

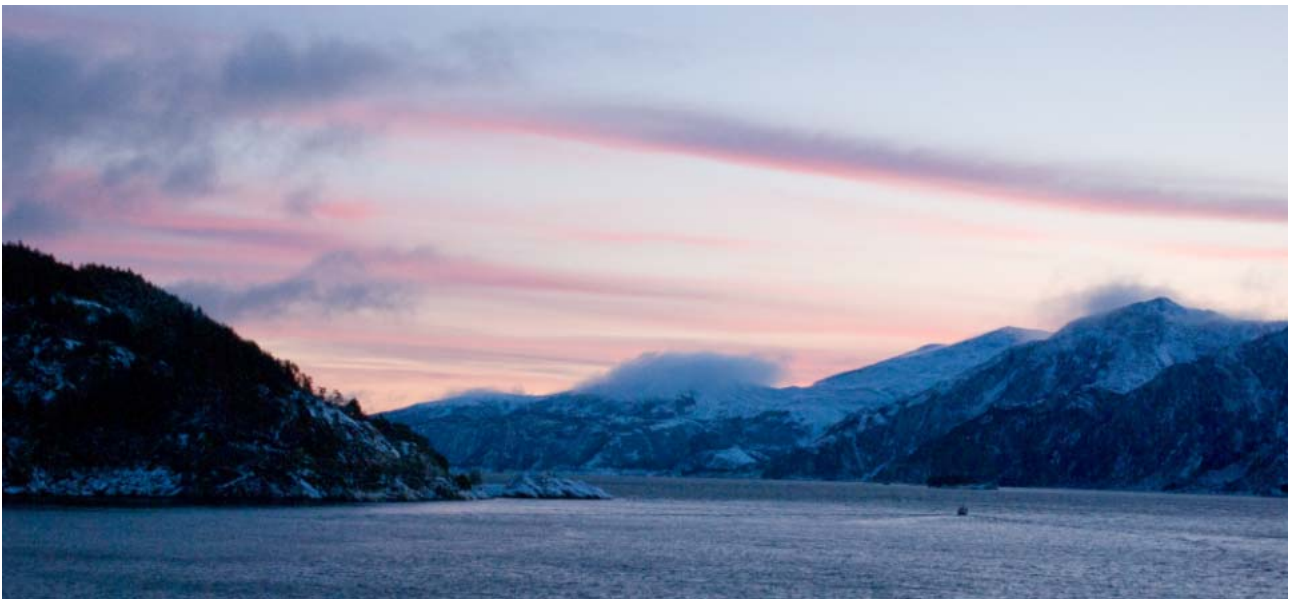
Leon & Audrey's world trip 08/09

Part 9 - Hurtigruten

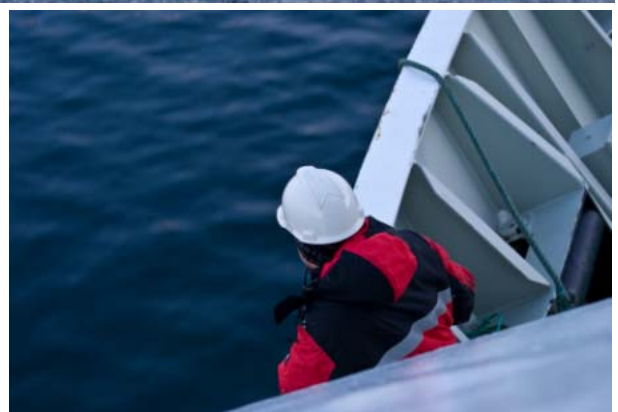
We appear to have lucked out with the dinner for our first night on the Hurtigruten (a passenger and cargo boat service up the coast of Norway). Dinner is a Christmas buffet that is 665 kroner if you haven't booked in advance and a lot less if you did (which we did). It was all very nice with the exception of the marinated lamb that Audrey didn't like (and I didn't manage to try).

Before dinner we sat and watched the storm from the viewing area at the front of the ship. It had gotten a lot worse since we had arrived and we were both glad that we were not out in it in a taxi that is not used to driving in the snow. The ship sailed at 1am so we were asleep and missed the excitement but were up for breakfast the next morning and off into Ålesund the first stop in our trip (and the location for the 1980's series Maelstrom).

Breakfast was a buffet affair with a large selection of Norwegian items including marinated fish and meat balls. Only soft boiled eggs, no scrambled or fried. We ate breakfast watching snow covered mountains slide by very close on both sides of the ship. We know the fjords are very deep with 100m being considered very shallow, so we weren't concerned except for the possibility of the view disappearing before we finished breakfast and go out on deck. Luckily it didn't.



Our first stop in daylight was Måløy. This was just to transfer about 7 passengers (on and off) and a reasonable amount of cargo. Off came several pallets of boxes of various description and about 20 chairs. In its place we received several bits of machinery and an enormous quantity of rope. The rope was thick and thin coiled in plastic wrapped pallet sized rolls. I lost count of the number of them, but given that we are headed up the coast they will probably come off again some time soon. We cast off and were on our way again.



Deck hand preparing for docking.



Photography Note: There were 3 photographers on the front deck with digital SLR's – an older lady with a Canon, a gent a few years older than me with a Nikon and me with a Pentax. I'm not convinced that the older lady should have had a complex camera. She started asking the Nikon user some basic questions (he was closer than I was) and he gave her some good advice that I didn't see the need to add to and she said she would go off and read the instruction book. She knew what she wanted to do, but not how to make the camera do it. I found out later that her son-in-law is a sports photographer and may have influenced her. If you are going to buy a camera for a trip get it early and practice and find out how to do what you want to do or you will be frustrated with the camera and not enjoy your trip as much as you should.

Half an hour out from Måløy we left the fjords for open ocean.

It was to be a rough crossing and no one was allowed out in the open decks, so we decided to do some laundry. With the machine loaded and running we watched the waves for a while out the window on deck 3 before heading up to panorama lounge to get a more open view (it's still enclosed with tinted windows so not good for photography). We sat on a sideways facing seat for awhile then headed off to move the laundry from the washer to the dryer. I've never been seasick before, but something set me off just after this. It might have been too much breakfast, sitting sideways, bobbing up and down to move the washing or jut the rough seas (that hadn't effected me for the past hour), but it had an effect. 10 minutes later I was fine again.

We arrived at Ålesund at about 13:45 and were scheduled to leave at about 15:30. This is a reduced stop to make up for the late departure the previous night. With the reduced amount of time we decided to take a walking tour to get the most of the time we had. The walking tour unfortunately ended up at the Art Nouveau centre which told the story of the town, which while interesting is not what we had wanted to do.



Ålesund burnt to the ground in 1904 with the loss of 1 life, but 10,000 left homeless. Aid came from everywhere and thanks to a downturn in the building industry in the rest of Norway the city was completely rebuilt in Art Nouveau style in 3 years.



The carvings and detail on the buildings are beautiful, but the city was left in natural stone grey until the 1970's. This had the effect of making it rather depressing looking (according to the guide and her husband), which it certainly isn't since it's been painted. The small fishing factories made way for big modern factories in another part of town and the old factories were converted into apartments.



In the 1970s a grand 3 storey manor house in the middle of town was sold to the state in the hopes that it would be used to host state functions and major events (and because no-one could afford the upkeep of such a grand house). It was knocked down to build the new city hall and a shopping centre (right).



The tour arrived back at the ship 1 minute before the scheduled departure time. We spent a bit more time in the open deck watching and photographing the world (or at least Norway) go past until the light faded and the wind got too fierce to keep walking around the ship - it was gale force moving from the front of the ship to the side, and just strong everywhere else. Audrey seems to have decided I need to be photographed while photographing something else, so here I am again photographing during sunset after leaving Ålesund.



We did more watching from inside and looked at time tabs and rearranged the next few days to suit how we were feeling before we went off to dinner. Dinner was a set 3 course menu that sort of whizzed past but was nice and not too large.



Back in the room we were writing up diaries until I fell asleep over the computer looking at photos – I woke up with my finger on the down arrow and the screen showing the last photo of the day. It seemed like a good time for an early night. About the end of dinner we stated across the next stretch of open ocean and the ship started rocking as it had earlier, and I had no ill effects at all.

The ship arrived at Trondheim at 6 in the morning. Audrey and I were out on deck to watch the docking. this was interesting as the ship had to reverse in to get to the dock with the cargo doors on the right side or unloading. We had breakfast before heading out into town with the hope of getting a refund organised on a

sleeper carriage we had changed the night before. The ticket office was of course closed on Sunday until 12:00 (the time the ship sailed) so we will organise it in the Bodø.

Trondheim was not the best place to walk around. The snow that had been falling had half melted into ice making the foot paths treacherous to walk on. Half melted snow was falling and becoming cold water as soon as it hit anything. My camera is weather sealed against rain and dust (and I hoped snow) so I did get a few pictures, but it was very wet by the time we arrived back at the ship. The views were much better and the weather had cleared by the time we left and had lunch.



Warehouse and converted warehouses along the waterfront in Trondheim.



A wooden building in Trondheim (left). After the fire in Ålesund laws were passed that forced the majority of buildings to be made of stone. Trondheim in a snow storm (right).



Not the gothic cathedral, but a nice little church.



Warehouse on the waterfront.



Monk Island. It used to house a monastery.



Trondheim's gothic cathedral that we didn't get to.

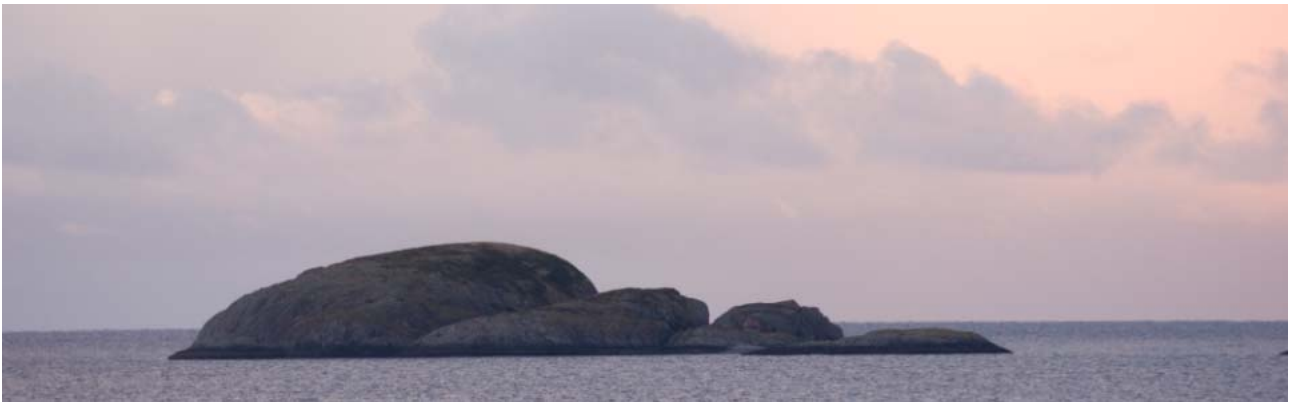


A lighthouse in Trondheim's harbour. Similar lighthouses are all over the coast of Norway.



Having the sun rise after 9am and set around 3 pm does make for short days to do much, but it also make you make the most of the time you have. This little light house is situated on large rocks or small islands that dot the path out of Trondheim (next page).

There always seem to be a couple of people who stick out of the crowd. There are at least 2 on this cruise. Nice English lady who talks to everyone and doesn't know how to use her camera, and 81 year old gent who has been on the full 11 day cruise several times and wears his knitted Viking hat everywhere and his cruise card around his neck.



Some of the rocks/islands that cover the sea north of Trondheim.

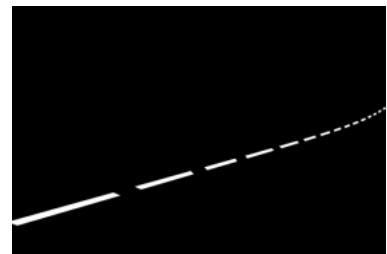


Sun set at about 3:30 pm.

Nice English lady gets off at every stop just for a breath of fresh air. She did this tonight at Rørvik tonight along with lady returning home with lots of luggage including a flat screen television. Lady with lots of luggage was helped off the ship by porter with the broken finger only to discover that her ride was not there. Nice English lady spoke to her and presumably offered to mind the lots of luggage while she went looking for her ride. Lady with lots of luggage headed off around the building looking for her ride and returned a few minutes later still without her ride from the other side of the building. A minute later car covered in lots of snow turned up and proved to be lady with lots of luggage's ride when the television was loaded into the back seat. Nice English lady had during this time started talking to new passenger getting his last gasp of cigarette before going onto ship. A few minutes later everyone got back on board except the few cargo handlers still moving things around the dock. We watched all this from the Panorama lounge where we were checking if the GPS would work there for tracking our exact point of crossing the Arctic Circle.

I wonder how we are thought of by our fellow passengers?

It was very early when we crossed the Arctic Circle, but Audrey and I were up on deck to look at the view. Here is one of the pictures I got of the Arctic Circle itself. :)



There is in fact a marker showing the Arctic Circle but it is not lit up well enough to photograph in the dark of night (7:25 in the morning).

Having actually crossed the Arctic Circle we bought our souvenir "I have crossed the Arctic Circle" hat. Audrey bought a warm Hurtigruten jacket to keep her warm and as a souvenir.