

Roger:

Wednesday 20 May

After a great breakfast at the Clarion Collection No13 Hotel, we headed to catch the bus to the Gondola. The view from Ulriken (top of gondola) is fantastic. Looking north-west and south over the city and waterways. Out to the east are snow covered mountains. A tasty lunch was followed by a 20 minute stroll to the highest point revealing a number of quaint cabins and tarns.



Arriving back in town we took a stroll through the old wooden buildings which look like the only way they stay up is by leaning on each other. There we found ZJ Design where the lady makes jewellery in the store. Daughters Victoria and Kirstie now have new

earrings. We also tried some of the local delicacies – whale meat sausage, reindeer sausage and elk sausage. Surprisingly delicious.



Boarding the National Geographic Explorer took place around 4pm. Sylvia gave Joel and I a guided tour as she had been to the Antarctic on it 18 months ago. At 112m and a gross 6471 Metric Tons this ship is really comfortable. Our cabin is 3x7M with a good sized bathroom and shower. The ship is well laid out with an open bridge policy (but don't push any buttons). There is a library and observation lounge on the top deck, a big lounge bar/briefing room on deck 2, chart room, restaurant, gym, sauna and a few other spaces. With an A1 Ice rating and a cruising speed of 15 Knots already we know we are in for a great time.

An emergency training drill for all 150 passengers is conducted. We assemble in the lounge and are taken in groups to the life boats.



Later we get a rather long briefing on the ship and activities and the staff introduce themselves. We have an expedition leader and assistant, 2 National Geographic photographers, 6 naturalists, 1 photo instructor, 1 undersea specialist, 1 historian, 1 video chronicler, 1 physician and just to make it a bit more interesting Alfred S McLaren, a former Nuclear Submarine Captain who during the cold war surveyed the Siberian ice shelf.

By this stage we were well underway steaming 160 NM north to Nordfjord.



After a smorgasbord dinner and a chat to a few people it is time to retire.

Sylvia:

Thursday 21 May

We were woken this morning at 5:30am by the Expedition Leader over the loud speaker. We had arrived at the wee town of Olden at the end of Nordfjord, a stunning spot with high mountains on each side of the fjord and quaint houses in the village. An early breakfast and then we disembarked for our first excursion at 7:15am. We were met at the wharf by coaches and headed off for a 40 minute drive up Olden Valley towards Briksdal Glacier. We enjoyed a brisk 2.5 mile walk up the track to the end of the glacier. Beautiful but not as visually stunning as the Fox and Franz Josef glaciers in my opinion. It was good troll territory though with lots of boulders and even an old ramshackle cottage with grass growing on the roof.





Returning to the carpark we stopped in at the café for coffees and a huge assortment of rather delicious cakes before reboarding the coaches and heading back to Olden. We made a brief stop at a very old wooden church that had the pews inside wee stalls – Roger commented that the church could double as a woolshed.





Joel has been quite a hit with the older folk on the ship. He cannot seem to get the grin off his face and is clearly making the most of the experience.

After lunch back on board we set sail back down the fjord so settled into the observation deck to update blogs and catch up with the rest of the world. The rest of the afternoon passed fairly quickly – a photo seminar from the National Geographic photographers, mandatory briefings on the use of zodiacs and kayaks, a good gym workout and the Captain's welcome cocktails preceded dinner. We were joined for dinner by Eric, one of the young photographers on board, who filled in a lot of gaps from the photo seminar earlier in the day.

The sun doesn't set until well after 10:30 and rises before 4:30 so we are not seeing much night.