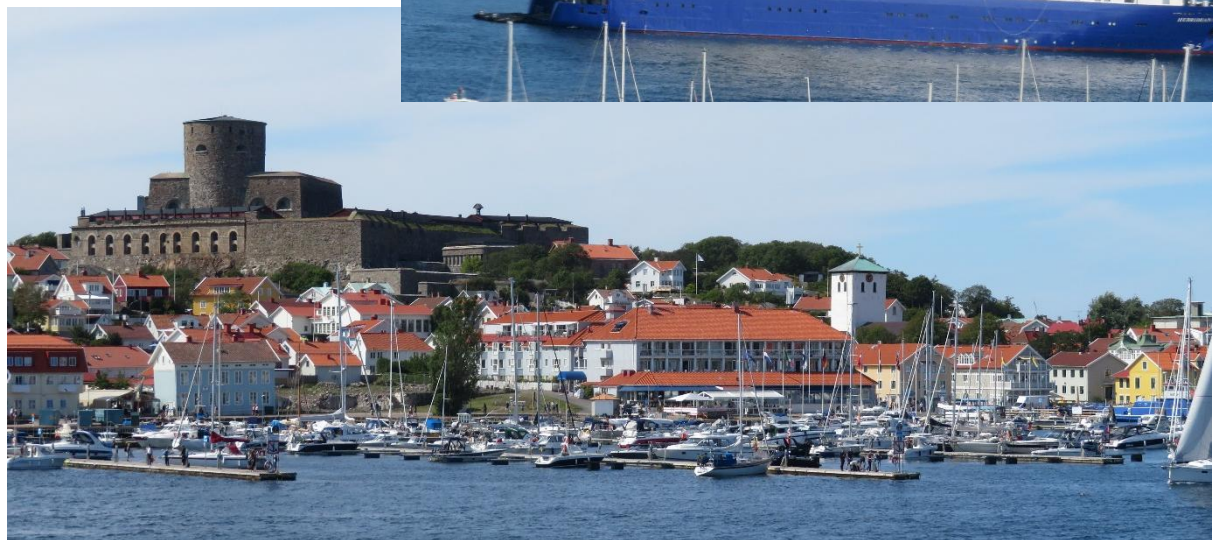


The Parslows in Norway - 2019

After touring the Baltic we headed to Norway making one last stop in Skagen at the very tip of Denmark, where the Baltic Sea meets the Atlantic Ocean.



Next was also a final stop in Sweden, at the holiday island of Marstrand. The island is dominated by an old fortress which we climbed, but is also obviously the holiday resort for those with money. The shops, holiday houses and numerous boats were mainly for locals with money to spare. But a delightful spot to walk around on a beautiful sunny day. The other photo shows our ship, taken from the fortress.





Graham and I elected to stay in the city and walk back to the boat. It rained heavily in the afternoon but we managed to get back avoiding most of the rain and in the process saw a demonstration, a wedding, and overflowing gutters showing, surprisingly, that Oslo doesn't cope well with flash flooding. We dried out for another lovely dinner and a rough night at sea. We are now in the south coast of Norway which is not as protected as the Baltic.

Next stop was Kragerø where we bussed through picturesque towns and forest to a canal previously used to transport timber and other goods. It is partly natural and part man made with numerous locks. We were fortunate that the rain held off for 30mins while we walked between two of the locks to appreciate the countryside.



The next day was spent cruising through Lysefjord, its stunning views were compromised by the rain; this was followed by a walk around yet another quaint cobbledstoned town. The following morning the weather cleared enough for us to enjoy a 6km walk to a lake at the bottom of a glacier. Unfortunately, the glacier is retreating fast but it was a lovely setting.



The next day was spent in Bergen, the home of Edvard Grieg; the morning tour included a short piano recital. In the afternoon, we went up the funicular to great a great view of the town and had a lovely walk around the fish market, the old timber buildings all squashed together and also surprisingly found a Cornish pasty shop - the lady's husband was Cornish and the pasty was pretty good.



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Sognefjord is 302km long and is spectacular – helped by the fact that the sun was shining and it did not rain all day. There were waterfalls around every corner and a few mountains were still snow-capped.



At the end of the fiord we went for another walk where we made time to look at the wild flowers and then visited a viking village.



The village of Flåm (pronounced Flom) exists only because of the train that takes an hour journey through the river valley and up to a wonderful view point. Unfortunately the 20 tunnels get in the way of the view and make it difficult to get good photos but it was still worth it.

In the afternoon we visited a church which dated from 1147 and tasted the locally made brown goat's cheese.



By the next day the rain had set in again. The bus trip went to yet another recreated village and more majestic waterfalls.....at least the wet weather has ensured that the waterfalls are looking great. The weather did let up for a short time allowing for a walk into the town where we were docked, called Flora. It was so nice to not see any souvenir shops, not be spoken to in English and see the locals going about their normal Saturday life.

Since the 1950s when oil and gas were found, Norway has become a very wealthy (and expensive) country. They have high tax rates and free education and good social services. Milk was \$3AUS a litre in the supermarket in Flora, and petrol is about the same. But the unemployment rates are very low and most people are wealthy enough to have a summer house if they live in a city. In the western part of Norway people used to travel mainly by boat, along the many fiords and waterways, but since the 50s money from the oil and gas has been used to build roads along the side of all the fiords and joining the many small islands, including some great bridges and about 950 tunnels, the longest of which is 230km. It makes me wonder why the Victorian government is making such a big thing about the tunnels for the new trainlines in Melbourne. Up here it's taken for granted.

Norway also produces about 90% of its power requirements by the many hydro schemes along the waterways and has a growing number of electric powered cars.

Sunday: today the rain held off (and a bit of sun came through) for us to drive inland along a long fiord to the end. After a bit of a walk we came to a lake with several glaciers in the area, they are all arms of a massive ice sheet higher up in the mountains. There were glimpses of snow and glaciers between all the mountains in the area, and of course, lots of magnificent waterfalls.





On Monday we visited Trondheim, one of the bigger cities in Norway, although it only has less than 200,000 inhabitants. Most of the towns along this part of the coast are service towns for all the offshore oil and gas rigs, and are doing very well financially. In Trondheim we visited a cathedral that has been rebuilt multiple times after catching fire or being destroyed by some invasion. It is now an impressive mix of building styles and is said to be built over the grave of St Olav, and dates back to 1070.

Trondheim is also a university town with a significant population of young people; along with lots of burger bars and nightclubs to meet their lifestyle.



Tuesday we were out hiking again. This time up a very steep, rocky incline to an interesting “hole in the hat.” The onboard geologist gave us a lecture about how the hole was formed. The first photo was taken as we sailed past the rock at 6am, the other was taken looking through the hole at about 10am.

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On our last day at sea we sailed past a monument showing the arctic circle and then visited the Lofoton Islands just off the coast of Norway. More great scenery! We disembarked in Tromso where we had a couple of days to ourselves and visit the local botanic gardens.

