternative tour-plan (plan B) and an emergency plan (plan C).<sup>3</sup>

*Plan A* is the actual tour-plan, what we intend to do in order to achieve the experience-related and learning aims we have set for ourselves. Using plan A as our starting point, the group should discuss which possible changes one may make during the tour and include these in an alternative plan, *plan B*. Here one should take into account changes in the weather, wind conditions and the flow and level of the water, and not least changes in the group's ability to complete the tour which may have consequences for the group's progress. *Plan C* is a 'crisis plan' which will ensure that we are prepared in the event of mishaps and accidents which may occur during the tour.

#### Practical planning

Much of the planning is done with reference to the map. It is therefore a good idea to make a copy of the map (the tour area) so that the tour route and plan may be drawn. As a supplement to the copy of the map a description and detailed notes should be included.

#### *Plan A*

*Plan A* should include the starting point, route-choice, camping sites and the end point sketched on the map. For instance, which side of the lake should we paddle on in relation to different wind directions, which should be noted with regard to the route choice? On the river the choice of route is given, however it will be advantageous to identify and mark known rapids and swift water, narrows, sharp bends, joining waterways, bridges, dams, deltas and steep gradients. These are 'critical' places which we must pay special attention to during the tour.

Further, the plan should include, on a daily basis, which learning topics we wish to work with and when we wish to work with these topics, as well as which kind of overnighting we have chosen. We must remember that plan A should ensure that we achieve the experience-related and learning aims which we have set ourselves.

The day's paddling leg, the day's learning topics and choice of overnighting form must suit each other in a realistic time-plan. A normal mistake is to plan stages which are too long so that there is not enough time to discuss educational topics during the tour. The time taken is affected by many factors. Remember and provide adequate margins regarding the planning of the time needed – *things take time!*

As we have already mentioned, the group members should be encouraged to actively participate and to be equally responsible. One should aim at the greatest possible participation and initiative from each student. When one has distributed tasks and responsibilities on a day-to-day basis, then this should also be included in plan A.

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<sup>3</sup> Bischoff & Mytting, 1999, p. 67.

Last but not least, plan A should include an overview of what equipment and food the group should take with them. The most important categories in this context are mountain equipment, repair and first aid equipment, as well as food and if needed fuel, if the season requires the use of primus stoves. If the group is inexperienced it will be beneficial to draft a personal food and equipment list as a guide to what is needed for each person.

### *Plan B*

As far as *plan B* is concerned alternative route choices (lakes), alternative campsites and alternative end points should be marked on the map (plan). The notes should also include a variation of the learning topics depending on any adjustments which may be made to the plan.

**The following should be drawn on the copy of the map which includes the tour area:**

- Plan A
  - starting point
  - route choice/stages – day for day
  - campsites
  - end point
  - possible 'critical' places: rapids and swift water, etc.
- Plan B
  - possible alternative route choice/stages from day to day
  - alternative campsites
  - alternative end point
- Plan C
  - inhabited areas where there is a telephone
  - route choice leading away from the area to call for help
  - route choice to discontinue the tour at an earlier point

### *Plan C*

In connection with the crisis plans we should try and find answers to the following questions: *How can we call for help in the event of an accident? Is it possible to use a mobile phone in the area? How long will it take before help arrives? Who is in charge if the situation becomes critical? (If a guide/supervisor does not accompany the group). Is it possible to divide the group, and if so, in what situations?* For tours on waterways and remote areas one should have marked possible routes leading away from the area which one may use to call for help, or to discontinue the tour. Inhabited areas where it is possible to find a telephone should also be marked. In addition, we should have made agreements in advance which will strengthen the group's preparedness in the event of mishaps and accidents which may occur. *What do we do if someone capsizes on calm water? What do we do if someone capsizes in a river? What do we do if someone gets stuck in the river? What do we do if someone injures himself or herself? How do we maintain the body-heat of an injured person? How do we transport the injured person?*

The crisis plan should also include the telephone number for the emergency services in Norway, **113**, for the employer and/or person/institution responsible.