

# Norwegian Woodturning Cruise

Part 2



by Joseph M. Herrmann

In the first part of this series on the Norwegian Woodturning Cruise, we looked at the demonstration and sales side of the voyage and provided a little background information about the true purpose of the cruise. In this article, I want to introduce you to some of the ports that we visited and the beautiful scenery that we encountered on the trip.

## PASSENGERS

Though the majority of the 225+ passengers on board were dedicated woodworkers/woodturners, there were some folks who didn't like the hustle and bustle inherent with huge cruise lines and just preferred this small cruise ship style of touring; I ran into several of them.

On a small boat, such as the MS Gann, it's far easier to become acquainted with your fellow passengers than on a larger cruise ship, and I discovered that there were many different nationalities represented. I met quite a few folks who were from the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia, as well as people from all over Europe and even a few folks from Russia. The United States was well represented, but not as well as I would have thought. Being on a small ship has its advantages and I got to know the demonstrators much better and met a lot of genuinely interesting people, many of whom I now call friends.

## PORTS OF CALL

We started the cruise in Stavanger, Norway, and proceeded from there to Sundane, Geirangerfjord, Molde, Namsos, Bodø, Tromsø, Hammerfest/North Cape, Sortland, Mosjøen, Trondheim, Ålesund, Bergen, and back to Stavanger.

For the most part, the ship traveled to the ports at night so that any discomfort caused by rough seas was minimized and a lot of time wasn't wasted while underway. The vessel usually docked at each port around 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. so there was a lot of time to sit on deck in the morning and watch the scenery pass by—as long as you were an early riser.

## THE MS GANN

As I mentioned previously, the MS Gann is a merchant marine training vessel during the school year, and therefore, doesn't have all the amenities that you would expect on a conventional cruise ship. For example, there was no gambling, swimming pools, Las Vegas-style shows, or alcohol on board—although I'm sure all those adult "sippy-cups" I saw weren't just filled with Kool-Aid! However, the vessel was clean and well maintained, the accommodations were quite comfortable, and the home-cooked food was wholesome and delicious. What more could you possibly want?

## ACCOMMODATIONS

There were cabins located on every deck and from what I gathered, the higher the deck, the higher the cost of the cruise. I had my room on "A" deck, which was the lowest and housed the least expensive cabins available, and I shared my berth with another person. The cabin itself was a bit small and provided bunk beds instead of regular beds (see Fig. 1). There were two small closets for clothes and other material, and a small desk was available for a computer (see Fig. 2). A bathroom with a small sink and shower was also available. I knew that there was a possibility that I would have to share my cabin with another person, and fortunately, I drew an absolutely delightful gentleman from New Zealand (see Fig. 3).

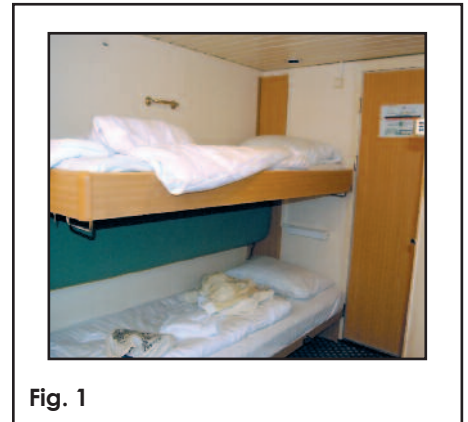


Fig. 1

**Bunk beds were provided in the inexpensive cabin that I shared.**



Fig. 2

**The desk area was small, but was certainly large enough for what I needed.**



Fig. 3

Mike Stafford (*left*) and Gorst DuPlesis (*right*) are talking to my "roomie" Kevin Watson.



Fig. 4

The buffet table was filled with lots of goodies so that even a somewhat picky eater had no problems gaining a bit of weight. I had a very interesting conversation with the gentleman in the red-striped shirt about the history of the area we passed through that day.



Fig. 5

Though fish and other seafood made up the bulk of the food choices, there was certainly enough other food available to not go hungry.



Fig. 6

The main dining area was spacious. Terry Scott (*right*) and his friend Dick Veitch at the nearest table in the black and blue shirts.

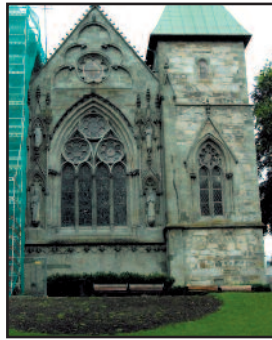


Fig. 7

Stone building materials were prevalent all over Norway and were used for some beautiful buildings.



Fig. 8

This is the view coming into the port of Stavanger from where the boat had been docked.



Fig. 9

I chanced upon this little inlet on my walking tour of Sundane—I think this would make an excellent photo for a jigsaw puzzle!



Fig. 10

The weather was quite nice throughout the trip—we had hardly any rain. However, the mornings could be misty and clouds dipped quite low along the peaks.



Fig. 11

This is the fjord entrance into Molde.

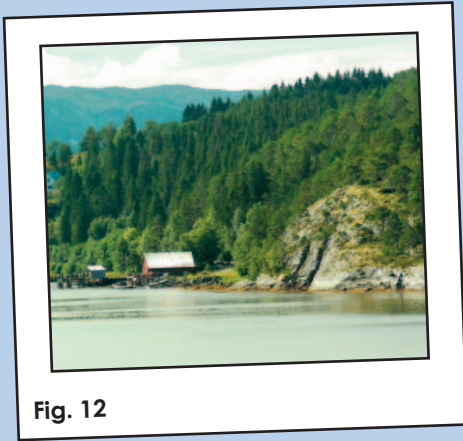


Fig. 12

Homes such as these were quite prevalent along the entire coast of Norway and many were accessible only by boat.

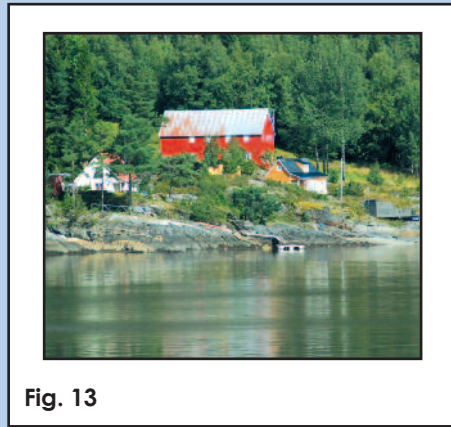


Fig. 13

Another grouping of "summer homes" along the coast.

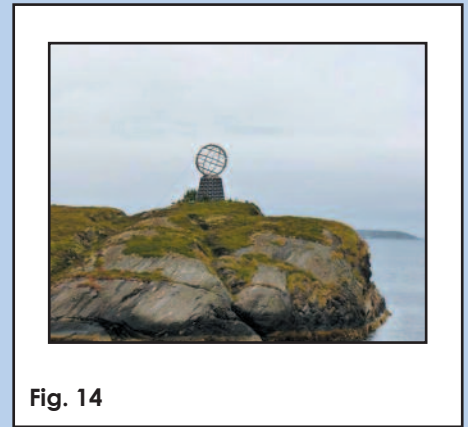


Fig. 14

This marker notes the location of the Arctic Circle.



Fig. 15

King Neptune and his henchman arriving for the ceremony.

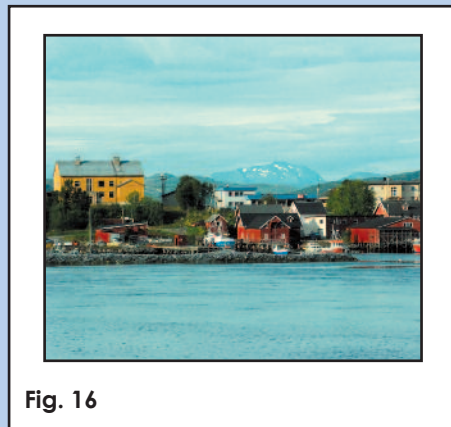


Fig. 16

Colorful little villages continue to appear frequently.



Fig. 17

The sunsets are breathtaking and occur much later in the evening than at home.

## FOOD

Everyone envisions cruise food as a sumptuous buffet filled with all sorts of decadent delights that are sure to pack on the pounds. Though not exactly the case on the MS Gann, the food was quite tasty and could best be described as Norwegian home-cooking. Fish was the staple at every meal, but there certainly was enough other food so as not to go hungry. I'm not a big fish eater and I had my reservations (nightmares really) about eating lutefisk and salmon for every meal, but that wasn't the case. I truly enjoyed the food on board and was glad I went into it with a semi-open mind. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend the food to anyone and I actually enjoyed the two fish dishes that were served—I enjoyed one so much that I even asked for the recipe!

The food was served buffet-style (see Fig. 4) and various offerings were available for all three meals (see Fig. 5). A large dining area surrounded the buffet table and there

was ample seating for everyone (see Fig. 6). There was another dining area adjacent to the main area for folks to use as well, and it provided a television to keep abreast of breaking news.

## SCENERY

We spent a total of fifteen days in Norway, and it would be almost impossible to show you all the photos I would like you to see here in this article—there are just too many beautiful ones from which to choose. However, I am going to try to provide a few from each port to give you an idea of how breathtaking the views were along the route.

I posted more photos each day on the *Woodturning Design* Facebook page. You can access that by going to our website at [www.woodturningdesign.com](http://www.woodturningdesign.com) and clicking on the red whirl-a-gig icon on the left-hand side of the home page. You don't need to be a member of Facebook to access the photos.



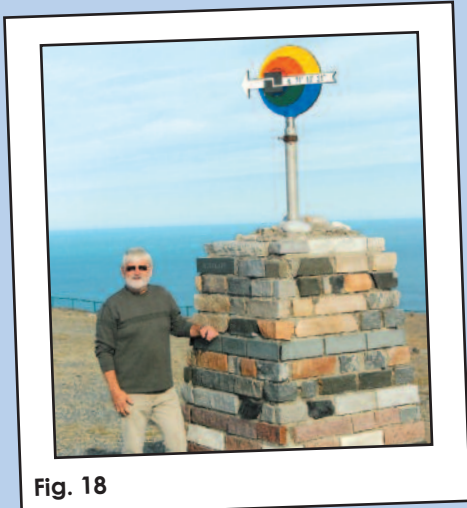


Fig. 18

I'm standing next to the monument, which is noting the position of the North Cape: 71° 10' 21".



Fig. 19

Reindeer were everywhere and they "belonged" to the indigenous people who lived in the area.



Fig. 20

Many of the buildings in Sortland are painted a vivid blue.



Fig. 21

The Trollfjorden had some of the most gorgeous views of anyplace we went.

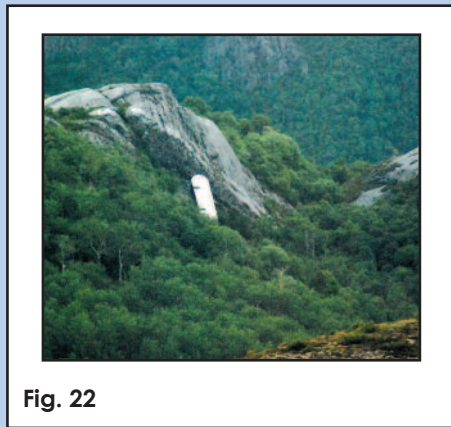


Fig. 22

This door that was built into the side of the mountain allows the trolls to pass freely.



Fig. 23

Numerous glaciers were evident along our route.

**Stavanger, Day 1:** Initially, I flew into Amsterdam and then made a connecting flight to Stavanger. We couldn't check into our hotel immediately, so I had an opportunity to do a little sightseeing around the port. **Fig. 7** shows an old stone church that was undergoing repairs.

**Stavanger, Day 2:** Because of a mix-up with the Harbor Master, we couldn't board the ship until quite late in the day, so we toured the area a bit more. We eventually got a ride to where the ship was docked and rode it back to the port to pick up the rest of the passengers (see **Fig. 8**).

**Sundane, Day 3:** The buildings all around Norway are painted such vivid colors and many are set on little inlets. It is truly a picturesque country (see **Fig. 9**).

**Geirangerfjord, Day 4:** The ship pulled into Geirangerfjord early in the morning to allow the passengers who were

going to take a bus tour over the mountains (and eventually be picked up in Molde) to get where they had to be. **Fig. 10** shows an early morning shot of the mist-shrouded mountains that encircle the town. **Fig. 11** shows the fjord entrance. There was a little house that was out of sight until we rounded a bend in the fjord (see **Fig. 12**).

**Namsos, Day 5:** There were a number of what I was told were "summer homes" all along the little inlets and bays that dotted the shoreline (see **Fig. 13**). I also heard that the colorful houses belonged to the lesser-paid folks, because white paint was much more expensive to purchase.

**Bodø, Day 6:** We crossed the Arctic Circle today at 7:22 AM. **Fig. 14** is the marker in the fjord that indicates the precise location of the Arctic Circle. To commemorate the crossing of the boundary, King Neptune paid a visit to initiate the "first-timers" into the exclusive club (see **Fig. 15**).

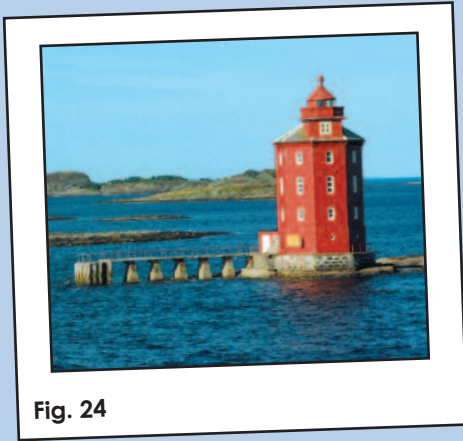


Fig. 24

People actually live in this lighthouse.

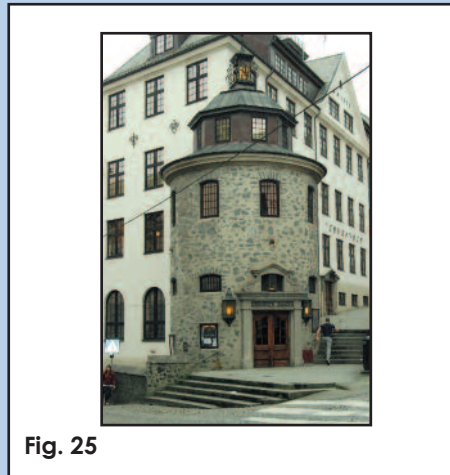


Fig. 25

One of the contemporary buildings in Ålesund.

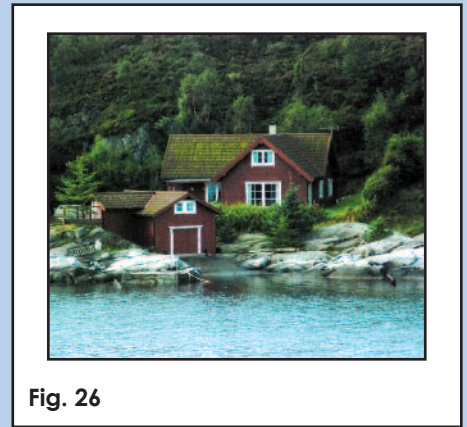


Fig. 26

Small houses dotted the shoreline more than an hour out of port.

**Tromsø, Day 7:** The day dawned brightly and we passed a number of spectacular views along the way. Small villages continue to pop up frequently and the vivid colors are almost universal (see Fig. 16). Sunsets are absolutely gorgeous, as Fig. 17 shows—this photo was taken about 10:30 at night.

**Hammerfest/North Cape, Day 8:** We made our way to Hammerfest and I took the only paid excursion that I had booked to the North Cape. The North Cape is the northernmost point in Europe and was quite desolate, although you couldn't have asked for nicer weather. I was a little disappointed in the trip, because we didn't get to see many of the "must-see" things that I was told about. Fig. 18 shows the marker for the North Cape. Reindeer were frequently noted alongside the road, and the bus had to stop often to allow them to cross the road (see Fig. 19).

**Sortland, Day 9:** Sortland is known as the "Blue City" because many of the buildings are painted a vivid blue (see Fig. 20). We also passed through the Trollfjorden, a very narrow passage where the entrance to the fjord is only about a football field wide. It rained most of the day, but the rain stopped just as we entered the fjord—it was a spectacular view (see Fig. 21)!

**Mosjøen, Day 10:** Mosjøen is one of the cultural centers of Norway, and I was able to tour a large part of it on foot. One of the interesting sites we saw along the coastline was a door built into the side of a mountain that, it is said, allows the trolls to pass freely between the two worlds (see Fig. 22). There were quite a few glaciers in the area as well (see Fig. 23).

**Trondheim, Day 11:** Trondheim is Norway's third largest city and for nearly two hundred years was its capital. One of the most interesting sites was an inhabited lighthouse that we passed along the way (see Fig. 24). We were told that the folks living there had to tether their children to the building to prevent them from being washed away during high tide.

**Ålesund, Day 12:** The architecture of Ålesund is art nouveau and is famous for its turrets, towers, and decorative details (see Fig. 25). Ålesund burned in 1904 and the architects who designed the reconstruction were young and inspired by contemporary styles of the time.

**Bergen, Day 13:** Bergen is a well-established port for cruise ships and is often referred to as the "Gateway to the Fjords." It is one of the largest cities in Norway but very conducive to exploring on foot. I was quite amazed at the

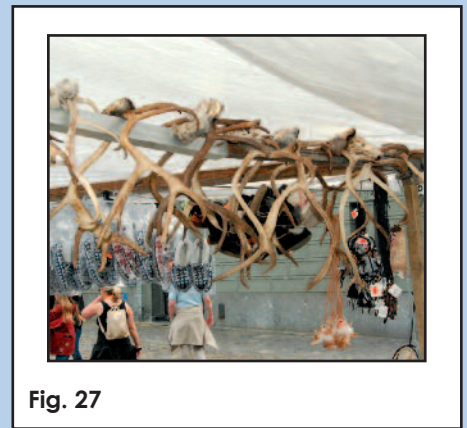


Fig. 27

This wasn't the only display of exotic goods featured at the market.

number of houses along the banks of the fjord even when we were more than an hour out of port (see Fig. 26). In addition, there was a huge industrial presence in the area. A large farmer's market was within walking distance of our dock and I found it to be quite fascinating, especially with some of the more exotic items being sold (see Fig. 27).

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The cruise was just spectacular and I urge anyone to consider going. The next one is scheduled for August 11 to 23, 2014, so there is plenty of time to start saving for the trip. For additional information on the cruise, please contact Odd Erik at [odderik@vertoyas.no](mailto:odderik@vertoyas.no) or visit the website at [www.woodturningcruise.com](http://www.woodturningcruise.com).