

Scandinavia

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First across Norway to Bergen for fjord adventures, and then back to Oslo for three days.



The Bergen Railway runs 500 km / 310 miles from Oslo to Bergen.



At the start the rail line and the highway follow along the lakes and river valleys.



Farming is practical and prosperous in the Hallingdal Valley.



Finse station, elevation 1,222 m / 4,009', is a bit over half way from Oslo to Bergen.



The Hardangerjøkulen glacier west of Finse covers 78 square km / 30 square miles.





The Hardangervidda area is northern Europe's biggest high-mountain plateau.





Hardangervidda plateau





The Oslo to Bergen line has 182 tunnels, ten of them over 2 km / 1.2 miles long.



Myrdal station is the departure point for the *Norway In A Nutshell* excursion (later).





The terrain becomes less severe as we descend towards the coast.



The rail line follows one of the smaller fjords as it approaches Bergen.





Bergen is Norway's second-largest city. View from Mt. Fløyen, 320 m / 1,050' up.



Bergen Bergen is the heart of Norway's offshore oil industry and a leader in marine research and aquaculture.



Bergen

Bergen was founded in 1070 AD and prospered through trade in dried cod.



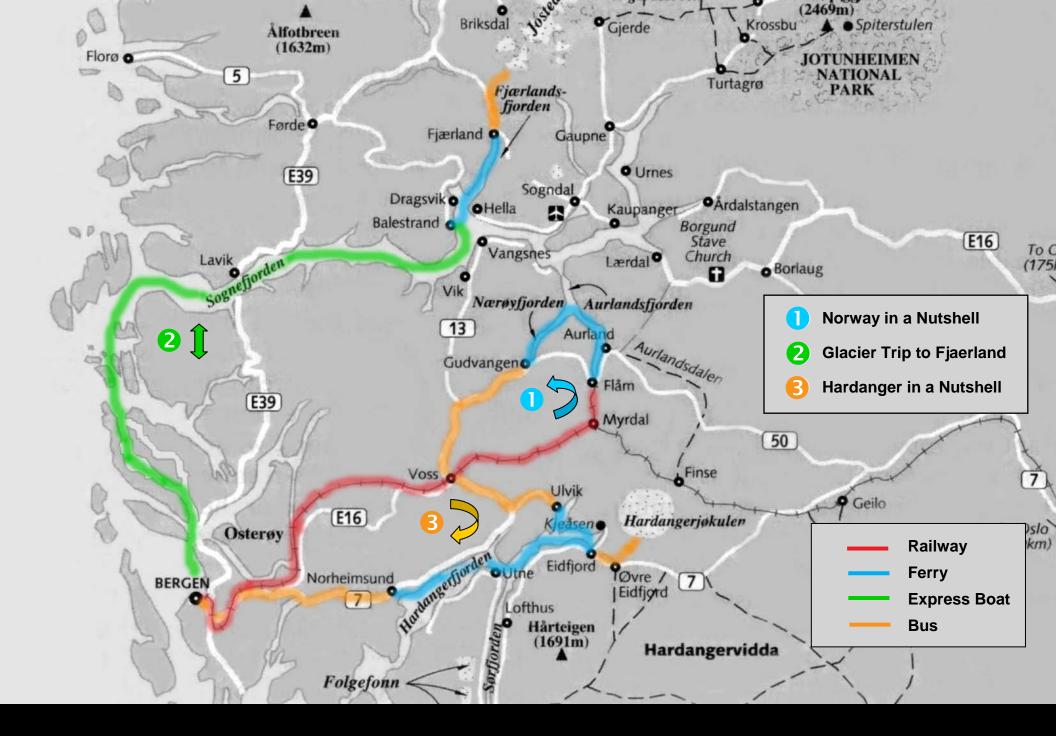
Bergen The Bryggen district was rebuilt after a fire in 1702.

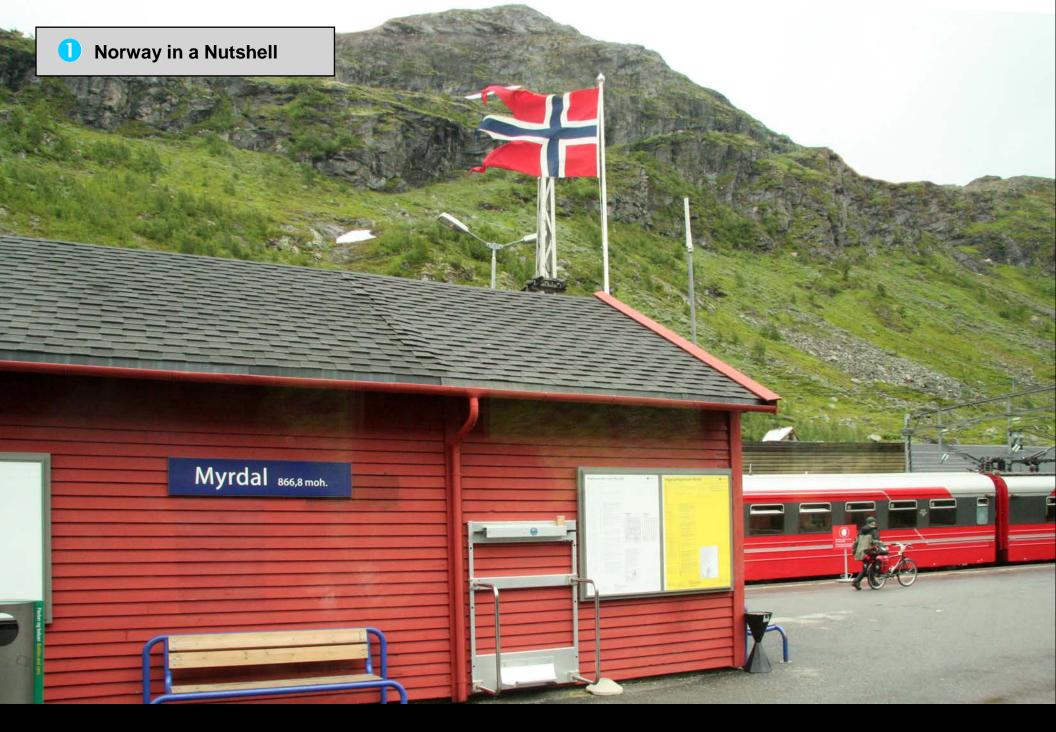


Bergen Bergen harbours everything from small pleasure boats to large cargo and cruise ships.



Bergen Bryggen's old quayside is a UNESCO World Heritage site.





First a little backtracking along the Bergen Railroad to Myrdal to change to the Flåm Railway.



The Flåm Railway runs from Myrdal, elevation 867 m / 2,845', down to Flåm, elevation 2 m / 6'.



The Flåm Railway is the steepest normal gauge railway line in Northern Europe.



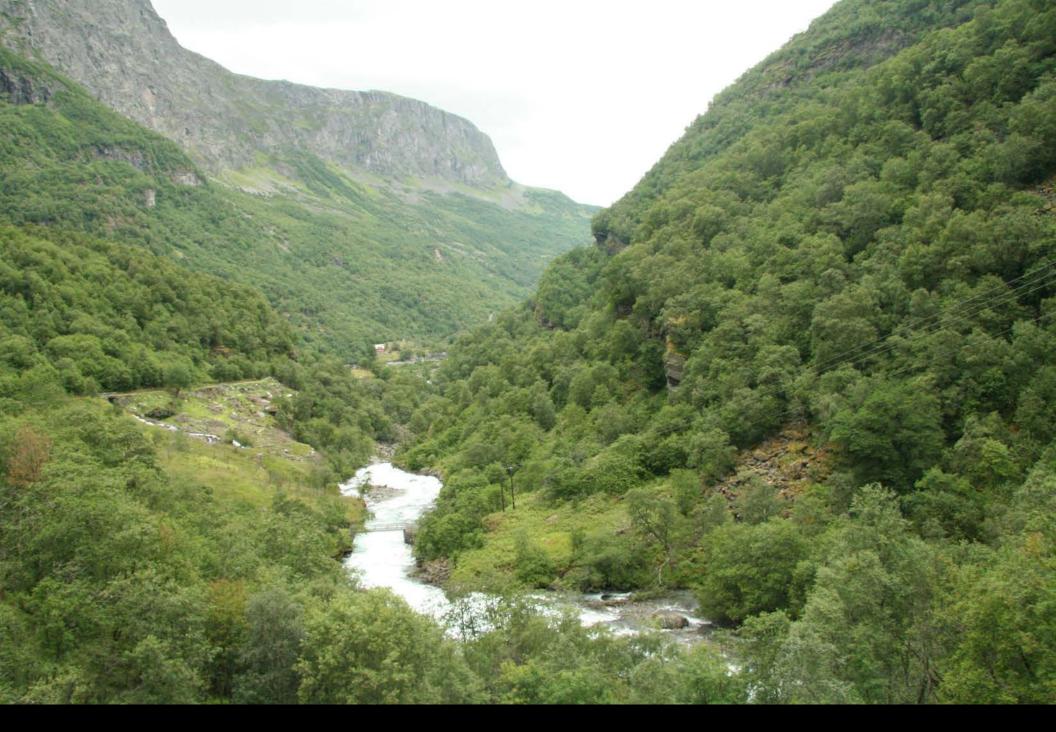
We pass through a long tunnel and then the train stops and everyone dashes outside ...



... to get a close-up picture of the Kjosfossen waterfall.

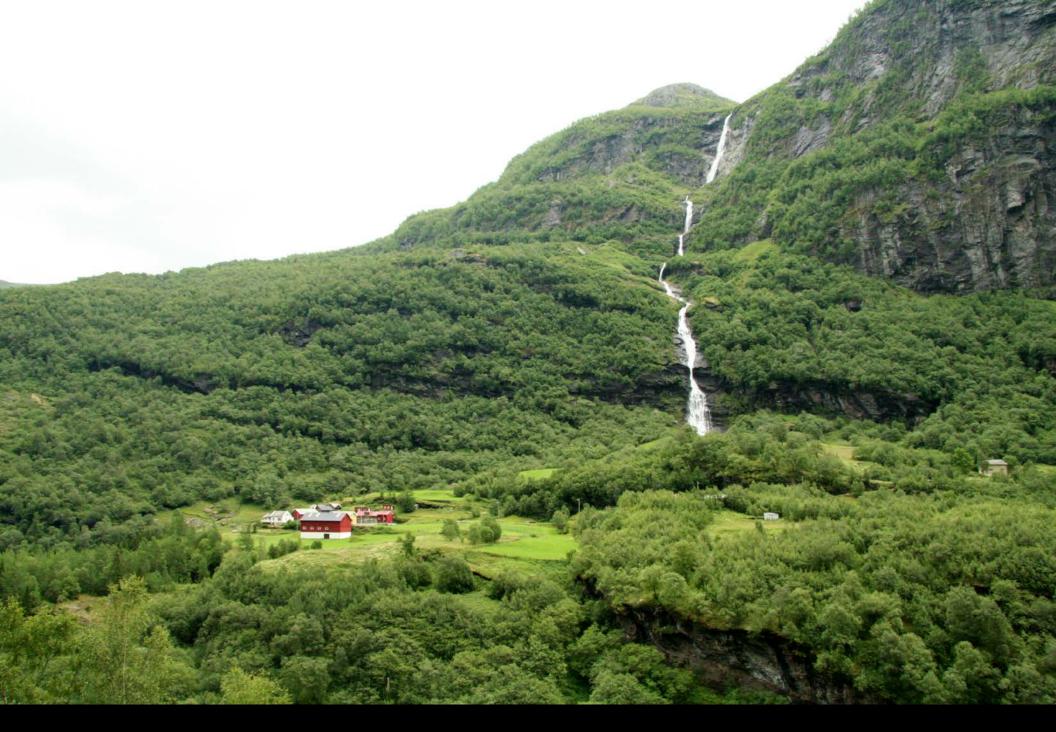


We pass through another tunnel and then get a glimpse of Myrdal where we started.



In the 55-minute journey we pass through 20 tunnels with a total length of 6 km / 4 miles.

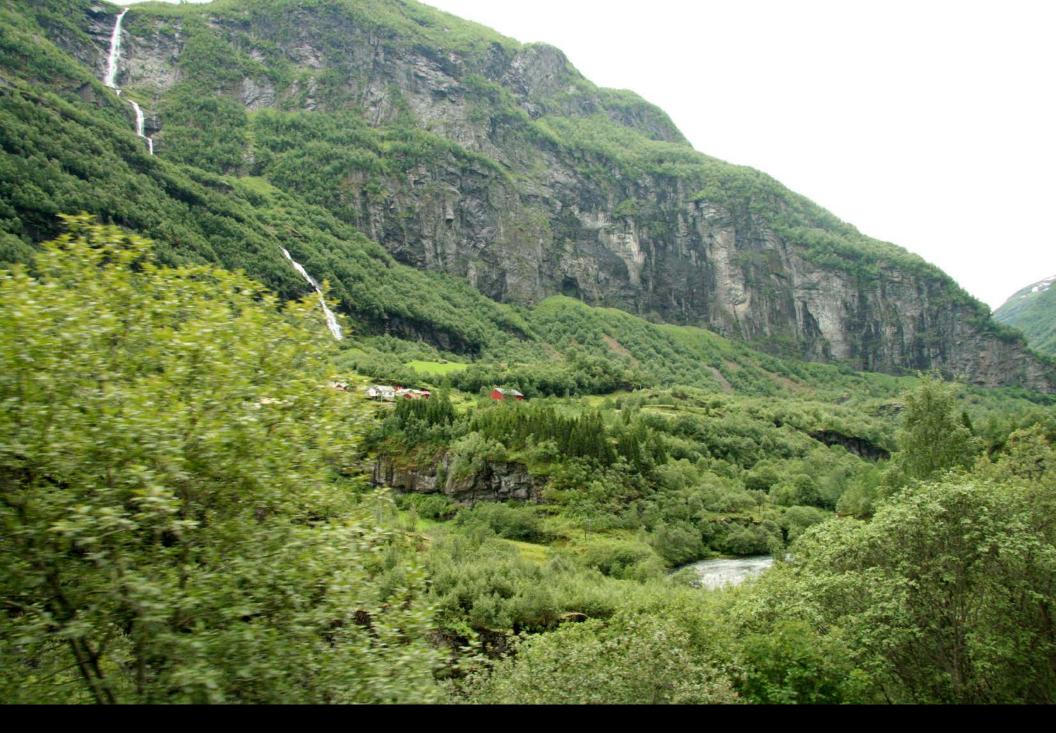




There are pockets of agriculture here, mostly goat farms.



"Flåm" means grassy plain surrounded by mountains.



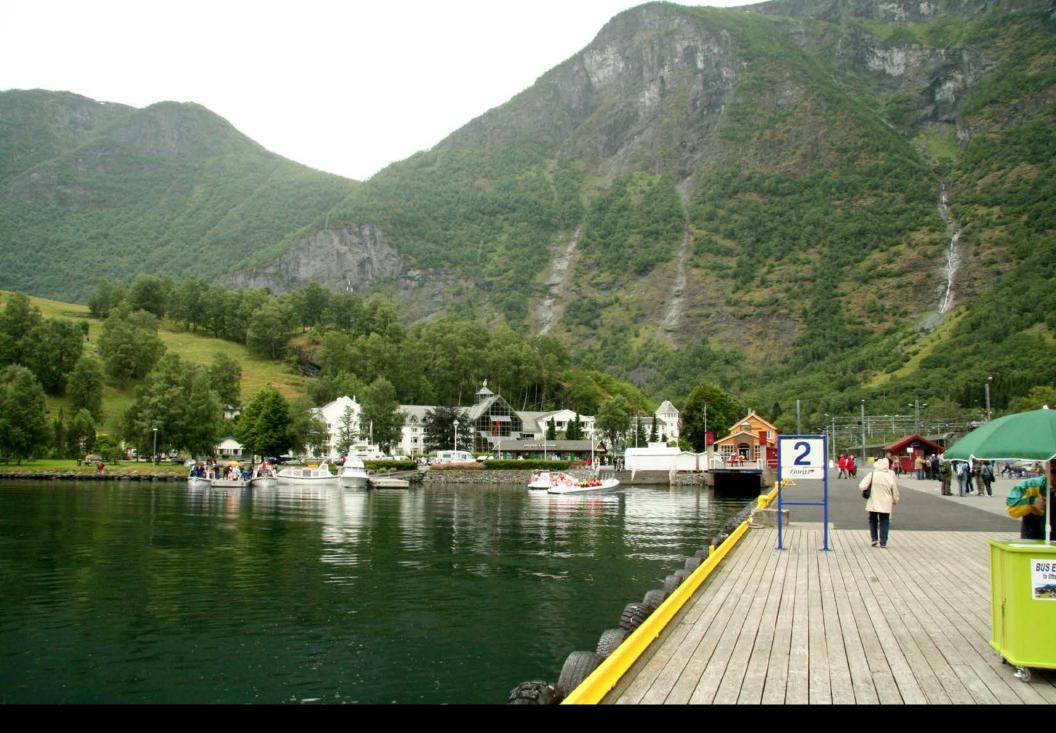




The Flåm Church (centre) was built in 1668 in the old village of Flåm.



Flåm, permanent population 400, is one of the most popular cruise harbours in Norway.



Flåm is the departure point for our cruise on the Sognefjord.



We'll be sailing for about two hours on a Fjord1 boat just like this.



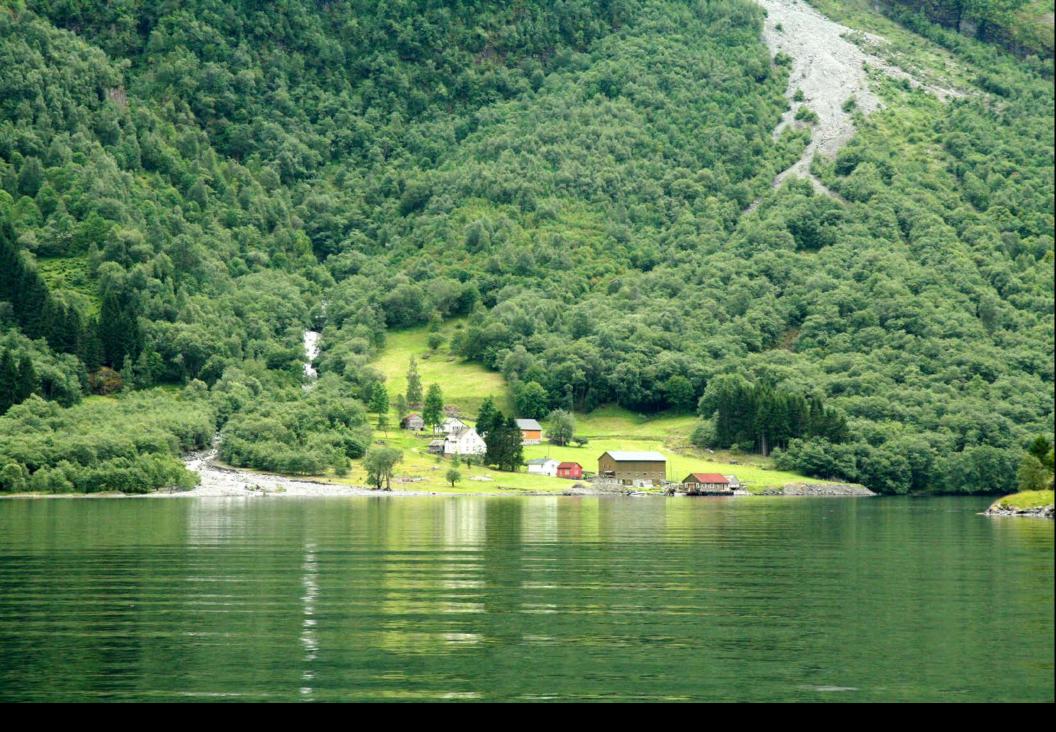
Sognefjord, en route from Flåm to Gudvangen



Otternes is a cluster of 26 old farm buildings on the mountainside, mentioned in writings from the 12th century. Now a museum.

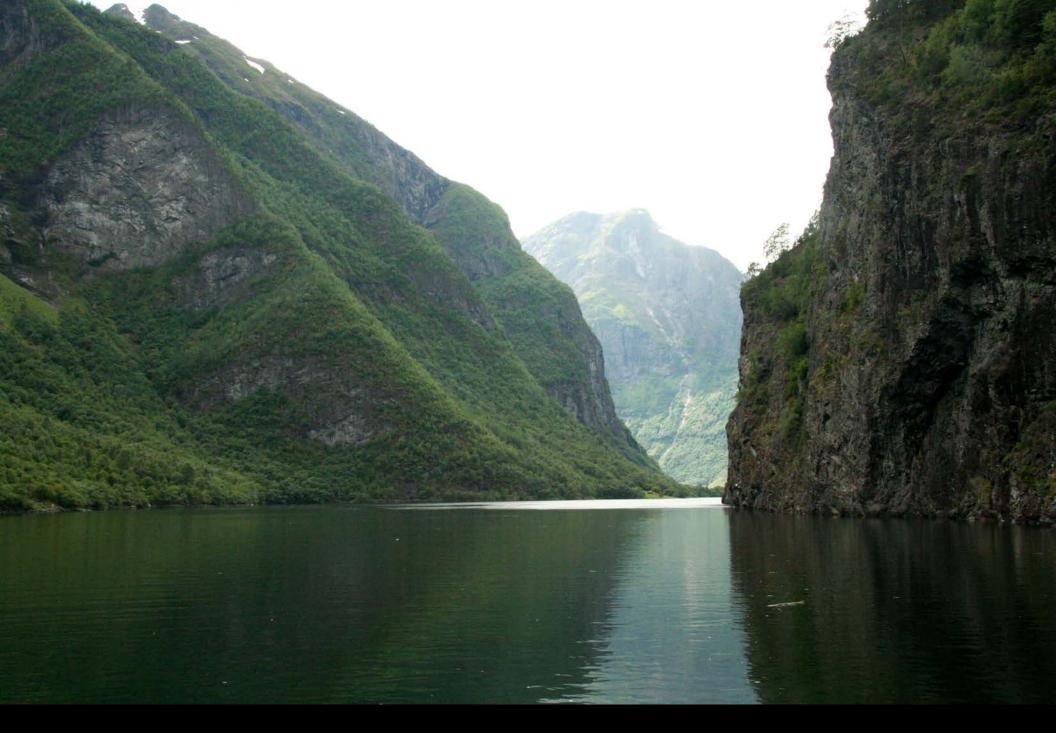


The village of Aurland on the southern shore, population about 1,200



There have been farms on the Sognefjord since the Viking era.

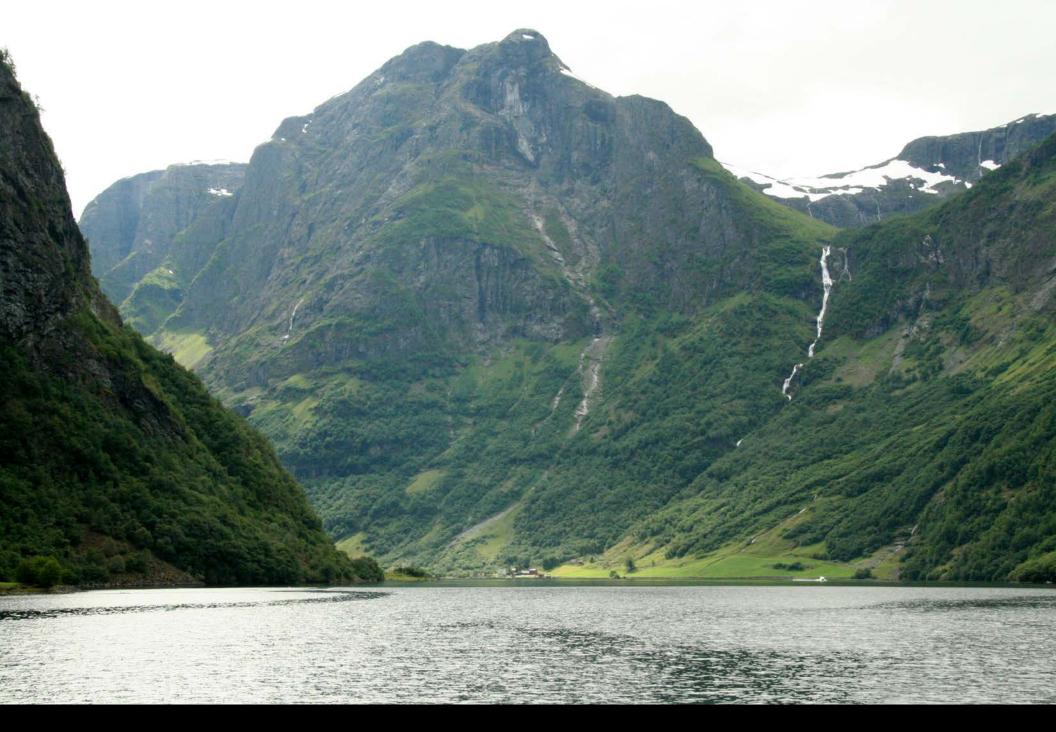




Sognefjord, about 150 km / 95 miles inland from the North Sea







Sagfossen waterfall, about 500 m / 1,640' long



Approaching Gudvangen, our Sognefjord cruise destination



We take a bus up a steep mountain road to Stalheim and Voss en route back to Bergen.





Beginning the climb up 365 m / 1,200' to Stalheim, through 13 hairpin turns



The maximum gradient is 1 in 5, or 20%, one of the steepest in northern Europe. From Voss, the Bergen Railway returns us to Bergen.



An express boat takes us to the mouth of the Sognefjord en route to the Jostedalsbreen glacier.



Leaving Bergen at 8 a.m.



The express boat goes north through scenic islands, stopping occasionally for local passengers.



Heading north from Bergen towards Sognefjord

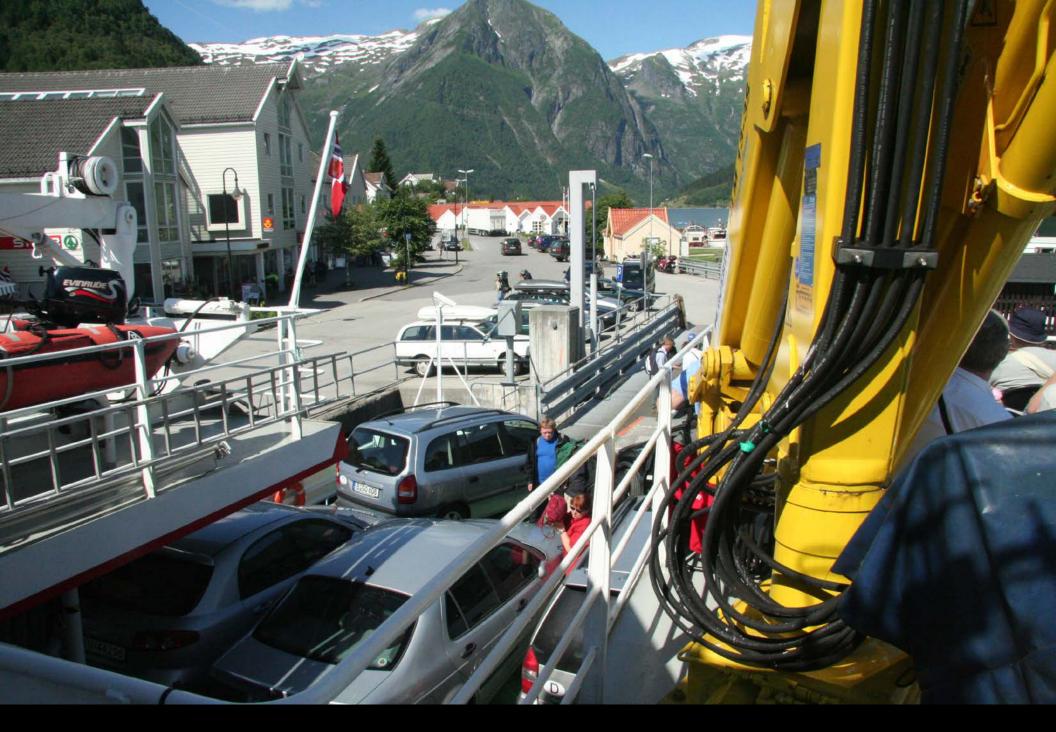


Sognefjord is very wide where it meets the North Sea.







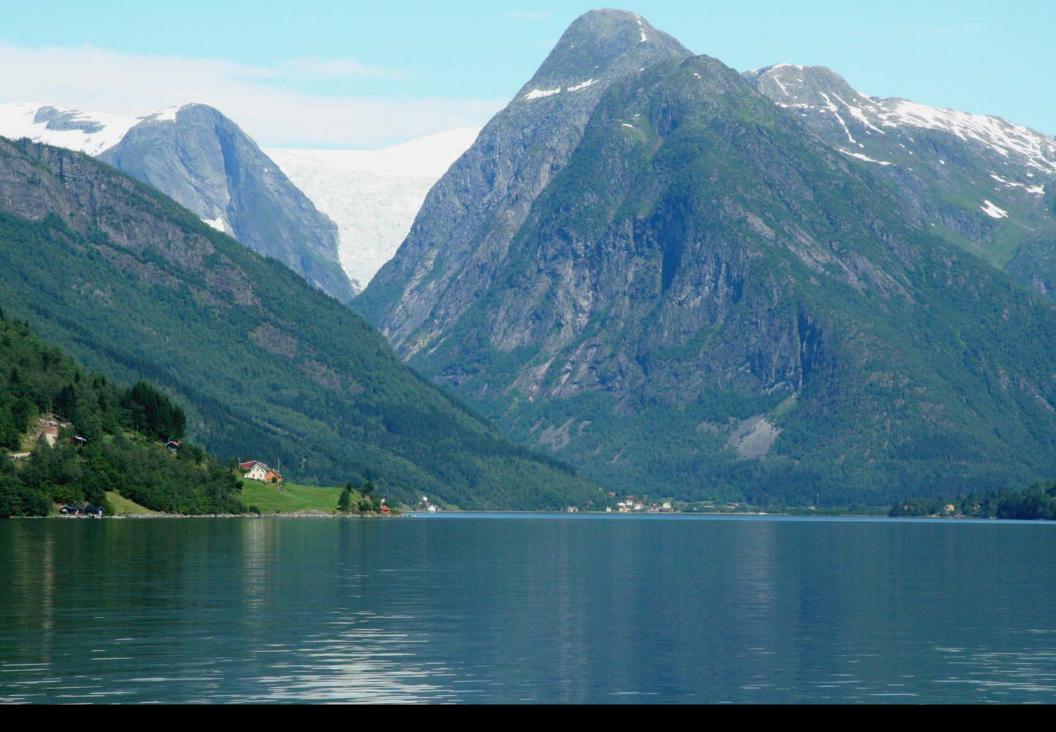


At Balestrand we switch to a local ferry.



We cruise up Fjaerlandsfjord, a branch of the Sognefjord, to its end at Fjaerland.







Fjaerland is a farming and tourism village of 300.



A bus takes us from the Fjaerland quay to Bøyabreen ...



... an arm of the huge Jostedalsbreen glacier, the largest glacier on mainland Europe.



Or what's left of it. In 1930 the Bøyabreen glacier covered all of this rock face down to the level of the lake.



At the current rate of retreat, the Bøyabreen part of the larger glacier soon won't be visible from the valley.



The glacier lake will remain ...



... along with the Norwegian Glacier Museum and its photographs of what used to be.



Norwegians are very concerned about climate change and are rapidly changing their ways of doing things.





Back down the coast ...





... to Bergen (9 p.m.).



The first leg of the third day-long excursion is a train trip back to Voss.



A bus takes us through Hordaland to Ulvik to catch a fjord boat.





From Ulvik a short trip across the Eidfjord, a branch of the Hardanger fjord, to the village of Eidfjord.



There's more agriculture here.
The white canopies cover fruit trees.



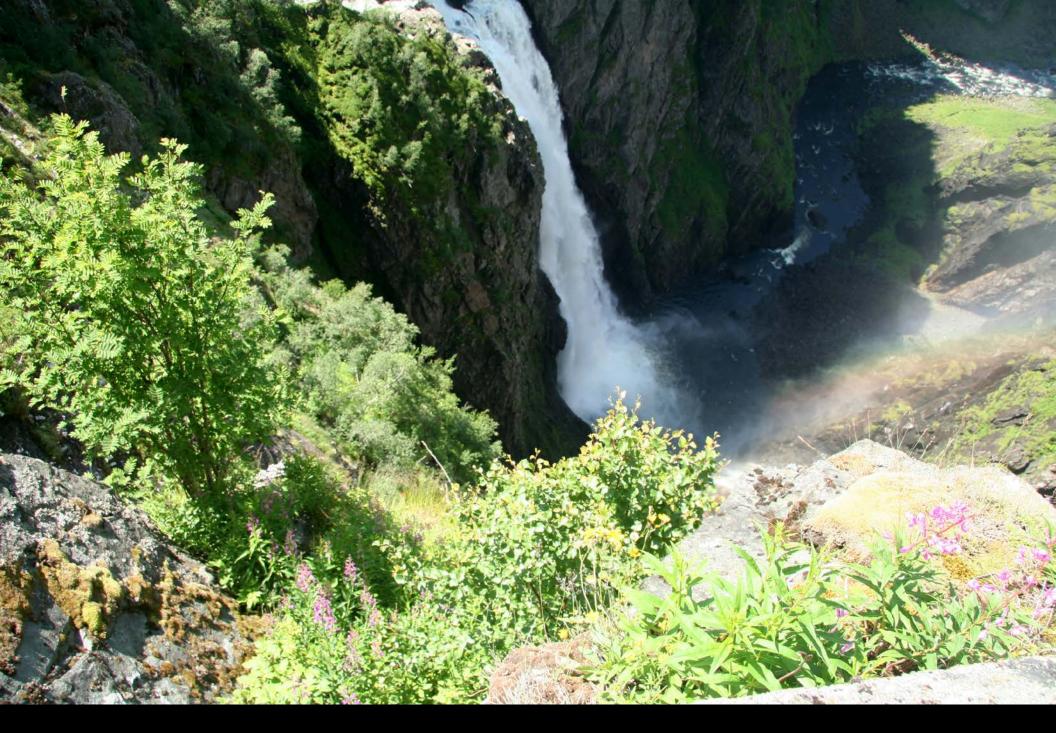
At Eidfjord we visit the Hardangervidda Nature Centre.



This is another impressive educational complex, showcasing regional wildlife.



The Vøringsfossen waterfall is the largest in Norway. It's won't all fit in one picture.



The bottom part of the waterfall. Total height 300 m / 984'.



A portion of the waterfall is visible in the extreme lower left in this view of the Måbø Valley.



Leaving Eidfjord we set out down Hardangerfjord itself.



This ferry stops into small communities about every half hour or so.



Loftus is one of the larger communities on the Hardangerfjord, with both agriculture ...



... and tourism industries.



It's been a great three days, but the weather closes in and the rest of our cruise and the bus ride back to Bergen are uneventful.



Return to Oslo The return to Oslo from Bergen retraces the outbound route.



Oslo is an inland deep sea port at the end of the Oslofjord.



Oslo First a one-hour mini-cruise for orientation.





Aker Brygge, the former shipyard area in Oslo Harbour, transformed by upscale redevelopment



Akerhus Slot (Castle), a fortress built to guard Oslo harbour



The Opera House is the newest addition to the city's skyline.



Oslo is a busy commercial port.



The Holmenkollen Ski Jump, used for the 1952 Winter Olympics, is up in the hills above the city.



Out in the fjord but still close to the city we find a live-in lighthouse ...



... a few recreational sailboats ...



... and some officially colour-coordinated cottages.



Oslo

The summer days are long.
View from the hotel at 9:33 p.m.



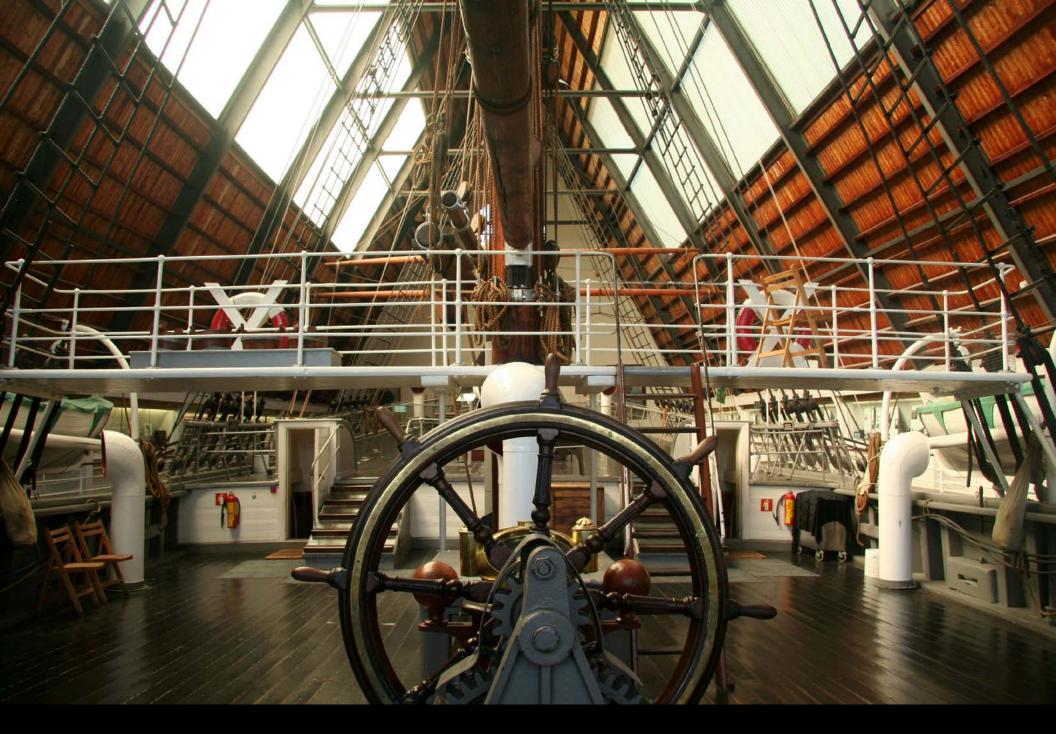
Serious explorations begin with a water bus trip to Oslo's maritime museums, first the Fram Museum.



The Polar Ship *Fram* took Norwegian adventurers on historic Arctic and Antarctic explorations from 1893 through 1912.



Visitors are invited onboard and below decks to see how the sailors lived.



This is a uniquely accessible monument to the achievements of the Norwegian explorers.



Kon-Tiki Museum The Kon-Tiki Museum houses the boats of Norwegian anthropologist and adventurer Thor Heyerdahl.



Kon-Tiki Museum Heyerdahl and his crew sailed *Kon-Tiki* from Peru to Polynesia in 1947 to show that South Americans could have reached Polynesia in bygone days.



Kon-Tiki Museum Heyerdahl sailed *Ra II* from Morocco to Barbados in 1970 to show that West Africans could have landed in the West Indies before Columbus.



Maritime Museum The Norwegian Maritime Museum portrays the country's 1,500 year-old tradition of boat building.



Maritime Museum The Uraed "egg" carried four Norwegians across the Atlantic in 1905 to prove that enclosed lifeboats save lives.



Maritime Museum This museum seems to have a scale model of every ship ever built in Norway.



Viking Ship Museum The Viking Ship Museum specializes in Viking ships from the 9th century.



Viking Ship Museum The Oseberg Ship, used to transport the body of a chieftain to its final destination, was discovered by archaeologists in 1904.





The Norwegian Folk Museum is a neighbour of the maritime museums.



More than 150 buildings from all over Norway form Europe's original and largest open air museum.



Museum staffers provide traditional entertainment.



Many buildings exhibit unique characteristics for withstanding the assaults of the elements.



The Gol Stave Church was built about 1200 AD.



Across town the Akerhus fortress depicts a different side of Norway's past. Building began in 1299.



Akerhus is a massive complex that was designed to protect Oslo's inner harbour.



The fortress was never captured, but surrendered in WW II in the face of the unprovoked German assault on Denmark and Norway.



The inner courtyard of the fortress, rebuilt after a fire in 1527.



The fortress houses the Norwegian Resistance Museum, which documents the Norwegian resistance against the Nazi occupation.



One of the thousands of exhibits deals with attempts to prevent the Nazis from getting heavy water for A-bombs from a power station in Telemark.



Resistance fighters made several attacks on the heavy water plant and finally sunk the boat carrying out what had already been produced.



Nobel Peace Center

Oslo is also the home of the Nobel Peace Center.



Nobel Peace Center

The recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize are represented in a gallery called *The Nobel Field*.



Nobel Peace Center

Canadian Lester Pearson won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1957, at a time when Canada was a respected peacemaker.



The Vigeland Sculpture Park covers 80 acres / 32 hectares.



The park features 212 bronze and granite sculptures created by Gustav Vigeland, starting in 1924.



Vigeland sculpted every figure out of clay and craftsmen were contracted to fabricate the final pieces.



The Monolith is comprised of 121 human figures rising toward heaven, embracing one another as they are carried toward salvation.



The Wheel of Life depicts four people and a baby floating in harmony. It is a symbol of eternity, and of man's journey from cradle to grave.



Holmenkollen Ski Jump The first Holmenkollen Ski Jump was opened in 1892. Holmenkollen is now Norway's biggest tourist attraction.



Holmenkollen Ski Jump Holmenkollen hosted World Championships in 1930, 1966, and 1982 and the 1952 Olympics. This "skier" is a sculpture.



Holmenkollen Ski Jump The Ski Museum illustrates 4000 years of skiing history.

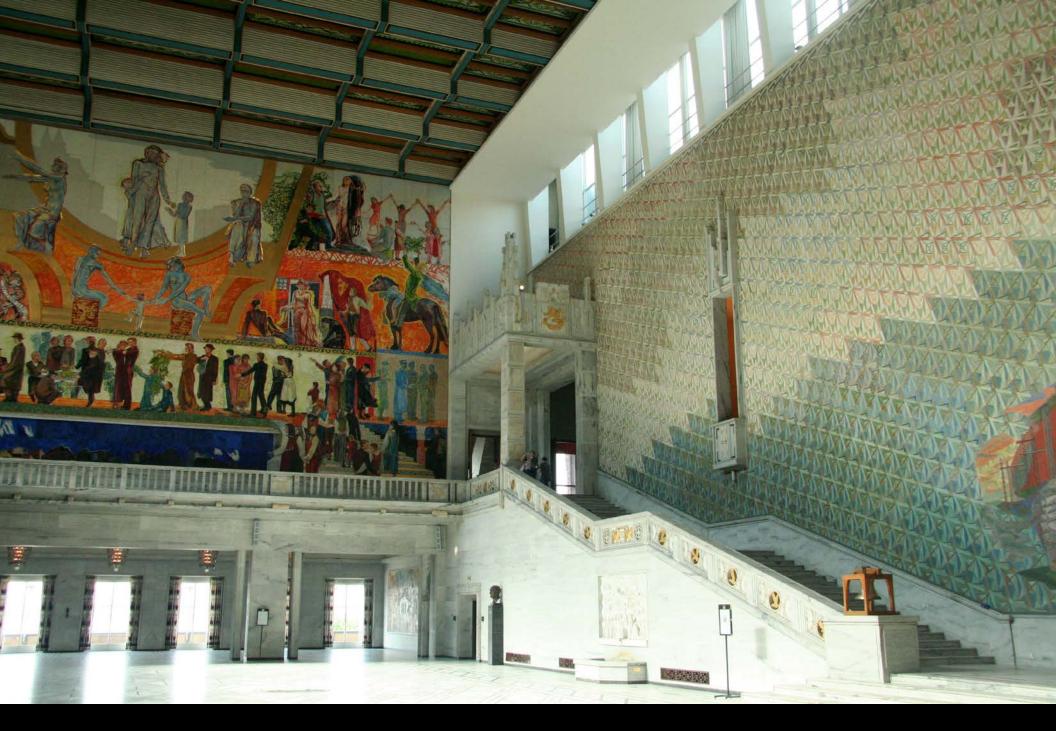


Holmenkollen Ski Jump The Holmenkollen Ski Tower provides an excellent view over Oslo and the inner Oslofjord.



Oslo City Hall

The City Hall design was completed in 1930 but construction was interrupted by WW II and not completed until 1950.



Oslo City Hall Rådhus Hall, the main ceremonial hall, has been the venue for the presentation of the Nobel Peace Prize since 1990.



Oslo City Hall Henrik Sørensen's Work, Art and Celebration fills an entire wall of the Rådhus Hall.



Oslo City Hall First planning for a new city hall began in 1915, to clear an old slum area by the harbour.



Oslo City Hall

Large parts of Oslo's elegant
City Hall are open to the public.



Oslo's new Opera House was opened in 2008.



The Opera House is the home of the Norwegian National Opera and Ballet. It was designed by the Norwegian firm Snøhetta.



The striking exterior is covered with 35,000 slabs of white Italian marble.

Vær varsom! Caution! Taket har mange avsatser, og kan være glatt. Bruk av sykkel eller skateboard er forbudt. Ferdsel på eget ansvar. The roof has many steps, and may be slippery. Bicycles or skateboards not allowed. Use of the area is at your own risk.



The interior is clad in oak and natural Nordic textures.



Aker Brygge The Aker Brygge development was created where a large shipyard closed down in 1982.



Aker Brygge Some old warehouses were restored and modern buildings were blended in.



Aker Brygge Housing units come with secured underground parking and a place for your yacht in front of your balcony.



Aker Brygge Restaurants here are expensive. Shopping is expensive. Everything in Aker Brygge is expensive.



Less exclusive and more fun ... "An Evening on the Fjord". An informal dinner cruise in the Oslofjord.



We get to see some of the surrounding countryside ...



... and there are big buckets of prawns for dinner.



End-of-day sunlight enhances warm colours.



No space for a pool in the back yard? No problem.





Great way to end the visit to Oslo. Off to Stockholm tomorrow.

< End >

Scandinavia

