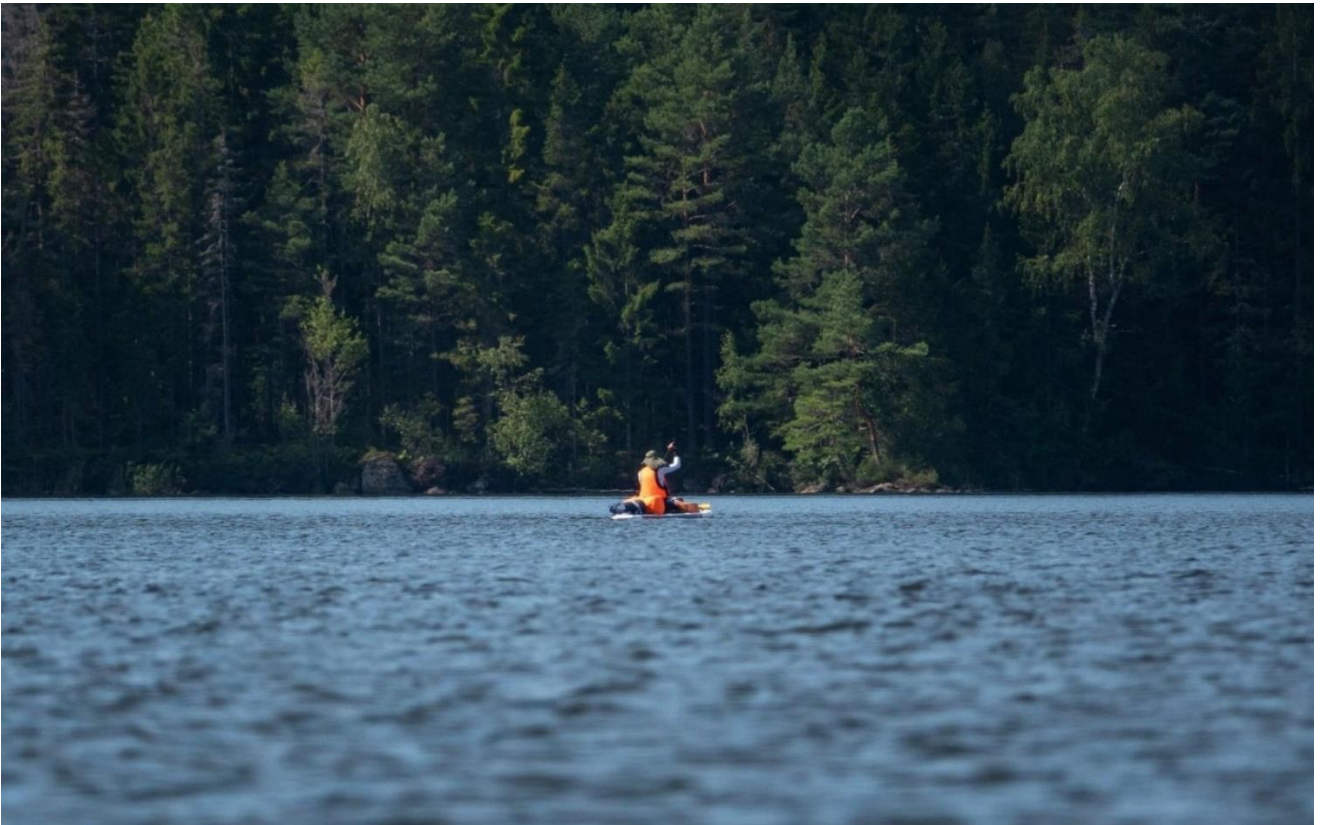


The Lone Paddler



Sweden Summer 2022

Paddleboarding Solo Cross-Country 550 km

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Abstract

This expedition involved a one-man team (Izzy) to paddle on a paddleboard from the East of Sweden to the West, going through Sweden's massive network of natural and man-made waterways. This would be the first time in Imperial's long history of expeditions for a student to take on a paddleboarding expedition. For the obvious reasons that a paddleboard is slower, less efficient, and more difficult to control compared to kayaking or canoeing, Izzy decided to take on the challenge. Due to the unexpected turn of events, the timescale of the expedition significantly exceeded the original plan but the expedition still remains a huge success. The expedition started on the 12th of July and ended on the 5th of September, lasting 55 days and covering 550 km on water and 90 km on land.

This journey wouldn't have been possible without the support from the Exploration Board and Old Centralian's Trust and so for that, I would like to extend my gratitude to the people running these organisations. I didn't know this expedition was a dream that I wanted to come true.

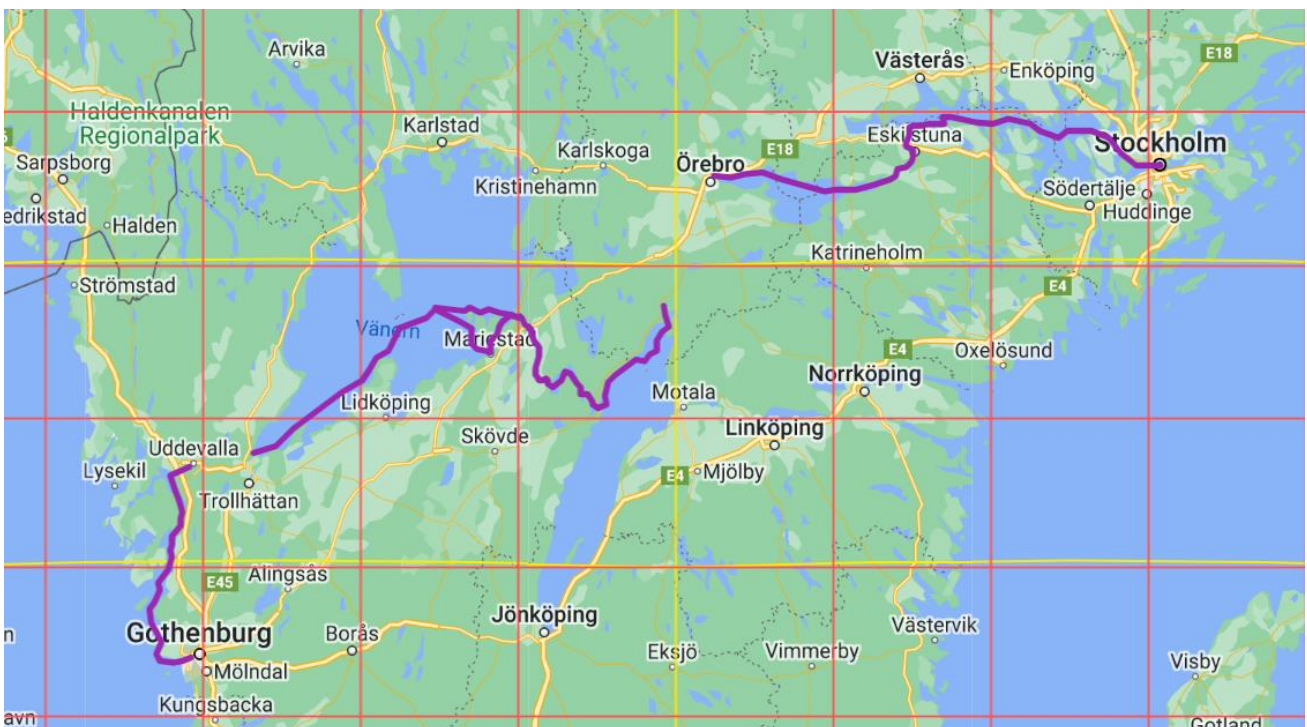
Introduction

Expedition Objectives

- To return home safely having gone through the challenges of long-distance cross-country paddleboard.
- Explore uninhabited and rarely visited archipelagos scattered within the mainland and coastlines of Sweden.
- Visit Lake Vänern, the largest lake in Sweden and all of EU.
- Experience first-hand Sweden's 'Allemansrätten', the Freedom to Roam.
- Pioneer a paddleboarding expedition at Imperial.
- Report on the expedition to provide information and inspire other Imperial College members to explore paddleboarding in Sweden's unique landscape.
- To identify other potential objectives in the area for future expeditions.
- Through photographs and documentation of daily entries, raise awareness on the benefits of the outdoors, exploration and of the Exploration Board.

Expedition Map Overview

Expedition route from Stockholm to Gothenburg.



Expedition Member

Main man: Mohamad Akmal Izzuddin (Izzy)

POC (for daily check in (safety purposes)): Peter Poi

This isn't a report. It's a story.

Izzy

The Difficulty Levels

These levels are meant to paint a picture of how things were out there. At the beginning of every chapter, a brief overview of the day's conditions is described. It is done on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the easiest and 10 when death is on the table.

Levels 1-7: The recorded bits

I record my days quite often. I take pictures, videos, or record voice notes using my phone. Most of the time it's when I'm on land, but quite often while I'm on the water too. However, to be recording means that my attention is now divided between trying to capture the moments and focusing on the expedition. At Difficulty Levels 1-7, I can still afford to compromise my focus for the sake of recording, hence, I dub levels 1-7 as the 'recorded bits'. All the videos and photos that you see are when the situation is between level 1-7.

1 – any water with a tailwind. These waters are easy. I would be listening to podcasts, calling my family, singing about, and snacking comfortably on my board.

2 – flat water. These waters are dead boring. I would be yawning every 10 mins. These waters make the days feel longer than it should.

3 – water with small waves and slow headwinds. These waters are still pretty boring. I would either be paddling mindlessly or listen to podcasts. Or let the voices speak 😊

4 & 5 – soft (5-15 km/h) headwinds. You would think a 1, where I'm being pushed by the wind, is where I would cover the most distance. Unintuitively, a 4/5 is my optimal condition. Even in headwinds, this is where I get all my personal bests at. The wind blowing against the skin creates the impression of being pushed back. I mean it does actually push you back, but at these speeds, it's minimal. But I would be paddling hard as it feels as though I'm being slowed down and therefore need to compensate. The winds at Level 3 and below are too soft I get very relaxed that I end up paddling slower.

6 – moderately strong head/sidewinds (15-20 km/h). In the early days of expedition, a 6 is something I resent. For me it was difficult. It drains me out and slows me down. But as the expedition progressed, as I refined my techniques, my strokes got more efficient, my muscles were adapting to the range of motion, and I had gone through Levels 8, 9, & 10, I would get annoyed at a 6. It's not super difficult but it's not easy either. 6 is the most common condition though. In other words, for the most part of the expedition it was rather difficult. 'Oi oi oi, don't cibai', 'Aipppp. Wind, behave', 'Woi enough la sia' are the things I would say to the elements.

7 – big waves (1m-1.5m), strong head/sidewinds (>25km/h), extended periods of sidewinds, white horses visible regularly. A 7 is frustrating. *Quite* frustrating. It's difficult, the waves are crashing into you, you're wet, you're cold, you're uncomfortable, you have a long way to go, and it doesn't look like the weather's going to get any better. I would cuss from time to time at whatever was happening. 'Buto la', 'Lanciao', 'Macam f***' are regulars at 7. Really, it was frustrating.

Levels 8, 9, 10: The unrecorded bits

Contrary to level 1-7, I didn't manage to capture or record on camera any moment of 8s, 9s, or 10s. I only have memories of it. In the build up to being an 8, 9, or 10, my arms would already be burning, they're already getting sore, I was already very unhappy with how things were, and the only thing I wanted at that point was to get out of there as quickly as possible. I would've spent hours on the water when things started turning for the worse.

At these levels, it is when the raw survival instincts start to kick in. I would be on very high alert, my spatial awareness bursting through the roof, eyes restlessly scanning everything around me for any potential threat to safety, I would focus on my form, my breathing, the distribution of strength, and I would be engaging every muscle group to fully utilise every muscle available. I didn't realise this before, but, looking back, starting from level 8 onwards, the mind actually starts slipping out of consciousness to let the survival instincts to take control of everything.

In short, an 8, 9, or 10 is when shit starts hitting the fan and you don't fool around. This is the reason I dub 8, 9, and 10 as the 'unrecorded' bits, I simply couldn't afford to compromise my focus just for the sake of recording moments. Safety takes precedence.

8 – I would be pulling every ounce of energy I have in my body, I would be straining every strand of muscle there is, and I would almost be on the verge of giving up. I would shout in anger at how things were stacked against me and how rough things were. An 8 is very frustrating. I could see myself punching someone in the face if they decide to fool around and waste my time.

9 – the shouts of anger of an 8 would now turn into silence. Some parts of me had already given up. If at 8 I was about to reach the top of the fence between fighting on and giving up, 9 would mean I have already tipped over to the other side. I wouldn't be paddling anymore. I would weep in silence, I would be on my board, kneeling in defeat, and I would come to realise how tiny and insignificant I was against the forces of nature. It felt like I was a speck of dust. The one or two times a 9 happened, it was only luck that got me through it.

You might wonder, if at a 9 I would've already started giving up, what would a 10 then be.

10 – There was no part of me that was paddling anymore. None of the strength that got me through a 10 came from within me. I got through a 10 purely from my will to live. You must really want to live bad enough to go through a 10. If placed in a 10 again, I have no doubt I wouldn't be able to make it through. A 10 is where I would get severely injured, or outright die, unless I make my way out of there. There were 2 occasions of a 10 in my trip and I don't ever want to go through it again.

Trip Overview

This journey began with a plan to paddle 300 km from the East coast to the West coast of Sweden cutting through the heart of Sweden and briefly paddling along the coast of EU's largest lake, Vanern. It was to be an expedition that would last for 1 month starting from mid-July till mid-August. However, the weather in Sweden throughout this summer was unforgiving. The winds were stronger and harsher than the previous years. This meant that the hours I put into gathering and analysing historical weather data for each area I would be passing through were basically useless and that I had to relearn new data while I was out on the water. The training I underwent prior to the expedition was also inadequate for the conditions I was facing, and my own personal expectation on the expedition difficulty was very far off. Simply put, I didn't know I was severely underprepared for the expedition. If I had to put a number at how difficult it was than from what I thought it would be, the expedition was about 2-3 times more difficult.

The fact that I still actually finished it doesn't immediately make me an invincible guy immune to all challenges. At about Day 7 I almost gave up. I seriously considered hanging my boots. Up to that point, 4 days had been difficult, 2 had been devastatingly brutal, and 1 was borderline impossible. Right from the get-go there had been no easy days at all and at that juncture, after waking up every morning hoping I can get through the rough waters but get crushed by it at the end of each day, I slowly started losing hope of finishing the expedition. When you get beaten up 7 times in a row without fail, it can be very difficult to find a reason to continue. It wasn't until I spoke to Chris, a retired Brit living in Sweden who I acquainted with prior to my expedition, that I decided to carry on. He eventually helped me on various occasions throughout my expedition. In his own wise words, "If this shit was easy, everyone would be doing it. Chin up dude, it will get easier as you get going". It was hard to believe it was going to get easier when the past 7 days had proven otherwise. But I trusted his words and just kept going. It did get easier. In fact, too easy that at one point I was 8 days ahead of schedule.

My expedition deviated significantly, and I ended up paddling for about 600 km over the period of 2 months, paddling through 4 of Sweden's largest lakes with 1 being extremely big it was basically an ocean. I had the most difficult, yet enjoyable time of my life. From being stranded at a random location and asking for help from a lady that was 100 km away who I acquainted with just the week before, to being taken in refuge by a Swiss family vacationing in Sweden, to going on a random fishing trip with a few Swedish people and seeing a shooting star for the first time in my life that night. It had been one hell of a journey and I will cherish this experience 100%.

The Stories

Disclaimer

1. I didn't manage to ask for consent from all the people I met if it was okay to use their picture in my report. Therefore, throughout this report I will cover all the pictures to respect their privacy
2. This report doesn't cover everything that happened on the trip. Instead, I have decided to write about events that happen at random time intervals and prioritising stories I have not yet made any video or talk about.
3. This report only covers about 30% of what happened. Writing about everything would've taken far too long to finish, extending past the deadline to submit this report. At the same time, I have started working and can only dedicate so much time to write this report.
4. I didn't cover any instances of an 8, 9, or 10 in this report. I wouldn't have been able to do justice to the events that happened by using mere words. Hence, I left it out completely. Though I am happy to share my experiences if we meet in person.

1. Tough Beginnings

Day: 1 of 50, Difficulty Level: 7, Supposed|Actual Progress: 2%|1% (0.5 day behind schedule), Status: Battered

I had a good start. The original plan was to arrive in Stockholm, scout for a launching point, and paddle westward towards Gothenburg. But when I arrived in Stockholm, I just realised how beautiful the city was. And so, I decided to change plans and stay in town for a while. I stayed in Stockholm for 2 nights while I explored the city. At the same time, I was also scouting for potential launching sites and purchasing my trip supplies. I was speaking to locals to learn about the waters in the area better and they told me about the expansive archipelago just outside Stockholm. It had a network of tens of thousands of islands. I figured there was bound to be a pretty island among that. And so, I decided to change plans again and explore the archipelago first.

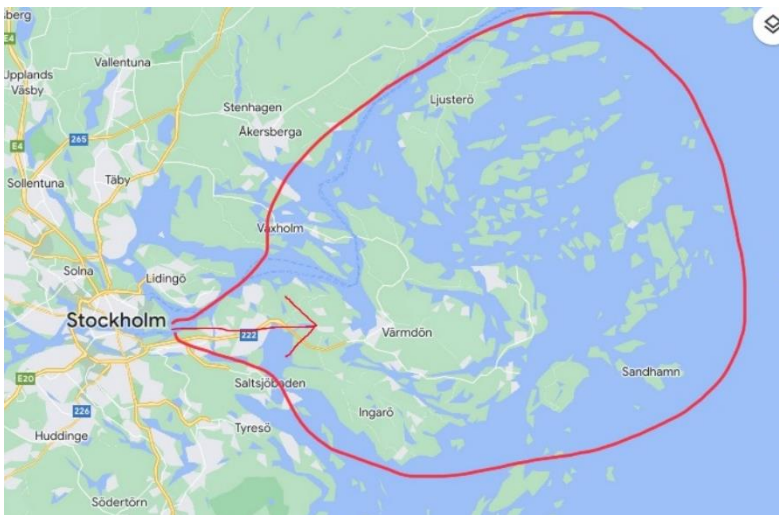


Figure 1: The archipelago I wanted to explore

I woke up early, got to my launching point on time, pumped up my board and set out towards the archipelago. Heading the advice of locals, I launched through a canal away from big cruise ships and ferries. Everything was going well, until I got out into the open waters. That's when I realised, seeing the aerial view of terrains on a map and seeing them at the sea level are two completely different

things. When anything is far away in the distance, it's very difficult to differentiate which one is closer or further away. I was meant to head towards one of two islands. Except that I was also seeing tens of other islands at the same time. I couldn't tell them apart. I whipped out my map and compass to help me out, only to realise I left my compass deep in my bag. Bloody hell.

Any expeditioner would know they should test out their setup before going on the actual expedition. I knew that too, except that I didn't have the time to. So I winged it. I was using the position of the sun and time of the day to narrow down the rough direction I was supposed to go. I managed to get that right. Except now I have to choose between which of the two islands I was going to paddle to. I had a 50/50 chance of getting it right, so I winged it. Well, I ended up on the wrong one.



Figure 2: My untested set up. Undeniably a mistake

'just power through' enough times before the words eventually lost their meaning and after 3 hours of paddling, I was nearing my limits. My ambitious goal to explore the archipelago started feeling impossible. The skies were getting dark, it was about to rain. Things were stacked against me, and I realised, if I didn't get out of the water soon, I might end up needing to call for an emergency. I was not about to call for an emergency this early in the trip.



Figure 3: The ladder and pier I ended up at on my first day

Simply put, going to the wrong one meant I would have to through a long chain of unprotected paddle from sidewinds. Sidewinds are horrible. You have to compensate the effects of wind turning you around by paddling only on the other side of the body. This also meant that half my body had to work twice as hard while the other side does nothing. The wind was pushing me hard towards some very jagged and rocky shores. I was on the edge all the time. I could only say to myself

I tried to find a nearby shore, but luck wasn't on my side. Maybe I was on Santa's naughty list. But even then, I should be getting coals, not the lack of shores. Out in the distance, I saw a little pier by a house. I saw it as my opportunity to get out of the water. It was a private pier. By right, I'm not supposed to use it. But I was desperate. I paddled there and once there, held onto a nearby ladder to rest. My arms were really tired at that point. I didn't know if the owner was around but after about 10 minutes of resting, a woman, presumably owner of the house, arrived. I quickly flagged her down and asked if it was okay for me to use her pier to come out.

She probably saw how beaten up and half dead I was and with no hesitation said yes. She even came over to help me bring my board out of water. At that point the big waves had wetted everything onboard including me, I was cold, I was shivering, and it was just cloudy

skies all around. She asked, “Would you like some tea” and I promptly took up the offer. She invited me in and served me some snacks. That was the beginning of my refuge with Daniel and Mona. I stayed with them for 2 days. They cooked me food, they let me use their sauna room though I didn’t use it, they took me to museum, and we handpicked blueberries in the forest to bake blueberry cake. They let me set up my tent on their porch and let me stay at their place to wait out the bad weather. They figured using a single blade paddleboard paddle was difficult and suggested buying a double blade kayak paddle. I appreciated the thought but told them it was out of my budget to do so. And what they did next surprised me. They offered to buy me a whole new paddle to help me on my adventure. I was beyond touched.

As the weather got better, I decided to head out to continue my journey. I decided heading out to explore the archipelago was too difficult it would present a safety concern for me especially because of the wakes from the boats. So I decided against it and started to head back inwards towards to paddle towards Gothenburg. I bid farewell to Daniel and Mona as it was time to continue my journey and with that, I cancelled my plans to explore the archipelago and started heading towards inland to begin my actual expedition.



Figure 5: Foraging blueberries!

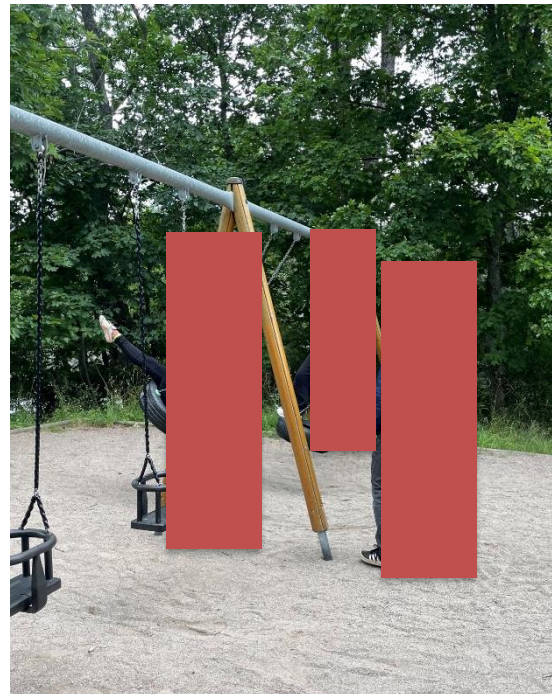


Figure 4: Don't let anyone ever tell you you're too old for swings!



Figure 6: Blueberries



Figure 7: The blueberry cake by chef Daniel



Figure 8: Daniel and Mona featuring my tent right outside the house

2. Viking Island and Ice Cream

Day: 4 of 50, Difficulty Level: 6, Supposed|Actual Progress: 8%|5% (1.5 days behind schedule), Status: Extremely exhausted, New Personal Best: 17 km

My body felt renewed after passing out for a day from getting a new personal best of 9 km nonstop paddling, so I was on a very good mood. But then throughout the day, loads of jet skis, speed boats, sailing boats and motorboats passed by. And you know what also passes by each time these boats pass by? Wakes. Bloody wakes. The reason wakes are so annoying and frustrating is because each time they pass by, they push you back and you lose momentum. On top of that, they will push your board out of orientation. So now you need to constantly fight it recover the momentum and reorientate yourself. It's a massive waste of precious energy and effort. Every time a boat passes by, I would internally scream and cuss my brains out.

Anyways, few hours in, I found a little cove for me to take a break. Out of nowhere, I could hear a faint typical Swedish greet 'Hej!'. I dismissed it at first as I didn't see anyone around, until I heard it again. I looked towards the direction and there was a couple on top of a little cliff waving towards me. We had a little chat and the lady brought up about this island that I should visit. It's called Birka. It's the first official Viking island in history. It then occurred to me that I hadn't realised Swedes and Vikings were related. I was debating with her on how worth it was to visit the island as I needed to paddle 1.5 hours to get there. But then she said that there's also a really good ice cream shop on the island. Damn, she should've started off with that. Now I'm convinced. And so with that, I side-tracked my expedition and now I'm headed towards that island to get some ice cream and a lesson on Vikings.

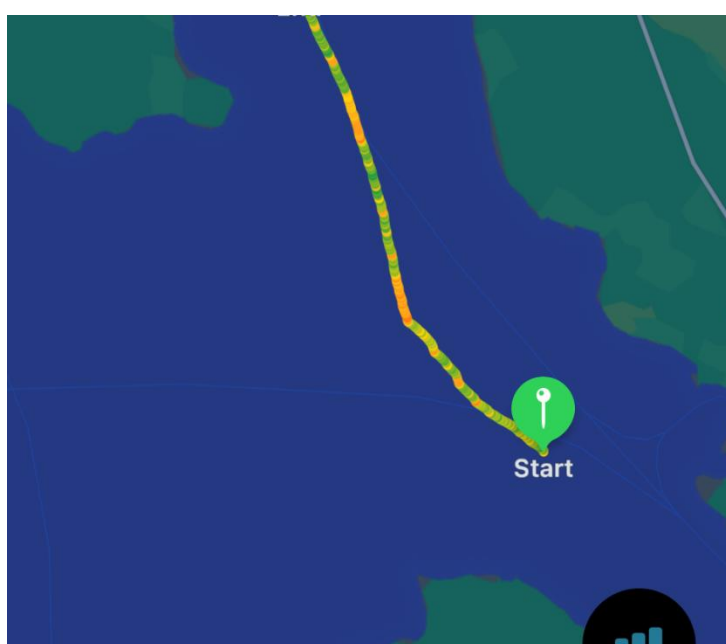


Figure 9: A picture of my paddling trail showing the exact point I decided to ditch the island

It was a 5 km stretch between where I was and the island. At the midpoint, I started to get tired. The winds had been blowing from one side and so half my body was being overworked to fight against it. I started questioning if the ice cream/Viking trip was worth the effort. So I started looking at the online reviews to decide if it was worth finishing the remaining half and that, was when I came across the general consensus that the island was overrated. I felt like it was a major waste of my time

to have paddled that far as I could've just checked it beforehand. But alas, we live, and we learn.

So, I decided to ditch the island. Also, since I was already going off-track and have messed it up this far, might as well just mess it up further. I'll realign things later. So I decided to let my plans for that day fail further and wing my day. I didn't know where I was, and I didn't know where I was headed to, but I just decided to paddle with the wind and let it blow me to wherever it was blowing. I was too tired to fight it. And that, was how I ended up at this really small place and for the 2nd time break my own personal record, unintentionally. It now stands at 17 km compared to the previous 9 km. I camped at the place for 2 days, charging up my batteries, replanning my routes to navigate the new area, and resting my body after smashing my personal record.



Figure 10: At some unknown location where I took some time off to wind down, read my Kindle, and re-strategise..

3. The Big Meal

Day: 11 of 50, Difficulty Level: 4, Supposed|Actual Progress: 22%|22% (on time),
Status: Very happy, Current Personal Best: 17 km

The weather for the next 3 days was going to get rough. Winds above 20 km/h would be challenging for any paddler and yet Sweden decided to put 40 km/h on the table for me. The waves were going to be big, fast, and strong and it wouldn't have been safe to go out. But I needed to make progress, especially when I was already lagging behind this much. So I made the decision to travel by bus to the next town ahead of time and wait it out in the next location. Some locals told me there was a really nice place in the next location where I could see the sunrise.



Figure 11: Vigo and his mum <3

On that morning, I missed my bus, my bus stop, and my train that was supposed to get me to the next town. Not really a good start. I had to change buses to get on a new one. I was lugging around 50 kg worth of luggage and would regularly, and understandably, get looks from others. I chatted briefly with this one guy at the bus stop and coincidentally we were headed to the same destination. The guy called me over to sit with him when on the bus and we continued chatting. We ended up chatting the entire 50-minute journey till we reached our destination. I enjoyed his company. Before we parted ways, he said to me 'In a few days' time, if you're going to pass by my area, do you want to stop over at my place? I can prepare us some

barbeque'. I know better to not say no to an offer – it will always lead to new experiences. So, I said yes and that, was how I met Vigo. My route did pass by his place, and I stopped at his beach to get to his house. There I met his mom, and we made a mixed pie of apples, blueberries, red berries, and some weird fruit, we had barbeque, I crashed at his place, he gave me a really comfortable pyjama to sleep in, and the next morning we had a nice and light breakfast outside the house while basking in the warm morning sun. Not long after, I packed up my stuff, bid our goodbyes and I left to continue back on my journey.



Figure 12: The blueberry pie we made :)



Figure 13: Barbeque!!



Figure 14: Dinner with a lovely sunset. Would've been better with my girlfriend but I don't have that yet unfortunately. Or fortunately.

4. Wrong Call

Day: 12 of 50, Difficulty Level: 7, Supposed|Actual Progress: 24%|26% (1 day ahead of schedule), Status: Extremely exhausted, New Personal Best: 23 km

I shouldn't have gone out that day. My head was spinning and my balance felt off even before getting on the water. But I decided a little inconvenience like this wasn't going to stop me from paddling. Bad idea.



Figure 15: Swampy area. Wasn't close enough to see the swampiness 😞

I was paddling through a swampy area. This meant flat waters – calmer than open lakes/oceans. I have a love and hate relationship with calm waters. On one hand it's great that it's not difficult, on the other it's too easy it gets quite boring. My life won't be on the line and nothing exciting was going to happen. Passing by a few boats and a group of wakeboarders kept things a bit exciting. Few hours passed and the sun was right above my head when the dizziness peaked. I had to come ashore for a break to let it die down. I didn't want to waste time doing nothing, so I applied for jobs. But after a few hours, I still felt dizzy, and that was when I faced a little dilemma. Should I call it a day and end my day early or should I continue paddling.

The Dilemma:

- The problem with calling it a day was that I had only paddled 5 km that day, I haven't even reached my minimum goal, and I was a few days behind schedule. The problem with continuing on was that I would be need to cut straight through the middle of Sweden's 4th largest lake. There was no place to stop except at the middle. I would need to paddle 5 hours straight to get there but that's not the problem. The problem was, there's a chance I will still be paddling after sunset when everything's dark.

One thing you don't do while paddling, is paddling after sunset. It's unnecessarily dangerous. You can't see landmarks clearly to navigate, you can't see rocks underneath the water that could break your fin or rip your board, and if you ever find yourself in an emergency, rescue teams will have a more difficult time finding you in the low light conditions. Avoid paddling at night unless necessary. I was also still dizzy at the time so to go out and paddle was an even stupider thing to do. But I couldn't stomach the thought of ending my day at only 5 km. It was too little progress. It was too short. I needed to push

myself more. 'Weak' was what resonated in my head over and over again. In the end, I said to myself, "Just pick any. We'll commit to it regardless". My body chose to continue.

It was a race against time. I had to reach there before sunset. I was getting on well. I didn't rush to paddle, I was putting in consistent power into each stroke. In these situations, it's best to make sustained controlled movements rather than short-lived bursts of power because in the event the weather suddenly turns against you, you will still have some strength left to navigate out of the situation safely. Anyways, things were going well, forecasts indicated little wind activities, and this meant that if I kept at the same pace, I would reach on time. Except, the forecast was wrong. Wind started building up to blow against me. 10 minutes was fine, but when it extended beyond that, the fear started creeping in that I wasn't going to reach land on time.

I started paddling harder, but it proved to be short-lived. I was already out on the water for hours that day. My arms were already tired, and I was about to reach my existing personal best, ie, I was about to reach my limit. So, I had to revert to my original pace. This was about the max my body could do at the time. Slowly I began coming to terms that I wouldn't reach before sunset. So I did the next best thing – inform my POC, of my current situation. It was a stressful evening that day and we were both on high alert throughout.

I ended up reaching about an hour after sunset. I had to strain my eye to see in the dark. I was walking back and forth a few times to carry my bags, then my board, out of the water, my legs up to my thighs were wet, I was cold, and I was very exhausted. I couldn't bother to take out my torchlight from my bag and instead setup my tent and carried everything in the dark. It was really cold – the temperature had already dropped to about 12C and I was only in my shorts and t-shirt.

I remembered my thought process at the time was to fulfil the barest minimum responsibility to my body and just go to sleep. I didn't bother changing my clothes, I only brought in my sleeping mat and sleeping bag into the tent, and I didn't even bother to take a breather – I just wanted to sleep. It was that tiring. At that time, I didn't have enough water to drink – only enough to make food. I was very thirsty, but I couldn't bring myself to go out, collect some water, wait for it to be filtered, and transfer it into my bottle just to drink. To paint a picture at how thirsty I was, I limited myself to drinking only 1.5L of water while I'm out paddling regardless how long the session was going to be and force my body to adapt to it. And on that day, I had been paddling for 7 hours under strong sunlight but only drank about 1L of water. So, I only had about 500ml left, just enough to make food. I was really thirsty, but I had to feed nutrients to my body for repair more than I needed to quench my thirst.



Figure 16: Charging up the electronics on a bright sunny day

The reason for limiting drinking water is because too much water can make you want to go to the toilet. And while you're out on the board, on the water far away from any land, having to go to the toilet is one of the bigger inconveniences you could face. So, I force myself to avoid that as much possible by drinking less. And so that night I slept thirsty, cold from being

wet in just shorts and t-shirt, cold from the cold night, and dirty in the same thing I wore while paddling.



Figure 17: Taking a break from paddling and enjoying the view overseeing Lake Hjalmaren, Sweden's 4th largest lake.

The next day I came to realise I once again broke my personal best. Now at 23 km than the previous 17 km. What surprised me more was that my muscles were actually fine and I could still go out paddling even after smashing a new record. However, I then heard some clicking sound in my shoulder. I took that as a

cue from my body to rest and not risk injuring it.

P/s: Have I tried not limiting myself to drinking water? I have. Trust me, doing the bits while on the water is messy.



Figure 18: View from inside the tent. Ducks would occasionally drop by to say hello

5. The Only Other Guy

Day: 16 of 50, Difficulty Level: -, Supposed|Actual Progress: 32%|37% (2.5 days ahead of schedule), Status: Very happy, Current Personal Best: 35 km



Figure 19: Askersund was gloomy and raining when I reached there :(

When I reached Askersund, it was raining heavily and I just realised there was no walkway to get to the campsite, only highway. So I decided to take the bus. Until I checked the apps and... there were no buses connecting there. I walked around, spent 20 minutes to talk to different bus drivers passing by to see if that's actually the case and if they would be kind enough to make me an exception. Nope. they don't go there, and they can't go there. I walked more to ask locals in the area to see if there would be taxis. Nope, many shops were closed that day. I checked Uber, nope. No uber at all. And that's when it hit me, I *will* have to walk this stretch. It was only 3 km long, but when you have to carry 50 kg, walk 3 km, doing it in the rain when your trouser's not waterproof, and one of your bags also isn't waterproof and your equipment is going to get wet, it would be a pretty damn pain in the

arse to do it. I dreaded at the thought of that. But that's what you do on expeditions. Dread the obstacle but do it anyway.

But then I had an idea. I headed to an open restaurant, brought all my luggage with me, walked in like a boss, and laid everything by my table in the middle of the restaurant. I was going to non-subtly signal to everyone, 'I'm on a bloody expedition, all eyes on me' and hopefully this allows me to ask people any weird favours and get a pass cause, well, I've already established the fact that I myself am weird by coming in all these bags and equipment, being small where everyone's big, being brown where everyone's white, wearing weirdly expedition-y outfit when everyone's in their relaxed clothing.

You would think this was an epic entrance, but there were only 2 other diners at the time. Not very grand. But I trusted the plan and after ordering some food, decided to go ahead and ask my favour to these two gentlemen. They were in the middle of their workday but they agreed! Just then, another guy walked in, ordered his food and walked round to my

table and asked out of curiosity what I was up to with all the equipment. And so I told him. Halfway through explaining, he briefly mentioned he had done something similar but only to small extent and my Spidey senses started tingling. In my head 'This guy had done some adventure. I need to get him to tell his story'. And so I immediately stopped and asked "Do you have time, or are you busy? If not, would you like to sit down to and have your meal with me".

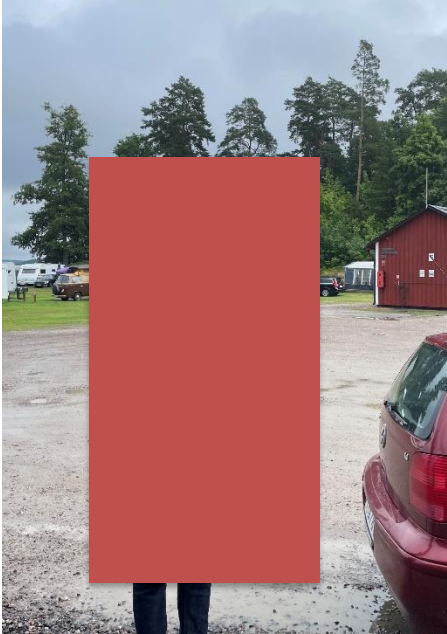


Figure 20: Paul a.k.a. the only other guy

That, was how I met Paul, the only other guy up until today that has had a similar experience, although only to a small extent. He went on a duo expedition, kayaking 50 km over the weekend. Chatting with him and exchanging experiences with him, the only person to be able to relate to, was by far the most fulfilling conversation I've had. It was exciting when another person understands exactly what you're talking about. Until now, most of the conversations I've had would have my listeners impressed. But I don't want that. I'd rather have a person who can relate rather than a person who is impressed. the feeling is unmatched. But anyways, I will miss Paul for being the only person to truly understand what it feels like to be out there in the rough seas and lakes.



Figure 21: Snuss. Not showing the picture of me taking snuss cause my mom would get angry.

Ps: Eventually he helped to drive me to the campsite bringing along all my luggage and equipment. He also introduced me to snuss, a Swedish tobacco. It's banned in many countries apparently hahah.

6. Cold Water Shock

Day: 18 of 50, Difficulty Level: -, Supposed|Actual Progress: 38%|42% (2 days ahead of schedule), Status: Shocked, Current Personal Best: 35 km

I've always heard about cold water shock but could never grasp what it really feels like. So, like a true engineer, I set up an experiment to find out. Unfortunately, I was the only test subject available, so I had to make do.



Figure 22: A test subject heading down the ladder for an experiment.

At that moment I was on an island at Vattern. The day before had been brutal. 30 km/h winds, waves coming from two directions, water sloshing around wildly. It was mad. Things got out of hand, I was blown away and stranded at a random place and had to ask for help from Jennifer, a very nice lady I met the week before. But all that is a story for another time. For now, cold water shock.

I was holding onto a ladder that goes into the water from a pier and once I was ready, I submerged my whole body into the water quickly, leaving only my arms out of the water to hold on to the ladder. The very moment I submerged into the water, my body immediately tried to breathe in the water. My

diaphragm was contracting and relaxing quickly trying to get air into the lungs but my mouth was fighting against it and kept preventing water in. I couldn't control anything and everything was automatic. For the first one second or so I couldn't think at all. Nothing made sense and everything was reacting instinctively. After the next second or so, then my brain started connecting the dots and I thought to myself "Why in the world am I breathing water".

I was impressed at my subconsciousness for keeping my mouth shut. It was wild. Everything happened so quickly – under 2-3 seconds. I rushed to pull myself out of the water, and in the process, hit my head against the ladder. I recorded a video of this and in the video, you could hear an audible 'thud'. I dipped myself again a few more times but after a while, the body got used to it. It wasn't a shock anymore, it was just cold water. I



Figure 23: My head recoiling after knocking my head on the ladder while rushing out

am now certain that cold water shock is very real and I sure as hell don't want to fall into cold water. It was then that I made it a point to avoid falling into the water at all cost. And so throughout the entire expedition and right to the very end, I never fell into the water, not even once. Call me professional athlete.

7. The German Family

Day: 20 of 50, Difficulty Level: 2 then 6, Supposed|Actual Progress: 40%|47% (3.5 days ahead of schedule), Status: Pleasantly surprised, Current Personal Best: 35 km

It was on this day that I realised how much I've improved over the last 20 days. The weather was calm, it was raining lightly, and I was just paddling and enjoying the views. It was quiet and pure tranquil and when I was starting to get into the rhythm, I had already been paddling for 10 km and didn't even notice it. And when I realised this, I was mind blown. Compared to my first day where just 4 km had completely drained me, now it's been 10 km and I only felt like warm up. This was such a massive improvement.



Figure 24: The day started off as a 2, but then turned into a 6

Prior to beginning that stretch that day, I had been in touch with this one Instagram dude who took really nice shots of Vattern. He was a local and travels with a sailboat. I chatted with him on Instagram to ask recommendations of good spots to visit and after listing quite a few, I made it a point to check out all these places. I was a slightly disappointed as the places he mentioned was indeed pretty, but it was only suitable to moor a boat and camp on the boat and wasn't meant for a paddle boarder. There were tall cliffs and rocky bottoms. So most of the time I had to pass up the spot.

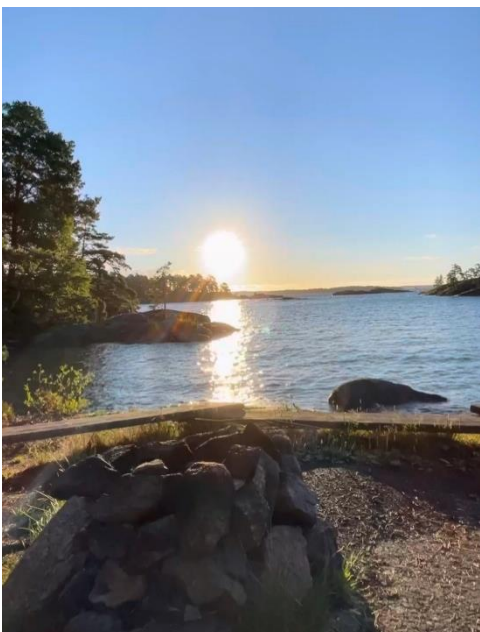


Figure 25: Watching the sunrise at the place I was camping at after meeting the German family

After paddling about for 2/3 hours, the conditions become a bit difficult and after another 2 hours of paddling in those conditions, I started getting tired and wanted to end soon. I reached this one particular cove and there were 5 people there - 2 in the water, and 3 out on the rocks. They seem to be together. I wanted to come ashore there but at that time, the introverted me was very strong - I was very reluctant to come ashore there because, 1) I would need to crash their party, and 2) I need to talk to people. But I really was too tired to continue further. Plus, I've improved significantly so I felt entitled to a treat. So I decided, "F*** it. I'm coming ashore now" and I did. Turns out they were a German family vacationing in Sweden.

The dad helped me get my stuff out of the water and from there we got on chatting.



They later on opened up the smoked salmon they bought and offered me to eat along. Yay!! Smoked salmon never tasted so goood. We had it with crackers and cheese. The dad was showing me a place in Granvik where I could camp at this supposedly really beautiful beach (I eventually went there and it really was beautiful). Then before they left, we took pictures and they asked for my Instagram to follow my progress. They were apologetic for not having enough salmon to go around. I didn't mind it at all. Honestly, although the food wasn't

enough to warm my heart. And at that juncture, I needed that more than I needed the food. Not long after, we bid our goodbyes and they left.

P/s: I later found out I wasn't supposed to camp there hahah. Apologies fellow Swedes, I didn't mean to.

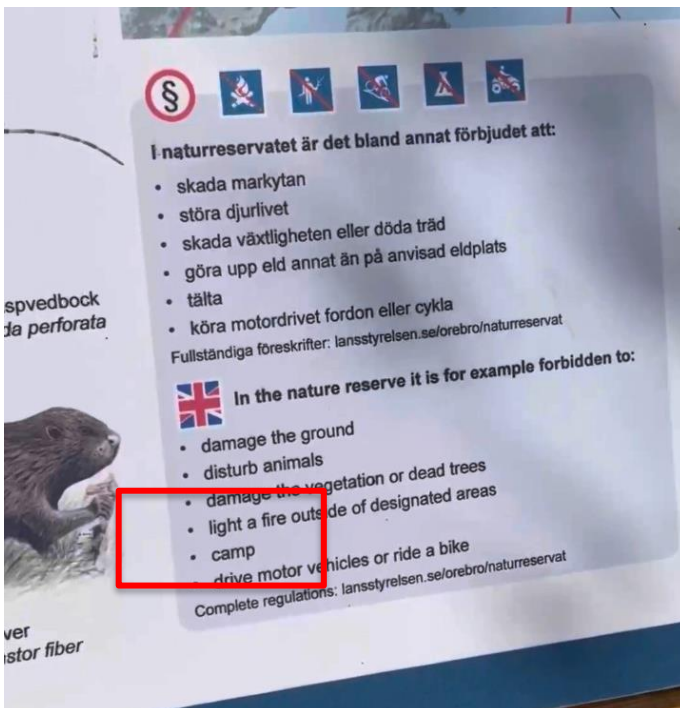


Figure 26: Whoops. My bad

8. Another German

Day: 25 of 50, Difficulty Level: 2 then 5, Supposed|Actual Progress: 50%|57% (3.5 days ahead of schedule), Status: Such is life, Current Personal Best: 35 km

I was now on the way to pass through the Gota Canal. The Gota Canal is a 200-year-old man-made canal that stretches for 190 km long. There was one particular stretch along the Gota canal that I was really looking forward to passing through before I started the expedition. In this particular stretch, the canal is so narrow that if there was a big boat passing through, only one of them would be able to pass at any one time. And to facilitate this, the boats would need to talk to each other in boat language to know who will be passing through first. I had to learn the boat language as well for when I would be passing by so I really wanted to spectate it. Unfortunately, at the time I was at that stretch, no big boats were passing by and so no horns were given out at that time. I didn't get to see any boats talking 😞



Figure 27: Me on the canal

Someone I came across before mentioned to me that the paddle from Vattern to Vanern should be easy because the water would flow in the direction I was paddling, thus, helping me out a bit. Bullshit. Half the time the water was going against me. Halfway through my struggle though, I came across a guy who was also paddling, but on a kayak instead of paddle board. He turned out to be another German that was vacationing in Sweden. For a while we paddled together as we were both headed the same direction. It was quite fun chatting with him but after about 15 mins, we reached the point where we would part ways. Dude basically writes blogs as a hobby and before we parted ways, he asked if he could take a picture of me to



Figure 28: Mikael and me paddling through the narrow stretch

write on his blog. I didn't mind it at all, so I let him to. I asked him for his name and asked to confirm it twice cause his name was a bit odd but when I tried to search it up on Facebook, I couldn't find it at all and kept on getting results of other people. I was a bit sad; I wouldn't be able to read what he wrote of me or see the pictures he took. It's okay, I guess I'll just wonder.

P/s: I didn't stop searching him on Facebook for 2 weeks and eventually found him! He took the picture that is currently on the cover of this report.

9. A Very Fair Request

Day: 27 of 50, Difficulty Level: 2, Supposed|Actual Progress: 54%|64% (5 days ahead of schedule), Status: Extremely happy, 2nd Personal Best: 34 km

It was a long day that day. The longest actually. I was on the water for 13 hours. I had scouted my route ahead of time and saw that I could shelter that night in a wind shelter. Wind shelters are scattered around Sweden in the wild. They're usually located near bodies of water to give quick access to those who needs to shelter from harsh winds. I love wind shelters as that meant I didn't need to set up my tent and, in the morning, I could leave earlier as I had less things to pack up.

The sun was almost setting when I reached the wind shelter. What I didn't realise beforehand was that a caravan campsite was set up near the wind shelter and so there were quite a number of people in caravans in the area. I was walking back and forth carrying my stuff to the wind shelter when halfway through, a boy with his siblings suddenly came up to me from a caravan and offered a pot with plain pasta for me to eat. I remember being too stunned to speak and unsure how to respond. I kinda just stood there for a solid 15 seconds looking at them and the pot and back at them and back at the pot with my mouth slightly open. Not that I was being picky but I would actually throw up eating just plain pasta and I don't know which one was more rude: to turn them down or to later on throw up. I think the dad must've thought it was weird that it was taking a bit too long so the dad came over and offered to serve it with something else. Phew. I just asked for some olive oil, salt and pepper so they didn't have to cook anything. They went back to their caravan to prepare it while I continued to the shelter to put my stuff first before heading over to their caravan. But just as I was about to head over, the same boy came up and handed me a plate of pasta. Damn bro, I should be the one heading to their place but they came to serve it to me instead *cries* Emir was the boy, Medfrid was the dad.



Figure 29: Pasta and coke for dinner!

I was just starting to eat when ANOTHER guy came up to me and offered me something to drink. Fk yeaaa!!!! Walter. Mans from Belgium. He offered beer, I didn't drink, then he offered coke. Took it up. Then he stayed and we chatted. His daughter and son came alongside him as well. I wanted to return the favour so I asked if he would like some tea and he said sure. He left so I could finish eating.

I returned the plate to Medfrid's caravan then walked to Walter's with my tea. Walter was busy playing badminton with his daughter and some other kids so it was only his wife that was there sitting outside the caravan. So I just sat with his wife

instead and chatted with her. Eva, that was her name. We chatted along for like half an hour. Towards the end she asked if I wanted anything, cookies or drinks or food. I just said “I’m good, don’t worry” but she kept insisting if I needed anything. So just then, I gave it a thought and a thought popped up in my head. I had second thoughts about asking it at first but decided “Screw it”. Here’s how the conversation played out:

‘Actually, there is one thing though’

‘Mhmm...?’ she said

‘Would you’

‘Would you...’

‘Have’

‘Have...’

‘Access’

‘To...?’

‘The shower’

‘Hahahahaha. Of coursee!’

Let me tell you, I jumped high out of my chair when she said that. I was half shouting “YAASSSSS HAHAHA” and Walter who was still playing badminton heard it and popped by and said ‘I’ve never seen a man so happy to get to shower hahah’. The showers were only meant for paying customers of the caravan campsite. It needed access cards to go in. And there I was, heroically securing an access card by asking these kind people I just met with whatever little shame I had left in me.



Having been on this expedition, I think a warm shower is one of the greatest blessings an expeditioner could get. Coldness stiffens you up. It makes you rigid and it puts you on the edge. It’s called a cold-blooded killer, not warm-blooded. Warmth, however, provides you with everything opposite. It’s comforting, its enveloping, I feel loved under hot shower man. Hot showers just hits different. I’ll take a warm shower any day. She gave me the access card and I went away to take a shower. I slept a happy man that night.

Figure 30: Card secured

10. The Second Expedition

Day: 29 of 50, Difficulty Level: 1, Supposed|Actual Progress: 58%|70% (6 days ahead of schedule), Status: Extremely happy, Current Personal Best: 35 km

That day the stretch was boring. It was a lot of tailwinds. I could sit down and do nothing, and I'd still be progressing. I just wanted to get out of the water because of how unchallenging it was that day. I remember mentally struggling to finish it as I had to force myself to paddle in such braindead conditions. I eventually reached the beach I was due to camp at a few hours before sunset.

As I was setting up my tent to end the day, an old dude approached me and started asking me about my tent. He was very interested in it for some reason and so I gave him a little house tour of it. I even invited him inside the tent to get give him the full experience. It was then that I got to know that he was an avid hiker having covered thousands of km of hiking trail throughout his life. I had a lovely conversation with him. We were exchanging expedition tips, tricks, our experiences, and talked about our gears and equipment. We ended up chatting for like 3 hours.

Towards the end, the conversation went with him talking about this one beach on a small island that he really wanted to go to. Apparently, his friends had been telling him that it was a really beautiful beach with pure white pebbles. I jokingly said "Well, what do you have tomorrow. Do you wanna go?" to which he replied, "Really? That was my initial plan! I am going there tomorrow".

"Oh. Umm do you want some company then?"

"But your expedition?"

"Nah I don't give a damn about my expedition - I'd do anything for a new experience hahaha"

And that, was how I met Mikael. We went ahead to go on a mini expedition to find the pebbly beach. We cycled across an island, trekked forests, ate blueberries, walked into many cobwebs in our face, and came across the berserker mushroom and a small harmless snake. I ended up staying with him for 3 days and in those three days, I met his friends, had dinner, ate ice cream, helped him around the house, and took some time off the expedition to update my journal. I was about 6 days ahead of schedule anyway as that time - the result of me overcompensating for the days I didn't paddle due to rough conditions. At the end of the three days, I asked him to send me back to where we first met so I could start from there and maintain the continuity of my expedition.

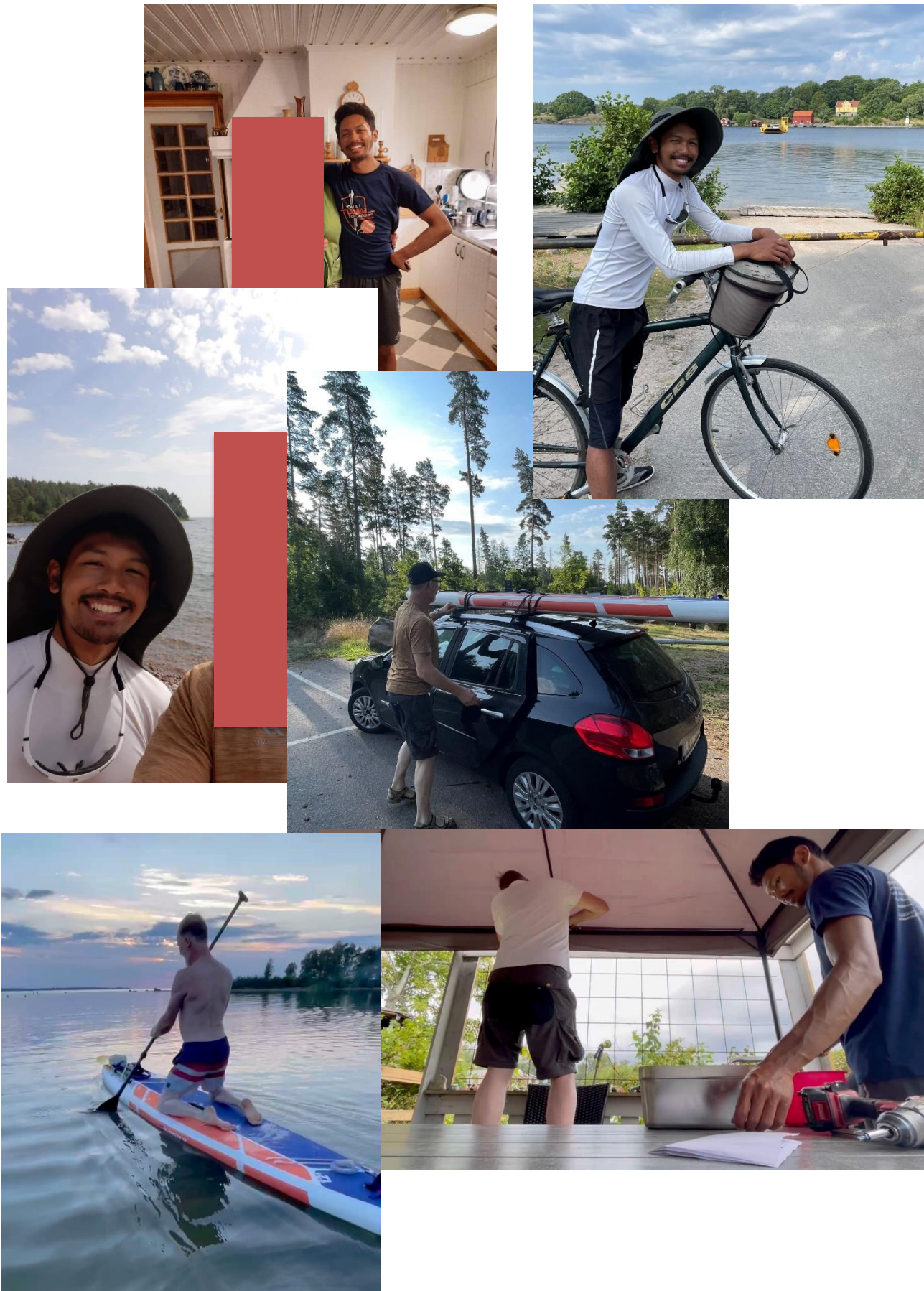


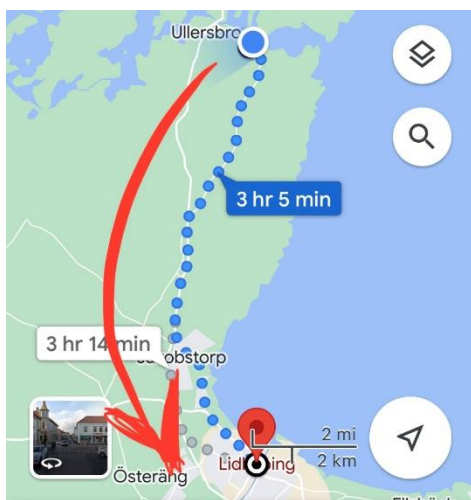
Figure 31: A collage of my time with Mikael

11. Uh Oh

Day: 36 of 50, Difficulty Level: -, Supposed|Actual Progress: 72%|79% (3.5 days ahead of schedule), Status: Dead and dreaded, Current Personal Best: 35 km

On this expedition, I have taken on many risks, believing in myself that I could do it, without knowing if I could actually do it. But because of this, I have pushed myself far beyond what I initially thought I could do. But when it comes to memory, and if you could afford to double check, don't be an idiot who tries to be confident. Just bloody double check it. That's how I got into a bit of trouble.

At that time, I thought I had food supply for 1 week, plus some extra. But as it turns out to be, I only had the extra, not the 1 week. When I was about to depart from a town, I did think about replenishing my supply but I was mad confident I had the necessary food supplies and so I set off without double checking my supplies. 2 days into my paddling I reached a rather small and remote harbour. It only had one restaurant and that's it. Coincidentally it was forecasted to be rough weather in the coming days, so I decided to camp while I waited out the weather.



3 hr 5 min (15 km) Mostly flat
via Gamla Läckövägen

Figure 32: The 6-hour round trip I would've needed to take by foot

I wasn't worried about lagging behind on progress as I was ahead of schedule anyway and I wasn't worried about food either as I had the necessary food supply to last through the bad weather. But as I was reorganising my bags (I periodically do so every one or two weeks) that's when I realised, I didn't have enough food to last the bad weather and that I was going to run out the very next day. And when I tried checking where the nearest town was, it was a 3-hour walk away.

There were no buses, no trains, no taxi, no Uber, no nothing. I would have to walk 3 hours to get there and 3 hours back. Walking for 6 hours just to get groceries was bonkers. I dreaded the thought of it but then I reflected on myself - I paddle 8 to 10 hours a day on average and have even paddled 13 hours at one point. So why would 6 hours of walking be bad right? So I went for it. But there's a twist.



Figure 33: Sticking my arm out to hitch a ride

Halfway through my walk, I started to get creative. I was finding ways to make the trip easier. I was looking for abandoned bicycles, I was knocking on doors to see if I could borrow their bikes with my phone as collateral should they worry I would run away with their bikes. But alas, nothing worked out. I then decided to try to hitch a ride while walking along the road. I extend one arm out with a thumbs up every time I hear a car about to pass by. One car passed without stopping, then two, then three. With each car passing by without stopping, I get slightly more demotivated. It wasn't that I couldn't secure a ride that hampered my spirits but it was the hope that I would get one but

end up not getting any that crushed it. But I rationalised that I would've walked it all anyway and that sticking my arm out wasn't even that much effort. So I kept on doing it.

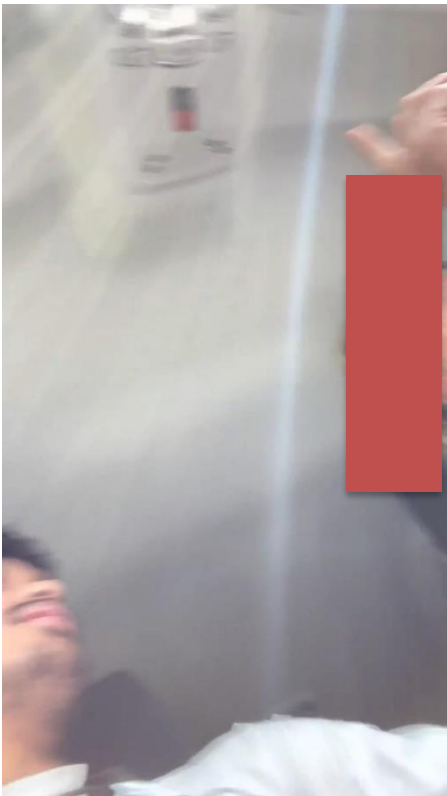


Figure 34: Inside the car with Claes

It went like that for about an hour and it wasn't until the 11th or 12th time that a car actually stopped and god was I happy. That, was how I met Claes. He eventually drove me to town and offered to give me a lift back to my tent. He also introduced me to his friend who was an actual athlete so I could ask for advice about the waters ahead of me. Two people had drowned in those waters just the week before when the condition got very rough. Any advice would be appreciated.

12. Too Easy

Day: 46 of 50, Difficulty Level: 1, Supposed|Actual Progress: 92%|94% (1 day ahead of schedule), Status: Extremely happy, Current Personal Best: 35 km

Finally, an extremely easy and relaxing day. Perhaps too easy. I was in the final stretch of my expedition. Only 100 km left. I was in a downstream river and the net wind/water current was flowing with me. Of the 50 odd days that I paddled in Sweden, this was one of the probably only 5 days where the net flow was going in my direction. The other 45 days were all awful headwinds, i.e., the wind and water blowing against me. These easy days are rare.



Figure 35: Putting my feet up, paddle out of the water, and just listening to the sound of silence

On this particular day, the water was calm, the wind was slow, and the current was slowly pushing me towards my end goal. I was chilling to music, I was calling my parents, calling my brother, and listening to podcasts. I still remember the podcast was about the untold costs of owning an electric vehicle in Malaysia. The river was rather wide, rightly so. This was the river that is connected to Lake Vanern, the largest lake (read: ocean) in the EU. and because it was the largest lake, large container ships would often use this river to get in and out of Lake Vanern.

On that day, I was mostly sitting down on my board, letting the current carry me. I would be in the middle of the river and would only sit back up every 5 or 10 minutes to make sure I wasn't heading into the bank or the marking pillars in the water. Every time one of the big ships was about to pass by, I would sit upright and paddle quickly to the side of the river to give way for it to pass through.

I enjoyed paddling on this stretch. For the most part because I could sit down and do nothing and I would still be moving. But it was also because of this it allowed me to have time for myself to reflect back on what an amazing journey it had been. It was nice to be able to let the mind wander about, letting it think whatever it wants to think, without having to worry about any potential hazard. It was a very relaxing paddle, and it just so happened to line up nicely with the fact that I was finishing up my expedition - as if it was meant to be a way to help me ease back into the 'normal' life.



Figure 36: Paddled to the side of the river to let one of the big boys pass by

I would've loved it if the current could carry me all the way through to the very end, but the current only lasted for about 20 km before it died down and I had to paddle again as usual. But it's okay, it was fun while it lasted.

13. Gothenburg

Day: 49 of 50, Difficulty Level: don't care, Supposed|Actual Progress: 98%|100% (1 day ahead of schedule), Status: Not really sure, Current Personal Best: 35 km

It felt slightly emotional. It was the last day of the expedition. I was going to reach my final destination, Gothenburg, very soon. I camped about 10 km away from where I was due to come ashore, a distance I could cover in a bit more than 2 hours. At that point, paddling 10 km was no longer a challenge. In fact, it was pretty effortless.



Figure 37: Behind the bright smile was actually a heavy heart

Last night was the last time I will be using my tent, the last time I will be using the stove, the solar panels, and the water filter. Today will be the last time I will be strapping my drybags onto my board using the ratchet straps that 50 days ago I was struggling to use, the last time I would be assembling the setup on my board - a setup that I have continually refined over the past 50 days to optimise my balance, accessibility, and comfort, the last time I would be sleeping on my sleeping mat on the cold hard ground, the last time I would be sleeping out in the cold 8C nights in my thin, unsuitable £8 sleeping bag I bought, and the last time I will be wearing my well-used wetshoe, walking on algae-covered rocks, dragging my board in and out of the water. It was emotional. I took pictures and videos of my gears. It felt sad departing myself from all these things that had become a very familiar sight at that point and to depart from the things that had gotten me through some of the most difficult times of my life. It was a very sunny day, yet it felt like the gloomiest.

I was scheduled to meet up with a family friend, one that I had only met once in my life and had not met again since 12 - I am now 24. I wouldn't recognise them anymore. I asked my mum beforehand if she could send me a picture of them so I would at least be able to recognise them partially and make a good first impression when I meet them. But when I eventually paddled into Gothenburg and reached the meeting point, f*** me I couldn't recognise them. A group of people called out my name, I looked at them and wondered

“Who are these people? How did they know my name” and it was a few moments later did I realise, these were the family friends I was meant to meet. Not really a great first impression I reckon.



Figure 38: Arriving in Gothenburg. 50 m left from the final checkpoint

I would forgive myself a bit in this regard. Several times in this past year alone, I had talked to people, introduced myself halfway through, only to be met with “Uhh, this is the third time we met”. Wow. Not even the first or second but the third. A bit disappointing but I can have the memory of a

goldfish at times. I'm fairly certain somewhere up my family tree my ancestors married a goldfish.

But anyways, I met up with said family friend and they brought me around Gothenburg. For being the 2nd largest city in Sweden, Gothenburg sure is tiny. It's basically London but strip away 80% of the attractions and scale everything down by 2. It does have the same diversity of people though, so that's nice. You get various food choices.

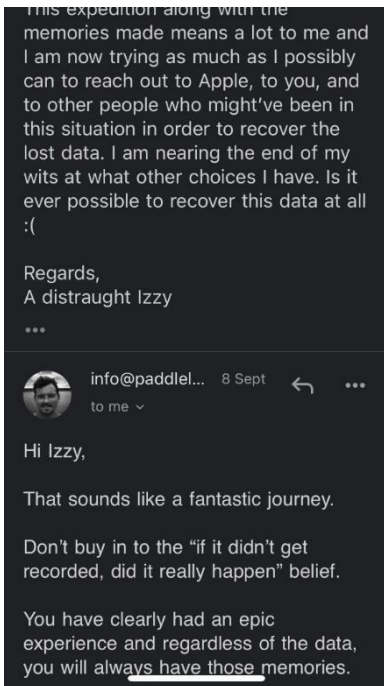


Figure 39: On the train back to Stockholm

I stayed in Gothenburg for 3 days, exploring the city and the archipelago around it. It was a nice city for me to transition back from the expedition life into the normal life. It was an easy-going city, laidback, and just relaxing in general. At the end of my 3 days, I took a train back to Stockholm. Stockholm to Gothenburg - a journey that took me 50 days on a paddleboard, took me 3 hours on a train. Madness. I soon departed that afternoon for my flight back to London and with that, my expedition has officially ended.

14. Post expedition

1. I accidentally deleted the app I used to track all my paddling data



This one had me stressing. I was cleaning my phone up from all expedition-related things so I could have a clean phone back as usual. While mass deleting apps, I accidentally deleted the app as well. The moment I realised that, my heart sank. All the effort the past 2 months, I poured my heart out for the expedition and now it was all gone. I googled online for solution, I reached out to people, and as a last-ditch effort, I reached out to the founder of the app himself. I emailed him detailing what had happened and asked if there was any way I could recover the lost data. He helped me out and outlined a few things to try out. Eventually I managed to recover the data. I don't think I will ever delete that app again.

2. Several people actually found my story cards

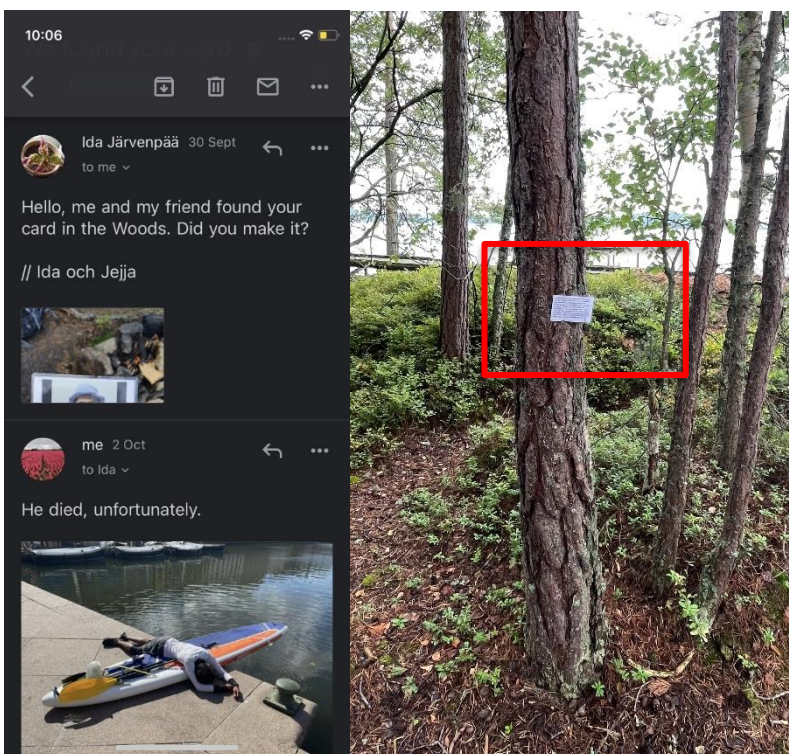


Figure 40: (left) One of the people reaching out to me. (right) sticking my card in one of the cracks on a tree near where I camped

Before I set out on the expedition, I had a sneaky plan in mind. I basically made tens of copies of story cards that basically details what I was doing in Sweden. I laminated each one of them and the idea was that at every place that I camp at, I would leave one behind for people to find it. If they do find it that is. I left my email on the card so people could reach out to me if they found it. Guess what, some people did! They reached out to me and checked in to see how I was progressing. Every time I receive one of these emails, I

would be extremely happy and would laugh out loud. It would brighten my day very much and I would sleep a happy man that night.

3. Continuing the adventure high and going for a surfing trip



I didn't quite take a break after my expedition and kept on riding the high of adventure. After returning back to London, just about 2-3 days later I went for a surfing trip down in Moliets, France. It was with a group of Imperial students and we all basically stayed at a surfing camp and surfed for 1 whole week. Day in day out it was just catching waves, chilling on hammocks, listening to music, hanging out, and just taking in the vibes. It was bloody awesome and I absolutely loved it. Life was pretty damn good.

Figure 41: Chilling at the beach after the first surfing sesh of the day



Figure 42: Fancy dress night back at the camp

Conclusion

I'm not sure what a nice conclusion would be like for this trip, so here's a few words of wisdom from me instead. Take it with a pinch of salt. Or a handful even.

- Get out there, its f***ing awesome
- Think, but not too much. Just do it.
- Believe you can do it more than you can actually do it.
- Adrenaline gets you far. Very far. Make use of it.

**At one point my body couldn't keep up with the beating it was getting. So I decided to trick my body to produce adrenaline to help me out by putting myself in danger and paddle close to jagged rocks or cliffs with waves pushing me towards it. Mental, I know.*

- Ask for help, people love helping adventurers.
- If you think it's weird, just do it anyway. You have the 'foreigner pass'
- Sweden has a lot of blueberries in the forest.
- You're actually stronger than you think you are. *Much stronger*. All you need is to put your life on the line and let adrenaline do its thing <3
- If someone talks/asks you in a language you don't understand, just pause for a second, look at them square in the face and confidently say, 'yes' with a nod. Most likely they'll laugh and know you can't speak their language and help you out.
- Being and looking young helps. People are more likely to help a clean-shaven young man than a gruffy looking old man. I.e., shave off that damn beard.
- Plan, plan, plan. I spent on average two hours per day for 3 months for monitoring, reading, talking to people, and regularly brushing up my plan.
- If you've lived your life in the city, the weather in open nature is very different than in cities. The behaviour is different, the pattern is different, the strength is different. Be prepared for that.



Figure 43: Don't think, just do it!
:DD

This expedition had been a smashing experience. I would never want to do an expedition at this level again because of how difficult it can sometimes be, but, it was 100% worth the experience. 10/10 recommend you try going on an adventure. Doesn't have to be this difficult. My next one would probably be much easier. Hit me up if you want to go on one!

Whatsapp: +44 7444 983953/+60 16 4110450

Instagram: izzuddinyazidd

Facebook: Izzuddin Yazid

Appendices

To watch the videos that I created while on the expedition (they're very fun): Instagram (izzuddinyazidd)

For the best source of information: speak to locals + due diligence on Google

For the 2nd best source of information: reach out personally to people who have done something similar before

For the 3rd best source of information: adventure blogs

To create your personal map: Advanced Google Maps ([here's mine](#))

Appendix I – Risk Assessment

Risk assessments provide a combined evaluation of the significance of a risk to expedition members. This enables them to prioritize preparations when trying to mitigate risks. Both 'Probability' (P) and 'Seriousness' (S) of the consequences arising from a hazard are expressed on a scale between 1-5. These are multiplied to give the combined 'Risk Factor', indicating the relative importance of addressing each risk.

Risk	Consequence(s)	Control Measure(s)	P	S	Risk Factor (P x S)
General Risks					
Minor trauma injury <i>(cuts/bruises)</i>	No major consequence if healed properly	Care when paddling and getting on/off rocky shores, first aid training knowledge	3	1	3
Strain	Inefficient travel and slower progress	Training prior to travel	3	3	9
Major trauma injury <i>(broken bones)</i>	Inability to paddle or move	Emergency mobile phone, first aid training knowledge, well planned routes to avoid harsh areas	2	5	10
Biological Risks					
Covid-19	Flu-like symptoms, frequent coughing, body aches, potential hospitalisation	I am fully vaccinated and have received booster shot. Substantial portion of journey will be away from people	1	3	3
Contaminated water	Sickness and diarrhoea	Filter water before drinking	2	3	6
Food poisoning	Sickness, dehydration, and diarrhoea	Food eaten will mostly be packed food with purified water. Food will be prepared using filtered water	3	2	6
Dehydration & exhaustion	Affects judgement, inability to progress	Consume immediate electrolyte, drink plenty of	4	4	16

		water, wear sunscreen, rest			
Environmental Risks					
Sunburn	Skin irritation, chaffing and blisters	Wear plenty sunscreen, cover body area with thin and breathable fabric	3	1	3
Cold water shock	Immediate gasping for air, uncontrollable movements	Wear wetsuit, always wearing PFD and leash, wearing wet socks	4	5	20
Harsh weather	Getting lost, injury	Check weather forecast when possible. Be prepared to make diversion to nearby islet	4	2	8
Tidal activities	Getting sucked out to sea, stuck at low tide unable to move	Tidal activities have been determined to not be a concern in the area that I will be passing through talking to paddleboard enthusiast who live near the area	5	1	5
Tick infection	Lyme disease, rashes, fever	Get TBE vaccinated prior to departure	4	3	12
Equipment Risks					
Stove breakage	Inability to cook	Equipment will be checked prior to expedition, food can still be eaten without cooking, can be replaced at checkpoints	1	2	2
Paddle board puncture	Unable to progress	Ensure daily checking of paddleboard before setting out, avoid sharp rocks by getting off the board when approaching land and guiding by hand	3	5	15
Ruined map	Inability to orient properly in emergencies	Paper map and GPS still available as backup	1	1	1

Appendix II – Checklists

1. Emergency Kit

Emergency Kit					
No	Item	Quantity	Up1	Up2	Up3
1	Plaster (waterproof) 19mm x 76mm	20			
2	Surgical tape 1.25cm x 5m	1			
3	Bandage 5cm x 5.5m	1			
4	Cotton gauze pad (5pcs) 5cm x 5cm	2			
5	Cotton balls (10pcs)	1			
6	Q-tips	20			
7	Vicks	1			
8	Alcohol swab	12			
9	Anthisan (insect bite) <i>2-3 per day, 3 days max. Consult after 3 days</i>	1			
10	Co-Dydramol (pain killer) <i>1/2 in 4-6 hrs. Max 8/day</i>	7			
11	Naproxen (anti-inflammatory) <i>.5g initial, then .25g every 6-8 hrs. Max 1.25g/day</i>	13			
12	Panadol (muscle and pain relief) <i>1/2 every 4-6 hrs. Max 8/day</i>	10			
13	DiarrhoeaRelief <i>2 initial, 1 per pass afterwards. Max 6/day</i>	6			
14	ORS (electrolytes)(24pcs) <i>2 per 200ml. As required</i>	1			
15	Purification tablet (10 pcs)	5			
16	Scissors (3cm blade)	1			
17	Tweezer (reg and pointy)	2			

2. Daily Paddling Checklist

Daily paddling checklist	
<u>Wear</u>	<u>Item</u>
Head	Hat, sunglass + strap, neck gaiter
Body	Shirt, sunsleeve, PFD, watch, swimming trunks, shorts
Foot	Wetshoes
In PFD	Daily map, phone, sat phone, compass, whistle
Cold/Rainy days	Waterproof trouser and jacket
Quick bag	Filter, snacks, water, cordial, emergency kit
<u>Day</u>	<u>Item</u>
Paddle	Tighten top/bottom latch screw
	Adjust paddle height & handle orientation
Board	Ratchet straps fully locked
	Fin integrity
	Adjust baggage stack - wind
	Adjust weight distribution - boat/current
	Swap fin (if necessary) - corals/shallow
	Swap QR leash (if necessary)
	Speaker
<u>Night</u>	<u>Item</u>
Water condition	Check water depth ahead
	Check tidal activities
	Check water current direction
	Check weather forecast
	Check wind average
	Check wind gust
	Check boat activities for wake
<i>Set time to leave & route to take accordingly</i>	
Weekly paddling checklist	
Blade wear, board seams and underside, bungee cord integrity	

Appendix III – Equipment Breakdown

Mains	Paddling Wear	Repair Kit (patch, cut, mend, replace)
Board	Warm days	Duct-tape
Paddle	Headwear: hat, polarising sunglass, neck gaiter, sunglass strap	PVC repair - brush, glue, patch, microfibre
Fin	Body: rash guard, wetsuit, PFD, cag/windbreaker, waist pack	Multitool
Pump	Feet: wet socks, wet shoes	Zip ties
QR leash	Cold days - wetsuit, neoprene gloves, beanie	Spares: fin pin, fin pins
Whistle	Rain - Waterproof trouser & top	

Media	Kitchen	Hygiene	Luggage	Electronics	Shelter	Camp wear	Navigation	First aid	Down Time	Paperwork	Misc and extra gear
Notepad	F&B	Toothpaste brush	Tie-down straps	Torch light	Sleeping bag	Insect repellent	Maps	Ibuprofen	Books	Reservations - camp, flight	Silica beads
Kindle, iPad	Stove, fuel, pot	Bodywash	Carabiners	2 phones	Tent, bivvy, poles	Cotton wear	Compass	Pepto bismol	Downloadables	Transport arrangements	Tying rope
Pen	Bowl, mug, utensil	Baby wipes	Deck bag	2/3 Power bank	Mat/foam/pad or blow-up bed		GPS	First aid kit		ID/passports	Voxi
	knife	Ziploc	Drybags	Water case	Pillow			Pain killers		Cash and cards	Trash bag
	Food container		100L x1 (pb)	Satellite phone	Bedtime clothes			Q tip		Proper storage & waterproofing	Gas adapter
	Water filter		45L x2	Charging plug				Electrolytes			
	Water bladder		20L x2	C-C, C-lightning				Tweezer			
	Purification tablet		10L x1	A-C, A-micro, A-lightning				Antibiotics			
	Lighter			Plug adapter							
	Fire starter			Earphone							

Appendix IV – Total Cost Breakdown

By being resourceful, I managed to reduce the expenditure of my expedition. I got discounts for helping people out, borrowed some equipment, buying some equipment from Malaysia and asking a friend to help bring it over, and sometimes, I just get lucky as there happened to be a sale going on. From expecting to spend £800 of my own money, I drove down my costs to about £300. The remaining cost was born by sponsorship funds.

The cost is split between Running Cost and One-off Cost. Essentially, if I were to do another paddleboarding expedition, the Running Cost, which is the cost required to run any other expedition using equipment that I already have, is what I would need to pay. The One-off cost is the cost to acquire new equipment etc. From this, the cost required to uptake a paddleboarding expedition is only £800 if one already has the necessary equipment.

ITEMS	TYPE	COST TYPE	COST
Travel			
Flight ticket to Stockholm	Transport	Running	67
Luggage	Transport	Running	25
Train from airport to Stockholm	Transport	Running	12
Return flight from Stockholm	Transport	Running	55
Luggage	Transport	Running	0
Train Gothenburg - Stockholm airport	Transport	Running	20
TBE vaccine	Health & Safety	One off	150
BC license	Paddleboard	One off	45
Train to airport London	Transport	Running	9
Train from airport London	Transport	Running	9
Insurance	Health & Safety	Running	85
Non-expedition Stockholm/Gothenburg	Accom	One off	170
In Sweden			
Total	Consumables	Running	480
Gas canister	Consumables	Running	10
Body wash	Consumables	Running	0
Laundry	Consumables	Running	0
Mains			
Board, Fin, Pump, QR leash, Paddle	Paddleboard	One off	611
Additional D-rings	Paddleboard	One off	17
Whistle	Health & Safety	One off	3.5
Ratchet strap	Gear	One off	14.5
Training	Paddleboard		0
Replacement Kit (patch, cut, mend, replace)			

Duct-tape	Gear	One off	0
Glue for repair & D ring	Paddleboard	Running	6
Repair - brush, patch, cloth, alcohol, sandpaper	Paddleboard		0
Multitool	Gear	One off	8
Zip ties	Gear	Running	2.5
Spare fin	Paddleboard	One off	0
Spare paddle	Paddleboard	One off	0
Paddling Wear			
Hat	Wear	One off	8
polarising sunglass	Wear	One off	8
neck gaiter	Wear	One off	2
sunglass strap	Wear	One off	2
rash guard	Wear	One off	9
wetsuit	Wear	One off	0
PFD	Wear	One off	19
watch	Wear	One off	10
waist pack	Wear	One off	0
wet socks	Wear	One off	0
wet shoes	Wear	One off	10.5
neoprene gloves	Wear	One off	17
Waterproof trouser	Wear	One off	10
Waterproof top	Wear	One off	25
Media			
Subscription - paddling app	Gear	One off	0
Notepad	Gear	One off	0
Kindle	Gear	One off	58
Pen	Gear	One off	0
Kitchen			
Stove	Gear	One off	0
Bowl, mug, pot	Gear	One off	0
Utensil/knife	Gear	One off	0
Food container	Gear	One off	0
Water filter	Gear	One off	12
Water bladder	Gear	One off	2
Purification tablet	Consumables	Running	2.5
Lighter	Gear	Running	0
Hygiene			
Toothpaste brush	Consumables	One off	0
Baby wipes	Consumables	One off	0
Ziploc	Consumables	One off	0
Luggage			
Bungee cord	Gear	One off	3
Carabiners x20	Gear	One off	3
70L x1	Gear	One off	8
30L x2	Gear	One off	0
10L x2	Gear	One off	7
5L x1	Gear	One off	4
Electronics			
micro SD card	Gear	One off	5
Speaker	Gear	One off	18
Waterproof case	Gear	One off	9
2 phones	Gear	One off	0
1/2 Power bank	Gear	One off	17
Torch light x3	Gear	One off	3
Satellite phone	Gear	One off	0

Sat phone cred		One off	0
Charging plug	Gear	One off	12
Plug adapter	Gear	One off	0
A-C, A-micro, A-lightning	Gear	One off	0
C-C, C-lightning	Gear	One off	0
Shelter			
Sleeping bag	Gear	One off	0
Tent	Gear	One off	0
bivvy	Gear	One off	4
Mat/foam or blow up bed	Gear	One off	23
Camp wear			
Bug repellent	Health & Safety	Running	13
Cotton wear	Gear	One off	0
Toiletries + towels	Gear	One off	0
Navigation			
Maps	Gear	Running	0
Compass	Gear	One off	3
First aid			
Q tip, vicks, tweezer	Health & Safety	One off	0
Pepto bismol	Health & Safety	Running	1.5
First aid kit	Health & Safety	Running	4
Codydramol, Panadol (pain killer)	Health & Safety	Running	0
Electrolytes	Health & Safety	Running	4
Anti inflammatory/bug bite cream	Health & Safety	Running	4.5
Vitamins	Health & Safety	Running	12
Down Time			
Books		One off	0
Downloadables		One off	0
Paperwork			
Reservations: camp, flight		One off	0
Transport arrangements		One off	0
ID/passports		One off	0
Cash and cards		One off	0
Proper storage, safeguarding, & waterproofing		One off	0
Misc and extra gear			
Tying rope	Gear	One off	3
Voxi	Gear	Running	0
Trash bag			0
TOTAL			2156

Appendix V – Emergency Action Plan

Contact numbers

Emergency services	Family members
UK emergency authority: 999	Mum (Putri): +60 12 2026 726
Swedish emergency authority: 112	Brother (Azam): +60 12 3417 350

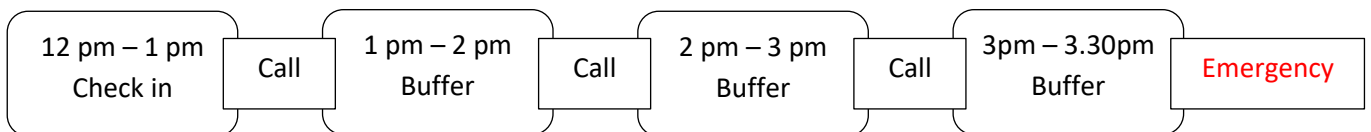
Daily check in

I will be appointing a POC (one of my friends) who will be available throughout the length of the expedition. I will be updating daily with my progress along with the details of my latest paddleboarding trip which will include GPS coordinates, distances, timestamp of my paddle log and a few other information that will be critical in pinpointing my exact location in the event of an emergency.

Tentatively there will be **two** check ins to be conducted daily. The first will be the **afternoon check in** between 12 pm - 1 pm in the afternoon (midway through my day where I will be stopping for lunch). The other will be the **evening check in** after I have set up my campsite at the end of the day a few hours before sunset at between 6 pm - 6.30 pm to indicate safe camping set up for the night. In the event of a no-show, the emergency SOP will be initiated.

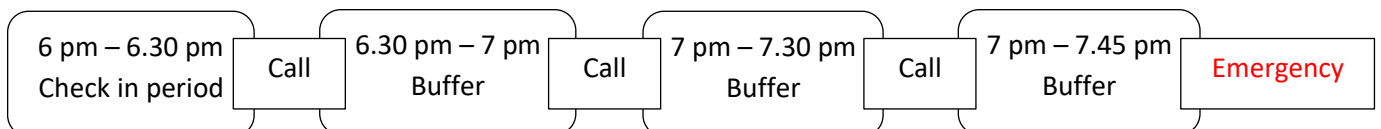
SOP for daily check in

1. Afternoon check in



If there is no check in by 1 pm, the POC will attempt to reach out by calling. A buffer of one hour will be set in place before the POC will again attempt to reach at 2 pm. If no call is returned, another buffer of one hour will be set in place before attempting to reach out again at 3 pm. If no call is returned by 3.30 pm, the emergency SOP will be initiated.

2. Evening check in



If there is no check in by 6.30 pm, the POC will attempt to reach out. A buffer of 30 minutes will be set in place before the POC will attempt to reach out again at 7 pm. If no return call was made, another buffer of 30 minutes will be set in place before POC reaching out again at 7.30 pm. If no call is returned by 7.45 pm, the emergency SOP will be initiated.

The times for evening check in is cut by half due to the sun setting soon and therefore lesser available sunlight. Should a search and rescue mission be required, this makes it significantly difficult to navigate and search in the dark. Hence, a rapid response will be required. This is also to account for the time taken to

make the chain of communication from contacting UK authorities, explaining the situation, sharing the details, to finally being passed on to Swedish authorities for further action.

The buffer is set in place to account for possible simple mishaps such as the phone running out of battery and will give plenty of time for the phone to be charged up. Another possibility is the rough water conditions that may arise, hence, making it unsuitable to check in.

Emergency SOP if failed to check in

In the event of failure to update on check in period, the following plan will be executed by the POC:

1. The POC shall reach out to the local (UK) emergency authority to inform of the situation along with the actions taken so far.
2. The POC will then ask to be connected to the emergency line in Sweden to get in touch with the Swedish authorities.
3. Once in touch with the Swedish authority, details of my most recent check in will be shared for further action to be taken.

Craft description

12'6" white paddle board, 3-5 luggage strapped on board



Rider description

Physical trait: 5'7", 60 kg, ~20.0 BMI body build, Asian, light brown skin

Clothing: Orange PFD (buoyancy aid), shorts/camo trouser, green bucket hat, safety whistle
Can swim but low cold tolerance. No wetsuit.

Appendix VI – Random Pictures



Figure 44: Setting off at 4 a.m. to get calm waters before it starts getting rough at 9 a.m.



Figure 45: A sunset view I would often get, but know that soon when the expedition finishes, I won't see it often anymore

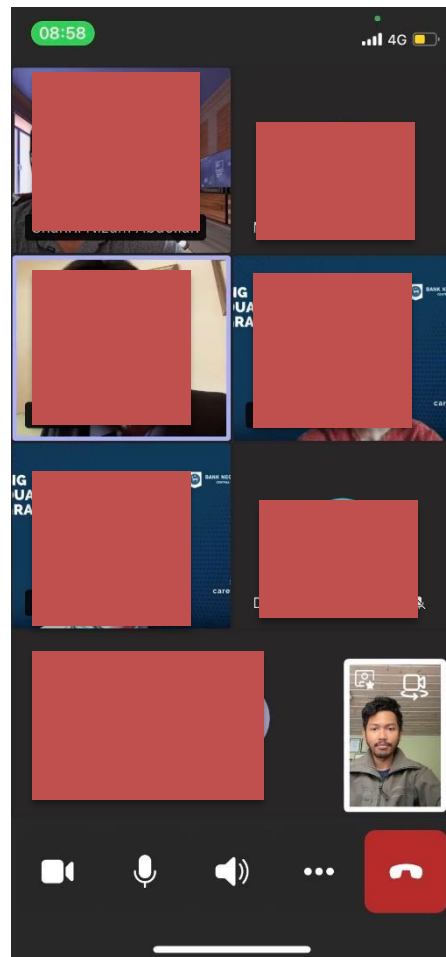


Figure 46: One of the job interviews I was attending while crashing at someone's place. I got the job haha.



Figure 47: POV: you're on an expedition on a paddle board



Figure 48: An example of a wind shelter I stayed at. On this particular day I ended my day early just because I wanted to sleep at this wind shelter. The place around it was too scenic not to

Jan-Willem Hordijk ▸ SUP
Stand Up Paddelboard Sweden ...
 July 25 at 9:55 AM · 🌐

Well, this is how you can do it too 🧑🏻♂️ 🇺🇸 😄
<https://youtu.be/NBfSWKSav6o>
 ⚙️ · Rate Translation

YOUTUBE.COM
Quite possibly the wolds fastest Inflatable SUP Stand Up Paddle Board

😄👍❤️ 14 3 Comments

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

Figure 49: What I wish I had on some days



Figure 50: Waking up to beautiful views and sunrises are a blessing, especially after a cold night



Figure 51: On the bicycle cycling with Mikael across an island in search of the beautiful white pebbly beach



Figure 52: A picture on the 1st day of the expedition vs the last day. 50 days without shaving. Which one is better – shaved man or cave man? Make a vote [here!](#)