

Nordic Wonders: A 26-Day Adventure Through Norway

By a new ICA member

Some travelled from Calais, others from Hook of Holland, but we all rendezvoused at the charmingly English-sounding Tornby Strand campsite in Hirtshals, Denmark, ready to embark on our ferry crossing to Norway. As a new ICA member, it was great to meet my fellow travellers over a delicious welcome meal and a leisurely free day before our prompt start.

With ten motorhomes and their intrepid crews of two, we formed quite the convoy down to the port. The four-hour crossing to Kristiansand was smooth, and the breakfast buffet was excellent — a sign of good things to come.



From Kristiansand, some of us headed directly up the motorway, hoping our toll tags would work — essential for navigating Norway's many tunnels, bridges, and ferries. Our first overnight stop in Mandal gave us our first taste of southern Norway's white weatherboard towns.

The next day's drive to Flekkefjord was a scenic delight — lakes, fjords, and mountains gave us

just a teaser of the splendour ahead. In Flekkefjord, we all took the opportunity to ride the historic railway line using quirky, pedal-powered rail bikes through 17 tunnels — one of which was Norway's longest. A slightly damp, disorientating experience but fun nonetheless (an ice cream afterwards certainly helped!).



Following the North Sea Route, we wound our way over twisting mountain roads to Jøssingfjord, stopping at a WWII memorial site marking the bravery of both New Zealand pilots and Royal Navy rescuers. We continued north toward Stavanger via a tunnel so deep it had gradient signs — one even featured a roundabout!

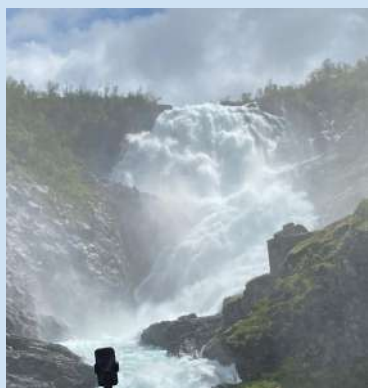


Technology was everywhere — from card-controlled showers to vehicle recognition toll systems. While we expected to use credit cards for buses, it turned out we needed cash or an app. Thankfully, Sandy stepped in and paid for 20 of us after a frustrating delay — not helped by our poor driver who looked ready to retire mid-shift.

In Stavanger, we enjoyed a stunning fjord cruise aboard a sleek modern boat with panoramic screens for those who preferred the warmth of indoors. We also explored the colourful quayside under sunny skies. At our next stop on the island of Bokn, some of us climbed a windswept promontory overlooking the fjord before continuing on to the Viking Farm — a fantastic interactive experience with nearby ancient burial sites.

In Haugesund, we camped right by the sea and enjoyed an evening gathering — top tip: in Norway, a generous salmon fillet can be yours for around £5, and with some prawns from the supermarket, you've got yourself a feast!

Arriving in Bergen — Norway's rainiest city — we were not disappointed. The heavens opened. Still, spirits stayed high. The fish market offered monster crabs and made-to-order seafood dishes. Sandy and Jo booked a wonderful restaurant overlooking the harbour — a welcome treat. Unfortunately, our tour guide was less memorable, but the sun returned just in time for a ride on the Floyen funicular, revealing panoramic views of the city.



From Bergen, some of us took the direct route to Flam, while others made a detour around Hardangerfjord to chase waterfalls — Marken Fossen, Steindalsfossen, and more. Roadworks caused long delays, but the dramatic scenery more than compensated. In Flam, we boarded the famous Flamsbana Railway, one of Europe's steepest lines, stopping to watch a spirited performance by "Huldra" — a mythical forest creature — beside a roaring waterfall. From Myrdal, some zipped down the mountain on

bikes, while others cycled back up the valley the next day. Ali and I canoed across a mirror-flat fjord in brilliant sunshine — perfection.



Our next stop, Skei, offered another waterside campsite with sweeping mountain views. Then, via the Lærdal Tunnel — Europe's longest road tunnel at 23km — we reached Briksdal, surrounded by towering cliffs and roaring waterfalls. In the rain, we took "troll cars" to Briksdalbreen Glacier — strikingly blue and beautiful, even to a glacier sceptic like me!

After Flam, we headed to Bud for a breath of sea air. Here, a hardy group tackled the Atlantic Road by bike — only to be ambushed by a torrential downpour. That evening, Sandy and Jo arranged a wonderful fish & chip supper, complete with strawberries and ice cream.

Trollveggen was next, nestled between dramatic cliffs and a rushing river. The owner kindly lit the BBQ for us, and I was roped in to provide evening entertainment. With my trusty ukulele and Guy on DJ duties, we sang and danced to *Summer Holiday*, *Sweet Caroline*, *500 Miles* and more — a night to remember!

Pressing on toward our final destination, we stopped in Lillehammer, home of the 1994 Winter Olympics. The Olympic Museum was fascinating — including a biathlon simulator — and a dual ticket gave us access to the excellent Maihaugen open-air museum, with buildings from across Norway, including Queen Sonja's childhood home.

Finally, we reached Oslo. Our guided tour was excellent — informative, relaxed, and full of local insight. Many visited the Fram Museum to learn about the polar expeditions of Nansen and Amundsen. The City Hall, though beautiful, had striking murals that might not suit a wedding! From there, the harbour view was stunning — we even spotted motorised sauna cabins cruising the fjord.

We finished with a group dinner at Frognerseteren restaurant, overlooking the city and fjord. Sandy and Jo handed out awards — coveted tubes of Smarties — for rally highlights.

And then, it was time to part ways. We'd travelled hundreds of miles through jaw-dropping scenery — snow-capped peaks, vast fjords, thunderous waterfalls, and quiet seaside towns. We'd shared unforgettable experiences, great food, and better company.



Huge thanks to Sandy, Jo, and Alan Rodgers Travel for a truly spectacular adventure. Norway — you were breathtaking.

Kim & Alison Brett

