

Baltic Heritage Review

Volume 2006, Issue # 2

[special issue on **Norway**, published by
the Scandian Heritage Society]

Heritage Highlights: Norway

Norway recently celebrated its 100th birthday — its political independence dates only to 1905, a relatively “young” nation (by European standards). Norway is a large, rocky mountain range–dominated Scandinavian country, with more shoreline than dry boundaries, with its continental area comprising about 80% of the size of the State of California.

However, considering its land-mass area, Norway is the *least* densely populated nation in Europe. More than half of Norway’s continental borders touch the Atlantic or Arctic Ocean-washed seas (i.e., the North Sea, the Norwegian Sea, the Barents Sea, and the Oslo Sound), and its dry borders touch much of Sweden, some of Finland, and even some of Russia (see map).

From the Viking adventures of a millennium ago, to the North Atlantic cod-fishing bonanza which dominated much of the last 600 years, to the phenomenally successful development of North Sea offshore petroleum — Norway has looked to the North Atlantic for its diverse treasures.





Even today, indefatigable Norwegian petroleum developers, ocean-going merchant transport ships, and a host of fishing industry vessels crisscross the subarctic waters of the North Sea (and beyond), looked from Norway's mountains and fjords, to the high seas, for profitable opportunities. Even Norway's famous **stave churches**, (see example) Norway's unique contribution to architecture, were made by Norwegian shipwrights!)

Some of Norway's earliest notables were history-changing Viking sea-kings, including: **Harald Fairhair** (first king of lands approximating today's country of Norway); **Ketil Flatnose** (king of the Hebrides Islands); **Aud "the Deep-minded" Ketilsdottir** (ex-queen of Dublin, mother of northern Scotland's co-ruler, and pioneer matriarch of Iceland's Salmon River

Valley); **Erik "Blood-Ax"** (famous for getting revenge); **Olaf Tryggvasson** (first king to impose Christianity in Norway, and to commission its imposition in Norway's territories, Shetland, Orkney, the Faeroes, Iceland, and Greenland; — Olaf also exhorted Vladimir to accept Christianity in

Russia); **Hrolf "the Ganger" Rognvaldsson**

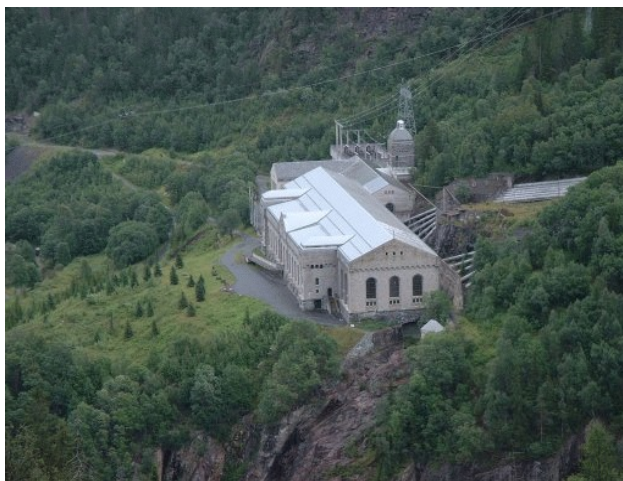
(re-named "Rollo", as ruler of France's Seine-side county of Rouen, and seminal head of the House of Normandy, and first of Normandy's dukes leading to William the Conqueror); **Olaf ["the Holy"] Haraldsson** (king who reimposed Christianity in Norway when it was backsliding into paganism); **Erik the Red** (emigrant to Iceland and later Greenland, founder of Greenland's settlement, and father of Leif Eriksson, discoverer of America); and **Harald Hard-ruler** (Viking adventurer and unsuccessful invader of England, in 1066, at Stamford Bridge).



Norway produced much more than Vikings, kings, and trolls — its cultural contributions include its gifts to the arts and sciences, such as its folk art called *rosemaling* ("rose painting"; see example).

Norway's cultural achievement notables include: **Roald Amundsen** (arctic /antarctic adventurer, the first to reach the South pole, and, if recent doubts about Byrd are correct, one of a duo who first reached the North Pole); **Astrid Karlsen Scott** (author of *Little House on the Fjord*, *Silent Patriot*, *Defiant Courage*, and other Norwegian culture writings); **Edvard Grieg** (composer of *In the Hall of the Mountain King*, *Morning Mood*, piano *Lyric Pieces*, and Piano Concerto in A minor); **Edvard Munch** (artist famous for "The Scream"); **Sonja Henie** (ice skater and actress, repeat-winner of Olympic gold medals); **Thor Heyerdahl** (oceanic explorer and author of *Kon-Tiki*); **Gustav Vigeland** (sculptor of Oslo's Frogner Park); **Armauer Hansen** (research physician who discovered leprosy's cause); **Henrik Ibsen** (playwright who lionized Julian the Apostate in *Emperor and Galilean*, and who wrote *Peter Gynt*, for which Grieg composed the "incidental music"), and many more.

Today's Norway is a peaceful and prosperous nation, but Norway has known turbulent and troubling times. Despite a proud and strong political heritage from the Viking era, Norway lost its independence as a nation. Norway was merged with Denmark in 1380, and that combined realm soon merged with Sweden — with Queen Margaret reigning as the "triple crown" monarch. When Sweden broke away from this "triple crown" arrangement, Norway continued to belong to Denmark, until 1814. Due to losing a war, Denmark was forced to relinquish Norway to Sweden, so Sweden ruled Norway from 1814 till 1905, when Norway insisted on political independence, and appeared ready to fight a war against Sweden to secure it. Sweden chose to acquiesce to Norway's demand, and 1905 saw Norway become independent again, a status Norway had lost in the late 1300s. Norway has been independent since, except as interrupted in World War II by the Nazi Germany Quisling-accommodated occupation (during 1940–1945), after Norway's King Haakon VII fled with critical government documents (when the Nazi invasion became militarily hopeless). During World War II, King Haakon led his country's espionage-oriented resistance from abroad, including resistance involving submarines, fishing-boats, planes, radios, skiing spies, and many Norwegian patriot adventures, — until at least Norway was fully liberated. (Vidkun Quisling, among other Nazi collaborators, was tried and executed for treason; others were shunned yet survived.)



One of the boldest episodes in the Norwegian resistance, during World War II (in the winter of 1943), was the thwarting of Hitler's use of a Norwegian hydroelectric plant, at **Vemork** in the Telemark region, to produce "heavy water" at the hydroelectric plant in Vemork (see photos of the Vemork "heavy water" production site). "Heavy water" is water with high concentrations of the "deuterium" isotope of hydrogen, i.e., many of the water molecules had an extra neutron, useful for "breeding" plutonium for achieving the "critical mass" for atomic bomb

usage. Daringly, Norwegian “special ops” soldiers were parachuted into Norway by British planes; — these saboteurs crept in one night, using a logistically impractical (and thus unexpected) route to reach the plant, and used espionage–provided “inside information” to locate the vulnerable parts of the Vemork hydroelectric plant.

While most of the Nazi security force was distracted, the saboteurs arranged explosives, so the “heavy water” production would be crippled by demolition work (quickly executed after midnight). Nazi reprisals were anticipated, because the local population would be presumed to contain the saboteurs. Therefore, one of the Vemork saboteurs displayed a British uniform to a disarmed German guard, displaying himself as a uniformed soldier, to mitigate the likelihood that local Norwegians would be afterwards blamed (and retaliated against) when the embarrassed German occupation guards fully learned of the plant’s strategic sabotage. One of the team of saboteurs, **Knut Haukelid** (see photo), one of the saboteurs, recalled this moment:

“We were well armed: five tommy–guns and two sniper rifles among nine men, and everyone had a pistol, a knife and hand–grenades. The blowing–up party, led by Joachim, first tried to get in through one of the doors on the ground floor, but this

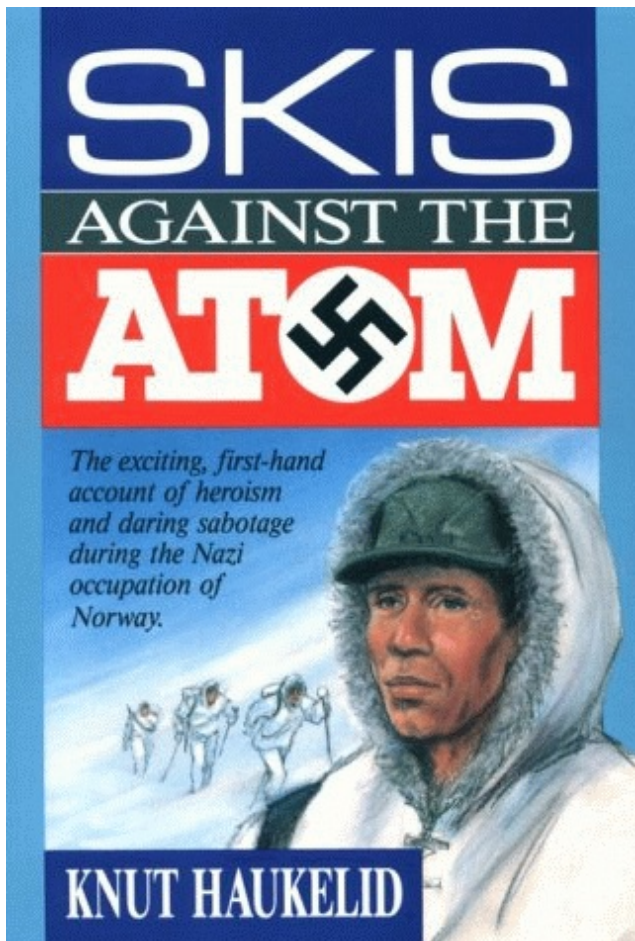


attempt had to be given up and another way found. Joachim and Fredrik became separated from the other two while searching for the cable intake. They crept along among a quantity of pipes under the floor and reached the door leading to the high–concentration installation.

There was only one workman in the room and of course he had nothing to say to two armed men. He was made to stand against the wall and look on. Fortunately he kept quiet.

Joachim began to lay the charges. Suddenly the windows were kicked in. This proved to be Birger and Kasper trying to force an entrance. The broken glass clattered on the floor, but the Germans heard nothing; the loud humming of the generators stifled all other noise. Joachim wore rubber gloves so as to be able to work without being burned by lye or short-circuiting. Nevertheless he cut himself badly when smashing the glass panes to let Birger in. Now there were two men to deal with the charges. ‘Take care not to short-circuit,’ the watchmen said. ‘If you do there may be an explosion.’ ‘Explosion!’ said Fredrik. ‘That’s just what there’s going to be!’ Fredrik stood talking to the watchman all the time.

“He showed the man his uniform [which was under his camouflage outfit]. ‘Have a good look at this,’ he said. ‘Notice these marks,’ pointing to the sergeant’s stripes on his arm. ‘If you look carefully, you can tell the Germans what an English uniform looks like. I don’t expect there are many of the master race in Rjukan who have had the chance of getting so close to an Allied soldier.’ The fuses were set for two minutes. Joachim cut down the time to half a minute before lighting them. The watchman began to look around in bewilderment when he realized that there was going to be an explosion. ‘Where are my spectacles?’ he burst out, ‘I must have them.’ ‘On your nose,’ Joachim said. ‘Take him out,’ he added, nodding to Fredrik. The man was told to run as hard as he could. Fredrik opened the door, and he vanished like a spirit. The boys followed, locking the door carefully behind them. The time seemed long to us who stood waiting outside. . . .



“We waited and waited. We knew that the blowing-up party was inside to carry out its part of the task, but we did not know how things were going. Jens had a tommy-gun and a pistol. If the Germans gave the alarm, or showed any sign of realizing what was going on, he would start pumping lead into the hut. I had a pistol and five or six hand-grenades. The intention was to throw them in among the Germans through the doors and windows. ‘You must remember to call out *Heil Hitler* when you open the door and throw the bombs,’ Jens told me. When once we had reached our post, we both became quite calm, sensing that the operation would be successful. . . . At last there was an explosion, but an astonishingly small, insignificant one. Was this what we had come over a

thousand miles to do? Certainly the windows were broken, and a glimmer of light spread out into the night, but it was not particularly impressive. The Germans likewise did not [initially] think that the explosion was very important: it was several minutes before they showed any signs of reacting. . . . When we were down in the bottom of the valley, we heard the air-raid sirens sound. This was the German' signal for general mobilization in the Rjukan area. They had at last collected their wits and found out what had happened. That did not matter to us. To capture nine well-armed men in a dark wood at night would be difficult enough for people with local knowledge; for Wehrmacht [*German soldiers*] men it should be quite impossible." *Quoting* Knut Haukelid, Skis Against the Atom (Minot, ND: North American Heritage Press, 1989), pages 109–113.

Britain's Special Operations Executive later declared the Vemork sabotage work as the "most successful sabotage" project of the war, because it ensured that the Allies developed the atomic bomb first, and it tactically wounded the morale of the Third Reich's high-tech war machine. (Other actions of the Norwegian resistance movement led to the destruction of the German navy's *Tirpitz*, as well as intelligence used to protect transport of wartime supplies from Britain and America to Russia, to aid Russia's ability to force Germany's war machine to war on two fronts.)

Baltic Bios: "King Harald & King Olaf"

(biographic close-ups of 2 Norwegian history personalities)

Harald "Fairhair" (Hårfagre) Halfdansson, King of Norway (reigned ~ A.D. 880–930)

The history of Norway, *as a nation*, begins with the life and times of King Harald "Fairhair" (born 858; died 934).

Harald "Fairhair" Halfdansson, a Viking king during the hottest phase of the Viking era, was the first king to expand his kingdom to an area approximating what we today call Norway. Harald's family background was colorful, demonstrating the turbulent tone of his times. Harald's father was Halfdan the Black (i.e., black-haired) was a king of Westfold (a part of Norway); Harald's mother was Ragnhild Sigurdsdottir, the daughter of Sigurd-Hart, king of Hringariki (Ring-realm). Once, when alone hunting in a woods, Sigurd-Hart encountered a berserk trouble-maker named Haki of Hathaland. Sigurd-Hart was alone, but Haki had 30 companions, and they attacked Sigurd. Sigurd fell, dead, as did 12 of Haki's men; Haki was now wounded in three places, plus one of his arms was now gone. Haki and his surviving men rode their horses to Sigurd's home, and Haki abducted Sigurd's 20-year-old daughter, Ragnhild, and her brother, Guthorm, as well as Sigurd's livestock and other valuables. Haki took to his bed, to recuperate. Halfdan the Black, another local



ruler, heard of this, so he sent about a 100 men to rescue Ragnhild and Guthorm, the stolen livestock, and the other loot. Halfdan's men accomplished the rescue, defeating Haki's men, and torching Haki's homestead; Haki, wounded and defeated, fell on his own sword, suicidally. Halfdan had a banquet ready for the rescue party, and the occasion became a wedding feast for Halfdan and Ragnhild. In time Halfdan and Ragnhild had a son, Harald – who one day would become famous as Norway's King Harald "Fairhair". Interestingly, Ragnhild's mother was Thyrrni (or "Thorny") Klack-Haraldsdottir, daughter of King Klack-Harald of Jutland; Thyrrni's sister was Thyri, wife of Gorm the Old, king of Jutland, the father of Denmark's king Harald Bluetooth.¹) With a family beginning like that, is it any wonder that Harald Fairhair was known for his forceful personality?

Harald Fairhair did not always have "fair hair". In fact, prompted by a woman's refusal to marry him, Harald vowed to "let his hair go" (no haircuts, no hair-combing, and no hair-washing!) until he had conquered Norway, and his quest took about ten years!

King Harald sent his messengers to a certain maiden called Gyda [or "Gytha"], the daughter of King Erik of Horthaland, to ask her in marriage. ... Then she spoke to his messengers ... that she would consent to be his lawful wife only if, before that, he would, for her sake, conquer all of Norway and govern the realm as independently as did King Erik of Sweden and King Gorm of Denmark theirs. "Because then," she said, "it would seem to me, [only] could he be called a sovereign king".²

Harald replied with an oath that he would neither cut his golden hair nor comb it, till he had conquered completely all of Norway (and gained its royal tax revenues), or else died in the attempt. Fierce fighting followed, and many regional rulers (petty kings, jarls, and chieftains) emigrated from continental Norway, choosing freedom abroad over subservience at home. Many Norwegian chieftains emigrated to Iceland, Ireland, Britain, or France. At the end of about 10 years, King Harald had gotten to himself all of Norway's land and tax revenues. So King Harald bathed, and he desired to have his frightful, tangled, matted hair combed — but this was impossible. Earl Rognvald of More³, his trusted friend, sheared it — for it had been uncombed and unshorn [and unwashed] for ten winters. Earlier, he had been nick-named "Lufa" ["Shock-head"], due to his hair being a golden fright, but now Earl Rognvald re-named him Harald "Fairhair". Of course, under those circumstances, who would disagree that Norway's high king, sporting his remaining golden hair, now washed and combed, was truly "fair hair"! Olaf's military and economic ambitions resulted in the outright conquest of other lands, as well, such as the Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands, and



Faroe Islands, plus coercive demonstrations of influence elsewhere (via hostage-holding and trade sanctions) in other places like Iceland and Greenland.

Olaf Tryggvasson, King of Norway (reigned A.D. 995–1000),
Sponsor of Christian Missions to Norway, Orkney, Shetland, Iceland, Greenland, & the Faeroes

Olaf Tryggvasson (born ~ 963; died September 9th, 1000) was Norway's counterpart to Denmark's Harald Bluetooth, with respect to the Christianization of Norway. Olaf's father was Tryggvi Olafsson, under-king of Wigen; Tryggvi himself was son of Olaf "Geirsteadelf" Haraldsson, who was a son of Norway's King Harald "Fairhair" (discussed above). In other words, Olaf Tryggvasson's claim to Norway's throne derived from his status as Fairhair's great-grandson. Olaf Tryggvasson's wives included: Astrid Eriksdottir, Geira, Gyda Olafsdottir, Gudrun Jarnskeggisdottir, Thyra Haraldsdottir, and Gyda. Of those, Thyra Haraldsdottir (whom Olaf married in 998), was a daughter of Denmark's famous king Harald Bluetooth. (On his mother's side, Olaf Tryggvasson was the great-great-great-great-grandson of Ragnar Lodbrock⁴, a very famous Norwegian king.)

Olaf's imperial ambitions resulted in the outright domination (and "evangelization") of lands outside continental Norway, such as the Shetland Islands, Orkney Islands, and Faroe Islands, plus politically coercive influence (via hostage-holding and trade sanctions) with places like Iceland and Greenland.

Despite, strong resistance from many in Norway, Harald vigorously imposed his brand of Viking Christianity upon Norway, sometimes by persuasion and some times by making offers hard to refuse, such as dealing with "farmers" of the Trondheim (f/k/a Nidaros, i.e., Nith River-mouth) region:

In summer King Olaf gathered numerous troops from the eastern part of the country, and with that force proceeded north to Trondheim, anchoring first at Nidaros (or "Nitharos"). Then he sent out messengers about all the fjord to call an assembly, summoning the men of eight districts to Frosta; but the farmers changed their token into war-arrows and called together both free men and thralls [slaves]. Now when the king arrived at the assembly, he found there the host of farmers all armed. And when the meeting was opened, the king spoke to the people and bade them to accept Christianity. But when he had spoken but a little while, the farmers called out and asked him to cease, saying that otherwise they would set upon him and drive him away. "Thus we did to Hákon, the foster child of Æthelstan, when he demanded that of us, and we do not value you higher than him."

And when King Olaf perceived the angry disposition of the farmers and observed that they had so large a force that resistance was impossible, he yielded in his speech as if to agree with the farmers, and said, "I desire that we come to an agreement such as we had

before. I wish to journey to where you celebrate your greatest [pagan] sacrifice and there see what is your accustomed faith. Then let us decide on what faith we shall adopt, and agree on that, all of us.” And as the king spoke gently to the farmers their mood softened and all their discussion thereafter proceeded peaceably and in a conciliatory spirit; and it was finally decided that there should be held a midsummer sacrifice inside the fjord at Mærin, and that all the chieftains and influential farmers should attend it as was their custom; and King Olaf was to come there too.⁵

Snorri Sturluson provides specific information about a local leader named Jarn-skeggi [“Iron-beard”] who opposed King Olaf, then he recounts the showdown at the midsummer sacrifice:

King Olaf moored his ships in the Nith River. He had thirty ships, with a picked and numerous crew. And when the time approached for the sacrifices at Mærin, King Olaf arranged for a big feast at Hlathir and sent messengers into the inner fjord district to Strind and up into Gaular Dale and into Orka Dale, inviting chieftains and other farmers of importance. And when the banquet was all prepared and those invited had arrived, there was good entertainment for the first evening, and drink was served very liberally, and the men grew very drunk. But afterwards during the night everyone slept in peace. [On the next morning] . . . the horns [were] blown to summon men for a meeting. Then all [Olaf’s] crew left their ships and came to the assembly; and when it was opened, the king arose and spoke as follows: “We had an assembly at Frosta, and there I bade the farmers to let themselves be baptized, but they bade me on the contrary to come and sacrifice with them, as had done Hákon, the foster son of Æthelstan. Then we agreed that we should meet in Mærin and there make a great sacrifice. But if I am to sacrifice with you, then I shall have a sacrifice made which is the greatest ever made, and sacrifice humans. And I shall choose for that, not thralls [slaves] or evildoers, but the noblest of men as sacrifice to the gods. I shall choose for that Orm Lygra of Methalhús, Styrkar of Gimsar, Kar of Gryting, Asbjorn and Thorberg

of Orness, Orm of Lyxa, Halldor of Skerthingstethja” — and he named still another five most prominent men, saying that he would sacrifice them to obtain a good season and peace; and then he had his men immediately attack them. But when the farmers saw that they did not have a sufficient force to fight the king, they asked for quarter and offered to submit to his terms. Then they came to the agreement that all the farmers who had come were to let themselves be baptized and to promise the king upon oath to hold fast to the true faith and to abolish all [pagan] sacrifices. The king kept all these men by him



at the feast until they had delivered their sons or their brothers or other close kinsmen as hostages to the king.⁶ However, King Olaf Tryggvasson's zeal was *not* so immediately successful in his personal dealings with one of his royal fiancée, Queen Sigrid "the Haughty" of Sweden, who had no intention of becoming a Christian when she married King Olaf. This problem led, ultimately, to Olaf's death (to be reported, *D.v.*, in the *Baltic Heritage Review* issue focused on Sweden, *q.v.*).

Nature of the North

(Baltic region creature features)

NORWAY'S FISHING TREASURY can be summarized in two words, "COD" and "SALMON".

As a quick glimpse of Norway's map (see page one) shows, Norway's natural environment (and its ecology), including its fishing industry and agriculture, is dominated by its

coastal/marine context, being bordered mostly by sea-waters, on the west by the North Atlantic's North Sea, and on the north by the frigid Barents Sea, with its south facing the North Sea waters that flow into the Baltic Sea. Also, that coastline is indented in jagged deep-water inlets — fjords — which jab like watery claws inland, with curving, crooked fingers, connecting the ocean-flowing water from each Norway's bay (vik) to the snow-melt-watered mountain streams which flow frigidly downward through Norway's montane forests.

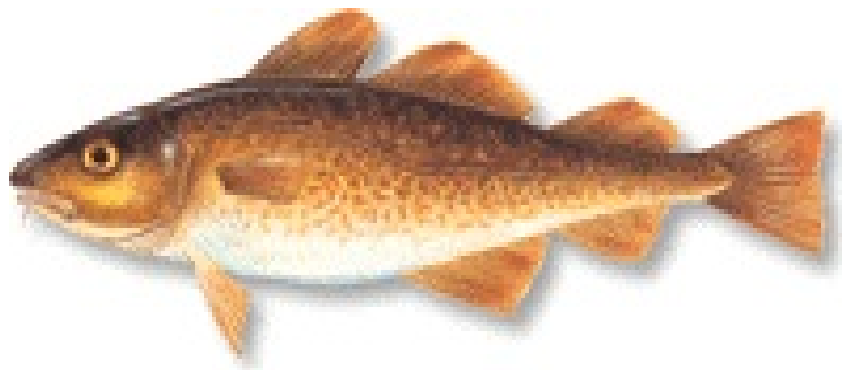
Of course, it would be hard to think of Norway's natural environment apart from its fjords



and other coastal waters (and their fish). Norwegian fishermen have harvested the North Sea waters for centuries, as well as those of other parts of the North Atlantic and the Baltic Sea. Prior the earth's modest cooling (sometimes called the "Little Ice Age") which occurred during the 1300s and 1400s, Norwegian fishermen traded primarily in HERRING, the prize fish of the Hanseatic League. Also, as subarctic temperatures dropped slightly, the herring migrated south, to the warmer waters besides the Netherlands, much to the delight of

Dutch fishermen. Although Hanseatic League politics had controlled the fish in Norway for about 200 years, global changes in the 1500s revolutionized the European-Atlantic fish market, due to the cod bonanza off the coasts of New England and eastern Canada. Thereafter, the Norwegian fishermen's primary North Sea groundfish (i.e., fish inhabiting the coastal waters above the oceanic continental shelf, such as those by Norway's Lofoten Islands) has the **COD**. Also, the primary fish that spawns in Norway's fjord-dominated inland freshwater, then emigrates to the sea, then returns to its native inland freshwater, is the Atlantic **SALMON**. Both fish are Norwegian economy champion — and they taste great!

SALMON. The life cycle of the Atlantic salmon (and its cousins, which include anadromous trout and similar salmonids) is an amazing sequence of being spawned in freshwater streams, replenished with cold snow-melt water in spring, followed by a migration to saltwater bays and into the Atlantic Ocean, followed by an



eventual return trip back to the original spawning freshwater stream, to reproduce the next generation. This requires a physiological teleology (design) that accommodates both freshwater and saltwater environments, plus an immeasurably precise ability to detect the exact water chemistry “fingerprint” of the salmon's native spawning waters. Of course, the fjords and mountain streams of Norway have hosted these delicious (and nutritious) fish from time immemorial. One of the greatest Viking sagas, the *Laxdæla Saga*, records the drama of Norse settlers in a river valley of Iceland — with that place-name denoting a “dale” (valley) at the River “*Lax*” (salmon).



COD. When the Baltic herring market declined in Scandinavia, during the 1400s, it was the North Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*) that rose to the occasion, especially in the 1500s (when Cabot and others reported cod galaxies in the waters of the “New-found-land”, which would

soon be settled by Pilgrims and Puritans, who would illustrate this phenomenon in places like Cape Cod). Even before the Columbus-and-Cabot generation, though, Viking fishing boats netted in huge

hauls of cod, off the shores of Norway, Iceland, Greenland, and eventually from Vinland (North America, from New England northward) found what would be rated the largest population of fish in the North Atlantic Ocean. Cod, containing less oil than herring, retained its “shelf-life” longer, especially if dried, smoked, or salted. It was the North Atlantic cod that funded the pioneer



economies of both Iceland and New England, and barter-like arrangements in trans-Atlantic trade (or trade with the Caribbean colonies) would by-pass the need for official currency, often cutting out taxes and bank charges.

Past & Repast: Norwegian

(old & not-so-old Baltic cuisine traditions)

Salmon is served many ways: poached, broiled, baked, smoked, in paté, as *gravlax*, whatever! Cod’s most unusual form, and most uniquely Norwegian, is *lutefisk*, an old tradition involving lye-soaking (which is washed out before cooking!), served with butter at Christmastime.⁷ **CAVEAT:** Lutefisk is *not* for everyone!



In addition to Norway’s famous cod and salmon (briefly noted above), Norway has distinguished itself in gourmet cuisine for centuries. For a few examples, consider these Norwegian cuisine treasures, found in Oslo restaurants: wild lamb (from Norway’s central mountains), reindeer steak (with morel-cream sauce) or rack of reindeer, smoked moosemeat (with jelly and broccoli), baked beef (with sweet-and-sour onion sauce), king crab (from Norway’s Finnmark waters), halibut (with garlic butter or basil butter), black grouse, “cold symphony” (mix of salmon, shrimp, hare, roast beef, potato salad, cheese) mushrooms dishes, poached mussels (with leeks, parsley, garlic, and cream), snails (in lemon-garlic-butter), fish soup (many variations of this), Norwegian meatballs, Norwegian pancakes, sea perch (with mustard–dill sauce), fresh oysters, shellfish paté (with or without salmon scraps), fried squid, Norwegian shark (with butter sauce), open–faced sandwiches (called “smørbrød”), fried catfish (mixed with prawns, mussels, red peppers, and capers), red wild boar

(with whortleberry sauce), and even cloudberry parfait (for dessert!).

Skalds, Sagas, Quips and Quotes (Baltic literature, language, and lore)

Norway has two official languages, **Bokmål** (“book-graphics”) Norwegian and **Nynorsk** (“new Norwegian”) Norwegian, both ultimately deriving from the original Viking “Old Norse” language (very similar to present-day Icelandic and Faeroese). Norwegians are educated in both, but about 85% to 90% use Bokmål for writing. Some of the spoken dialects resemble Nynorsk more closely than Bokmål, in vocabulary and accent. Generally speaking, Bokmål (which retained influence from centuries of Danish rule) is more common in cities and suburbs, Nynorsk is more likely to be encountered in Norway’s rural parts, such as Norway’s less-populated west coast.

The Norwegians are also proud of their folksy proverbs. For example: “Having a woman who loves you is better than owning gold or goods.”⁸ Another: “As one selects his company [i.e., companions], so one is rewarded.”⁹ Another: “A good neighbor is better than a sister in the next village.”¹⁰ Another (this one is a no-brainer!): “One’s own children are always prettiest.”¹¹ And one more: “Gray hair should be respected and honored; a bald head deserves a bow.”¹²

Dominoes of Destiny (historical impacts)

Norway’s independent spirit is illustrated by its reluctance to join the European Union – Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, and even Baltic nations have joined, but not yet Norway or Iceland.

Norway has left historic impact “footprints” all over the Baltic region, and beyond. For example, the British Empire’s global naval tradition is derived, culturally and historically, from the Vikings, many of whom were Norwegians. In other words, the British learned their ocean-going boat technology and their daring seafaring practices from the Viking, due to the British Isles’s constant interaction with the Norwegian (and Danish) Vikings for more than 300 years. From the many times when England were attacked by Danish and/or Norse¹³ Viking ships — from just before A.D. 800, repeatedly throughout the 800s, 900s, and early 1000s, followed by the Norwegian-blooded





conquest of England in 1066 by William of Normandy, followed into the 1200s by a Viking attack on Scotland, at Largs (on the Firth of Clyde), on October 2nd of A.D. 1263.

The Norway of today is innovative, retaining the enterprising and resourceful spirit of its many Viking (and post-Viking)

ancestors.

For example, Norway is a **petroleum** giant, extracting huge volumes of oil from the cold seas on Norway's western coasts (see map).

Norway's government-dominated¹⁴ petroleum company, **Statoil**, is a major world oil producer — exporting oil to many European nations, especially its Baltic neighbors (see photo of Statoil petrol station in Estonia), and providing gasoline to consumers via literally thousands of Statoil petrol stations.

Norway has achieved one of the highest national standards of living in the world, with petroleum accounting for about half of its export revenue.¹⁵ Norway is not a member of OPEC, yet it ranks third in the world for oil exports, behind Saudi Arabia and Russia.

Norway is also blessed with other valuable natural resources, including mountain streams and falls for hydroelectric power



production, fishing (inland freshwater fishing, estuarial fishing, and oceanic continental shelf fishing), timber (spruce, pine, fir, oak, ash, beech, birch, etc.), and various minerals (iron ore, coal, lead, zinc).

Norwegian shipping is # 2 worldwide, preserving the old Viking heritage of life (and sea-trade) on the high seas, plus a leader in shipbuilding. Old King Harald “Fairhair” would be pleased.

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ENDNOTES

1. Regarding Denmark’s **King Gorm** the Old, and his son **King Harald Bluetooth** (the “George Washington” of Denmark), see **Baltic Heritage Review**, volume 2006, issue # 1, pages 1–6.)

2. *Quoting* Snorri Sturluson’s Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway, translated by Lee M. Hollander (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press / American Scandinavian Fndtn., 1991), page 61.



3. Ironically, Hrolf “the Ganger” Rognvaldsson, one of Earl Rognvald’s sons, was “outlawed” (banished, as a criminal, i.e., decreed “outside the law”) by King Harald Fairhair. Hrolf fled to Valland [i.e., Gaul-land, meaning France]; after raiding for awhile there, Hrolf cut a truce deal with the French king, Charles the Simple, in A.D. 911 – so Hrolf agreed to settle in Rouen of a newly defined county, “Normandy”, near the Seine, to serve as a defensive buffer between the Baie de la Seine / English Channel and Paris — hiring a Viking to fight against future Vikings!! Now an immigrant ruler in “Normandy”, Hrolf the outlaw became known as “Rollo” (baptized as “Robert”, and his remains are yet in Rouen), with the new noble title “Count of Rouen”, which a generation or so later (in Hrolf’s new dynasty, “the House of Normandy”), became re-named the “Duke of Normandy”. The son of Hrolf / Rollo was William “Long-sword”, whose son was Richard I, sire of Richard II, sire of Robert, whose illegitimate son was William the Bastard. The latter duke of Normandy, in A.D. 1066, after the Battle of Hastings (off England’s eastern shore), became re-named “William the Conqueror, King of England”. In fact, William’s descendants sit on England’s throne even to this

day! (The statute shown appears on the grounds of St. Ouen's church in Rouen, Normandy; but, when this author visited there in A.D. 2002, as a cruise ship's Viking history lecturer, the Rollo statute then had a left arm, but no hand attached to it.)

4. One of Ragnar Lodbrock's sons was **Ivar the Boneless**, Viking king of Dublin (~ 871–873), and slayer of England's Edmund of East Anglia (in A.D. 869). According to the most current scholarship, Dr. William R. Cooper informs us, the skeleton of Ivar has never yet been found.

5. *Quoting* Snorri Sturluson's [Heimskringla](#) (fully cited above), at pages 205–206.

6. *Quoting* Sturluson's [Heimskringla](#) (cited above), pages 206–207.

7. This author and his wife routinely attend a *lutefisk* banquet in Bosque County, Texas. Bosque County includes the towns of Norse, Cranfills Gap, and Clifton (the latter being the “Norwegian capital of Texas”). The *Norwegian Society of Texas* is especially active in Bosque County.

8. [Norwegian Proverbs, Selected from the Tales of Peter Christian Asbjørnsen & Jørgen Moe](#), edited (and translated) by Joanne Asala (Iowa City, Iowa: Penfield Press, 1994), page 21. This Norwegian proverb's same basic idea appears in the Bible's Proverbs 31:10.

9. Asala's [Norwegian Proverbs](#) (cited above), page 35. Compare this proverb to Psalms 1:1–6.

10. Asala's [Norwegian Proverbs](#), page 37. Compare this proverb to Proverbs 27:10.

11. Asala's [Norwegian Proverbs](#), page 23. (This also applies to grandchildren!)

12. Asala's [Norwegian Proverbs](#), page 37. Compare this proverb to Proverbs 20:29, and also to another proverb which she recites (on page 54): “He is worth much who has learned much”.

13. Norse Viking conquests during the Viking era focused on north Scotland, Strathclyde, and Galloway, as well as the islands west or north of Scotland (Man, Hebrides, Orkneys, Shetlands).

14. Statoil's stock is majority-owned by the Norwegian government (about 70% stock interest).

15. The International Monetary Fund's ranking for A.D. 2005 (covering economic data for 180 nations), shows **Norway as #2, worldwide**, for [gross domestic product \(GDP\) at purchasing power parity \(PPP\)](#), per capita, — i.e., #2 in 2005, **per capita**, for the value of all final goods and services produced nationally, in that year, divided by the average population for that year.



POST – SCRIPT This brief 16-page introduction to some of the historical, natural, and cultural heritage of the Kingdom of

Norway cannot possibly do real justice to its valuable heritage as a nation (or as a culture, representing its many peoples over the past 10+ centuries. However, a few quick highlights have been offered, plus a few quick glimpse (such as the Oslo museum's Viking ship, shown left), to whet reader appetites, to both learn and value the unique heritage of Norway. Norwegians worldwide sing "***Ja vi elsker dette landet***" — "Yes, we love this land" — and that with good cause.