

Norway Trip Report - Fjords

By Linda and Chuck on s/v JACARANDA

August 2012

This report has 2 parts: (1) Oslo-Bergen Train and (2) Norwegian Fjord Ferry Trip on the Hurtigruten Line

(1) Oslo – Bergen Train

Beautifully scenic cross-country train ride (a classic) and Fjord boat trip, July 2012

We highly recommend this trip as it's very scenic and lovely.

We had trouble trying to book this run ourselves since we wanted to split the journey at Myrdol and travel down to Flam and then onto Bergen the same day.

Chuck spent some time on the Norwegian rail system website and finally gave up after finding "Norway in a Nutshell". <http://www.norwaynutshell.com/>

Through their website he was easily able to book the trip from Oslo to Bergen. After about 5 days they responded that they were successful in arranging all the transport (Oslo-Bergen train sometimes books up) and when we arrived in Oslo the tickets were awaiting pickup at the information center outside the train station. They also had a "Nutshell" rep at the station in Myrdol, Flam and at the bus pickup point as well to ensure you were at the right place.

"Norway in a Nutshell" Tours was responsive, convenient and well-organized.

Our Trip Itinerary:

Depart Oslo (around 8am) via bus from the railway station. This was due to work being done on the track and part of the early rail section was closed.

Train to Myrdol

Train from Myrdol to Flam

Boat from Flam to bus pickup thru the Fjord

Bus to Voss

Train to Bergen

<http://www.norwaynutshell.com/en/explore-the-fjords/norway-in-a-nutshell//>

Another Option: We did this trip all in one day but some people had elected to break the trip up and stay a night in a hotel at the bottom of the Fjord. Also other folks we met took a ferry from Flam all the way to Bergen. [Both sounded really good to us and we would look closely at this if we did it again.](#) The Fjord is spectacular.

(2) Norway Fjords on the Hurtigruten Ferry (Bergen-Kirkenes)

Six day northbound excursion, July 31 - August 5, 2012

A Norwegian friend told us that Hurtigruten was the best way to see the Fjords - she said it was a truly Norwegian experience of the fjords - a norwegian ship with norwegian

crew and norwegian food. It is a working ferry that is a major lifeline for many remote towns and makes about 30 stops transporting goods and passengers from Bergen, up into the Arctic Circle, to Kirkenes (at the Russian border). It is not a fluffy luxury cruise ship - there are no "hotel room" cabins, no casino, no pool, no 24 hour food orgies. It is really a mix - a comfortable 400 passenger working boat with a wonderful glassed in lounge at the bow of the boat, hot tub, bar areas with modest entertainment, available excursions, and a few activities like a "Crossing the Arctic Circle" ceremony for first-timers. Yet it is fun to see Norwegians and backpackers get off and on on a daily basis and get a sense of Norway through contact with the staff and the role that the ship plays in the economy and lifeblood of the country.

We looked at Hurtigruten's website to book the trip directly with them and had lots of questions. <http://www.hurtigruten.com/voyages/norway/>

We then found a company called Cruise Norway <http://www.cruisenorway.com> that specializes in Norwegian Cruises based out of NYC and offers many types of cruises including a Hurtigruten trip. Mark was really personable, knowledgeable, responsive, and was able to answer all our questions. We spoke to him via skype from Amsterdam a month before we wanted to go and he explained a few other trips as well with a variety of costs and itineraries. When we told him we were going to Ireland after Norway, he suggested another option on a larger, more upscale ship that went to the Fjords and then to Scotland and Belfast. Since it was much more expensive than our budget and we read that the average age was about 75, we decided to do the local Norwegian one (Hurtigruten). Mark saved us some money by booking through his company (he was able to discount the fare) and reserved a great cabin location for us.

Location tip - Our cabin was on the starboard side. Since the ship docks and loads/unloads on the port side, it is quieter on the starboard side. So when the ship docked at 3am we were not disturbed by the noise of offloading etc. Our cabin was conveniently located midship on Deck 3 near the main reception desk, close to the central internal stairways and the main door to embark/disembark from the ship for land excursions. Also this central location meant if there was any seaway it would be the best place to be as the motion would be less.

Cabin description - rooms are small but adequate with two single beds that folded up into seats (much like a train berth). Lighting was good. Had a desk and space for hanging clothes. The en suite bathroom had heated floors! We also had a porthole; there are no balconies.

Make sure that there is NO walkway outside in front of the cabin window when you are docked!! This would mean people passing in front of your view and you would need to close the curtains for privacy. We never had to close the curtains for the whole trip except to lessen the light sometimes at night (the sun hardly set this time of year). This was reported in some Trip Advisor comments we read - other passengers complained about their cabin locations. Mark will know but be sure to ask him anyway!

Cruise Norway Info:

<http://www.cruisenorway.com>

Contact: Mark Stuczynski
(and Katrina Barre)
11 Broadway, Suite 404
New York, NY 10004
Tel: [1-800-334-6544](tel:1-800-334-6544) and [1-212-480-4521](tel:1-212-480-4521)
Fax: [1-212-480-4524](tel:1-212-480-4524)
Email: info@cruisenorway.com

Aside: Chuck did see that Norway in a Nutshell also sells the cruise as well (<http://www.norwaynutshell.com/en/explore-the-fjords/hurtigruten-norway-in-anutshell/>) but we were very pleased with our booking through Mark at Cruise Norway since everything went smoothly.

Comments / Suggestions

Bergen

Bergen is well worth a few days stop. It's a charming city, easily walk able and we really enjoyed it. We arrived late evening, spent one full day and then got on the ship the next evening. We took the cable car to the top of the lookout and then walked down through the fern and pine forest right at the edge of town! That was great! We did a walking tour of the old city area of Bergen - colorful and very historic.

The Hurtigruten ferries leave every day from Bergen going north and every day from Kirkenes coming south. That means if you do your research ahead and want to get off for a couple of days along the way and do your own side trips then you could pick up the next ferry coming by. This would work if you could book it early enough. Not sure how this would work but Mark could answer these questions.

We did the six day trip going north from Bergen to Kirkenes. The twelve day trip includes a six day return trip going south back down to Bergen. The ports going north that the ship stops at night are stopped at during the day during the southbound trip. That way you get to see numerous other places during the day. But if you do this midsummer then it's light all the time.

Side trips – There are numerous side trips available as you can see from the attached excursion list. We choose not to do many and just got off and walked around most places. But there were a couple that we did . The bird trip out to an island by boat, Linda was interested in the Sami so did a trip to a Sami village in Lapland.

Eating

We paid for the optional meal plan which included 3 meals a day and the food was good. Breakfast and lunch are buffets which we really enjoyed. Varieties of salmon, fish eggs (lumpfish caviar) and herring were always plentiful. Dinner is assigned seating

and it was a fixed menu which featured traditional Norwegian food (there was a nice written cultural explanation). Dinners were good but not great - except for the one night that there was a seafood buffet.

There is a cafe on the ship that was open twenty four hours and served light meals and snacks at reasonable prices.

You have the option of buying a "special" coffee cup and that gives you unlimited coffee or tea available 24/7. It was about \$35 so we ended up buying just one cup and sharing it. It worked out just great.

Internet – We almost always had internet onboard but not in our cabin. This is supposed to be upgraded this year. We had to go up to the lounge to gain internet access for our netbook. BTW the kindle had G3 access just about everywhere (in our cabin) even if the ship's internet was not available. So we used the kindle for a quick check of incoming gmail.

Some Trip Advisor stuff Chuck found:

http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowTopic-g190500-i932-k1348896-Hurtigruten_Norway_Coastal_Steamer_Review-Western_Norway.html

Remember these are working ships with about 400+ passengers. We would NOT do this trip in winter as you would miss all the terrific scenery