



## VI International Adventure Conference 2018

# Climates of Change

## Rethinking the Outdoor Experience: *A student's perspective*

Jenny Taylor & Sarah Becker

This year, the Adventure Tourism Research Association (ATRA) worked alongside the Spanish Outdoor Physical Education Network to host the 2018 International Adventure Conference (IAC) at the end of January in Segovia, Spain. The theme of IAC 2018 was 'Climates of Change' and speakers and presenters were asked to 'rethink the outdoor experience'. This theme was approached from many contrasting and innovative angles which made for a varied, engaging and above all inspiring conference.

This concept of 'change' was no more apparent than in the involvement of the International Adventure Student Committee (IASC). For the first time, a number of students from Universities in Spain and from West Highland College, UHI (including myself), came together to help organise and oversee the conference proceedings. This allowed us to not only attend a conference (many of us for the first time) but also gave us an excellent opportunity to speak with almost every delegate as we ferried them from bus stop to conference hall and from conference hall to tapas bar!

### Segovia and our Spanish friends

We, from the West Highland contingent, arrived in Segovia on Sunday afternoon/evening, two days before the official conference opening. This gave us the opportunity to explore the absolutely beautiful city of Segovia and the foothills of the Sierra de Guadarrama (the mountain range and National Park which separates Segovia from



The beautiful Cathedral in San Millan, the old town of Segovia



We spent Sunday afternoon exploring Segovia, it's a beautiful city with amazing architecture



The hills around Valsain were filled with the remnants of Civil War defenses

Madrid) but also to get to know our Spanish hosts and the other students which made up the committee.



*Looking towards the Sierra de Guadarrama Mountains*

Darío Pérez Brunicardi was our wonderful host and it had been his idea to form the IASC in the first place. He made sure not only that we felt truly welcome and knew what our roles were going to be during the conference, but also that we were well fed and watered at all times. The West Highland contingent struggled, somewhat with the concept of having lunch at 2.30pm instead of 12.30pm which Darío quickly picked up on and made sure we all had something by at least 1.30pm!



*Bocadillo de Tortilla y caña in Valsain with Dario*



*Working hard in CENEAM*

The Spanish students were also amazing – their English was definitely 100% better than our pitiful Spanish – and we soon all got stuck into preparing for the conference proper. We were tasked with all the logistical and practical conference organization, putting together the program, welcome packs and ensuring delegates got to

the right places at the right times.

### **The delegates arrive...**

ICA 2018 took place in three main locations, the National Center for Environmental Education (CENEAM), the Town Council building in La Granja and the University of Segovia. It officially started on the Tuesday evening with a welcome from the Principle of Segovia University and a Charity Dinner in aid of the NGO, Futuro Vivo.



*Welcome from the Principle of Segovia University, Steve Taylor and International Adventure Student Committee Representatives*

Throughout the day, our job was to register all the delegates and issue them a pack containing information about the conference, a name tag and a 'Climates of Change' hat – we also had to ask them about which workshops and dinners they planned to attend over the next few days. This may seem like a straight forward task, but travel weary academics really aren't all that interested in whether they are going to do 'Bikeball' or 'Forest Bathing on Thursday afternoon – all they want to know is where the bus to take them to their beds is leaving from!

### **Welcome to IAC 2018!**

The conference opening session was held in the CENEAM building with introductions from the CENEAM Director and National Park Chairperson.



*Opening session in the CENEAM Main Hall*

The theme of IAC 2018 was 'Climates of Change – Rethinking the Outdoor Experience'. The first keynote speaker, Outi Rantala began the conference with her thoughts and research on this subject. What role can Adventure tourism play in the changing climates of current societies? When being outdoors, time changes. Every day time seems to rush by hectically whereas time we spend in the outdoors goes by in a smooth cycle. That is why a long hillwalking tour leaves us so calm and rested. But can this state of calm and stillness we feel when we are outside, only be achieved on long trips? According to Outi Rantala's findings the answer is yes. It takes time to reach the stillness, some days of getting used to the rhythm of a nature holiday. Time, a valuable asset to people in the corporate world, may not always be available; people are excluded from the chance of reaching this state. This is the challenge we are facing. Is there a way of achieving a state of calm within only one day, maybe only hours?

## Parallel sessions and workshops

Each day there was around two hours of Parallel Sessions in which delegates presented their research and we were given the opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion. Talking to the many speakers at the conference we were able to gain insight into their ideas and progress on various subjects. Their presentations included work on 'transparent guiding', the use of outdoor courses to reengage young people into education and working life, remaining mentally focused on a solo trip across Canada, and using the time and means you have to experience micro adventures and all they have to offer.



*Melissa J. Lötter presents her collaborative research on 'A conceptual framework for segmenting niche tourism markets'*



*Rene Wilkins present his collaborative research on 'How do nature guides understand and practice transparent nature guiding?'*

As well as the speakers and parallel sessions each day, we also had the chance to take part in workshops such as "Natural music: hear, feel", "Forest & Mindfulness". These workshops continued the theme of the conference in a more practical ways and allowed delegates and us students to discuss further things we had heard in the parallel sessions.



*Bikeball - a Segovian sport, not for the faint hearted!*



*Hearing nature's own rhythms*

## Some of the workshops arranged by the Local Organising Committee



Music workshop: connecting ourselves to music and nature



Using the Jolette chair for increased inclusivity



Fairycup  
Framing nature: thinking outside the box of creativity



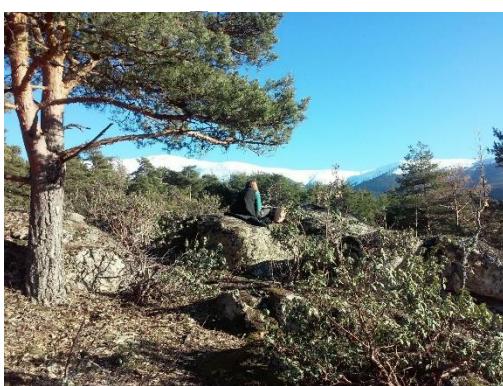
Cultural history, myths and legends in the hills surrounding Valsain



Forest Bathing: walking quietly with nature and each other



Indoor climbing workshop: bringing the outside, inside



Understanding the rhythms of the outdoors



Winter art beneath the pines

Looking back at Outi Rantala's opening keynote speech, for most participants, a silent walk through the forest of Valsaín was all it took to feel calm and relaxed.

## Evening Activities

At the end of the first day we took part in a 'Tapas Rally' through the old town of Segovia, San Millan. This included information on the fascinating history of San Millan – including

many tales of witches and demons. But most importantly of all this involved drinking plenty of 'vino tinto' and sampling a great deal of the delicious tapas served in the bars around San Millan.



*The search for clues begin - finding clues meant finding the next Tapas bar so this was quite important...*



*We were split into teams for the rally - perfect opportunity for a photo (and some serious rivalry!)*



*Tapas bar numero uno!*



*Final Tapas location - let the wine flow!*

On the last night of IAC2018 there was an official Conference Dinner in La Granja, this was by all accounts a lovely evening. However, we (IASC) were not allowed to attend until we all



*Living the student life*

paid £30 for the dinner so we went and got pizza instead!

## A few last words on courage...

On the last day, the keynote speaker was Tove Dahl who is doing research into 'Courage'.



Tove Dahl's keynote speech on 'Courage is more than small change'

The word 'adventure' signifies who we are, who we would like to be and who we are not. To move from who we want to be to who we become involves courage. But what does it mean to be courageous? Is it courageous to jump off a cliff first? And is it even courageous to contemplate and decide not to jump at all? There are different levels, origins and motivations for courage based on people's upbringing, privilege, ethnicity, gender...

Courage is a virtue that we all require at some stage and it was brilliant to learn more about it and how many actions involve even a little bit of courage.

## Closing session and feedback from the floor

In the closing session, Carl Cater spoke of the 'incredible richness' of this year's conference to which Humphrey Murphy noted the importance of 'embracing the chaos'. I believe this was in relation to the chaotic and ever changing nature of adventure and how we interact with the outdoors rather than the conference itself!

The most exciting element of the feedback from the delegates on the final day was how much they enjoyed having the IASC this year. We felt hugely honoured to be the first piece of positive feedback discussed! We have big plans for next year's conference and hope to build on the student element, perhaps even putting together a student conference to run alongside the original.

Throughout the course of the week we met so many inspiring and motivated people who are all concerned with the development of the Outdoor and Adventure industry and the immense opportunity this sector has to offer. Learning about what is being discovered right now and putting faces to papers and journal articles has given us a whole new perspective towards our degree and academic work.



International Adventure Student Committee Team

*We are immensely grateful for being offered the opportunity to attend this year's conference, it has broadened our horizons and provided us with a whole new network of contacts and potential academic opportunities. Most importantly though, we have made many friends not just amongst the IASC but with the academics and organisers as well. We feel truly inspired and look forward to being part of the International Adventure Conference 2019!*



A Warm Welcome Awaits



International Adventure Conference 2019

17th - 21st June 2019

Laggan Outdoor Activity Centre, Dumfries & Galloway, Scotland, UK

[www.iac2019.co.uk](http://www.iac2019.co.uk)



**Scottish IASC:** Jenny Taylor, Sarah Becker, Jordan Thompson, Lyndsay Waterson and Kristjan Maasik