

# Participating in a sunrise/sunset/star gazing reflection



As a Scout you will spend a lot of time in the outdoors carrying out fun and adventurous activities. Many of these will take place during daylight hours, while others will take place at night time. If you have ever been on a night hike or played wide games after dark you will know that there is an added sense of excitement and adventure in the darkness! But as well as planning activities which are both fun and adventurous, you should also allow time for reflection on the world around you. The natural world is an amazing place which sometimes we don't notice as we rush by.

Have you ever stopped for a moment while hiking in the mountains to look at the scene around you? Did you ever think, "Wow, this is just incredible"! Given the chance, a reflection on the natural world will give you a sense of the bigger picture. You will get the chance to appreciate how amazing and complex is the world around you, and you may also come to realise that you are part of this wonderful creation.

Reflections can take place at any time. But if you always head for home as the sun goes down you will miss out on a great deal that the outdoors has to offer. So try a reflection activity at sunset or sunrise. Or maybe try a reflection based around observation of the night sky itself.

## Sunset and Sunrise

Sunset and Sunrise are usually the most spectacular times of the day and there is something magical about the sun as it drops into the sea or appears over the top of a mountain. They combine daylight, twilight and darkness and are a great time to stop and observe the world around you. The following are some things you might try ...

- Plan a camping trip on the west coast. Sit on a beach and watch as the sun sets into the sea before you head back to your tent.
- Plan to finish a hillwalk in the darkness and bring along torches. This will allow you to sit on a mountain peak and watch the sun set before you continue home.
- Try getting up well before dawn and hike to a good location to watch the sun come up.
- Reverse your trip to the west coast! Try camping on the east coast, get up before dawn and watch the sun coming up out of the sea.



## The Night Sky

The night sky has inspired people throughout history, and when you stop and look up you can see why. At no other time do we get a glimpse of the vastness of the universe we live in. The following are some things you might try after dark...

- Do a bit of star gazing and try to identify a number of the constellations and planets.
- Try observing night sounds made by animals.
- Go on a simple orienteering exercise using the stars as a guide. Keep it basic and start with north, south, east and west for starters!
- Hold a 'quiet' campfire where you sing only quiet songs. Try including some thoughts and stories in between the songs which may help give an appreciation of the natural world around you.

## Dusk to Dawn Hike

A good way to combine many of the above is to try a Dawn to Dusk Hike. This could be a really exciting adventure for your Patrol where time for a reflection could be included

at any stage. It will probably be a good idea to organise such an activity during the summer months which means you will have the least amount of darkness.

Like any hike you need to plan your route carefully. Ideally this means starting in a location where you can see the sun setting and finishing in a location where you can see the sun rising. What you do along the way is entirely up to you. You might want to and do some star gazing. You might want to hike along a stretch of coastline. You might want to try a wide game in a forest. Whatever you do it will prove to be a memorable experience.

### Some practical considerations

Whenever you are planning these types of activities you should remember to consider a number of things.

- The weather! No matter how good your plan, if the weather is poor your reflection is not going to go very well. So have a look at the weather forecast in the lead up to the reflection and be prepared to re-schedule your activity if it looks like the weather is going to spoil things.

- Clothing! No matter what time of year you plan your reflection the chances are it will be cold late in the evening, during the night and early in the morning. Proper clothing will ensure that you can enjoy the activity.

- Darkness! Remember that it is very possible that some Scouts will be a little uncomfortable in the darkness. You need to set things up when planning your activity to encourage them. Don't put them in a position where they have no 'get-out' option. For example, if a Scout doesn't fancy the idea of sleeping in the middle of a forest make sure it will be possible to get back to the Scout Den

