

RIDING FJORDS

INTERVIEW BY SAM HADDAD WITH CHANELLE SLADICS (CS) AND KJERSTI BUAAS (KB), PHOTOGRAPHY BY CINDY SANTINI



Marie France Roy

When the filmer John Roderick suggested the One Life crew (of Kjersti Buaas, Chanelle Sladics, Sarka Pancochova and Marie France Roy) might fancy a spot of late season shredding in Iceland they almost bit his gloved hand off. And that was before he'd even shown them the boat that would be their passport to the remote



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What made you guys head to Iceland?

CS: The filmer John Roderick [he of all-girls movie *Float* and Cheryl Maas' *Open Air* series from last winter] brought the trip idea to me. He said, "How about taking a boat around all this amazing nature in Iceland?" His pitch was perfect, he talked about being on a sailboat in the middle of nowhere, being completely isolated and splitboarding, which was something that, apart from Marie France Roy, none of us had ever done before. Marie was the only one who'd been to Iceland as well. She said it was the only trip she'd been on where she actually cried on the plane home and she hadn't even really got to do that much, she'd just ridden those chairlift mountains down south. We wanted to do an exploration piece where we were really isolating ourselves from the real world.

Did your sponsors support the idea?

CS: Yeah they were really stoked on the concept and it's really an honour as women athletes to get that support. Plus we have different sponsors so it wasn't like I was going to Oakley and asking for 60K for a trip. We found some creative ways to make it more affordable too.

Is it nice that you all have different sponsors, so it's not like just another team trip?

CS: That's why we started One Life [thisisonelife.com] as we're all drawn together by a certain way that we like to travel. Literally the first person who lands from a flight can pick up the rental car and go shopping for everyone and pick the accommodation, as we're all on the same wavelength. We'd rather stay at a more ghetto place with a kitchen than a hotel for instance, so it costs less for the sponsors as everyone's pitching in. And then we're in a comfortable environment where we have space to do yoga and so on. Any trip is always going to be amazing as all action sports athletes are amazing but obviously we know that we travel better with certain energies that are like-minded.

We're like a caravan full of weirdos, but that gives us creative control over what we're doing and makes us more passionate about the trip as we're organising it.

Was the country as magical as you'd hoped?

CS: Definitely. On our way to the boat we'd fill our bottles in waterfalls that we saw by the side of the road rather than gas stations and it was the best water we'd ever tasted. I was like, "Wow this is how it's supposed to be." Unfortunately we've contaminated our land so much that we can't do this anymore back home in the US, even in the mountains. They really do their best to nurture the mountains here. It definitely makes you appreciate nature and how beautiful the whole process is. Obviously we're not going to be able to undo the past but if we can just learn from it and do our best to lead non-toxic lifestyles that would be the best.

You don't hear about that many snowboard trips to Iceland. How does it compare to say AK?

KB: It's certainly not the steepest, especially compared to Alaska and BC, it's more like the mountains in the Nordic countries. They are pretty pointy so you get some steep areas, and we went quite late in the season so that gave us challenges of what we could access and what we could actually do.

What was the boat like?

KB: When I first saw it I thought it was really small but on the inside it was way bigger than I'd imagined. It felt like we had a good space, though if someone did decide to be loud everyone would hear them.



Sarka Pancochova

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Did you see the stars at night?

CS: Not really as it was late spring and we were so near the Arctic circle that the sun never really went away. It was really peaceful at night, we'd go out at 11pm and sit on the deck and look at the lines and think about what adventures we were going to do the next day. We were really like, "Shall we go right now maybe?" But we didn't do a night hike as John said there wasn't enough light for us to film, and we wanted to save our energies to film properly the next day

KJ: And all your gear gets really wet and there are limited drying abilities on the boat so you need to be smart and selective about what you do!

Did you enjoy splitboarding?

KB: Yeah we loved it. I love cross-country skiing so when I got to combine that and snowboarding it was the perfect combo. We'd see this beautiful landscape with fresh pow and be like, "Let's stop here," so then we'd hike and ride for two hours. It really opened our eyes to how much you can access.

How remote was the actual boat trip?

CS: We were out in the middle of nowhere and didn't see a soul on any of the hikes. And the water in the fjords was so glassy and deep with the entrance seeming far away with steep mountains all around you, it feels like you're protected from everything. We had to start late in the day to wait for the snow to soften as it was late in the year and we didn't get any fresh snow while we were there, so we mostly stayed close to the boat and did smaller trips to an old whaling station, and an abandoned house.

Did you have any scary moments?

CS: I had one sketchy hike off the road when I didn't realise it was so icy. The girls went to one area and I went to another with the guide and we didn't realise it was all exposed to wind so we were pretty much ice picking. It was pretty scary but it actually made me want to get more gear and more into it so I can access more and be safer in the process.

How far were you from help if something had gone wrong?

CS: A few hours in a helicopter, that was one of the things. Not a lot of advanced women snowboarders have had the opportunity to go to these places and our guide told us we did a lot of lines that were first descents which was really exciting.



Chanelle Sladics

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Chanelle Sladics



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We see from the shots that you surfed too?

CS: Yes we surfed off the boat. Marie and I were really determined to get a surf in as there were two boards on the boat and we were stoked that the girls let us go while they picked up trash on the beach. It was the first time we actually found trash anywhere, we thought we'd be picking up trash the whole time, just to help out and give something back, but every time we stopped we were like, "Wow there's still no trash," until the surf beach. But for the surfing we borrowed wetsuits which were huge so we wore two each and had booties and huge gloves that were twice the size of our hands. It was definitely the coldest water I've ever surfed in and I got the head freeze for sure, but I was so distracted by my outfit that I wasn't that cold. They've got unbelievable waves there, and like everything the surf community is growing so people are going to greater and greater lengths to find uncrowded waves. So we were really grateful to have the waves as pretty much ours and just to have the snow meeting the ocean like that. It was a special experience, the mountain and the ocean in one day, as we'd ridden powder that morning.

For more on the trip head to boreaadventures.com/winter/Sailboat_Skiing Kjersti Buaas is sponsored by Roxy and Monster, Chanelle Sladics is sponsored by Oakley, Marie-France Roy is sponsored by Red Bull and Oakley and Sarka Pancochova is sponsored by Red Bull and Flow. The movie Exploration Iceland will be released this autumn, watch it at coolermag.com

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