

**Published as part of Traveller's Tales  
Grapevine - Volume 36, Issue 1  
Perth International Dance  
December 2024**

**Gisela's Norway Odyssey**

This year's European visit included a long held objective of joining a Hurtigruten Cruise along the Norwegian Fjord Coast from Bergen up to the vicinity of the Russian border and return. Altogether a 12 day trip with stops in various, some very small, ports along the way - for anything between 30 min to 4-5 hrs.

I treated myself to the North Cape excursion, a visit to the Ice Hotel with Dog Sledding, a smaller Fjord Cruise and Vesteralen Archipelago Tour (North of the Lofoten Islands).



Lots more of the pricey excursions were on offer and yet many passengers just enjoyed the ship and its facilities whilst taking in the gorgeous fjord and sea vistas.

For the adventurous and hardy type a night time snowmobile tour took participants steering through the cold and dark, leaving ship and port in one place and rejoining it hours later again in another. And you had to pay a very hefty price for it, not for me. I thoroughly enjoyed however wandering over frosty ground and crunchy snow up in the Northern parts, seeing a few small ice floes in the sea and experiencing the North Cape in its white winter dress.

Originally - and still - Hurtigruten is a state owned freight and ferry service, it strikes a perfect balance of delivering this local service alongside an international visitors and tourist experience.

(We used to have state ship services circling around Australia - anybody remember? - but I never got onto one of them unfortunately.)

I flew to and stopped over in Oslo (home of famous opera house, sculpture park, Nobel Prize headquarters) and then took the train to Bergen for a couple of days before embarking. Bergen has much to offer and I stayed in the attic room of a traditional coloured house (view to the quay where my ship docked) and enjoyed the town, surrounding mountain hiking and visiting a small sauna/bath at the seaside from the 1920'ies just down the road.



Hurtigruten had a deal going for Solo Travellers and Single Cabin occupancy. A tight, cosy, comfortable space with heated flooring in the tiny bathroom. The ships of this line are relatively small compared to the bigger cruise ships, the latter to me looked monstrous when we saw one in a port - massive brutal size and totally uninviting in its bulk and dominance. No way that I would be on one of those.

It also added the promise of seeing the Northern Lights and this came true on a couple of occasions.

Whilst it was the right time of year to view them it is still a matter of chance when and how long for this may occur.



It was overall a great experience with the emphasis on nature, food and comfort. Lounges, restaurants and bars all welcoming with a touch of style, but also homely - if this is the right word.

There was little 'entertainment' and none was needed. People played games, read books, had conversations, attended presentations. The 3 young people (Austria, Norwegian, French nationalities and all multilingual) looking after the guests were great - knowledgeable, relaxed, competent and sometimes funny.

It was just the right mix of elegance and simplicity, adventure and comfort, structure and freedom. On returning to Bergen I simply wandered back to 'my attic room' and the journey off with another day there - instead of rushing to the airport. It was perfect!

### **and -- Perth Dancers in Germany**

Margaret from the Israeli Group had often spoken about her visiting Pappenheim / Bavaria for its annual Israeli weekend seminar. She had made the trip/s specifically around this event and this year was going to be the final time - for both the seminar event organiser Matti Goldschmied and for her taking the journey.



Luck met with good planning with me being around during that time and able to participate - albeit for one day and half the night only, as I did the round trip by train and bus from my hometown about 100 km's away.

It was a great pleasure to meet with Margaret and Jenni there in the end, and form a 3 person (Western) Australian contingency - so out of context (as in away from Perth) and yet very much in context (as in Israeli Dancing).



Two Israeli Dance Teachers (including Ravi Ziv) had specifically travelled from Tel Aviv to Germany for the few days to join Matti, both much appreciating the break and time away from the concerns and troubles of their daily life in present day Israel.

The town is small, nestled in a valley with the Altmuehl River flowing through. A historic castle sits atop it, one of the many found all over the country. A generous afternoon break allowed exploring the surroundings, a shared casual buffet dinner led into the evening after the day session/s.

It was held at a comfortable modern Christian Seminary Facility offering all under one roof - teaching, eating and sleeping. I regretted not being able to stay for the whole 3 days but much enjoyed the day visit and being part of Team Australia for that time.

**Gisela Gmeinder December 2024**