

2nd Report: Utsira
59°18'.7N 004°53'.7E
Grip
63°13'.1N 007°35'.6E
June 24 to July 16 2019

Route Overview



Monday, June 24. We cast off shortly before the ferry arrives in the northern harbor of Utsira and sail out toward the mainland. The famous emblem of the island stands prominent on the cliff. Far away the ferry is approaching, approximately 3nm from the harbor entrance. The wind is too weak to fill the sails; the engine is running the entire trip, sputtering only occasionally. Close to the mainland we pass innumerable islands of all sizes on our way into the Bømlafjord and to Mosterhamn, where we intend to tie up for the night.



Several lighthouses appear, small groups of buildings on piles of rock. In olden times they were the isolated dwelling places of the lighthouse keeper and their families. We always wonder at the impressive biographies of these people.



Mosterhamn is a very small and to our understanding very unorganized little port; wooden piers in front of houses, small jetties everywhere and just a short floating dock. Where could we tie up? The floating dock is occupied by a sailboat and a fisherman, who is cleaning his boat. A man comes running and beckons that he will leave in a moment. He climbs into the sailboat and gets ready to take off. I take a few turns, Alex prepares the fenders and the lines, the sailboat takes off and we make fast. There is water and shore power. The fisherman tells us where we can find the

store and the important landmarks of the place. It's raining, but we need a few things and want to see the famous church only a few hundred meters away. Even in the foggy drizzle its white walls gleam under the slate roof. Tradition has it that King Olaf Trygvason built a church here in the year 998 when Christianity gained a foothold in Norway.



The present-day stone church was probably built in 1150 at the location of the original wooden church. It is one of the oldest churches in the country. Unfortunately, we cannot see the inside, the door is locked and the windows too high to peek in. We go back onboard and enjoy a peaceful evening with eating, writing, reading and turning in early.

Tuesday, June 25. No rain, but the sky remains gray and hazy all morning. We leave toward midday, hoping that the weather forecast holds true and we will not get wet.

Looking back into the small harbor, no activities to be detected. But we did learn a little of the history of the place, found what we needed for the pantry and passed a quiet night. I should be able to wash, but

when we have time, there are no machines available or my batteries are empty! We still have clean clothes, no problem to wait for the next opportunity.

The weather is murky, but at least dry. We go on against weak wind running the engine. Once in a while we unfurl the genoa for a short time. Sailing among the many isles and islets is always pleasing. We enjoy watching the houses nestled among the rocks with their boat house and miniature jetty.

Lighthouses sit on exposed spots like



dwarfs with red caps, surrounded by service buildings, dwellings, sheds or boat-houses.

The afternoon passes and we finally reach the vicinity of Hjellestad, where we made landfall coming from Shetland two years ago. We left *Silmaril*, rented a car and un-

dertook a long tour to see all of our Norwegian friends between Ålesund and Oslo. Today we intend to moor *Silmaril* in the marina of the Bergen yacht club Kvittepollen. We visited the marina on foot from Hjellestad, to see Lars, the solo sailor, whom Alex had met in Greenland and who had been sailing with us from the Faroes. He tied up here after his 14-months trip.

Kvittepollen is less exposed to the northwest wind than Hjellestad, however, all the jetties are crammed full. In addition to the numerous club members' boats, many sailors have arrived who will take part in the Shetland Race that starts tomorrow.

The harbor master advises us by phone to take a free mooring ball. We make fast at number 8 using the buoy hook from Sweden we have not used in years, enjoy the calm, not a ripple on the water and watch the busy activities on the boats tied to the jetties, an intriguing view.



a small class, Bermuda-rigged keel boat, no engine, sailed above all in Norway and Denmark. To leave the harbor, they sail, row or are towed. A beautiful sight. Across from us, the boats of the members and the regatta sailors crowd the jetties. It was worth our effort to circumnavigate the many stones from Hjellestad to Kvittepollen, we feel just great here.

Wednesday, June 26. We move to the head of jetty B as planned. After some household chores we take a long walk to the marina of Hjellestad and on in a wide circle through a densely populated area back to Kvittepollen. The weather is favorable, the sun is shining and fair-weather clouds drift in the sky.

We pass all kinds of homes, big, small, traditional, modern, pretty and unspeakably ugly, a wild mixture of styles and personal taste, built without a general plan, just as the individual owner wanted it.

Few of them lured me into taking a picture. There is this very modern one with a beautiful garden, both sober in style, pleasing in every respect.



The Knarrs lie hull against hull, all of the slender boats covered with tarpaulins. The harbor master explains: the Knarrs is



And these two, a traditional one, typical red tiles, brilliant white walls, small windows, and an old refurbished farmhouse, both of them in well-groomed gardens.



Along the road, lush green on gray-white rocks in bizarr shapes fascinate me. The steep cliff is always humid, small rivulets force their way through cracks, sustenance for moss and sundry plants.



From far above we cast a glance over the marina, on the left-hand side the boats moored on buoys, on the right the floating jetties. *Silmaril* lies far ahead, not to be seen from here.



Thursday, June 27. We leave Kvittepollen today to take advantage of the favorable weather forecast to sail a good way further north.

Silmaril is ready to go. The beautiful deep blue sky is sprinkled with white clouds, we are anxious to start and I steer the boat away from the jetty, nice maneuver and we are on the way towards Bergen.

Alex has planned a route among the islands, where all kinds of obstacles call for close attention, rocks, narrow passages and the ferries that cruise at 30knt coming and going on our way.

We reach the area where we met Christoph von Reibnitz and his *Peter von Sestermihe*, anchored together in a small bay near the island of Lysøa and held a little regatta on the way to Bergen, *Peter* under full sails with the spinnaker, *Silmaril* under gennaker. We exchanged pictures of the exciting event, glorious memories!



This lighthouse remains vividly in our minds. *Silmaril* passed very close by the little cape. Would we dare such a course today?

Bergen lies ahead. We cross the approaches to the harbor and sail through the area, where we spent the winter of 2008/2009 in the tiny marina of Litlebergen. We talk about the time, recall funny details, memora-

ble meetings, places we visited, things we bought. We are thankful and happy to have had the chance to pass these winter months on the boat.

The wind direction is inconvenient. We jibe several times before we reach the bridge that we crossed many times going to town, when we had our car with us.

It is a special construction. Its pillars stand on concrete blocks that form a wide circle; a steel structure spans the passage for tall ships to pass.

Just behind it, the bridge over the waterway to Litlebergen appears.

We revel in memories of those winter months.



The bridge is just tall enough for *Silmaril* to pass safely.



Our route resembles a canal and we are on the lookout for fast ferries. At one point we have to divert our course. Two



ferries arrive at the same time. I reduce the speed and move as close to the shore as the water depth allows. All goes well, the ferries speed passed, the distance is far safer than we expected.

We discover recently-built houses with grass roofs. The tradition goes back to Viking times, when divots were used for building and covering roofs.



And what could that be?

It is under construction, stands right next to a raging stream and has the traditional



projecting roof for a crane. We cannot answer our question, of course, but speculating is always fun.



A group of eiders swim close to us, dark ducks and black and white drakes. They are the first ones we come across this year.

The beautiful birds fascinate us. The drakes utter deep cooing sounds during mating season. These here have no time; they are busy fleeing from our bow.



At 16:15 we tie up at the deserted jetty in Feste. I did not dare turn inside to be better protected from the waves of passing ferries and fast motorboats. We hope for little traffic during the night. The store is still open, we buy a few things. There is also a diesel pump. We will fill the tank tomorrow morning before we leave.

Friday, June 28. The alarm clock wakes us at 05:30. We are ready to go at 06:25, but hold it, someone needs plenty of room! At snail's pace I steer *Silmaril* close to the wooden pier to let the cargo pass. Nobody around at the diesel pump, but we can pay with the credit card. Alex fills the tank and the empty jerrycans, I fill water and we start. No more ships on the waterway. The rocky shore shows curious folding and vivid colors.



"Iron Art" on the rocks makes us smile. The cat passed too quickly to get a good picture, despite our slow movement.



This is definitely not snow. The rocks are covered by large patches of white. Our geological knowledge is sadly scant. I have no

idea what they are; I simply like the looks of them



bad smell and disturbs the cherished idyllic landscape.

But of course, no sailing without diesel!

The next bridge is in sight.



on the chart, but it's comforting that the signs say the same: 25m for both.

A small ferry is waiting for customers; through the binoculars we see that the barrier is still down, so, we go full throttle to pass its course before it departs.



And we pass another incredible natural work of art. Who would dare to say that sailing is boring?

Our route through the narrow curvy waterways is full of surprises, nice ones, but also stinking ones: a huge refinery is spread across an entire island and envelopes the whole area in very



A high-tension power line is right behind it.

Of course, Alex checked their height



The fast ferry approaches from behind; I make sure it has enough room!



Boring? Hardly in these waters, where traffic, shallow spots and underwater

rocks are an omnipresent danger. Sailing is suspenseful demanding at times, just fun. The weather is changing for the worse. Rain is in the air.

We would just love to hide here along with the other sailboats and stay put until the front has passed.

But our trip is not et at its end. There is the Sognefjord to be crossed, a number of islands to be circumnavigate where, in the vicinity of Svanøya, Alex has found a possible anchoring place.

The crossing poses no problems, no ferries no tankers or cargoes block our way. We turn into the waterway between Sula and Losna. The well-known lighthouse on the rock shows up.

We sail close to the cliffs; rocky faces look at me.

The wildest thoughts cross my mind when I sit at the helm and my eyes contemplate the cliff face, while the autopilot is doing my job.

See the bald head that squints his eyes?



Or is it a cortisone-puffy face?

E.T. next to the thinker?



The nose? The beak?

We leave the tall cliffs behind, sail round a few islands and reach the spot where Alex expects to find the anchorage.

The small bay is definitely too narrow for *Silmaril*. We round the island, pass a fish farm and head for the village at the end of a large bay. The harbor does not impress us, a short floating jetty is tied right next to the ferry landing. How on earth am I going to maneuver *Silmaril*? And of course, I do not succeed to approach the jetty. *Silmaril* is too long for the space behind the motor boat. Driving backwards to the other side of the jetty does not work either and the place is too close to the ferry anyway. Alex lets go of the line, I take the boat out and wait. Meanwhile a man comes running and points to the new jetty somewhat hidden behind the store. I had seen it before, but Alex snapped: private, certainly!

So, the wretched debacle comes to a good end. We tie up alongside and have a perfect place far away from the ferry.

We deserve punishment for the harbor cinema we presented to the people in the bar and the store and force ourselves to go among these people, although we go bright red with shame.

We pay our fee, do some shopping and order a hamburger.

A curly-head comes to our table. His name is Lunden. He is a painter, performs in theater and cabaret, in short, he entertains the village together with his partner Lisa throughout the year. He soothes our grievously hurt self-confidence: such embarrassing maneuvers just happen!

After the meal, we talk a while to him and two brothers at the table on the terrace made from a huge blue cable spool. The brothers are both farmers; they live and work on the farm of their grand-parents; one of them is the cowboy, as he calls himself, the other is a breeder of goats. His daughter is with him; she visits during vacation.

I am totally beat by the long trip and the disgusting maneuver; I go straight to bed. Alex goes for a walk and discovers the highly-praised Svanøy Hovedgård, an ancient farmstead. He will show me tomorrow.

Saturday, June 29. We get up early, in order to have time to take the planned walk. I'm grateful to see everything with my own eyes. Descriptions and pictures are fine, but one's own eyes store long-lasting impressions of a very personal kind. The manor house used to be a large farm in Viking days. It changed owners many times and became the center of the Haugian pietistic movement in 1804. It remained unchanged until in 1972 a foundation took charge and refurbished the entire premises.

The main building is surrounded by an almost too perfect park-like garden. The



neighboring wooden buildings are quite far apart; the grass looks freshly mowed.



The farm buildings have a stone substructure. The grass stands tall, interspersed with beautiful wildflowers.

The visitors of the center obviously do not come here often, I suppose. The caretakers concentrate on grooming the garden around the main buildings. Maybe they make hey round the distant outbuildings.

A thousand-year old stone cross stands among the tombstones in the ancient cemetery. Its runic inscription runs along one of the small faces; it is highly weather-worn. It is said to be one of only four runic inscriptions in Norway. No description of its meaning is provided.

Close by I detect a touching tombstone: a crude slab placed on a layer of rocks in the grass just carries the name on a strip of plastic and a necklace of small stone beads.



Who might be buried here?
A young child? Mere thoughts for speculation, no answers.

Sheep graze in a meadow behind the cemetery. Do they belong to the goat breeder we met? I am always fascinated by these animals and would love to know their race. They could be Norwegian Blackface. We have seen them on many islands. They are horned, pretty large and bulky.



On our way back to the boat we pass the old ruinous shipyard. It cannot be brought back to life without the effort of a financially powerful enthusiast, probably desperately hard to find. Today, only large establishments have a real chance for survival, here in Norway as everywhere else in the world. It's a sad sight and a liability for the community.

I take a last picture, *Silmaril* and the isolated old yellow house across the bay, where Lunden and Lisa live.

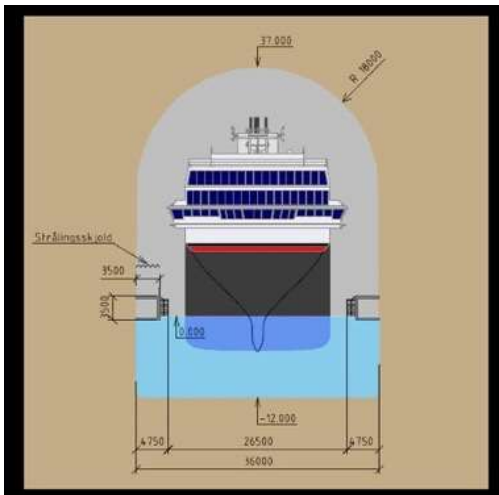


We are headed for Selje, the perfect place to wait for a god weather window to round Stad, the notorious nose of Norway. Difficult conditions often prevail on this stretch of coast, strong currents, tall waves and severe wind. At times not even Hurtigruten ships dare to sail.

The construction of a tunnel has been planned for many years that would allow the passage at the narrowest point of the peninsula in all weather. According to Wikipedia, the work was supposed to begin in 2018 and to be accomplished in 2004.

Selje is located at the end of the bay where the western entrance to the tunnel is planned.

The key to the map:



Stadlandet, the name of the peninsula, below Stad Ship Tunnel Path, the route of the tunnel.

The profile of the tunnel will allow large ships to pass. The dimensions are calculated

to accommodate Hurtigruten ships: Height 49m, width 36m, depth 12m, gross tonnage 16^000t. (pictures: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stad_Ship_Tunnel.)

We did not talk to Norwegians about the project who would have known details about it. We doubt that the article in Wikipedia represents the actual state of affairs. Its date is June 20, 2018.

We cast off at 09:00, not a ripple on the water. With the engine running we soon reach the labyrinth in the approaches to Florø, shallow water, dozens of markers, a true slalom.

The famous lighthouse stands far away isolated on a pile of rocks, looking like an obese dwarf with a red cap.

The close-up shows a big building and a small shed with very little solid ground around it. Again, we cannot imagine how the lighthouse keeper and his family lived here.



At the entrance to Florø, we turn north. Our route lies in an industrial area. We pass shipyards, quarries and factories of all kinds. But there are also signs of farming and fishing. Small villages or individual farms stand close to the shore, where cultivable ground has formed beneath the naked cliffs and where the inhabitants live off the land and the sea.



Many small islands can only be reached by boat. Larger islands are often connected to each other by tunnels, so that only one ferry to the mainland can be operated for the entire group. Such projects are realized in many places to provide transportation for a very small number of people. The government makes huge efforts to prevent the rural exodus.



Snow-capped tall mountains surround us.

The wind freshens the farther we sail into the Fryøysjønfjord. Soon the wind blows with 26kts. We run under genoa, so the conditions are easily managed, thank goodness.

At the end of the fjord we have to round the 860m tall and steep cliff of Hornelen, an almost 180° turn.

A ship appears coming out of the entrance where we will have to find our way. It is a service ship, its bow beautifully adorned with a wild painting, *The Arctic Art*.



As soon as we are around the corner between the tall cliffs, there is almost no wind and only a ripple on the water. Our route takes us between Bremanger on the port side and Marøya on the starboard

side around the prominent nose of Bremanger toward the northwest. Behind us a thick cloud descends from the mountain



The sailboat will soon have to cope with wind and fog, if the cloud comes all the



way down to the water. We do not envy him!

Ahead of us we see signs on the water of severe squalls; and in no time we are right among them. Even under genoa Alex just barely keeps *Silmaril* from broaching. As soon as we are passed a group of small islands around Husevågøy and are approaching Måløy, the wind dies down.

Måløy is probably the largest fishing harbor in the country. The huge fish cannery swallows the catch of innumerable gigantic seagoing trawlers, spreads fish odor over the whole region and sticky fish fat over the entire harbor. We made the experience on a previous trip, when we made fast between two gigantic fishing ships: our hull was salvaged with the disgusting stuff!

We sail under the wide span of the bridge into the Måløysundet, pass the harbor, the far-flung premises of boat yards and a series of small villages.

At the end of the sound we catch a glimpse of Standlandet, an awe-inspiring sight of the nose under the dark clouds.

The route to Selje is not long. We turn east and sail along the southern and eastern shore of Barmøy. Here as well every ara-



ble surface below the cliffs is farmed, a peaceable relaxing image in contrast to the grim view of Stad.

We arrive in Selje toward 17:00. Here we waited for a good weather window in 2008 for 4 days. So many memories crop up. There was Jan, the captain of

the Klosterbåten, his wife Doris and his brother. They told us much about their lives over coffee and cake. And on the trip to the island Selja on Jan's boat we met Ragnar, Jenni Mine, Magne and Anne Line from Emblem near Ålesund whom we visited many times over the years and who are still very close friends.

The place has changed, of course.

The harbor seems a little dilapidated.

But we find a good space.

I turn *Silmaril* on the spot and steer her to the jetty, the stern close to the lateral ponton in one movement. The successful maneuver comforts me a bit for the debacle in Svanøybukta.

Across from the jetty on the pier is a new gas pump and a Bunnpris store.

We walk over and buy a few things.

Back by the boat, we talk to the



neighbor. He grew up in Selje, but is only here on vacation now. We ask him about Jan and Doris. He tells us that Jan had a bike accident and died last year. The lady in the store would know more about it. We will go to see her tomorrow. We are tired and hungry now; I should attend to creature comforts.

Alex studies the weather and believes to see a favorable weather window on Monday. It will not be perfect, occasional rain and gray sky.

Sunday, June 30. Rain splashes on the deck and wakes us up. I finish writing the first German report of the voyage and Alex puts it on our website. In the evening we go for a short walk and have a hot chocolate in the store. The lady at the cash register confirms the neighbor's story, Jan is no more. She gives us the last name of Doris and her address. She still lives in the same house. We cannot remember the place. It's too late for a visit. I copy some pictures of our last visit on my little photo printer, write Doris a letter and slip the envelope into the nearest letterbox. Alex studies the weather once more, compares the different programs and decides that we will start early tomorrow morning. The weather will worsen again on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Monday, July 1. We get up at 03:30. Dawn is already near. We did not sleep a lot. It's raining. We cast off and sail close to the wind along the peninsula of Stadlandet. It is about 20km long and 600m tall. The fog is almost on the water, we only see dark water and murky cliffs. Our meteograph points to 994.8 hp and is still dropping! The closer we get to the nose, the taller and steeper the waves come against us. *Silmaril* is dancing! At the end of the peninsula, we unfurl the genoa to 60%, after another half hour we let it out all the way. We follow the approximate route of a cargo vessel ahead of us. I insert some of its waypoints into our plotter. The captain of the cargo certainly knows how far out waves and currents are most favorable.



It's raining, no fun at all at the helm, cold, wet, windy. I'm half blind behind the drop-splattered glasses. Reading the plotter makes me squint!

And the one at the helm needs to hang on to something, otherwise *Silmaril's* prancing has one sliding from one side to the other on the drenched seat.

Around 06:00 we are at about half way of the planned trip.

We pass the small offshore islands and rocks at a safe distance.



Ahead of us in the fog looms the last cape of Stadlandet, where we will slowly turn and sail along the northeastern coast of the peninsula. Hopefully the waves will diminish.

Pelting rain still aggravates us. Suddenly the engine starts stuttering! Oh no, not again and in these conditions! Alex goes below deck and pumps the air out of the conduits. It helps for a few minutes and the stuttering starts all over.

We should have filled the tank to the brim. In such swell the diesel splashes around and air can get into the conduits. On the other side around the far cape with less chop, the problem should be solved. There is always more to learn and to think about!

A Hurtigrute ship passes us on starboard. Its voyage is hardly as strenuous as ours. But we are in quite good spirits, the most difficult part is behind us and the conditions are not more difficult than expected.

We just have to be patient for a few more hours.

Alex has chosen a marina that

turns out to be too small and too crowded. We continue around the isle Sandsøya and arrive at the marina of Sandshamn. There are two long pions, one of them tilted and almost touching the water on one side, the other probably o.k. Both are deserted. But as Alex leaves the boat to fasten a line for me to drive into, he can hardly gain a foothold on the algae-covered wet wood. In the end, we both manage our jobs and *Silmaril* is tied up. Too bad nobody is watching; that was a nice maneuver!

We hang up our drenched clothes in the bathroom, I cook porridge, brew two large cups of tea and at 11:00 we are both in bed and soon fast asleep.

Pelting rain wakes us up. The weather is gruesome, wind drives the rain at 35kt, we are so glad to be here, no matter how seedy the condition of the pion.

We get dressed and walk to the Coop store. The young man is very communicative. He tells us that some time ago the marina and the adjoining restaurant with its ballroom, showers and bathrooms was in good shape and a lucrative business. Now the premises crumble, since the owner is bankrupt. The islanders hope for a financially strong investor. A well-organized marina with a restaurant would indeed be a perfect starting point for the trip around Stad, just like Selje on the other side.

There is at least shore power at the pion and a water hose that is almost long enough to reach *Silmaril*. We pull her a bit closer to the tap to avoid the complication of assembling our own hose with the one on the jetty. As soon as the tank is full, we hole up again. The heater is running.



Tuesday, July 2. Rain, unceasing rain and strong wind. Even in the marina 30kt gusts shake *Silmaril* and push her to the ponton. We are busy watching tennis on the computer, writing mails, working on the reports, reading and eating. Of course, there are dishes to do and other small chores. The weather forecast is depressing, rain, rain and rain again for the rest of the week.

We walk again to the store to find a waterproofing spray, but they do not carry such stuff!! No problem, we get our rubber boots out.

Wednesday, July 3. Rain, and more to fall according to the weather forecast. We stay put. We pass the time again with writing, knitting, Sudoku and reading. After lunch we don our raingear and go for a hike.

Next to the store we find a map of the island nailed to the wall that shows several hiking paths. Alex proposes to walk around the peninsula and the mountain Grøntua. We find the beginning of the path. It's wide enough for a tractor and as the tracks suggest it's still used once in a while. It ends at the remains of some sort of a military structure and becomes a small foot path.

A man with a dog comes along. We walk high up above the water. White posts with red caps mark the way. We continue across screes, along narrow and slippery grassy ledges, around huge boulders, difficult to get passed, under the bare cliffs and down to the shingly shore.



Our balance is no longer what it once was. We hold on to prickly juniper bushes and our feet feel their way carefully step by step. Below the bushes and the grass, deep holes are hidden between the rocks and I think with dread about a sprained ankle.

I push the black thoughts to the back of my mind and take comfort in bizarre and beautiful things: a rock wearing a wig, a pretty flower on a lichen-covered stone.



The innumerable shades of green of grasses and bushes, the bright colors, all the wild flowers and the pitch-black snail crawling along in the grass make deep impressions.

Despite relaxing moments, moving on this goat path is a great strain. I keep protesting, what are we up to? How on earth did we end up here? There is no help, a safe turning point is far behind us, so, we just struggle on.



After two strenuous hours we reach the first signs of civilization. And shortly af-

terwards the village lies before us. It still takes a while to get down to the road. The path is more frequented here, planks are laid over boggy patches and the path is well marked, not like up in the rocks where we often had to look for the next post with a red cap and the path to it for long moments.



Finally, we reach the paved road and march to the marina, get rid of the drenched clothes and relax in the warmth.

What a day! It was a true Zehnder adventure. At least we were out in the fresh air and exercising without a problem. That makes up for the discomfort of water even in the shoes. And we do have an efficient heater.

Thursday, July 4. We are leaving today. Ålesund and our old friends, Anne and Raymond are waiting for us. We will sail to Nørvevika Båthavn, the marina where we stayed over two winters, 2008/9 and 2009/10. It's not so far and we take our time. The weather has improved, no rain is threatening and around 10:00 the world looks almost bright, drifting clouds over *Silmaril* and the reflecting water.



A Polish boat arrived last night. They lie behind us and will move up after we have left, to reach the water hose.

The old storehouse built in traditional style with the protruding dormer needs a coat of paint and it would shine in new

splendor

From the fish factory at the entrance to the marina, noise and smell emanate. A trawler is unloading its catch.

As we untie at 11:00 a torrential down-pour blinds us. It only lasts for a few minutes and we are off.

After an hour, the main sail and the genoa are up and we tack until the wind shifts and forces us to take the main in. Under genoa and with the help of the "green monster" below deck, occasional rain showers pelting down, we pass some small and some impressive light-houses, two huge supply ships, tied to-



gether like Siamese twins and arrive shortly after midday in the vicinity of Ålesund.

The famous Sukkertoppen, the emblem of the town welcomes us.

Raymond is calling and asks us to sail directly to the island of Gåsholmen, the yacht club's own small island.

He and Anne are still on shore, but *Chillout* is already waiting for us.

At 17:00 I maneuver *Silmaril* between two floating jetties and we are ready to embrace our dear friends.



The weather has improved, no rain, but wind heightens the chill factor, we are cold.

The mountains around us are snow-capped and the weather forecast announces further precipitations. For us that means rain, up there probably more snow.

We warm up below deck until we hear the varooming of a dinghy engine.

Anne and Raymond arrive and we are into each other's arms.

The four of us are alone, a bit later another boat makes fast and we meet Sunniva and Ole, the daughter-in-law and son of our friends.

We had never met them and we enjoy a wonderful evening on *Chillout*, talking, exchanging news, indulging in Anne's elaborate buffet, Raymond's home-made beer and just feeling happy to be here.

We finally go to bed way past midnight.



Friday, July 5. My cousin Heinz and his partner Regula travel on the Hurtigrute ship *Nordnorge*. They arrive in Ålesund in the morning and we want to meet them.

Around eight Anne and Raymond take us to Nørvevika in their dinghy and we take a bus to town. The ship is supposed to land at 09:30 but is late. When *Nordnorge* arrives, the passengers are not allowed to leave the ship, we only wave to Heinz and Regula high up on *Nordnorge's* deck. They cast off immediately, sail into the Geirangerfjord and will be back in Ålesund in the afternoon. Heinz will call us when they know the time of arrival.

Alex and I stroll through town and take a bus to the shopping center Moa and return to Nørvevika.

In the evening our meeting with Heinz and Regula works out. We return to the marina in town near the Hurtigrute pier in our dinghy and wait for the arrival of the *Nordnorge*. Regula and Heinz can leave the ship for half an hour. We wander

through a few streets in town and have hardly time to show them the beauties of Ålesund with all the news we have to exchange

Just before the *Nordnorge* blows her horn for departure, the two go back on board. They have their motorcycles with them and will drive from Kirkenes all the way home to Switzerland.

Our dinghy takes us back to Gåsholmen, I prepare a Chili con Carne and a salad for dinner. Together with the four Igesunds we eat in the boat house behind the island in the small bay. Wine and beer encourage lively discussions and much laughter. Shortly before 03:00 we are finally in bed after a long eventful day.



Saturday, July 6. We remain on Gåsholmen. It's Raymond's birthday tomorrow and we will celebrate with Ole, Sunniva and Andreas, a family friend, whom the two will pick up in Nørvevika. The three young people will leave tomorrow.

A motorboat has arrived at the guest jetty. A husky is running back and forth on the wooden walkway and in the gras and the rocks on the shore.

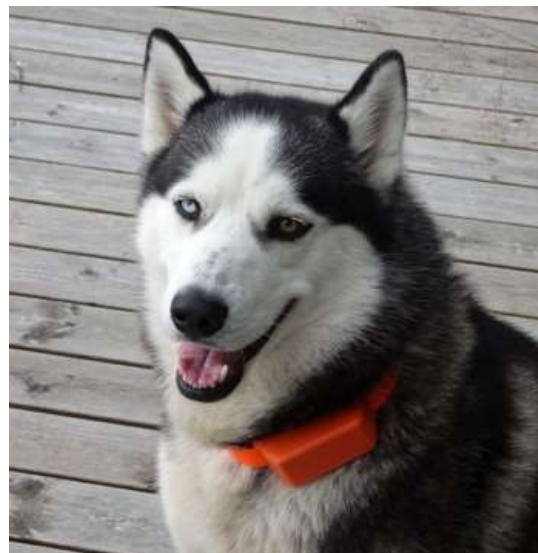


I need not be afraid of him; he obeys his



master promptly and unlike many dog owners he immediately realizes that I feel uneasy. He calls the husky back and introduces him: his name is Skipper and he looks up at me with his different-colored eyes in his friendly face.

The man is from Estonia. We talk about his country. He can hardly believe that we have been there with our boat.



I cook a Chili con Carne and prepare a salad for everybody; Anne makes a dessert, Raymond organizes wine, beer and aquavit.

The table is set in the clubhouse; Alex studies something sitting in the sun while dinner is still cooking. The beer is ready to be drafted through a tube inside the house with the container outside in a cool place.

Ingenious!



We enjoy the elaborate dinner, the lively conversations in great company and turn in very late: it is 02:30 when everybody returns to the boats along the wooden walkway more or less stable on one's feet. We all make it safely onto our boats and crawl into bed!

Sunday, July 7. It's Raymond's birthday. He knocks at our window and presents a huge beast he caught. We are going to eat it in the evening. Sunniva and Ole come to say goodbye. They are leaving. Andreas cannot yet get up, but he sends greetings; what a laugh!

We spend a peaceful day with Anne and Raymond, explore the little island, sit in the sun talking and prepare an early dinner. We are so happy to have such wonderful friends.

Monday, July 8. We sail to Nørvevika, where we find a place for *Silmaril* for a few days. *Chillout* lies in the box next to us. Anne and Raymond need to run some errands; we take a bus to the shopping center Moa, where Alex hopes to find some parts for the boat.

Today is my birthday, I am 75 years old, hard to believe! But yes, an old woman. I buy wool in the great store; the knitting with very fine silk simply does not fit in this climate. Alex needs another pair of socks and I have to repair his old pair.

Raymond talked Alex into getting a new anchor and he promptly ordered it, and I receive another birthday present! They both convince me with much laughter that I will feel so much safer at anchor with this wonderful new acquisition. How generous of them, but they are probably right!

Anne and Raymond come on board for dinner. They will drive to Stordal tomorrow to see Anne's parents and to attend to some chores on the farm house they have taken over. We will not see them soon again.

We say goodbye. It's a sad moment, but they promise to visit us in Switzerland in winter.

Tuesday, July 9. We are going to visit the Ulsteins in Emblem. They all have their homes on the same parcel. Daughter Birgitte has organized the day: her husband Ove is going to pick us up around midday. We visit Jenni Mine and Ragnar in the afternoon. Son Magne helps serving coffee and cake. The parents are old, Jenni Mine is going to be 92 and Ragnar will celebrate his 99th birthday in April. Despite their old age, they both tell us more about their experiences during the war. Both have risked their lives working in the resistance and contributed many important publications to help remember the atrocities of those times. They both were honored many times by the King; Jenni Mine shows us medals they have recently received again and a war ship is named after Ragnar; Jenni Mine baptized it.

Ragnar is still writing and corresponding by mail, although his fingers do not obey him easily. We admire them so much and feel honored and happy to be their friends. In the afternoon Magne takes us to go fishing. Down in the boat shed he shows us with great pride what he has installed since Alex went fishing with him years ago. He is now retired but goes out fishing in the small boat on his own and needs help with the heavy nets. The new row boat is now equipped with a small crane driven by an engine with a 12V battery that he can charge in the shed.

I get the same survival suit to wear on the water that he put me in when I accompanied Magne and Alex with a broken leg!

We remember Magne as a rather reserved person and he surprises us talking about his fishing experiences, how he chooses good spots, what kind of fish are caught when and where and also about his parents and his wife while he steers the rowboat along the coast and out to the middle of the fjord.

The men fished for quite a while but did not catch anything. It happens, Magne remarks dryly.

Back on land we visit his wife Anne Line. She broke her leg and is afflicted with a heavy plaster. She can only move in a wheelchair. The plaster will come off on August 8. I make a mental note of the date!

After a short tour through the garden, to see the chicken coop and the Tesla in the garage it is time for the third visit: Birgitte and Ove have invited us to their home for dinner.

And again, we talk about memories of ten years ago, when we first met the Ulsteins, about what happened in the meantime in their lives. Birgitte is still working as physiotherapist, Ove is going to retire in a few weeks as music teacher, but will keep playing the violin in the orchestra. He also rents out their sailboat, a Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 40. In summer they regularly sail themselves.

Ove takes us back to Nørvevika around 22:00.

What a day! We are very happy and a bit exhausted. But Alex knows that the anchor has arrived at the post office and runs to make it to town by bus before it closes at 23:00.

Wednesday, July 10. Alex goes in search of spare parts; I write mails and add notes to my diary. In the afternoon we take the bus to town, just like that, to relax.

Thursday, July 11. Alex mounts the new anchor and turns the 50m chain around, its beginning is now its end. He also replaces the faded and missing colored length markers. The job takes him almost all day. I attend to household chores, washing, cleaning, writing, knitting, reading and getting *Silmaril* ready for the four-person crew: we expect Renate and Mike from Corsica.

Shortly before midnight, they arrive at the bus station of Nørvevika. We are so excited, all four of us!

Renate unpacks her huge bag and reveals a series of gifts, tea, powdered milk, wine from Corsica, meat and jam. The latter is in bad shape: despite the safe storage in Renate's hiking boot and the wrappings with clothes, the jar is broken! What a mess and what a shame! The jam is home-made with fruit from their Corsican paradise, a mixture of tangerine and something else.



The adorned shoe in the basin is a hilarious still life, but also a good and proper mess. Fortunately, the smearing is almost restricted to the shoe, only one sweater is slightly touched, everything else in the bag is clean.

We talk for a long time and are looking forward to three weeks of sailing together.

Friday, July 12. We spend the day in town to introduce Renate and Mike to the place that is so dear to us. The bus takes us to the center. The Ship Festival is in full swing. Even at the very end of the harbor boats are tied up alongside each other leaving little



space to maneuver. A throng crowds the streets. We walk through the old town and enjoy the sight of many special buildings. The town burnt down in a devastating fire in 1904 and was reconstructed with the help of Emperor William II. He

had visited Norway on his yacht many times and was very fond of the people. It was his personal wish to assist the country poor as it was in those years with relief supplies and money for the rebuilding of the town. So, many buildings were reconstructed in the style of the time, the Jugendstil.



The backyard mountain Aksla beckons under the cloudless sky and we climb the 418 steps up. Two vantage points offer dazzling views over the town and its surroundings. Looking west over the town we see the harbor, where the cruise ships land, many of



the fast ferries start from and the Sukkertoppen, a favored attraction for tourists and locals on the island Heissa, connected to the town by a bridge.

Looking east toward Nørvevika over the Borgundfjord we see the newer parts of the town.



We enjoy the moment, to be here with Renate and Mike who, as it seems, have brought us the sun



and warmth after a long stretch of cold and rain.

Back in town we decide on the spur of the moment to take the ferry to Langevåg and pay a visit to the Devold outlet, where we buy Merino underwear without a real need;

the bad weather obviously condition us. The trip and the place grant Renate and Mike additional first impressions of Norway, so dear to us.

Saturday, July, 13. We are leaving heading north. Before we start for good from Nørvevika, I steer *Silmaril* to the diesel pump in the marina and then out into the Borgundfjord and around Heissa to the inlet of the town harbor Brosundet. The connecting bridge between the town and Heissa is not tall enough for *Silmaril's* 20m mast.

The harbor is still very full, but we do find a spot where we can lie for a short time: we tie up alongside a large old ship, eat breakfast in a small bakery, go shopping and finally say goodbye to Ålesund. We will not come back this year, not with *Silmaril* in any case.

There is no wind and we reach the little island of Bjørnsund with the throbbing of the "green monster" below deck in our ears.

The inlet is alarmingly narrow. But with the ferry running in front of us, I take courage and see that with care we can enter unharmed. Just behind the ferry there is room for one boat and we make fast at the wooden pier.

To my great amusement I detect at eye level a small flower in a rather peculiar spot.



about to celebrate the annual joint cleaning selling coffee, cakes and hand-made objects for the communal funds. Of course, we buy coffee and



The island is not inhabited year-round, the homes are summer residences. The owners take care of the houses, the gardens and the public services in a common effort and cherish an active social life. They are just



cakes and contribute a small donation to the surprise and grateful acceptance of the cashier.

Sunday, July 14. Alex has studied the weather thoroughly and we can sail without hesitation along the notorious coast of Hustadvika and way out to the small island of Grip.

The name of Hustadvika might recall an event of last winter, when the Norwegian cruise ship *Viking Sky* had engine problems in very bad weather and drifted uncontrollably toward the rocky shore. The passengers had to be rescued under extremely difficult circumstances and furnishings and installations in the ship suffered heavy damage. Many commentaries were broadcast on TV and radio throughout Europe. We say goodbye to Bjørnsund and its impressive lighthouse and the colorful skyline.



The crossing proves uneventful, it is cold, but our good clothing helps. We run under sails with the occasional support of the engine and arrive at the entrance of Grip. The inlet is somewhat wider than the one of Bjørnsund, but the harbor has little free space. First, we moor *Silmaril* alongside another sailboat that is already tied to a fishing boat and move a little later to the wooden pier behind the ferry.



On our stroll to the village, a man introduces himself, Olaf, and invites us to see his thatched house, the oldest on the



island. His wife, Åshill, shows us the whole house with great pride, she talks about the constant work on the house in the last 45 years of ownership.

They did not change much, just a toilet was installed. The kitchen is still minuscule under a very low ceiling. Most of the space in the various rooms is filled with beds. Their grandchildren love to come to the island to stay in the little red thatched house.

Åshill gives us two bags of crab meat as a farewell present!

When the ferry arrives tomorrow, the church will be open. We plan to take the opportunity and decide to stay another night.

The resident fisherman and photographer presents us with four large filets of Sei and a bag-full of cod cheeks for free, just like that.

In the evening, a brand-new X-Yacht comes alongside. The skipper mentions possibilities for a winter quarter for *Silmaril*. We still do not yet know where she will remain and appreciate his suggestions.

Late at night, I am already in bed, the son of Åshill and Olaf, also Olaf, knocks and wants to show us the sunset at 23:45! The scenery is beautiful, but the temperature freezing. I am terribly cold in my pajamas and just a jacket on top.

Renate took the two pictures. My own camera was left behind in the heat of the moment.



Monday, July 15. At 11:00 sharp, the ferry arrives. A small group of tourists disembarks. We follow them to the church.

When the guide finishes with her explanations in Norwegian she patiently answers our many

questions. The smallest stave church in Norway was probably built around 1300. The paintings on the wooden panels were created in 1620. They are quite faded, but still show the impressive skill of the artist.



I cannot use the flash, it goes without saying, the paintings would suffer far too much further damage. A kind of windmachine stands in



the entrance. It is the fire horn of the island. It is broken and no longer in use.

The skillfully plaited bell rope tolls the small bell in the tower. It is regularly pulled for church service and its pealing is heard all across the island.



From the ceiling in the main nave hangs a votive ship, as in many Scandinavian churches. Unfortunately, I forgot the name and the make of this one. These ship models often reveal the name of the giver and



the reason for the votive offering.

After our visit to the church we walk to the meeting place of the island, a small eatery that is open for a while when the ferry is in the harbor. Coffee, home-made cake, waffles and of course beer are served. We indulge in a second breakfast.

On our way back to the boat, we pass again the colorful houses, the little red one among them.

The picture also shows the water reservoir of the island, a square concrete structure below the rocky surface from which the water was collected in olden times. The rain water trickled over the smooth rock face and along the many crevices into the covered basin.



To keep the water clean, every year the inhabitants used to scrub the dirt and growth from the entire rock on their knees.

Today the water is collected from the slate roofs. The little red house gets its water from the neighbor for a fixed fee.

Our friends, Åshill and Olaf, take the ferry to Kristiansund, where they live. They need to wash and run some errands before they return on Wednesday. The summer is not yet over, thank goodness.

Before the ferry leaves, they come on board for a glass of wine. We exchange addresses. I will send them a Christmas card, if I don't forget!

After another stroll through the village, a scrumptious dinner and a pleasant evening we turn in.

