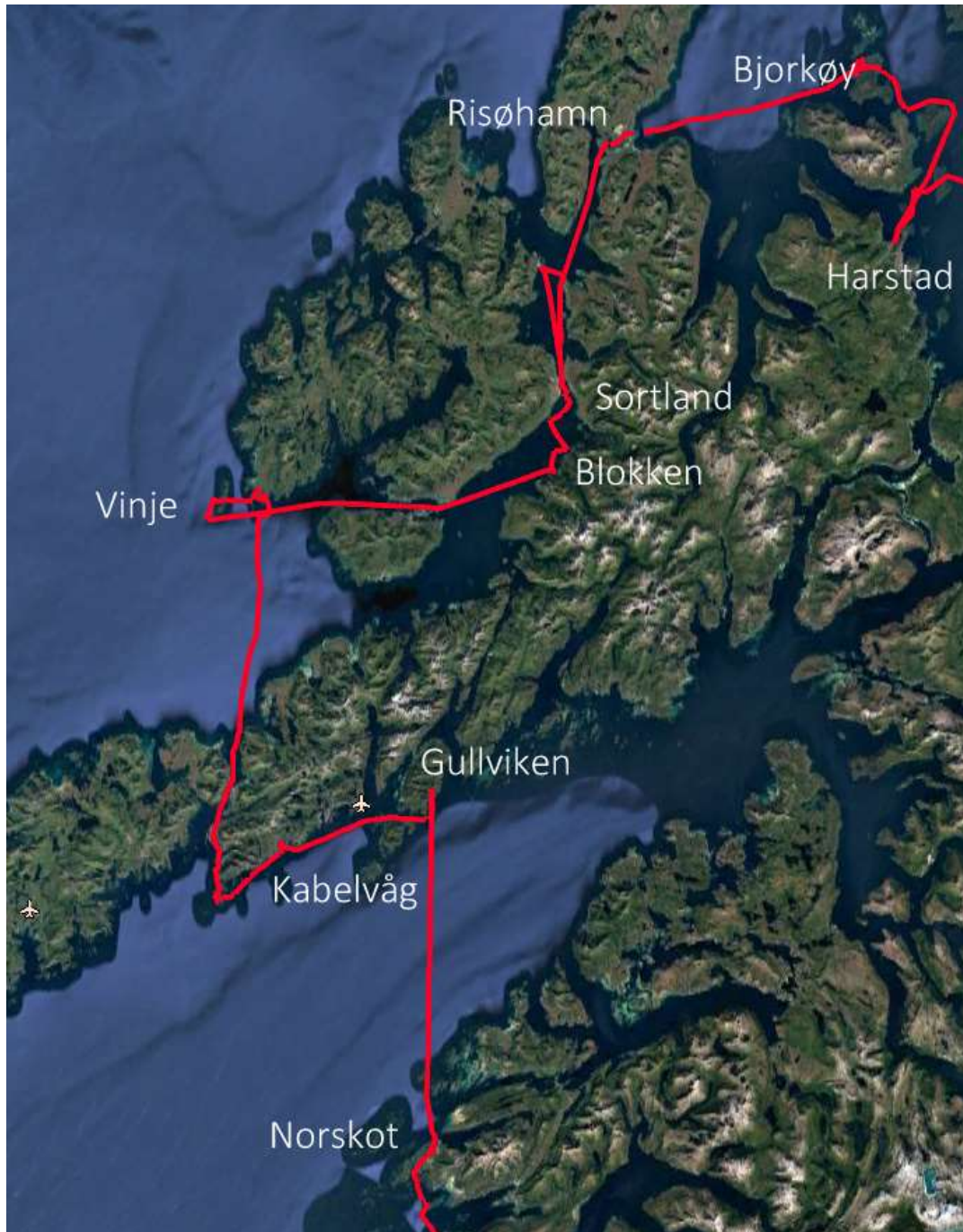


4th Report: Nordskot
67°50.2'N 14°47.7'E
Harstad
68°49.0'N 16°31.4'E
August 3 to 14, 2019

Route overview



Saturday, August 3. We leave Nordskot early; ahead of us the craggy mountains of the Lofoten. Gunn and Stein expect us in Gullvika bay on Stormolla. We get there shortly before 15:00 and drop the anchor near a large charter boat, that we have seen in Bodø.



A few boats lie at the end of the bay, one on a buoy, others at the pontoon.



Soon we see *Paquita* on the plotter and here she is. They signal that they intend to



anchor in the adjoining lagoon. It is high tide and the shallow passage should cause no problem. Anchor aweigh and off we go in *Paquita's* wake.

The small lagoon is fabulous. We are almost alone. Only a motorboat lies at the jetty by the houses. Nobody is around.



Without Gunn and Stein, we would hardly have dared cross the shallow entry. Now we ride at anchor next to each other and contemplate the breath-taking view, the entrance to the lagoon and the impressive mountains behind the little hamlet.



We celebrate our reunion with a powerful anchor dram from *Paquita's* stock of Aquavit.

Stein takes us to shore in the dinghy. We gather berries and arrive across the rough ascent at an ancient road. It still connects two very old settlements.



It leads to a little lake, surrounded by rocks and cliffs.

For dinner I prepare chili con carne and serve beer and wine and aquavit. We enjoy talking, the quiet around us in this incredible landscape, laugh a lot and are grateful for this new deeply felt friendship.

Sunday, August 4. Gunn offers breakfast. What a treat to watch the fire blazing away in the gasoil furnace.



Stein has baked a pile of waffles. He inherited the waffle iron from his mother and it works perfectly well on the petrol stove.



We marvel at so many special details on *Paquita*. She is an old boat indeed, smaller than *Silmaril*, 10m long and not 12m. But nothing is missing for a comfortable life on board. Gunn stows everything she needs even for elaborate meals in the tiny pantry. Lack of space is ingeniously side-stepped: the water container for the oven, an old aluminum pan receives the necessary shape!

There is hot and cold water from the tap, an electric seawater pump on deck to clean the fish blood or squirt the dirt off the anchor, a permanently installed board at the back of the boat with a drain over-board to gut the fish.



And what is more, Stein replaced the broken autopilot with a power drill, it has been working for years! And Gunn made a cover for it to keep it dry in bad weather! The two have a solution for everything; and if not, they do not need it!

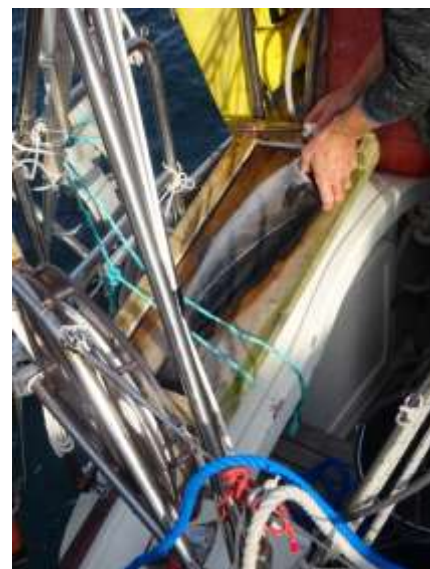
We wait for high water. Meanwhile the berries are processed on both boats, and in the early afternoon, the water is high enough to pass the shallow exit of the lagoon. The anchors come up, *Paquita* takes the lead and we follow behind.

Stein proposed to take time to fish for dinner. Despite *Paquita's* fish finder, Stein is not successful, but Alex catches a big pollock

We continue to the bay near Ørsvåg southwest of Kabelvåg and drop the anchor next to each other.



Stein prepares the fish on his ingenious board and Gunn conjures a typically Norwegian meal: fish, potatoes, carrots, and a few ingredients on the table.



Monday, August 5. At breakfast on *Silmaril*, Stein proposes to sail together to Kabelvåg on *Paquita*, Stein's birthplace, and drop us off. They would continue to Svolveær, fill the diesel and water tanks, while we would visit Kabelvåg and then take a bus to Svolveær and meet up again. No sooner said than done! *Silmaril* stays at anchor alone, we join them on *Paquita*. Stein drops us off in town and we refresh our memories of Kabelvåg of 2009.

Gunn and Stein mention several interesting places to see. We climb the hill to the statue of King Øystein I, who founded Kabelvåg and built the first church on the Lofoten in 1103, the Vågan Church.

The place is a grand viewpoint. Unfortunately, the clouds hang low over the mountains and the sea; looking back over the roofs of the town, a number of cranes and construction sights do not lure me into more panorama pictures.

The descent is narrow and steep. The railing helps to keep our balance! Carefully we take step by step and





arrive safely at the foot of the hill back in town. We come across many old houses, lovingly refurbished or at least hoping for restoration.



place, the paved square at the harbor, and indeed, we find the several outlines of boats laid in stone, where each shipwright had a specific place to exhibit his handiwork.

Gunn has told us that her grandfather sold his hand-made boats on the market



Our next destination is the famous Lofoten Cathedral. It stands in the same location, where King Øystein I. erected the first church. Many older churches had been built in the course of history. The present-day yellow neo-Gothic timber structure was built in 1898. It has a seating capacity for 1200 people and is

the largest wooden church in Nordland. The blond wood of rafters, pillars and benches, the white-washed ceiling and walls convey impressive vastness, blazing light. A beautiful votive ship hangs from the ceiling. Ship models like this one were often endowed to give thanks for maritime rescue. A so-called Friedrich II bible of 1589 is on exhibit. I could at first not find information on such an edition. But later on, I learned that



many churches did not have bibles and therefore, Frederic II, king of Denmark and Norway, commissioned a second edition of the Bible of 1550, first Lutheran Bible in Danish, to provide bibles for every church in his realm.

The organ is small and of sober design. We feel fine in this building, no blatant pretentiousness, no grim paintings, a true place of assurance, certainly very much in the interest of the believers, who were often enough burdened with unspeakable sorrow and tribulation.

As in many noteworthy places in Norway, the visits of past and present kings are cut in stone, their names and dates in golden script.

The Church deserves its fame. We are glad to have paid a visit. In good spirits, we wait for the bus to Svolveaer at the nearby bus stop.

We have been in the capital of the Lofoten before and remember many things, although what we see now shows obvious changes, cranes everywhere, new skyscrapers in and around the harbor, great activity, the jetties almost full.



The "Svolveaer Goat, Svolveaergeita", the two narrow pinnacles towering on top of the mountain Fløya, at a distance of 1.8m, high up above the town still attracts crazy people into daredevil leaps. We meet Gunn and Stein for lunch, go shopping and chug leisurely back to the anchoring place on *Paquita*, where she is carefully made fast to *Sil-*



maril. The night will be calm and we only need one anchor for both boats.

Alex dismounts the Bimini top. We want to be able to mount the cover over the cockpit for wetter and colder weather and will need the Bimini top's rod system. Stein receives the heavy solar panel that was installed on the top. He will use it to have light at the landing when they arrive with the boat in the dark and have to find their way up the steep wooden ramp and the rocky foot path to the house. Alex already ordered a new flexible solar panel that will be tied on top of the sprayhood.

Gunn spoils us with a wonderful chicken dinner. She tells us, that before she became a teacher, she had been a chief. Well, that explains her ingenious cooking. Our evenings

together are pure joy, not only because of food; we talk, discuss many issues, learn a lot about each other, deepen our friendship and just have fun.

Before we go to sleep, I catch a great picture of the *Kung Harald* leaving *Svolvaer* framed for a short moment between the two islands to the north.

Tuesday, August 6. We wake up early, not a cloud in the sky, great view.



The bay is rather densely populated, settlements all around it, farming, traditional buildings and many boats on buoys. This is the last day sailing with Gunn and



water and we observe nature-hungry tourists or signs of them: he is about to pitch his tent . . .



Stein. We enjoy the peaceful trip to the next anchoring place, first south around the many islands in the vicinity of Henningsvaer, then we turn north and continue along the coast of Austvågøya.

Paquita shows the way.

The road around the island is close to the



. . . two have landed in their yellow Kayaks and far away, hardly visible on the cliff, a red tent waits for its owners.



The pictures are not great, but we were tickled by the sights of the typically Norwegian notions of recreation. Shortly after midday we arrive at the anchoring place behind a group of small islands in the Gimsøystraumen in the vicinity of Lyngvaer. *Paquita* has already dropped her anchor and we moor *Silmaril* alongside.

This is our last dinner with Gunn and Stein. We love every minute of it, are in good spirits, laugh a lot, despite the sad prospect of leave-taking in the morning.

Wednesday, August 7. Time to say good-bye. Gunn and Stein sail south. They go home to Stigen. We take course toward Vesterålen.



Our route takes us through the Gimsøystraumen, a narrow passage with considerable currents below a bridge. Alex has checked the speed of the current; we are a bit late. Gunn and Stein entertained us with a last incredible breakfast. That took its time and the best time for the current is long past. We can see the 4kts current against us at the bridge pillar and I feel it in the tiny tugging movements of the helm.



We pass the church and the lighthouse of Gimsøy at the exit of the sound and we are on the open water heading across the Vesterålfjord toward Steinesjøen. The wind blows

from the right direction; under full sails we make brisk headway. Just at the entrance to Steinesjøen the sails come down and we sail into the fishing harbor, looking for diesel, water, and a space to spend the night. Nobody around. I maneuver *Silmaril* to the pier in front of the fish factory, Alex fastens two lines and we climb up to inspect the place. There is a small dilapidated gasoline pump at the very end of a small inlet, refuse all around. The floating jetty does not look trustworthy neither to walk on nor to moor our boat. And the card machine is damaged; someone has cut the cables. No diesel, no water, not here in any case.

In front of a large shed, a group of men clean fish. They only speak Russian, no information to be had.

At the back of the harbor a long jetty full of fishing boats look promising. We could at least make fast. There is a long enough space. But we turn around and sail over into the small neighboring harbor of Bø, where our book marks a guest place. The water is shallow and we don't dare to go all the way back to the marked jetty now at low water with dry spots everywhere. So, we decide to go back to the fishing harbor and moor the boat where we saw the free space. We find even shore power, watch the sky getting tinted and the sun go down in splendor.



Thursday, August 8. We do need water and try the third little harbor described in our book, Vinje.

Casting off needs thorough preparation. The flags indicate rather strong wind from abeam that pushes *Silmaril* to the jetty. We agree on driving forwards into the line using the "Chnebeltrick", the stick trick (described in Report 1, 2019, page 20): bow spring from the cleat at midships, the fender ball all the way at the stern, full throttle with the rudder to port and smart loosening of the line thanks to the trick. The maneuver is successful! We are off. Vinje is only 2nm to the west.

We make fast at the first pontoon, where we expect the water to be deep enough and not at the guest jetty way back in shallow



water. The owner of a motor boat allows us to take power from his connector and says that the gate to the pontoon is locked, but that there would always be somebody around to let us in, if we go for a walk. There is water, a shade of light brown, but so what. We learn that diesel is available in the fishing harbor, where we have been, but the diesel truck arrives on order. No matter, Alex fills two jerrycans into the tank. We stay here.

The nearby museum is open.

We take our time to explore the house and the surroundings.

The interior of the fisherman's hut shows in detail how the men, often as many as six or even eight, lived when they worked far away from their village. We can positively smell and feel the atmosphere.



Outside in the Outdoor Gallery we find the pictures of the art work that were created in the scope of Artscape Nordland in the 1990ies. Artists from many countries were commissioned to create sculptures for specific communities in Nordland.

Among them we find the picture of the sculpture by Markus Raetz, an artist from Bern.

He created a head, Eggum's Head, that found its place on the island of Vestvågøy on the Lofoten. The head shows many different "faces". A video demonstrates the views

([youtube.com/watch?v=mHdC2B_b51w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHdC2B_b51w)).

The project is still in progress (Artscape Nordland - nordnorge.com).

(As I am writing on this report, I just heard on the radio, that Markus Raetz died last week, on April 14, 2020. He was born in 1941, like Alex. Here in the community of Bø the sculpture by Kjell Erik Killi Olsen, Mannen fra Havet, the man from the sea, stands on top of a hill with a 360° view over water and land. The huge cast-iron man holds a crystal in his hands and looks



out to the ocean. Fascinating!

After the visit to the museum and a climb up to the Mannen, we want to go shopping. The door to the pontoon is now open, but Alex wants to make sure that we can get back in again and invents a mechanism using a cramp and a string to operate the handle inside.

On our way to the village we come across another work of art: the box is a distribution station! The Norwegians Burdened with four heavy shopping bags we arrive at the gate and the mechanism works!



A full day ends with a nice dinner and a peaceful evening.

Friday, August 9. A cloudless sky greets us in the morning. There is almost no wind and we decide to take a detour to the island of Gaukværøya far out to the west, the fishing grounds of the North Atlantic right at its west coast, nothing but water until Iceland and Greenland. A busy 600 people village stood here in a wide bay. When fishing could no longer ensure the inhabitants' livelihood, they dismantled their homes without further ado and transported them to less exposed locations. Today the foundations of their homes can still be seen.

We had planned to anchor in the bay and take the dinghy ashore and explore. But the approaches and the bay itself bristle with rocks, moreover difficult anchoring conditions, possibly bedrock, unfavorable outlook for a light-hearted sally.



We continue south around Litløya. We read about the island. A 65-year old woman owns it and lives on it year-round. We are anxious to see where she lives. Her name is Ellen Marie Hansteensen; she bought the island in 2006 and refurbished the premises with the help of the architect Stein Halvorsen that are now transformed into a guesthouse.

We catch a first glimpse of the building and the fire as we turn east around the south western tip of Litløyya. A bit later we see the little bay where boats arrive. The solid landing stage is equipped with the most advanced facilities: a ramp, a crane, a large boathouse. In bad weather, the red rubber dinghy can be hoisted out of the water, maybe stored in the shed.



The solar panels were installed by the government in 2003 for the fully automatic operation of the light house. Today they also provide the power for the mechanical devices and the light on the landing and in the house.



The island is very barren, but Ellen has succeeded in laying out a vegetable garden. She also collects berries and offers many home-made goodies for her guests. We are deeply impressed by this incredible venture and ask ourselves, whether we may dream about visiting someday and staying for a while. Booking is offered by Airbnb! Ellen fetches her guests on the main land with her red dinghy and takes them back. No leisure boats are allowed to land on the island. Who knows, maybe such a dream could come true if we stay in good health long enough.

We sail east across the Vesterålfjord and along the northern coast of Hadseløya. Villages and small agricultural holdings line the waterfront. Farming and fishing seem the main occupations. Maybe some



descendants of the fishermen of Gaukvaerøya found a new home here. The Bridge of Stokmarknes appears. We know the place. Years ago, we had an appointment here with friends of friends to get



borrowed charts and bring them back to the owners. Today we don't stop and continue to Blokken, a small harbor with a pontoon and a little bay where we could anchor at the west coast of Hinnøya. In the early afternoon we reach the entrance to Blokken and sail into the harbor between the small islands. There is a space at the pontoon and we make



fast in front of a large sailboat. *Silmaril* almost disappears behind her. Shore power and water are both



available, a perfect opportunity to take a long shower.

Nobody is around. But as we walk up to the gate, we see numbers of tall thread rods protruding out of their nuts on the planks, perfect stumbling blocks! Somebody must be working on the pontoon.

We are eager to explore. The locked gate to the pontoon raises a smile: the key to the padlock is in a small letterbox. Through a hole in the fence one can reach out and open the lock. There is only one key and we cannot take it along. Other sailors would be locked in with no chance to get out! We put the key and the lock back into the letterbox and start on our walk.

Behind the club building we ascend the hill that extends to the entrance, at the port side as we came in. Splendid fall colors and a spectacular view over the inlet and the small off



shore islands to the distant mountains reward us for the scrambling among rocks and

bramble to the very tip of the hill. On the way back we see *Silmaril* through the bushes at the pontoon, the modern boatyard of Blokken in the back background.

We continue our stroll past the club building toward the village. Not a soul around. A few picture-perfect homes and lovingly tended gardens betray industrious owners.

As in many other places we find signs of abandonment. Nobody has



stepped onto this grill in front of a dilapidated porch for a long time.

But we hear the screeching noise of a saw or drill over in the boat yard. As we get



closer, the skeleton of a new boat under construction appears behind the main building. The yard is well known for this kind of traditional work. A man climbs out of the hull. He ignores our presence. So far, we have not exchanged one word with a local; this seldom occurs during outings.

Back on the pontoon we briefly talk to a newcomer. An elderly Norwegian asks us about services, fees, and points of interest. His English is rudimentary, but we tell him all we have experienced. Unfortunately, there is no further contact, His wife's English is non-existent. We should absolutely learn to speak a little Norwegian.

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Saturday, August 10. As soon as we are out of the bay leaving Blokken, a stiff breeze whistles in our ears, light mist envelops us. We hoist the sails, the main with reef 1, and tack back and forth across the fjord toward Sortland.

On our portside on the coast of Langøy, we observe huge bare surfaces, like in other places before. We cannot imagine deforestation to that extent. And how can we explain the square patches of forest? Are those bare areas to be afforested? We have asked a number of Norwegians about it, but never received an answer.



Sortland is a large industrial city. Blue seems the business's favored color.

Ahead of us, looms the elegant Sortland Bridge. It spans the entire fjord between Langøya und Hinnøya. We keep admiring the superb edifices in this country that has to overcome incredible obstacles to establish connections between islands and places in the rugged landscape on the mainland, awe-inspiring tunnels and bridges of all sizes. On the Hurtigruten tracks, all the bridges are 30m tall at the highest



point, like the Sortland bridge, just beautiful.

Before we reach the passage, we take in the sails. The wind on the nose and the expected strong current motivate us to be extra careful.

Alex checks the weather again. The wind should die down later on. We decide to find a sheltered anchorage and wait for better conditions.

A spot south of the small island of Brem-



nesøya slightly further north looks promising.

Anchoring proves more difficult than expected; close to the shore out of the strong wind behind the elevation the water is very

shallow and sandbanks obstruct the ideal location. But after a few tries, we drop the hook and enjoy the relative calm in the lee of the island.

In the course of the afternoon, the wind increases contrary to the weather forecast and keeps veering, making it almost impossible for us to continue north. White horses across the entire fjord. We change our plan. In these conditions we can easily turn back, sail before the wind to Sortland and stay overnight. Anchor aweigh, genoa unfurled and we are on our way cruising with speed under the bridge.

Alex detects a short pontoon in a tiny inlet; it is long enough, and despite the considerable swell we make fast and are happy to be here and not out fighting against adverse wind and banging waves. We feel too old to face such hardship.

A short stroll takes us to a nearby restaurant and we indulge in a very good meal.



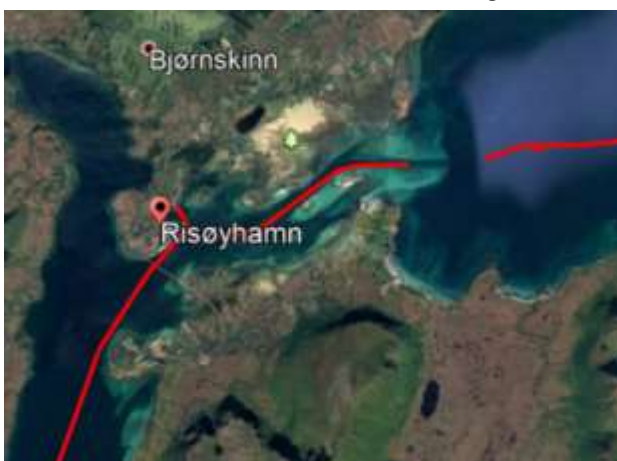
Sunday, August 11. We wake up early and leave Sortland under a fog-shrouded sky in blinding drizzle. The wind has died down completely overnight. We still unfurl the genoa, but the engine is rumbling most of the time in the Risøysundet.

Risøyhamn is our destination. The *Polarlys* crosses us on her way south. Alex marks the time of her passage to make sure that we will not encounter another Hurtigruten ship in the Risøyrenna, the very narrow dredged channel between Andøya and the northwestern coast of Hinnøya. All the Hurtigruten ships keep the same schedule.



We arrive in familiar Risøyhamn toward midday. We have been here twice before, both times at anchor. The marina in the village is new, the guest pontoon unoccupied and

Silmaril soon moored.



Anxious to find out how things have changed we go for a long walk through the village and out around the small peninsula back to the shore of the Risøysundet. Extensive work on a new landing for freighters is in progress. Coquina is exported

to France from here and the numerous white mounds of the growing business take up too much room at the Hurtigruten pier. A distribution station from the well-known art project adorns the construction site.

So far, we have not met a soul. The tourist season is over. Dozens of mobile homes are on the street across the bridge, obviously turning back home. The kids have to go back to school next week. Back in the village, the museum is closed. Too



bad, we have never been inside. Every so often, probably every decade or so, the governing kings pay visits to specific places, Risøyhamn is one of them. The great events are always celebrated and commemorated, of course. The Norwegians love their royal

family.

And they love isolated spots for leisurely contemplation. Everywhere we came across chairs or benches all alone in the landscape. Alex takes advantage of this one for a short rest with a wonderful view.



Back with *Silmaril*, we have a new neighbor. Henk is a single-hand sailor from the Netherlands on his way back home from Svalbard. Alex immediately pelts him with a thousand questions. What a surprise!

A young family carries a cool box and lots of warm clothing to their boat. They talk to us. In fact, we have seen their boat in Bodø; yes, the husband and a friend arrived in their home port some time ago. Today, the family goes out fishing. It is so pleasant to feel welcome. We greatly appreciate the Norwegian openness toward us so

often experienced and miss not meeting people.

Monday, August 12. Time to go on. Alex disconnects the shore cable and we prepare to leave. Wind from port pushing *Silmaril* to the piling and Henk's boat in front of us makes casting off a bit difficult. We discuss the maneuver and bring the stick into position to assure the loose-



obliging help we finally succeed in leaving the tight spot, we are on our way and Henk waves, a mischievous grin on his face! I am so terribly ashamed!



ning of the line in a flash. Unfortunately, I miss the crucial moment, *Silmaril* is pushed back to the piling. With Henk's

We passed the Risøyrenna an hour ago. The *Lofoten* appears. There is a little wind. We set the sails.

The famous colony of seagulls and cormorants in the vicinity of Sundsvall is well-worth another visit; we want to find a nice anchorage nearby and stay for two days. The search takes time. We cruise at snail's pace in the very shallow water among the many small islands close to Helløya. We have been here before and

are confident to find a good place. Eventually we spot a buoy between Little Sandøya and Store Sandøya. It belongs to the yacht club and is available if not claimed by a member.

We could not have found a more beautiful place: gleaming white sand on the little beach, rocks all around us, many birds and deep blue sky.



The terns are hunting around the boat, rise high up, spot their prey and dive dead straight wings folded flat at the body creating miniature waterspouts splashing up. A black guillemot paddles around us.



With relish we observe the busy activities.

Toward evening we let the dinghy into the water, row to the little white beach and climb the hill. The brilliant colors of flowers and berries meet our eyes. The

beginning tinge of fall shows on some



leaves.

The view from the hill is enchanting. Silmaril peacefully drifts around her mooring.



The wind has died completely. It is still light, but dusk announces with a delicate pink on the horizon the sunset, a bewitching atmosphere with its glowing shades of gray and sharp silhouettes.

On the other side of the small beach we

look out north into the Flatøysundet.



A pipsqueak hides perfectly camouflaged in the seaweed.



There are so many things to detect and admire. But dusk is falling; soon it will be dark. We take a short turn with the dinghy along the shore, enjoy the profound silence, observe attentively what stirs in the advancing gloom and return to the boat, perfectly content.

Tuesday, August 13. Alex attends to a long-delayed chore. The plotter had disagreeable malfunctions time and again and he wants to find out what is wrong. Moreover, the new flexible solar panel awaits us in Harstad. The details for its mounting need to be considered and possible solutions prepared. I continue writing and take care of the household. The day flies by.

Lars will join us tomorrow in Harstad. Alex met him in Greenland, and we sailed as a miniature flotilla back from the Faroes to Bergen, *Silmaril* and his *Pomona*. This time he will be crew with us. We are keen to experience how we will fare with such a young man on board. Lars is just forty-two wears old, a very good sailor and professional carpenter.

Wednesday, August 14. Morning mist shrouds the mountains. We leave our little paradise at low water heading northwest around the small islands, rocks and Bårnøya to avoid the sandbanks and turn into Sundsvollsundet. The noise of the sea-gulls on the cliff intensifies.

And here they are. Thousands nest in every nook and cranny of the crag, parents, and fledglings with the dark ring around the eye. Entire flocks circle the boat, swim, or land screeching near their nests. The noise is deafening, the stench drastically offends our noses.

We take our time, chug along the tall cliff very



slowly, watching the wild activities in the colony and taking many pictures.

At the end of the sound, we turn south. We had planned to follow our old track, but detected a bridge on the new chart that was built between Grytøya and Sandsøya. It is only 12m high, no longer a possible passage for us. We must take the longer route around Sandsøya.

Sinister clouds tower above the mountains. Alex gets the rod to fish for a while, but no success. Too bad, we would have loved to welcome Lars with a special meal.

The solar panel is supposed to arrive in the vicinity of the marina in Indre Bergsvågen, not close to the city harbor in Harstad. Shortly after midday, we arrive at the entrance to the narrow inlet and are lucky to find a space in the crammed full marina. At the hammer head of one of the last pontoons we make fast behind a small motor boat.



The marina building is bright red, a warehouse in traditional style.

Modern row houses line the opposite shore.

We are anxious to find what the city center has in store for us.

There is plenty of time to fetch the solar panel at the post office, just a short stroll away. The Joker store is open, we retrieve the package. It is flat, stiff, and rather big. But despite its uncomfortable handling, Alex carries it without grumbling to the boat.



The panel is not really flexible and will have to go on the sprayhood canvas. But my misgivings about possible abrasions are unfounded; Alex finds a rest of rubber profile to glue on the sharp edges.

Lars will arrive tomorrow. We are looking forward to a new exciting sailing experience going north.