

## NORWAY BIKE TOUR, 2016.

My chum Martin has an ambition to cycle the length of Norway; he'd already done the south bit up to Bergen, and said it was time to do some more. Oh dear! I knew Norway would be hilly, wet and expensive; Martin said the scenery was stunning. I didn't have to go, of course, but not having been to Norway before made the likely discomforts unimportant....

So we flew out to Bergen with our bikes and a huge amount of luggage, as we would be camping, on July 7th. My cunning plan was to join in for the bit up to Trondheim, then leave Martin to carry on north (Norway is well over 2,000 km long), I figured 2 weeks would be enough to get a good impression of the country. At Bergen, which is about level with the Shetland Islands, we stayed for a night in a Youth Hostel – the town is scenic with an attractive harbour, lined by UNESCO listed old warehouses. We bought supper from a supermarket, as all the restaurants were seriously expensive.

Next day after a good buffet breakfast (fondly looked back on later) we used good cycle lanes to escape the suburbs. One snag with Norway is that there are no cafes for a morning coffee stop; in fact, there is little else at all, once you leave the bigger towns, so we bought food at a supermarket, knowing these would be rare and infrequent. Lunch is always a picnic in a bus shelter, of bread, bland sliced cheese and tasty salami. But the scenery was getting just splendid – we followed the coast which has islands, fjords, sea inlets and mountains. The roads were mostly quiet and well surfaced, so good cycling. Most days we would have a ferry ride, essential links in the local transport system. Also there are scary tunnels, the long ones ban bikes, in which case we used the old roads that wound up over the hills, slow going with frequent pushing of heavily loaded bikes.



*Brewing a cuppa out of the rain*

There were many useful campsites, which always had a kitchen where you could get out of the weather and cook supper – most appreciated when it rained. And it did rain! Every day, almost, so hurrah for Rainlegs and a good jacket.

I won't bore you with a day by day itinerary, but we progressed north steadily doing about 50 miles each day. One of the highlights was crossing the island of Bremangerland, reached and left by ferries – we had some sun, the scenery was just as the glaciers had left is thousands of years ago, and very peaceful. Another was



*Visitors to our camp site*



*Atlantic Way*



*Near Oldeide*

the Atlanterhavswegen or Atlantic Road which joins up many small islands with causeways and bridges and has terrific scenery each side - there is more water than land up here. Further on, a big tunnel bars our way, so we use a bus, that seemed quite used to having cyclists aboard. One morning it just bucketed with rain; another we spent two hours crawling uphill to super views of snowy mountains.

Our schedule was slipping, due to the rain and hills, and I had a flight home booked on Friday 22nd. So we altered our plan, to cycle to nearer Kristiansund, where I could get a fast ferry to Trondheim, saving two days. So I took this (a most enjoyable run at 40 mph) and left Martin to keep up the good work. I had a restful day pottering round this attractive city, with its fine cathedral and bicycle lift, etc. A beer at the airport cost me £10 (!!)

 but they had Le Tour on TV in the bar and I wanted to watch stage 19.

Did 800 km. And Martin? Last heard of passing the Arctic Circle.....!

Rob Foster