

North Cape

North Cape by recumbent. A travel report.

Walter Hoogerbeets



Northernmost

There was a moment when an idea popped up in my head: I should go to the North Cape. Or actually, I acquired the strong inner conviction that I had to go to the North Cape. I could hardly think of something else.

My girlfriend told me I could keep thinking forever about it, or I could do it. She said do it, and do it soon.

I like coastlines. Mountains, forests, plains, they are all pretty to me. But nothing beats the beauty of the frontier between land and sea. For many people, the Norwegian fjords are the non-plus-ultra of coastlines. But closer to where I live is a coastline which is the radical opposite. It has fascinated me for years, and it is more or less on the route to the fjords.

So my plan was to not take the usual route through Sweden, but follow the coast of the Wadden Sea, take the ferry from Hirtshals in Denmark to Kristiansand in Norway, and then along almost the complete Norwegian coast until this magical northernmost cliff.

This adds almost half the distance of the usual route. It adds also lots of climbing, more cycling against polar wind and many ferries. But these coastlines are well worth all of the extra endeavor.

During my journey I will see all of this beauty passing by. I will see both great differences and unexpected similarities. I will see the tree line slowly descend and suddenly dive into the sea, and then the point where Europe itself disappears into the Arctic sea.



Landscape













































Textual

The low lands

The first eight days of my journey I rode along the coasts of the low lands. The coast of Holland, with its extensive dunes, took the first day. My mother and my sister live here, so I dropped in for a short visit. The weather turned very bad, so I spent the night at my sisters house in Den Helder.

This port marks the southwest end of the Wadden Sea. This sea is a remarkable blend of old cultural landscape and wilderness. 10,000 square kilometers of shallow tidal waters, sandy islands and mud. A landscape forged by the rhythm of the tides, changing on the timescale of a human lifetime. Two times before I cycled along most of the Wadden Sea's coast. How many weeks I sailed here I cannot even recall. So I wanted to ride a third time along the Wadden Sea, this time all of it.

It is not always possible to ride along the tidal flats themselves. In the Dutch part of the Wadden Sea, there's mostly only a road on the land side of the dike so you only have now and then a view over the salty slough. This doesn't mean there is nothing to see. The land inside is an old cultural

landscape, reclaimed from the Wadden Sea in a struggle of centuries.

Cycling in these quiet polders it is hard to imagine how hard life was once here and full of risk. Sometimes this history surfaces, for example in some villages I pass on my second day: Wierum, Paesens and Moddergat. At the end of the 19th century, a storm destroyed their fishing fleet. Hardly any males were left in these villages. They never fully recovered, and ironically this is the reason it is a very pretty, museum-like place nowadays. I have my first coffee break in the local pub. I am the only client.

The northernmost point of the coast of Groningen has its own North Cape, but few Dutch know this. I confuse my friends by noting the summit of the North Cape on my microblog. After this little joke I go south to the camping place of Termunten, where the toilets and showers are furnished with evangelical propaganda. In one day I biked almost the complete Dutch part of the Wadden Sea.



Doubts

The biggest part of the Wadden Sea belongs to Germany. Over thirty islands, four large estuaries and many ports. This is the most interesting part of my journey along the Wadden Sea. The first day I have a hard time enjoying it. The rain is so bad I can hardly look around. The East Frysian islands are not visible, while the Wadden Sea is no more than 2, 3 miles wide at certain places. But a few times I can cycle on the sea side of the dike and see the pretty marshes, like at the Leybucht.

As I reach Carolinensiel in the evening the weather gets better. Not too early as I am worried about my progress. Every morning I doubt I will reach North Cape in time. Only after my coffee break, mostly about one or two o'clock, I regain some faith I will make it. On my second day in Germany for example, at two o'clock I have only reached Dangast at the Jadebusen estuary. But after Apfelstrudel and a second cup of coffee I feel better. The kilometers are flowing easily under my wheels, at the ferry across the Weser I start thinking about reaching Sahlenburg the very same day and I succeed. Riding in the peaceful polders of Wursten, I was fully enjoying my trip again.

This internal struggle comes back every day. But I am still able to enjoy the beautiful scenery: the raised bog of Sehestedt which floats on the sea during high floods, the low islands of Northern Friesland where only small artificial hills protect the inhabitants against the sea. The lighthouse of Westerheversand, majestic in the bright morning light.

Actually, I am cycling too fast along the Wadden Sea. The Wadden is a landscape that needs time and tranquillity to show its real beauty. Close to Dagebüll I suddenly realise this. These are the last few kilometers on the seaside of the dike. I halt, dismount and make one final picture of the blue grey mudflats and small land reclamation dikes.

After crossing the Danish border, the doubts about my progression vanish. The first night I spend in Ribe, I did half of the Danish part of the Wadden Sea on a late afternoon. The Danish part is relatively small. Large parts of it border high land instead of polders. The Danish polders are scarcely inhabited; the Danish always preferred to live on higher ground and use the polders only for agriculture.

On the seventh day I say goodbye to the Wadden. At the Ho Bugt I halt one more time to absorb the sedimental landscape. Then I set sail to unknown territories.

Dunes

The west coast of Denmark consists largely of a long strip of sand, thrown up by the sea in ancient times. On top of this, dunes grow. Behind the dunes are lakes, old dunes and fjords. Not the type of fjords I will see in Norway, but still worth a visit. On the strip of sand is one long, straight road to the north. Near larger places there is a lot of traffic and there is not always a cycling lane. Fortunately, drivers are careful. But it is not my favorite track. The scenery is sometimes unique, but I don't know if I will ever ride here again.

One day and a half later I reach Hirtshals. I'm dead tired, but very happy. My goal was to reach Norway within ten days. I made it with a comfortable margin. This is my first long cycling journey, it's a good thing I estimated my abilities well. At the campsite, I wash my clothes, eat my pasta and then I take a stroll into this small town. The wind is blowing hard. When I try to take a picture at the harbour, I have problems holding my camera still. I purchase a ticket for the ferry next day and go to a pub to drink a beer. I write in my diary, buy another beer and another one. A solitary cyclist's party.



Fjords

Crossing the North sea to Kristiansand means a day of rest. Rest I seriously need. Eight long days of fast cycling without a day off proved a littlebit too much. In Norway I will not do that again. Fortunately, on the ferry I feel my body starting to recover. In Kristiansand I take it easy. I eat out and sleep at the campsite, which is still closed for the season but serves in the meantime as a public park. This is Norway.

The south coast of Norway is treacherous. On the map, no large fjords are visible. The famous mountains of Jotunheimen and Hardangervidda are way up north. In the first days I could get used to climbing, so was my plan.

Not exactly. The coastal route via Mandal and Lindesness to Farsund is full of small but steep climbs. They are harder than any climbs I've done before. On top of that, it's warm and dusty which affects my hay fever and contact lenses. I am forced to use sunglasses.

In the afternoon I reach Lysta Fyr, the lighthouse on the southwest end of Norway. A good first Norwegian milestone. Then it is another 70 km to

the campsite. Again, the trail looks innocent but it contains even steeper climbs. This time on gravel. At the end of the day I've done 175 km, but I'm impressed by the effort it had taken. If all of Norway is as heavy as my first day, I'd better call my boss to tell her I need another week off.

However, a local recumbent rider I meet at Knivesdal tells me I managed to take roughly the hardest way possible in this part of Norway. Maybe it will be doable after all.

Trusting the words of the local cyclist I start for the second day, on which I will take only main roads. At Flekkefjord I call my girlfriend, we have our seven year anniversary today. I tell her it will be less hard today, "because I just follow the 44".

Well. Not. The 44 repeatedly leads from sea level to considerable heights, steep along rough masses of rock. My legs are almost wasted and the heat is terrible. Did I overestimate myself, or did I underestimate Norway? Compared to the many travel reports I read, I trained very well, have a light equipment and a superior bicycle. But if the road continues like this, I'll have a hard time to do

a mere 100 km today.

In Hauge, much earlier than planned, I have a coffee break in a town hall - library – cultural center combination. I have a waffle with my coffee, the start of an addiction. I charge my cellphone, fill up my camelbak. With a head full of images of myself weeks overdue at the North Cape, I climb on the Fujin again. Eigersund will be final destination for today. I'm trashed.

But the hard climbing is over. Long descents and a little tail wind bring me in no time to Eigersund. Then there is a long, flat coastal road with a beautiful view on the sea. I spend the night on a pretty beach camping close to the airport of Stavanger.

Nordic weather

During the following days I encounter the weather Norway is famous for. Ferries are short moments of warming up and dripping off. Beyond Bergen I even rent a cabin instead of putting up my tent. I dry my clothes with an electrical heater while outside the hailstorms pass by.

In this part of Norway, the fjords reach deep into the Scandinavian peninsula. So deep, 'following the coast' loses its meaning. This is the landscape that makes Norway known all over the world. Fjords are everywhere along the coast, but here you'll find the longest, largest and deepest. Around them mountains with snowy peaks. In these mountains some nice cols can be taken. One of them, the Gamle Strynefjellsvegen or Rv 258, is the only cycle route to Geiranger. It is a gravel road reaching 1100 meters.

I want to do this col, and Geiranger seems a nice place for a day of rest. From the Sognefjord I therefore cycle a little to the east, passing the Jostedalbreen. Sadly, from the people at home with internet access I hear the Rv 258 is still closed.

Too much snow. I have to divert from the planned route and have my day off at the small town of Stranda.

Fortunately, two days later I have a col. Out of the Valldalen I climb far above the tree line. The road is only one week free of snow, at several places I ride along a wall of snow. Lakes are largely frozen. From my bicycle I look at sharp mountain peaks. Aside of the road there is a lot of skiing going on.

This road leads to Trollstigen, a narrow, steep road with many hairpins. One of the main tourist attractions in this region. I am early in the season, but there are already many mobile homes and motorcycle riders on the road. I am glad I'm not doing this in August.

At the top I take a moment to make pictures, to eat something and check my brakes. Then I start the descent. "Have fun!" says a bystander.

And fun I have. 9% on average with a fully loaded semi-lowracer, that's fast. I've already done more descents like this, and now I have enough faith to let the Fujin roll a little more. I have to be careful, drivers are looking more at the landscape than the road. They don't have a constant speed either. I overtake several cars. To enjoy the majestic landscape, I stop once in awhile.

In the second half of the descent I follow a local driver in a hurry. He is tailgating the tourists, some stop to let him pass. Not a very social driver, but for me he is an icebreaker. I can let the 'North Cape Fujin' go at its own speed. However, my icebreaker doesn't exceed 80 km/h, so I still need to brake once in awhile. But for me, it is fast enough.

“We always have time”

One day I cycle through the inland: via the Surnadal I ride to Trondheim. Now I understand why almost every North Cape cyclist chooses a way much less coastal than I did. The road ascends slowly, the steep climbs of the coast are not here nor the time-consuming ferries. These are easy kilometers. Unfortunately, it is also the day I break two spokes. The second time, two road bikers training for Trondheim-Oslo stop. They offer help, but are mainly curious about my bicycle. They explain where in Trondheim I can get new spokes, as I ran out of spare ones. They want to ride along with me, I get the message clearly and push the pedals. Fortunately, the road descends slightly, so they get the show they hoped for.

Trondheim does not have a campsite near the city, so I choose the youth hostel. Here I meet two Dutch North Cape cyclists, who came from Oslo through the inland. I contact Challenge, to ask advice on the spokes. Paul Voerman does not like to take risks, he wants the wheel rebuilt if possible. And he wants a broken spoke for examination. Trondheim is probably the only place with a good bicycle shop I will see this week, so I try to find one.

The large bicycle shop has spokes, but no time. The smaller Sykkel Senteret “has always time”. Problem solved so it seems, but it does not come easy. The spokes are not exactly the right size, and ‘having time’ is more about ‘making time’. After several hours of work the shop’s owner himself

devotes his attention to it. He builds a perfectly true wheel for a laughable price. “We always try to help” I am told. Well, they surely did! One of their clients rides a velomobile by the way.



Time trial

With my bicycle in perfect condition again I take the 8:30 ferry crossing the Trondheimfjord. I don't see much of the fjord, as it is raining hard. Today I will make a start with the Rv17, a long coastal road with many ferries leading to Bodø. As I turn away from the fjord I encounter what I have been preparing myself mentally for: polar wind. The Norwegians mostly cycle from north to south, so they have the prevailing wind at the tail. But like any Western European I want to finish at the North Cape, not start there. So I have to ride against the cold northern wind. However, I did not expect to meet it this far south.

The landscape is changing. I can see I am moving north. Trees are getting smaller, the first dwarf birches and cotton grass appears beside the road. The Norway I know from hikes in Saltfjellet and Narviksfjell surfaces. On a grey but dry morning I pass the border of the province of Nordland. Suddenly, within a few kilometers, the real beauty of Norway unfolds.

So it is true. The more north you get, the more beautiful Norway is. And the sun breaks through.

Many ferries, some with remarkably complex schedules ask for an accurate planning. North of Brønnøysund, on Friday, there is a ferry which sails in one go a track normally done by two connected ferries. This connection is almost impossible for cyclists. By chance, I'm there on Friday, so this ferry saves me some stress. The ferry moors, I ask the sailor whether this is the right ship. I don't understand his answer, until I assist him with the pronunciation of the word "canceled".

So I have to do the impossible connection after all. 40 minutes and 17 kilometers to the next harbour. A strong and cold head wind. Fortunately I can wait for the other ferry in the mobile home of a Dutch couple. It turns out the man has owned a Challenge once.

The first ferry has a delay of five minutes. 35 minutes left. I eat a lot of dried apricots, empty my camelbak partially and try to keep my legs warm. Then the time trial starts. I wait at the forefront of the vehicles, two feet engaged in the pedals. The ferries' personnel give me a pitiful smile, they know

what I'm up to. The ramp hits the quay and I'm gone.

For almost a year I've done only long distances, and before the shorter trips didn't go easy as well. I try to recall how I rode those 40 minute races of the winter competition. Always a dip in speed at 22 minutes, that I know for sure.

At every kilometer marker I calculate my average speed. Shouting loudly I try to encourage myself, it will be a close call. My body is not used to high speeds anymore, no matter how hard I push, the speed is low. However, at 10 km I detect some margin. At 15 km I am ahead of the schedule. The last two kilometers are very long again, but when I roll down the last little hill to the harbour, the ferry arrives. Within two minutes the ferry leaves, but I am on board. The crossing takes fifty minutes, this is hardly enough time to recover.

Party

After this race I need to slow down a little. This is no problem, in the first weeks I cycled myself enough margin. A few days later I take a ferry to the Lofoten islands. Here I have a very slow day. The weather is perfect, I enjoy the wild mountains who leave hardly any place for people to settle. On the beach camping of Fredvang I see the midnight sun for the first time in all its lustre.

The rough Lofoten are succeeded by the Vesterålen, islands with a more subdued landscape. Green hills, blue sky, white beaches, a deep blue sea. And a freezing northern wind. Every hour I get more north, the land becomes more quiet, the nature more pretty and my body more tired. But also more euphoric. I am on schedule, my body is doing fine and I am enjoying this beautiful country more and more.

A ferry sailing twice a day in summertime brings me to Senja. This island impresses me deeply. There is so much to see in less than a day of cycling. I see sharp mountain peaks, a col leading me along a frozen mountain lake, pretty lakes and woods of little crooked birches. The Mefjorden is the most beautiful fjord I've seen until now, and

there are almost no buildings along its shore. Following the road to Botnhamn, the landscape turns less a wilderness, with meadows, larger trees and villages. It is like all the beauty of Norway passes by that day.

The ferry from Botnhamn is the last one with a tricky schedule. I ride to Tromsø in one go, so it is another day of 160 km. I'm in a party mood: the finish is very close now, almost every large hurdle is cleared. The camping is close to the city, so I am tempted to have a little party. After dinner I have a few beers in Tromsø and write in my diary. I will make it. I just cycle to the North Cape.



North Cape cyclists meet

The nice weather seems definitely over now. It is very cold and cloudy as I cross the Lyngen Alpen next day, to take the last two ferries. I ask a Norwegian woman if this is the normal weather for the season, and she confirms. That is good to know. I trained all winter, so I do not really care. I am prepared.

Little short of a miracle, the sun returns after the second ferry. I take my chance and cover quite a lot of kilometers the one and a half day this warm weather lasts. I reach Alta wearing summer clothes. The Cape is getting very close, will I be one of the lucky bastards who are standing beside the monument under a blue sky?

Maybe it's a good thing after all, that I am not one of those lucky bastards. Crossing the plains of Finnmark in heavy weather is part of the experience. It is sullen when I leave Alta, drizzling starts when I ride into the Stokkedalen, and when I climb to the plain it is raining with some hail. Wind is strong and gusty. But I am able to see a little of the landscape. It is just as I expected: flat mountains, snow, moss, bushes which sometimes

reach knee height. A few small houses and huts. Why do people live here?

Somewhere in the middle of the plain I meet two cyclists riding North Cape – Lindesnes. They ask how much they will have to climb until Alta. Probably the first days have been tougher than expected. They assure me I will only have to descend, but this turns out incorrect. I start to long for coffee at Skáidi and decide Olderfjord, not much further down the road, will be today's goal.

In Skáidi is a gas station with a restaurant called the Skáidi Kroa. When I walk in I see a soaked cyclist. We greet, after a few minutes we start a conversation. He is a Swiss, named Hanspi, heading for the North Cape. His route has led him through Germany and Sweden. After a cup of coffee he continues, I take another coffee and waffel, and a third. Then I too continue through the rain.

22 kilometers and a nice climb further I walk into the reception of Olderfjord's camping, just at the moment the Swiss cyclist is renting a cabin. He

proposes we share it. With this weather an excellent idea. In the cabin we immediately put on the electrical heater and dry all of our wet gear. We both have definitely deserved this comfort.

Hanspi likes to get up early, but with plenty of time left I prefer to sleep long. We hardly speak to each other next morning, but we will probably meet again.

The Cape

There are many frightening stories about the last part of the journey. There would be many tough climbs, the winds are said to be dangerous and the North Cape Tunnel is described as pure horror. Well prepared but slightly nervous I dive into the tunnel, 7 km long and well over 200 m beneath sea level.

“So, that’s all” I think when I am through. Then I realize the vast majority of North Cape cyclists take the route through Sweden, just like Hanspi. Those who do take a route through Norway, mostly do not reach the fjords until well beyond Trondheim. This explains the stories about the last part of the route: most cyclists had a relatively easy route until they are confronted with Norwegian cycling.

The 33rd day is dedicated to the summit. I have plenty of time, sleep long and leave the camping relaxed. The trip starts with a fine climb to the first plain. It starts to rain again but who cares, with the ultimate goal so close. Soon I discover the stories about the wind are *not* exaggerated. I estimate the wind at 7 Bft, with gusts far stronger than that. I am glad I chose the Fujin as my bicycle!

Having reached the height of the plain, I see a cyclist coming my way. Is it...? But he moves to my side of the road, and yes, it is Hanspi the Swiss cyclist. He got up at 3:30 in the morning and is on his way back. We will both sleep in the youth hostel tonight, and then we will do a lot of talking. Right now is not the place and time for a social break.

About the time I descend into the Turfjorden, rain has ceased. Now and then some blue sky is visible. In an euphoric mood I begin to climb again, the last climb. It is a little sunny when I reach the entrance gate and buy my ticket. The guy selling tickets is curious about my bicycle. When I explain the combination of low weight and low aerodynamic drag, he instantly understands why this is such an excellent bicycle for his country.

The time has come for the pictures at the globe monument, the SMS to my microblog and coffee. I take time to let it sink in. I did it. I finished my journey. A year ago I shared my plan with the world and now I am sitting here. Slowly and silently I enjoy this moment, while many congratulation messages enter my cellphone.

That afternoon, at the youth hostel, I see the Swiss bike, but Hanspi himself is nowhere. I decide to walk into Honningsvåg. Too late I think I should have left a note on his bike. After shopping food for the journey home, I enter a café-restaurant at the harbour for a beer and dinner.

A few minutes I am sitting there and of course, Hanspi walks in. Honningsvåg is not that large. We eat fish and drink Norwegian beer. Here, in this small town far away from the Western European fuss, we celebrate our victory.

Visual



Goodbye Delft. [1]



The Dutch dunes. [1]



Seaside of the Hondsbossche Zeewering. [1]



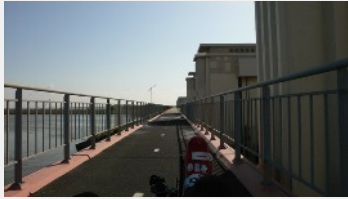
Cycling path in the dunes near Den Helder. [1]



Den Helder lighthouse. [1]



Surfers at low tide. The waterline is far. [2]



The sluices of Kornwerderzand. [2]



Bridge across the Van Harinxma Canal, Harlingen. [2]



Horses on the marsh, Friesland. [2]



Wierum church. [2]



Seaside of the dike, Groningen coast. [2]



Noordpolderzijl, a tiny tidal port at the coast of Groningen. [2]



At the Dutch North Cape, on the dike of the Emmapolder. [2]



Jeverland. [4]



Ditzum, a tidal port at the Ems river. [3]



Statues on the beach of Dangast. [4]



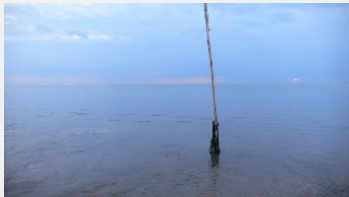
Just like Holland, Germany fears the sea, nicknamed "Blanke Hans". [4]



On the ferry across the Weser river. [4]



Polder in the Wursten land. [4]



The mudflats near Sahlenburg. [4]



Self portrait, Sahlenburg. [4]



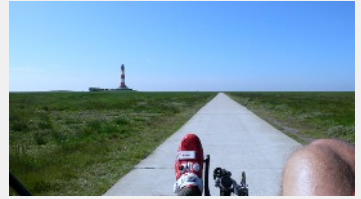
Man at mole, Büsum. [5]



Tönning. [5]



Cycling path through the Katinger Watt. [6]



Westerheversand lighthouse. [6]



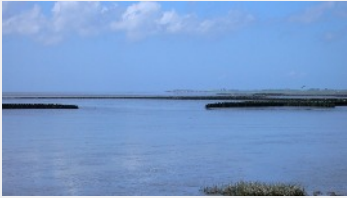
Westerheversand. [6]



Narrow-gauge railway to the Nordstrandischmoor hallig. [6]



Sheep gate, Northern Friesland. [6]



Mudflat with land reclamation dikes, Northern Friesland. [6]



Wind turbines, Northern Friesland [6]



The Men at Sea, Esbjerg. [7]



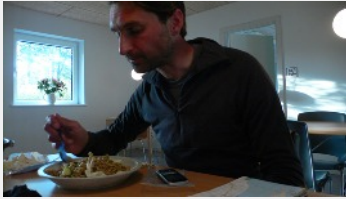
Ho Bugt beach. [7]



Danish border. [6]



Abandoned farm, Danish coast. [7]



Self portrait with pasta, Agger. [7]



Lighthouse and camping, Hirtshals. [8]



The ferry is coming to port, Hirtshals. [9]



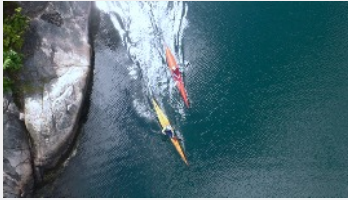
Goodbye Denmark. [9]



Near the Norwegian coast. [9]



Kristiansand. [9]



Crossing the first fjord. [10]



A tough climb is rewarded by a view on a beautiful mountain lake. [11]



Offshore industry near Stavanger. [12]



At Lysta Fyr, the southwest end of Norway. [10]



On board of the ferry to Skudeneshavn. [12]



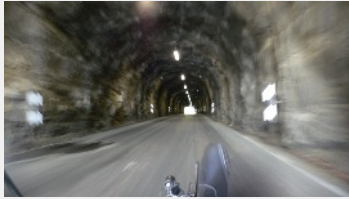
Bryggen, the old part of Bergen. [13]



After two days of rain and hail, I enjoy the comfort of a cabin. [13]



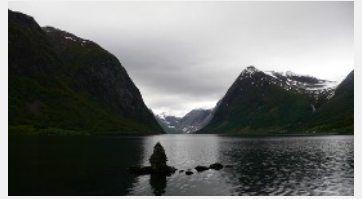
Unfortunately, many ferries don't offer a view on the fjord. [14]



Tunnel. [14]



Along the big fjords. [14]



Cairn with seagull in the Kjøsnesfjorden, which is a lake, actually. [15]



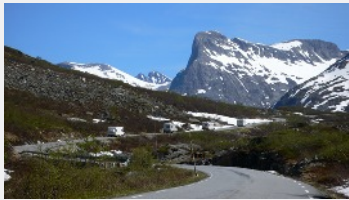
Time for a day of rest. Stranda. [15]



Laundry. [15]



At the harbour, Stranda. [15]



Mobile homes on the road to Trollstigen. [17]



At the col. [17]



View from Trollstigen. [17]



Warning: traffic jam. [17]



Trondheim. [18]



Nordland is getting close. [21]



Beach with cobbles. [21]



Island. [23]



Passing the arctic circle. [23]



Rainclouds moving over the mountains and fjords of Nordland. [23]



Nearing the last ferry of the Rv17. Cars take the Svartisentunnel instead. [23]



Waiting for the ferry. [23]



On board of the ferry to Ørnes. I am the only passenger. [23]



The midnight sun shines on the mountains. [23]



Wooden cutter in the port of Bodø. [24]



On board of M/S Bodø to the Lofoten islands. [25]



The ferry empties itself. [25]



A flock of seagulls, Å, Lofoten. [25]



The end of the E10 in Å. The last few hundred meters, the E10 is a cycling path. [25]



Reine, the famous fishery harbour at the Lofoten. [25]



Rorbu. [25]



Stockfish. For centuries the only reason to be at the Lofoten. [25]



Often found at the Lofoten: sea urchin. [25]



The midnight sun reflects into my tent. [25]



The midnight sun. Fredvang, Lofoten. [25]



Norwegians really like hiking. [26]



Rebecca, a beautiful restaurant in the middle of nowhere. [26]



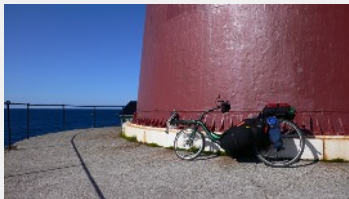
Campfire and tonic water at the camping of Stokmarkness, Vesterålen islands. [26]



Bridge, Vesterålen islands. [27]



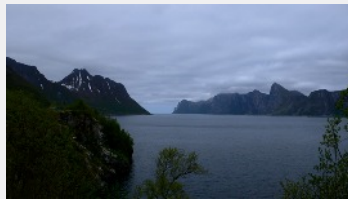
Nordlandbåt. [27]



Andenes Fyr, Andøya. [27]



Mountain lake on the island of Senja. [28]



The unspoilt Mefjorden, Senja. [28]



Road on the island of Lyngen, Troms. [29]



The Lyngen Alps tower looming above a small hamlet. [29]



Kvænangsfjellet. An amazing col on the E6 to Alta. [30]



Warning, moose *and* reindeer. [30]



Barn wit boy at the Altafjorden. [30]



Through the Stokkedalen, heading for the plain. [31]



The Skáidedduottar plain. [31]



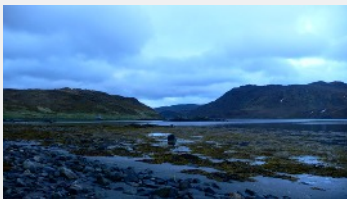
Hanspi, the Swiss cyclist. Like many cyclists nowadays, he brought a laptop along. [31]



Entrance of the notorious North Cape Tunnel. Are the stories exaggerated, or was I lucky? [32]



A pleasant evening with Dutch motor bikers. [32]



Skipsfjorden at night. [32]



Hanspi got up in the middle of the night. He is returning to Honningsvåg as we meet. [33]



At the Cape. [33]



In the youth hostel of Honningsvåg. I did it. [33]

Stuff

About the bicycle

For this trip I bought a brand new Challenge Fujin SL. This bicycle was chosen mainly with the circumstances in Norway in mind: Mountainous and windy. The bicycle had to be both lightweight and aerodynamic. Because of head wind a low bicycle is better, but it should still be high enough to carry luggage. I am not aware of any bicycle meeting these requirements better than the Fujin SL.

The bicycle has some components better than standard:

- Carbon crankset, FSA triple 30-39-53;
- Carbon front boom;
- SRAM X.0 dérailleur;
- Matching PG 990 cassette, 11-32;
- SRAM X.9 gripshifts;
- Avid BB7 disk brake at front wheel;
- Mudguards;
- Day rack;
- Schwalbe Kojak 35 mm slicks;
- Super light KMC chain, titanium nitride coating;
- Bebop pedals with titanium axles.

I chose the X.0 dérailleur because of durability and strong spring, which keeps the chain tightly stretched. The reason I combined the X.0 with X.9 shifters is the fact these offer a more comfortable grip. Otherwise they are exactly the same as X.0 shifters. The system is very light too.

The disk brake is a tough weight penalty, but absolutely necessary for the steep descends which are on the daily menu in Norway.

The Kojaks are fast and puncture resistant tires. They offer good grip in wet weather and on gravel. Comfort is good. I bought the folding version to save weight.

The triple crankset and 11-32 cassette offered the gear ratios I needed to take all slopes encountered, but without my lightweight gear and nine months training, it would not have been enough on some hills.

The lightweight chain did quite well, I have the impression the coating contributed to this. Nevertheless, I think this technology isn't completely mature yet.

The Bebop pedals are excellent. With the large amount of freefloat and the easy step-in they offer the same comfort as Speedplay, but without the fragility of the cleats or dirt vulnerability. On top of that, they are very light: 219 gram for the complete system.



About the gear

Going to the Finnmark, you will need to prepare for seriously bad weather. Using minimalistic summer equipment is irresponsible. My tent was a Hilleberg for two persons. I slept in a Mountain Equipment three season sleeping bag and the lightest Therm-A-Rest. This was always warm enough, the extra space in the tent was very comfortable on rainy days.

For cooking I used a MSR Whisperlite. However, in Norway I seldom needed it as most campings have a kitchen.

My cycling clothes consisted of a set summer clothing with leg warmers, and a set of winter clothes. The last two weeks I mainly used winter clothes.

My après-cycling wardrobe was standard outdoor clothing. They were summer clothes, but using thermal underwear and three thin Icebreakers it was good enough for the cold North.

I had two pair of shoes. Sidi Dragon MTB-shoes during cycling, Salomon watertight hiking shoes A at the camping. I know, this is a little heavier than one pair of trekking shoes. But my strong opinion is that shoes are suited for cycling, for walking, or none. On top of that, the weather in Scandinavia is sometimes so wet even waterproof overshoes will

not keep your feet dry. Being able to put on dry shoes in the evening seriously adds to the holiday experience.

For rain protection I had Pro overshoes, an Odlo GTX-paclite jacket and Vaude E-vent rain trousers. I am especially satisfied with the latter.

All of this was packed in Radical side panniers size M with waterproof liners, and a Haglöfs Tight S daypack as a rear bag. For the latter I had a yellow rain cover, which also enhances visibility on the road.



Colophon

The journey started on the 15th of May 2009, 7:30 in the morning. The North Cape was reached on June 16, 11:50. The journey home by public transit lasted from June 17, 6:30 until June 20, 20:10.

Text and photography: Walter Hoogerbeets
Graphic design: Hugo Schuitemaker

This travel report may be copied and redistributed according to Creative Commons 3.0, under the following conditions:

- Attribution to the Author;
- Noncommercial, with the sole exception of the promotion of Challenge Recumbents, Apeldoorn, the Netherlands;
- No Derivative Works.

See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/> for details.