

Norwegian Wood

Terry Martin was on-board for the ultimate workshop event.



I have attended many international woodturning events over the last 20 years, but there has been one that I really wanted to be part of – the Norwegian Woodturning Cruise. A simple description of it sounds so unlikely that you wonder who could have thought of it: fly to Norway, embark on a ship with hundreds of turning addicts, cruise almost the entire length of the spectacular Norwegian coast taking in the sights, talk woodturning for 12 days, watch famous turners at close quarters, take lessons...it all sounds very improbable, but it has been happening every three years since 1998.

Odd Erik, who runs the cruise, explains how it grew out of the unique geography of Norway, where road and rail travel are still quite restricting: 'I used to work for a large building supplies store. We travelled by road to quite a few shows in Norway with great success, so we wanted to go to

more cities, but it would have been too expensive. Then I came up with the idea of using a boat. We could go where we wanted, the set up was easy, and we could have passengers join us to help finance the project. When I told my boss he called me totally crazy, but finally he agreed that we could try it. We started in 1998 and on the first small ship we actually did the turning in the dining room!' Now that Odd Erik's own company runs the cruise, he has expanded it into a bigger ship and has much more experience gained during five cruises.

As a demonstrator on the cruise, I was not disappointed with the unique experience. Each day I awoke to the gently rolling rhythm of in-shore sailing as we cruised to the next port. After a shower in the compact ensuite bathroom, I answered emails in the small but comfortable cabin, then went to the foredeck to be treated to yet another breathtaking seascape of offshore islands and the

early light bouncing off mountains, waterfalls, and fjords of such grandeur that we seemed to be travelling in a fantasy world. At breakfast in the dining room old and new friends ate together and talked about turning.

After breakfast passengers often booked one-on-one lessons with demonstrators, or took lessons with the dedicated teaching staff. Some took classes in knife-making, leatherwork, carving, pyrography or felting. Once we had docked, passengers had the option of taking excursions in the delightful towns we visited, while locals came on board to watch, learn, and buy tools and wood. I had many delightful conversations with many of them, including a goat farmer, a science teacher who was also a master woodcarver of traditional Norwegian dragons, a family of three generations who spend their indoor winters turning wood in a tiny hamlet, and many more. These conversations were a highlight for me.