

Scandinavian Adventure

From Seattle to Hallstahammer, Sweden

Baltic Cruise

Norwegian Fjords Cruise

Jul/Aug 2010

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter #1**

Date: 8/11/2010

Hi Guys,

We are on a fantastic trip in Scandinavia and I can't stand it! I have to share some of this beauty!! We don't have much in the way of internet, so I couldn't get it sent on time, but still wanted to share!!

We left our RV at friends Al & Terri near Seattle (at the base of Mt Ranier -see it in the background??).



First off, we spent 2 fabulous weeks teaching in Hallstahammer, Sweden. The new friends we met there were absolutely wonderful and we got to renew friendships with a few folks that we had met in Germany and in Scotland. The Swedes all speak excellent English and made us feel right at home. We did work pretty hard! We had 3 sessions a day with both lunch and dinner served at the dance venue and only had one Saturday morning off!!

Before the 2 weeks kicked off, we got to attend an outdoor cook out at Inge's house (he set up the entire event in a very short time and did a fantastic job!! Thank you Inge!!). While enjoying the evening at his house, we got to see our first Hedgehog! It was adorable!



On to the dancing, the hall was absolutely perfect. Floor was great and acoustics was fantastic.



Besides the dancing, we also celebrated a couple of birthdays and got to enjoy Scandinavian Birthday cake!



Our English friends, Steve & Shirley had come in their RV, towing their Smart car (it's soooo cute!) and we got to have lunch at their place one afternoon and see how roomy it is and also how nice the local RV park is. It's huge and has 2 Olympic size pools and cabins and all sorts of amenities (including a laundry which I got to use!).



We also spent a few of our free hours walking around the local area and saw some nice homes and boats coming through the lochs.



That's our hotel across the canal. The canal had lots & lots of Canadian geese and they were very hard to keep off the road!



Must mention that this schedule DID NOT interfere with the social get togethers which happened almost every night. At the hotel sometimes



At the hall sometimes-



At the lake once!!



One afternoon we walked to a local flower shop (it was huge!!) and enjoyed looking at the hundreds of different flowers for sell.



The best part of this 2 week event is that they have asked us back and we can't wait to do this again!! We are shooting to set something up in July 2012. Keep an eye on my website for more info!!

Guess I've put in so many pictures I had better close this one out! Hopefully I can get caught up while we're here in Copenhagen with internet access!!

Lots of love and stay tuned for the Baltic Cruise!!!



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 2 -Stockholm & Helsinki**
Date: 8/11/2010

Hello Again!!

Now I'll move on to the first of our 2 cruises!! We flew from Stockholm to Copenhagen and met up with our cruise buddies at a Scandic Hotel. Not sure if it was because we checked in late (about 9:00pm) or because I had gotten a discount rate (only \$170 for the night!! Yipes!), but we got this tiny little closet of a room! It was smaller than our RV living room! We had to store our luggage in the bathroom so that we could slide in on either side of the bed!! We all scrunched up in there just to prove how tiny the room was!!! There was no closet! The 3 hangars on the wall was the only attempt at storage!! Pretty sad! But it was clean and since we were only there for one short night, it was okay! Luckily the others rooms were much larger since they had been there for 3 days already!



Anyway, there was a little sunshine the next morning, so Bill & Carol took us out walking to see the square and one of the main Pedestrian areas.



We headed to the ship about noon and the check in was fast & efficient! Our first stop was to eat of course, but then we spent the afternoon walking around to get oriented on the ship. We found the basketball courts empty, so we all tried our hand at shooting baskets! Barbara had the best form!



The first day was at sea -interesting course, we had to go north & west from Copenhagen around and then down south through "the Belt" before finally getting to head up the east coast of Sweden to Stockholm. Before reaching the port, we cruised through the beautiful Archipeligo. A group of hundreds of small island along the eastern coast of south central Sweden, this area reminded us all of the 1000 Island district near Toronto, Canada. Our ship just dwarfed some of the islands and it was amazing piloting skill to maneuver through them all!!



Our first tour of the day was to the Vassa museum. The Vassa was a huge war ship built in the 1500's which sank as it left it's dock for it's first voyage!! It's really an amazing vessel to see, because it was excavated from the bottom of the port in 1957 and is in almost perfect condition. It's really a sight to behold with lots of carvings and sculptures. The story on it's design and how it sank is quite interesting, but I don't have time to tell about it now! Just Google it!!



We just missed the changing of the guard at the Palace, but we got to see them (through the wet bus windows (yes unfortunately it was a rainy day!!)).



Then on to the Armoury. It had a huge collection of weapons, carriages, armour, clothing, etc of the Royal Family and was interesting, but mobbed with people due to the poor weather outdoors!



We were then supposed to take a walk through the old town, but since the weather was poor, we scuttled inside a local pub and stayed warm & toasty with coffee & beer!! That evening, the weather cleared up and we enjoyed a marvelous Happy Hour while cruising back out through the Archipelago!!!



Next stop was Helsinki, Finland! Weather was decidedly better and we were lucky enough to see & hear several marching bands, both civilian and military practicing in front of the church in Senate Square. The civilian band was the Helsinki Pipe & Brass Band and they sounded quite good. Dress was a bit eclectic but our guide said they were just practicing on their lunch break!



The inside of the church was beautiful. Especially since it was Lutheran and they are usually not as ornate as the Catholic.



The guide gave us some free time to shop and wander up the main street and we enjoyed the central park area.



Next stop was the Rock Church which is built into the side of the granite cliff and the roof is made of 14 miles of coiled copper wire!!



After lunch, we drove on to Porvoo, a tiny picturesque fishing village. Not much there, but got some free time to relax and wander the quaint streets.





That night we were treated to a beautiful sunset as we cruised on to St Petersburg!!!

Wish you were here!!

Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 3 -St Petersburg**

Date: 8/12/2010

Hello Everyone!!

The 2 days at St Petersburg were definitely the highlight of the cruise!! The city was absolutely amazing. We were exhausted after the 2 days of touring, but it was well worth it. Both days the tour started at 7:00am!! Can you imagine George & Pam voluntarily getting up at that time in the morning (5am!!!) 2 days in a row!!! Totally disgusting!! We're retired! Actually saw sunrise both mornings and here, that's pretty darn early!! They were pretty colorful sunrises too! Pollution can do wonderful things!



We first took the bus to Peterhof Palace. The Winter Palace built by Czar Peter the something or other. The drive through the city was a contrast in extremes. Most of the buildings along the Neva river are amazing. They have been renovated and the architecture was wonderful.



Just before we left the city, we passed one of the ancient entries to the city.



Just before this gate, we were driving through what can only be classified as a slum. The guide described it as a "Factory worker's area." It was awful; windows broken out everywhere, trash on the streets, homeless on the sidewalks, graffiti on the walls -could have been Harlem!! I'm sure if they could have driven any other way because they seemed unhappy that the tourist would see that area. She said the government had said they had put aside money to rehabilitate the area, but in the years she had been a guide she had seen no changes. She was an excellent guide. She was very forth coming and not afraid to say exactly what she thought about things, political or religious. We really enjoyed her. I asked how long she had been a guide and she said she preferred not to discuss it, it made her feel very old!!!

By the way, St Petersburg is not suffering from the drought that Moscow has been hit with. They mentioned how worried they all were about Moscow and had friends and relatives who were suffering.

Peterhof was gorgeous inside (no cameras allowed) and out. Huge gardens both in front of the Palace to be viewed from the road and stretching all the way to the river in the back with a fountains, flowers and gardens everywhere.









Apparently Peter the Great had a sense of humor (or a mean streak). These fake tree fountains were put in by him when he built the Palace. Notice the bench on the right. He would invite his guests to visit the gardens and hide out of sight and watch them. When they sat on the bench, he could flip a switch and water spews from under and around the bench to soak the guests!!!! Very funny from his point of view!!



This fountain was call Fountain of the Sun and rotates around. Lovely.



This is a checkerboard fountain and was beautiful. It should be known that all the fountains are only operated by gravity from a local stream. Most are only turned on for a short time for the tourists to see, a couple of hours a day. We were allowed to stay a few minutes extra to see the main fountains turned on and dramatic music (possibly the Russian National Anthem?? - The guide had left us, so couldn't confirm this) was played.



On back to the city where our lunch included caviar (tried it -Yuck!), champagne & vodka!! Marvelous! Speaking of alcohol. Apparently there is no laws concerning drinking in public as we saw many many young men walking the streets with beer bottles in their hands. This was in the early afternoon and on into the evening.

Then on to Yusupov Palace (where Rasputin was assassinated). Beautiful palace and we were allowed to take pictures inside!!





Last stop of the first day was Peter & Paul Fortress. The Cathedral inside was unbelievable.





Running out of time, we need to leave for our next cruise in less than a half hour!! That evening we went to a Russian ballet and it was very disappointed! Poor execution and the dancers didn't appear to know what they were supposed to be doing. It was extremely hot in the theater (no air conditioning and it had been almost mid 80's during the day), so wonder if the 2nd or 3rd string was brought in to protect the primary dancers. Anyway, it was the only disappointment of the cruise.

Well, have to wait until later to do the second day and to mention Estonia, Poland, & Oslo, Norway. AND then we'll have the Norwegian Fjords to talk about too!!!

Miss you all and think of us!!

Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 4 -2nd day in St Petersburg**
Date: 8/20/2010

Hi Guys!

Our 2nd day in St Petersburg was just as full as the first! We again began the day at o'dark thirty and the weather was just as gorgeous as the day before! Our first stop was just for a scenic view along the Neva River.



Apparently Peter the Great had been fascinated with Egyptian history and there are several statues resembling the Sphinx or other Egyptian artifacts.



We then headed out on a city boat cruise and it was awesome. The city is readily visible from the many canals and then from the river itself.







Our visit to the Hermitage was fantastic. Such amazing wonders they have on view there and they even allowed pictures!!





Apparently there is a process for making items from Malachite that was perfected by the Russians. It must be somewhat similar to doing wood veneer, but it's difficult to tell that the items are not carved out a single block of Malachite. There are entire staircases, beds, walls, etc made out of this process and along with all the gold plating, it really looks regal.



More examples of the fabulous museum. We only had a few hours here, but it would be much like touring though several buildings of the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. You could spend hours and hours there. Tom Anderson -you will be in heaven here!! Many works of the grand masters are here on view.



More Malachite.



From the Hermitage, we visited St Isaac's Cathedral. I think they said this is the 4th largest Cathedral in Europe after St's Mark's in Venice, St Peter's at the Vatican and another??? Can't remember right now. Anyway, this is looking up into the ceiling dome.



Then our last stop was the Spilled Blood Church. There was a long involved story, I believe someone in the Royal family was killed on this sight and the church was erected on it. Again, I can't remember -guess we'll have to get the stories again when we go our River cruise with Grand Circle from Moscow to St Petersburg in September 2011!! Talk to Liz Weiler if you want to sign up!!



Our ship departed from Russia and we were on our way to Estonia!!!

Russia was certainly an amazing place. Could have easily spent a week here!

More later!!

Lots of love,

George & Pamela



Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 5 -Tallinn, Estonia**

Date: 8/20/2010

Hello Again!!

Although this cruise has been wonderful, I must warn anyone considering it -it's rather grueling! All the stops are back to back with no sea days in between!! Glad that we get to do a second one that's more relaxing after this!! Feel bad for our friends having to return to work!!

Anyway, the next stop is Tallinn, Estonia. It is a picturesque little town (at least the medieval old town that we visited). This view was actually from our balcony on the ship!



Our tour started with a short bus ride to the old town where we walked around the cobble stoned streets. This was from a scenic overlook in town.



Next we had a little free time to shop (mostly touristy souvenirs and more of the beautiful Baltic Amber Jewelry. The girl at the counter was reprimanding me for taking a picture inside her shop. Said it was illegal. I think she might have been afraid I was stealing jewelry designs and all I wanted was evidence of Sylvia spending money!!! Here's a shot of the old walls around the center of town.



Then a short bus ride out of town to Kadriorg Palace. The grounds were beautiful. After another beautiful day visit, we enjoyed our Departure Happy Hour!!







And now we're off to Gdynia, Poland!!

It's definitely a whirlwind tour of the Baltic!

By the way, we asked our guide (a lady who had lived all her life there in Tallinn) if she knew anyone of the name of Koyt Tullus (the famous round dance leader from California, choreographer of Kiss Me Goodbye Rumba) and she did know a gentleman that worked at the University with that name. She said it was not a common name and she didn't know the family well, so couldn't confirm if he was any relation. Thought we had to ask though!!

Only 2 more stops!! Poland & Oslo, Norway! Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 6, Gdynia, Poland**

Date: 8/23/2010

Hello Everyone!!!

Our next stop was Gdynia, Poland. One of our first sights was this cute pirate ship (later saw them everywhere -they are apparently tour boats).



Our excursion actually took us away from the port city and into Gdansk. The bus ride was a half hour or so and through a clean, pleasant, fairly large city area.



There was some military vehicles on the street, but not sure why.



We got out of the bus along the river. And enjoyed a lovely walk through the old town area.



We toured St Mary's Church and it quite pretty, if not as ornate as some of the Catholic cathedrals.



It's main claim to fame is this enormous astrological clock. It had all sorts of information available on it and was also a "cuckoo" type clock that had all sorts of animation every hour. I think it was from the 1600's??



This church was one block from the huge pedestrian area in the center of old town. We got to be a part of a Dominican Celebration that had brought folks out from everywhere and there was a real fair type atmosphere. We all agreed that we would love to stay here for a week or so!!! Of course the sun was shining, so that always helps!



Part of the tour including a show & tell about the Baltic Amber. Learned that real amber floats in a mild salt water mix whereas the fake stuff will sink. Almost all of us had bought some amber on our trip, but none of us wanted to take it off to try it!!! We had a little free time before lunch, so George & I wandered the area and found some really interesting food stalls! Really wanted to try these sub sandwiches which were sold by the half and eaten open faced. Looked and smelled yummy!!



But since lunch was included in the tour, we went back to the hotel and enjoyed our lunch with the group. We got to try some type of sausage roll and a really good soup.



Also had live entertainment during lunch and these girls were fabulous!



We hopped back on the bus for a drive to Malbouk Castle. The Polish countryside reminded me of the Amish farms in Western Oregon. It was peaceful, green, and very lush.



Malbork Castle was very interesting. It's huge and has mostly been restored. It's on the UNESCO World Heritage list.





It was almost totally destroyed by Russian bombs while it was occupied by the German Army.



The kitchen area looked ready to use to roast a pig today! The drawbridge still covers the moat, but it's no longer used as a sewer, thank goodness!!!





The drive back to the ship was probably very scenic, but I couldn't stay awake!! Did wake up to see this area by the river which has apparently just flooded recently.



Really enjoyed our day in Poland. Have now put this area on our bucket list to come back and really check it out!

One whirlwind day was just not enough!

More later!!

Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 7, Oslo, Norway**

Date: 8/25/2010

Hi You poor folks back at home!! Sure wish you were here!!
Just got this picture and although it was taken on the first day of the cruise, I wanted to include it, as it shows all the gang, except for Barbara who was the photographer!!



Soooo... Coming to the end of the Baltic cruise! Our last port of call with the Star Princess was Oslo, Norway. Very handy for George & I, because our Norwegian cruise did not stop here. It would have

been a real shame to see so much of Norway and not to see Oslo! This city is another place that had a wonderful feel to it. I suspect you could come here and spend a month or longer and still want to see more!! We unfortunately only had a few hours, but we had had a day to relax at sea, so we were chomping at the bits!!

On the way, we crossed under the Belt Bridge which connects the island that Copenhagen is on to the mainland. It's a huge bridge, but it didn't feel like we were going to fit! We watched from our balcony, but I'm sure the one's in the lounge on the top floor were holding their breath!!



We also had our Formal night Happy Hour! Doesn't everyone look marvelous!!! George was even wearing a tie!!! (I didn't pack the Tux this time -trying to conserve luggage space -he was SOOOO disappointed!!)



Anyway, back to our travels. The first thing that our guide pointed out was the new Opera House. It was designed so that families can actually picnic on the roof of the building with beautiful views of the Fjord to enjoy (isn't that a brilliant idea??) It is really lovely. I think they said it had only been open for 2 years. They are obviously very proud of it and the bus drove by it twice so that people on both sides could get pictures of it.



Our first real stop was the Fram Museum. The Fram is a ship that has been all over the world and has actually been to most places as the first to ever make it there! It was used in explorations of both the North Pole and the South Pole. Much better design than the Vassa, Huh?



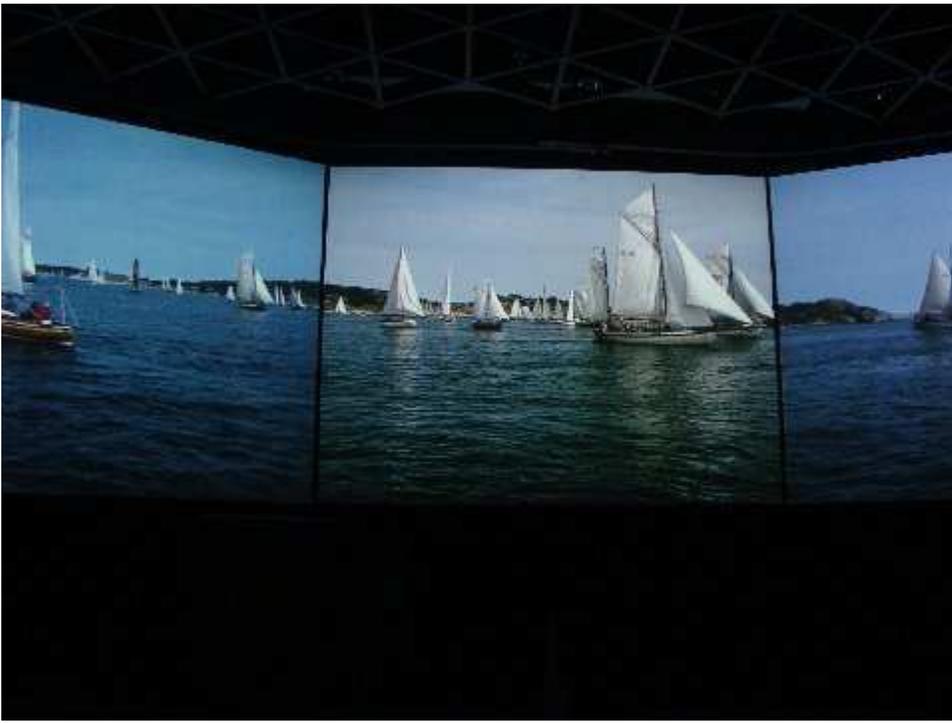
Thinking of the hardships these brave men must have faced to do their explorations is mind boggling. We get annoyed if our plane is delayed a little! The first trip Amundson faced, he

expected to be gone at least 5 months, traveling in subzero weather in these tiny little cabins.



At the Maritime Museum next door, we got a beautiful slide show of the area. And looked at all

sorts of artifacts from ships and off shore oil derricks. Check out the size of this harpoon gun!!



And here's a bunch of real "figureheads"!!



But the real treat of the day was a cruise on a sailboat through the fjord. The ship was actually very old, but quite substantial and comfortable. We used engine power, not sails unfortunately.



The weather was really warm and the sunshine felt great!!!! A beautiful lighthouse that looks like a church.



The Star Princess at her Oslo dock.



Each Island had it's own color code for the buildings. Some were blue/yellow/red and some were green/yellow/red, etc. Made for a beautiful peaceful calm setting. Of course these homes (mostly summer vacation homes) are passed down from generation to generation and almost impossible to purchase. If they do come up for sale, they are in the million dollar range.



The gorgeous modern art glass sculpture in front of the Opera House. As we sailed by, the captain played several operatic songs, mostly by Andrea Bocelli. Gave us goose bumps!!



This day was perfect to end our Baltic cruise!! Here's you all our friends & family and hopes that you too get to enjoy a time like this in the near future!!!



I'll continue with our adventures in Copenhagen and then on to the Norwegian Fjords cruise!!
Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 8, Copenhagen**
Date: 8/25/2010

Hello Everyone,

Well, the Baltic cruise is over and Bill & Sylvia have gone home. The rest of us had a gorgeous day in Copenhagen. We left the ship with no problems and went straight to our Scandic hotel by taxi. By the way, the taxi's in Copenhagen are quite nice, and easy to come by, but pretty expensive. Anyway, it was too early to check in the hotel, but they had a secure storage area, so we left our luggage and headed to the nearby train station to Helsinger to visit Kronborg Castle, commonly known as Hamlet's Castle.



Trying to figure out the trains was funny. The hotel manager had directed us to the train station and we got there easily enough. What she had failed to tell us was that tickets were only sold via a machine and the as only instructions were in Danish!!!! We eventually asked someone for help and through a mix of hand signals and broken English, we were directed to a little store across the street where we could buy the tickets from a young man who spoke fairly good English. Sooooo, once we were on the train, it was a piece of cake to get to Helsinger and the Castle was visible from the train station and only a short 10 minute walk. The weather was amazing, low 70's and totally blue sky!! Awesome!!



Saw lots of flowers and a pretty little park on the way. We arrived at the castle just in time for an English tour.





He explained that the meals sometime lasted for hours and folks would actually eat until they had to throw up!!

They would call over a servant with a silver tray, throw up and then continue to eat! And I thought we ate too much now adays!! Yuck!!!!

The castle was in beautiful condition and had lovely furniture and tapestries on the walls.



According to the guide, Shakespeare was never actually at the castle, but had described it accurately from others' descriptions and thought it would make a perfect setting for Hamlet. After the tour, we were free to wander on our own.



The security guards didn't bother us much.



We found our way to the Maritime Museum and Bill got some good ideas for a new Figure Head position. Then we found the circular staircase up to the top of the tower. Views were incredible.







We continued the rest of the Maritime Museum, it had exhibits about life onboard the ships.



There was a chapel that is still in use. This was the first time I have ever had a glimpse behind a pipe organ. The keyboard was accessible in that cabinet next to all the organ stops.





There were enclosed pews for the congregation and then the King had a entire area in the balcony. The guide said that sometimes the services would go for hours and hours and she suspected the king would often times take a nap in his hidden area.





The last part of the castle to check out was the Casements which were underground. Apparently they were used by the servants for storage, etc. It was pitch black, the flash shows how low the ceilings were.





Then back outside to the Ramparts.



More security for this military area. There were swans in the moat. We wandered into the cute little town of Helsingør, found a nice place to have dinner and people watch.







We took the train back to Helsingør and enjoyed our last short evening together as they all had to take an early early flight back to the US. Hated to see this part of the trip end, but all good things much come to an end or so they say!!!

Stay tuned for the last episode!!!

Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 9 -2nd day in Copenhagen**
Date: 8/25/2010

Hi Friends & Family,

George & I got to sleep late and only got up just in time to enjoy the huge breakfast provided by the hotel.

About noon we headed back to Central Station to wander the city on our own!!

We walked a huge square, a little over 5 miles. We started down HC Anderson Street to the Waterfront.



Didn't have quite as pretty a day, but only drizzled off and on and it was still warm, so not too bad. There were lots of naval boats on the canal. Some were open for tours. There were some from Russia and some that appeared to be Danish or Norwegian.





We went into the Black Diamond (the amazing public library). There were any exhibits inside and a walkway over the street to the Royal Library.





Since I hadn't really done any research about Copenhagen, we really weren't looking for anything in particular, just checking things out. There are many impressive government buildings and most things are right on the many canals.



There were lots of canal tours offered, but we were content to just walk around.



Nyhavn is a famous street where originally the sailors and fishermen lived. Now it's a tourist heaven with restaurants, pubs, shops, & expensive boats!







From there, we walked on to King's Garden



And to the Rosenborg Castle.



We went around the block to the Botanical Garden and spent over an hour going in and out of the many different hot houses. It's next to the college, so we assume they maintain it. Our favorite exhibit had a spiral staircase to the top of the building, but things were pretty overgrown in there.





There was also a butterfly house, but we only found one kind of butterfly.



There were signs about a special exhibit which had to do with these plastic bowls floating in the pond. Not sure what the point was, but they were interesting! Must be modern art!



We finally left the park and continued on down the street and into another park, Osterds Parken. It was huge and had an enormous pond with a bridge over it. Lots of folks on boats and just walking the many paths through it. Nice to see such greenery inside a big city.



From there we went to the Ice Bar. For a mere \$50 (yes I know we're crazy to pay that much, but it was great fun!!), we were issued these cute parka's with attached gloves and had free run of the tiny little bar. We were the only one's there (it was about 4:30pm, rather an off time), so we enjoyed our healthy fresh ginger, strawberry, apple juice, Absolute vodka drink, called a Vapiga Inga (included in the cover charge and served in a block of ice!!) We played the ice hockey game and took turns riding the ice motorcycle. Not the ice bird cage!







George's glasses froze and he couldn't see for about 5 minutes after we walked out.





That was about the extent of our afternoon. We had grilled chicken sandwiches at Kentucky Fried Chicken (cheapest and quickest dinner we could find!!), then after a quick walk through the pedestrian area looking for mouth wash (don't the Danish use mouthwash? Took about 30 minutes and questioning 4 people before we finally found some), we took the train back to our hotel and had a relaxing evening at our hotel.

Next stop Norway!!! Finally!!

Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 10, Alesund, Norway**
Date: 8/27/2010

Hi Everyone,

So George & I set out on the last section of our awesome vacation! We took a taxi to the Royal Caribbean Vision of the Seas. It was a bit smaller ship than the Star Princess. Heard that there were about 2200 passengers. This one was only 10 floors vice the 18 of the Star Princess. Our balcony cabin was on the 7th floor. It is a very pretty ship, think it was built in 1994, but must have been renovated recently. The centrum area was gorgeous.



We were actually able to board before noon (per invitation on our boarding instructions), but our cabin was not ready until 1:15pm. Had lunch and immediately ran into what became our biggest complaint on the ship. There was not enough seating in the buffet dining room for all the guests. There ended up being one good thing about that situation. We would have to join someone else and we got to meet some really neat people! That first day, we sat with this very quiet couple. We finally got her to talking. Turns out that they are naturalized Americans from what she said she "was happy to call the Former Soviet Union!" Once she started talking, she mentioned they had never been able to travel in Russia, the hotels were only open for business travelers. She & her husband were very very happy to be American citizens.

As a matter of fact, on this particular trip, we ran into lots of people that were very open about the fact that they loved the Americans and loved America too. One young couple from the Netherlands told us that they vacationed in America almost every year and loved to visit and hike in the National Parks. We shared lots of stories about our National Park experiences! This particular trip really reinforced that we are very very lucky to be Americans!!

Soooooo, on to my travelogue!! Off the soapbox!!

The weather was a little bit dreary, cool, windy and drizzly. The activity staff tried build up interest in a Caribbean Line Dance Sail Away party, but couldn't get many takers. We watched from the safety of the inside overlook!!



The first night our Cabin Steward set the tone by greeting us with an adorable bed creature. By the end of the cruise I had quite a menagerie!!



The first day was at sea and was a smooth relaxing day. Slept late, read, went to a staff Salsa class (it was pretty poor -didn't bother with any more!). Our first stop was Alesund, Norway. This beautiful town was very interesting. We took a nice long bus trip, seeing gorgeous scenery at every turn.



We stopped at a little church -Stordal Church. It is famous for the the decorations on the inside -called Rose painting.





Don't quote me, but I think they said it was on the UNESCO World Heritage list. There was also a little home next to it that we could visit, it was a common farm household. We saw the sod roof throughout all of Norway. They explained that Birch bark covers the house and the sod is then placed over it for insulation. They laughingly said that a goat was used for a lawn mower!! We were told that this roof has been showing up more and more recently all over Europe. It's considered environmentally friendly to birds, etc. Some folks are even planting flowers for more decorations. Supposedly the birch bark will last for up to 50 years.



The scenery continued.



A fish house with a salmon ladder.



Next was Gudbrandsjuvet Gorge. Rushing river into a very narrow cavasse, 16' wide and 80' deep. Metal walking paths over it all. Some cute story about a lover jumping the gorge to get to his mate.







This is the river before it's forced through the gorge.

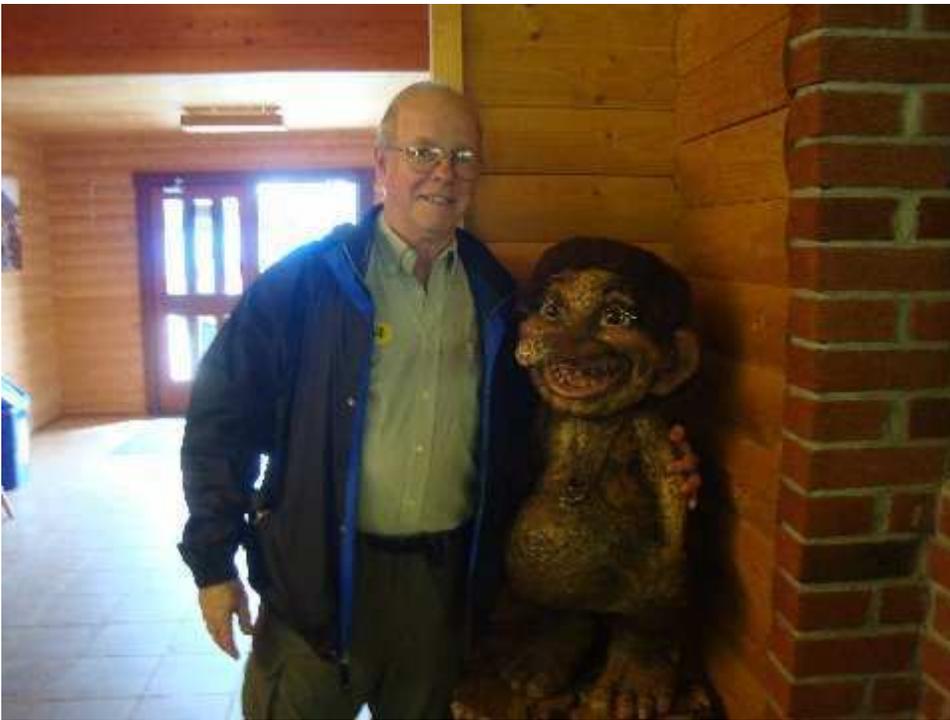


Fireweed is prevalent all around, the latitude is about like Alaska. Waterfalls are everywhere. Even though they said they have not had near the rain that is normal.





We were served lunch at a visitor's center at 2500' over looking the Path of the Trolls. This was our first time to hear of the Norwegians obsession with Trolls. They have hundreds of tales concerning them. There are really bad trolls, just grumpy ones, stupid ones, females ones that have tales that fall off once they trick humans into marrying them, and on and on!!



The Path of the Trolls is an extremely steep road with 11 unbelievable switchbacks. We discovered that the busses in Norway have a much better turning radius than ours in the US. We were literally turning back on ourselves. Unfortunately it was rather foggy, so couldn't get a perfect view of the road down, but I think you can get the idea.





Scenery on the way down was fantastic. A "common" warning sign.





And how's this for a descriptive sign in a public toilet? Guess there's no question about who's expected to use this one.



This was Troll Wall. It's a vertical cliff face on a mountain peak that was considered unscalable until 1965 when the first climbers were able to find a way up, now it's a well known challenge for those that have no fear!!





The bus ride back to the ship was again non-stop scenic goose bumps.







Back into Alesund, we were shown the Nouveau style of architecture the city is famous for. Apparently the entire city was destroyed by fire in 1862 and rebuilt in this interesting blend of styles.



We got back on board the ship about 30 minutes before we departed. Sailing out was fantastic. All of Norway is just God's canvas. Amazing.



So ended our first day of touring on this cruise. Can't imagine how it can get any better, but hang on to your heart strings, believe me, you'll be planning your next trip to this lovely country!

Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 11, Arctic Circle & North Cape**
Date: 8/30/2010

Hello Again!!

This was the wildest stop of our whole summer. Actually it was not only the port stop, but the travel to it. We left Alesund and traveled due north. The water got increasingly rougher as we crossed into the Arctic Ocean and then past the Arctic Circle. Captain told us the waves were 4-6 Meters!! Later they told us that the other ships that were supposed to have sailed up there had turned back!

During our day at sea, we had a really fun incident. Bear with me as I relate this story. We went to the formal dining room for lunch and were seated between 2 couples. George talked to the couple from Iowa on his left and I mostly talked to the couple from the Netherlands on my right. The couple that George talked to went by M&M (not our Mike & Mary Ann Desimone, but names were the same!). George told her about our dancing and described Round Dancing a bit. He told her we traveled a lot and that our names were George & Pam. She wanted to see us dance and we told her we'd be dancing at the Ambassador's party after dinner. Lunch was quite pleasant and we enjoyed all the chatting (me enjoy talking? can you imagine??). Anyway, the rest of the day went by and after dinner, we headed to the formal party for the Platinum & above guests. As we walked towards the dance floor I heard someone say my name. I was pretty shocked because we hadn't really made friends with anyone on the ship yet, but turned to see a couple that I didn't recognize at all. They introduced themselves as Bob & JoAnn and they dance with Mark & Pam Prow in Houston! They are signed up for our Alaskan cruise and recognized us from the flyer!! Here's the really fun part. They had not intended to come to the party, but at dinner, they happened to be talking about dancing and said they were Round Dancers. One of the other couples at their table was... yep you guessed it...M&M!! They mentioned meeting us at lunch and waalah! A full connection was made! Amazing how really really small the world is!!!! We found that we have lots in common and spent much of the rest of the cruise with them and his sister & brother-in-law. Sorry to relate such a long story, but just think it's hilarious! We got a picture of the 6 of us at a later stop that I'll include at the appropriate time.

Back to the travelogue!!! We cruised throughout the day and didn't arrive at Honningstag until the next morning. Sunrise was a little after 3am by the way!!! This tiny little town is on the northernmost inhabited island of Norway, Mageroya. The trip on the tender to the dock was not too bad and we boarded a bus in the drizzle for the hour ride across the island to North Cape.



The scenery on the way across was definitely top of the world quality.





On the way over we made a short stop at what is supposed to be a fishing/hunting camp (more a tourist trap). There were reindeer there (a native in costume would allow you to get a picture of yourselves with the reindeer for a small fee -NOPE, we didn't participate).





The Native's shelters looked much like our Indian's teepees. One guide said something about it, but didn't understand whether she said that they had actually started using them after seeing the American Indian's or if it was an accident. Have to google that. The thing that amazed me was that they had huge firepits inside them. Very smoky inside.



After that stop, we saw lots of deer roaming free. Assume that they are all domesticated animals used instead of cows. And more fabulous scenery of course.







There is a huge Visitor's Center at North Cape and not much else!! There is much to do that it is built on the 71st parallel.



It has a movie theater where they showed us a very interesting 3D video of the seasons, midnight sun, & northern lights.



Then there were exhibits about the seabirds (one of the tours was supposed to have gone out to an island rookery -glad I didn't pick that one because it was canceled due to the rough ocean as was our new friends trip to go king crab fishing).



Also exhibits about the different explorers that had been there and also other countries's visiting royalty.



There was a balcony called the King's Overlook with an outdoor lookout. We braved the outside for just a few minutes. It was cold with passing sleet showers.







It was unbelievably windy. We had a lot of trouble standing up. George held out this bag to try to give an idea of how hard the wind was blowing. There was an umbrella, 2 water bottles and an extra shirt. It was really heavy. The wind was blowing it straight out and he had trouble holding onto it!!



The only other thing to see was an exhibit that was built after getting suggestions from elementary school children from around the world. Consists of this statue of a mother and child and statues representing coins from around the world.



Back in Honningsvåg, we had to huddle in a crowd to wait for the tender. Occasionally got pelted with Sleet while in line. Not exactly a place I'd care to live!! We did get to see a nice rainbow as we cruised out of the harbor towards Tromsø.



The Captain took us back out right by the North Cape wall. Again the seas were really really rough and the wind was even worse!! George went out on deck to get pictures for me.





Can you see the tiny little buildings on the top of the cliff. That's the Visitor's Center. Check out this wave coming! It soaked everyone on the outside deck (including George!!!).





Glad we can say we've been there, but don't have this one on the list of places to come back to for a longer visit!!!

Stay tuned, the other ports were more spectacular!

Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 12, Tromso**

Date: 8/30/2010

Good Morning Everyone!

The waves got smoother as we headed south and we also traveled on the east side of many of the islands. Docked at 8am at Tromso. It is the largest township inside the Arctic Circle and it's most historical claim to fame is that Hitler's Tirpitz was sunk just outside of the city. It escaped damage during the war and is a beautiful little town. It is also known as Gateway to the Arctic as it was used as the starting point for many explorations and for Arctic hunting expeditions. We drove a little west of town to the main museum. It was rather ho hum, but had some nice exhibits about the Sami natives (I was told Laplanders is considered a derogative term nowadays). Also had a nice slideshow on the Northern Lights.





There was a church exhibit inside the museum. This is also where we learned something quite interesting. ALL Norwegian churches must have a ship in them somewhere. Notice the replica of the ship hanging from the ceiling. After this was pointed out, we did see them in all the churches we visited.



This church also had sand timers. Apparently they were to remind the minister that there was a time limit to his sermons as most individuals had traveled long distances to attend and also had long distances to travel back home!!!



In case they did fall asleep, the nuns would stroll up and down the aisles with this instrument to whack them on the head to wake them up!!! A bit brutal back then, huh?



Otherwise, there were animal exhibits.



From there we drove over the Tromso Bridge (Tromso is actually made up of 5 (I think) islands

that are connected by beautiful bridges to the mainland. And on to the day's highlight -a funicular (cable car) to the top of Mount Storsteinen. It was mostly sunny and the view was stupendous!!!







At the top was a viewing area.



And you could walk all around the top.





There's our ship, Vision of the Seas, in the distance Proof we were there! Squinting into the sun!



I couldn't quit snapping pictures!





It was quite green on the top and there were a few Arctic flowers.



A view back to the cable car station. George walks towards the mountains in the distance.
Wish we had had time for a real hike. And of course we had to come back down.







We stopped to visit the Arctic Cathedral. Unusual building, completed in 1965, some say the shape and color represent the arctic glaciers. Now days it is known for it's stained glass that is supposedly the largest in Europe. Interestingly enough, it was designed with clear glass, so that the congregation could contemplate the beautiful outdoors, but the designer forgot about the midnight sun which was blinding the congregation and they took to wearing sunglasses indoors. The pastor did not care for that -hence the stained glass. But neither the building architect, nor the stained glass artist would ever enter the church after the glass was installed. The pipe organ is supposed to look like a ship to satisfy the requirement for the interior ship.



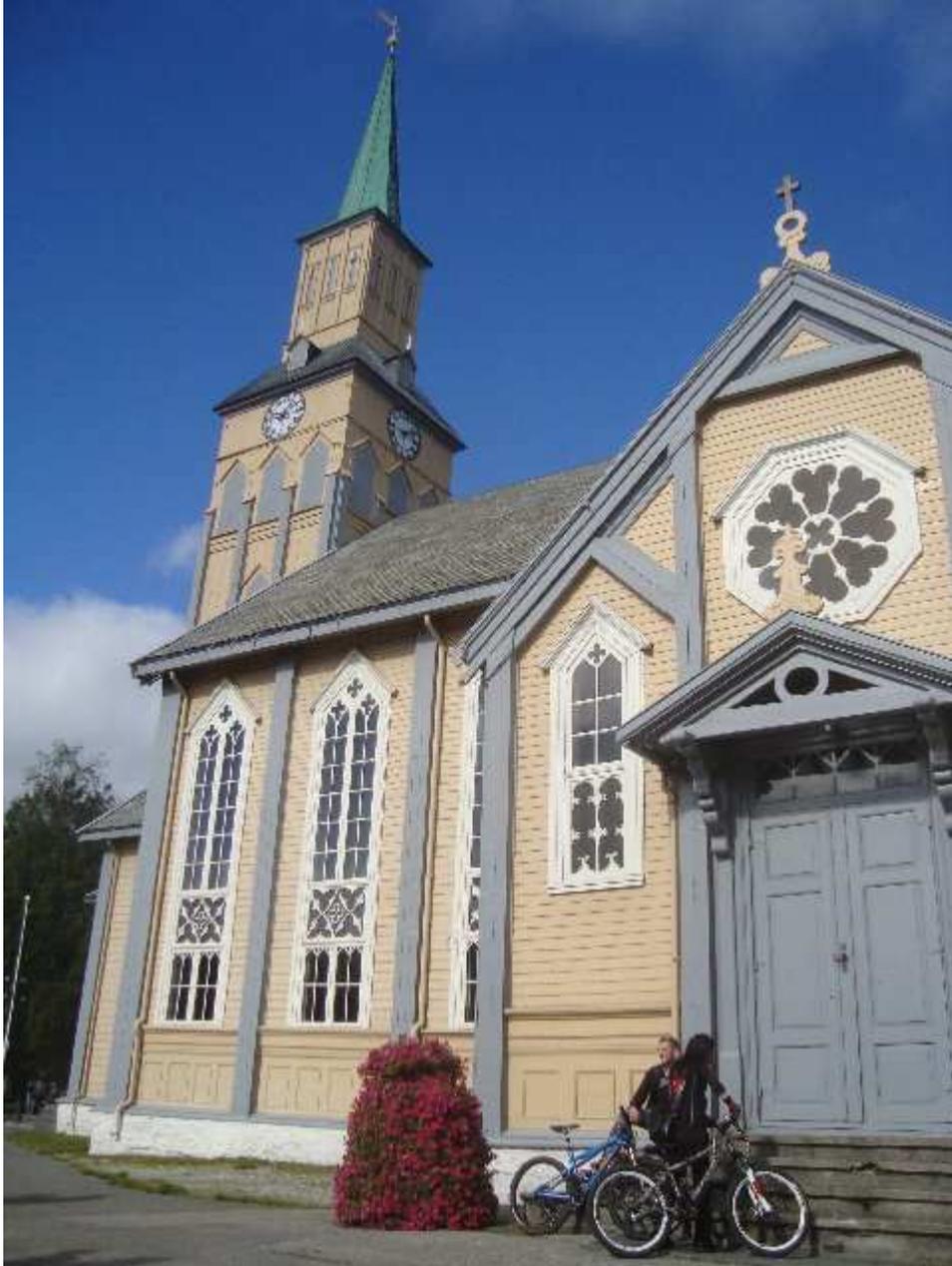




They had some beautiful photos of Northern Lights on the wall. Incidentally, our guide told us that any time there are Northern Lights, there are corresponding Southern lights at the same time. We had never heard that before.



That ended our tour, but we walked around on our own and another church downtown. It too had a ship in the chapel, but I didn't get a picture of it.



We walked around the downtown pedestrian area and visited the unusual city library (domed roof and glass front to use the free wi-fi).





Do you think this sailor appreciates his additional head gear? Looks like it's there quite often!! A view of the Arctic Cathedral from across the fjord.



The evening departure from Tromso was magnificent.





And we were off to Geiranger. Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 13, Geiranger**
Date: 8/31/2010
Hi Guys,

This stop was not only beautiful, it was the only hike we've gotten to do since our time with Dan & Sandi at McCloud, California!! The little town of Geiranger only has a permanent resident population of a couple hundred; however, the tourist population is huge!!!! The Geiranger fjord is on UNESCO's World Heritage List and is one of the most visited in Norway. The train of cruise ships is unbelievable. We were lucky there was only 1 other ship there while we were there. It's definitely a gorgeous setting! I tried to make a map to give you an idea of how far we had followed the fjord inland, but couldn't make it readable. Anyway, we were about 50 miles from the ocean!!!! Amazing, huh? The fjords are just so very deep and even though they are narrow, they are navigable by huge ships.



We had to tender to the dock. Our ship used her own life boats. There was a ferry at the dock too. The dock area consists of parking lots and gift shops.





We had 45 minutes before our tour meeting time, so we walked up the road to a little church. Had continuous views of the fjord behind us. The weather was fabulous -high 70's and mostly blue sky.





The cemetery at the little church was obviously well cared for.





Most of Scandinavia and the Baltic are Lutheran. Assume this church was too. But note the ship hanging from the ceiling!!



Saw this beautiful tractor on the way back down.



And here are our new friends, Joann & Bob next to us and his sister Leslie and her husband John. We're ready for our hike!!



The bus took us quite a ways up the hill.



We had a short 10 minute hike to this little farm. We took a look at a few of his sheep, goats, & Alpacas, then back to enjoy the Norwegian waffles, jam, & cream with coffee to fortify us for our 5 mile round trip hike!







Then we set out. There was this cute little trail marker and notice the container of hiking sticks that were offered gratis as long as you returned it!







We had 2 guides. Both young women, I think they were in their early 20's. One from Belgium and one from Italy. The girl from Italy led the way and she was a mountain goat!! Kept a pretty serious pace and stopped once half way up. Everyone made it to that point, but John & Leslie said that was enough and the Belgium girl took them back to the starting point.



Joann & Bob made it to the viewpoint of the waterfall (Storseterfossen), but stopped there and waited for the rest of us.



Take a close look and see the people on the rocks beside the water! I'm really sorry that Bob & Joann didn't make it to the top, because the highlight was that we got to walk BEHIND the waterfall!!! That was super cool! Literally!







George & I were the first in line when our guide asked for volunteers to climb down behind the waterfall. We were all pretty hot by that time. It had been a pretty steep climb and it was in the 80's. As we climbed down we were getting a little spray and it was awesome!!



We had to scrunch to the side to let another group come out.



There was a chain to hold onto on the mountain side, but the guide warned us that Poison Ivy was all over the wall!! Great!





Is that cool or what? Here's the view down. Not much room down there, so only got to stay a few minutes. It was a marvelous adventure!! George beat me to the top and of course look where I found him!! The peaks all around us were wonderful.









But then it was time to head back down. Picked up Joann & Bob very soon.





Our young friends from the Netherlands, Guido & Nicole stayed with us most of the day. We shared hiking stories about the National Parks in the US. This was their first time vacationing in Scandinavia, normally they go to the states. They've been to lots of the parks, but not quite as many as we have!! They were scared to go behind the waterfall though.



We found John & Leslie down by the road happy & rested!



Our bus was not waiting for us, so our Italian guide asked if any of us had the energy and/or desire to hike a little further and go to a fjord overlook. Well of course we did!!!!



Back past the farm and over the side.







Finally it was time to head back. The end of a glorious day!!! On the tender back to the ship, we could see up to where our overlook was. Check out the overhang!! Humm???

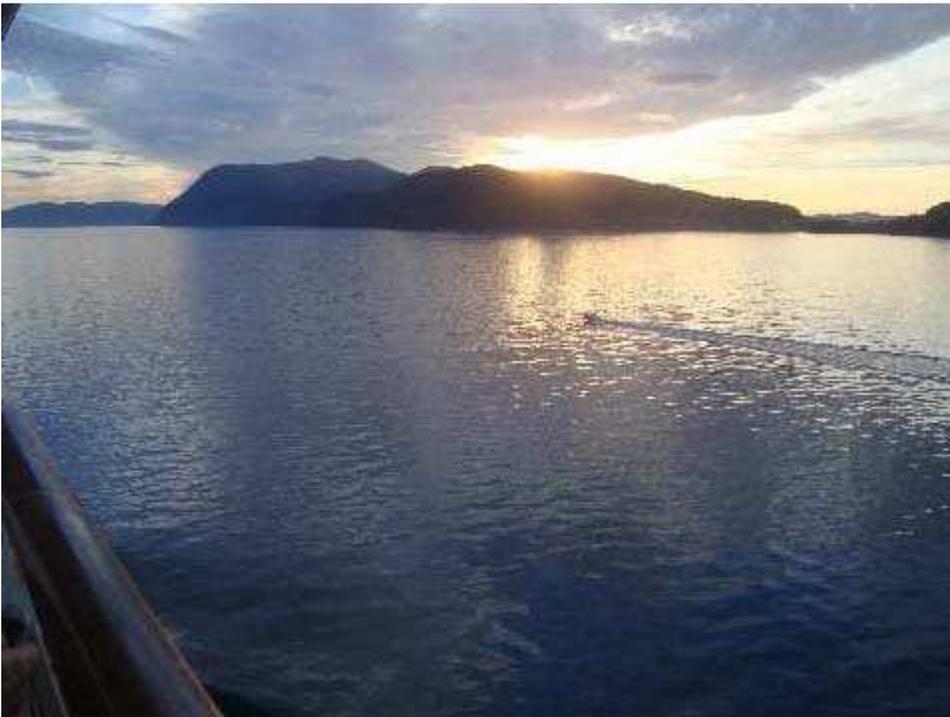






Our cruise out through the Geiranger fjord was stupendous. I took hundreds of pictures!!! I've already made this too big, so I'll just give you a couple to whet your appetite and I'll try to get most of the rest of them loaded onto Shutterfly.





Soooooooo, that was marvelous! So sorry that I got so carried away with pictures this time, but it was hard to choose. Norway is wonderful! I've run out of superlatives!! We're almost done!! Only 2 more stops -Olden & Bergen!! Gone for now!! Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 14, Olden**

Date: 9/1/2010

Good morning folks!

I had assumed that Geiranger was going to be the prettiest stop. Well, now I'm not sure. I think Olden is tied or maybe even better!! Again we had pretty good weather, not quite as warm as yesterday, but mostly sunny blue skies. It did spit a little while we were on the lake, but not enough to bring us inside. But let me go in order.

We arrived in the port of Olden about 8am. This was a really really small community.



The main reason to come to Olden is to see branches of Europe's largest glacier,

Jostedalbreen. It covers approximately 300 square miles. Our bus tour took us through the Kjenndal Valley. Even the hour long bus trip was enjoyable. The scenery was awe inspiring. It did remind me a lot of Alaska, especially driving east out of Anchorage through the Matanuska Valley and past the Matanuska Glacier (without the fjords of course!!). Anyway, we drove along the Sognefjord and along Loen Lake.



The little winding road was one of the 2 way one lane roads and it was built right into the side of the mountain. Totally un navigable during the winter.











There were a few cabins along the road. We were told that it's summer homes only. Apparently there have been 2 huge tidal waves down the lake since the 1900's. Huge chunks of mountainside fell into the lake and destroyed the lakeside communities. The last was in 1936. Can't remember the exact number but we think the waves reached 250' up the shore. Since then folks have only come during the summer.









Our bus driver had little trolls over the door...for good luck?? Our guide told us a long involved story about a farmer and his 3 sons who tricked a troll to get his gold treasure. It was rather interesting, but pretty gory. Not sure I would relate it to children without giving them nightmares!!



More scenery. This will give you an idea of how narrow and close to the edge the road was.







We finally arrived at our destination, Kjenndalen, a small farm/cafe with access to an arm of the glacier and a boat to travel back.





We first crossed a tiny bridge (I'll show you in a minute on the way out) and went to a parking area to walk as close as possible to the glacier. He said you could actually walk on it in past years, but it has receded a little and they now feel it's dangerous to get to the edge of it. Cute little toilet in the parking area.



We walked as far as the path allowed. Notice all the Fireweed. More reminders of Alaska.











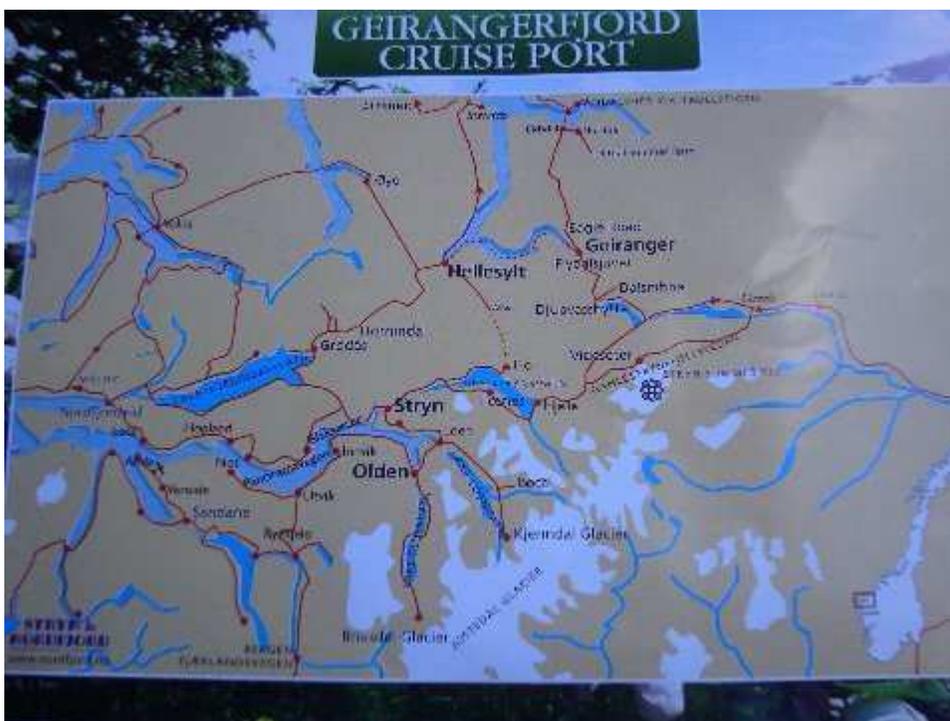




The path was quite rocky and covered in different colors of moss.



Here's a map showing the area. What's most interesting is seeing where Geiranger is. We had to cruise all the way out of the fjord it's on and then back inside to get to Olden. Took from 5:30 the previous night until 8:00am this morning! Interesting, huh? Our bus had left Olden, drove northeast along the fjord to Loen, then followed Lake Loenvatn to the access to Kjenndal Glacier.



This was the view from the tiny little bridge. I'm not sure all those busses should be driving over this thing!!



Then back to the little farm/cafe and we got waffles, jam, cream, & coffee again. George tried to steal the troll's sword, but didn't succeed.



Check out this homemade boat/raft!!



We boarded the little boat and managed to get a space on the roof up to the left and on the back of the boat. We leaned on the edge and sat on the round life boat containers for the hour long boat ride.



That's our Netherland's friends again.





The boat ride was just constant fabulous scenery. Can't show you even a 10th of all the pictures I took. Water was the gorgeous aqua/green associated with glaciers and the steep mountains on all sides of us were covered in waterfalls and tips of the glacier.



Here's a view of the road we drove to get there.



Just a few pictures and I promise I'll stop.







I had a better view of the road on the way back.



There were several farms on the way back to Olden. By the way, I don't think I've mentioned before that we were surprised that the homes in Norway didn't look "European". They could have been taken from Nebraska or any other rural area in the US. When we have traveled in other countries (Germany, Austria, Italy, etc), there was a difference in the way they actually looked, but not in Norway. It was interesting.



Saw several Caravan parks on the way back to the ship.



The port of course had all the standard touristy gift shops, but with reindeer and trolls!! The cruise out through the fjord was wonderful of course.











And so ended another lovely day in Norwegian paradise!! Starting to think of the US more and more! George even got serious about writing a dance for the weekend as soon as we get back! Wonderful if it will have a Norwegian flavor?

More later!

Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Chapter 15, Bergen**
Date: 9/1/2010

Well Friends & Family we're coming to the end now!! Bergen was our last port of call before we ended this cruise in Copenhagen and it was a doozy! We docked at 8am and our tour started at 8:00am by bus. It was called Norway in a Nutshell and is presented by lots of tour companies, not just the cruise ships. It was a 9 hour tour and unfortunately most of it was just traveling and looking. However there was an awful lot of stuff to look at!!!!



Bergen is by far the largest city we visited in Norway, population over 200,000. It has a wharf area that is on the UNESCO World Heritage list, but we only drove past it on the bus. Originally Bergen made it's fortune by trading cod for everything else. Norway was hit very hard by the "Black Death" (the Plague) and Bergen lost it's world status during that period.



Again, we drove past cute little farms and beautiful mountains and lakes.







The weather was not quite as perfect as the previous days, but it was still in the 60's and it was not raining, just partly cloudy. There was a low mist in the valley's that just made everything look very peaceful.



Our first real stop was Tvinde Waterfall. Our guide had warned us before we arrived that she had been here last week and it was not very impressive, due to lack of rain this summer, so we were not sure what to expect.







We thought it was pretty impressive and sure enough when we got back to the bus, she said it looked much better this week. Hard to imagine what it could look like with more water, huh? Notice that Bob & Joann were with us again on this tour, but our friends from the Netherlands had found another hike to go on. We continued along a river.



We were heading towards this lodge on the left, Stalheim Hotel. We had a buffet lunch there (huge, but with the crowd of people it was hard to get from area to area and I ended up with mostly cold salads and several had fish in them -you can imagine how happy I was!! But I made it for it by making an early run on the dessert table!!) The hotel was furnished with many antiques and was really beautiful inside.



But the main highlight for the Hotel is the view from the back. It is a top the Stalheimskieiva and the road up has 13 hairpin curves to arrive! Yep, we would be driving down in our bus!!





Not perfect, but can you get an idea of what the road was like? Supposedly 26 degree grades and 13 hairpins in less than a mile. Glad we weren't driving it with our RV!! The road was built between 1842 & 1849! Pretty impressive, huh?



Looking back up to the hotel. It's a little easier to see the road from here.



There were huge waterfalls, but mostly on the wrong side of the bus from me!! We continued through the Stalheim Canyon which has huge waterfalls throughout it.







Then we traveled through the Gudvangen tunnel which is a little over 7 miles long. These Norwegians really know how to build things!!

Then on to Flam to take the train up to Mrydal station. Before boarding we had a few minutes to wander and take a few pictures.





This train is one of the steepest in the world on regular gauge rail. It is 12 1/2 miles long and about 18% grade on the majority of it. It was about an hour trip. I hung out the window for the majority of time!!







Once we had to stop for a few minutes to allow another train to pass coming down.







There were waterfalls everywhere.





We made one stop that we were encouraged to get out and go look at a huge waterfall, Kjosfossen.







There were these cute little girls that came out to dance for us while we were there. They are female trolls that are trying to seduce a husband. They have tails that fall off once they are married. I couldn't see the tails and I kept George from looking too closely.





We continued on to the top where we changed to another regular train (the Bergen line) to meet with our bus again.



On the regular train, we sat with this interesting couple from the Island of Malta. They were also from our ship and had watched us dance. He was impressed because we had looked so happy, but he wanted to know why I was not home taking care of my Mother!! They had 3 boys, oldest was 52 and they all still lived at home and were not married!! Interesting! Anyway, the scenery was not as dramatic on the return to the ship, but still beautiful and enjoyable!





We went back by the wharf area.



And past the wall old town. And then it was time to say goodbye to Norway!! Certainly didn't want it to end. For our final night on board, the cabin steward gave us a really nice bed decoration.





By this time I had quite a menagerie as I had not been getting rid of them each day!!



And they put on a nice flag ceremony for the final evening. It was very colorful and fun to see how many countries were represented by the crew.



We enjoyed a beautiful relaxing last day at sea. Heading back to Copenhagen.

I'll end with one more travelogue to describe our return back to the US!

Gone for now. No more about Norway. I've gotten almost all the best pictures posted on my Shutterfly page. I

also just finished my Asian book. It's 62 pages and I ordered one to be delivered to Texas, so I'll definitely have it

to show when we get to Mesa.

Lots of love,



George & Pamela

Subj: **Scandinavian Adventure -Final Chapter -Back to Seattle**

Date: 9/2/2010

Well Hello Again!

It's time for the final chapter! We made it back to Copenhagen just fine and were one of the first off the ship. Now that they allow you to just walk off with your luggage, the debarkation is wonderful. Used to be such a chore to pack the night before, have to chase down your luggage in the mad house on the port, etc. Anyway, we just walked straight off (no customs or anything in Copenhagen) and were first in line for a taxi. Because it was 7:30am (boy the Hurd's are really setting an undesirable early morning trend on this trip!!), the taxi breezed straight to the airport and joy of joys, we had 3 and a half hours before we could even check in and then 2 more hours before we could board. Oh well, we had our computers with us and we found a nice quiet place with plugs and everything, so just worked away!

The flight home was rather annoying. I had booked with Delta and this was the second international flight with them that was on an old old jet that had overhead screens. Didn't really bother me, I was either reading my digital book or sleeping anyway, but George loves his movies and it was difficult to watch them and of course there was no choice, so he had a rather miserable time. Flew into New York's JFK, had a 3 hour layover there (by the way, if I were coming in to the US for the first time through Delta's service, I would think it was a 3rd world country!! Off loaded the planes onto these 1950's busses that rise to the door of the plane and then lower to drive around, then rise to connect to the airport terminal. They were filthy and rattle traps. Then a long walk to customs, claimed our bags (which took over an hour to arrive - yea Delta), rechecked our bags and back through Security. All in all made for much irritation!). Sooooo, better plane on to Seattle, but of course they wanted money to watch these movies!!! Where oh where is our cabin steward and waiter and activity staff???? Take me back to the cruise ships!!

Arrived in Seattle (hang with me, I'm going to get to some good stuff in a minute!), took the shuttle to our Jeep, drove to Al & Terri's in Eatonville and arrived at 2:30am! Opened the RV door and nearly fell over!! The smell was HORRIBLE!!!! Apparently, the power had gone out in the RV about a month ago and everything in the refrigerator was spoiled!! Icky fluid all over the tile, hadn't touched any carpet thank goodness. Got things all cleaned up and finally went to bed about 4:30am!!

Up at 9:30am and George figured out what had gone wrong with the power and got it fixed. There was power to the RV, but a internal safety switch had decided that it needed to protect the circuits and shut everything off. Isn't technology grand? The idea is appropriate, but apparently it is set too stringent.

In the meantime, the sun was shining and Mt Rainier was amazing!!!



Now, the good stuff. Tom & Marilyn Anderson had arranged for us to use their beach house on Vashon Island to meet with George's son and family for a couple of days. We already had casual clothes packed and with a short stop at Costco and Albertson we were ready to go! After much conversation between Tom & Marilyn and George Jr., we arranged a time to go over on the ferry. As fate would have it, when they loaded us onto the ferry, we ended up being side by side with George & Rua! Really cool!



To end up this trip back to the real world, we had 2 totally magical days with George, Rua, & Leila. It was George Jr's birthday and Marilyn had furnished a cake (well sort of). Full moon shining on the water!





Leila ate cake (brownies) & icecream and although she didn't look very happy, she was and she played until 1am!!!! Which means that she slept until 9am!! We loved it! The next morning was absolutely gorgeous. Didn't know Seattle could behave so well! No wonder people live here!!







Leila loved looking at the mountain and the birds with the binoculars!







Now the best part!!! After a silence of 15 years, we were able to reconnect with George's youngest son!!! We talked to him on Skype and should be able to keep in contact from now on!
It was a wonderful family reunion!!





Apparently he had decided at 35 it was time to reconnect with family and he found my website and got in contact from there! Awesome!!



So that's the real end to our summer adventure! Now we're back in the good ole USA!!!



We're back to dancing too! Enjoyed a wonderful weekend with Randy & Marie. Yes George finished our waltz and it went over pretty well!



We hit the road heading east and got to the Air Force Academy this afternoon. We'll do our

Labor Day weekend here starting Friday!! Yippee!! Back to work!!
Hope I didn't bore you and looking forward to seeing you all soon!!!
Lots of love,



George & Pamela

***** Check out our web site! [Hurd's Round Dance Home Page](#) Check out our dance demo videos www.DanceRounds.info Look at my pictures on Webshots <http://community.webshots.com/user/pshurd> Look at pictures, videos, & Photo books on Shutterfly <http://pampicts.shutterfly.com>