

## Bergen, Norway



**Bergen**, the second largest city in **Norway**, has 235,000 habitants and was founded in 1070 by King Olav Kyrre.



It was the capital of Norway until 1299 when the capital moved from [Bergen](#) to Oslo. It is a delightful city with much to offer, which we discovered as we walked along the Bryggen Hanseatic Wharf with its quaint shops, to our ride on the funicular, (called the floibanen in Norwegian), which offered spectacular views of the city as well as the mountains. There are hiking and ski trails once you reach the summit, as well as a restaurant and gift shop.



We explored the open-air Fish Market, which is open year-round, and in addition to fish, sells moose and reindeer sausage, smoked whale meat, vegetables, fruit, Norwegian patterned sweaters, pewter items, trolls, and the usual souvenir items.



In the evening, we had a lovely dinner at [Bryggen Tracteursted](#), which is located on the Bryggen Hanseatic Wharf, and is part of the UNESCO's World Heritage Sites. The restaurant was built in 1708, and provided a glimpse into the past. Read more about the restaurant in our Restaurants section.

After dinner, we decided to explore the Bergen music club scene, and went to **Rick's**, located at Øvre Ole Bulls plass 9, that has five bars all in one location, as well as an Irish Pub. We met with the owner, Toto,

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who has owned Rick's (named for Rick's in the movie, Casablanca) for the past 10 years.



The well-stocked bar, coupled with the opportunity to hear two great bands, made for a fun evening. We met with [Miami Vice Machine](#) band members Knut, Vidar and Magne, before their performance, and they said that they are a mix of Miami Vice and Miami Sound Machine and play 80's music. They started the band 8 years ago playing the music they loved in the 80's, said that they are a cover band without ambitions, and now have the right clothes and the right hair to play that music, which made us wonder what they were talking about; that is until they came out on stage dressed in wigs, 80's clothing and make-up, with stage names of Millie Vavildi, E-mahl, Rubik Cube, Silly Idol, Guran Guran and Maxwell Jump. Then we knew what they were talking about! The audience packed the dance floor and it was like it really was the 1980's again.



The second bar featured [Tommy and the Runaway Boys](#), a blues based funk rock band, which consists of Tommy Kristiansen - guitar and vocals, Øystein Langhelle - bass, Ørjan Borge - drums, and Lars Hammersland - piano, keyboards, and organ. This band writes their own music, as well as plays some covers. They are going to the studio this fall to record a new CD, which will be a blend of modern R & B, Blues, and Swing style. As for the band members, their tastes vary widely from Hank Williams to modern, pop, rock & roll, and metal (Øystein) to Oscar Petersen jazz (Lars). In any case, these boys really rock, and are worth following their career.

The next day we went on a Bergen City Tour, and learned that Bergen has a music festival each year at the end of May. For 12 days, around 800 musicians come from the around the world to play at the festival. The city has one of the oldest orchestras in the world, and their philharmonic gives concerts on Thursday evenings during the winter.



Bergen is the home of the Edvard Grieg Museum, Troidhaugen, which has a 200-seat concert hall, and has concerts on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. We had the opportunity to tour Composer Edvard Grieg's house where he lived with his wife Nina for 22 years, and composed on his Steinway piano in the living room of the house. The house is filled with momentos of the interesting lives they led, including a stained glass window with a rose motif in honor of Nina. Whenever Nina couldn't accompany him on a trip, he would bring her a single red rose when he returned. The stained glass window is a symbol of their love for one another. An interesting note is that Edvard was only 5 feet tall, and in order to reach the piano, he used to sit on Beethoven's sonatas, which not only gave him a boost, but provided inspiration as well. Edvard, who died in 1907, and Nina who died in 1935, are interred in the mountain on their property.



We visited the Fantoft Stave Church that was built in Fortun in Sogn in 1150, moved to Fantoft in 1883, burnt in a fire in 1992, and was rebuilt. Inside the Stave Church, the ceiling looks like the inside of a wooden ship. Of interest were the 2 small windows located on either side of the church that could be opened or closed to give communion to "unclean" people. Women who had given birth were considered to be "unclean" for 60 days after the birth of a girl, and 40 days after the birth of a boy. Lepers were also considered to be unclean. There was a ring on the front door of the church so that people could always gain sanctuary in the church by grabbing onto the ring, and a small stone on the outside of the church from a pilgrim who had walked along the route of Jesus Christ.

We had lunch at [Kafe Kippers at the USF Arts Center](#) that was once a sardine factory, and is now a multi-art center, as well as a restaurant. We had a wonderful lunch at an outside table overlooking the water, where the gracious waiters took great care of us. Read more about the restaurant in our Restaurants section.

Afterwards, we did some shopping in the shops along the Bryggen Hanseatic Wharf to purchase pewter and sterling silver items for gifts as well as for ourselves.

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In the evening, we had dinner at [Pascal Mat & Vin at the Neptun Hotel](#) where their vast collection of art is as appealing as their menu. Read more about the restaurant in our **Restaurants** section.

To celebrate our last evening in Bergen, we went to an outdoor performance of the Giuseppe Verdi opera, *Aïda*, performed by the [Vest Norge Opera](#) on the grounds of the Bergenhus Castle. It was an interesting modern interpretation of Giuseppe Verdi's opera, and the setting on the castle grounds in the moonlight was perfect.

In the morning, we flew back to the United States on [SAS Scandinavian Airlines](#), with fond memories of our time in Norway.

Please read our other articles on Norway in **Destinations**, **Restaurants** and **Chef's Recipes** sections.

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