

# Two, Double-O, Nine - its Roverway 2009



Roverway is a European jamboree held every three years starting from 2003. This year, from the 20th to 28th of July, the Hong Kong Contingent, of which two took part as leaders, three as Service Team members and six as young members, had the unique opportunity to set up their tents in Iceland, a country that many of us have heard of but are not familiar with; where the natural water from lakes are clean enough to be drunk directly; and has so many flies, one had flown straight into my throat, but let's not get into that...

## We are the only Contingent from Asia

It felt special being the only Contingent from Asia, to bring our culture to Europe, where we ourselves had an extraordinary experience of spending more than a week with the generally Western Scouts. With the theme of Roverway Iceland 2009 being "Open Up", we really took our step and got on well with the others. The official Roverway song, "Open Up!" — bearing the theme as its name and expressing it in music — definitely captures the Scouting side of us with its nice melody.

In Roverway Iceland 2009, over 3,000 participants were divided into "tribes", each with around 50 Scouts of several nationalities. It was a fresh idea for us, as it differs from the 21st World Scout Jamboree or other jamborees some of us have been to. The camp consisted of two parts: during the first four days, each tribe was assigned a "Journey", which was to camp in different places all over Iceland and enjoy a number of activities. After an exciting opening ceremony at the University of Iceland, we, the eight Hongkongers who were not the Service Team, together with Scouts from six other countries, camped at a site facing a large beautiful lake and had much fun canoeing, kayaking, and watching the disgusted faces of our contingent representatives as they ate traditional yet strange food, like sheep heads and shark flesh. After all, our Journey was named "Survivor: Iceland" - wouldn't have been a survival game without a contest of eating weird food, would it?

## Day after day with joy and fun

And that was just the first day. On the next day, a raft was built which sailed on the lake with people on; the day after, we went on a three-hour walking trip to town, where we went to a swimming pool, and then interviewed locals



there; on the fourth day, we did some community work on the campsite. The rest of the time we spent just relaxing in the delightful environment and admiring the pleasant scenery surrounding us, or playing group games. The foreign Scouts never run out of games, which got everyone constantly moving and were something we should absolutely bring back to Hong Kong.

On the fifth day, we left the lake and finally arrived, along with all other participants, at the main campsite in Althingi, where another opening ceremony welcomed us and left our emotions elevated, ready for the coming days. That night, our blind hope was replaced by eager anticipation when we were informed about what was in store for us - and there really was plenty to do!

First, there was the Middle Earth, where the information

tent, main tents of several countries, cafés and a large teahouse stand. The Gimle café was the ultimate gathering place and was especially crowded, because of the coziness inside and that it was the only souvenir shop. Next, five themed villages, each with many workshops, were located around the campsite: "Arty Party", PSST (politics, society, science, technology), environment, sports, and Vikings, each of which could be visited for half a day. Some volunteer work could be done at specific spots in the campsite, such as paving the Roverway Path and planting young shoots on a small grassland (which were surprisingly enjoyable), earning you stamps that could eventually be exchanged for a special badge, although I thought it as just a bonus.

## How popular our Chinese calligraphy and tea are!

One big event of Roverway 2009 was the Carnival Day on the 26th of July. Every contingent had a booth prepared in Middle Earth that introduced its own culture through food, games, etc. Almost like a tradition, the Hong Kong booth was all about Chinese calligraphy and tea. Its popularity is not for me to judge here, but from what I've seen, everyone who approached us enjoyed or was at least concentrated in tracing Chinese phrases like, for instance, "我愛童軍", "心想事成" or "妳很漂亮" with brushes and ink through Xuan paper (宣紙), either because they wanted to take away a little part of our culture, or because they genuinely liked the traditional art. Everyone received a small cup of hot "Pu Er" (普洱), "Shui Xian" (水仙) — made from Chinese sacred lily instead of the water lily that we wrongly told everyone — or "Tie Guan Yin" (鐵觀音), and we ourselves of course took a sip or two from time to time. Gradually, more and more Scouts requested a translated Chinese version of their names, which brought us the pleasure of translating and writing, sometimes figuring how for strange names, and seeing them holding their new names with a smile.



The truly unforgettable experience was our tribe's own farewell party. Each contingent prepared or improvised an act for everyone else, who loved and had a laugh out of all but one. All along, we Hongkongers thought there was something like an "international night" where each country would perform, so the four boys including me learnt and practised a little kung-fu for over two months — turned out there wasn't, and not wanting to waste our effort, we instead showed it during the party. Entirely an amateur, I was actually quite grateful that I would only face our tribe; on the other hand, my regrets are not having practised thoroughly and having a bumpy camping ground as our stage. But at least I opened up to the challenge of learning something new within a short period of time, the process was fun, and the outcome somewhat gratifying!

Through Roverway's tribes, international acquaintances were established, and I'm sure every tribe is looking forward to a reunion in a future event, most probably the 22nd World Scout Jamboree in Sweden. With the convenience of the Internet, it may be possible indeed; and how wonderful the feeling would be. ✿