

Post



Scott Farnsworth

Jul 21, 2024 · 6 min read

The King and I - Part 2 - July 22, 2024

Updated: Jul 26, 2024

SUMMARY

We dock in Honningsvåg on Mageroya Island, the furthest north **town** in Europe. Our excursion takes us to North Cape, the northernmost **point** in Europe. There are monuments and dramatic views outside and a café, movie theater and displays inside. Late in the evening we cruise back up and around North Cape aiming to go back down the western side of the country. There is a celebration around the pool where we're invited to join the "blue-nose club." This involves jumping in the pool (which has been iced down). The ship's Hotel Manager leads the way, in her uniform. Most of the ship's officers follow, again in full uniform. Next is the Cruise Director in her evening gown and finally

about 30 guests. I watch the shenanigans while Scott sleeps. I stay awake until midnight to take a picture of the midnight sun which won't set for several more days.
- Karen

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DETAIL

[Sorry in advance for such a long post.]
Today we wake up knowing it's the end of the line. Well, not the end of our cruise, just the end of us cruising northward, as we've been doing.

We're still underway. Outside it's sunny, mostly clear, blue sky, warm, and windy. At this latitude, even at this time of year warm is rarely in their active vocabulary. I check the map and determine that we're even closer to Russian than before. Now we're a scant 100 miles from the border, as the crow flies. Hopefully we don't get much closer.

Our excursion isn't until the very civil hour of 4:30 pm so we have a leisurely morning, breakfast, lunch and we watch as the ship eventually glides into Honningsvåg. We'll be docking, thankfully. Karen exercises and I attend a briefing on the science in science fiction writing. Pretty interesting. The speaker worked in the government in many administrations in very technical and top secret stuff, so he can't tell everything but he knows his stuff. And... he's written lots of science fiction himself, so there's a fair amount of self promotion.

At 4:30 we walk the gang plank and get onto our bus #5 with our guide, maybe his name is Fred? We're headed towards North Cape, or as the Norwegians would say Nordkapp. From Wikipedia I've gleaned that it's a cape on the northern coast of the island of Magerøya.

Nordkapp is the terminus of European Route E69 which means if you're driving in Europe you can drive here, and when you get to North Cape you'll run out of road. Nothing (from Europe) goes any further north. A while back Charlie, Doug, and I did something similar but it was in the Americas rather than Europe and it was south instead of north. "Fin de la monde" (end of the world) or something like that.

Given that this place is so unique, and accessible by road, it's a popular tourist destination. There are lots of camper vehicles around, tents and lots of adventurous souls on bicycles with backpacks coming here from where ever, on their own power. Impressive.

The drive out of Honningsvåg is quick, as the city isn't all that big. We pass a huge drying rack for cod which is fully laden. The bus windows are closed, which is probably a good thing. Out of town we notice something: there are no trees. We're in the tundra. The hillsides are green, but no trees. The weather must just be too brutal (at least temperature-wise) for trees. It's a stark beauty but it's pretty. We hear about the people who did, and do, live here. The Sami.

Probably the best known Sami is the actress who said the line "You had me at 'Hello'" in the movie Jerry McGuire (Renée Zellweger). Those Sami less famous mostly tend to the reindeer up here, as their people have been doing for a very long time. We learn that reindeer are domesticated, like cows. They're not in pens or fenced areas, like cows, but being mostly on islands helps.

We anxious to see reindeer (and see if their noses really are red — wink) and sure enough we do. It's their easy time of the year so there are babies. We're looking for them and they're mostly white and we're looking for brown. Apparently like a snowshoe hare they change their fur color in summer and winter, but in reverse. In summer the reindeer are lighter colored and in the winter they're darker. Hm.

At Nordkapp proper we see lots of statues and signs and proclamations about where we are. There's a visitor's center and lot and lots of visitors. It's very windy as we are on a cape. It's a huge flat plateau overlooking the sea and the wind is blowing.

Inside we watch the movie about flora and fauna and artsy-fartsy. We didn't really get it. Beyond that there's dark tunnel (definitely unique for all who've endured countless 24 periods of daylight to get here). There's a funky oval shaped chapel off one side of the dark tunnel. The ceiling has short plexiglass rods, lit from the back, that looks like stars. On the other side of the dark hallway is some Asian museum which seems strangely out of place at the northern-most point in continental Norway.

There are a few dioramas showing the first people to come here, and the King of Norway, long ago, coming here and hoisting himself, and his victorian-dressed friends, from the water (where they sailed in) up to where we are, to have a look at the view.

We continue to the end of the hall where there's a six minute artsy-fartsy multi-media show about the four seasons and the light and dark and ice and northern lights. Again, we don't really get it. When the lights come up we see it's really just a fancy auditorium and we guess they needed to do something with it (for the tourists) when it's not in use. There's a nice balcony, outside, called the King's Balcony, overlooking the sea. The view is very impressive.

On our way out we do poke our heads into the museum. Holy Crap? We know this dude! This is Rama V. You may know him better as The King from The King and I. We learned all about him in Thailand last spring on our trip there. If I recall correctly, world powers (UK, France, Holland, etc.) were coming to the area, grabbing a country, and saying "You're now our colony!". King Rama V figured he'd better skedaddle off to Europe, make some friends, and learn the European ways. He did and when the world powers came to colonize Thailand they saw their old friend and said "Wait! This guy's one of us, we can't take over his country". And that's how Thailand was never colonized. AND... on Rama V's voyage to Europe, THIS, here, was the terminus of his trip. Trippy!

Back on OUR ship we jump in the hot tub and relax. We have room service dinner in our room, on the balcony, with French wine we bought in Oslo. We watch the ship motor away from Honningsvåg. Our route takes us by Nordkapp again for another look (this time from the water).

At 10 pm I'm asleep and Karen is out by the pool watching the "Polar Ice Plunge". Garbage can-size buckets of ice are dumped into the pool and then, one-by-one, the ship's officers jump (or dive, fall, or belly flop) in to the pool, in full dress uniform. Next, passenger who care to follow suit, do the same. Karen demurs. I snore. In all twenty or more passengers take the plunge. Many more witness the event.

At midnight I'm still snoring and Karen's still awake, snapping pictures of the sun, still well above the horizon.

Photo



Not a huge town and certainly not a lot to see, but we were intrigued by the drying cod pieces (see what we did there?). The bus windows were closed so we don't know if it stunk to high heaven.



For days we've been seeing gorgeous forests of verdant green trees. Something's missing here. We learn we're now so far up north we're in the arctic tundra.



But not having trees doesn't mean you don't have beaches. This is the northernmost beach in Europe.



We're wishing to see reindeer and we see reindeer, albeit at 80 kph and from a distance.



Closer up Karen sees another reindeer with her white baby.



North Cape (Nordkapp) visitors center.
Radar dome for the? Rooskies?



Insta-ready statue pointing out the 23 degree tilt of the earth enabling the midnight sun we enjoy here.



These are the cliffs where the King of Norway, back in the 1800s, hoisted himself (and friends) up to see the view.



Trolling for friends. Notice... four toes... four fingers... big nose... and tail (but not on Karen).



Diorama showing discovery of the North Cape.





Back on board our ship, having room service dinner and wine we bought in Oslo.



The first officer to do the Arctic Plunge (in full dress uniform) is Tatiana, the "hotel" manager.



Midnight and... SUN... still.

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