

Post



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# Admiring Pulpit Rock (from below) - July 15, 2024

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## ***SUMMARY***

Had a shore excursion this morning from Stavanger which involved getting off our ship and onto a small boat which took us to the beautiful Lysefjord (pronounced Loosuhfeeord). The scenery was spectacular and included the a very close-up view of Whisky Falls and the Vagabond Cave. From a great distance we admired Pulpit Rock, some 1900 feet above us. On the return trip we off-loaded at a lodge-y type place for traditional Norwegian waffles with sour cream and strawberry jam. Back in Stavanger we walked the charming old streets and enjoyed the weather. Cocktails in The Living Room then Chinese and all-you-can-eat sushi

buffet for dinner. Evening entertainment was a mentalist who was awesome. - Karen

[Photos](#) | [Previous](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

### ***DETAIL***

After a day at sea, today's our first port: Stavanger. It's Norway's third or fourth largest city, depending on how you're counting, but still that's only 250,000 people. It's the center for oil and gas for Norway. As we're coming into port we see a bigger boat behind us. It's the Iona, from the P&O line out of Great Britain. We learn later that it comes over twice a week and carries up to 5,200 people. (Compared to 600 on our ship!)

Today's our first excursion. Our ship is docked, so we just walk down the ship's gang plank and head down the pier to a smaller boat that will take a bunch of us out to see some local tourist stops. Our guide is tall and thin Lars who is actually from Denmark. It's fun hearing the Danes and the Swedes rag on each other, and the Norwegians, and vis-versa.

Lars explains that he came to Norway for a job in the petroleum industry, which he got, but later lost during some economic hiccup. We motor slowly in town and only open up the engine once we're beyond a big bridge. Like all of Norway that we've seen so far, it's beautiful. Lots of small islands and green hills off on the mainland, with just a small amount of agriculture that we can see. Lars says only 3% of Norway's land can be farmed, so it's good they can farm fish in the sea.

Lars points out a number of fish pens, each of which, he says, holds up to 100,000 salmon! They're raised there and when they're ready to be harvested they just put in a big water vacuum which sucks up each fish in turn and sends it over to the processing facility. The latest are similar pens for halibut. They're bottom dwellers, so the pens have to be designed to resemble bunk beds, so each fish feels that it's on the bottom. They're 5'-6' or more when full grown and ready to harvest (about five years) and the fisheries who've been doing this experiment are just now getting to the fifth year, harvesting and return on investment.

The boat ride is going up the fjord, which is beautiful enough, but our goal is to visit a waterfall or two and the famous Pulpit Rock which the Norwegians call Preikestolen. You've undoubtedly seen pictures of tourists on it, overlooking the Lyse Fjord (Lysefjorden), the one we're zipping through. The flat rock platform is 604 meters (about 2,000 feet) above the water. There are no barriers or railings at the edges. Why? Because if you put up a railing, you're in essence saying "this is unsafe" and thus other areas, without barriers or railings, are by extension safe (which they're not). So... no railings. Just be careful. They have a zillion tourist visit pulpit rock each year and have only lost two or three in the past few decades.

Under an impressive waterfall our tour boat pauses for pictures and then heads off towards our waffles-and-coffee stop. Along the way we see where the Rockman Swim-Run (<http://www.rockmanswimrun.com>) was held two days prior. It's running and then swimming across the wide, icy fjord, and then running up the steep steps of the opposite side of the fjord. Crazy to envision.

We think of waffles as being Belgian, but these are Norwegian waffles. Meaning? They're in the shape of a heart and six of these hearts all fit together, their points touching, so the waffle iron has a logical shape. We each get a whole waffle and are premitted to put as much strawberry jam and sour cream on as we wish. I can't lie, they're pretty tasty.

On the way out and back we see lots of cabins on the water. We learn about cabin life in Scandinavia. Everyone, through family or friends, has access to one or more cabins, maybe on the water and/or up in the mountains. They're typically not very fancy, just basic rooms, furniture, etc. Families and friends go to their cabin and everyone knows this just means to chill, relax, and be a family.

We hear about the love (or lack thereof) between the Danes, Swedes, and Norwegians. We're told that when Norway wins a match in the World Cup Soccer Tournament, or the like, the Danes are happy for them. When Norway loses the Danes are REALLY happy. We learn about Norway's sovereign fund, from investing all their oil money. Each year up to 1.3% of the fund (no more) is distributed to every Norwegian. Why no more? This fund is for current and future Norwegians. They want this money to keep growing and being given out forever.

After we get off our excursion boat we realize that with 5,200 people off the Iona cruise ship, the city is swarming with tourists, mostly Brits. We'd heard this ship comes from Southampton twice a week. Sheesh.

We find the old part of town with lots of very cute, quaint, smallish houses. Peeking from behind them, not far away, is this massive cruise ship. The scale looks like Godzilla attacking Tokyo. I can understand the locals having mixed emotions about these bi-weekly visitors. Apparently the tourists are told "please know these are people's actual houses, where they live... please don't try the doorknobs or peek in the windows". Ugh.

We see a couple of spots from an online self-guided tour and then just wander. The city turns 900 next year, and the thing that really turns 900 is the Stavanger Cathedral. They've been fixing it up and for now it's still under wraps (literally). Not much to see They'll be having an unveiling next month.

We have lunch on the ship (it's paid for). And after some in-cabin chilling, I head out for more street walking while Karen continues relaxing on the balcony.

On my walk I gather most "getting around" here is done on foot. It's Monday and as we are coming up on 6pm I notice many stores are closing (and others are already closed). Time to get home to family. Nice work/life balance.

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## Photos



After we docked we felt that we were awfully close to the buildings downtown.



On our excursion. We learn only 3% of the land in Norway is usable for agriculture. It sure is green. Also, lots of little 'cabins' dotted all over the place.



New style fish pens, enclosed, being tested out.



Pulpit Rock, from below, where we are,  
2,000 feet down.



Pulpit Rock, from above. Seems crazy  
dangerous to us.



Not our excursion boat. Lots of these zodiac boats zipping around at very high speed.



So many waterfalls in Norway. This is one, misting Miss Karen.



Chilling on our excursion.



Our boat. More appropriate to "people our age".

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Norwegian waffles. Yum.



Old town Stavanger. Very quaint. Please don't try the locks or peer in the windows. This is not Disneyland.



The Stavanger Cathedral. 899 years and seven months old. Getting ready for it's big birthday next year.



Of course there are Trolls here and there.

[Previous](#) | [Next](#) | [Index](#)

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