

Post



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Sleeping in fish-oiled goat skins - July 25, 2024

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SUMMARY

We're further south now in the town of Bodø (pronounced Boo duh). Our bus takes us along the coast and into the Karlsøy fjord. Once again, stunning beauty all around - tall, jagged mountains, crystal clear water and sandy beaches! We're headed to the Kjerringøy (pronounced Charing oy) Open Air Museum, a ferry-ride away. It's a former "trading post" which has been well preserved, allowing us to see what life was like in the 19th century. (Hard. It was hard.) - Karen

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DETAIL

59° now, going up to 63° here in Bodø. Weather is currently gray with low clouds. The outlook for later calls for partially sunny mid-day with an “early” sunset (11:15 pm).

We have a long excursion today (outdoor museum a ways away) so we’re off the boat around 9 am. Our tour guide yesterday was Tore, pronounced Tour. Today our tour guide is Tor, also pronounced Tour. Apparently this one is what we would call “Thor”, you know, the guy with the big hammer.

Tor gives us detail of the area as we drive. We’re in Bodø, just north of the Arctic Circle. It’s the 19th most populated metropolitan area in Norway with about 54,000 people. The city is pronounced like “Buddha”.

We pass a bank on our left and he says that’s not where the rich keep their money. Across the street is the town harbor with big, gorgeous boats. He says that is where the rich keep their money. They do not know how to operate the vessels, but they do invite friends over for lunch on the boat, moored in the harbor. The city was named one of the European Capitals of Culture for 2024. It’s funny that we somehow missed that announcement.

We drive by many single-family dwellings and they all look very similar. They all have nicely groomed grass and flowers in the yard. The homes themselves are one big block with four medium sized square windows, all designed to keep the heat in during the long winter. Today, he says, it'll be 63° and they are really not used to such hot weather.

We pass hay fields and the farmers have rolled the harvested hay into big stubby cylinders wrapped in white plastic. Tor calls them 'tractor eggs'. A previous tour guide said they were called troll toilet paper rolls. Normally they harvest the fields two times a year (July and August). Given how warm it's been this year they're thinking to have a third harvest.

We drive by/through the aviation museum building. We're told is in the shape of a propeller, interesting! There is an air base near by. They used to fly F-16s out of here, and it was oh so loud. Now they've moved the base further south (and fly F-35s), so it's not as loud. In the Cold War of the 1960s, the US flew U2s to take pictures over the former Soviet Union. They took off from Pakistan and landed here in Bodø. There were a lot of US military people here to support that.

The U2s flew so high the Soviets couldn't (in theory) shoot them down. They tried and couldn't (even shooting down three of their own planes in their efforts)... that is, until they did down a U2. The pilot, Francis Gary Powell, parachuted to the ground and was captured. The Americans in Bodø knew the gig was up and were gone in three hours. According to Tor, when Nikita Khrushchev gave his fiery UN speech (where he pounded his shoe on the lectern) he said "If you Americans ever do anything like that again, the next atomic bomb to be dropped will be on Bodø". Who knew?

I'm thinking how pretty it is here. All of Norway is pretty but with so much green and water and high mountains here, it's really gorgeous. Tor points out a striking island across the water. He tells us this is one of those places where they had the witch trials in earlier centuries. They would hold the women suspected of being witches under water. If they drowned that proved they were innocent. If they survived, they were a witch and were burned at the stake.

We hear about how many people moved to the US during various hard times. Now there are more Norwegians in the US than there are in Norway. There was the vote for which countries would join the EU and Norway said "No" (twice). Tor says if they'd asked the Norwegians if they wanted to join the US (where all their families live) that would pass.

Tor talks about the geography and the history of these impressive mountains. He says at one point these, and the Appalachians, and the Cordillera in South America, were all one long range. I'm going to have to look up that one.

As we get closer to our destination we start to hear about where we're going. It's Kjerringøy, pronounced, of course "Chatting Oy". If you were polite you'd call it Lady's Island, or Island of the lady. And where we're going is no island (it's a peninsula) and the lady is no lady (according to the traders she dealt with she was a b*tch. Thus Kjerringøy is "Bitch's Island". We're going to see her house and other buildings.

She and her husband were in the fishing trade and made lots of money. He died and she decided she'd continue the business, not something a woman did back in those days. She was a good business woman and made even more money.

Lots of fishermen came and worked there. When the weather wasn't suitable for going out, the fishermen would sleep in the boathouse, up to 200 of them all in one big room. They slept dressed, of course, but what did they wear? Clothes made from goat skins soaked in fish oil (to make it waterproof?). Can you imagine the smell?

We got to tour the house and see where all the girl servants and workers slept. We saw her many kitchens, the general store, and on and on. It's in amazingly good condition. They have Balmoral China service for 70. Our guide is very good at explaining things, and is excited because tomorrow she'll be giving this same tour to some visiting French dignitaries and their host, the Queen of Norway. We swear the royal family is following us.

In the general store they still have the ledgers of what everyone owed the lady of the house. Workers typically died in debt and she'd forgive the debt, noting the deceased had nothing of value to their name to help pay it off. The general store was also the local post office. The post-man boated over twice a week to pick up and deliver the mail. Many of the recipients couldn't read, so he'd read their letters out loud. Many people showed up to hear the news (and private gossip) from the outside world.

Eventually we head to bus and drive/ferry back to the ship. We clean up and have our last dinner in one of the specialty restaurants (not counting the upcoming French Tasting Menu, groan). Later we attend a comedian's stand up routine in the Cabaret Lounge. He's a bit manic but very funny. Exhausted we head for bed, outside it's still light.

Photos



Island in the background where they did the "witch test" holding you under water if they thought you were a witch.



Tractor eggs, aka Troll toilet paper rolls.



Tor (left) and our house tour guide.



The 'foundation' seems like an after thought. Houses balanced on rocks!



The very nice living room from the nicest place in many 100s of miles. That wall paper is original and over 300 years old.



The dining room. The lady of the house (in the picture) had good (and expensive) taste.



The walls are all solid beams of wood, like 8" thick. We have a grinder just like that when I was young!



Weaving loom



House worker sleeping quarters. Chamber pot under the bed.



Where the girl servants slept. The little hole in the wall was to ensure there was no funny business going on.



In the master bedroom, a furniture mounted chamber pot, pull out.



Karen heading to the boat house, where up to 200 fishermen would sleep in bad weather.



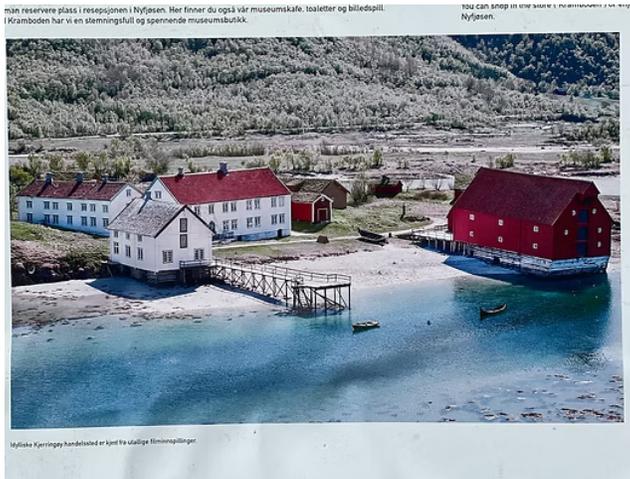
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So pretty here. Nice day, eh?



Sod roofs  m layer? Birch bark.



The estate from a distance. Tide goes up and down 2+ meters.



Headed home. Waiting on the ferry. So many gorgeous mountains like those in the distance, all around.

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