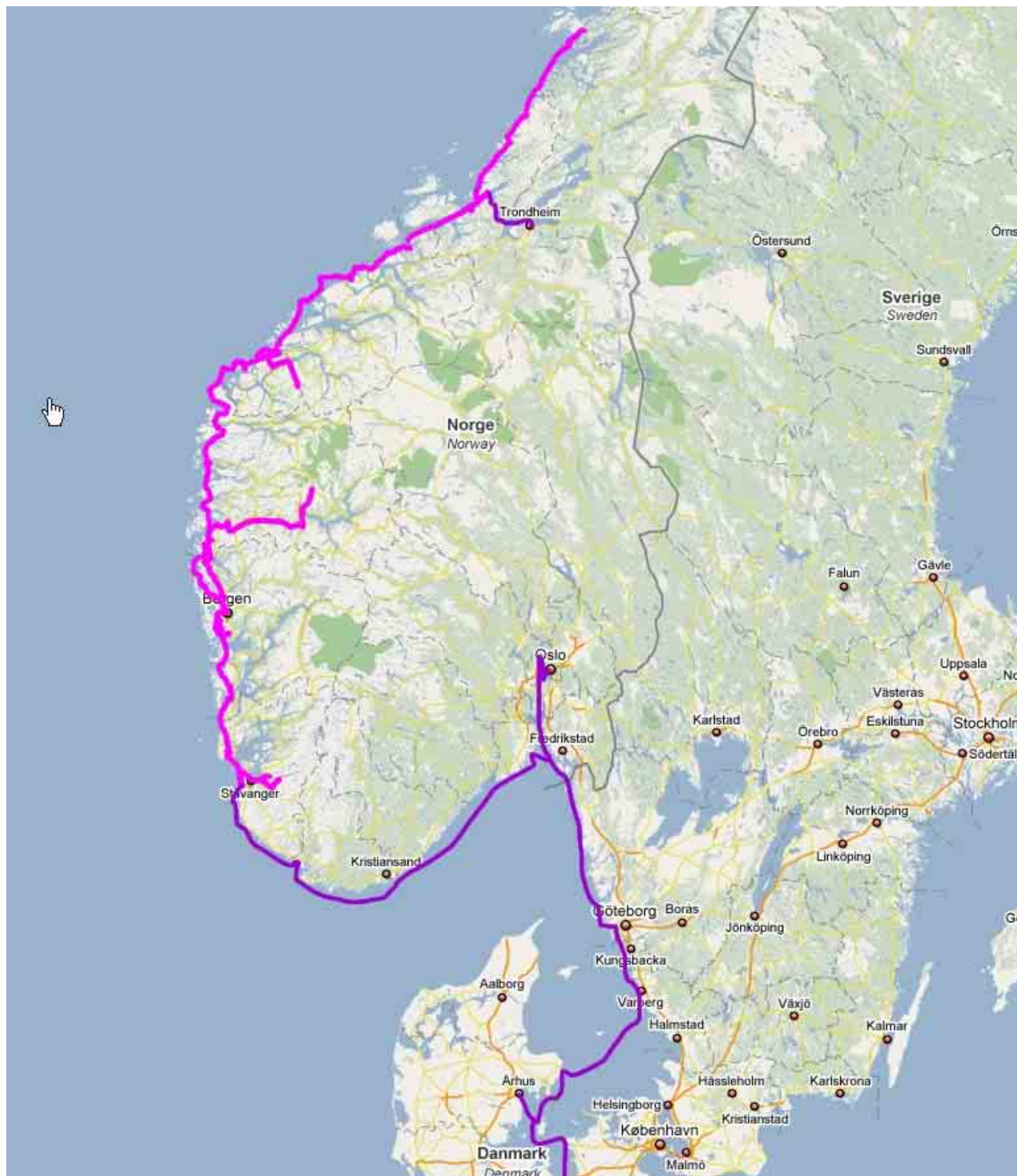


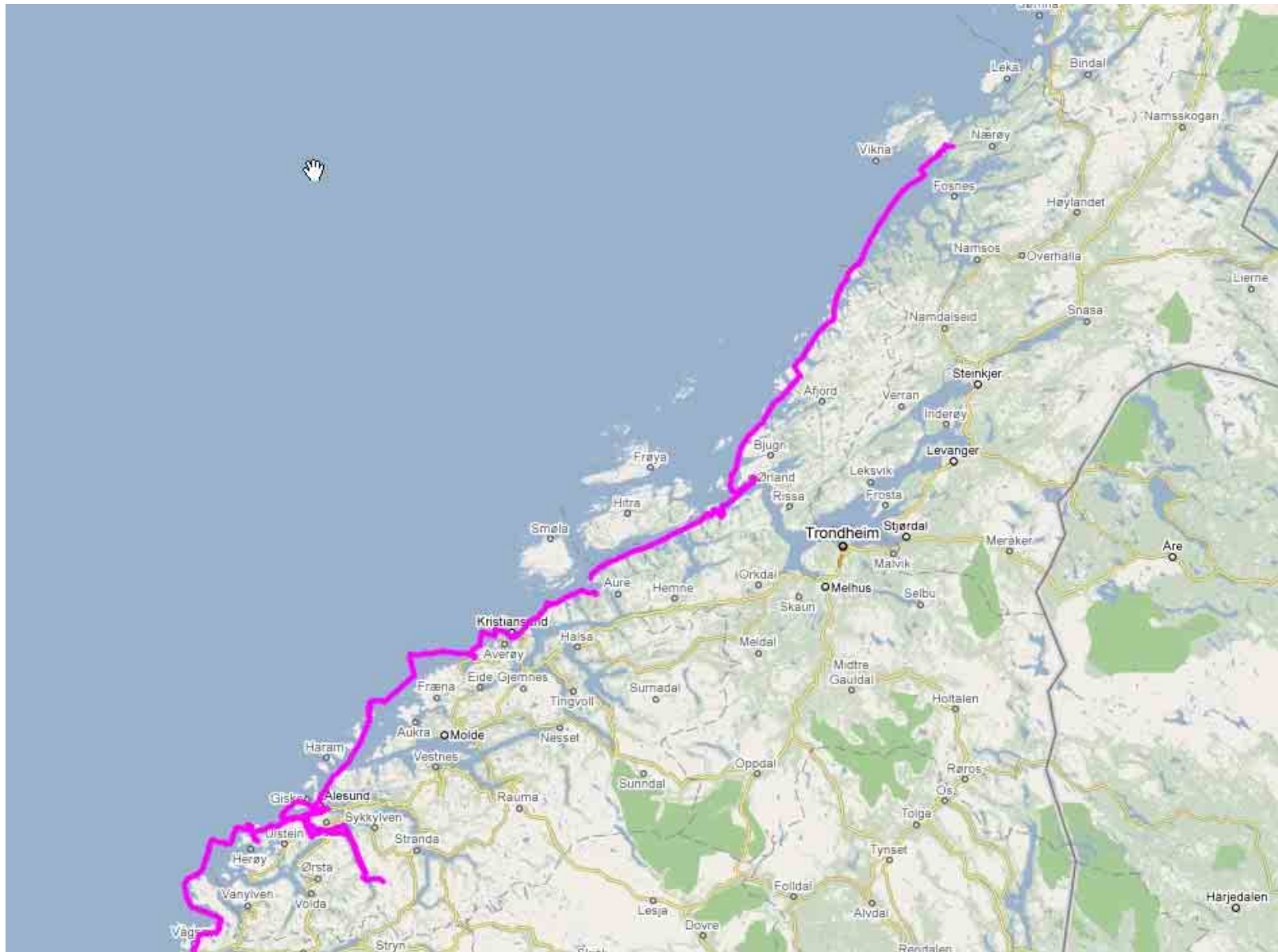
Voyage with Silmaril 2009

1st Report: December 2008 to the beginning of June 2009

Overview 2008/2009



Route 2009



Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

My last report in 2008 told of our planned prolonged visit to Switzerland and that's where I take up the tale of the weeks we spent skiing and visiting family and friends. Everything went to our satisfaction. We skied a lot in the Jungfrau region in mostly wonderful weather. I was experimenting with the new skis we had bought with the idea of taking them to Norway and go on extended tours around Ålesund. Well, those plans were thwarted when I unfortunately broke my leg two weeks before we returned to Silmaril. We therefore left all our ski equipment in Switzerland and prepared to return in any case to Ålesund, even with crutches. And all went much better than I had secretly feared. I climbed into the boat from the back and found a convenient way to stow the crutches in the back, swing both legs over the back bench and hobble into the boat along the various points of support. Snow and ice did not hinder us to take short walks, since Alex had mounted spikes to the crutches.

Alex passed the time reading, working on the boat, at the computer and exercising at the gym club.



I had little choice but sitting in my corner, working on the blanking I had designed to use up all my old spinning samples

reading, answering e-mails and going on short outings, mostly shopping or a little trip once in a while. One beautiful day we drove some miles up to the snow, where I could walk with the borrowed kick sled and even step on the runners and slide for a few meters.



We visited friends, had them over for dinner on Silmaril, went to a great concert in the Ålesund Kulturhuset given by the Norwegian Chamber Orchestra and the trumpet soloist Tine Thing Helseth, an extremely talented performer of 23 years! She played Haydn's trumpet concerto in E-flat to give you the shivers.

Alex went fishing with a friend putting out the nets and getting them back in again.



I accompanied them along with Magne's dog on one of the trips.



It was so exciting to learn about this craft. We have so little notion of fish and how to catch them, let alone prepare all the great dishes. There were a few fish and dozens of crabs in the nets! They are a real pain for the fishermen. And it seems that deep down, at 80 to 100 meters, where the nets stand, they get at the fish caught in the nets and are so entangled that it takes virtually hours to get them out! We received a huge meal of fish, neatly prepared for broiling and eat all of it the same evening.

We took our first sailing trip of

the year before we went to Switzerland. Silmaril was still in her winter outfit, no sails and all covered with a tarp. We had accepted the invitation of a friend to take a turn on Storefjord on Sunday. Saturday had brought snow again and there was some work to do before we could start.



The wind was not very favorable, too little at first and more snow at the marina of Sykkylve, where we filled up the water tanks.

But on our way back, the wind increased, shifted constantly and gave us a nice sample of sailing in the fjords: watching the wind vane non stop, always ready to react at the wheel and the lines.

Our stay in Ålesund was full of heart-warming meetings with wonderful people. We felt very much at home and belonging during the weeks we lived in the Nørvevika Båthavn and we are anxious to keep in touch with all of you.



Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

On 1 April we left for another trip to Switzerland. We returned to the apartment in Bönigen and Alex could ski again for a few days. After Easter we went to Ehrendingen to look after Renzo's and Sylvia's girls, Johanna and Ronja, while their parents went on a week-long ski touring adventure. We had a really good time with the girls and enjoyed staying in their beautiful home. Their garden is at present the home of our bird Krak, whom we acquired last fall in the wild hope to have a garden of our own one of these days.



Our time was crammed full with visits, errands, doctors' appointments, car service, etc. until we left again on the long trip to Ålesund on Tuesday evening, 21 April, by car to Kiel, ferry to Oslo and car again to our final destination.



We arrived in time to get Silmaril ready for sailing and to go shopping for our goodbye grill party before Andrea and Tom, two experienced mountaineers from Brugg, arrived on Sunday evening at Vigra airport. We had invited them to come visit us and go on skiing tours with Alex. To our joy they had accepted. They arrived and were immediately engaged in the preparations, almost before they put their luggage on board Silmaril. Andrea took loads of pictures and those I insert for the time of their stay with us are from her camera.

Monday morning we went shopping for the week and left Nørvevika Båthavn for a small place in Hjørundfjord.



Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

About half way to Sæbø, Alex decided that it would be very convenient to have the car with us already on the next day. We had planned that I would get it. On the spur of the moment he told me to put Tom and Andrea on shore at the ferry port of Festøa. We approached the station between two approaching ferries and could only find a very rusty iron jetty where putting them ashore was possible. In a rather daring maneuver I advanced as slowly as I dared with the wind and the waves. As the bow almost touched the jetty, they nimbly jumped onto the iron rails in a few seconds and I could leave the threatening surroundings full speed in reverse with a beating heart.

They returned to Ålesund by ferry and bus to get the car, while Alex and I sailed on to our base. And indeed, to have the car proved very convenient. The three could drive up towards the snow to avoid carrying the skis very far. There was not very much snow left at sea level.

We chose Sæbø as our home base, where we moored Silmaril in front of a picturesque Hotel/Motel with a number of little cottages around a main building, all of them covered with grass. Silmaril lies behind the hotel owner's old excursion boat with two masts, the only visiting boat for the first three days.



Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

The weather was good and the three climbed four peaks on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday!
Alex was fascinated.





On Saturday they even experienced a snow storm en miniature.

Andrea took a load of wonderful pictures during their stay with us. I make so bold and show some here.

Alex will put many more at your disposal on the web.

Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

I was a little sad to be left out. Especially since the three not only saw snow and beautiful mountains, but birds I have never seen in the mountains before: we call them snow hens, white in winter and dull brown in summer.



But what could I do but be patient, exercise my leg and hope for next winter's adventures on skis.

After the exertions of the day, all three of them took a dip in the 8° C cold water!! I had fun watching. Brrr!!





One evening Tom and Alex went fishing and indeed caught two impressive samples:





Next evening, we were told that fishing at this place was forbidden! The man apologized for telling us! Everybody is so incredibly courteous to us here.

Sæbø is a small village at the end of a road with ferry connections to a few other very small places. A rather large river flows into the sea right behind the jetty. There are innumerable birds on the land left dry by the low tide and their songs and cries filled the air. I took walks to observe them. They were all very busy finding partners and getting ready to build nests. The "Grosser Brachvogel" (*numenius arquata*) has a particularly beautiful song, a melody similar in length and variation to the nightingale. I had never heard it before and it was especially beautiful to hear in the quiet of the night with only gentle sounds of small waves on the rocky shore and the water of the nearby river flowing very slowly into the sea hindered by the incoming tide.

Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

On Friday we sailed and motored to the very end of one of the arms of the fjord to Øye. We moored Silmaril at a floating jetty and went on a walk toward an impressive waterfall. Unfortunately a huge landslide barred the way up there with its debris last November and scrambling over all those rocks and wood and sand was too much for me. We turned and went to briefly visit a mink farm. It's a horrible sight, the poor creatures in small cages, wire on all six sides of them! They also had a few silver and blue foxes in only slightly larger cages. Well, the farmers there have to make a living and have been raising mink and fox for over 80 years. I'm just glad I only wear a vest of rabbit fur of our own raising!! To do what all visitors apparently do, we had coffee and cake in the famous Hotel, where Kaiser Wilhelm II had stayed on holiday at the beginning of the 20th century. What a place!



We left Sæbø on Sunday, since we had planned to sail to the famous bird island of Runde before Tom and Andrea had to leave us again on the coming Wednesday. We wanted to see the thousands of gannets and puffins and seagulls of all kinds that come to the island every spring to nest and raise their young.

Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

The three sailed Silmaril out of the fjord to the ferry station of Solavåg and I drove the car to the same place and waited for them to pick me up. There is a small harbor and I could jump on board from the small hotel jetty with no problems. We left the car in the parking lot of the hotel and continued sailing to Hareid, from where we wanted to go on to Runde the next day. On our way to the bird island, the weather turned a bit nasty and since Runde has a very small harbor and we were not sure about depth and moorings,



we sailed to the city harbor of Ålesund.



Brosundet is a very sheltered place, only a narrow canal in the center of the city.

On Tuesday we then drove to Runde. The trip was well worth it. Rain stopped when we got out of the car and started again just before we reached it again. On top of the mountain, the view and the birds were astounding. Above the huge mass of the nesting birds a sea eagle was leisurely circling in the strong wind with only an occasional flap of the wings. Majestic is the word.



We enjoyed watching them despite the very strong wind that gave us a hard time to hold the binoculars still. I crept to the very brink of the cliff on all fours and was still a bit scared of the height. Alex never even ventured closer than 10 m! Tom and Andrea, of course, are professional mountaineers and stood erect on the smallest rocks at the very precipice! Awe inspiring ability!

The birds are far more impressive in reality. the

camera cannot truly render the impressions we had. The eagle could not be captured at all on film.

The two-hour walk was a nice test for my recovery: I had almost no pain and just needed to be careful, since coordination and muscular strength are not yet what they used to be. Good feeling.



Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

Our visitors left on Wednesday and the rain never really stopped until early Monday morning. So, we took a day trip on the Hurtigrute ship Polarlys to the world famous Geiranger fjord instead of motoring with Silmaril the 180 miles there and back again in horrible weather, a trip of at least three days. It was a memorable experience. The weather was not great but still gave us some sonny glimpses of the sheer rocks in the narrow waterway and the many waterfalls.



There are a number of farmsteads at incredibly isolated places, some of them on small ledges a few hundred meters above sea level, some nearer to the water, but still surrounded by rocks. Most of them were abandoned in the 1950ies; now some of them are inhabited during the summer by owners or guests.

Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

Back in Ålesund we waited for the rain to stop with nothing much to do but working on Silmaril, reading and doing general household things. We still planned to leave on Sunday. We went to say goodbye to the Ulstein family in Emblem and our friends in Nørvevika. But we ended up staying until Tuesday, since we had the chance of lifting Silmaril out of the water on Monday along with the boats of two other people in the harbor. So, Alex jumped at the possibility to check the under water and change the oil in the sail drive. It was quite an operation. The moving crane they sent was too small for two of the three boats and it took some time for the larger one to arrive. We finally were back in the water around three o'clock and returned to Nørvevika to a free place to take a shower, do some laundry and get ready to continue our trip north. We had to load the car with everything that needed to go back to Switzerland and say goodbye for the last time to our harbor neighbors!

On Tuesday morning, 12 May, Silmaril left Nørvevika and Ålesund for good. We were finally on our way up north.



Our destination was Ona, hoping against all odds to be able to sail with the wind on the nose. And we were lucky; we sailed until the water way became too complicated for comfort under sails just before we reached Ona. The little island has a very sheltered harbor and regular ferry traffic. Silmaril was the only visiting boat.



We wandered up to the two lighthouses, from where we had a lovely overview over the entire island.



There are a few small farms and some scattered private homes; but as a resident told us, most of the houses are only used in summer. Nevertheless, Ona has a regular ferry service for its all-year inhabitants.



Leaving Ona, we headed for Håholmen, and Wednesday turned out to be a rough day with the wind against us almost all day. Hustavika greeted us with short waves from all directions and wind up to 16 knots. We had the engine running for most of the trip, not daring to tack against the wind that was steadily increasing and prolonging the trip. We docked with the kind help of two men who work there.

I still have so much to learn about landing in strong wind in a small harbor!!

And what a lovely place this is! The old boats, the buildings of various colors, and the rocks and water all around make a wonderful scenery.



We walked around on the small island and saw a lot of birds, geese (anser anser), ducks (somateria mollissima), the gander with his striking spring colors: black and white with a green spot on the neck,



"Austernfischer" (*haematopus ostralegus*) and, of course, masses of seagulls, all of them performing their courtship dances and songs. I had a great time watching and listening.

Two Swiss men came by, wondering what on earth a Swiss boat could be doing here. They were at a conference held on the island. The world is so small.

On the 14th, we sailed all day with good wind, first to Kristiansund for shopping and then on northward. Alex found a nice anchoring place in a sheltered bay near Roksvåg. We dropped anchor at about 7m very close to the shore and let out about 40 m of chain and ended up in 26 m of water. The wind still blew with 15 knots, so Alex kept watch for an hour to make sure Silmaril was only dancing on the spot, despite the rather unfavorable anchoring conditions.

On Friday, we sailed to Kongsvoll, at the entrance to the Trondheim fjord. This is a lovely small marina, very sheltered and offering good facilities, crane, diesel, showers, etc., even a restaurant. We washed the boat to get rid of all the salt on it, Alex in shorts and bare feet in the cloudless warm afternoon.

And on Saturday, we sailed across the Trondheimleia to Brekstad. We had planned to take the Kystekspresen into Trondheim to see the festivities of the Norwegian national holiday, the 17th of May. But there was only one boat going late in the afternoon. So we remained in Brekstad. It was a very good decision. The brand new Ørland kultursenter right by the harbor has a permanent and excellent exhibition on Hannah Ryggen's tapestry. And since I did some weaving many years ago myself, I was excited to learn about her work.



The very knowledgeable librarian, Morton Hauge, gave us a tour even after closing hours.

He also called a German dentist, Soenke, who works here and he and his wife, Carola, promptly invited us for a grill dinner! We felt very spoiled by everyone.



The parade next day was a great experience. It seems that everyone of the community was taking part. We were so pleased to see all the people in their national costumes. We felt quite out of place in our ordinary clothes among all those people in Sunday finery!



We also saw the two daughters of the German couple who performed in the parade. The older one, Charlotte in national costume, plays the clarinet and the younger one, Frederike in the bands uniform, a percussion instrument.

On Monday we took the speed boat to Trondheim, visited the cathedral and a number of very interesting museums.



Here an entire medieval village could be visited with a number of life-size figures, houses and workshops.



Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

Around four, we met Ola, a friend of neighbors from Nørvevika, who took the time to show us the harbor, where we could possibly leave Silmaril for the winter. He also called a lot of people to help us find the harbormaster in Rørvik and other options to leave Silmaril for the time of our trip to Switzerland, including the possibility to fly to Ålesund by private plane. His effort for our benefit impressed us very much.

We left Brekstad on Tuesday morning and motored many hours mostly against the wind with only a few hours sailing. The autopilot and I allowed Alex a good snooze.



We reached Bessaker just after the Hurtigrute ship Polarlys had overtaken us before the narrow passage leading to the small bay of the village.

We docked at the floating jetty in front of the small shop and the restaurant. Everything was already closed at 6, but we had everything we needed.

Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

The weather was still great the next morning despite the prognosis of d rain, so we decided to go on to Rörvik. Before we left, we took a walk to the summit of the hill, where in old times the beacon fire was placed. The view was breathtaking over the islands and the sea. It also showed us the complicated route we were to take tomorrow.



The trip to Rörvik proved long, over 9 hours on the water. But we were lucky, after 5 hours of motoring, we set sails and sailed very close hauled to right in front of the harbor here. By ten o'clock we had docked and were preparing dinner. It had been a long but nice day. By 9 o'clock, Jérôme arrived in his beautiful Lady Salope, a 43foot Omni under French flag. We had met him in Brekstad and spent a nice time in his company.

We wanted to leave Silmaril in this harbor fort he time of our visit in Switzerland. And that took some organizing and deciding. The harbor master gave us a nice place and opened the shower and washing room for us.

And that is where Silmaril will wait for us until we come back in June.



Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

Jérôme came to dinner to help us get rid of the leftovers in the refrigerator.

We had several options for the trip to Switzerland, Hurtigrute ship, private plane or rented car from Rørvik to Ålesund, where our car was waiting in Nørvevika harbor. Prices and time involved varied a great deal! We finally decided to take the Hurtigrute, since the weather was not great and the pilot of the plane could not guarantee that we could reach Ålesund before the advancing weather front.

On Saturday evening, Jérôme accompanied us to the MS Vesterålen and had coffee with us on board.



Since we had returned to Norway after Easter, the days became ever longer and believe it or not, these pictures were taken at 9:30 and the sun was still high up in the sky. We watched the sea and the sky on the ship until 1 o'clock in the morning and could still very well make out the outlines of the shore and islands all around and even the nautical signs.

Alex took some spectacular pictures of the night sky.



At 21:53 the sun is still pretty high up in the sky.

The next morning greeted us with wonderful cloud formations.



Back in Ålesund on Sunday at midnight, Alexander, a friend from Nørvevika, met us at the pier and gave us a berth for the night in his Shield of Faith moored in Brosundet, just a few steps away from the place of our arrival..

We got up early on Monday morning and began the long trip to Switzerland with our car along the very famous routes of Trollstigen and the Eaglepath to Geiranger. It took us many hours driving to Oslo along these routes, but we enjoyed every minute of it. Just look at those pictures!



The detour this route to Oslo involves proved to be well worth the additional hours driving. We saw landscapes of great beauty and roads of impressive engineering.

The hairpin bends of the road can hardly be made out against the dark cliff. It was built in 1936 and is now a well known tourist attraction.

The street leads close to precipices and waterfalls that simply cannot be described. The same holds true for the view over the valleys far into the distant mountains.



We kept stopping and watching despite the flying time and the many km still to drive.



Geiranger Fjord from high up presented itself in an impressive perspective, its narrowness and winding course and the many cruise ships that hardly fit into it at its very end.



Both passes, over Trollstigen and the one above Geiranger were still covered with masses of snow. And Alex was looking out for good ski slopes. And I took great pleasure in seeing such absurd snow art.



Reports Silmaril Summer 2009

From the passes we continued along fertile valleys with many farms and always a lot of water. We could not stop often any longer. But the famous stave church in Lom lured us for a last walk around it and along the wild little river that flows through the middle of the village and runs over steep rocks into a narrow rocky whirlpool.



Pretty late at night we arrived at the hotel in the vicinity of the Oslo airport and prepared for the third part of our trip to Switzerland, the voyage with the Color Line from Oslo to Kiel.

Alex had hoped for bad weather in the Skagerrak to experience the seaworthiness of these luxury ferries. But no chance, there were only small waves and moderate wind all the way to Kiel.

In Hamburg we visited friends for the last time this summer, since we will leave the car in Switzerland and fly back to Norway.

And finally on Friday night late, 29 May, we arrived in Praz, the little house at the lake of Murten, from where we will visit family and friends and organize the removal of the screws from my leg.

On June 11, we fly back to Silmaril and continue our voyage north.

We send greetings and will be back with another report sometime this summer.

Ursula and Alex