

Qajaq Treffen 2005 report

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This year Tom and myself have organised the Qajaq Treffen for the first time. We wanted to put traditional qajaq-ing in the spotlight by combining this event with the Veluwe Rally. On Friday afternoon we packed our gear and drove to the recreation area Rhederlaag. We had more registrations than we initially expected and the weather forecast for the weekend was pretty good.

Arriving at the Rhederlaag we built our camp and setup the ropes between two of the poplar trees. After a while our first Belgium guests, Marc and Tin, arrive with Marc's skin-on-frame. We were really surprised to hear that Marc was inspired to build his sof after reading through our website. Later in the evening after we had indulged ourselves with some fastfood from the local fastfood chain, the rest of the Belgian guests arrived. While enjoying a good glass we all admired paddles and qajaq's. I hit the sack early that night while the rest continued to chat.

Saturday morning after breakfast a mutual decision was made to start with the dry part of the program first, while some of the Dutch still had to arrive. We started by explaining how the ropes work. For almost all present, ropes is a new phenomenon. The Greenlandic hunters used to tie their hunting ropes between a pair of poles to challenge each others skills and to maintain skills during times they could not go out to sea. The ropes can be done on a tight high rope or on a slack low rope both ropes requiring different skills. Tom and myself have only mastered 4 of the low exercises so far and we show what they are like. After a hesitant start the others soon learn that ropes is not only about skills but also a great source of fun. Almost all of the people present give it a go and most of them succeed in 1 or 2 exercises. Our Belgian guests from Turnhout are eager to set this up at "home" when they return. After all have sore hands and muscles, we muster the newly arrived Dutch qajaqs and paddles. It's a big surprise that even some of the larger guys present can wiggle themselves into the EastGreenlandic qajaq of Cees. Sonja from the Veluwe Rally organisation is curious how such a kayak paddles. So she lends Cees tuilisaq, paddles a bit and rolls it with surprising ease (to herself).

After everyone has enjoyed their own lunch, we start the afternoon with the wet part of the program, the rolling. As it appears most of the participants already know one or two ways of rolling. After a brief demo of what Tom and Dick have picked up in Denmark all go about and do their thing. Tom and Dick from time to time lend a hand by standing in the water. We also do not let the chance go by to try out some of the other qajaqs and sticks. The Yost folder of Jos is drawing the most attention. Some of us also perform some funny things like standing up in the qajaq and re-entering the qajaq after a wet exit. Too soon the afternoon is nearing its end and after stepping into some dry clothes the cars are moved to the take-out point of the Sunday paddling distance. Meanwhile the barbecues are prepared and fired up and as soon as the drivers return we can start with the Qajaq BBQ. Soon everyone is busily grilling food and enjoying a good glass. It is not until the early hours that the last people hit their sleepingbags.

Early Sunday we get a wake up call from Sonja as she shouts across the campsite in her lovely German accent, "DING DONG the start of the 100km is in one hour.!" Some of us clearly have problems from the night before and have to fight themselves through their breakfast. But at 8 o'clock we have all managed to climb in our qajaq's. Shortly after the start a large group of people, like last year, manage to go the wrong way and take the longer route off the lake. It is immediately clear that our Belgian participants have better trained muscles than we have, meaning that the group is split up into several subgroups. But from time to time we meet up for the necessary sanitary stops and of course for lunch, which we enjoy on the bank opposite of Zutphen. At this point we also meet up again with Niklas who got disconnected from the group directly after the start. After lunch we paddle on to Deventer, our take-out point where we get awarded our medal. After a quick pint in the bar of the clubhouse the qajaqs are loaded on the cars and we head back to the campsite. After breaking up our camping gear we say goodbye to all the participants.

All agree the qajaq event has been fun and should definitely be repeated next year. Future locations, like Zeeland, are mentioned. Where it will be is not certain yet, but there will be a Qajaq Treffen 2006. We also agree to keep in touch.

More photo's can be found at the links below
Album 1 (Erik van Woerkens)
Album 2 (Tom Steenberg)
Veluwerally album