

# Come Find The Magic

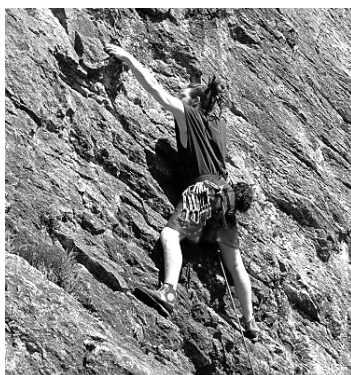
by Peter Jarvis

**H**AVE YOU EVER LIVED with people from around the world for 17 weeks? How about climbing up to 2,000 metres with a 90 litre pack in a snowstorm in May, gone canyoning off a bridge in the dark, or had the honour of representing your country internationally?

I did all of those and more last spring when I was a volunteer at the Kanderstag International Scout Centre (KISC) in Switzerland. KISC was such an amazing experience that I wanted to share it with all Venturers, Rovers and Scout leaders.

Kandersteg International Scout Centre was the dream of Lord Baden-Powell and since 1923 has been achieving its aim of "better Scouting for more young people" through its permanent mini-jamboree. "Find the Magic" is KISC's slogan. What is the

magic? It is in the mountains, the friendships created whilst discovering cultural differences and the opportunity to live life to its fullest. The



*Switzerland scenery offers  
so many opportunities  
– like rock climbing!*

programme is based around three themes: Friendship, High Adventure and Eco-Adventure.

The Centre has indoor accommodations for 260 people plus campsites

for 1400 more. A year round camp programme is run for visiting Scouts. Activities are dependent on the time of year ranging from alpine skiing, ice climbing and curling in the winter to rock climbing, caving and glacier hiking in the summer. Programme staff are delighted to work with Scouters to plan a full and challenging program for visiting youth.

English is the working language at the Centre, but you will hear many languages! When I was there we had staff from 15 different countries — Ireland, Austria, Germany, Australia, South Korea, Netherlands, Denmark, etc. One of my roommates was from South Korea and the other from Denmark.

I was very interested to learn that in most European countries, Scouting is led by young leaders. For example, in Ireland, the average leader is 22 years old and the eldest is no more than 26. This is understandable as most young people do not leave home to go to university; they stay in their hometown after they finish



*In the kitchen, short-term staff learn  
all they need to know about catering.*

Photos: Courtesy of Peter Jarvis

secondary school and apprentice or work in the area continuing their association with their Scouting group. It was wonderful to see how far and wide these groups travel every year. Their youth really get to see Europe when they join Scouting. My understanding of the term "world wide brotherhood of Scouting" certainly increased!

There is a long standing tradition that member countries of the WOSM each sponsor a room in the Old Chalet building. The Canadian Room sleeps 12 and is decorated with pictures from each province and territory. It will need to be renovated in the next couple of years and I really hope that Canadian Scouting will support it both financially and by providing some new "Canadiana décor".

KISC is run by a committee and every two years has a general meeting at the Centre. Each staff member is responsible for creating a small display about Scouting in their country. I got up early and prepared pancakes and maple syrup as a typical Canadian food. I thoroughly enjoyed talking to Scouters young and old about what makes Canadian Scouting special.

#### How to Volunteer

There have not been a lot of Canadians volunteering at KISC and they would like more! I highly recommend for an experience of a lifetime that all Canadian Rovers apply for a spring, summer, fall or winter session at KISC.

Becoming a short term staff member is not difficult. You need to be at least 18 years old, have a working knowledge of English and be a regis-



*Peter was up early the morning of the General Assembly to set up his amazing display of pancakes, syrup and Canadiana.*

tered member of your national Scouting organization. Scouts Canada's national office was most helpful and prompt in approving my application. You are only responsible for your transportation to KISC plus some entertainment expenses once you get there. Due to Swiss employment laws, short-term staff are considered "volunteers" but the Centre provides everything from "pinks" (the staff uniform) to toiletries to a weekly staff night out.

On days off, you have the opportunity to travel around Switzerland or to enjoy one of the local activities. I had some amazing ski days at the end of the winter and then fell in love with rock climbing and spent almost all my spare time rock climbing. But I also found time to go white water rafting, hiking and visit Switzerland's capital city, Bern.

What did I enjoy most? Meeting and becoming friends with the other people working at the Centre. The only thing we had in common when we met was that we were all in Scouting in our home countries. Working together, we became really good friends with many shared memories and experiences. Now I have friends around the world! I was there in the spring so we spent much of our time working on maintenance and room renovations, but we also had some Scout groups as visitors. I went to an incredible campfire organized by a Spanish group, a very cold flag break run by Italian Scouts, chatted with German Scouters doing their

Woodbadge II course and met American Scouters from Dubai!

I have been in Scouting since I was a little brown tail Beaver. I have had many wonderful and challenging experiences as I moved through the sections — including CJ'01, earning my Chief Scout Award, acting as President of our Venturer company and some amazing camping, — but this was the most incredible Scouting experience I have ever had. I encourage you to either help your crew "Experience the Magic" or apply yourself. You won't regret it!

Want more information? KISC has a very informative web site. Check it out at [www.kisc.ch](http://www.kisc.ch). X

— Peter Jarvis is a Rover and Beaver Leader with the 132<sup>nd</sup> Toronto (ON) Scout Group.



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