

Norway *August 5 - 28*

This itinerary is for a 22-day/23-night trip, but of course you could follow just parts of it for a shorter trip (see suggestion below). My trip was composed of several segments: four days driving the coastal road, the mountainous E6 route, and the middle segment of the Lofoten Islands; six days based in Reine, in the southern tip of the Lofoten Islands; five days in Bergen and driving up through Sognefjord to the Geirangerfjord; and finally, a week based in Aurland, on the southern side of the Sognefjord.

Norway is an expensive country to travel in. But picking lodging with a kitchen(ette) to cook in once in a while can greatly cut back on costs (and you may eat better anyways!) This trip is probably much more enjoyable in the late spring and summer months, but you can save some money by visiting just before peak season (early June) or just after (late August). You can also save money (especially if you are traveling with several people) by renting a cabin or a house for a week. We rented house #FJS377 in Aurland (southern Sognefjord) through Interchalet (<http://www.interchalet.co.uk>) and it was absolutely wonderful. The house was spacious and comfortable and the view from the deck is possibly the best view I saw in the three weeks of travel in Norway.

I found August to a good time to travel to Norway. The weather was unpredictable (some days sunny and 80F and some days closer to 50F and rainy). But especially by the middle of August, there are noticeably fewer tourists (especially in the north, the overwhelming majority of tourists were Norwegian, and Norwegian kids go back to school around August 20). And although visiting earlier in the season when the sun never sets in the far north could sound enticing, the sun not setting means no sunsets. And I saw some of the most incredible sunsets of my life on this trip.

When I started this trip, 1 \$US = approx. 5.43 NOK, 1 EUR = approx. 7.84 NOK. I have not tallied up the total cost of the trip. I leave that to you, as I don't want to know!

In these parts of Norway, people dress quite casually—I lived in sneakers and hiking boots. See my post on “Hiking Packing List” for a list that approximates my packing list for this trip. A few additional items to consider bringing: additional books (as there's not much to do at night in most of these places), CDs (for the car—in many of these parts you get few or no radio stations), the GPS of course, a small tripod for those sunset shots, a fork, knife & spoon set for grocery store meals, a more substantial waterproof windbreaker (just in case), mittens & hat (it does get chilly some days, especially at night or up in the mountains).

In terms of guide books, we relied primarily on the *Lonely Planet* during the entire trip, on the *Moskenes Guide* for the Reine area (free at your hotel) and on Rick Steve's *Scandinavia* for Bergen and the fjords. We also picked up a number of brochures for driving tours, hiking trails and other sites from the local tourist offices in the fjords region, which were generally quite helpful.

Fri, August 5: Abby flies Paris to Oslo (8:30pm – 10:50pm)
Sat, August 6: Abby flies Oslo to Bodo (9:25am – 10:55am), night in Mo I Rana
Sun, August 7: Abby—night in Bognes/D. flies Paris to Oslo
Mon, August 8: Abby—ferry Bognes to Lødingen, night in Gimsøya/D.—Oslo
Tues, August 9: Abby/D.—Reine, Lofoten/D. flies Oslo to Bodo (arr. 14h30) then ferry Bodo to Moskenes (17h45 - 21h00)
Wed, August 10: Abby/D.—Reine, Lofoten
Thurs, August 11: Abby/D.—Reine, Lofoten
Fri, August 12: Abby/D.—Reine, Lofoten
Sat, August 13: Abby/D.—Reine, Lofoten
Sun, August 14: Abby/D.—Reine, Lofoten/M&D fly from Boston
Mon, August 15: Abby/D.—ferry to Bodo (14h – 17h)/D.—flight to Paris (7:10pm)/Abby: flight to Bergen, arrive in Bergen (7:10pm – 11:10pm)/M&D arrive in Bergen (12:20pm), night in Bergen
Tues, August 16: Bergen
Wed, August 17: Night in Balestrand
Thurs, August 18: Night in Geiranger
Fri, August 19: Night in Geiranger
Saturday, August 20 to Saturday, August 27: Aurland
Saturday, August 27: return to Bergen
Sun, August 28: Abby flies back to Paris at 7:50am/M&D—night in Bergen
Mon, August 29: M&D fly to Boston 1:10pm

Date	To	Cost	Flight/Train/Hotel Details
Fri, Aug 5	<p>Abby—fly from Paris-Orly (South) to Oslo: 8:30pm – 10:50pm</p>	<p><i>Flight:</i> €174.10 <i>Hotel:</i> €73.71</p>	<p>Flight details: DY1497 (2h20 duration) from Orly South, Reference number: 45L6EH</p> <p>Hotel in Oslo: Best Western Oslo Airport Hotel Museumsvegen 26 Gardermoen 2060 Tel: 47 (63) 949500 <i>Shuttle every 20 min from Platform B 25 (arrivals)</i></p> <p>The shuttle bus is 70 NOK each way, and although I found it annoying to pay anything for an airport hotel shuttle, the hotel was cheaper than the others closer to the airport and less than a 10-minute ride on the shuttle (which comes every 20 minutes). The hotel was nothing special but perfectly adequate and included a buffet breakfast.</p>
Sat, Aug 6	<p>Abby—fly from Oslo to Bodo: 9:25am – 10:55am</p> <p>Kystriksveien Coastal Route: Bodo to Støkkvågen (4h40) then Mo I Rana (1 hour)</p> <p>(Includes Jektvik - Kilboghavn and Forøy – Ågskaret ferries: arrive 30 min before)</p> <p>The first ferry (about 15 minutes) was 60 NOK and the second (about 60 minutes) was 130 NOK. The ferries come frequently in the summer—I did not have to wait more than 15 minutes for either one. No need to reserve ahead (in fact, you cannot). The ferry rides make for nice scenic breaks and also bathroom breaks!</p>	<p><i>Flight:</i> €91.40 <i>Car:</i> \$866.53</p> <p><i>Hotel:</i> 650 NOK (breakfast included) (not paid)</p>	<p>Flight details: DY208 (1h30 duration), Reference number: 45MMFF</p> <p>Rental car in Bodo: Hertz (desk in terminal) voucher number US3417129 (open until 1pm)</p> <p>B&B in Mo I Rana: Mo Hotell og Gjestegaard, Elias Blix gt 5, 8624 Mo i Rana Tlf: (+47) 75 15 22 11 (call if arriving after 18h!) http://www.mo-gjestegaard.no</p> <p>The coastal route drive is beautiful and it's well worth taking your time and stopping frequently—for one, because Norway is known for enforcing speeding limits harshly and also because there is absolutely nothing to do in Mo i Rana so no reason to get there early.</p> <p>While Mo i Rana has no redeeming qualities aside from its convenient location and its funny name, the guesthouse in is very pleasant and includes breakfast in an inviting breakfast room. The Rana Restaurant in town (a 5 minute walk) serves surprisingly good food and if you show your room key for the guesthouse, you'll get 15% off the bill. The main dishes ran about 120 – 200 NOK before the discount.</p>
Sun, Aug 7	<p>Drive the E6 Mo I Rana to Bognes (4h20)</p> <p>D. flies to Oslo</p> <p>Google maps says it is about 4h20 from Mo I Rana to Bognes, but even without stops, it's probably more. With frequent but short stops, including the diversion to Skutvik, I was en route for about 9 hours. But again, there is no reason to arrive in Bognes too early—there is <i>nothing</i> to do aside from the drive to Tynges!</p>	<p><i>Hotel:</i> 855 NOK (breakfast included) (not paid)</p>	<p>Hotel in Bognes: Tysfjord Turistsenter AS - N-8275 STORJORD Order number 123 99 Tel. +47 75 77 53 70 post@tysfjord-turistsenter.no http://www.tysfjord-turistsenter.no/english/The_Hotel/the_hotel.html</p> <p>I was surprised that the drive on the E6 from Mo i Rana to Bognes was just as dramatic (albeit different) from the coastal route, including mountains, tundra, crossing the Arctic Circle, fjords, lakes, fishing villages.... If time permits, stop and explore the Saltfjellet-Svartisen and/or Rago National Parks. You can also take a right at Størfjord for a 13 or so kilometer mountainous excursion across the Swedish border (be sure to drive through the village of Junkerdal on the way or way back). Another side trip that is well worth the extra hour or so is to Skutvik, on the</p>

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			<p>peninsula to the southeast of Bognes. If time permits, try out a few of the dirt side-roads. This peninsula has amazing views of the mountains to the south, its own green yet jagged mountains that look like they should be in Hawaii, turquoise bays and beautiful old farms with big red barns and classic Norwegian architecture.</p> <p>This hotel is really the only option in the area, but it's perfectly adequate, with friendly staff and a decent restaurant. Breakfast is included. Be sure to look out the back of the hotel around sunset—it's an amazing view across the lake towards the mountains.</p> <p>Just a few kilometers past the hotel, take a left towards Korsnes and once in Korsnes, a left (down a dirt road) to Tysnes. Both Korsnes and Tysnes are tiny yet full of character. Tysnes has the feeling of a frontier village. The drive is spectacular, with turquoise waters, white sand beaches (some with sheep!) and views of the jagged mountains of the Lofoten Islands. The whole excursion will take about an hour door to door from the hotel (including multiple photo stops). If you have time, you could leave the car by the traditional white church in Korsnes and walk the dirt road to Tysnes.</p>
Mon, Aug 8	<p>Bognes-Lødingen ferry, drive to Gimsøya (1h ferry + 2h driving)</p> <p>The ferry was 170 NOK.</p> <p>A quick note for those with a GPS (which generally, I highly suggest, though it's hard to get too lost in Lofoten—there's only one main road, the E10): if you have older maps as I apparently do, the GPS may not know of a newer(?) section of the E10. Follow the signs for Sortland (to go to Stø) and for Svølvaer or A i Lofoten to head down the chain of islands. Be particularly careful to enable or disable (whichever your plans require) the "Avoid ferries" option.</p> <p>D.—Oslo</p>	300 NOK (+ 90 NOK for sheets & towels) (not paid)	<p>Ferry: 9:15am – 10:15am (arrive 30 min before) (http://www.torghatten-nord.no/) This is one ferry on an actual schedule, even in the summer!</p> <p>Hotel in Gimsøya: Hov Feriegaard Your hosts: Unni Hov and Inge Andreassen Address:Hov, Gimsøysand Postal Code: 8314 Telephone:+47 760 77157 Mobile:+47 47755813 E-mail:unnihov@online.no www.hov-feriegard.no</p> <p>Thanks to the suggestion of the <i>Lonely Planet</i>, I took a diversion to the Vesterålen Islands after the ferry crossing to Lødingen. It's about 1 ½ hours each way to the tiny fishing village of Stø, north of Sortland (and about 15 minutes north of Myre where you can stock up on food supplies at the grocery store). The drive alone is worth the detour, but the hike from Stø was the main objective and it turned out to be one of the nicest hikes I have ever done—how could it disappoint when it combined a picturesque fishing village with mountains, ridges, wildflowers, ocean, white sand beaches and turquoise water? For the start of the Queen's Route, park in Stø and keep following the road (away from where you came from) past the last house on the left (it's gray-blue with red & purple trim) and soon on the left you'll see a red 2-car garage with white doors. Just to the left of this building is an unmarked path that leads through a gate (which you can unclip to open but be sure to shut it again) and up the 570m mountain. Follow the red "T"s all the way—the path is well marked. The <i>Lonely Planet</i> says it's a 5-hour loop to Nyksund via the mountains and back the coastal path. I followed a sign for Stø when I was almost back to the shore and did not actual go through Nyksund. The loop took me 4 hours at a fast pace but with 100+ photo stops. Even if you are not inclined to hike, you should</p>

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			<p>follow the coastal for a bit—it's only about 10 minutes to the white sand beach with turquoise water. For the coastal path, follow the road from Stø all the way to the end and you'll see the path on your left.</p> <p>It was then about a 4-hour drive to Hov, Gimsøya, but that included brief stops for a few groceries & gas, a number of stops for photos, a quick spin through Svolvaer and Kabelvag, and the 8 km or so detour (each way) to Henningsvær. This detour is an absolute must. In fact, I would consider staying in Henningsvær (or at least spending an hour or two there), an adorable fishing village with at least one hotel (the Lofoten Arctic Hotel) and a couple of restaurants, perched at the tip of a mountainous peninsula.</p> <p>Unni Hov's guesthouse is on the wonderfully uninhabited island of Gimsøya. There's no town and no shops but there is a golf course café a 5-minute walk down the road that serves food 8am – 1am. The guesthouse is simple (shared bathrooms) but despite the associated camping and RV hook-ups, it has a lot of character, and you also have use of a kitchen, living room and dining room. In fact, there are 5 guest rooms upstairs and the whole downstairs is shared. <i>And</i>, it's also ½ or even ½ the price of most other <i>budget</i> accommodations in Lofoten. If you are really on a budget, you might even consider making this your base in Lofoten, as it's fairly central for exploring the entire chain of islands. The owner (the wife) speaks English and is very kind and welcoming. Best of all, the guesthouse is right across the street from a beautiful white sand beach and at least in early August, the setting sun falls just behind a distant lighthouse for a spectacular sunset.</p> <p>Be sure to walk up the mountain (Hovern) just behind the guesthouse either the evening you arrive in time for sunset or the next morning. It's under an hour to the top and the path leads from the red "service station" building at the end of the camping area.</p>
Tues, Aug 9	<p>Gimsøya to Reine (1h40)</p> <p>Abby—arrive Reine, Lofoten</p> <p>D. flies to Bodo (arr. 14h30) then 17h45 ferry—arrives in Moskenes at 21h00</p> <p>Sakrisøy Rorbuer is owned and run by a friendly mother and son. The fishing cabins have an authentic feel but are renovated and quite cozy (once I realized there was a heater). Our cabin, Hakonbua B, had a living area with a couch and a dining room table, a kitchenette and a bathroom downstairs, and a then loft</p>	850 NOK/night (not paid)	<p>On Tuesday, I made my way from Gimsøya to Reine. I started the walk suggested by the Lonely Planet from Eggum to Unstad, but it was not nearly as interesting as the Stø hike the day before and with heavy winds, I decided to turn back after a little while and instead follow the Lonely Planet's suggestion of driving the RV815 route instead of the E10 through Vestvagoy Island. The RV815 is definitely worth the few extra kilometers, as are the detours to Stamsund and Mortsund. I stopped off at Nusfjord, an historic fishing village that charges 50 NOK just to get in the town—perhaps not worth \$10 as you get pretty good views from the parking lot above the town without having to pay, but when you think of it as cheaper than 2 cokes at a convenience store, it's probably worth the money. (You may also want to save a visit to Nusfjord for when you have time to hike in the area—see hike #11 below.) It's worth a quick stop at the turquoise beaches of Flakstad. The beach at Ramberg looked quite nice from the road but when I saw all the ugly buildings built up around it, I decided not to stop. Driving into Sakrisøy and Reine via Hamnøy is a treat.</p> <p>Reine hotel: (Dagmar): booking confirmed, arrival 9th of August, departure 15th of August, NOK 850 per night.</p>

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	with a double mattress upstairs. Sakrisøy is a convenient place to stay—just a few kilometers north of Reine and at the edge of the most turquoise part of the bay.		SAKRISØY RORBUER Sakrisøy, N-8390 Reine i Lofoten Tel. +47 76 09 21 43 Email: jgylseth@online.no http://www.lofoten-info.no/buene.htm Reception is in the doll-museum at Sakrisøy. <i>Call if arriving after 18h:</i> +47 900 35 419, +47 760 92 143 http://www.datadesign.ws/Sakrisoy.htm Sakrisoy@lofoten-info.no http://www.lofoten-info.no/Sakrisoy/default.htm <i>Reine websites:</i> http://www.hillhaus.com/index.php?cat=56
Wed, Aug 10 to Sat, Aug 13	Abby/D.—Reine, Lofoten		

Food & drink near Reine

Maren Anna, Reine Rorbuer, Hamnøy Mat-Og Vinbu and the Brygga Restaurant in Å are the only restaurants in the Reine area for a real meal, and they are all quite expensive (225 – 325 NOK or so for a main dish.) After one decent but not exceptional dinner at Hamnøy Mat-Og Vinbu, we decided to eat in for the rest of the week, but you can still stop by any of those three restaurants for a beer after dinner to soak in the atmosphere—all are quite pleasant inside.

- **Maren Anna**—a large pub/restaurant in Sørvågen, about a 10-minute drive south of Reine. Friendly atmosphere, 45 NOK for a 33cl beer. Open til midnight.
- **Reine Rorbuer**—right in main square of Reine, cozy atmosphere, 55 NOK for a 33 cl beer. Open late.
- **Hamnøy Mat-Og Vinbu**—see above. 3-minute drive north of Sakrisøy. Open late.
- **Fish Shack**—open til 8pm. It's a small market that also sells 70 NOK fish burgers that are pretty decent. Picnic tables outside. Right across from Sakrisøy Rorbuer.
- **Kaffe Bar**—in the central square in Reine. Ridiculously expensive (though average for Norway) but very cute and inviting inside and chairs & tables outside for nice weather. Reat baked goods.
- **Cinnamon Bun Bakery**—in Å, 15 NOK for a freshly-made cinammon bun from an historic bakery—definitely worth the trip.
- **Groceries:** There are plenty of grocery stores in the area, though all but the small shop at the Statoil station in Reine close early on Saturday and are closed all day Sunday: Coop between Reine and Sakrisøy, Joker in Sørvågen, mini-market in Å, Reine Statoil, Bunnpris supermarket in Ramsted.

Hiking

Be sure to pick up the *Moskenes Guide* from your hotel or a tourist office, which explains all the main trails on Moskenesøya and Flakstadsøya Islands (the two southernmost islands in the Lofoten Islands). It's also very helpful if not essential to purchase the Lofoten or Western Lofoten topographical map (available just about everywhere, including at Sakrisøy Rorbuer). Keep in mind that the sun may set quite late, but it still starts to get chilly in some spots by 5 or 6pm when the sun goes behind the mountains. We did the following hikes (numbers as labeled in the *Moskenes Guide*):

- **Hike 1**—This hike starts in Å (which you should be sure to visit before or after the hike). We took about 4 hours to hike along the south side of the lake, then up the mountain towards Stökkvika, then back to Å along the north side of the lake. If you head down the west side of the mountain to the beach and back to Å, it will probably take closer to 7 hours. Best to do this hike in nicer weather as it does get quite muddy.
- **Hikes 2 & 2a**—2a is just a short (45 min) easy walk around a lake. Make the hike longer by heading to and past the second lake further inland.
- **Hike 3**—Reinebringen, my favorite hike in the Reine area. It's a must but only for experienced hikers and in good weather as the path goes straight up. There's not much to see on the way up but the view from the top down at Reine and the surrounding bays, islands and mountains is amazing. We hiked up, along the ridge in each direction for a few hundred meters and back down in about 2 hours.
- **Hike 5**—this start of this short hike (45 min each way) in Bunesfjord is only accessible by ferry or kayak. Head up and over the hill to see one of the most beautiful beaches with turquoise water you'll ever see.
- **Hikes 8, 9 & 10**—these hikes are all in the northern corner of the Moskenesøya Island. We combined 9 & 10 to make

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<p>a circle (about 3 hours). We only did the northern section of hike #8 from the Torsfjorden to the beautiful Kvalvika beach and back (about 2 hours including some exploring around the beach).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hike 11—This was one of my favorite walks in the area. Park in Nusfjord, head towards the town (they should let you through without paying admission to the village if you say you are just there for the hike) and follow the dirt road to the right of the town, which turns into a path after about 10 minutes. It's about 3 hours round-trip to Nesland. • Hike 13—this quick (45 min round trip) but straight uphill hike is nice late in the day as the path will still be in the sun. It's a bit hard to find the start of the path from the road, but if you park at the Bunn Pris/Statoil shopping center in Ramsted parking lot and look across, you'll see the large white village hall and water tank on the side of the hill—head up just to the left of them. <p>Kayaking</p> <p>Reine Adventure (post@reineadventure.no) in the main square in Reine offers guided tours and will also rent kayaks for the day (450 NOK for a single or 650 NOK for a double). I highly recommend taking a kayak out for a day and seeing the area from sea level. You can also rent motor boats (550 NOK/day) at Sakrisøy Rorbuer if you prefer (only for those staying there). We rented a double kayak around 10am, explored the bay around Reine, Sakrisøy and Hamnøy then crossed the bay to the Bunesfjord, parked the kayak for a couple of hours, had a picnic lunch then climbed over to the Bunes beach and back (see hike #5 above). We arrived back in Reine around 5:30pm.</p> <p>Other</p> <p>The <i>Lonely Planet</i> hypes up the village of Å. It's certainly worth a visit (primarily for the cinnamon buns, or if you'd like to visit the Støckfish Museum) but I was partial to Reine (which the LP calls "characterless").</p> <p>Biking--Reine Adventure also rents mountain bikes. I did not see any trails that would be suitable for biking, but a number of people were biking the car roads. Most tunnels had pedestrian/bike paths around them. I found it a bit too windy to bike most days and the streets are quite narrow, but if you're up for a challenge, it could be rewarding.</p>			
Sun, Aug 14	Abby/D.—Reine, Lofoten M&D fly from Boston		<p>M&D Flight: 14AUG 21:30 (Flight FI630 From: BOS To: KEF depart 9:30 pm; arrive 6:30 am.). 15AUG 08:00 (Flight FI326 From: KEF To: BGO depart 8:00 am; arrive 12:20 pm)</p> <p>Take airport bus (every 15 minutes) to 4th & last stop: Radisson (Bryggen): http://www.flybussen.no/bergen/index.asp?lang=ENG</p>
Mon, Aug 15	<p>M&D arrive in Bergen 12:20pm</p> <p>D. flies from Bodo at 7:10pm</p> <p>Abby flies from Bodo at 7:10pm; arrives in Bergen 11:10pm</p> <p>Night in Bergen</p> <p>Our cozy little guesthouse in Bergen was fantastic, with very friendly owners with an eye for decorating. Our room had a small kitchen area. It's about a 10 minute walk to the start of the Bryggen area.</p>	<p>Ferry: 849 NOK (paid)</p> <p>Flight: €131.60</p> <p>Hotel NOK 1100 per night (not paid)</p>	<p>Abby/D. Ferry Moskenes to Bodo: 14h – 17h15 (arrive minimum 45 minutes before) (http://www.torghatten-nord.no/), rental car drop-off by 6pm</p> <p>This is the one ferry of the trip that you really should reserve in advance if you're bringing a car on board.</p> <p>Abby flight Bodo to Bergen: 7:10pm – 11:10pm (via Oslo arr. 8 :40pm, leave 10:15pm), Reference number: 45B88F, flights DY215 & DY636</p> <p>Airport bus : 23:20, 23:30, 23:45, 00:00</p> <p>The bus is convenient and at 150 NOK round trip can save you a bit of money (compared to about 300 NOK each way for a taxi). Get off at the last stop (the Radisson in Bergen Bryggen) for a 10-15 minute walk to the Skuteviken guesthouse.</p> <p>Bergen hotel: Skuteviken gjestehus Skutevikens Smalgang 11 +47 93467163 (Name of contact: Solveig Rongved) www.skutevikenguesthouse.com</p>
Tues, Aug 16	Night in Bergen	Hotel NOK 1100 per night (not paid)	<p>Be sure to take Fløibanen Funicular (35 NOK each way) up the mountain (unless you are up for hiking it) and walk down through the lush forests back to the center of Bergen.</p> <p>Also be sure to explore the beautiful Skuteviken</p>

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			<p>neighborhood where the guesthouse is located—take any of the cobblestone streets up from the water and try to get yourself lost!</p> <p>We had a nice dinner at Zupperia (at Vaskerelven 12—there is also another location at Nordahl Bruns gate 9. Tel. 55233266, open Mon – Fri 12-23, Sat 13-23, Sun 14-23). The menu has a mix of everything: Norwegian, Mexican, Greek, Thai... which usually means that none of the cuisines are particularly good but in this case, everything we ordered was quite good and not overly expensive.</p>
Wed, Aug 17	<p>Night in Balestrand</p> <p>Balestrand is a pleasant small town that has traditionally been a resort town. You can still see some small villas with interesting architecture along the shore (be sure to stroll along Kong Belesveg, the road the hotel is on, at some point). The tourist office can also give you maps of nature trails and other more challenging trails if you have more time. We had dinner at the bar/bistro of the Kviknes Hotel (the large and more expensive hotel at the heart of the town). It would have been quite expensive but if you arrive before 6pm you get the significantly reduced lunch menu/prices. Their spätzle was quite good.</p>	<p>Car: \$794.94 (paid by M)</p> <p>1,240 1,140 NOK (not paid), includes breakfast + tax</p>	<p>Rental car in Bergen: Aug 17, 9:00am Autoeurope voucher number: US3365669 BERGEN DOWNTOWN OFFICE KANALVEIEN 48 BERGEN AVD. MINDE Tel. 475 55 292 500</p> <p>This rental office was a bit outside the downtown area, but cheaper than the others and a taxi got us there for 175 NOK. We asked when we picked up the car if we could drop it off at the airport and they said that was fine, for no extra charge. Driving from Bergen to Balestrand we took the E39 to the 55, which includes one ferry crossing.</p> <p>Balestrand Hotell: www.balestrand.com KONG BELESVEG 41, 6899 BALESTRAND +1 415 205 8527 (Unni-Marie's US cell) info@balestrand.com **Call if arriving after 18h00</p> <p>The Balestrand Hotell is ugly from the outside but nicer inside and the owner is very friendly and helpful. Breakfast (included) was excellent.</p> <p>Websites on Balestrand : http://www.sognefjord.no http://www.visitbalestrand.no</p> <p>Info on car ferries: http://www.balestrand.com/?side=35</p>
Thurs, Aug 18	<p>Night in Geiranger</p> <p>We chose to take the mountain road from Balestrand to Geiranger (Rte 13, to 5, to 60, to 15 to 63). It took all day including numerous short stops but was well worth it for the spectacular views.</p> <p>The Geirangerfjorden Feriesenter website has information on hikes in the area and for 10 NOK you can purchase a good hiking map from the tourist office.</p>	<p>2,180 NOK (2 nights, not paid) + 300 NOK linens</p>	<p>Geiranger hotel:</p> <p>Geirangerfjorden Feriesenter Confirmation: Booking no. 11070 Arrival: 18th of August 2011/Departure: 20th of August 2011 Can cancel the booking or change the arrival and departure dates until one week before arrival without any charges. After this you will be charged for minimum the first night. **Call if arriving after 5pm, arrival no later than 9 PM. *End cleaning included but clean the dishes & take out garbage or pay NOK 200.</p> <p>Our cabin (#4) was quite cozy, with 2 bedrooms (sleeping up to 5 people), a kitchenette, living & dining areas and a front deck, just meters from the edge of the fjord. I would highly recommend it.</p> <p>Finn Magne Grande Grande - N-6216 Geiranger - Norway Phone: (+47) 951 07 527 Mail: office@geirangerfjorden.net Web: www.geirangerfjorden.net</p>

Date	To	Cost	Flight/Train/Hotel Details
			<p>Hikes near Geirangerfjord:</p> <p>http://www.geirangerfjorden.net/efottur.htm http://www.geirangerfjorden.net/efotturlang.htm</p>
Fri, Aug 19	<p>Night in Geiranger</p> <p>The only negative to Geiranger is that it's a small place but as it's a UNESCO World Heritage area, the fjord is one of the most visited in Norway. We were quite lucky not to coincide with any cruise ships, but your chances of meeting one are high and the town may not be so pleasant with an added 1,000+ tourists.</p>		<p>We had one full day in Geiranger and took the excursion boat up and down the fjord (1 ½ hours, 170 NOK), which is well worth it in good weather. We also hiked trails “B” and “C” on the tourist office's hiking map, which offered excellent views of the fjords as well as extremely friendly goats and llamas along the way. Be sure to drive up the Eagle road for the panoramic viewpoint. If the weather cooperates (which it did not for us), also consider paying for the drive up to the Dalsnibba viewpoint. If you have more time, you could also consider visiting one of the restored farms along the fjord, though they are only accessible by boat plus a steep hike. If you are also traveling to Aurland you'll have the chance to visit Otternes Farm which is much more accessible.</p> <p>Geiranger has a cute port area with some large souvenir shops and a handful of restaurants. We really liked Laizas right by the tourist information office. The atmosphere is nothing special but the sandwiches and chicken tagliatelle were excellent! Head over the one of the two very inviting cafes for more atmosphere and a hot chocolate: Villa de Sving or Café Ole.</p>
Sat, Aug 20-Sat, Aug 27	<p>Drive to Aurland Mannheller-Fodnes Ferry every 20 minutes (:00, :20, :40)</p> <p>Around Aurland</p> <p>We took Rte 15 to 55 (a national tourist route) down to Aurland, with a ferry crossing between Manheller and Fodnes. We were on the road all day but made a number of worthwhile stops at panoramic viewpoints (well-signposted) as well as at: Lom (for its beautiful Stave church, the largest still standing), Luster (for its Dale church, bakery with excellent cinnamon buns and views of the Lusterfjord), and Solvorn (for its charming wooden houses and cute port).</p>	€880 (paid by Abby)	<p>INTER CHALET: +49-(0)761-21 00 77 Customer number: 816846 Booking number: 2271783 from 30.01.2011 Arrival date: 20.08.2011, Duration of stay: 7 Nights Property FJS377 Total price 880.00 EUR</p> <p>We could not have found a nicer house to rent for the week. The interior was spacious and nicely decorated and the view from the enormous front deck was unbeatable. At about 2 km from Aurland, it's easy to get into town. Aurland is a great base for a week as it's centrally located with plenty to do for a week and has a couple of good restaurants and grocery stores, but it is not a stop on the “Norway in a Nutshell” tour as some neighboring towns are, with masses of tourists trying to see the entire fjord region in just one day.</p> <p>Hiking ideas near Aurland: http://www.visitnorway.com/en/Product/?pid=47195 http://www.visitnorway.com/en/Product/?pid=47215 http://www.carwalks.com/default.asp http://www.routeyou.com/route/view/248107/walking-and-hiking-route-aurland-viewpoint.en http://www.fjordnorway.com/en/WHAT-TO-DO/Hiking/Trekking-routes/Seven-great-trekking-routes/Aurlandsdalen---wild--beautiful/</p>

Daytrips—this is how we spent our week (7 nights/6 full days). I would not necessarily recommend this order—any order will do, just wait and see what the weather is doing! You can find excellent maps and descriptions of all the hikes below at the Aurland tourist information office, and most are also described here: <http://www.sognefjord.no/en/Product/?TLp=263750>.

- **Day 1:** Low-key day: spent some time enjoying the house and the wonderful deck, explored **Aurland**, drove to **Undredal** on the other side of Aurlandsfjord, visited (from the outside) the smallest Stave church still in use in Norway (Undredal), walked north on the fjord from Undredal and tasted the famous goat cheese from the small market in Undredal.
- **Day 2:** Visited **Borgund Stave church** (old wooden church dating from 1178) and its museum. Hiked the Sverrestigen Trail to the Vindhellavegen Trail from behind the church (it makes a nice 2-hour loop) on the old historic routes. Returned to Aurland via the **snow road** (Rte 243), stopping at the viewing platform for views of Aurlandsfjord about 8 km from Aurland center. If the weather is not great, you can always return to the viewing platform another day from Aurland, as we did. Be sure to visit the women's/handicapped bathroom at the viewpoint for your own private window over the fjord! About 1 km past the viewing platform if you are coming from Aurland, just past the camping area and a blue cottage on your right is a small parking lot on your left. Park here and follow the unmarked path at the end of the lot up the hill and to the left (only about 10 min) for another wonderful view over the fjord.
- **Day 3:** Hiked the last segment of the famous **Aurlandsdalen trail**, from Østerbø to Vassbygdi. I was dropped off in Østerbø and picked up 5 hours later in Vassbygdi, but you can access these points by public bus (or taxi) as well. I highly recommend this hike but save it for your sunniest day. Østerbø to Vassbygdi is mostly flat for the first 2/3 of the trail, then mostly downhill towards the end. For an added challenge, take the detour up and over Bjønnstigvarden. If you do not want the logistical complications of a one-way hike, park in Vassbygdi and hike 2 – 2 ½ hours mostly uphill to the beautiful restored farm of Sinjarheim and back (1 ½ - 2 hours) and you'll see the best part of the hike. You could of course do the full 4-day Aurlandsdalen hike, but the Østerbø to Vassbygdi is supposed to be the most beautiful part. If you have more time, continue further down Rte 50 (past Østerbø), another national tourist route. Be sure to stop at the Fossheim waterfall on the way back to Aurland on Rte 50. If you have time another day, you can hike up to the waterfall and up Mt. Prest overlooking Aurland (7.2km one way).
- **Day 4:** Fjord 1 **ferry** from Aurland to Gudvangen and back, on Aurlandsfjord and Nærøyfjord (about 9:15am – 1:10pm). When you get on at Aurland, you avoid competing with the masses of tourists from “Norway in a Nutshell” who get on at Flåm and Gudvangen. Nærøyfjord is a UNESCO World Heritage area and one of the narrowest and most dramatic fjords. Best to do on a clear, sunny day. The ferry is ridiculously expensive (370 NOK for this round trip excursion) so if you prefer not to spend the money, you can drive to Gudvangen at the end of the Nærøyfjord and then on to the hamlet of Bakka, part-way down the fjord. If I had had more time, I would have then done the hike up from Bakka and back (about 4 hours). In the afternoon, we took the hike right from our house on the Bell Farm to Volda (about 1.6 km), then hiked into the Skjerdal valley and back to Aurland center along the fjord road (about 3 hours). This is another good hike for a rainy day as only Bell to Volda is on a trail and it is not too muddy; the rest is on the road.
- **Day 5:** Visit to **Otternes Farm** (<http://www.otternes.no/en>). I highly recommend this visit, and paying the 30 NOK extra (80 NOK total) for a guided tour with the farm's manager, Laila Kvellestad. The farm dates back to at least 1522 (but likely far earlier) and is comprised of 27 buildings, most of which can be visited and many of which were left almost exactly as they were when the last families left the farm. The vision for Otternes is to move towards becoming a working farm again and away from a museum approach, which makes it a much more impressionable experience for visitors. Be sure to stay for coffee/tea and pancakes and don't miss the home-made brown goat cheese and locally-made organic ice cream. After your visit to Otternes, follow the trail up the hill past the Vikesland, Sele and Li farms, then back to Aurland (about 3 hours). This trail is mostly in the forest so not bad on a rainy or foggy day. The only fjord views after Otternes are just before and after the Li Farm (to which you could return with the car on a clear day).
- **Day 6:** **Flåmsbana** (Flåm railway, <http://www.flaamsbana.no/eng/>) up to Myrdal (250 NOK) and hike back to Flåm on the Rallarvegen service road (about 1 hour up on the train and a 4-hour hike back). There are several variations you could try as well: 1) rent bikes in Flåm and bike back on the service road, 2) take the train round trip (350 NOK), 3) hike part-way back and take the train the rest of the way from Blomheller (about 7.5km) or Berekvam (about 10km), or 4) drive past Flåm center and up the narrow paved road to Berekvam and hike (part-way) up to Myrdal and back from there. The service road goes down steeply from Myrdal for about 2 km (maybe not the best for bikes) but then is mostly flat or an easy downhill for the remainder. It's gravel until Berekvam then paved. My favorite stretch of the road was probably from 2 km or so south of Myrdal to Berekvam, passing through a beautiful valley with very friendly goats and a small café specializing in goat cheeses.

Food in Aurland: We ate a number of meals in or as picnics (there are **Spar** and **ICA** grocery stores in town). My favorite food in town is at the **Duehuset Pub**—the lasagna was quite good and the pizza (if you ask for extra tomato sauce) is by far the best pizza I had in Norway and big enough for 3 very hungry people (us) or 4 normal people.

Sat, Aug 27	Bergen We took a slightly longer route back to Bergen, to the viewpoint at the Stenheim Hotel (well worth it on a clear day), to the small town of Ulvik on a branch of the Eidfjord, Be sure to grab lunch at the Dros Bakeri & Kafé across from the small boat ramp – they have possibly the best tomato, mozzarella & pesto sandwich I have ever had! We then went down the national tourist route 7 along the Edsfjord and Hardangerfjord back to Bergen.	Hotel NOK 1300 (not paid)	Rental car drop-off in Bergen: Aug 27, 4:00pm Autoeurope voucher number: US3365669 BERGEN DOWNTOWN OFFICE Airport—we were able to return the car to the airport at no extra fee KANALVEIEN 48 BERGEN AVD. MINDE Tel. 475 55 292 500 Bergen hotel: Skuteviken gjestehus Skutevikens Smalgang 11 +47 93467163 We were back at the same guest house in Bergen as before on Saturday night (3 people) in the “loft” room which is a wonderful space and worth the 200 NOK extra, then Sunday (2 people) moved down to a small but much cheaper room on the ground floor.
Sun, Aug 28	Abby flies back to Paris at 7:55am M&D—Night in Bergen	<i>Flight:</i> €59.20 Hotel 700 NOK (not paid)	Abby’s flight: Norwegian booking reference 8FJMQA DY1476 - 28 Aug 2011 07:55 Bergen/10:15 Paris-Orly I believe there is only one direct flight between Paris and Bergen per week. It’s also super cheap—don’t miss out!
Mon, Aug 29	M&D fly back to Boston 1:10pm		M&D Flight: 29AUG 13:10 (Flight FI326 From: BGO To: KEF depart 1:10 pm; arrive 3:35 pm). 29AUG 17:00 (Flight FI631 From: KEF To: BOS depart 5:00 pm; arrive 6:35 pm)

Possibilities for a shorter trip (only if necessary—I would not have wanted to miss any of this!)

- **10 days:** Nordland & the Lofoten Islands (Days 1 – 10 of above itinerary)
- **2 weeks:** Bergen & the Western Fjords only (Days 11 to the end of the above itinerary)
- **9 days:** Bergen & rent a house for a week near the fjords (Aurlandsfjord would be my pick!)
- **6-7 days:** Bergen, Geirangerfjord and a taste of Sognefjord (Aurlandsfjord, Nærøyfjord)
- **Long weekend:** I wouldn’t recommend such a short trip, but it is possible to stay in Bergen for a night then head up to Eidsfjord, Hardangerfjord and even the southern side of Sognefjord (Aurlandsfjord, Nærøyfjord) for a couple of nights if that’s all the time you have. This not allow any time for hiking and would entail a great deal of driving but the driving would all be quite scenic.
- **5 days:** Nordland & Lofoten with only 1 nights in Reine (for non-hikers)
- **5-6 days:** Reine only
- *Or any other combination you can think of!* How long you spend in each place will depend on how quickly you like to move, how much driving you are willing to do each day, and how much hiking, kayaking, etc. you would like to fit in. Keep in mind that the weather is quite variable. While you may be able to fit in most of your agenda for Reine or Aurland in 4 days, for example, you should factor in a few days of sub-optimal weather.