

The First Voyage of Lumina – post 4

Sailing to Svalbard

31 May to 7 June Up the coast of Norway and across the Arctic Circle

For a few days we settled into a routine of continually sailing up the coast. The winds have been reasonably favourable being generally from the North West. This meant easy sailing most of the time which makes a change for Norway where often there is a lot of motoring to be done. After the anchorage by the Atlantic Bridge our next stop was possibly one of the best anchorages we have found in Norway, a lovely, sheltered bay on a wooded island without any cabins or houses to be seen. There was a boat already in. We had been following Anna on the AIS for a couple of days together with several others who are going in the same general direction as us. Shortly after we anchored its owner rowed by and we exchanged a few words, he went on to climb up a small hill to take a photo of the anchorage and on his return I invited him on for a beer. He saw our Norwegian cruising guide on the cabin table and said: “my boat is in there”. Probably one of the biggest understatements ever as it turned out that he had co-written the whole series of guides to the coast. Well, we gave him our thanks for such useful publications and now we have a signed copy.



It is possible to traverse most of the coast without actually going out into the open sea, this means that you are generally protected from the swell coming in from the Atlantic, if not by Islands, by a myriad of skerries and rocks. In some places this inside passage is several miles wide and in others it may only be a hundred or so metres apart. Navigation can often be very intense as you try and identify the next important mark from the chart and compare it with what you see. Add to this the complications of ships coming up behind wanting to overtake and oncoming traffic and it makes the whole process very interesting.



The Rock Piper came quite close to us as he came out of a port. A short time later he dropped off the pilot and then they passed us again with a friendly wave so I assume we did the right thing to keep on our course as the “Stand on Vessel”. Check out the Rock Piper – a very interesting ship that pipes rock down to the sea bed cover pipelines and other installations. <https://boskalis.com/about-us/fleet-and-equipment/dredgers/subsea-rock-installation-vessels>

About half the time we have been anchoring and the rest on various visitor pontoons (gjest havn) at small harbours. Nearly everywhere has one and usually there is just us or maybe another boat in. Rorvik was a little different, being a bigger town with supermarkets and shops. The boats were rafted up two abreast but there was a space that nobody had taken. To get in we had to squeeze between another boat and an old dock but made it in without further ado with a few inches to spare at both the bow and stern. Arriving on a Sunday meant that everything was shut and it seems that it still is the day of rest in Norway.

After a quick visit to the supermarket to get fresh veg we headed north again and anchored in a place we had been last time. A lovely sandy bay surrounded by rocks and islets with seals which seem to be a rare sight in Norway. When looking for somewhere to anchor there are various places marked on the chart with an anchor symbol, these are good spots,



Plenty of room in Rorvik!

generally with a sandy or mud bottom ensuring your anchor holds well and usually sheltered as well. The problem with the Norwegian coast as far as anchoring is concerned is usually the depth. You can be within a few metres of the shore and in extreme examples be in a hundred metres of water. When anchoring we like to put down 5x the length of chain as is the depth of water. So, if it is 10m deep you put down 50m of chain. That's fine but it also means you need a circle of 100m for the boat to swing in the wind so often if you put down the right amount of chain then the stern will be touching the rocks which is not really ideal. You can get away with less chain but the problem is that the shorter the chain, then the angle from the boat down to the anchor is less and either stops the anchor digging in or can pull it out when the boat pulls on it.

So, after a week of steady progress of between 20 and 60 miles a day we have just passed the Arctic Circle. This is at 66 degrees and at this point you should be able to see the sun at midnight between 12th June and 1st July. That is if you can actually get a clear sky of course. Daylight wise even in Shetland there was only a short dusky night and here it is normal daylight all the time, but does get colder at "night". Generally, the weather has been pretty miserable with lots of rain and drizzle and quite cold as well – about 6C. The inside helming position on this boat has certainly been worth its weight in gold – well it did cost enough, although could really do with windscreen wipers and a demister on the inside!

At the dock with us tonight is a large sailboat together with three specialist aluminium tenders. It is all part of a Norwegian charity called In the Same Boat.

<https://www.inthesameboat.eco/>

They have volunteers who live on the sailing boat for several weeks at a time and daily they go out in the small tenders picking up plastic litter on remote beaches. The youngsters also

get trained in sailing and boat craft, first aid etc at the same time. It seems to be a good formula as there are plenty of people to volunteer and they have tapped into the willingness of large companies to improve their eco credentials by funding them. As well as picking up the litter they also record what it is and how much they collect. Sadly, they are now going back to beaches that were cleaned maybe 4 years ago, but now on the return they are collecting more than they found the first time.



In The Same Boat - Large 50ft sailing yacht, 2 workboats and a larger tender

From here we head out to the very end of the Lofoten islands to follow them back to mainland Norway then through the fjords up to Tromso to catch the weather to get across to Svalbard.



Arctic Circle Monument 66.33 Degrees North and 1300 miles since we left Milford Haven