

Norway & Sweden
3 September – 18 September 2006

03 Sept 2006 - Sunday

Dallas

So another trip begins. In some ways, the beginning of a trip is the best part: All of the planning and anticipation is behind, and once you start the trip you are locked into your itinerary and in the care of the airline with little to do except sit back and enjoy the ride. What a delightful feeling of pleasant expectations!

Leaving on Sunday like this has been very relaxing, although the time went by quickly, filled with the seemingly endless series of tasks that need to be done before we could leave town. We are both relaxed and rested, which is a good way to start a trip!

Packing wasn't too bad. We both cut back on the clothes we brought so we didn't have the usual "sit on the suitcase to get the zipper co close" experience. The new Rick Steves suitcases seem to be working well so far.

Our bags are checked all the way to Oslo, so getting through London should be a breeze.

At the moment we are on the nearly empty plane to Chicago. Security was not an issue, although I got snagged for a spot inspection of my bag as we boarded (I made eye contact – Kathleen just walked on by), but even that was no big deal.

Chicago: Arrived at gate K3, departed at gate K12.

Flying from Chicago must cut some time from the trip (compared to flying direct from DFW) because the trip seemed a lot shorter. We both managed to sleep a lot more than usual, which helped pass the time. We had great A/B seats, so we didn't have the hassle of being in one of the center 5-seat rows. American has started charging for wine \$5/bottle. Bummer.

Passing through London was a little weird. We had to go back through security again, but in an area separate from where the people originating their flights were screened (Heathrow Terminal #4). Other than the time it took it was no big deal. We had breakfast/lunch there before catching our flight to Oslo.

04 Sept 2006 - Monday

Oslo, Norway

We finally did go through immigration in Norway (had to fill out their Landing Card), although they couldn't have cared less about what we had in our luggage.

04:30 Oslo time: We are sitting on the train at the Oslo airport waiting for it to depart on the last leg of this long journey. All of the plane rides were uneventful and relatively easy. This was the most rested (bad English, I know) I have ever been on a trip to Europe.

The hotel proved to be a bit of a hike, but the wheeled suitcases worked fine, and we were both glad to have some exercise. The [Cochs Pensjonat](#) is extremely adequate (especially for the price: \$110/day). The room is on the 5th floor in the rear and has wonderful windows that can be opened wide to allow deliciously cool air into the room.

We arrived at 5:15 and felt very rested all things considered, so we went down to the harbor (Akerbrugge) and sat at the [Herbern Marina](#) and enjoyed the beautiful weather, the Frydenlund beer

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and a bucket of shrimp. They weren't Texas shrimp (more like crawdad's with roe) but we figured out how to eat them with a little help from our waitress.

Wandered around a bit more, and one more beer at an Irish pub, before heading back to the twin beds with the Scandinavian comforters to enjoy a well-deserved rest shortly after 9:00 pm.

05 Sept 2006 – Tuesday

Oslo & Rakkestad, Norway

I am one lucky genealogist according to Kathleen... I had good luck on many fronts, although it got off to a bumpy start.

We slept very well, right up to the 8:00 alarm. Breakfast at the restaurant down the street was as advertised – 59 Kr each for a descent smorgasbord with all the coffee we wanted to drink. It was a beautiful, sunny day and we greatly enjoyed our meal at an outside table watching the early morning hustle and bustle of a large city.

We had seen the Hertz car rental location on our way home last night and were very confident that we would arrive there again after a walk of a few blocks, but we missed it. It turned out to be ½ block off of the street – we were distracted walking across the intersection by the car and the bus that nearly hit us because we were not in the crosswalk – and walked on by.

Great confusion ensued when we realized that we had not seen it. As we consulted the maps and re-checked the address we realized that the location we needed to be at was well across town from where we were. A very kind and helpful Norwegian lady stopped to help, called Hertz, explained where we were and arranged for them to transfer our reservation to the nearby location, which we soon found.

We had to wait for an hour (time for more coffee) but we were soon on our way to Rakkestad. It took us a while to navigate out of the city center to reach the E18. Once the GPS got a good signal and figured out where we were it was smooth sailing.

Rakkestad is a fairly sizeable town, but it didn't take us long to realize that they had no TI, and that the church was nowhere obvious. By dumb luck we found what looked like a City Hall but which turned out to be a library with a very well stocked and staffed genealogy center. The woman who runs it was a fantastic resource: we got several documents I did not have, lots of information, and a promise from her to drive us around tomorrow to see several of the farms.

Kathleen said I am one lucky genealogist!

We drove back to Oslo (the GPS was awesome), had a marvelous Italian dinner at a Rick Steves recommendation, came home, did some homework on my genealogy and crashed.

I forgot to mention that we parked on the street near the hotel, in the only place we could find. We need to have the car moved by 8:00, so it means an early 6:00 start tomorrow.

06 Sept 2006 – Wednesday

Oslo & Rakkestad, Norway

Off to an early start. Got up at 6:00, got to our local restaurant only to discover that it didn't open until 7:30. On to plan 2 – take out from the 7-11 grocery across the street, but they weren't open either.

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Settled for the coffee shop right next to our Pensjonat, which worked out well. I had Quiche, Kathleen had a scone, and we bought sandwiches for lunch.

Had no problems with the car: it was right where we parked it with no ticket and no vandalism. We did have some minor problems finding our way to the E18 again, but we were soon on our way. We pulled into the parking lot at the library in Rakkestak at 9:30.

Walked into a happy, talkative group of volunteers at the family history center. There were about 8 people there, all happily doing whatever they were doing. Only one from the group spoke English, so we worked to a pleasant background of Norwegian chatter and laughter.

Another American couple showed up. They are staying in the area for 5 months and doing research. He was, unfortunately, a typical loud, boorish stereotypically American with a mousey wife. We quickly distanced ourselves from both of them.

We spent some time Tuesday night outlining our priorities and objectives and did a great job tearing through the documents (Kathleen is really an outstanding partner for all of this!) and found out that so much that I am having a hard time keeping it all straight in my head. We took lots of pictures of documents with my camera. Now I just need a little time to sort through and catalog everything.

Everybody at the center paused at 11:00 for a little snack of coffee or tea and little waffles. We enjoyed one of our sandwiches before wrapping up our research. Then the fun really began. Eve (the woman at the center that we have been working with) took us (in her car) to see several of the farms related to my family. We saw where my great grandfather was born, and stopped at the farm he bought when married his 2nd wife, and where he lived until his death in 1921. It remained in the family until recently (a local butcher bought it).

Eva took us to the home of Bjorn, a 2nd cousin (descendant of Anton and his 2nd wife) who was doing some construction on his house. Then we met his sister and her husband at their new (3 months) paint store. Had quite a visit with them: drank coffee, told stories about our families, and laughed like we had known each other for years. Her name is unpronounceable (to me, at least). She and Eva grew up together and Eva called her something like Lula [Tulia, but she goes my Raidun]. She has a real outgoing personality, and really reminds me of my cousins Bobby and Sandy. She reminded Kathleen of Lisa (my niece).

She kept saying "Its like Christmas!"

Eva also took us to her farm and showed us some petroglyphs her husband discovered on a rock outcrop in the middle of one of their fields.

They have built a campground with cabins. She works at the family history center, volunteers with special needs kids, does a weekly radio show and who knows what else. She must never sleep!

Drove back in rain. Didn't feel like going far so just ate hamburgers at the café across the street from the hotel. It was great to be outside – they has a table on the sidewalk under an awning, complete with wool blankets to ward off the damp chill. We enjoyed it immensely and had several beers after dinner, just enjoying the coolness, the rain, and the ambiance.

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Another early day (got another parking place that is only good until 8:00 am). We plan to drive up to Eidsvoll to see what we can see.

07 Sept 2006 – Thursday

Oslo & Eidsvoll, Norway

Got the day off to an unexpectedly early start when the fire alarm went off about 1 am this morning. The alarm bell in our room would have woken a dead person – it certainly got our attention. Fortunately it was nothing major: just too much smoke from someone cooking something in their room (our room has two electric cook surfaces, a sink and small fridge). I had a hard time falling back asleep and was dragging all day as a result.

Got up at 6:00 anyway as we had parked in another space that was illegal after 8:00 (all we could find). Visited our local coffee shop (they were having some kind of event and were handing out free to-go coffee (we paid for ours – they hadn't quite started the giveaways when we arrived).

Had clouds and rain on our drive to [Eidsvoll](#), but got there right at 9:00, only to discover that the library (where we had decided to do most of our work) did not open until 2:00 on Thursdays. There were some employees there: they assured us they had lots of information, but we had to come back at 2:00 to see it.

We went to the church (got directions from the receptionist at City Hall) and stopped at the Parish Office. They tried to look up some of the names I was interested in but couldn't locate anything. All the old records are in Oslo (this church burned 4 times – once in 1850 with both sets of Parish records!).

They did assure us that they could tell me if and where anybody was buried if I had more information (name, date of death) which I lacked. I got their email address () and will follow up with them when I get more information on Laura Larsdatters parents.

Walked around looking for tombstones but they don't maintain the stones or graves after 20 years unless somebody pays for maintenance, and they re-use the plots after a while, so we did not find anybody we cared about.

Had lunch in the car (sandwiched we bought in Oslo), drove around a bit, stopped and had coffee to kill time until 2:00 when the library finally opened. What a dud – the bulk of their information was microfilm from the Mormon Church. Without an index to figure out what was on what roll of film it was a waste of vacation time. So we packed up and headed back to Oslo.

Spent a little time reflecting on the improbability of all that happened yesterday. It seems like a miracle that two branches of a family could be separated so far for so long and then be reconnected again like this. It was (and is) hard to take in. We have some much to be grateful to Eva for... we both separately tried to donate some money to the center. but she wouldn't hear of it, just said that was what she was there for.

Managed to get back to Oslo in time to drop the car off at Hertz before they closed at 5:00 (but just barely!). Dropped our stuff back at the hotel (what a wonderful location!), bought our train tickets for tomorrow (2200 Kr!) and headed up the mountain to the [Frognerseteren](#) Restaurant. The weather had cleared. and it was a beautiful, sunny evening so the view was spectacular (as was the food, and the price!).

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08 Sept 2006 – Friday

To Mo i Rana, Norway

Our train day! Two long rides: Oslo to Trondheim, then on to Mo i Rana. The day is beautiful: cool and sunny with few clouds in Oslo, but it became increasingly cloudy as we traveled North.

We decided to walk all the way to the train station this morning, and it turned out to be a rather pleasant stroll through a part of Oslo we had not visited on this trip. The area near the train station is more touristy, with several blocks of the [Karl Johanerstatte](#) (Karl Johan Gate) street closed to vehicular traffic. We also saw several people begging and many others who are obviously living a rough life (I had read that the park just South of the station was a hangout for drug users and prostitutes).

The walk took about 30 minutes, and the new suitcases worked well. Our train car is a modern, comfortable one with 2 + 2 aircraft-style seating. We bought sandwiches and coffee at the station and enjoyed a picnic at our seats as the train departed Oslo.

We both have a much more positive impression of Oslo than we remember from our last visit. We hardly got to see anything in the city this time and would like to come back again sometime to visit the Peace museum, the Resistance Museum and some of the other sites. I could spend a week at the National Archives alone.

The train is as relaxing and fascinating as we remember....

The train from Trondheim was nowhere near as nice though... It was one of those self-propelled modern units. Just our luck: we got seats facing the two seats opposite with a table in between. It was our worst luck that the lights soon started cycling on and off before ceasing to work altogether. It was light enough to read most of the way, but we could have used more leg room for the 5 ½ hour trip!

We had eaten sandwiches at the station in Trondheim and bought two more for the trip, so dinner wasn't up to the previous night's standards, but it was filling.

Got into [Mo i Rana](#) at 10:30 and found our hotel (the [Ole Tobias](#)) with no difficulty. The room is more than adequate and the "bar" (actually the breakfast room) was still open so we were able to enjoy a few beers before crashing for the night.

09 Sept 2006 – Saturday

Mo i Rana and Nesna, Norway

Slept late (9:00) so had to rush to get ready, eat, and find our Hertz/TV store for our 10:00 appointment to pick up our car. We arrived at 10:05 so we were OK.

It was cloudy as we headed out of town for [Nesna](#), and we ran into rain throughout the 75-minute drive along the fjord and over the mountains that separate Nesna from Mo i Rana.

There isn't much (other than the beauty of the sea and mountains) to attract one to Nesna, and we quickly came to the conclusion that my relatives who left made a pretty good decision. The church is run down, there indeed is no hotel in town, not even a bar that we could see. After taking pictures of the church, walking around the cemetery, and having a quick lunch at what passes for the local "Mall", we were about ready to call it a day and head back to the hotel.

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Luckily we stopped off at the Herset farm for a few more pictures. While we were standing on the side of the road the owners pulled into the driveway and onto the farm. I screwed up my courage and drove in after them to ask a few questions.

They were very nice and invited us in. They had been hosting some American relatives who just left that morning. They had a family gathering the day before. We were comparing family trees when Ernst realized that Ellen (his wife) and I were related!

At one point Ernst looked at me and said "you are very lucky!".

We documented quite a lot of information in my database, and I showed them a lot of what I had, before driving to see the Handaa farm and visiting her mother's sister. They were in the middle of their afternoon tea with her husband Ole's sister, so we drank coffee and let the conversation flow around us. We had already had coffee and cakes at Ellen's, so politely refused the offer of sandwiches, cheese cake and other sweets, but did have more coffee and tasted the 2nd favorite Norwegian treat (after lutefisk!): some kind of unleavened bread with sweetened butter in between: it was delicious!

Ernst also drove us over to Mehus to show us what that looked like. We finally left about 7:30 with an invitation to return Sunday (tomorrow) at 4:00 for dinner and more relatives.

We drove back to the hotel, our moods bouncing between stunned silence and bursts of unbelieving laughter over our good fortune. Back at the hotel we headed immediately to the basement to enjoy the evening snack (all we needed after all of the sweets we had been served) and a few beers. We found out that the hotel has wireless internet and so sent our first emails of the trip before retiring for the first long night's sleep of the trip.

10 Sept 2006 – Sunday

Mo i Rana and Nesna, Norway

We enjoyed sleeping in a bit immensely, but both really hated to get out of bed anyway. There is a bar next to the hotel, and both nights have been interrupted by loud talk and laughter, apparently as the bar closes for the night. Nothing major, but we both woke up at various times as a result.

The breakfast smorgasbord is every bit as good as we remember from our last trip to Norway: a good selection of meat, cheese, bread, tomatoes, cucumber, red peppers and a lot of other stuff I cannot bring myself to every try.

It is cloudy and raining today, a perfect day for a leisurely breakfast.

Spent a while relaxing at the hotel, catching up on email and enjoying the free coffee. Kathleen put together several pictures with captions from Rakkestad and Nesna and emailed them so everybody could see their new cousins. I used the PC down in the breakfast room to send some additional details. Then we were off towards Nesna.

The rain and clouds had cleared off, so it was a beautiful day for a drive. We took a few side roads since we had time to kill and got to see some breathtakingly beautiful scenery. This is truly a magnificent part of the world!

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Set out for Hemnas (where my GGGF, Anders Anderson, was born). I had not been looking forward to the hassle of having a car while we are over here, but it has turned out to be very little trouble, and the GPS has made navigation a breeze, although it did not take us on a route to Hemnes that seemed out of the way so we followed our own route.

Maybe the GPS is smarter than we know, because the road we chose was under construction, so it was a slow, bumpy trip!

Hemnes is a small town, fairly typical of what we have been seeing in this part of the country. We found the church without any trouble and spent some time walking around and photographing it, listening to the excited chatter and many footsteps of children from the local school as they ran uphill past the church, looped around behind it, then back downhill on the other side, engaged in some kind of scavenger hunt.

Kathleen had pilfered sandwiches from the hotel at breakfast, so we ate lunch in the car in the parking lot of the church before heading up the hill to look at the cemetery. Not knowing for sure that I had any relatives buried there (especially given our lack of success at finding graves on this trip) we did not walk around much.

While we were walking around the church, I came across a pile of old tombstones piled up next to a shed.

I had hoped to get over to Bardal Ytre where my GG Grandmothe was born, but it required us to take a ferry across and we did not have enough time to do that and get back to Mo i Rana to meet Ellen & Ernst by 4:00, so we headed back to town to shop a bit.

We finally figured out the parking meter system, but both of us mis-read the sign. We thought we only had to pay to 4:00, resulting in a 300 Kr parking ticket!

I dropped Kathleen and the luggage back at the hotel, dropped the car off at Hertz, went to City Hall and paid off our debt to society and made it back to the hotel by 4:00.

Our hosts picked us up a few minutes later, and we ate at a Bimbo's restaurant (they insisted on paying!), picked up some groceries, then headed back for what turned out to be a very pleasant evening at their home. They have wireless internet access, so Kathleen was able to download Brothers Keeper (a shareware genealogy software package) on a CD for Ernst and got it loaded onto his PC. I gave him a GED copy of my database, so they now know what I know.

We had a really enjoyable discussion about a wide variety of topics, over several beers and 3 bottles of wine (we had brought a 6-pack of beer and a bottle of wine with us), with a small feast of cheese, fruit, nuts and crackers.

Ernst's two dogs (Sarah and Scott) came in (it had been raining all day but really started pouring after we got to their house). Ernst has them remarkably well trained to respond to his voice and whistle commands and they stayed on rugs in between the living room and kitchen.

Ernst explained that they had been asked to move onto the farm at the request of Ellen's parents, and told us how he built the house himself about 21 years ago. It is a beautiful, comfortable home that looks it was built by a master craftsman rather than by a school teacher.

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We all finally ran out of energy, things to say and wine around midnight and went to bed. They have turned out to be relations and people whose company we really enjoy!

12 Sept 2006 – Tuesday

Nesna, Norway

We both slept very well in the guest room and walked into the kitchen to face another feast for breakfast: eggs, bacon, cheese, yogurt and other things I cannot remember.

They left for work at 8:30, and Ingeborg arrived to pick us up at 9:00. We went to the Kommune offices where I was able to purchase both of the Nesna Bygdebok's! Then we went to see the new teacher's college building where Ingeborg works. It was very modern and impressive. Got to see Magne (and his wife, who had brought her grade school class for swimming lessons), and he took us on part of the tour.

We then stopped off at a local kind of community center/resale shop being run as a café for people who need some help getting integrated into the community. It is also being used to teach immigrants Norwegian. We had coffee (of course!) and pancakes, then it was time to say to goodbye to Ingeborg and Nesna.

Our ship (the MS Finnmarken) showed up at 11:15 as scheduled. Our room is very adequate, with a couch, a desk and our own bathroom on the 6th (of 8) decks.

At Sandnessjøen we met Margarete Herset (Ingeborg's mother) who greeted us with a small Norwegian flag (which she gave to me). She came on board and we sat in the cafeteria for 45 minutes and talked over coffee. She is (like everybody else we have met in Norway) a wonderful person who has traveled extensively (a former telephone company operator who has been retired due to downsizing) whom I sincerely hope we get to meet again. She invited us to visit her any time – says she has a 3-bedroom house and a cabin on an island.

We are splurging big-time and have booked massages for tomorrow (the soonest available times – I'm really happy Kathleen checked!) and a 6:00 seating for dinner.

At the moment we are enjoying the quiet of the lounge on the 8th deck, sipping our first Dahls beer and munching nuts. It is another cloudy, rainy day but we don't care: it is such fun to be on a ship. As much as we both loved meeting everyone and the way we have been treated (like royalty!) it will also be fun to be entirely on our own for the next week.

I left Kathleen in the lounge and went out to soak in the hot tub at the back of the upper deck. There were two. On either side of a heated pool. It was cool and raining lightly but it was marvelous to be outside and luxating in the warm water.

We took the first seating for dinner. Since it is near the end of the voyage they had the captains dinner this night, so we all got a small glass of white wine as we walked in, with which we toasted the captain and his assistants after a short speech (in Norwegian, English and German) as they walked around the dining room trailed by the serving staff.

The dinner was excellent: started with an appetizer of smoked salmon with potato salad, followed by a main course of sliced beef with sautéed vegetables and scalloped potatoes. They cheerfully serves me a second portion of the beef, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

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We went back to the upper deck to finish our wine (so good we each got another glass from the bar when we finished the bottle), then went outside to watch and photograph the activities surrounding the docking, unloading, and undocking of the ship – always fascinating to both of us. It was cool and drizzling lightly but nonetheless enjoyable to be outside.

We were both tired from our early start in Nesna so we retired early.

13 Sept 2006 – Wednesday

Off the coast of Norway

Slept well last night – there were no overnight ports of call: maybe that was part of the reason. Woke up after we were already docked in Trondheim, where we will remain for several hours (06:30 – 10:00), so we got up and left the boat at 8:00 for a quick walk around the town.

It was a bit warmer than last night, and the sun flirted with us for a while before giving way to the clouds and a slight drizzle. We enjoyed the walk, and a cup of coffee and a sweet roll, and took many pictures of the boat and surrounding area before climbing back on board.

This was where we decided to do laundry (Ellen had offered but we felt like had already imposed so much we didn't take her up on the offer). It was not too difficult: a 10 Kr token runs a load of wash, with the machine automatically adding the soap.

Most of the day was spent in pleasant relaxation. It was cloudy and occasionally very foggy, but that did not detract from the pleasure of sitting in the observation room on the 8th deck, reading and occasionally dozing off.

We never did get the wireless internet working on our PC, but I did luck into a large amount of free time on one of the ship's PC's and sent some email.

One lucky side-benefit from Kathleen's doing the laundry: she found out what we had missed by skipping the 10:50 meeting held to go over the procedure for getting off of the boat at Bergen. We had assumed (incorrectly) that it was only for those who had been on the boat since the cruise began. We need to have our big suitcases packed and sitting outside our room by 9:00 Thursday morning so they can take them down somewhere for us: this helps speed up the departure. They will have them waiting at an airport-type luggage claim thing when we get ashore. We also get off by sleeping deck, from the top to the bottom.

We witnessed what happens when someone misses the boat. A Spanish (or Italian) couple had walked into town and came running back to the dock as we were pulling away. Lucky for them the captain pulled back in and let them get on board.

Lots of fog in the afternoon run down the coast.

We both got 45 minute massages, and it was a wonderful experience. Kathleen's was at 3:00: mine was not until 6:30. While she was getting hers I went back and swam in the saltwater pool and luxated in the hot tub again: such a life!

Dinner was a disappointment – not as good as the night before: the cod, cabbage and potatoes were not interesting, and the service (we took the 8:15 2nd seating) was hurried and indifferent.

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We finished on time to watch one more undocking procedure (the ship had docked while we were eating dinner). It is still fascinating to watch!

14 Sept 2006 – Thursday

Bergen

Woke up at 7:00. Cleaned up, packed, then went outside to watch the activities on our last port of call before Bergen. It was a beautiful spring-like morning with lots of sunshine. We both really enjoyed being on deck as we left the harbor: we took many pictures.

Afterwards we shared a ham sandwich for breakfast (the dining room charges 230 Kr each for breakfast: our sandwich and 2 coffees was 180 Kr), then Kathleen went back on deck while I did some photography and genealogy housekeeping on the computer.

It turned out to be a glorious day weather-wise. We passed through some beautiful islands before lunch: we both took many pictures of them.

After a lunch of hotdogs & fries we took our handbags to the front of the ship, sat in the sun, enjoyed the breeze and marveled at the passing water and islands. What a majestic ending for a boat trip!

Every trip seems to have an incident where we get really mad at each other, and ours for this trip happened trying to get to our hotel in Bergen. We did not have a good map, the directions we got from the hotel were unclear, and the Fodors map was wrong. We walked quite a ways out of the way on a very warm day in a very hilly town and arrived (finally!) sweaty and tired.

The walk back to the city center was easier (downhill and luggage!) and shorter than the path we followed going to the hotel (thank the heavens!). We scouted the walk to the bus station and figured out how to catch the bus to the airport (get on and pay 71 Kr each). We then walked through the park to Ole Bulls Plass and found an outdoor café and gratefully had several beers (Hansa's) and ate nuts. The evening was beautiful, and it seemed as if all of Bergen had turned out to enjoy it.

The outdoor café's were full and everywhere else we looked we saw people soaking up the sun. After deciding that one more beer would mean never leaving the café we headed for the harbor.

Stopped into a shop and picked up a few souvenirs, then scouted out the restaurants along the water. Settled on To Kokker, a marvelously old, cramped, crooked, wonderful place reached by walking down a narrow alley off the street lined by buildings on both sides and overhung by balconies. The ceiling was low, the doorways small, the floors were unlevel, but the food, wine and service were wonderful. We both had Norwegian lobster bisque. I had duck and Kathleen had Anglers Fish (a.k.a. Devils Fish, a type of Cod). It was expensive as hell, but fun.

We then made the surprisingly short walk to the funicular ride to the top of the mountain for a spectacular view of Bergen. It was a clear, warm evening: ideal and spectacular. While there we met a woman from Florida who had taken the train out of Oslo (and the Flam detour) and was catching the overnight train back to Oslo. She is traveling with her son, wife and grandson, but they decided to stay in Oslo and she came by herself.

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Finished the evening across from the fish market at a pub with outdoor seating, enjoying a Guinness (me) and Kilkenny (Kathleen) and the steady flow of young Norwegians streaming around and past us before trekking back up the steep hill to our hotel (Steeds, and B&B on Parkview).

Like Oslo, we are both much impressed by our second visit to Bergen. The beautiful weather is certainly a factor. Neither of us remember it being so large, or so beautiful, surrounded as it is by great expanses of water and looming mountains.

We were also kind of overwhelmed by the city, and the number of people... It is very different here when compared to Nesna, or even a town like Trondheim.

15 Sept 2006 – Friday

Bergen to Stockholm

Kathleen inadvertently set the clock radio in the room for 6:30 am so the day got off to an early start (for her – I went back to sleep!) The room was clean and comfortable and we both slept well.

Breakfast was served across the hall from our room (which was on the 2nd floor) in an ornate room carved wood paneling and stained-glass windows. This must have been quite a home in its day: the location (on the top of a hill overlooking a park) suggests so.

Got our luggage ready to check at the airport and had a little time to kill so Kathleen took a walk in the park while I vegged in the room.

The walk to the bus station was enjoyable (it is much more fun rolling suitcases downhill on cool morning when you know exactly where you are going) and by 10:00 we were on the bus and on our way to the airport. We got there at 10:30, did a last-minute reconfiguration, checked everything and were through security by 11:00.

Security here is much more relaxed... we never even showed an ID. We had expected things to take longer. We also thought we could take care of our VAT refund from yesterday purchase here, but we need to do that in Oslo). So we had a cup of coffee, read the newspaper, and I caught up with this journal.

The flights were about what you would expect. We had about 90 minutes in Oslo, where we got our VAT refund, purchased a bottle of wine in duty-free, and a sandwich with the last of our Norwegian change.

On arrival in Stockholm we got our bags, some Swedish Kr, then rode the airport bus to the train station downtown.

The weather is delightfully cooler here, and the 20-minute walk to the hotel in Gamla Stan (old town) was not too difficult. We are thrilled with our room: on the top floor in corner overlooking the street in front of the hotel. Big, and lots of windows that open, providing lots of fresh air, light and a wonderful view up and down the street.

After settling in we wandered around the old town, picked a restaurant (Italian), had a great dinner, took a few night pictures of the now nearly deserted area around the hotel, and finished the night off at an outdoor bar over a beer, snugly wrapped in a wool blanket.

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15 Sept 2006 – Friday

Stockholm, Sweden

Another beautiful day, so we decided to take a boat ride. Picked one that took us out and around the thousands of islands that lie in the waters around Stockholm. It was a glorious day to be on a boat!

Arrived back hungry and dogs & fries at a small stand near the boat dock. Then walked over towards the Opera House and bumped into a gathering for a UNICEFF walk-a-thon with a band and beer, so grabbed a brew and soaked up the sun with the walkers.

Headed back to the old town and picked up some souvenirs and gifts, then had a few more beers in another outdoor bar on the south end of the island. Decided to try another Italian restaurant for dinner. It was good, but not as good as last night!

Headed back to the room where we enjoyed the wine from duty-free in Norway and reviewed some of the pictures we have taken in the past few ways.

16 Sept 2006 – Saturday

Stockholm, Sweden

Cloudy but still nice outside – another good day for a boat trip! First had breakfast, which is excellent here: lots to choose from, and the breakfast room, like the rest of the hotel, is beautiful with lots of artistic decorations.

Chose the tour that runs around the city, which was fun because it showed a lot of the parts of town where people actually live! Two hours of enjoyable fun.

Walked through the NK department store before going back to our hotdog stand for lunch. Walked to the island with the Voss museum (and amusement park) but couldn't make it past the beer garden without stopping and enjoying the water with its seemingly endless flow of boats and birds.

Walked to the amusement park, caught the ferry to the Gamla Stan. An elevator that I noticed the day before was right by the dock, so we rode it up for a scary but breathtaking view of Gamla Stan and the rest of the city (there is something about the walkway that seemed frightening to us both). Had a beer at an outdoor café before walking down to the café we visited yesterday for some more liquid courage.

Had Italian again at the same restaurant where we ate on Friday night, then headed back to the hotel to pack for tomorrow's early departure.

Finally thought to cash in the free drink coupon the hotel gave us. Asked at the desk as we picked up our key, and they said they would send it up, which they did: a half bottle of Rioja.

I don't think I mentioned the Port wine in the room, or the nice little "welcome" note in the room when we arrived. All very nice and, I guess, in keeping with their 5-star rating.

17 Sept 2006 – Sunday

Stockholm, Sweden

Got up at 5:00 to begin the long trip back home. It was foggy (but warm) enough to make finding our way to the train station a bit of a chore. We made one wrong turn but caught the mistake right away. We did get onto the wrong bus (one going to some ship) but caught that right away too.

Norway & Sweden
3 September – 18 September 2006

Check in and security were simple (I did NOT have to remove my shoes!). Had sandwiches and coffee for breakfast, grabbed a few minutes on internet access terminals, boarded our plane and were soon on our way to London.

Heathrow turned out to be a bit of a headache. Got into a huge queue to be re-screened for security, a process that took nearly an hour spent mostly in a slow back and forth shuffle in a hot room, waiting to have our bags X-rayed and for us to go through a metal detector (without shoes this time) again. We read that Britton was about to relax all of this security foolishness (mainly because nobody else would support it) but that probably won't happen for a few more days.

We have noticed that the workforce here at the airport seems to have changed and is now appears to be mainly Indian.

Pulled into O'Neill's pub for a restorative beer and some emergency French fries.