

# Norway 2008 with Josh Neilson

Norway, a country of contrast, beauty and world class white water, is slightly bigger than Germany but with 95 percent less inhabitants. While learning to kayak I was drawn to the photos and film of kayaking there and this would be my first close up experience. On the plane to Oslo butterflies tore around in my stomach. Rumours about thrashings, swims and broken bones flew through my head, soon replaced by excitement when I was met by fellow Kiwi, Sam Sutton, in our brand new Renault rental car. With a few bits of wood screwed Kiwi style to the roof for racks, a car full of food Sam had brought from Germany, and our boats strapped down we were off to Telemark, a few hours south.

Telemark holds some of Norway's steepest white water. Within minutes of arrival we were running a huge slide which we thought was a bit low. It turned out to be on the high side, but still good fun!

We spent three weeks based on the lakeside at Austbygdai. This small town sits right where the river meets the lake and at the base of some amazing mountains. The Austbygdai River has a few sections of class 4-5 White water, one where Sam, on a fine day, fired down a huge slide and off a 35foot drop. It isn't normally run! He styled it, but was glad to reach the bottom! Right after this was the main waterfall on the river, Spanemfossen, a cool drop with a lot of water and a super soft landing!

The steepest river I have ever seen was Husevollevla, which was on our must visit list.

The section called 'project 2000' had been run once, a few years ago, and not been touched since, though many have looked. At the top is a plateau before the river drops 400m in a stretch of only 500m! The run started well with clean drops and slides. About half way down Tim Starr dropped into a slide, was pushed left and his deck popped. He swam the slide and luckily made it out before the next drop. When running white water this steep, safety has to be paramount. Since just about every river in Norway has a road right alongside, it's easy for a last minute decision to pull over and start paddling. Tim 'pulled out'. The rest of the run was without fault and Sam was super stoked to get on this one.

A few more cool creeks under our belts and we were off to the Voss region for Voss Extreme Sports Week. This includes over 10 different extreme sports, each sport with a few competitions. This year there was a head to head, time trial and team's race for kayakers. Right before the event two other Kiwi mates, Mike Dawson and Bradley Lauder met us and travelled with us for the rest of the trip. The time trial was on the first day. Mike Dawson took first place by a huge margin. On the second day the team event on the same river included a higher section. In about 20 minutes of racing class 4-5 drops and slides in groups of three, First, Second and Third were taken by the Kiwi teams. Cool on the podium! The final day was head to head racing. Mike, Sam and Brad then stood on the podium. New Zealand 3 firsts, 2 seconds and 2 thirds!

## Kiwi Association of Sea Kayakers N.Z. Inc. (KASK)

**KASK is a network of sea kayakers throughout New Zealand**

KASK publishes a 200 page sea kayaking handbook which is free to new members: the handbook contains all you need to know about sea kayaking: techniques and skills, resources, equipment, places to go etc.



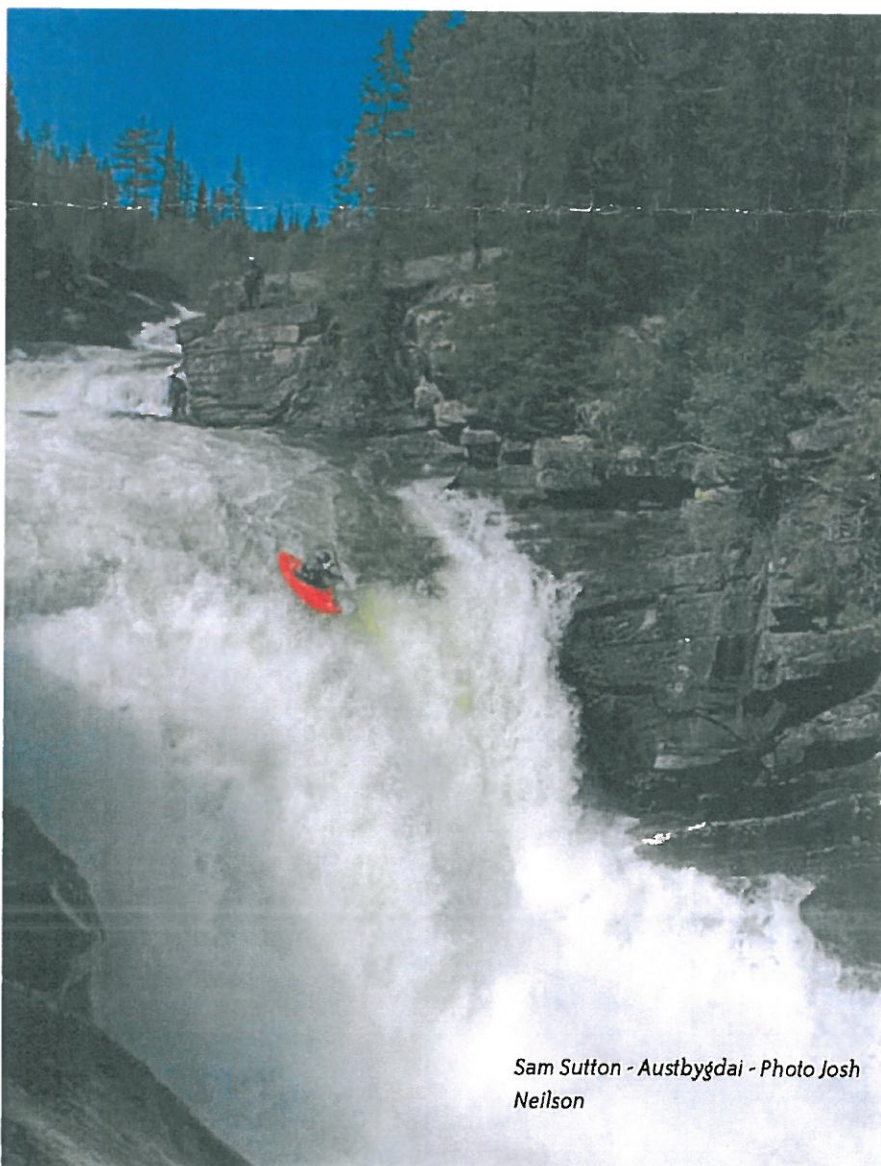
KASK publishes a bi-monthly newsletter containing trip reports, events, book reviews, technique/equipment reviews and a 'bugger' file. KASK holds national sea kayaking forums.

**Website:**  
[www.kask.co.nz](http://www.kask.co.nz)



Annual subscription is \$35.00.

**Kask**  
PO Box 23, Runanga 7841,  
West Coast



Sam Sutton - Austbygdai - Photo Josh Neilson

A great effort by our country!

Over the week we saw awesome displays by the BASE jumpers and Wing suit fliers off huge cliffs, and freestyle big air skiing just out of town.

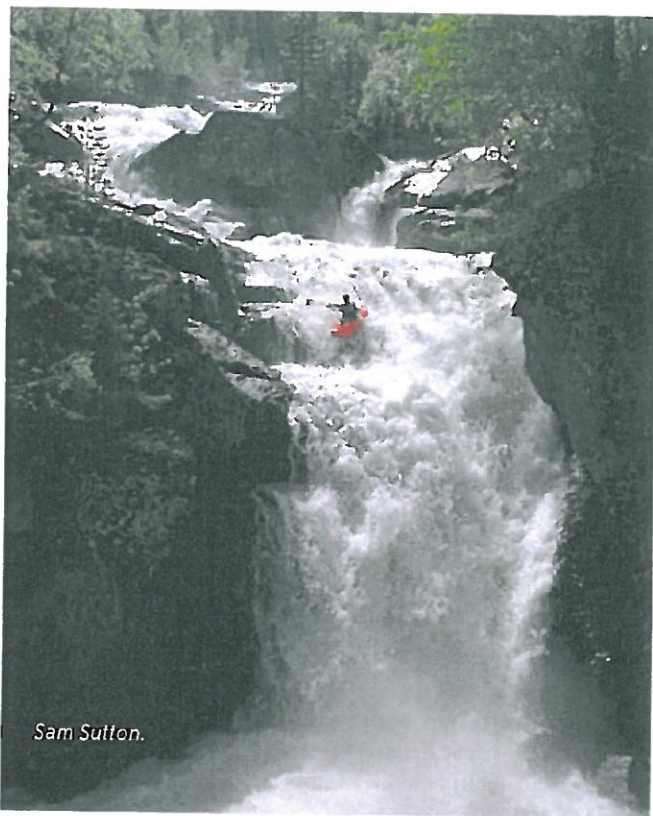
The festival wrapped up with a closing ceremony and a film competition. I entered a short film which I'd compiled over the week. It contrasted the real and unreal. Our film, shown to an audience of a few thousand people, took second place. With everyone on a high from a week of excitement and success, we celebrated and danced the night away.

The festival over and the town emptying out fast we turned to the guidebook for more adventure. The weather cleared and now, free from the crowd of kayakers, we paddled almost every super classic run in Voss. But we had missed the prize run on Tiegdale River every time it came in.

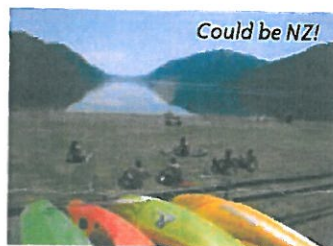
So we loaded up the car and went north to find some new white water. Half way up we paddled a small creek on the high side of good but took off early when Brad was flipped in a hole and hit his head quite bad. The rivets on his helmet, smashed right down, gave him a bit of a fright. We hiked to our car where a txt message from a crew back in Voss was waiting. "Tiegdale River back in. Good to go tomorrow."

We aborted the north mission and headed back for a morning put in. Great excitement at camp that night! At the put in, excitement turned to frustration. The river was dry. We had missed this run for the third time. Sitting at the base of the famous double drop, a clean 10m with a 2m pool then a 15m drop, we planned to be back for a fourth attempt in 2009.

In six weeks Sam and I had paddled a huge range of creeks with a lot of cool people. I left Norway thinking of Jens Klatt's words in the Guide Book "Paddlers come with high hopes expecting to run everything, time permitting. But even after four weeks you only gain a rough impression. The gorges and rivers of Norway provide the modern white water paddler with absolutely limitless options. Let the power and beauty of Norway enchant you on your journey. Enjoy the ride."



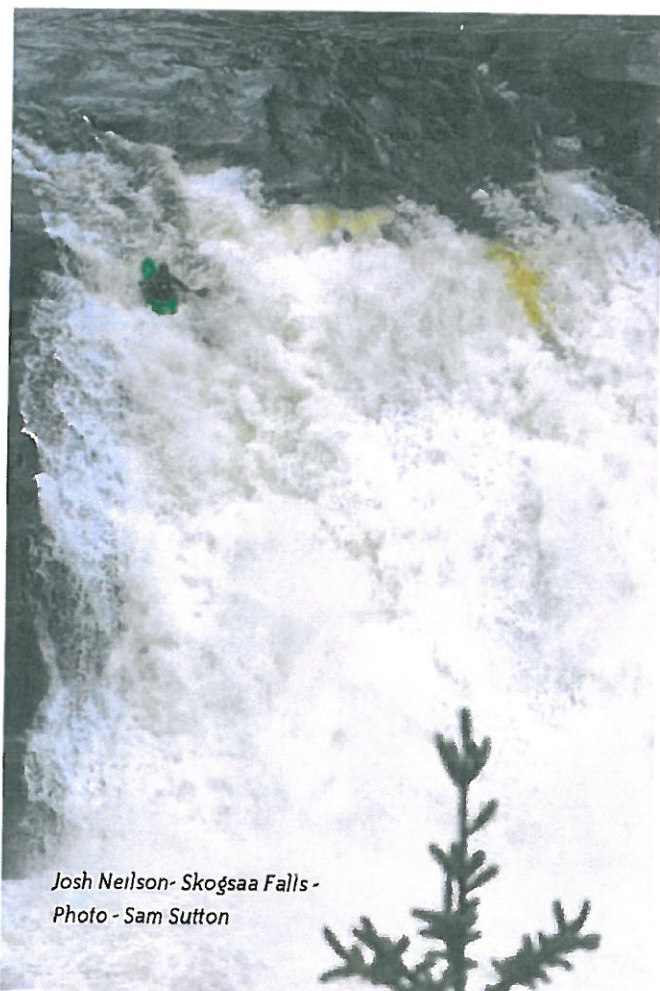
Sam Sutton.



Could be NZ!



Frozen Lake.



Josh Neilson- Skogsaa Falls -  
Photo - Sam Sutton



Josh Neilson homerun -  
Photo Sam Sutton