

Norway: August 17-30 2017

07 August 2017 – Monday

Dallas – London

And so another trip to Europe begins. Cliff drove us to the White Rock light rail station and we took the train to the airport. We are now on board our flight to London and onto Oslo: the doors have just closed, so it is official!

This has been a hectic time for me. We spent 5 days in Minneapolis attending a German Genealogy conference, then we attended a DGS Summer Seminar, so the trip was upon us before we knew it. We both packed this morning: I usually begin to lay my things out days in advance.

It will be a long travel day: 8+ hours to London, then a 5-hour layover before we finish with a flight to Oslo. Even though it is a mild August (for Dallas) it will be nice to be in a cooler climate.

We had 2 seats together near the back of the plane (row 41). The flight was not very crowded. I had hopes of grabbing an aisle seat in the row behind us, but the crew had them reserved for their use.

Too bad too as I had a hard time getting someplace where I was comfortable, which caused my back to tighten up some. In spite of that I (and Kathleen) managed to get some sleep during the flight.

08 August 2017 – Tuesday

London – Oslo

Once in London (Heathrow) we looked into the possibility of an earlier flight to Oslo: the agent appeared to be willing to do something about the baggage we had checked through until he saw that the earlier flight was fully booked.

So, we went through security and went to the Admirals Club in Terminal 3. What a great place! We both turned up our noses at the breakfast served on the flight (because we are trying to stick to our Atkins diet, and they offered nothing that was low carb). Happily, the club had a great breakfast (scrambled eggs, sausage, sliced meats, cheese and much more) so we did not regret our choosiness on the plane.

It was a pleasant and relaxing place to kill the 6 hours we had before our flight to Oslo departed. We will need to allow about 2 hours to get to terminal 5 (we will be flying British Airway) as we will need to catch a bus and go through security again.

If only they had cots...

Lunch was Pork and Saur Kraut (and other stuff we did not eat) and a salad. Forget the lack of cots: I want to live here!

We bussed over to Terminal 5 at 3:00 pm. Bought some wine at Duty Free, had some wine at a bar and finally boarded our flight to Oslo operated by Qator for British Airways due to a work stoppage. We were both tired and despite the kid behind me frequently kicking the back of my seat I managed to sleep most of the way.

It was sunny and cool when we arrived, although rain is forecast for tomorrow. We collected our bags, got 2000 Kr from an ATM machine, took the train to Oslo (just missed the previous one but only had to

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wait 10-minutes for the next one), enjoyed the 20-minute ride downtown, then took a cab to our hotel (Thon).

It was about 10:00 pm when we arrived. The hotel restaurant was closing and most of the area restaurants were closed too. We settled for nuts Kathleen had brought from home.

We are sitting now with our feet on the bed, windows open, with a cool breeze wafting into the room, listening to the small but vocal group of patrons in the bar across the street with the intermittent sound of trains running in front of our hotel.

Last word for today: it is 11:30 here in Oslo, 4:30 pm in Dallas. We left home at 3:00 pm yesterday (Dallas Time): No wonder we are tired! I suspect that we will sleep soundly tonight.

09 August 2017 – Wednesday

Oslo

We had set our alarms for 8:00 and woke up to a grey, rainy day.

The breakfast buffet here at the hotel got good reviews and they were well deserved. All the coffee you could ask for (I needed that!) and a buffet with eggs, sausage, bacon, sliced meats, cheese, tomatoes, and cucumber – and that was just what I ate. Breads, cereal's and still more food seemed to go on forever.

We braved the rain and walked down to the train station and the scenic tram (#11-12) tour of downtown (as recommended by Rick Steves), then went down to the old fort and visited the museum to Norwegian Resistance.

We got the senior discount (1/2 off), which was nice. It was interesting and educational, but not especially well presented. Most of the displays were in Norwegian (duh!) which wasn't a surprise, but the descriptions in English were often hard to see. In some cases, due to poor lighting, but also because of poor placement. Some were printed on something clear with no background, so you had difficulty reading it at an angle, so you had to be right in front of it.

All in all, it did not compare favorably with the one we visited in Copenhagen (which Kathleen read since been destroyed by a fire). Such a loss!

We split an order of fish and chips and enjoyed some wine at a touristy but nice seafood restaurant near the harbor and watched the rain drench the boats, and the wet people come and go from our table in the corner with a perfect (and dry) view of it all.

Considered riding on one of the water taxis covered by our 24-hour pass but could not figure out how long the trip would last or when we would get back so we gave up on that idea.

Instead, we found a department store so Kathleen could buy some socks and something to sleep in (a T-shirt), when went back to the train station and picked up some wine then rode the tram back to the hotel... Well, past it, then we caught another tram going in the other direction as the next stop was quite a distance away.

Changed out of our damp clothes and went downstairs to the restaurant in our hotel for dinner. We sat outside under an awning that had a heat lamp, enjoying the rain and watching the never-ending

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procession of people, cars, busses and trams as they all proceeded on their busy way to wherever they were going.

Dinner was full of surprises. Kathleen's Skate was delicious: It reminded me of Lobster. I had Celeriac (a vegetable) with my veal, and it was delicious. I think it was the first meal I ever had where the vegetable outshined the protein! This was reputed to be one of the best restaurants in Oslo: the food supports the claim, even if the crowd (or lack of one) didn't. We figured that was attributable to this being August, which is when many Europeans go on vacation to someplace else.

Exchanged messages with Reidon in Rakkestad during our dinner. We will meet her at her house tomorrow afternoon.

Retired back to our comfortable room for an after-dinner glass of wine (or maybe two...). Tomorrow we are off to Rakkestad!

View Kathleen's video: [A Day in Oslo](#)

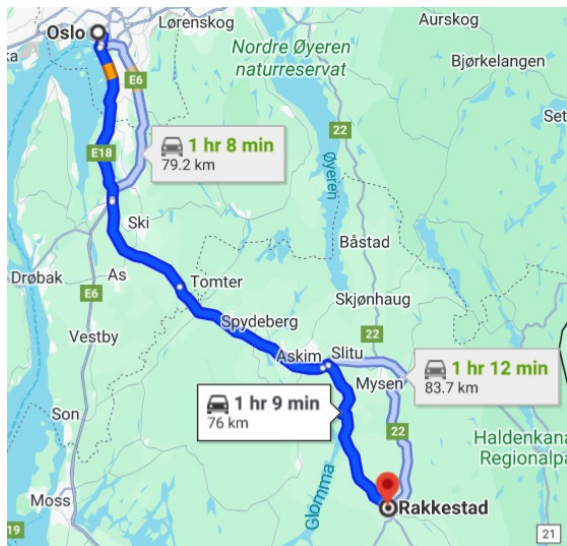
10 August 2017 – Thursday

Oslo – Rakkestad

Woke up to a beautifully sunny and warm day: the complete opposite of yesterday. Had breakfast (just as good as yesterday), packed, checked out and took the 5-minute cab ride to pick up our car after (wisely) deciding that it was too far to walk and too much of a trouble to try to on the tram with our luggage.

The only problem we had picking up the car was finding it in the garage. It was hiding in a corner behind a concrete pillar. Had to go back to the rental desk to ask for help!

I love the car: a small diesel/electric hybrid BMW that is great fun to drive and which has plenty of room for 4 people.



The drive to Rakkestad was crowded leaving Oslo but absolutely beautiful. It was amazing how quickly we were out of the city (even after I made a wrong turn) and in the country.

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The car has a navigation system, but it was set to Italian and nothing we did in the garage before we left convinced it to switch to English, but Kathleen got out the manual while I was driving and soon had it managing our route and talking to us in a subdued English (British) accent.

Found our hotel in Rakkestad: our room is on the 2nd floor over a row of stores, and our suite is large enough for a medium-sized family. The bedroom has what anybody would consider to be plenty of sitting room (a couch, a chair and a desk), but we also have another entire room adjacent to it.

We ate at a nearby restaurant recommended by Reidun (prefers Tulia) – Solside – (“The owner is a daughter of your second cousin Sonja”) before we drove onto Tulia’s house.

It was fortunate that we only had salads for lunch, because she greeted us with true Norwegian hospitality and served waffles with cream and jelly, followed by chocolate cake (we both abandoned our Atkins diets without a second thought) and an endless stream of coffee..

We talked Tulia and her husband Øyind, got through the inevitable questions about Trump, and moved on to genealogy. Tulia has gotten the bug so Kathleen and I worked with her, traded files and did the kind of things genealogists do when they get together.

We broke away from that to drive to the church to look at graves, where Tulia revealed that her first husband had (unsuccessfully) tried to kill himself with a shotgun the day before. She was very upset, and can be expected.

None the less she escorted us to her the home of her brother Bjorn shortly before 7:00 pm. He had recently finished adding a sunroom onto his house, and we sat out there talking, drinking and (eventually) eating a small feast of fruit, sliced meats and sausages, potato salad (what diet?) a bread.

Their son Paul came down to meet us from his farm. He was a very nice man who was into painting, acting, cars and motorcycles.

By 10:00 Tulia was yawning and we broke off to drop her at home and return to our corner of luxury (where, reportedly, the King of Norway has also slept).

We will go to the library tomorrow to meet with Eva Bjorsted, then we will hook up with Tulia and Bjorn to see some local sights.

View Kathleen’s video: [Oslo to Rakkestad](#)

11 August 2017 – Friday

Rakkestad

We stayed up late talking in our room last night and so slept in late (10:00) today. Our breakfast had indeed been placed in our refrigerator last evening as promised, and it was surprisingly satisfying: Sliced meat & cheese, hard boiled eggs, sliced peppers & beets, cereal and bread, along with milk, orange juice and instant coffee.

Ran a few errands (bought insoles for Kathleen’s shoes at Boots, bought some wine for Bjorn and Anna at the state wine store) then went to the library to see Eva Bjornstead.

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Had a nice time catching up with her. She is now paid 75% time, and they are working on a series of books documenting every farm and family in Rakkestad. The 1st one should be published by the end of the year.

We next met with Tullia, who laid out the plan for the rest of the days adventure (which sound great) before setting out for the day's adventures.

We drove out into the country and to a cabin her friends owns which is located on the shore of a beautiful lake. Her friend (who was not there at the time) and her partner (who was – mowing the lawn when we arrived) have this small, idyllic cabin which originally had only 2 rooms but now has been expanded to 4 rooms, with a deck, a wood-fired sauna, and a really cool detached building where they can sit around a central fire pit.

We walked the short distance to their 2nd cabin, closer to the lake. It was locked (and the keys were out fishing) so we boosted Tullia in through the open window so she could open the door for us. It was also small, utilitarian and neat as a pin. I would say ideal except for the fact that neither house has a toilet – both have only a nearby outhouse. It is understandable why they only live there in the summer.

We drove back into town to pick Bjorn who, by this time was home from work. We first went to his son Paul's house: Paul was working, but his wife was there, and later we were joined by her father. They have a very large barn that houses his motorcycle, Porsche, Model-T and in bicycles. Their house (which they have renovated) is beautiful. They are finishing up a renovation on the other house on the property (marvelous workmanship!) and plan to rent it out.

We departed and drove to see three of the locks on the Haldenkanalen canal. Got to do a lot of walking up and down stairs at each one, some of them quite tall.

We finished the day at the Fredriksten fortress near Halden, a massive and well-preserved fort built to defend Norway against Sweden (very successfully – it was attacked many times but never defeated).

We tried several times to stop and eat, but every place we tried was closed. In the end we went back to Bjorn's house and ate take-out pizza (from the restaurant in our hotel!) and talked.

It was interesting to listen to so much conversation (and laughing) as Norwegian flowed around us all day. Tullia and Bjorn seem to have a good relationship. They talked constantly (with Tullia occasionally breaking out to translate for us) and laughing frequently.

We will visit Tullia one more time tomorrow so I can get photographs of some of her family pictures.

View Kathleen's video: [Østfold County, Norway](#)

12 August 2017 – Saturday

Rakkestad & Oslo

Time to move on... Our hotel has been very nice: quiet and comfortable, and we have enjoyed the breakfasts.

We went by Tullia's for one last visit and to get pictures of some family pictures that she had. She had pulled out several books and marked sections of interest for me. We made audio recordings of her

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reading them (and several other documents she dug out, including Anton Martin Syversen's will). She is a really lovely person and it will be sad to leave.

The drive back to Oslo was enjoyable. The scenery was reminiscent of Wisconsin. It was fun to see the small towns and farms as we drove.

Our hotel for the night is a few miles from the airport and is quite large – an obvious destination for transients like us, tour groups and airline crews. We dropped our luggage off in our room, got diesel for the car, and drove to the airport to drop it off (which was a BMW 220D, a diesel-electric hybrid that was quite nice. It appeared to be getting really good mileage, as comfortable to be in and fun to drive. I look forward to seeing something similar in the US market some day).

We nearly left the tube containing the poster showing the lineage of the Norwegian kings that Øyind had given to me in the room. We noticed before we left the hotel and went back to get it.

Went into the airport, got some more Kroner at the ATM, had salads for lunch, then sat there and enjoyed several glasses of wine while we watched the steady flow of travelers coming and going. The bus back to the hotel cost us 70 Kroner each and took 15 minutes: Very convenient.

Managed to conduct a little business back in our room (reached out again by email to potential panel speakers for the upcoming Society Seminar) and did some other odds and ends before heading down to the restaurant for dinner.

We both had steak and an excellent bottle of Bordeaux – so good that we got another glass each to take back up to the room with us for a nightcap.

13 August 2017 – Sunday

Oslo and Nesna

The Thon-Airport had a remarkable breakfast buffet – much bigger than the one in Oslo, and more entertaining: the cook had an impressive grease fire in a pan. Sadly for him he appeared to have burned his hand as he disappeared for a while before returning with a bandaged hand.

Took the 9:10 bus back to the airport and went through the mostly automated check in process without any human assistance and absolutely no recorded PA announcements. Quite different than the American process and infinitely more pleasant!

Our B concourse is largely deserted – just a few of us going out of gate B1 to Mo I Rana on an aircraft that is very similar to an ATR-72 (it was a Bombardier Dash-8, a high wing, dual turboprop, T-tail). The forecast for Nesna calls for rain just about forever...

The flight was nearly full but uneventful, with just a hint of turbulence as we descended into Mo I Rana.

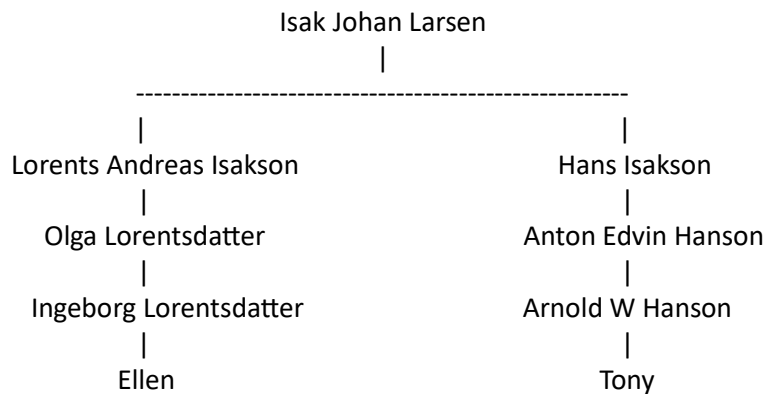
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Ellen and Ernst met us at the small airport, which was quite crowded as our flight was now the 2nd arrival in a short period of time. The bag pickup was crowded, crammed behind a long, slowly moving line queued up for the next departing flight.

Had lunch at a quaint restaurant (Bimbo) and drove out to Nesna in the intermittent rain. The guest house that will be our home for the next few days is simply amazing – hard to believe we have it all to ourselves. We settled in, caught up on a few things and headed up to their nearby house for dinner.

We had salmon with “fish sauce”, boiled potatoes, and a salad, followed by pleasant conversation and discussion about plans for our stay. Their generosity is overwhelming in its magnitude but not in the manner in which it is presented.



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14 August 2017 – Monday

Nesna

The grey, overcast day cannot dim our spirits this morning as we slowly begin our day in the little paradise that is our temporary home. This guest house is idyllic. The first floor has the bathroom, kitchen (which has been fully stocked) with a dining area and living room (with a wood-burning stove). There are several bedrooms up the steep stairs.

Kathleen was up earlier than I was and has been busily engaged in all sorts of social media activities. She has been mastering software that creates videos and has produced several, each a little better and more sophisticated than the one before.

For my own part I am grateful that I set up the closed Facebook group that I am using to share information about the trip with family and friends. It is good knowing who my audience is, and everybody I have included seems to be enjoying the pictures and comment (and, of course, Kathleen's videos).

We spent the afternoon touring the countryside north of Nesna. We took the #17 road out of Nesna to Tonnes (literally the end of the road). On the way we stopped at Stokkvågen to visit the Grønsvik coastal fortress that had an interesting museum focused on the German occupation of the area during WWII, the battery of guns they installed to control shipping, and the camp for Russian POW's that they established here.



It is estimated that more than 13,000 prisoners died here, living and working in conditions that remind me of other concentration camps I have heard about. I learned that the Germans set up such camps all over Norway to deal with the thousands of prisoners captured in the early stages of the war.

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Most of what remained of this camp, including burial markers, were destroyed by Norway in the 1950's, allegedly, according to one person quoted, because "we don't want to be reminded of what happened here".

There is now an effort to do what can be done to document those who died here. It will be difficult, between what the Norwegians did in the 50's and the records destroyed by the Germans after the war.

We continued on our way to Tonnes over a road that became increasingly narrow as we went along. The beauty of the hills and the water distracted me from any concern about the closeness of the on-coming traffic, plus Ernst is a good driver.

We had planned to eat at the restaurant in Tonnes, but it was closed and not due to open for another hour so we bought some snacks at the nearby grocery store and drove back to Nesna.

Coming and going, Ernst stopped to check out the many sheep we passed on the road to see if any were from his flock of 80 (a few of them were). He said that he would just break even cost-wise were it not for the government subsidy that he receives.

We caught up on things at our "house" while Ellen prepared dinner for us: roast pork, Sauer Kraut, boiled potatoes, rice and vegetables, with strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries for dessert.

After making plans for tomorrow (Ernst and I are going to go fishing in the morning) we departed to let them get on with what they need to do and to relax back her in the comfort of our heaven.

It is disturbing to hear the news from Charlottesville about the violence and death at a [white-fascist/neo-Nazi rally](#) after viewing the pictures and reading about the suffering caused by the real Nazi's during the war here.

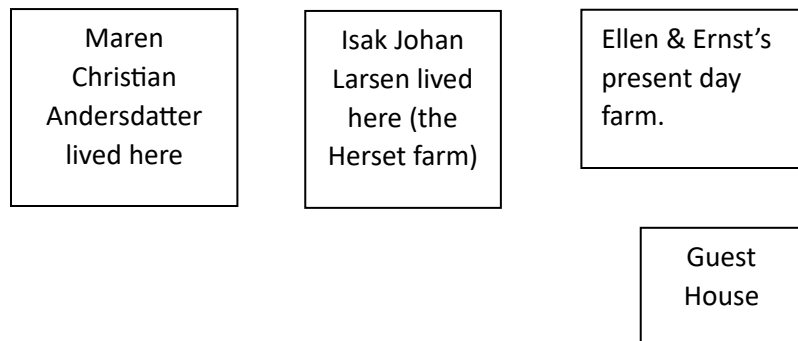
View Kathleen's video: [Herset & Nordland County](#)

The property in Nesna

← Mo i Rana

The town of Nesna ->

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Ellens father (Alf Pareli Antonson, 1892-1953) married Margit Julie Mortensdatter in Aberdeen, Brown, South Dakota in 1921 but returned to Norway and bought the Herset farm. Ellen bought it from her mother.

It is estimated that the original guest house structure was built sometime between 1765 and 1820. It has recently been remodeled.

Ernst and Ellen now own the adjacent properties where Maren Christian Andersdatter and Isak Johan Larsen lived (Herset).

15 August 2017 – Tuesday

Nesna

Up early (6:30) so I could eat (bacon & eggs made for me by Kathleen who gamely got up early too even when she didn't have too) and be ready to depart with Ernst at 8:00 for our fishing expedition.

My taxi to the harbor was one of his John Deer tractors, leaving the car behind for Ellen and Kathleen. It was raining intermittently, but the forecast promised better weather as the day progressed.

We loaded our gear onto the boat, motored out and then Ernst began to drive around his favorite fishing spot and using his sonar to look for fish. Seeing none he decided to try fishing anyway, and we were soon rewarded with our first catch of the day, which also turned out to be our largest fish of the day. From then on I fished while he navigated and managed the boat.

We motored out and Ernst began to drive around his favorite fishing spot, using his sonar to look for fish. Seeing none, he decided to try anyway, and we were soon rewarded with our first catch of the day (also our largest fish of the day). From then on I fished while he navigated and managed the boat.

We caught 8 coal fish (paddock?). We were pretty sure that this was the same type of fish that Kathleen had at the restaurant in Oslo (Skate?) that she liked so much.

We tried for some different types of fish without success. All we managed to catch was our fishing line, which became profoundly wrapped on our propeller shaft. Ernst had to hand out the back of the boat with a knife so he could cut it away while the southbound Hurtigruten rushed closely past us.

We came in and drove the tractor over to see Margrete (Ellens sister), joining Kathleen and Ellen who were already there. Margrete has recently been diagnosed with ALS and has moved to Nesna to be closer to Ellen and the help that she can provide. We all enjoyed sandwiches, cake, and (of course!) coffee and fun conversation.

Came back "home" and Ernst attempted to teach me how to fillet this kind of fish. I kind of got the hang of it, but was nowhere as quick or as good at it as he is.

Rested back in our retreat until 6:00, when we went back to their house for a traditional Norwegian dinner (which thrilled Ellen's messenger group of cousins): boiled fish, flat bread, carrots, potatoes, aquavit, and beer. It was a very enjoyable meal with pleasant, relaxed conversations. And the ice cream we had for dessert was delicious!

View Kathleen's video: [Fishing](#)

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16 August 2017 – Wednesday

Nesna

Ellen and Ernst urged us to take their car this morning so we could see some of the area on our own. So we got up early, ate some breakfast and left to catch the 8:10 ferry from Nesna to Levang. Ernst had given us a card good for a discount on the passage: he neglected to mention that it was a debit card that paid for the trip for us. We don't know how we are ever going to be able to repay their generosity.

The rain that was forecast began while we were on the ferry and continued all morning. We took highway 17 to 78 down to Mosjoen but got there before much of anything was open. So after a quick drive around the city center we headed up the E6 to Mo I Rana.

Once there we bought some beer and wine (including a really nice one to leave as a gift when we leave), then found the city center. We had stopped at the tourist information office (next to the beer & wine store) when, remembering the parking snafu the last time we were in Mo I Rana, we picked up a free parking pass they provide to tourists. Kathleen also got a recommendation for a nice gift shop where we bought a class sheep tea-light candle holder for Ellen and Ernst, and a Troll to send to Tulia to add to her collection.

We bought a fajita plate (beef, onions & peppers) at the nearby outdoor market, shopped a bit more, filled the car up with diesel, then headed back to Nesna.



Back "home" we (hopefully) figured out the washing machine and started a load of laundry. Ellen had promised a "hot lunch" at 3:00: "Hamburgers", with gravy, potatoes and vegetables, although the "Hamburgers" turned out to be "Mooseburgers": we loved them!

Back to our cabin where we took care of some correspondence and napped for a while before Ellen picked us up to go to Ingeborg's house.

Ellen dropped us off with a burst of Norwegian to Ingeborg explaining that Ernst had been summoned to help rescue a neighbor's boat that has been adrift (he joined us later) and then departed. Ingeborg graciously met us and showed us around her marvelously renovated home.

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She has remarried (to Birger Ruckstein) and lives in a house in “downtown” Nesna. It was formerly a Swiss Chalet styled house that had been built elsewhere, dismantled, and moved to its present location in the early 1900’s. They bought it ~6 years ago (600,00 Kroner, about \$75,000) and have completely renovated it.

Ingeborg is a counselor for troubled children. Birger is a counselor at the University. They met at a conference. He is from Oslo, but moved here and is, apparently, teased mercilessly by Ellen over his accent and vocabulary.

They live there with their daughter Margrit (she was ~5 the last time we saw her) and a foster daughter about the same age (she has been with them for ~2 years) and a younger boy who just joined them this week.

We (or course!) were served a smorgasbord of meats, cheese, fruit, olives and red wine (Spanish Grenache, or Garnacha in Norwegian) that was very good. We sat in the enclosed sunroom they built in place of what had been a balcony. It overlooks the boat harbor, and we were grateful that it was enclosed because it was raining, quite heavily, while we were there.

Every time we have sat down with a group like this on this trip Trump has emerged as a topic of discussion. To a person, they have all viewed him as a fascist buffoon with shameful views on minorities and women. The damage he has done to the image of America is disgusting.

17 August 2017 – Thursday

Nesna

Yesterdays (and last nights!) rain is a distant memory this sunny and beautiful morning. We had a leisurely breakfast and caught up with our various forms of documenting this trip before we left (at 11:00) for a boat trip and picnic on the nearby island of Toma.

The boat ride to the far side of the island was fun. Ernst pointed out many now abandoned farms on the small islands as we passed them. Our picnic spot was a cove that had a dock (built by cousin Lorents Lorentsen) and a picnic table: it was as idyllic and beautiful as one could possibly imagine.

Ellen had packed a feast for us – bread, meat, cheese, eggs, cucumbers, tomatoes, coffee, and other things I did recognize (or eat). I did try the Norwegian Brain Cheese, much to Ernsts approval. It is slightly sweet but enjoyable.

After we all wandered our separate ways and did our part to hydrate the nearby bushes we motored off and tried to slaughter a few more fish. After my attempts using a pole failed, we tried trolling, with a long line that has 6 hooks. At first, we had no luck, but once Ellen took over the helm we started to catch mackerel (at one point we had 4 fish on the line at once). We did this until it was time to return to the farm to prepare for the dinner planned for the boat house near the water.

Back at the farm, Ellen began preparing food for dinner, Kathleen went back to our “house” to work on a video and Ernst and I cleaned the fish we had caught that afternoon. Well, actually I watched Ernst clean the fillet the fish. I took the fact that he only brought one knife as a silent but polite commentary on his opinion of my filleting skills.

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He did defer to my cooking skills though and allowed me to prepare and cook them (in butter with sauteed garlic and onions topped with green onions) on the grill that was set up at the boat house. In fact, he turned all of the grilling duties over to me.

It was a small but fun gathering. In addition to the four of us, Lorents Lorentzen and his wife were came, as did two other cousins I had not previously met. The evening was pleasant, the food was good (even though Lorents said, only half-jokingly, that mackerel was only good as bait for better fish!).

Ernst filled in some more information about the layout of the property.

We met one of Laurents daughters (all of his daughters appeared to be very striking in the pictures he showed us over dinner) as the party broke up and everybody was leaving.

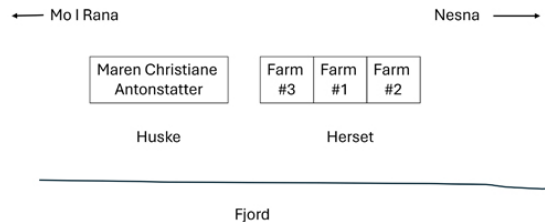
View Kathleen's video: [Nesna Cousins](#)

18 August 2017 – Friday

Nesna

Time to leave Nesna already! We have done much and even though we feel like we have been here for awhile it also seems like time has passed quickly.

Ellen made breakfast for us so were back up at the house at 9:30 for one more meal with them. Ernst and I straightened out the farm layout (below), so I think I finally understand the lay of the land.



We drove to the dock to wait for the arrival of our ship. One of the cousins from last night came down to day goodbye with her two sons and her brother (one of a set of twins). Such friendly people!

We checked into our room on the MS Richard With, toured the boat, had lunch and are now perched at the window of observation room on the 7th deck, along with all of the other older tourists, contemplating all that we have experienced so far on this trip.

We had discussed, at length, the best way to thank Ellen and Ernst for all they did for us and came to the conclusion that they would refuse money (and be somewhat insulted if we just left some), so we settled for leaving a card, the sheep tea-light, and a good (we hope!) bottle of red wine. I sincerely hope they receive in in the spirit in which it was intended...

I would say that our visit was the kind of thing you only read about in a Rick Steves book, except I don't recall ever reading about such an outpouring of generosity. Ernst & Ellen seemed to get as much pleasure out of our visit as we did. I hope that is the case.

We settled into shipboard life quickly. Sat in the lounge and watched the endless parade of islands flow past. I enjoyed having some time to look into a few genealogy questions prompted by my visit. Kathleen lost herself in a book.

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Lunch was a buffet affair. We finally got hungry for dinner about 8:00 and went to eat, only to be confronted with a long line of people waiting to be admitted. Turns out they had assigned tables and seating times, something that they neglected to tell us about when we checked in. We are not officially table #52 with an 8:30 seating.

Dinner is more formal, a 3-course affair served at the table (a fish appetizer, veal steak with veggies for the main course, and cake for dessert). It was quite adequate.

We took the remains of our bottle of wine back to the lounge and became part of an auction benefiting the Hurtigruten foundation that benefits the environment. I bit on (but did not win) a Norwegian flag.

19 August 2017 – Saturday

Southbound aboard the MS Richard With

Slept well. It was nice to be able to get up when we felt like it, even though we were both up and about well before 8:00.

We had arrived in Trondheim and remained there until 10:00am. The Northbound was the Finnmarken – the same boat that Ernst and I disturbed in Nesna when we were disabled with the fishing line wrapped around our propeller shaft. It was fun to stand outside (it was sunny and warm – at first) watching the busy crew loading and unloading all of the stuff required to keep a couple of large ships full of tourists happy.

Kathleen volunteered to attend the 10:15 briefing on how we should depart the boat when we reach Bergen tomorrow. We both then hung out in the lounge again as the weather deteriorated towards what is forecast to be a rainy afternoon and evening. I worked on some more family history while Kathleen read.

The rest of the day passed much as the afternoon before... After lunch we went back to the top level lounge and spent a pleasant afternoon watching the rain-swept scenery flow past. After dinner (in a much less crowded restaurant – many of our traveling companions departed in Trondheim), we took what was left of our bottle of very nice Spanish Rioja back the lounge for a last night-cap before retiring for the day.

20 August 2017 – Sunday

Southbound aboard the MS Richard With

Awoke early to rain, but it soon ceased. The weather report for Bergen sound hopeful!

Although we don't arrive until 2:30 we must have our suitcases packed and placed near the elevator by 9:00, and we must depart our room by 10:00. I guess this helps them achieve a quick turn-around in Bergen.

After breakfast we opted to finish our trip in a lounge on the 4th level which was deserted when we arrived. There also have a room on this level for hand luggage (although we both opted to keep our backpacks with us).

Norway: August 17-30 2017

We have both been reading about the unrest and protests going on back in the US and are grateful to be far removed, although every person we have talked to for more than a few minutes has raised the subject of Trump and his disgraceful policies and positions.

We stayed in the lounge (except for when we ate lunch) reading. Our arrival in Bergen was uneventful – much easier than the last time. We walked off the boat, claimed our luggage, got on our bus, and were soon at our hotel Thon Rosenkratz, which is located in the old part of the city.

We wandered around the area and the nearby harbor, stopping in at a few stores looking for a suitable XXXL t-shirt for Danny Hanson (no luck!) and finally stopped off at a sidewalk bar overlooking the water for some wine.

While we were there, we talked briefly with a man wearing a Trump t-shirt. Turns out he was a big fan. Not American, but he likes his straight talking, swamp-draining manner.

It took a while to figure out what to do about dinner. Our hotel included dinner with our reservation, but we looked it over (lots of pasta) and decided we could do better. We ended up the Nora across the street and extremely pleased. Good wine (Sancerre) and surprising food: A lobster mango salad. Chicken and salad and grilled beef, all of which we shared and thoroughly enjoyed!

Finished the evening over a last glass of wine at the hotel bar, then returned to our room to enjoy music played on our Bluetooth Bose speaker.

21 August 2017 – Monday

Bergen

This Thon hotel carried on the chains great breakfast tradition. The chef made me a really good omlet!

The front desk really help with the mailing of the poster that Øyind gave to me. They took my credit card information and will arrange to have it mailed home to me. One less thing to have to keep track of at the airport!

We had purchased tickets to go see the home of Edward Grieg, a Norwegian composer that Kathleen admires, and boarded the bus at the TI with a lot of other fans. It was a 30-minute ride, which was narrated by a tour guide as we passed places of interest.

Arrived at the house (which we toured) and saw the small building he used to write his music, both located on a hilly spot of land overlooking the water. They have built a visitor center and a performing hall where we enjoyed a 30-minute concert of his work performed by a visiting pianist.

After the bus returned us to the TI we finished our shopping, had lunch (fish & chips) and took the funicular to the top of a nearby mountain where we enjoyed the spectacular view and the cool, refreshing air. We have been teased by intermittent but light rain off and on all day but never anything too heavy: we have been lucky!

We intended to have our farewell to Norway splurge meal at an upscale fish restaurant but they were fully booked, so we ended up at the same To Kakker restaurant (in the same alley as the other restaurant, same chefs) where we ate the last time we visited Bergen.

Norway: August 17-30 2017

No regrets: Great red wine and fantastic food. Started with scallops, then I had duck and Kathleen had beef, all served at a leisurely pace and in the company of a mix of fellow diners from all over the world. Quite pleasant!

Then back to the hotel for a final nightcap with music in our room.

22 August 2017 – Tuesday

Norway to Germany

Goodbye Norway! Up early (5:00!) so we could pack, eat, check out and walk the short few blocks to the Raddison Blue Hotel to catch our bus to the airport. It all worked like clockwork and we were at the airport by 7:30 for our 9:20 flight to Oslo.

We will need to claim our bags and re-check them for Frankfurt in Oslo, but that is the only irritant on a sunny and beautiful day.

The Norwegian Air flight to Oslo was quick and uneventful, but upon arriving we found that our Finnair flight to Helsinki had been cancelled. All they could offer by way of re-booking was a 5:00pm flight to Helsinki, a hotel there, and a 7:40 am flight tomorrow to Frankfurt.

We knew (because they had booked the passengers in line in front of us on it) that there was a Lufthansa flight departing at 4:00 that was going directly to Frankfurt, but our agent said he could not put us on that flight because we had booked our trip using frequent flyer miles.

I called American Airlines for help. It took 30+ minutes but Barbara Collins was able to get us on the Lufthansa flight after all. So, we took advantage of our meal voucher from Finnair and (back at the same restaurant we ate at when we dropped off the car) had fish & chips.

Once on the plane it was obvious why American was able to get us on the flight: the plane was not very crowded at all. We each got a 3-row section of seats to ourselves! Plus they seemed us a sandwich and a drink!

The flight went quickly. Deplaning was a bit unusual: we exited out the front and the rear, down to busses that drove us to the terminal.

Once there we waited for a very long time for our bags to appear, but once they did we exited into the main terminal area without ever seeing an immigration or customs agent.

Picked up the car without much delay, but only after being forced to purchase insurance. Apparently Dollar/Hertz policies (or possibly German law) will only accept coverage provided by a credit card if you have a letter from the credit card company explicitly identifying you and stating that they are providing coverage for you. Then they put a substantial deposit on our credit card: a 1000 Euro charge for a 170 rental!

The drive to Schweinfurt took longer than either of us expected, and the GPS routed us through small towns and back roads for much of the way. It was just getting dark when we reached town, only to find that the bridge we needed to cross to reach our hotel was closed for construction.

Norway: August 17-30 2017



It took a while (and a few phone calls to the hotel) but we finally reached it, parked, registered, and ate at 9:45 (the restaurant closed at 10:00). It was a long, hard travel day.

23 August 2017 – Wednesday

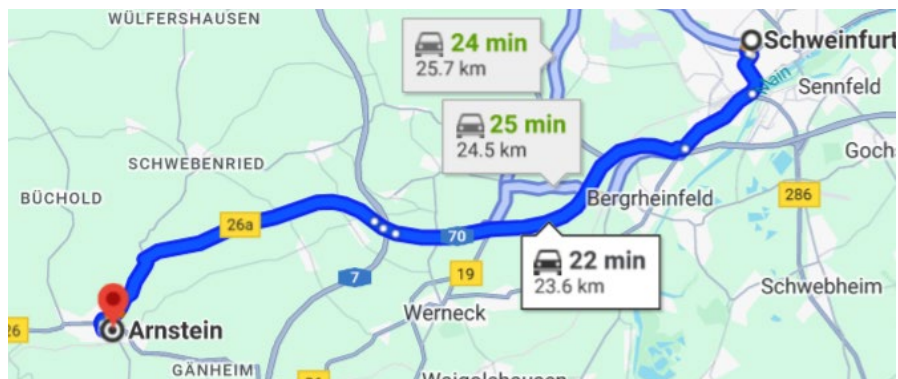
Schweinfurt Germany

We slept until we woke up and so got down to breakfast a little late. Late enough that they had to chase us out (so they could begin to set up for lunch) while we were lingering over their excellent coffee. We just moved outside as the morning was pleasant and they have tables and chairs just through the doors heading from the bar.

The buffet was more limited than the Thon Hotel but was quite sufficient for our needs: eggs, bacon, and lots of meats & cheese.

We decided to go to Arnstein and Eisleben because they were closer. We did walk up to the TI in town to get some local maps first, but we really didn't need them as things turned out.

The GPS got us to Arnstein easily, and they had a large map sign that we photographed and used to supplement the GPS.



We found what appeared to be the Schloss – the large home of whoever ruled the town in feudal days. Located on the top of a hill, near the church, and surrounded by outbuildings. However, that church (which was locked) did not appear to be a Catholic church.

Norway: August 17-30 2017

We did find a Catholic-looking church/building that now appears to be somebody's home (many rooms!). Kathleen thinks it may have been the rectory.

Convinced that there was no longer a Catholic church in town we tried (and failed) to get lunch. It was by now 2:00 – apparently well past the lunch hour. So we drove to Eisleben, a much smaller town where the church was quite obvious. It was also locked, but was surrounded by lovingly tended flowers of many varieties.

The cemetery was a short walk away, but revealed no graves of interest.

We drove back to Schweinfurt, did some media chores, enjoyed some local wine, and talked for a while before walking into town to find somewhere to have dinner.

Ended up at an outdoor restaurant overlooking the town square and had a great meal (Saurbratten for Kathleen, roasted port for me) and an enjoyable conversation with the couple who joined us at our table. He had been to the US (their daughter worked as an au par in Georgia) and spoke adequate English. His wife was less fluent (and has not visited the US – she hates to fly).

We finished the evening sitting outside at our hotel, still enjoying the local (Wurttemberg) wine and watching the river cruise barges go past and through the nearby locks.

View Kathleen's videos:
[Arnstein](#) (Without the Churches)
[St. Georg in Essleben](#)

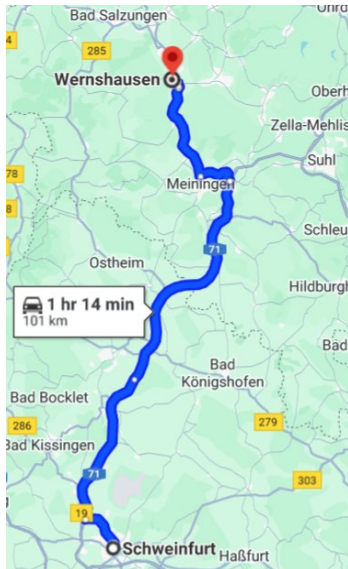
24 August 2017 – Thursday

Schweinfurt Germany

Woke up earlier and caused less trouble at breakfast!

Drove a little more than an hour through rolling countryside with large farms to reach Wernshausn ...
Just beautiful!

Norway: August 17-30 2017



Stopped and photographed a very helpful map of Wernshausn and Niederschmalkalden that showed the location of churches and cemeteries. It was just across the street from what turned out to be the Catholic church (St. Michails). There were several more men who were painting the fence and one escorted us inside and gave us a tour in German that Kathleen was largely able to translate for me. We didn't have the heart to tell him we weren't really interested, but it was a pretty little building.

One of the other painters spoke English and pointed out (literally) the location of the Protestant church, which was further into town and located quite prominently on a hill.

We found a way up the hill and parked by the cemetery, where we found a number of Pfaff and Storant graves as well as several Kuempels, which was exciting. One Kuempel apparently married into a wealthy family (Fisher) judging by the size of the family plot and the large tombstones located there.

Laura Kumpel Fischer
b. 27 Oct 1844
d. 9 Apr 1912

Married to Erhard Fischer
b. 9 Feb 1844
d. 27 Sept 1911

The church was open, and was quite impressive, with balconies on two levels. We spent some time there photographing and taking videos of the interior.

We had an equally hard time finding lunch again today and ended up eating in a small grocery store. My pork with mushroom sauce and French fries was more than adequate. Kathleen enjoyed the Goulash.

We found the church in Niederschmalkalden without difficulty: Unfortunately, it was locked. So, after taking a few pictures we drove up to the cemetery.

Norway: August 17-30 2017

We did find one Amborn and a few more Kuempels, so are very confident we have been walking the same ground as my ancestors. It will just have to wait on the results from the researcher I have hired.

Drove back to Schweinfurt debriefed over wine at the hotel bar.

Finished the evening off with Italian at the Café down the street from our hotel. It was still pleasant enough to sit outside. We split the tomato and mozzarella appetizer, then enjoyed Spaghetti (Kathleen) and pasta with bacon (me), then enjoyed a nightcap outside back at the hotel.

Kathleen has a moment of panic back up in our room when she realized that she no longer had a purse, but everything turned out well – she had left it outside the hotel and somebody had already turned it in at the front desk.

View Kathleen's video: [Wernshausen & Niederschmalkden](#)

25 August 2017 – Friday

Schweinfurt Germany

We (well, Kathleen) did a bit of research and found that there are several churches (4) and cemeteries (2) in Arnstien, so we decided to use our 'extra' day to go back and revisit Arnstein. So after breakfast we set out on our way.

Found the Maria Sondheim Parish and Pilgrim church (and cemetery) first. This is a large, impressive church with much land, many buildings, all of it beautifully and lovingly maintained. The church itself is old and full of artifacts.

We looked for (and found) many burials for my Schmitt/Zang line, and even a few from my Schulz/Metzger line. I will research those in detail and try to connect them into my family.

Lunch continues to be a challenge (as does parking). We used the GPS to identify a promising-sounding place outside of town. We eventually found it at the end of a very narrow lane – closed.

We re-traced our way back into town and settled into a guest house that had been closed when we found it on Wednesday. Communicating was a bit of a challenge: the menu was in German, and the proprietor had limited English, but we managed. Kathleen got her hamburger fix, and I had the recommended dish that involved mushrooms. To my good fortune it also involved pork and was delicious. We even managed to park without getting a ticket.

Next up was St Margareta, not too far from the center of town. It was not locked so we got to see the interior. It was surrounded by a cemetery, which we walked, photographing stones of interest. We noted that this was the first cemetery we had visited that did not have somebody cleaning or performing maintenance of some kind.

Went next to St Laurent, located well outside of town. It did not have a cemetery, and was built in the 1970's and so was of little interest historically. They did do a nice job of incorporating some of the icon and other beautiful features from the old church.

Came back to our hotel, did the by now usual social media commentary and enjoyed a few glasses of wine.

Norway: August 17-30 2017

It was (and still is) a beautiful, warm (30 C) sunny day.

Watch Kathlee's Videos:

[City of Arnstein: St. Nikolaus & Maria Sondheim](#)

[Near Arnstein: St. Margareta and St. Laurentius](#)

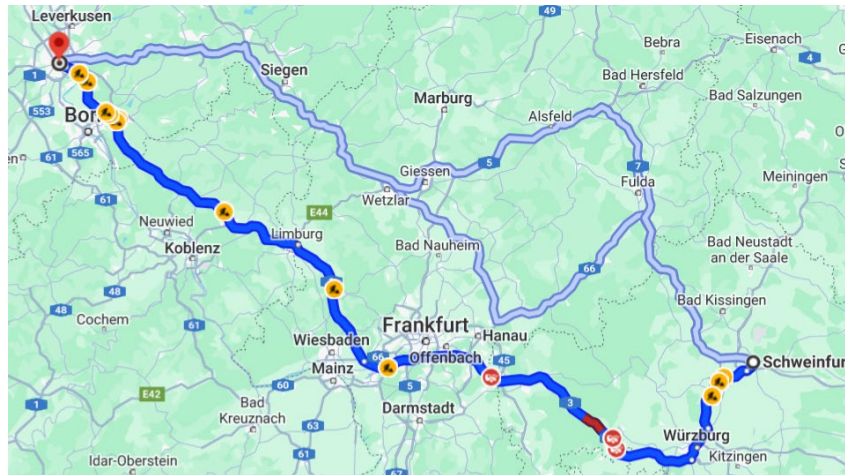
26 August 2017 – Saturday

Schweinfurt and Cologne, Germany

Travel day. Ate, packed, and decided to visit Arnstein one more time. We wanted to re-visit the first church we found (St. Nickolaus) on the hill near the Schloss) and ignored (because we thought it was a state or Protestant church). And I am glad we did!

It was open, and the inside is magnificent – very old and quite ornate. Spent a lot of time photographing and absorbing the beauty and history.

Stopped off for coffee, sweet rolls, and a bathroom break at the bakery we tried to eat at on our first day in Arnstein. It is beautifully modern (and clean) inside and everything (the coffee, food, and service) was great.



Finally it was time to head for Cologne, which took us nearly 4 hours. Being able to integrate my smart phone into the car's navigation system and sound system sure is nice, and it makes the navigation just about flawless.

Our hotel is a step back for us. It is located on a relatively quiet street, but it is very convenient. No A/C, elevator for luggage only, and no receptionist after 5 pm. We are in room 22 (2 floors up), which is large, impeccably clean, has a ceiling fan and windows that open, so we have no complaints.

Parking was a challenge. Kathleen was not sure we ended up at the correct garage, and we had a bit of consternation about what to do, but we asked someone just getting into their car and they indicated that we were in an acceptable (if not "the") place, so we felt better. We checked with the hotel clerk, and she confirmed that we were in the correct place, so we relaxed after that.

Norway: August 17-30 2017

We were both hungry my this time so we headed down towards the river and ended up in a sidewalk café where the beer was good (to me: Kathleen compared it to Schlitz!) and the food was even better.

There were many people teeming around, many of them carrying, waving and wearing a flag that I Googled and discovered was the Kurdish national flag.

Later when we walked up to the Cathedral we were overwhelmed by the large number of people there. It was a little overwhelming.

We did find a quieter street and finished the evening over a few glasses of wine at a nice sidewalk bar located in an upscale shopping district.

Walking back to our hotel from the waterfront we noticed a large police presence. Many vehicles, and many groups of 5-6 police men and women walking around.

We did encounter a store with a broken window and a group of young men, one of whom had a rather bloody head, and a team of police people. Not sure what happened, but it is obvious that the authorities are ready for something with this many people in town.

27 August 2017 – Sunday

Cologne, Germany

The breakfast here was nice – smaller in scale than the Thon Hotel spread but more that adequate for us.

We had decided on a Rhine boat trip yesterday (we had stopped at the TI shortly after we arrived) and had even purchased tickets. We were going to go as far as Bonn (a Rick Steves recommended day trip), but Kathleen read more about it last night and found that the boat just drops you off and continues before turning around and picking you up 5 hours later.

So we just upgraded the ticket and will spend the entire day on the boat, returning at 7 pm. Seems like a popular idea as there was quite a line waiting to board the boat.

We forecast called for a sunny and warm day so we headed up to the top deck and got a table near the railing. It was a beautiful day that became increasingly sunny as time went by. In fact, by lunch time I could feel my face starting to get sun-burned, so we moved into some shade for the rest of the trip.

The boat was crowded, including many family groups, obviously enjoying the fine weather and the prospect of being on a boat.

One group near us appeared to be a family, including 2 small children, 2 couples, 2 brothers, and a set of grandparents. They kept the waiter busy by ordering many rounds of beer (for the men) and water (for the women). Nobody appeared to become outwardly drunk, but they did go through a lot of beer.

The boat had a lot of waiters who cheerfully served drinks and food the whole trip. I enjoyed another Winer Schnitzel with mushroom sauce and fries while Kathleen mad to with the potato leek soup and some of my fries.

Norway: August 17-30 2017

The Winer Schnitzel (pork) has become my go to meal lately. Mostly because it is so good, and has been served with some really good sauces. Also, it is easier to pick out on all of the German menus we have encountered on this trip as we apparently have wandered off of the American-frequented tourist areas.

All in all it was just a relaxing, beautiful boat ride on the Rhine.

Ate dinner at a Rick Steves recommend restaurant, near where we ate the night before. I'm in love with the Winer Schnitzel I have been ordering, and the one I had for dinner was especially delicious (it was the pepper sauce I think). Kathleen loved Saur Bratten.

Tim Albert raved about a local beer (Kolsch) that we sampled on the boat, again at dinner. As Tim said they would, the waiter recorded the number of glasses (served in a 0.25 liter glass) you drink with marks on the coaster.

Headed back to the room and enjoyed a wine night-cap.

28 August 2017 – Monday

Cologne, Germany

We couldn't visit Cologne and not tour the Cathedral. There was a free guided tour at 10:30 so it was a relaxed morning and lazy breakfast for us.

The tour itself was excellent – the guide was an architect, and she used the hour to help us understand when and how the cathedral was constructed. She also gave us a great understanding of the people and the times in a way that made me appreciate the secular influence on everything that affected its funding and construction.

The movie afterward featured some brilliant photography and music – enough so that Kathleen wanted to go back to the church afterward so she could sit through prayers and hear the organ.

Afterwards we got some directions to the church Kathleen believes was the one her relatives attended. It was a short walk. Unfortunately, it was locked, but at least we got to see it and walk the surrounding streets. The buildings around it were all relatively new as most of the city was destroyed in WWII. Even the Cathedral was hit by 14 bombs (according to our tour guide).

We stopped for lunch and did a bit of shopping on our way to scope out the archives (tomorrow's destination), then found our way back to the wine bar we discovered earlier in our trip where we enjoyed the wine and near constant flow of people as they came and went.

We eventually walked down towards the river and had dinner at a Rick Steves recommended restaurant (Peters Bauhaus) where we had one of our best meals in Cologne (so far). More Kölsch beer, great environment, better service, and delicious food.

29 August 2017 – Tuesday

Cologne -> Frankfurt Germany

On the move again. After breakfast we checked out of the hotel and took our bags to the car (still in the garage) and walked leisurely to the Catholic Archive. We arrived early and spent 20 minutes on a bench nearby enjoying the cool, clear morning air and watching Cologne wake up.

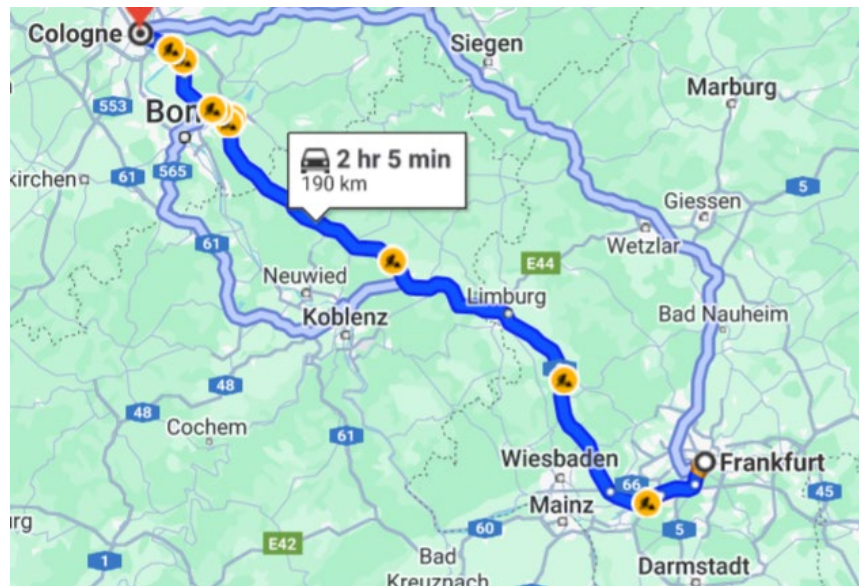
Norway: August 17-30 2017

Presented ourselves at the archive door at 9:00 on the dot. It took a few seconds to figure out how to buzz for the door to be unlocked, but we were soon inside and headed up to the 2nd floor.

Kathleen had written ahead and was assured of some assistance by the woman who met us, but she wasn't much help. She showed us to the two terminals and demonstrated how to access the digitized images and that was about it for the help. Fortunately, Kathleen was organized and prepared and we both proceeded to scan the records looking for Reuters and photographing those that we did find.

Although we could take all the pictures we wanted (we had to record which images and how many pictures) they had no other way of providing copies of the images except (maybe... I couldn't really understand) for leaving a list of images for them to print and mail to us.

Anyway, we got good pictures and were done before noon. We back-tracked last night's steps to the bar near the Cathedral, and then Peters Bauhaus where we retrieved the sweater Kathleen had left there, had lunch at the Italian restaurant we had been observing across from the bar near the Cathedral, retrieved our car (54 Euros – Cash only!) and drove back to Frankfurt, a 90-minute drive.



Hertz made returning the car about as unpleasant as picking it up was. They did the most thorough car inspection I have ever witnessed and found a 4-inch scratch on the bottom of the right-front air dam. I practically had to lay on the ground to even see it. So, they noted the damage and submitted paperwork for judgement by higher authorities and will email me when they decide what I owe.

Caught a train into Frankfurt and walked to our conveniently located hotel which is just a short walk from the train station (near track 24). The room is on the small side but is very clean and has everything we need for our brief stay.

Scoped out what to see and where to go and opted to walk to the nearby central area, walking through the recently revitalized downtown area, filled with lots of trendy ethnic restaurants dotted with lots more that are still under construction.

Parts of the walk (as we approached the square) were devoid of people. There was even more construction here, but the square itself was lively, and got even more so as the evening progressed.

Norway: August 17-30 2017

We were both tired and in need of a glass of wine. As luck would have it we had arrived at one of Rick Steves few recommendations for the part of town. Everything about it turned out really fine: we had a table right on the square, the food and service were both great, and a series of musicians set up and performed scant feet from where we sat. It was like being at a concert that served food and drinks!

The violin player we heard first was really good, but he became increasingly disgusted when a competing accordion/guitar duo arrived and set up nearby. He packed up and left soon thereafter.

After the accordion/guitar duo left a brass quartet showed up, and they were really excellent. They played for nearly an hour to much applause from the growing crowd.

The violin guy showed up at a restaurant across the plaza (now accompanied by a flute player) to finish the evening's performance for us as we paid our bill and walked back to the hotel.

30 August 2017 – Wednesday

Frankfurt Germany -> Home

Got a message overnight that our flight had been delayed for an hour, which gave us a little more time for breakfast and packing, but it also stirred memories the last two trips home from Europe (the cancelled flight in France and cancelled flight/seating disaster in London).

Things looked more grim when we arrived at the train station and saw that there were issues with the train to the airport. But when we stopped by the DB Info counter, they pointed us to the subway, which had trains every 15 minutes.

Had some issues with the first two ticket machines we tried (would not accept cash or our credit cards!) but the third one we tried worked just fine.

Things improved at the airport: No wait at the American ticket counter, easy immigration and security, and a only a little more waiting before we were on the plane and on our way on the long (nearly 11 hours) flight directly to DFW.

We had aisle seats across from each other, about 4 rows behind a Jewish couple with 2 small children who cried, fussed, and generally made life difficult for all involved.

Otherwise, the flight went without incident. We both watched several movies and slept so the time passed more quickly than I expected.

Getting through customs and immigration was a breeze for me, using (for the first time) my Global Traveler Entry status. It took Kathleen a bit longer (with a lot more hassle) but we were soon back in the USA.

Getting through all of that, then bus to Terminal A, then the light rail to White Rock Station (where we were met by Cliff) took a bit more than 3 hours. We were both pretty tired by this time. We rested a bit, had a quick hamburger and were both soon in bed.