



This details the high lights of Oslo and a visit to nearby Lillehammer

THE MAGIC OF NORWAY IN WINTER

A short break in Oslo

THAT NARNIA FEELING

Stepping into Norway's awesome winter landscape on a winter's morning felt as magical as stepping through the wardrobe into Narnia. The white snow crunched under our feet and the trees were laden with soft powder as though they had been dredged in icing sugar. Lights twinkled in the early morning light and although snowy the temperature hovered just around freezing.

THE THIEF

We had arrived late the evening before and sank into the soft comfy beds of The Thief- one of Oslo's top hotels. A warmer welcome would be hard to find. At one time its location was a haven for smugglers, thieves and vagabonds but today it is hideaway for all those who appreciate the finer things in life. Surrounded by international art and an appealing at-

mosphere it is the perfect place to relax, enjoy Nordic cuisine or chill out in the spa.

THE FIORD

Oslo's fiord is easily accessible and was just a stone's throw from the hotel so early next morning we made our way to the quayside where the ferries leave for the islands scattered off shore. The white glistening snow gave the illusion of daylight even before the sun rose. We took a ferry which left every hour calling in at several tiny islands where colourfully painted cabins rose from the deep white crisp snow which surrounded them. Streaks of blue and yellow broke free from the snow laden clouds and was reflected in the calm icy waters.

MARITIME HISTORY

Back on shore it was time to explore the city's maritime history. Our first port of call was the Viking museum. Here old Viking ships and relics



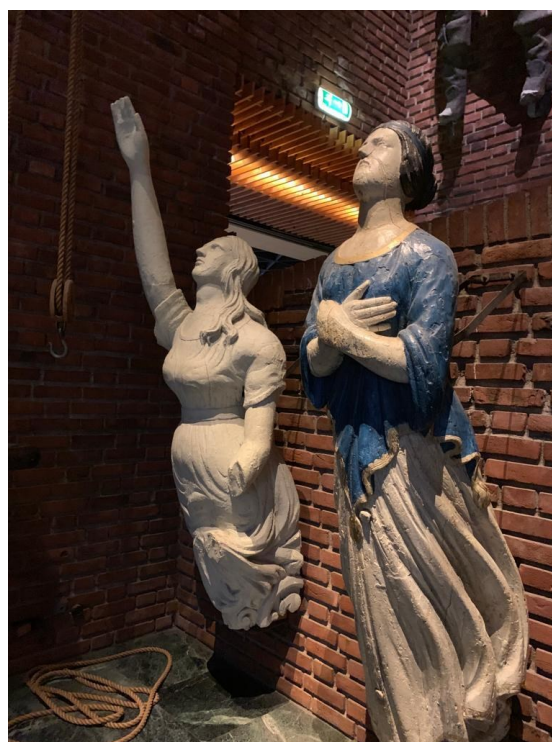
THE THIEF HOTEL

OSLO WATERFRONT

CABINS ALONG THE FIORD



were housed in a great soaring building with stark white walls which highlighted the giant wooden boats. At times the inner space was transformed with dancing northern lights and awesome scenes telling the story of the majestic vessels and those who sailed in them. Next was the Kon-Tiki Museum which houses the original rafts and artefacts from Thor Heyerdahl's world famous expeditions which crossed the Pacific Ocean in 1947 Then on to explore Roald Amundsen's boat which was the first to reach the south pole. Here we sat on the deck of the Fram and experienced the roll of the Arctic swell. Below deck we experienced the creaking of the hull compacted in the ice and froze as we experienced the re-creation of the ice cold conditions.



MUSEUM HEAVEN

With so many great museums it was difficult to decide which we should visit next. We chose the National Museum - after all no visit would be complete without seeing Edvard's 'The scream.' We made just a token visit to the medieval Akershus Fortress -famous for its ghosts - more to soak up the external architecture than wander through its vast interior as it involved a lot of uneven walking. Although Oslo's famous ski jump disappeared into the fog the museum was illuminating



THE VIKING MUSEUM

KON-TIKI MUSEUM

FIGURE HEADS

RECYCLING IN THE MARITIME SECTION

OSLO HOT DOG SELLER

HOT DOGS AND OPERA

We also payed a visit to the city's famous hotdog stand - more like a hot dog with pickle and mashed potato in a pancake! No visit would be complete either without



ST LUCIA AT THE OPERA HOUSE

EN ROUTE TO LILLEHAMMER

LILLEHAMMER

NORWEGIAN CHURCH

a visit to see the Opera House. We were lucky enough to see performances on two consecutive nights. It is quite an outstanding building and well worth a visit

LILLEHAMMER

The journey between Oslo and Lillehammer was picturesque as there was a deep fall of new snow which weighed heavily on the branches of the tall pine trees which enveloped the landscape. As we travelled in land the river could be seen freezing over creating what appeared to be a mist a few feet above it.

We visited Maihaugen where numerous buildings from different eras formed an open air museum. Icicles hung from the roofs but inside fires were lit

and period actor's portrayed life as it used to be. There was a great wooden stave church but unfortunately it was closed.

The streets of Lillehammer were enchanting. Life here was unhurried and we had a ride in a horse drawn cart. We later enjoyed reindeer for dinner at a traditional ski lodge with its blazing log fires and twinkling candles. Before we left the following morning we visited the ski jump and surrounding area. For those who want to ski this is a great location. At nearby Oyer the gondoliers were unable to operate as it was too windy but we drove up the twisting route to the mountain top to enjoy the sweeping view



LOG CABIN IN THE SNOW

Our last night was in a log cabin semi buried in snow in an isolated location. It was difficult to believe it was only half an hour from the airport. It came complete with two fluffy affectionate cats, a blazing log fire and a hot tub. Outside white fairy lights twinkled and inside candles flickered and old fashioned oil lamps cast a muted light. It was furnished with old folk art. Blankets, rugs and sheepskins abounded. Early next morning we watched the birds and squirrels as they played outside before we waded through the deep snow and left the enchantment of Norway behind. Arriving back in the UK it seemed as though we had stepped back into the wardrobe and Narnia was gone but we knew we could return and it would be just as magical.

LILLEHAMMER HIGH STREET

BAKING IN MAIHAUGEN

LILLEHAMMER EATERY

STREET FOOD IN LILLEHAMMER

LOG CABIN