

Yes, it's official – we now have a new favourite holiday country. Move over France, Greece and forget about Australia – enter Norway!

So what is it about Norway? Well what do you know about the country? Yes, it is thin and long – so there is a lot of driving. It's outside the European Economic Community – so no Euros – instead think krone. Yes, it is an expensive country – but certainly no more so than Australia! It has the midnight sun if you go north of the Arctic Circle; well in summer at least. It's not exactly crowded, even with all those tourists it only has about 4½ million inhabitants. 12% the size of WA with about 2½ times the population.

Norway is just so beautiful, and so varied. Just when you think that you've seen it all it comes up with more and more, better and better. Great mountains, fabulous fjords, stupendous waterfalls (Norway has nine of the world's twenty highest waterfalls), a fantastic coastline, great cities and superbly engineered roads – with 18 [designated national tourist routes](#). We sampled 8 of these.

For the holiday overall we had 3-months to play with, leaving Perth on May 6<sup>th</sup> and returning on 6<sup>th</sup> August. That's about half the time we had last year!! The key destination was always going to be Norway.

The first challenge was how to get to Norway. It is a very long way from where we store our motor-home in the Midlands of the UK. In the good old days there were ferries from Aberdeen and Newcastle to Bergen and Stavanger. Those ferry routes closed a long time ago, so we had a roundabout route to get there, and of course we chose a route that included a number of other countries:

Country	Km	days
Norway	4850	36
Sweden	1801	6
France	1217	9
UK	1061	20
Germany	1046	6
Denmark	861	2
Belgium	483	8
Holland	241	2

**Favourite Norwegian cities** – Trondheim and Stavanger were nice but we were most impressed with **Bergen**:



Our Motor-home went really well in a road trip of 11,290km!!

Overall, the driving was enjoyable and safe. The Norwegian roads were good and seemed to be full of motor homes. We read a newspaper – OK we picked it up out of a bin in MacDonaldis when we were using their free Wifi – which said that Norwegians have over 250, 000 motor-

homes. I'd believe it too – they were everywhere. Even so the country is big enough to swallow them up. I just got fed up with waving to each one that we met coming the other way!!

Normally we try to take a few back roads when we travel. This is not too easy in Norway – there are mountains and fjords everywhere - so you really have to stick to the main roads. To get across the fjords there are over 100 vehicle ferries which are very efficient and not very expensive – individually – but boy do the ferry costs add up! To get around the mountains there are passes and lots of tunnels – we took some that were over 8km long – one of which we drove through without meeting anything coming the other way – no-one behind us either - so not really a very busy road! Once through we were rewarded with a fabulous stopping spot – wedged between the mountains and a fjord – with a wonderful view of the midnight sun. The following picture was taken at breakfast the next morning:



Many of the tunnels and bridges are toll – as are many of the main roads – usually just where you can't avoid them! Their system of collecting the tolls is brilliant – you register your bank card on their web site and they take \$50 from your account! You then just drive – a camera takes your photo each time you go through a toll and at the end of the holiday they add all your tolls up and credit you with any money left from your \$50. For us it worked really well.

At 24.5 km long the Laerdal Tunnel is the longest road tunnel in the world; so long that there are large and differently coloured chambers at intervals to relieve boredom, to stop drivers falling asleep. We decided against taking the tunnel, opting instead for a road over the top – this started with a series of Z-bends up to what we called the 'Mother of all Lookouts' which projected out over a huge drop down to Aurland and the fjord.





From the lookout we climbed up and up to about 1300 m on what is called the 'Snow Road' – good reason too - our van is over 2.7m high – so there's a lot of snow up there!!



Travelling further north we took the Trolls Road to what we named the 'Father of all Lookouts'. The view was amazing and keeping your eye on the road with 11 hairpin bends was challenging, particularly so as right alongside the road was a 320 m waterfall. Yes we did get a bit wet!



**Exercise:** We did do a lot of driving but we also got some exercise at times, such as walking to Pulpit Rock one of the iconic places on their tourist circuit. It's an amazing rock platform with a vertical drop of over 600 metres on 3 sides down to the [Lyse fjord](#). All the blurb said it took 2-hours to reach. We took about 3-hours coming back! That's Pam in centre-shot!



**Reflections and the Midnight Sun:-** Norway is a wonderful place for reflections – there is so much water which varies from really rough to absolute calm. Travelling north you reach the land of the midnight sun. This picture was taken about 10:30 at night. It's actually an arm of the sea – not quite like the Indian Ocean!!



**Where else did we go?** Other favourite places included: Veurne, Bruges, Ghent, Mechelen and Lier in Belgium; Mt Ste Odile and Rosheim in Alsace; and Sasbachwalden and Saarlouis in Germany.

As we were also passing through Holland we contacted André and visited him and his dance group Phoenix in Apeldoorn. It was great to see him and we danced with several of his groups. They have a wonderful hall that they own – great floor, bar and café facility. The dancers ranged in age from toddlers, through teenagers to people of a very mature age! A wonderful spectrum! We were made very welcome and thoroughly enjoyed it.

That was the only dancing that we did on the whole holiday, but we also caught up with our friends Gabi & Stefan, whom we first met dancing in Bulgaria in 1997. Last year we attended their workshop with Iliana Bozhanova and Todor Yankov. This year we emailed them to say 'probably won't see you in Munich this year – we're off to Norway'. They emailed back to say 'so are we!!' So we met them in the Lofoten islands north of the Arctic Circle.



**Language and Communication:** Most Norwegians spoke English – and generally very well. Our French got a bit of practice, and our tourist German came in quite useful too. In communication terms the Netbook worked well again, particularly when paired up with MacDonalds' free Wifi; until that is we got some way up Norway – very few MacD's there.

Other **images** of the holiday: **Flowers;** lupins in Scandinavia; geraniums and petunias in Alsace; having **breakfast in the snow** at one of the free stopping spots (guaranteed in their constitution); getting lost in the mist of [Skuleskogen National Park](#) and the [Vasa](#) museum in Stockholm.

**Next year?** We're thinking France, Spain and Portugal. Do 'Le Tour' again. And yes we will go back to Norway.