

**Y**ou left us last month while we were still digesting the shock of having our entire wine store confiscated in Svolvaer and now, as we attempt to come to terms with it, we set off in marvellous weather conditions. The sun is shining so brightly and innocently it's as if it couldn't have possibly done anything else over the past few weeks. Through the Oyhellesundet Channel, we are heading for the famous Trollfjord, a kind of dead-end street on the water surrounded by 3,000 vertical feet of rock faces and a barrier of snowcapped summits at the end. It's an unforgettable view that even the Hurtigruten coastal cruise liners don't miss, despite the fact it's so narrow they barely have room to turn around. After soaking it up, we continue north and suddenly come into very strong winds and waves to match – we keep the wipers running continuously. It seems the high mountains act as a blast pipe for the fjord; we've had similar effects on several passages.

After a night in the middle of nowhere called Risøyhamn, we reach Andenes at the northern tip of Andøya Island. Here, the underwater topography allows for water depths of several thousand feet very close to the European continental shelf, which is why the North Sea whales come so close to the Norwegian coastline. We make full use of the opportunity and follow a

former fishing trawler that is now running whale safaris, offering a 'whale guarantee'. The trawler is led by a very experienced captain who uses a sonar instrument to hear the clicking noises of the whales within a radius of about two miles.

Once a whale has been located, the ship approaches very carefully and very slowly, sometimes in vain. The whales come to the surface for about 15 minutes to breathe before diving down again to find food, and during this time, you often get to see the magnificent fountains they blow out through their air holes as well as their tail fins when they dive down again. These moments come unannounced and are over rather quickly, so capturing them on camera requires a considerable amount of attention as well as luck. The following day on our way to the small island of Husøy, we have to cross the same sea area again and are lucky enough to see another two whales in the wild – an impressive experience for us Baltic Sea natives, where the largest animal we've spotted in the sea is a porpoise.

## EXPLORING THE AREA

Tromsø is the name of the next and final major city on our way to the North Cape. Advertised as the capital of the Northern Lights, which it celebrates with its annual Nordlysfestivalen, sadly we are here at the wrong time of year, so take a berth with a backdrop of the Arctic Cathedral instead. Built on a hill across the sound in 1965, today it is

### ABOUT THE CREW

We covered Thomas and Jutta Kittel's journey to Moscow in their Marlow 72E Azura last year; this year join us as we follow the adventurous couple on a four-part journey to the North Cape of Norway in the Arctic Circle



the town's somewhat futuristic landmark, the charm of which is apparent when it is illuminated from the inside. For the first time in our lives, we go to a Norwegian music concert that starts at 11.30pm and only lasts 30 minutes. At the end of a wonderful performance, we step out of the cathedral exactly at midnight to find the water, the snowcapped mountains, the city on an island and the ornamental bridge below us, and look directly into the warm midnight sun that gives the day no end. We're all touched by the magic of this moment.

As a joke, a friend gives me the four 'Viking Laws', in which the third says, "Be a good merchant". Clearly the Tromsø administration has taken this to heart since they present us with an invoice for NOK2,000 (about £170), which in addition to the usual harbour fee, an 'entry fee' of NOK296 (£24) and a 'flat fee' for water of NOK262 (£21.50) stand out. On the positive side, the flat fee includes 10,000 litres of water, which exceeds our capacity only by a factor of five.

But this isn't the full story – for filling up with water, the supply is through a huge fire brigade-type hose and a clumsy metal adapter that doesn't fit with our small inlet. So we end up using our own water hose and a lot of tape to construct a connection which will hopefully withstand the water pressure. For this outstanding service, the city of Tromsø is politely charging us a further NOK547 (£45) for a 'Water connection fee'. Gentlemen, this is really great – the Vikings would certainly have approved.



PART THREE

# LAND OF THE MIDNIGHT SUN

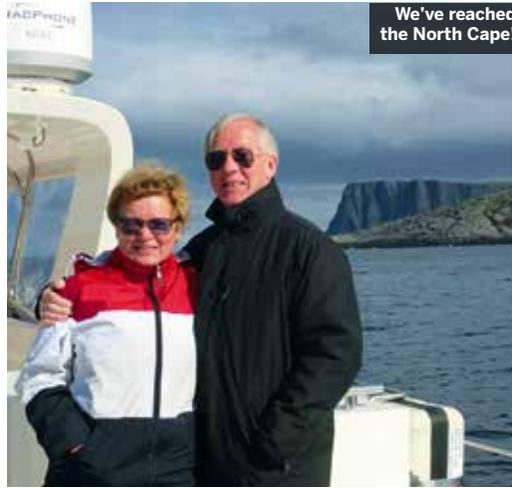
The Kittels come by whales, puffins, calm seas  
and spectacular views at the North Cape

Words and pictures: Thomas Kittel

En route to Leirvik  
on Aurlandsfjord



We've reached  
the North Cape!



Midnight in  
Andenes harbour

Besides the main cities of Norway that we're already aware of (despite being on a learning curve of where they're located), we are making for smaller ports whose existence we were previously unaware of. Some of them do not necessarily warrant being remembered, but here and there we find pleasant surprises. Alta, at the end of a fjord of the same name and not on our original route plan, turns out to be one such place. This small town is a little hidden away, which is perhaps why the Hurtigruten liners no longer come here, but it was recommended by some friends who sailed the Norwegian coast from north to south last year.

A small but well-kept yacht harbour greets us with a narrow entrance and one single guest pontoon, which can only be reached with an abrupt 90° turn to port immediately after entry. To reach the centre of the town, which looks like it was designed on a draft table, we have to walk uphill for quite a while but, contrary to our expectations, we find an inviting restaurant with good cuisine. After a delicious dinner we explore Alta further and first to catch our eye is the Nordlyskatedralen (Northern Lights Cathedral) at the end of the pedestrian area. Built in 2013, its modern and striking architecture

remind us of an unsymmetrical piece of paper half rolled up and standing on its end. In the symbolic tower a golden ladder leads the way to heaven while the interior is dramatically illuminated with lots of clever lighting. We can't help but notice that Norway's architecture demonstrates its modern design influences, particularly in the new churches, art centres and museums.

Alta also has a well-regarded archeological outdoor museum showing rock reliefs from the Stone and Bronze Ages worked into the hard sandstone. The more than 4,000 reliefs were found in 1972 and became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985. It features the same type of quartzite that has long been used as a construction material, most famously exported for use in Tokyo's airport.

In sharp contrast to this museum is the Tirpitz Museum, a little outside Alta, where we learn a lot about the sea battles of World War II that I'm much less familiar with than the events on land. In general, I'm not particularly interested in military stuff but after skipping every sea mine or war museum (there are a lot up here – every town has one), I finally decide to visit the privately run Tirpitz Museum near Kjaafjord, where a huge battleship was stationed in 1943. Here,

*Puffins normally live on water and only come to land to breed, but we see thousands and thousands sitting together on our way round the Cape*



she was attacked by British forces several times and severely damaged; at the fourth attempt, she was finally sunk near Tromsø.

I find this museum a somewhat strange experience. It's a grey and rainy day, I'm taken by a taxi driver who hardly speaks any English and doesn't know the way to the museum, am greeted by a noticeably happy young man at the entrance who doesn't really fit the setting – and I'm the only visitor. I sit alone in the projection room and look at British documents of the events. Northern Norway was strategically important and it took an unbelievable amount of people, resources, intelligence and courage to finally end this insane war. Sometimes it's hard to believe that these events happened just 70 years ago. To me, they seem to stem from a different age, almost as distant as the Stone Age rock reliefs.

## THE SUMMIT

After we have to fit another unexpected day of rest due to conditions, there is just one leg left between us and our end goal of the North Cape. The weather is still rainy and foggy as we leave Hammerfest and we can only hope that the sea conditions will allow us to go round the North Cape on the Barents Sea side. This time, the weather gods are finally with us – the rain stops and the fog clears away shortly after we pass MS *Europa*, the uncrowned queen of exclusive cruising. The sun manages to poke its head out over the calm sea and we decide to head around the North Cape. The decision pays off – we are rewarded with a spectacular view of the North Cape plateau steeply towering out of the Barents Sea to a height of over 1,000ft. This view is very rare – even the Hurtigruten passengers don't see it as their ships go round the south side of Magerøya Island.

We haven't climbed a mountain before but we imagine we have a similar feeling, as if we'd reached a summit – and even the fact that geographically the North Cape isn't exactly the northernmost point of the European landmass doesn't dampen our spirits. For us, we are just pleased to have reached this location despite all the adversities, and even more so to do it from a point that most other visitors and tourists don't. On our way round the Cape we get another treat – thousands and thousands of puffins are waiting for us on a huge rock. These very pretty birds normally live on the water and only come to land to breed; they're sitting so close to each other that from a distance the whole rock looks to be white.

Thoroughly happy and very satisfied with what we've achieved, we reach Honningsvåg in the late afternoon. Here, the Hurtigruten liners as well as numerous cruise ships from all over the world make this small harbour one of the most visited places in Norway. We join the steady stream of tourists and experience the North Cape for a second time, this time from land. The obligatory photos with the



Cruising from Svolvær Lofoten to Trollfjord



Off to see the whales near Andenes

famous globe are part of our itinerary, as well as a small glass of prosecco to toast the success of our 'modern adventure'.

A further honour is that we become members of the Royal North Cape Club. Founded in 1984, it now has almost 50,000 members. Besides an official document confirming our presence at the North Cape, we receive admission-free entry to the North Cape for the rest of our lifetimes. So why not escape a dull winterly weekend at home for a spontaneous 'free' visit to the Polar Circle, ladies and gents?

During our land visit to the North Cape, dense fog engulfs the whole scenery, only briefly interrupted by short sunny moments – all those warnings from previous visitors who saw nothing but clouds now make sense. We feel very lucky to have circumnavigated the North Cape in near-ideal conditions.

Now there are only another two and a half months, about 2,500 nautical miles and almost 20 guests ahead of us before we reach domestic waters again. And if you think that the return trip would be pretty boring, think again – on the way up, we didn't have enough time to visit and see everything, and it can be fun to return to a port twice. Often you will get a completely different impression due to weather conditions, a new crew, or just how you're feeling that day.

So we're looking forward to descending from this maritime summit and enjoying Tromsø, Lofoten, Trondheim, Ålesund, Sognefjord, Geirangerfjord, Hardangerfjord, Bergen and Stavanger once more on our way home. **MBY**

**Next month** The South Cape marks the final leg of the journey