

Post



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Eidfjord: Last but not least - July 28, 2024

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SUMMARY

We sail deep into Norway to the end of the beautiful Eidfjord. Off the ship and on to (another) bus for a picturesque drive along the Eid River, passing through tunnels and along vertical rock faces to the stunning Måbødalen Valley and the head-exploding beauty of Voringfossen. Metal walkways take you to fabulous view of this, one of Norway's most famous waterfalls, which plunges 600 feet into the canyon below. We continue on to the Hardangervidda mountain plateau to see the Syssemdam dam and the distant Hardanger glacier. We stop for coffee and waffles before heading back to the ship. Leisurely afternoon the great French

dinner at one of Azamara's speciality
Chef's Table meals. - Karen

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DETAIL

We wake knowing today is our last day on the ship in a port. Tomorrow we have a day at sea and the next morning, at 7 am, we dock in Copenhagen where we get off. Today we're in Eidfjord ("Oath Fjord") and our excursion is titled Waterfalls and Canyons. These are a few of our favorite things.

From the boat, looking around, the mountains rise around us in every direction. We've probably motored 100 miles from the open water, up the fjord, to get here. Eidfjord is not somewhere you come for the city (less than 1,000 people live here) but rather you come here for the natural beauty, and for sports, both winter and summer.

Our guide is Gier (pronounced "gear") which means Spear. He was born towards the end of World War II so he's seen a lot. He's from here and though he doesn't remember the war he's heard many stories. He also lived through the poorer times, before the 1960s, when life was hard. There weren't a lot of roads, so you had to get around by boat. Now there are good roads that quickly take us up from sea level to 4,000 feet.

We hear about the good times and bad, in terms of catching fish. They used to catch salmon here, but not so much any more. The biggest ever caught was 27 kg (about 60 pounds). That's a big salmon! The area is very rugged with striking beauty. As such anyone whose anyone in Norway has been here. Somehow Grieg's composing was inspired by the area's beauty, as was the writing of Henrik Ibsen. The King has been here and as has Roald Amundsen when he was preparing for his trek to the poles. The thought was that if you could survive and traverse this land, you can handle anything. Sonja Henie used to come here to skate, in theory because you could do it year round, way up in the mountains.

Our first stop is Vøringsfossen or “Vøring Falls”. It has a drop of over 600 feet and there are viewing platforms to see it from multiple directions. There’s a big cloud of mist and the sun casts a rainbow. In the gift shop are all things troll. Also there are reindeer pelts which are extremely soft with long fur. I can see how that would keep them warm (had these ones not been skinned).

Gier tells us about the hard life around here, how he had 2 meters of snow on his roof on night, and worked to clear it before the roof collapsed. He also says he has a sod roof, which is nice because he can’t hear the rain, easier to sleep. He repeats what we’ve heard about the prevalence of electric cars here in Norway. He has a Chinese EV and he says it’s the best car he’s ever had. Maintenance, he says is 1) does it need to be washed? And 2) does the firmware need to be updated?

As we drive around we see rivers and smaller falls all around. Apparently this area provides hydroelectric power to some large area. The road we’re on connects Oslo and Bergen, so this area is well placed. We see lots of “Touristsenters” with accommodations and summer and winter activities. RVs are everywhere. There are buildings, but not too many.

Our next stop is at the dam of a large reservoir, for power generation. We're told that you can see a glacier at the far end of the water, but damned if we can. As we drive on I ask my phone our elevation and we've gotten up well above 4,000 feet. It's barren tundra now, but it's beautiful undulating land with mountain pools and streams carrying the water downhill. In the distance we can finally see a glacier, and it's massive.

We hear about the fish in the various lakes we see. According to Gier "Good fishing here. No one does it. Young people are too lazy anymore. They just go to the restaurant." (Kids today!) We don't see any reindeer but hear there are 10,000 of them (here? all of Norway?) and that they have to 'cull' 10% of them every year or the population gets out of control. It's a pain to get a license and a gun, and then to get any catch tested afterwards. Gier tried it once but "didn't have such good luck".

At the far end of our drive we stop at a restaurant and have the traditional Norwegian waffle with sour cream and strawberry jam. From our experience this is a large portion of their diet (or maybe that's just on cruise boat excursions). On the drive back we hear about Gier being a programmer and an air traffic controller. More recently he wondered if he could sing so he joined a local chorus. They did well and ended up performing in the main concert hall for audiences of many 1,000s of people including the Queen of Norway.

I'm picturing Gier as a Norwegian Forrest Gump as the tales go on and on. He's very interesting but speaks with an accent, not unlike Henry Kissinger. Slow and low and gravely. We're in the area known as Hardanger, known in part for the Hardanger fiddle, the national instrument of Norway. Listening to Gier I'm wondering why we needed to visit any of those other parts of the country.

Gier tells the funny story about the discovery of oil in Norway. Have I already told you? In 1969 it was suspected that maybe there's oil in the North Sea. Shell, or someone, got approved to look... they could test drill in 32 spots. In the first 31 places they they looked... nothing. Drilling in the 32nd location, too, didn't result in any oil. The drill team wanted to tell HQ they didn't find anything and were they OK to stop? It was December 26 so HQ was closed. The team kept drilling and, bingo, they found oil. From that the country's sovereign wealth fund is now worth 18.5 trillion NOK (Norwegian Kroner) or \$1.7 trillion US dollars. December 26th is fondly remembered in Norway.

Reflecting on Eidfjord, we could imagine how just seeing two weeks of Norway, maybe today would be "more of the same" or "we've seen this kind of beauty". Thankfully, that wasn't the case. Lots of places I'd be happy to return to, and Eidfjord is definitely on the list. (Maybe Karen will be happy for me to call her back in the US when I visit Norway again).

Back on the ship we relax and recover from the exciting excursion with Gier. Dinner is our last fancy, special meal. Tonight's our "Chef's Tasting Table: French". Seven courses each with accompanying wine pairing. They do different such dinners, each with eight guests. French and Italian are the most popular but they also were pushing Indian and "California". I'm not sure what that last cuisine would consist of.

The meal turns out to be delicious. The whole meal is introduced in detail by the head chef and later the waiter and sommelier introduce each successive dish and matched wine. At a big table we're seated four to a side and end up talking just to the couple across from us. They're from Alberta, Canada and we have lots in common. At the end of the meal they insisted we take their email and phone number. We're invited to come and stay with them in Alberta (or at their place near Palm Springs). This proves to me we've definitely been served too much wine.

Photos



It's a long way into Eidfjord and there are sights to see. More on clear days than today. But the suspension bridge is impressive.



On our excursion we get to our first (and only?) waterfall. With the noise and mist churning up from below we gathered it's impressive.



It really is something. Lots of power. We see how this could generate a lot of electricity, but we're thankful they left us this to see.



Requisite selfie.



We passed on any of the many Chinese-made Norwegian troll dolls.



We did get our close up of a reindeer, albeit as a part of the wallpaper.



Snacktime and our view is very nice. These cabins are rentals for tourists to enjoy the views longer term.



Traditional Norwegian waffle with sour cream and strawberry jam, again.

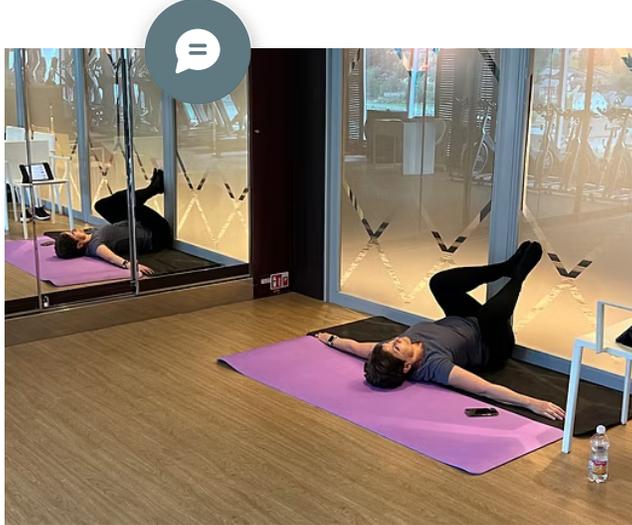
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On the drive back we did get a glimpse of the glacier. It looks like a big one.



On the ship we could see most of the greater Eidfjord residential area. Not so big.



Karen takes a break to stretch and exercise.



The evening was capped off with a seven course French Tasting Table experience. Good food and tasty wine. Too much? Here the sommolier is introducing this course's pairing.

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