

My Duke of Edinburgh Experience

My started off at home as I was packing the last of my food before I left and then double checked they I had all the equipment I would require for my experience. I then set off saying the last of my goodbyes to my family and slung the massive bag over shoulder and put it on my back, and did up all the straps in order to make it as comfortable as possible. With everything sorted, I slowly made my way to the train station where I hopped on and met my other friends also doing their duke of Edinburgh. We arrived at – station 20 minutes early and said our greetings to the teachers there and to pass the time, one of the people in my group had brought an American football which we played with until everyone had arrived. Once that time came, we were given our instructions, along with a compass and a map with the path we were supposed to follow. We then set off, full of energy, not knowing what the following days would hold.

Upon setting off, I used what I learnt during the practice and took out some nuts and dried fruit, then began snacking on them. As I was not doing the navigation at first, I was able to lumber at the back of the group talking with my friends and peacefully eating my fruit and nuts. Due to our groups continuous fast pace we quickly caught up with the group in front of that had left before us and upon catching up with them, I heard somebody shout hill and upon looking up I glared at a large and steep slope then among the moaning and groaning our two groups set of and attempted to conquer this humongous task ahead of us.

The first few metres were easy. I even heard somebody say “This isn’t too bad”, which would prove to be famous last words. Almost immediately after that my legs started aching greatly and based off the look on my friends faces I could tell theirs were too, nevertheless we continued on. I was in the middle of the group, with the strongest at the front and the weakest at the back. Due to this I didn’t have the best visibility and heard a voice ahead telling us that the land was levelling out, relieving all of us, but it was short lived as we heard the same voice yell again, this time saying “Never mind, it goes up again”. Which brought frustration to all of us and as we were already tiring we took a well-deserved rest.

Shortly after that the land did level out and that task was thankfully over and to make things better we had reached the first checkpoint and therefore texted our position in to one of the leaders. We identified where we were on the map and identified a number of paths and windy roads ahead of us. Unsure of what route to take, we used or lessons to take a bearing and to our enjoyment we took the correct route and entered a forest just across the road and continued to walk through there, instead of the nuts I had, I switched to the chocolate biscuits I had stored and started to munch them down. Remembering something that was said at the start of the day I began collecting different samples of leaves in order to classify them later on and while doing so I had the chance to admire the environment around me. I saw flower patches that ranged from beautiful purples to luxurious yellow all standing out. I also notice the trees and how they were all different heights and sizes with something individually special about them, like a hole carved out by a woodpecker, or a twist in the trees trunk or a majestic squirrel galloping up a tree.

After almost three hours of walking I had finished two packs of biscuits, half of my fruits and nuts, a chicken rap, 2 bags of sweets and an apple, but despite this I was still hungry, so thankfully we arrived at our lunch location where the other groups were already viciously chomping down their lunches, so the rest of my group and myself hurried to join them. I spent the next 30 minutes eating food and socialising with my friends, as well as regaining some of needed energy for the rest of the hike. It was finally time for us to set off again, so with the rest of my group we took off ready for the rest of our journey, but we were shortly stopped again in order to be asked a few questions. We had to identify the structure ahead of us, as well as our 6 figure grid reference based off a view between two trees. I took charge and with a bit of help from my group identified the row of houses and farm ahead of us and our 6 figure grid reference, so we passed and continued on, but this time I was navigating.

I was navigating for about an hour and with a few hiccups successfully led my group to another checkpoint, but in order to get there we had to travel through a field of horses and due to a past encounter one of my group was petrified of the group so we quickly and quietly walked along the edge of the horse

field, with my scared friend leading the group holding the arm of someone else for protection and when it came to the parent leaped over it like he was the flash. Once at the checkpoint we texted it in and realised that it was the third checkpoint, the next one being the camp site, so with sheer determination, despite the pain in our shoulders and legs, we walked on and eventually caught up with another group on a long windy road.

Upon meeting the group we turned off the road into a large goat herd and encountered many goats of different sounds all making their traditional sound as we passed by and eventually we came out of the fields and back onto the road where we met the other two groups, so now we were all together and like a stampede of animals in an orderly line powered through the roads to a field, where we were greeted with one of our leaders. With his assistance we trekked through a farmer's crop field being careful to avoid any crops and eventually came to another field, this time of golden yellow wheat. I was one of the first to go through into the field and saw the sun in all its beauty illuminating the wheat field and further enhancing the already heavenly looking wheat which looked like each individual strand of the crop was joyfully glowing. Upon reaching the end of the field I looked back and saw a perfect line of my class mates all trampling the same path through the wondrous wheat field in a perfect line.

In the last stretch of the journey we had to conquer yet another humongous hill, that was bigger than the last one, but thankfully not as steep, so we started off a group of about 40 all trying to fit through a small fence that only one person could get through, especially with our massive bags, but anyway we made our way through the steep hill, which also happened to be a horse field, much to the anger of my friend, who ran up the whole hill in order to escape the harmless horses that were peacefully lingering far from us. I reached the top of the hill and realised we could have taken a short cut through a wheat field that we thought was off limit which I thought we could use on the next day. Anyway, I looked back at the rest of the field where some of my friends were still clambering up and admired the beauty ahead of me as I could see fields, forests and paths all brilliantly highlighted by the sunset's elegance and everything at that moment was very peaceful, until out of the corner of my eye I saw a disturbance, as one of the horses blocked a fence that my friends had to pass and watched amusingly as they scattered like scared birds and attempted to remove the horse from their path which was a funny wrap up for the day and after a bit more walking through a forest we came to our camp site which was a blessing to our eyes.

Upon entering the campsite me and the other members of our time, rushed to the best camping spot using the little energy we had and when at our spots moved our gigantic bags and collapsed to the floor, relieved to finally have a break. This victory was only short lived as one of the instructors soon came over and delivered the brilliant news that we had to put up our tent before resting so with large amounts of pain we got upon our exhausted legs. As a group we decided we would split into groups to put up the tents and we did so with ease, except for when the tent collapsed on top of my group as we forgot to put one of the poles in, despite that we eventually got all our tents up and then rested for the next hours which was definitely owed to us due to the long trek we faced.

After that hour though myself especially started getting very hungry and therefore took out the cooking equipment and assembled it as we were taught to do so. I then to my teachers amusement took out the 8 steaks which I had marinated the day before and then froze to keep fresh. They remained edible, so I decided to cook them, and while I kept the majority for myself, I did share some it with my group and friends in other group, which was a nice contrast to the grim noodles they were eating. Nevertheless after eating my steak I then ate another pasta dish as I was still hungry and with a full belly I laid down and relaxed. After another hour of relaxation the pain in my legs had decreased so I got up and joined the game of american football that was going on and before I knew it, it was time to go to sleep, so I went into our tent which was properly put up this time and lied on my pillow and contrary to the practice got a very good sleep- In the practice somebody else in my tent had rolled on top of me while I was sleeping and took up all my space, so I had a very rough night of sleep.

I woke up at around 7 and put on my sliders and then yet again took out the cooking pot, this time I had porridge and 2 chocolate choccissants which made very happy. Eager to set off as early as possible and get home, my team and I washed up our cooking equipment, got it checked and then continued to take down

the tent which was declared clean by one of the leaders, and before we knew it we had our bags on and prepared to set off yet again, hoping to get home as early as possible.

At first we retraced our steps, as the route we set out started off following the same route as before, so we went through the forest and went down the hill with the horses and eventually came to a very high in which we could see out for miles and tactically decided to use in order to see our route ahead of us and upon doing so noticed a short cut that cut a corner and went through a large wheat field and upon looking at our map also realised the shortcut was a public footpath and so decided to take it. The wheat was taller than all of the members of my group, and as I was entrusted to navigate, I was in front and slowly and awkwardly trampled through the field and to my relief came out the other end, which was clearly faster than the other route, as we had already caught up with a group that left 10 minutes before us, so we decided to join up and started walking together and eventually due to our joint efforts reached the first checkpoint, where we decided to take out some snacks and the other group trekked on. For my snacks I ate another apple, but then took out my bag of nuts and dry fruits again and began snacking. Due to my navigation on getting my team to the first checkpoint and the fact that we had all navigated already, we decided to let me continue navigating, so with a bag of nuts and fruits in my hand, as well as the map we set off and took a left onto a public footpath.

This footpath led on to a series of fields, none of which contained any animals, however the surrounding fields did, and eventually we came to a field that did have horses. Except for my friend with a phobia of horses, this was not a problem, apart from the fact that they were stood right in front of the gate that we had to go through. So we approached, not really sure about what to do and tried different things to get it to move, including clapping at it, doing a series of hand movements and even throwing some seeds, but nothing was working. With the fear of my friend growing about the horse, whether it was to do with our efforts or it wanted to move, the horse left and with a decent amount of pace we continued leaving the horses behind. The track ahead led us to many open fields that were parallel to the forest and eventually we came out to a road and that is when the group and myself realised that we were lost and that the left we had previously taken was the wrong one and we should have taken the left beforehand. Due to my mistake, we identified where we were and we realised I had led them south, instead of north, but luckily for me, the road we were on led straight to the second checkpoint with very few turns.

Despite this hiccup, we were determined to make up for lost time and so stormed ahead of the road and identified where we would have to turn off the road, but when we got to that location, we saw no turn, but in another stroke of luck, we came across another group, that like us took a wrong turn, further down the road, which is where we were meant to turn off, so we joined up. With this small motivational boost both of our groups stormed ahead like a steam train, and then funnily enough came across yet another group, which we joined together with and putting our heads together figured out the route and which turns to make and on the second to last turn before the checkpoint, came across yet another group that got lost, which was much to our humour. So collectively our 4 groups which all got lost continued and arrived at the third checkpoint where we had our lunch.

In order to split up our groups, we left in intervals of 5 minutes, and much to the discontent of some groups my group was second to leave and as we took a turn off the road saw a vast expanse of field covered in white and yellow flowers and the group before else climbing up a steep hill along the path, so double checking the map, we followed them and eventually caught up with them on top of the hill and as we were eager not to get caught by the group behind us, which we saw entering the white fields we continued walking across the top of the hill and at the same time were able to appreciate the jaw dropping view ahead of us. We continued walking while simultaneously gazing at the mesmerising view of the majestic flows ahead of us, but as we pulled away from the other group, turned away from the flower fields and came to another juxtaposing views of luxurious castle like houses that had such strange shapes, and luckily as our path took us closer to them, we stumbled towards them and were able to appreciate them from closer up. Which is where we took another break, which to the anger of many of my group had led to the 2 groups behind catching up to us, but nevertheless, we took our bags and joined up with them and started walking yet again.

We stuck with this group for a while talking and socialising, but eventually we split from the 2 groups for some reason and took a path into a forest while the others continued following the same path. We trampled along the path in the forest convinced we had gone the right way, but realised we could go no further, as the land ahead was private, so we were forced to retrace our steps and after gazing at the map

for awhile came back to where we split from the groups and followed the route they took. As we sadly scuffed our way along the path, we came across a different school also doing their Duke of Edinburgh that had come from the station we were trying to reach and asked for directions and they told us to continue along the path, which we did. Eventually, though the navigator had a strange urge to turn off this path and go into a forest, but likely as my friend and I were skeptical and wanted to get home checked the route before we went too far and pointed out we were going in the opposite direction, so quickly turned and continued on the path. On the map I could tell we were getting close to the station, so in my eagerness to get home checked the train times and saw the next train was in 5 minutes so tried to get my group to push on but they were too tired, so at the fastest pace we could, we rushed to the station and as we turned the corner we saw the sign for the station crossed the road and turned to the station.

We had arrived. After two extremely long and exhausting days we had finally completed this fun adventure, but to our disappointment as we arrived the train was just leaving and on it was the other two groups which had passed us. Nevertheless, we checked back in with the leaders, handed in our equipment and appreciated the fun events of our last day. Upon reaching for another snack I had noticed that the bag of nuts and dried fruit I had was empty and I was all out of snack. I again checked the train times and noticed that the next train home was in an hour so I sat down and waited. Luckily we were told of a small shop nearby so my group go up and stumbled and slumped to the shop where we all bought an ice cream. I bought a solero, but others in my group bought a range of fruit lollies and cornets. We returned to the station bought our tickets that sat on the platform seats, as there was no seats and waited for the train to come. Eventually it did and we all hoped on. Luckily my house was close, so I only waited for 3 stops until I got off where my mum took me home to a nice bath and then, my wonderful and glorious Duke of Edinburgh adventure was over at last.

