

Polar Explorers

Skiing through Canadian Winterscapes

For the last five days, we have been floating downstream to our final destination on an ever-widening river. Suddenly, there are houses next to the water and we see an occasional car. We would like to canoe for hundreds of kilometers more, but winter is knocking at the door. We paddle as slowly as possible, but the river inevitably pushes us to the end. We don't have a plan yet, but we do have a host family waiting for us.

We sit outside on the porch at Carl and Pat's house in Fort Kent, the town at the end of our canoe trip. We are in sportswear with a healthy red glow on our cheeks. All morning we were with Carl on roller skis, a summer sport for cross-country skiers who train at the biathlon center. Carl is the president and coaches the athletes.

"This would be a cool way to travel," Zoë says enthusiastically, but then focuses again on the upcoming winter. We have been dreaming about a skiing adventure but have no idea how it works, if there are trails, and what kind of skis we need. Carl is a biathlon trainer and ski expert, so we are in the right place to learn. Zoë asks if it is possible to tie ski routes together, and she talks about the possibilities she has researched. Carl looks approvingly at Zoë's plans.

"You can also follow the Saint Lawrence in Québec," Carl says. "There's no road, but people live there. In the summer they can only travel by boat, but in the winter, they ride snowmobiles from town to town," and he draws the map in the air.

We take our computer; Olivier finds a video and presses play. Vast white plains, remote villages, and wild nature glide across the screen. We don't say a word, but goose bumps prickle down our arms. "Are we going to do this?" Zoë asks, full of adrenaline.

Carl follows our gazes and smiles. One morning outside and a one-minute video determine the rest of our adventure. We're going to ski for three months in Canada and then cross Europe on roller skis.

Once upon a time, ideas like sailing across the Atlantic or canoeing through the wilderness were madness and naive. It is not luck or coincidence that brings us here. It is thanks to frequently asking the question, "What are we going to do next?" That's how we learn to find our ideas, dreams, and desires. When we tell our story to people, there is always one among them who says, "Oh, I have an idea too."

