

Post



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Jul 16, 2024 · 5 min read

# Oy! Ship! You can't park there!! - July 17, 2024

Updated: Jul 20, 2024

## ***SUMMARY***

One of those “if I see any more beauty, my head will explode” days. It begins with a sail up the beautiful Nordfjord. Finding our original destination of Olden overcrowded (with both the enormous Sky Princess and the Queen Mary 2), we anchor in a nearby inlet and are taken by tender boat to Loen where we board a bus for the drive to Briksdalen Glacier. It’s one of the most beautiful drives ever - high granite walls with plunging waterfalls, lush green forests interspersed with small, quaint communities, beautiful dark turquoise lakes... And that’s before you get to the main attraction which is the glacier, visible from the valley below. We

stop at the Visitors Center for coffee and all-you-can-eat cake before boarding our so-called Troll cars for the drive up towards the glacier, passing a stunning waterfall on the way. A short hike takes us to a viewing area as close to the glacier as is safe to be. - Karen

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### ***DETAIL***

When we wake we look outside and see we're still cruising, in a fjord. We're heading for Olden. Above us, to the south, is the biggest glacier in all of continental Europe. They add the "continental" due to a bigger glacier in Iceland. We can't see the glacier, proper, of course, but every so often we get a glimpse of an edge of it, through a brief gap in the clouds. We also see waterfalls and the occasional patch of snow on the northern slopes. It's 57 degrees out and we can tell it rained over night.

As we enjoy our coffee in our cabin we hear an announcement. Our cruise director explains that in the cruising business (according to her) docking ports are first come, first served. We weren't first, in Olden apparently, so we'll be anchoring (tendering) at the cute town next door (Loen). In the best "sour grapes" style, our cruise director tries to convince us that WE got the better deal, so there, HA!

Eventually tendered into town we quickly get on a big bus with a wild looking tour guide. He has a long, blond mohawk with shaved sides and a short braided beard with beads. He's from a bunch of different places (based on parentage and living locations: Ireland, South Africa, etc.) As such he has a rather strange accent but is very funny.

The road isn't very wide, especially for our wide bus and the occasional car/bus coming the opposite direction. Such situations let our guide make fun of the Danes, Finns, Hollanders, and especially the Swedes. He explains that in truth they do love the Swedes. That Norway has enough money to in fact buy Sweden (but they don't because it's not worth anything). Snap.

The bus is taking us to the Briksdal Glacier. We're not allowed to walk on the glacier (at this time of year) as it's fragile and dangerous, but we will get a good glimpse of it.

We stop first at a gift shop (which we're told is a rip-off, stay away) and a coffee shop where we can have coffee and cake. He says we can take as much cake as we like (his example is 10 pieces) but that whatever we take we need to eat. We are sure he's kidding. We'd never take so many pieces of cake. When we arrive we find they have 10 flavors of cake and the pieces aren't so big, so we take 10 pieces, yikes! They're good and we (groan) eat everything.

Part of the experience is riding in "Troll Cars" up to the base of the glacier. There's nothing "trollish" about the vehicles. They're by John Deere and are Gator Pros, if you know anything about John Deere vehicles. There's a driver's seat and an extra seat next to the driver. Behind that is three rows of two seats each, and all of those have a big plastic covered table cloth with which you can cover yourself. Being a gentleman I let everyone go first and as such end up in the seat next to the driver.

On the way up, we pass this huge, churning, high-volume waterfall, constantly spewing out tons of icy cold mist. As we go through this mist I finally realize what the plastic table cloths everyone (but me) has. Hm, good learning exercise.

At the top we get out and walk the additional 10th of a mile to the slate colored pool at the base of the glacier. It really is spectacular here and in all the other directions. There are signs indicating where the glacier stopped in 1990 and in 2000, etc. It is receding. Pictures are taken and I let our guide know I'll be hiking back down (one of three of us, the other 25 in our group take the Troll Cars back down).

There are lots of people here today to see the glacier. Normally Olden has a population of 666, but with our ship, the Sky Princess, and the Queen Mary 2 in port, there's an additional 7,100 souls here. On the bus ride back to the ship we stop to take a picture at the picturesque end of the lake. It's misty and rainy and you can't see anything. Our guide reminds us that the Vikings left Norway for Great Britain looking for better weather. Seems like a toss-up to us.

We learn that lemmings do, in fact, throw themselves over the edge of the cliff, as advertised. But they know they're jumping into the water and will crawl out on the other side of the fjord. We learn that you must have a fishing license to fish here. It's 80 euros (a bit less than US\$80) and this permits you to (hopefully) catch a maximum of one salmon. We see cows (what we call 'moo cows' from our childhood). Our guide relates a local expression. In the winter they milk cows and in the summer they milk tourists. We learn that with 60,000 KM of coastline Norway has the second longest coastline, just behind #1 Canada.

It's a fun shore excursion but soon we're back on the boat, warming up, enjoying the view, and getting ourselves mentally prepared for tomorrow eight hour excursion!

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## Photos



We wake at 6:30 and aren't due to dock in Olden until 9:30 so we have lots of time to admire the sides of the fjords as they glide by. We're giddy when we see our first snow (in July!)



Further along, in a break in the clouds, we get our first glimpses of the glacier, the biggest in (continental) Europe.



Some ship took our parking spot in Olden so we're relegated to Loen, where it's all anchor parking. Hence the tenders.



Looking up, after getting off the tender, we see a cable car going up into the sky. Very quickly it's engulfed in the low cloud, giving us an idea that anyone foolish enough to ride up (it's not cheap) will see very little.



On the bus ride we pass a huge, long lake with water from the glacier we're on our way to see. We're on the wrong side of the bus for a proper picture, but this strange shot shows how still the lake is.



There were lots of camp sites and lots of campers, totally enjoying the scenic beauty all around, we're sure. Swimming in the freezing glacial run-off, not bloody likely.



Will we take 10 pieces of cake? We did not think so. (We did). Yum.



Troll cars with protective plastic covers for everyone (but me)



Winding our way towards the glacier.

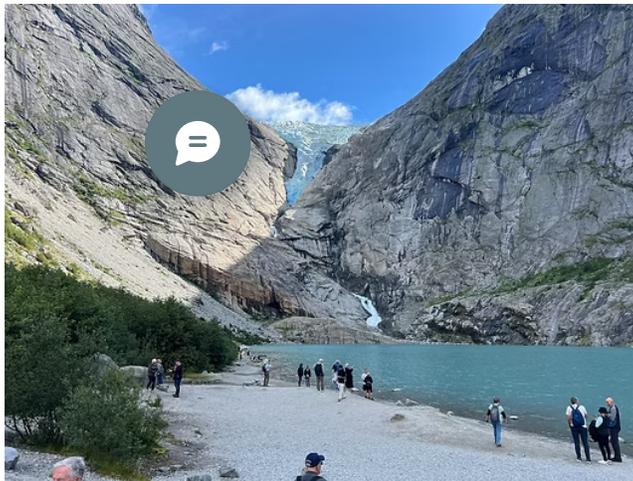
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Whoops, a misting waterfall. Where's my tarp??



Almost there.



As close as we're going to (legally) get to the glacier.

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