

Stavanger, Norway: A Disney Cruise Line Port Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

In the final of this [series](#) of articles looking at some of the ports of call the Disney Magic will be visiting next summer when it cruises the Norwegian fjords, we head to Stavanger.

Located on the southeastern coast of Norway, Stavanger is very much a mixture of the old and new, with the charming Gamle Stavanger (old town) located on the quayside, while one of the city's museums pays tribute to what drives Stavanger today economically -- the offshore oil industry.

□ Stavanger is Norway's third largest city, and it's got an impressive history, with a beautiful cathedral, which is definitely worth a visit, dating back to 1125. The other wonderful thing about the city is, just like Bergen, you're likely to dock right in the middle of town, with all of Stavanger's major attractions within walking distance. You'll certainly be more lucky than us, as the day we visited, in early May, was a national holiday, which meant nearly every shop and cafe was closed. This was a great shame, as I'd have loved to see the city when it's truly buzzing with life.

□ However, we did get to see an interesting slice of life during our visit. We were waiting to visit the cathedral and realized that, from the level of security, someone very important was inside. It turned out that the Norwegian Foreign Minister was attending a service. We were astonished to see him leave on foot, with just a couple of security people around him, and I was able to happily snap photos of him. I couldn't believe it, as you'd never be able to do that at home, and I'm sure it would be the same in the US. It's an indication of what a safe country Norway is, and how laid back this city is.

For me, the stand-out attraction here is the old town, a collection of around 200 wooden homes dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, conveniently located right along the waterfront. You can easily wander around on your own after disembarking, and the joy of an area like this is, whichever way you turn, you're presented with beautiful homes. These were once home to seafarers and local workers, and even today, it's clear the homes are still well loved, and beautifully looked after. As we wandered around, though, I couldn't help but have sympathy for the people who live here. I don't think I'd like to have hordes of cruise ship passengers descending on me, and gawping at my house.

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□ I mentioned earlier that the cathedral is well worth seeing, and it's conveniently located right next door to a beautiful, lakeside city park. We really enjoyed just sitting here, drinking in the atmosphere.

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□ Somewhere else that's well worth visiting in Stavanger is the Valbergtarnet or fire tower, which was built in 1852 to try and protect the city from fires. Although it's located up a hill, once you arrive, there are only a couple of flights of stairs inside. Once you make it up those, you have a magnificent view across Stavanger and down to the harbor below, where you'll be able to admire the beauty of the Magic beneath you.

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□ Sadly, because it was a national holiday, we didn't get to sample the museums here, although there are plenty. The Norsk Oljemuseum or the Norwegian Petroleum Museum is housed in a very futuristic building. If we return to Stavanger, I'd be fascinated to see inside it. Sadly, the Maritime Museum on the waterfront won't be an option for Disney cruisers, as it's closed on the first two occasions the Disney Magic stops there. On the third visit, on the 11-night cruise, visiting it will be tight, as it doesn't open until 11:00 am, while the Disney Magic has an all aboard time of 12:45 pm.

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□ There's plenty to see outside of the city as well. The big out-of-town draw is Lysefjord and the dramatic Pulpit Rock. The rock is located about seven miles from the mouth of the fjord, and towers almost 2,000 feet above the water far below. As I'm sure you can imagine, this draws many a thrill seeker, with base jumpers attracted here. If you take a tour that allows you to visit Pulpit Rock, the views from up here are dizzying, and definitely not something you'll enjoy if you have an issue with heights. Be careful when you choose your shore excursion, though, as some will only take you past this at water level.

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□ Another fascinating place to visit outside of Stavanger is Sor Hinde Island, which is home to a variety of tropical plants, including bananas! It's certainly not something you'd expect to find in Norway, and especially not when you realize that the city is located as far north as Alaska!

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□ If history, rather than gardens, appeals to you, then you won't go wrong with an excursion out to the Iron Age Farm, which is a reconstruction of a farm, as it would have existed here around 6,000 BC. That's a truly mind-boggling amount of time to wrap your head around!

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□ Norway is well known for its fish, and particularly salmon, and Stavanger has cruise excursions that focus on that aspect of daily life.

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Whether Disney will offer these excursions remains to be seen, but there's a good chance they won't be able to resist offering the Salmon Safari, an exceptionally pricey experience, but then again, it is truly once in a lifetime! You don a survival suit, diving mask, and snorkel, and swim with wild salmon in their natural environment. It's something that you really need to be fit for, as you float for some distance down a river, but I can imagine it's something you'll never forget.

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□ Before we visited Stavanger, I only knew it for its association with oil, so I wasn't expecting much from the city. I learned it's a beautiful place to visit, and really does offer something for everyone, both in Stavanger itself and the surrounding countryside.

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□ The Disney Magic visits Bergen on its seven-night Norwegian Flord cruise, departing from Copenhagen on June, 6 2015, on the nine-night Norwegian Fjord cruise, also out of Copenhagen, leaving on June, 20 2015, with a final stop on the 11-night Norwegian Fjords and Iceland cruise, leaving Copenhagen on June, 29 2015.

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!](#)

Article last updated: 08-28-2014

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