

Friday, July 13, 2007

Fjords, Ferries and Snow - Martin and Yvonne



Two weeks cycling in Norway, June 2007

It is easy to overdue the superlatives when describing Norway, so let's start with the weather. We left Newcastle on the ferry as the UK started on 2 weeks of rain and floods. In Norway we made more use of the suntan cream than the waterproofs and only in the second week as we came South did the weather become changeable.

We set off on the ferry from Newcastle to Bergen, then overnight on a luxurious big coastal ferry heading North. We heard the ferry call into ports during the night (it hardly got dark) and we were then set down at Torvik at 7.00am. Torvik, a little south of Alesund, consists of a big shed and 3 houses so as the ferry left us at speed heading further North it all felt a bit isolated. At this point 28 cyclists got a grip on themselves, loaded up the panniers on the bikes, and we set off on our CTC tour led by Brian Curtis (his last ever Norway tour after 20 years of leading).

The first few days were fjord and ferry orientated. The routine was get up in the morning, on the ferry, climb a big mountain, along the top, down the other side, on the ferry, then repeat 2 more times. Snow covered hills and fantastic views became the norm. Waterfalls were two-a-penny and all of them tumbling down more than 500 metres, often right alongside the road as we speeded along (going downhill) between hairpin bends. There was also some outstanding flat riding alongside the Fjords where we made our Santana Tandem really sing along.

Accommodation was in some hotels but mainly in the Norwegian hostels. These are to a high standard with large purpose built buildings, en-suite rooms and good food. At Voss the hostel was beside the Fjord and we basked in sunshine on the terrace for two evenings.

There were hard days because after all this was a "challenging" CTC holiday. We were rewarded with riding through snowfields in short sleeves and shorts, by fabulous isolated scenery, and a real sense of achievement. One 70-mile day someone with an altimeter reckoned we had climbed 2,200 metres - it felt like it, and we were glad of the rest days.

We stayed two nights at Geiranger Fjord, saw the QE2 on a cruise, and rode the longest steady downhill I can remember, hardly dropping below 20 mph and pedalling all the way on the tandem for about 10 miles.

As we got further south towards Bergen it became more populated (this is all relative of course) and we started to see a few more cars on the main roads. The tunnels are not fun, and you can't avoid them as there is often no alternative - the noise of the traffic and the alien environment are not meant for cycling. There are cycle tracks in most towns, and on the whole the lack of traffic makes Norway an attractive cycling destination.

At the Bergen Hostel one of the Directors of the Norwegian Hostels came to our last dinner and made a presentaion to Brian Curtis to mark all his years of tour leading in their country. It is a shame he is retiring because Yvonne and I would have heartily recommended his tour!

Martin Weeks



