

A Nordic Ski Tour - March 2008



Norway was an itch that needed scratching. Having toured extensively throughout the Alps I felt as though the Scandinavian version was, at worst, a new experience, and at best, a whole new world. We teamed up with the Buchanans who, at least, had done it before. Dave selected the Rondane area, 3.5h. N.E. of Oslo by train, and as befits an IBM man organised the entire trip. We flew Norwegian from Edinburgh to Oslo, which was quite cheap, took a train to Otta, and a taxi to Mysuseter, where there is an excellent budget hotel. All things are relative, of course, and “budget” by Norwegian standards is not necessarily cheap.



We awoke to a magnificent breakfast to celebrate Pat’s birthday (don’t ask which) followed by our introduction to the mysteries of waxing. Was it to be blue or purple? Apparently it all depends on the temperature, age and nature of the snow. There are many colours and several grades of each colour. It pays to be non-committal but observant! Our objective was the Smuksjoseter Hytta, but the learning curve was steeper than the

terrain as I struggled with the unfamiliar equipment. However a cut track led unerringly through the mist to the staffed DNT hut. Superb quality, but at £50pppn you would expect it.

Day three took us to the Rondvassbu Hut and gave an insight to the possibilities of this genre. We blazed our own trail through virgin snow, and even managed a few parallel turns on the descent to the collection of huts. Apparently there are usually at least two in case one burns down as they are all wooden buildings. We spent two nights here with a day tour up the Rondvassdelen, and were fed splendidly with reindeer meat and salmon steaks.



The fifth day to the Bjornhallia Hytta was again through virgin snow and involved the crossing of a low col, with a challenging descent through birch scrub. By now we were almost in control and we arrived unscathed. Day six was the best of the holiday as we crossed some impressive terrain to the Eldabu Hut. The GPS proved indispensable as we headed

due south into a whiteout. In between the scenery was magnificent and the silence only broken by the incessant chatter of DB's shutter. This was our first self catering hut and we really appreciated the DNT system of stocking the huts with food and trusting people to pay for what they use. We also met some real Nordic tourers who were averaging 50km a day.

Another self catering hut, the Grahogdbu, followed, which was crowded but fine all the same. Then came the ski out to Venabu, a resort with uplift, but many miles of Nordic trails. It has a good, but expensive hotel with fantastic food for a mere £90 a night. We did a day tour up Svartfjellet, a small peak of 1154m., which was superb on our mountain touring skis. The downside was



being overtaken by fat Norwegians on track skis. It was like going out on a MTB with the North Lincs. Road Club. Dave enjoyed himself so much that he treated us to a beer at about £9 a pint! The best time to visit Norway is in Lent.

An early start at 2.45am saw us in a taxi to the railway station, train to Oslo and the flight home. On balance I would say that it opened up a whole new world but a potentially expensive one.



Bernard Smith