

Jeff Allen:

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A GUIDE



I always wake early on expedition, I like to sit and meditate for a while. The background noise of a camp coming to life, is observed remotely, zips un-zipping as clients exit the warmth of their sleeping bags, the clink of a cook pot and whoosh of a camp stove bursting into flame all tell me stories of who is up and about.



I exit my tent and go straight to the fire to reignite any embers, a few gentle puffs and the grey, seemingly lifeless coal, brightens into an orange glow, threatening to singe the hairs of my beard.

The open fire, which last night gave warmth as well as distraction, where my group got to know each other and layers of each individuals' personality started to melt away in front of the flames. An open fire has so many uses, this wilderness T.V. is an essential ingredient on any expedition. I often see modern man as being like an onion, a protective husk on the outside, but beneath are layers and layers of experience. Expeditions help to remove this outer husk and let the real person free. My job as a Guide is to provide protection to this exposure, my reward is to witness it. It's the greatest of privileges my job has allowed me.

Today we are paddling around the outside of Culross Island. I shall also guide and protect my group from any threats that the environment may have in store. It's three days since I last had a weather report but my

barometer is holding steady and skies are crystal blue. I listen to my clients chat to each other about their experiences so far.

Last night we had a small black bear scamper around the outskirts of our camp, attracted by the smells of food from afar no doubt. Tonight we camp below the grandeur of a salt water glacier, hopefully we will witness Humpbacks as they explore the sound for food. I'm proud to be a wilderness guide, I'm part sea kayak leader, part councillor, I'm a fisherman and chef 'cord en Naturel', I'm a first aider and I'm a facilitator of amazing experiences, I have the best job in the world.

The new British Canoeing Guide scheme is designed to open doors into the world of guiding. Its concept of introducing potential guides to the deeper subjects of leadership, camp craft, environmental concerns and customer care are all there to encourage leaders to explore at their own speed, some of the essential ingredients of being able to guide others through a variety of environments, the common theme of water being the medium by which we travel. Under the mentorship of an experienced Guide, the aspirant Guide will follow initial direction backed up by their own intuition and explore all subjects deeply.

Having been introduced to the essentials, they are free to further develop their knowledge and skills as required and when they feel ready, return for advice and acknowledgement to their mentor, to share the knowledge and experiences before moving on to becoming a fully fledged British Canoeing Guide.