

## Olden, Norway: A Disney Cruise Line Port Review

by Cheryl Pendry, *PassPorter Featured Columnist*

When we took our Norwegian cruise a couple of years ago with another cruise line, I never thought in my wildest dreams that Disney would soon be following in our boat's waves, as it were.

Of course, back then Frozen was still being put together, and hadn't yet made it to the big screen, so none of us knew how instantly popular Norway would become as a Disney destination.

Summer 2015 sees the Magic taking its first tours up into these waters, and having had the luxury of previously experiencing some of the ports of call it will be visiting, I'll be taking you through some of them in this series of articles.

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□We start with the smallest of the ports we visited on our cruise, the town of Olden, a village which is home to just over 500 people, and yes you did just read that right. If you're wondering what on earth a place that small could have to offer, and trust me, I did wonder that before our visit, then the answer is, plenty. Don't be put off by reviews you may read online. I made that mistake before our cruise, as my trusty Norway guidebook didn't even mention Olden, it's that small! I was horrified by some of the stories I read, which essentially told me that visiting the village itself was a complete waste of time, with nothing to see. How wrong can you be, but more of that in a moment&hellip;

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□The first thing Olden has to offer is its scenery. This really is serious picture-postcard territory, with snow-capped mountains high above the few homes dotted along the shoreline, all surrounded by lush meadows.

As you visit in the summer months, it looks and feels (if the weather's right) idyllic, although I couldn't help but think that this must be a tough place to live during the winter. We were so fortunate on our visit here. We had a beautifully sunny and warm day, with temperatures in the mid-60s. It was the start of May, and when we departed, our captain told us that it was the hottest day he'd even known at this time of the year, and he'd been coming here for over 20 years! If you get a day like that, you really are in for a treat, as getting out and about in the open is in order here.

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□We had a full day in port, and it will be a similar story when the Magic docks here. With many of the shore excursions only lasting half a day, there's time to explore the village, and while it's small, it's certainly

charming. I'm an avid photographer, and I was in heaven here, with the beautiful, colored homes that nestle around the fjord.

□ You reach the village after a pleasant, 10-minute walk along the main road. If you want to explore further afield, you can also rent bicycles at the pier. We wandered around with no real idea of where we were going, but we quickly found the Gamlejyrkja, as they say in Norwegian, or the old church as we'd say. It dates back to 1759, and some of the timber used in its construction was from the stave church that once stood here. There are some shops to browse as well, but there's not too much to actually visit. Having said that, the chances are that you'll be captivated by the views, rather than worrying about visiting attractions, as the biggest attraction here is the scenery.

□ The major draw here is the stunning Briksdal Glacier, about 15 miles from Olden. As soon as I saw photos of it online, I knew we had to visit it. If that's something that appeals to you, it's worth knowing that the traditional visits to the glacier involve a lengthy, and very hilly, walk to get there. You're dropped off at the visitor center, and when you set off, things don't look too bad, but round a corner, and suddenly you're confronted by extremely steep slopes. You do need to be pretty fit to do this. We had friends who walked it, and were used to outdoor activity, and they struggled with it.

□ Thankfully, having researched this online, and discovered the trek to get to the glacier, I went ahead and booked the Briksdal Glacier by Troll Car excursion. At this stage, we have no idea what shore excursions will be offered when the Magic charts her new course to Norway, but it's a good bet that if other cruise operators offer it, Disney will, too. The troll cars are essentially golf buggies, and they pack a lot of power to get up those steep hills. Even in these things, it still took us quite a while to get to the glacier, and you aren't taken the whole way. You still have about a 10- or 15-minute walk ahead of you, and even this is hilly, which made me feel very sorry for everyone who was walking up here.

□ Sadly, when you finally see the glacier, the overwhelming feeling I had was one of regret. All the way here we'd been seeing signs, describing where the glacier had covered in years gone by, and when you think about how far back those were, to see what are essentially the remnants, complete with a lake in front of it that hadn't existed 20 years earlier, was just tragic. It was certainly a stark reminder of global warming. Despite that, it was also a stunning scene, and we stood there for as long as we could, taking it in.

□ Of course, I'd thoroughly recommend this shore excursion, either walking (you have been warned!) or by troll car, but Disney is likely to

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offer many other options. You might even be able to enjoy Glacier Safari Rafting near the arm of Briksdal, but there are also other glaciers to see, namely Kjenndalen, while you can also cruise around Oldevatnet Lake or you can visit Norfjordeid, all of which are spectacular. One thing I can pretty much guarantee is that you won't be disappointed by the scenery, as everything is just breath-taking.

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□The Magic visits Olden as part of its nine-night Norwegian Fjord cruise, which departs from Copenhagen on June, 20 2015. Other ports of call are Stavanger and Bergen, both of which I'll be covering in future articles, plus Gerainger, Alesund, and Molde (all in Norway).

*About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)*

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