

Study Tour in Norway

Report from the Study visit in the Counties of Sogn og Fjordane and Oppland

(original in French)

12.-14. May 2006



Euromountains.net, Theme 2: The role of regional authorities in the development and promotion of mountain quality products

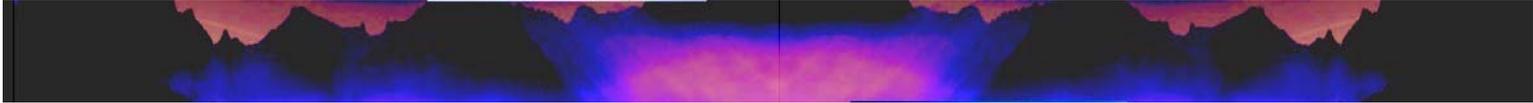
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Study tour in brief – main points

A 3-days bus tour starting in Flåm, Aurland and ending at Oslo Intl. airport Gardermoen

- Day 1: Guided trip in Sogn og Fjordane, passing through the municipalities Aurland, Lærdal, Sogndal and Luster. Stops and study visits at different places in Luster municipality. Crossing over the Sognefjellet mountain pass into Oppland county.
- Day 2: Visits to study objects in Lom and Vågå municipalities in Ottadalen region. Visits will include different types of business - food, small scale industries, tourism based on cultural heritage, etc. In the afternoon travel via Valdresflya mountain pass over to the Valdres region.
- Day 3: Visits to study objects in the Valdres region, a region which still has an active living tradition of summer mountain farming. The region is also renowned for the production of “rakfisk” – brined/fermented trout, which is termed a delicacy amongst gourmants.



Summary of the 3 days

Our study trip in Norway took us from west to east through the central mountain areas of the two counties Sogn og Fjordane and Oppland. The trip was planned to show a cross section of the natural features of the area as well as give an impression of local culture and how people have been, and are using mountain resources for their livelihood. All in all we visited 10-11 municipalities. A common characteristic for these municipalities is that each covers a huge land area but have few inhabitants. Population density is not more than 2-4 persons per square km.

Divided by the mountain range between Western and Eastern Norway, there are differences between the communities on either side both in geography, climate, culture and traditions. Mountain areas in Western Norway are different from most mountain areas elsewhere in Europe in that the mountains rise directly up from sea level without any lowland in between. In addition narrow fjords cut deep inland forming a special landscape of fjords and mountains.

Climatic conditions differ from west to east. In west the weather of mountain communities in Sogn og Fjordane is influenced by a coastal climate, with mild winters and long summers, which favours horticulture and fruit growing in lower lying areas. In Oppland, on the eastern side, we find a typical inland climate with cold winters, dry and relatively hot summers. The communities in the mountain valleys here have been regarded as good grain growing areas. Precipitation is low in most of the area. Annual rainfall in Lom is a mere 250 mm; the lowest of all in Norway. Thus, irrigation is necessary and has century long traditions. Farmers in Lom have an old saying: *“If the Lord gives sun, we ourselves provide water”*.

Climatic differences are also reflected in local building techniques, in particular in the many well preserved old timber houses. Lom and Vågå municipalities have the highest concentration of protected old houses on the list of the Directorate for Cultural Heritage.

The visited municipalities also represent the core area for the remaining stave churches, which are church buildings unique for Norway and date back to pre-reformation times.

Common for the whole area is that mountains and mountain resources have been of great importance for peoples' survival and local development. At first through hunting and fishing; later by grazing of domestic animals, mountain summer farming, wood cutting etc. Mountain summer farming is still actively practiced, particularly in the Valdres region. In more modern times quarrying, timber production and hydroelectric power have become important. Norwegian mountaineering had its cradle in these areas more than 100 years ago. Today tourism is a fast growing industry, still with unexploited possibilities. Fjords, glaciers and high mountains make up a unique combination of natural features which attracts tourists from all over the world.

Agriculture is still of great importance, even though a dramatic reduction in number of farms has taken place in recent years. Agriculture provides employment and direct income for 10-15 percent of the population. Farms are generally small and most farmers need, and have side incomes of different sort. Multi-activity on the farm has been a tradition which has got a revival in recent years by active promotion from the authorities. A combination of farming and tourism is common and on the rise. Staying on a farm and combining adventurous mountain activities with a taste of locally produced food and traditional culture is a mixture that meets well the modern market trends in tourism. More exotic farming activities like reindeer farming are also found, and have long traditions in these mountain areas. More recently red deer farming has been taken up as a part of mixed farming.

Egil Nestande, Partner of the project, County from Sogn og Fjordane, Norway

Friday 12. May:

- 09:00 Departure from Fretheim Hotel in direction Aurland (centre of Aurland municipality)
From Aurland municipality we travel through the world's longest road tunnel (24 km) into Lærdal municipality, passing its administrative centre, Lærdalsøyri, and continue to our first ferry crossing of the Sognefjord
- 10:00 Ferry Fodnes – Manheller
- 10:45 At Manheller we enter Sogndal municipality, which we travel through with guiding along and into Luster municipality, where we make a short stop in the hamlet of Solvorn. Here we will be joined by the development officer in Luster municipality, Olav Grov, who will be our local guide for most of the day.
- 11:45 Short sightsseeing in Solvorn before our second crossing of the Sognefjord over to Urnes, where we will have a 3 hours programme. Urnes is famous for its stave church, the oldest preserved stave church (<http://www.stavechurch.com>). Urnes Stave Church is on Unesco's World Heritage list. Programme at Urnes will include:
- briefing at Urnes farm which include many undertakings: local food production and processing, red deer farming, farm tourism, etc.
 - lunch at Urnes farm
 - guiding in Urnes Stave Church
 - information about the development project at Urnes and neighbouring communities
- 15:00 Departure from Urnes and travel in direction of Sognefjellet mountain pass
- 15:45 Short stop at Turtagrø Hotel (<http://www.turtagro.no/>) and at highest point of the mountain pass where we might get a magnificent view of the surrounding mountain ranges. The road across Sognefjellet mountain pass is designed as National tourist route (<http://www.turistveg.no/index.asp?lang=eng>). When we start our descent from the mountain pass we are also entering Oppland county and Lom municipality.
- 17:00 Visit at Storhaugen farm (<http://www.storhaugengard.no>), where two generations are running a comprehensive business of rural tourism, and traditional food production and processing. An important market is national alpine skiing teams from different European countries.
- 19:00 Arrival at Lom municipality centre. Accommodation and dinner at Fossberg hotell (<http://www.fossberg.no/en/index.htm>) In the evening possibility to visit the Fossheim Stone Centre (<http://www.fossheimsteinsenter.no>), stroll around the village and take a look at Lom Stave Church, one of the largest of Norway's stave churches.



Summary of the first day made by ADRAT, Portugal

With the punctuality that we can observe during the 3 days, by 9am the 12th of May 2006, we starts the study visit in the Norwegian Counties of Sogn og Fjordane and Oppland, prevue in the project Euromountains.net with the support of the Communitarian Initiative INTERREG III C – SUDOE. These Counties have a deep tourist activity, as the result of the existence of exceptional natural conditions and a rare beauty.

With about 30 persons on board, the bus addressed to the Aurland Municipality, crossing the world longest tunnel at the date of its construction (about 24 kms) until it arrived in Laerdal Municipality, where the importance of agriculture is noticeable. The main cultures are the production of potatoes and cereals, in spite of the necessity to irrigate the soil. Cattle production, namely bovine, caprine and ovine are, also, important resources of this Municipality. The salmon fishing had already great importance, but the appearance of a parasite raises the impracticability of the fishing of this species so appreciated, in spite of the treatment procedures of the river. A small stop in the trip allowed the contact with this little town and with its beautiful wooden and very ancient houses.

The first Sognefjorden crossing was between Fodnes and Mannheller, in the Sogndal Municipality. This Municipality, with about 7.000 inhabitants, is one of the most important in this zone, with a very important production of timber. Sogndal is the main school, commercial and administrative centre of the whole region. Here are located the Research Institutes, the Schools and the principal Training Centres, with about 2.000 students of all region. Sport has here a privileged place: there is one Training School for football players and managers, with about 160 users. It is, also, an important transport centre either through ferries, ploughing the fjord, or through roads, that took benefit of the tunnel construction, having a deep transformation in the

transport means in the last 50 years, after the construction of roads doing the connexion among the main population centres. Sogndal has, also, a little airport allowing connexions with the main cities of the country.

Concerning the economic activity, the main sectors are the tourism and the production of timber and fruit, sold fresh or in jam, profiting from the favourable climatic conditions that exist here.

In direction to Solvorn, we arrive to the Luster Municipality, town also profit with the transports revolution verified, with the construction of roads reeling the fjord and communicating the different population centres, increasing the independence related to the communications by boat.

Solvorn is a small village, with 500 inhabitants, situated at the margin of Sognfjorden, very demanded by tourists, because it is one of the fjord's places where the water is warmer and it's an important holidays place. It has a splendid hotel – the Walaker Hotel – that was built in the eighteenth century with an art gallery built with the wood proceeding from an old church. In this village we can find old wooden houses, ancient residences and boat storehouses that were recovered to the countless tourists that come here to spend their holidays, enjoying adventure sports and fishing, which is abundant here. Sovorn has a beautiful wooden church, built at the end on nineteenth century.

In Solvorn, Sognfjorden was crossed again by ferry until Urnes, a little village where is main touristy attractions of Luster Municipality is located – the Urnes Church, from the 12th century, classified as World Patrimony by UNESCO.

In Norway, the construction of wooden churches was very common and there were over two thousand. Nowadays, there are, only, eighty eight which are being conserved in order to avoid its irremediable destruction, because they are considered an important patrimony of the country.



The Urnes Church, built of wood, is considered the most ancient church existing in Norway it's a beautiful pattern of the religious buildings in this country, in spite of its simplicity comprising an element that attracts many tourists in summer. Even though it is completely built with wood, we can verify its excellent preservation state which it's due to the fact of the lack of pillars plunged in the soil, this way avoiding its rottenness. Actually, this building's foundations is made of rock, and the construction was built as one box above this foundation, fact which keeps the wood in a good repair. The North side has relief drawings symbolizing the fight of the good against the evil, through representations of animals, probably lions and serpents, its excellent state of preservation is obvious.

The Urnes' Church interior has also great simplicity, having few openings and separated zones for the different members of the community, with an appropriate local to the most representative family, closer to the altar and with the women situated in the Northern row and the men in the Southern row. The decoration is very simple, and some elements were moved back after the Reformation, so it only maintains the original decorative designs.

After this visit it was lunch time in one farm that works with agro-tourism and where the visitors can contact with the diferent activities that here are developed. The meal served was prepared with home-grown products, and it was served as main dish, deer stewed-meat – farm production. The drinks served in the meal – apple and raspberry juices – are, also, produced at the farm, as well as the dessert that was served.

Before the meal, the farm's landowner gave the group a general perspective about the activities developed there, referring that the farm works in cattle production, namely deer and ovine and fruit, the apple and the raspberries are the main productions. The apple production has 4 hectares of surface and the raspberries has an area of 8 hectares, but the importance of the apples is decreasing, with the increase of the production the market prices decrease, becoming less profitable to the producers.

Part of these products goes to the production of juices and jams. The trade of natural raspberries in little baskets addressed to the markets of Bergen and Oslo is a successful challenge, due to the profitable prices obtained.

However tourism is one of the main activities developed in this farm that has thirty-five beds, distributed by several traditional buildings. This activity is carried out, almost exclusively during the summer, between the

months of June and September, period in which Urnes Church is open to the public and period in which the ferry that connects to Solvorn makes the cross several times a day, carrying a great number of visitors.

Questioned about the production of deer and the adoption of baskets to the commercialization of raspberries, the owner referred that it is very important to be one step ahead of the competition, looking forward to profit from the advantages that the innovations bring.



At the end of the meal, very briefly, a development agent who is working in the Municipality of Luster made a short reference to the activities developed by the Municipality that has launch actions that tends to the dynamic the Municipality, referring also that social welfare, the economic dynamics, the territorial management and the tourism are the main areas in which the Municipality has developed its action, setting special emphasis in the tourist promotion, having in account the increase of the visitors average. The development agent's communication had to be reduced, because the second stage of the trip had to begin, in order to complete the programme foreseen.

However, it was possible to do a brief visit to the deer production, at the moment they were being fed.

It began then, the trip to the Jotunheimen National Park, with a little stop in the Hotel Turtagro, placed 884 metres above the sea and it's one of the paradises of the mountain sports' lovers, open between Easter and the beginning of October, where we could see some of the culminant points of the zone and it's also the start for the exploration of this zone. The young people were in great number, practising their favourite sports. This hotel is the successor of one other with the same name built in 1888 and destroyed by the fire.

Departing to Lom and after the crossing of Sognefjellet highest point, we enter in Oppland County, by a road classified as nacional touristic, where we could see countless tourists' practicing mountain sports. We kept going until we arrive to Storhaugen, a mountain farm, from where Jotunheimen can be visible, at 700 metres above the sea level and 8 hectares area that can be considered as a property from medium size.

The landlords welcome the group with coffee and the region's traditional cakes, which was as an introduction to present the space that is vacationed to the agro-tourism, though the tourist activity is one of the main sources of income. The farm is a family enterprise, where three members of the family work, during the high season and in part-time they have to hire one person to take care of the cleaning.

Mr. Magnar Slettede, the farm owner, made its presentation and referred that their main production is goat milk, with a production average of 40.000 litres/year, and sold to the enterprise TINE that covers all the country's territory, collecting, transforming and commercializing all the milk produced. Besides the goats, there are other animals such as horses, sheep and ducks, which income is not important.

The tourist exploitation is the main activity of this farm it has fifty beds available in several flats distributed by buildings made according the ancient Norwegian tradition, some of them built to the effect, other profiting ancient barns and other agricultural existing structures.

He also said that the investment amount was about 4 million crowns and he received as support 150.000 crowns from Oppland County, he does new investments every four years, when the previous investment is already recovered. The operation period is from May to October, having more tourist frequency in summer.



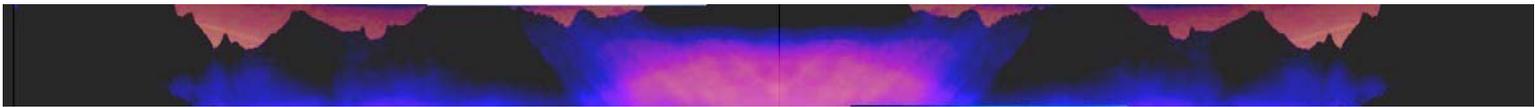
The farm has as clients, clubs and national ski teams from Norway on other countries that come here to train in summer months.

Questioned about the reason why he doesn't give up on the cattle production, because the obtained income is poor, the owner answered that goats are very useful to clean the forest and he doesn't transform the collected milk because the majority of his clients don't have interest in local products. They are more interest in the summer ski practice. Also because he isn't interested in creating problems with the enterprise responsible for the milk collect, that is, at a national level, almost a monopoly situation.

The interview finished with a little accordion concert made by the owner of this space who is, also, a music teacher, and two of his pupils, what delighted everyone that participated in this study visit. Afterwards the group did a visit to the flats intended for the tourists which are, generally, well equipped and with the necessary comfort to a pleasant stay in this farm.



Valbjør farm



Saturday 13. May:

- 09:00- Programme with visits to some local businesses and institutions:
- 12:00 - Norsk Fjellmuseum/ Mountain museum (<http://www.fjell.museum.no/english/index.htm>)
- Stokk og Stein (<http://www.stokkstein.no/>) a company specializing in building and restoring log houses and timber work of different types
- a local bakery and baker Morten Schakenda, who is competing successfully with modern bakery chains

- 12:00 Departure from Lom, travel along the Otta river and lake Vågåvatnet to Vågå municipality

- 13:00- Programme at Valbjør farm (<http://www.valbjoer.no/>), which is on the list of protected farm sites under the Directorate for Cultural Heritage. The family runs the farm as a multi-business undertaking within the frame of the protected farm site (organic farming with dairy goats, processing of local food, farm shop, and tourism with serving of traditional food and accommodation in picturesque, old houses, cultural events, etc.)
- 15:00 - lunch meal with traditional food from the farm
- information about the farm and premises (history, farming system, business, etc.)

- 15:00 Departure from Valbjør, passing through centre of Vågå municipality and travel in direction of Valdresflya mountain pass

- 16:00 Short stop at Gjendeosen (outlet from lake Gjende and start of Sjoa river). The site is set up as a gateway to Jotunheimen National Park (<http://english.dirnat.no/wbch3.exe?p=3045>). Briefing about the project "Nasjonalt parkriket" – the Kingdom of National Parks

- 16:30 Passing the highest point of Valdresflya mountain pass, which is also holding a designation as National tourist route (<http://www.turistveg.no/index.asp?lang=eng>).

- 17:00 Arrival at Beitostølen – a major tourist destination in Valdres region
- short stop and briefing about the site, the mountain community Beito and local food specialities

- 19:00 Arrival at Filefjellstuene (<http://www.filefjellstuene.no/>) where we are staying over night.
- Dinner at 20:00 hours.
- After dinner possible information about reindeer farming in the area.



Summary of the second day made by Vallée d'Aoste Region, Italy

The second day of the study trip began in Lom with the visit of the National Museum of the Norwegian Mountains, Norsk Fjellmuseum. In the same site one finds also the tourist bureau and the head-office of the administration of the National Park of Jotunheimen, in which one finds the highest mountains in the north of the Alps (2.452 meters). The National Park was established in 1980 and develops on 1.145 km².

The Museum has been opened for 12 years and to begin the visit one shows to us a film of images and music in connection with the life of the mountain during the different times of the year: *"The water of the mountain until the fjords"*. Indeed in the area of Lom the problem of the water is rather important, because the statistics say that here rains as in the desert of the Sahara (274 mm of rain per annum in the last 30 years). For the irrigation one must then use the water which, starting from the glaciers, transforms itself into lakes and brooks.

The Museum is designed like a modern museum where the various objects, images and sounds are used to create curiosity at the visitors so that they directly will visit the evoked places. For the exposure the objects which represent the activities of the mountain were selected: tools for ploughing, the equipment for the mountain... The Museum shelters also a mammoth which was used as mascot during the Olympic Games of Lillehammer in 1994, because one had found traces of these animals in Norway which went back to the icy period.



Equipment for the mountain and small mammoth exposed in the National Museum of the Norwegian Mountains

A tortuous course close to the principal room makes possible to observe photographs accompanied by testimonies of people who, all along the years, visited these mountains; one finds by example these words of Oav Aukrust which shows as the mountain can be at the same time marvellous and hard for the men « *You gusts of Norway, you spirit of the mountains, your lament is mine, if no-one hears you, I hear you netherles, and know yours suffering* ». On the second floor of the Museum one rebuilt the habitats of the animals of the area (the dash, the fox...). A temporary exposure on the reindeer occupies a small room of the ground-floor.



Animals of the area: a dash and a reindeer

The territory of the National Park of Jotunheimen is one of the more important places of the Scandinavian areas for the tourism: for 300 years the tourists have known these places for walks, the ski touring, the shelters, hunting for the reindeers, the salmon-trout fishing and the salmon fishing. The Museum preserves the photos of the first English tourists and the articles of newspapers of 1884 when for example the territory is described “full of tourists and women”¹.

The Museum is twinned with a museum of the Valley Venosta in Trentino, in Italy. The second visit planned for the morning was to the bakery of Lom where Morten Schakenda waited for us to tell us his history and to explain us his activity of baker.

After 20 years of work as chef in Oslo, he knew a French baker and he decided to learn his art; after three years of training he decided to established himself in Lom.

The Municipality of Lom offered the establishment to him where he installed its bakery, because nobody wanted to buy the building. He spent all his money to rebuild the bakery and to make some publicity he invited his friends journalists. In his company the baker occupies the principal place: he works while profiting from a splendid panorama on the cascade of the torrent and the people who will buy bread can see the various moments of the production process.



Reception to the bakery of Lom by Morten Schakenda

¹ Lillehammer Tilskuer 2 august 1884

The purpose of his project is to change the practices of the people by producing bread of quality. Bakery is open all the year, even when the tourists are not in the area, for that the other bakers did not believe in his project because they considered it unfeasible, but as Lom is on the most important road to cross Norway from Oslo to Bergen, Morten believed in his project so continued to work to improve its product. He buys corn of the farms of the area and he sells only 30% of his production to the local population, he sells the remainder somewhere else. He works with the artists to make Lom more pleasant; he organizes cultural activities in collaboration with: painters, musicians and other young people. For better accommodating the customers he thinks to build other rooms in the under ground of the bakery to place approximately 15 people in the "better 15 chairs of the world".

Among his actions of marketing, to underline his engagement towards the young people who represent the customers of the future: once a month he offers bread to the nursery school and he also holds classes of taste for the children of the school.

The receipt of Morten is to work on quality rather than on the quantity in particular if a customer will be satisfied in his service can be will not undoubtedly return because he will not have any occasion to pass by Lom, but he will advise his/her friends to stop to the bakery of Lom.

Morten today says "I want to create the best bakery!"

To finish the visit to Lom we went to see the farm restored by Stokk og Stein, a company specialized in timber constructions. The farm is composed by four buildings, to restore the principal farm one spent 5.000.000 of Norwegian Crowns and to build the new house 3.000.000, all the complex cost 25.000.000 of Norwegian Crowns. The farm belongs to a rich businessman of Oslo and now it is rented to the tourists for groups to 15 people for approximately 1.000 Norwegian Crowns per person per night. Previously in the room of the meetings one managed the justice.



The restored principal building and the principal phases of the restoration



Details of the interiors of the buildings



Secondary building built again



Constructive private individual

At the end of the visits we started from Lom to join the Municipality of Vågå: during the trip we drove along the river Otta and the lake Vågåvatnet. We stopped to the farm of Valbjør which is on the list of the farms protected by the direction of the Cultural Inheritance. The farm, composed by 11 old typical houses out of wooden of the Area, is located at 700 meters of altitude; Valbjør has a very long history, the ancestors of the family which currently has the farm were here already in XIII century. Now there are only 6 people who live in these houses, but before there were 25-30 people who lived and worked here.



Breeding of the goats to the farm of Valbjør

The farm is biological in addition to the breeding of the cows, of the goats and of the horses the practiced activities are related to agriculture, hunting and fishing, anyway above all the goats are reared because the meat and the cow's milk produced by the farm were not competitive anymore in the common market. Previously in the farm the animals had all a "house": the sheep, the goats, the cows were separated; now these buildings have been transformed in a small store, a pub and an granary.



Buildings which make the farm of Valbjør



Buildings which make the farm of Valbjør

The main productions of the farm are the products of goat; in Valbjørh the main activities are breeding animals and tourism; for the tourists there are rooms and 2 houses to be rented. The future of this farm is undoubtedly in the tourism; the tourist seeks an alive farm and not a museum, thus the agricultural activities will continue.



Lunch with farm products:

- Sausages of dried goat and pig (the meat of goat is salted and dried, and is not smoked as along the coasts)
- Pâté of rafter
- Goat's milk cheese



The cheese is not produced in the farm because it is very difficult to obtain the authorizations and very expensive to buy the machines; this farm with other 39 farmers confer milk on an establishment of TINE (co-operative Norwegian which produces, distributes and exports the products of milk) where there is the transformation and then the commercialization.

The tradition of cheese has been lost throughout the years, only in these last years one started again this activity. When we went down again in Vågã, we passed in front of the door of the **house of the giant** (a large rock who reminds a door) that a legend says that he lives there and if one knocks twice on the door he will open. The door the evening is illuminated and the Municipality organizes activities to promote the site. Before join the National Park of Gjendeosen we see some pastures in the mountains (summer farms) which are used in summer during 3 months; formerly the farmers joined the mountain pastures on foot now they use the trucks. The owners of the mountain pastures have the rights of hunting, fishing, and timber for the heating.

Our visit then brought us to Gjendeosen (National Park); in Norway the national parks occupies a good part of the territory, for example 60% of the territories of Lom are in the National Park and also 23% of the territories of Vaga. There usually parks are not a lot valued, they are only marked in green on a chart! Now one became aware of the importance to develop activities in the Park and in the neighbourhoods of the Park for that a program of information is started, in particular we visited the first door of the Park where panels of information were located.



Panels of the information at the entrance of the Gjendeosen Park



Panels of the information at the entrance of the Gjendeosen Park

Each Common has different rules compared to the constructions in the parks, indeed in the Common of Lom one finds no more than 200 country cottages while the Common of Vaga is less restrictive thus one counts up to 800-1000 country cottages. When we arrived to **Beitostølen**, we tested the specialities of the village: meat sausages of goat and pig, salted and dried, cow and goat's milk cheeses and corn beer. Beitostølen is a tourist Common, at 900 meters of altitude. During the winter there are 400 people who live in Beitostølen, but there are 10.000 places for the tourists.

Concerning the economy of the Common, there are 900 farms where one raise sheep, cows and goats. The climate is very dry thus perfect to make dry the meat.

The program of our visit finally envisaged the arrival to **Filefjellstuene**, which also belongs to Valdres Community, which counts 5 Commons and 18.000 inhabitants. They are Commons of mountain where the agriculture is not profitable any more and the tourism became the first source of the economy of the place. Indeed, Valdres is at three hours from Oslo and there are many houses of vacancy and the tourists ask above all for services.

The area is characterized by the presence of the farms of mountain and by the churches of wood (four) and for that reason the Common would like to create the first Regional Park.

One of the churches of the area was sold to Guillaume Emperor who carried it to Poland where it made it rebuild and now it is the church more visited apart from Norway. To prevent that other churches can be sold, at the end of the XIX century, the inhabitants of Vang dismantled their church and they hid it, to go up it a few years later. In Vang there is a church of the XIX century and there is a stone with runic inscriptions of the IX century: Gurnei engraved signs to preserve the memory of his brother who died. The runes were used to transmit messages and in Sweden still one uses them. Always in Vang the Community built an old people's home with the money of the incomes of the hydroelectric energy production.

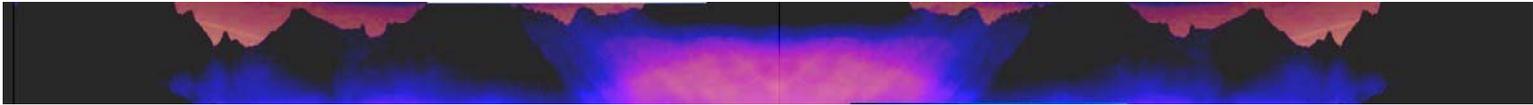
Through Valdres also one of the more important voices of communication which connect Oslo to Bergen.



Runic inscriptions to Vang



Vinter and summer landscapes in Valdres region



Sunday 14. May:

- 08:00- Departure for visiting Filefjell tamreinlag (<http://www.filefjell-reinlag.no/>),
- 10:00 a reindeer farming company keeping a winter herd of about 3000 reindeers. Briefing about reindeer farming, migration between pastures, products, etc. (meat, milk, hides, antlers)
- 11:00- Arrival at Nordaker farm (<http://www.nordaker.no>) and Valdres Rakfisk.
- 13:00 Nordaker farm is an old farm which has been run by the same family for centuries. Production of rakfisk, brined/fermented trout, at the farm has long traditions. A forefather of present day owners started around 1800 systematic fish cultivation of smaller lakes belonging to the farm. He refined the process of making rakfisk and set up guidelines for how to handle the fish in order to get a high quality product. Rakfisk production, made according to the old recipes, is to day the main business and source of income at the farm. They have obtained the official quality label "Spesialitet" – special food, and have their own farm shop.
 - information and briefing about the farm and some of the secrets of rakfisk production
 - lunch with possibilities of tasting the delicacy
- 13:00 Departure and direct travel towards Oslo International Airport with guiding along the route
- 16:00 **Arrival at Oslo International Airport Gardermoen**



Summary of the third day made by the Province of Trento, Italy

Exchanges with a deer breeder

Breeding of deer is traditional in Norway since 1780. In 1945, in Oppland County, 4 firms of professional breeders exists.

The visit unit produces about 55 000 kg/ year of deer meet. From 1985 until 2005 deer meet was trade to a large national supermarket. Recently, deer milk production increased. It is an expensive and precious product, used within the field of the cosmetology.



Farming enterprise for fish Nordaker, municipality of Aurdal

This enterprise is well-known for its production of « Rakfisk », northern specialty made with salmon trout

This sepciality is used to be eaten during christmas time. The firm started the production in 1969 with 30 kg of rakfisk and nowadays it sells more than 30 000 kg/ year.

Comments on the value added of the whole visit

Each of the participants had to answer the following questions: What you learned? what surprised you? what good practice have you learned? what are the benefit of this study tour? are you going to use some ideas in your region? do you plan any application in your region? Do you plan any further exchanges with some of the contact persons you made in this study trip? Etc...

ADRAT, Portugal

(Comments from José Luis Géraldes)

The impression was that in Norway the agricultural aspect by now is relegated in second plan compared to the tourist aspect and that the tradition in the transformation and the use of the agricultural products was lost. Only recently a process of rediscovery of these traditions started, even and especially to offer to the visitors something authentic which identifies the territory.

Also in Aosta Valley during the years' 80 one ran the same risk by investing all on tourism, but in the years' 90 one back up. For a more global valorisation of the environment and his traditions we are all going in the same direction both to answer at the request of tourism, and to respect the European laws which pose lots of limitations to the production.

It is important to observe like two countries so much different in terms of geographical position, culture and legislative panorama, are making similar choices, perhaps it is that at the end everywhere mountain territories have the same problems and restrictions.

In detail, it was observed that:

- The reception in the rural structures is subject to less constraining rules compared to the situation of Aosta Valley and Italy; one refers in particular to the laws on hygiene, safety, access to disabled... that the agrotourisms in Aosta Valley as in Italy must respect: in Italy in these structures there is often the feeling to be in hotels with five stars while in Norway it is still possible to live a rural experience (Ex The Valbjør farm).
- The success of the projects of local development is extremely dependent on the engagement of the individuals: in Norway there is a support of local authorities but the ideas, the will and the initiatives of the local contractors play the principal role (e.g. Morten Schakenda, the baker of Lom).

- Norway is very different compared to the Aosta Valley in terms of territory, history, culture..., however, in the course of the years, the same model of evolution of the agricultural world was developed: the binomial agriculture-tourism.
- Following the study trips (Aosta Valley- Norway), one noted the interest of the company Stokk & Stein of Lom, specialized in the construction of wooden country cottage and the craftsmen of Aosta Valley, specialized in the construction of the stone-built houses; in organize working days for a mutual know-how exchange.

Vallée d'Aoste Region, Italy

(Comment from the whole delegation from the Vallée d'Aoste)

Then, the group started the last trip of the day in direction to Lom. We were installed in a pleasant hotel and it where it was possible to visit the beautiful wooden church of this town. Throughout the dinner the group was accompanied by the Chairman of Lom, a small town with about one thousand and two hundred inhabitants. Lom is the administrative, commercial and school centre of this region and also an important communication centre. During the brief speech made by the Chairman of Lom, at dinner, it was clear that we were in a rural zone, with a great necessity in the soil irrigation, because it's a zone with low pluviosity levels and that tourism is very important to the local community. The Museum of Mountains and the wooden church are this Municipality's main touristic attractions. There been an effort to sensitize the population for the necessity of the increasement of the number of residents.

As a final comment to this first day of the study visit, we want to make the following remarks:

1. The touristic activity has a primordial importance for the populations living in the Sogn of Fjordane e Oppland Counties. In fact, the natural conditions provides that, because the magnificent landscapes, as we could contact, are rare and the built patrimony very well conserved, with great value are here well

profited, as well as the existence of structures for the practice of adventure sports. However, it will be to point out that, at least, in the visited places, the local promoters, besides the valorizar the natural conditions, they also know how to combine complementary activities that for many inhabitants of urban centers, are unknown. We could, also, verify that, in spite of the short period of the high touristic season, it is very well profited.

2. In a general way, the customers' concept about local products of the mountain zones is very encouraging. So we had some curiosity to know the way they were worked in the visited zones. With some deception we verify the lack of interest in working on these products using the traditional methods commonly used in these zones, when asked about this, one of the promoters, said that the tourists only wanted the activities related to the mountain. Even in the farm visited in Urnes it didn't seem to be given a great deal to this fact, apart from some productions mentioned. (In the two following days, this thought was partially changed despite the fact that we thought that it would bring many benefits to the population of the region).
3. Two natural issues state the activity of these rural zones: the climate and the soil morphology, on one hand it difficults the normal development of the agricultural activity, abbreviating it drastically, and on the other hand complicates the accessibilities and increases the price of its construction. This fact conditions the normal life of the local communities, in such a way they, that small towns saw their importance lifted because they are educational centres or because they are places crossed by important roads, as Sogndal and Lom.
4. The depopulation is one of the characteristics of the mountain regions in the last years, but we would like to stand out one issue that called our attention, which was the small number of persons we meet in the towns where we passed by, except for the zone where the Hotel Turtagro is situated, where an high number of tourists, mainly young people goes to spent the week-end. The low density of population was, in fact, one of the problems referred by the Chairman of Lom related to his Municipality.
5. As a last remark, we want to enhance the excellent organization of the visit with a suitable foresight of the visits, the availability of our hosts, the sympathy and efficiency of the interpreter, the security of the driver and the beautiful panoramas we could enjoy, as well as the interest of all the places we visit.

Province of Trento, Italy

(Comments from *Giampaolo Maini et Giuseppe Visintainer*)

The issues identified in these areas of Norway are similar to those from the Provincia Autonoma di Trento. For local authorities, it is therefore necessary to face the issue of the promotion of the mountain to avoid difficulties linked to exodus.

We identified the following strategies:

- Research of connection/ association between tourist, cultural and craft activities ;
- Development of new technology in mountain areas;
- The knowledge of foreign languages to promote the tourist offer;

With this Norwegian experience, we understood the importance of the promotion and to add value to the typicity and the quality of farm, cultural, craft activities of the territory.



SUACI des Alpes du Sud for the Rhône-Alpes Region, France

(Comments from Emmanuel Mingasson)

The study tour in Norway from the 12 to 14 May 2006 offered the opportunity to visit various firms and project that were studied within the framework of the study :

- Farms involved in the organisation *Kulturgardar i Gudbrandsdalen* aiming at adding value to the traditional farmer culture and also at promoting other farms involved in agritourism activities in a way or another
- production of *Valdres Rakfisk*, semi-fermented trout
- project *Stokk og stein*, that relaunch the tradition building of houses in wood and stones,
- Cheese production from Underdal (not exactly within the study tour but more at the side of the conference)

The opportunity to see on the field what was described in the studies was, beside the general opening on another country, interesting manly because this enable to locate the studied projects in their own environment. This enables to realize the real importance of the studied project for the local development of the region.

For instance, it was for me difficult to understand the reasons that committed the local authorities to support and the Underdalsosten project, involving only 3 goat farms committed in a cheese unit., before I came there and saw the small village from Underdal, 140 remote inhabitants located at the end of a dead-end road next to a fjord; the choice of such a small project was surprising. In fact, through this cheese process unit, there is the issue of the future of the village, that proof the decisive role of territorial authorities.

The balance between tourist visits and meetings with local actors was appropriate.

Two regrets could be mentioned:

Firstly, a small regret, is that it would have been reasonable to avoid the long travel the night of the second day, as the objective to see a breeding of 3000deer was not realistic (too short time)

Secondly, a more substantial remark is that if all the of visits turned out to be exciting², by their content itself, by the quality of the project presented and by the availability and the enthusiasm of the speakers met, in none of them, the theme of the role of the local authorities in the emergence, the set-up, the launch of the project and then of the activity itself was tackled. On this point, we did not meet one of the objectives of the study tour.

Députation of Palencia, Spain

(Comments from Luis Girón) – Only the Spanish version exists

Se trata de una visita a una zona cuyas posibilidades de desarrollo vienen dadas por el impresionante entorno natural, muy cuidado y protegido, su relación con los deportes de invierno, y la escasez de habitantes y de núcleos de población. Nada que ver, por lo tanto, con la realidad del sur de Europa, y concretamente de la provincia de Córdoba, cuyas zonas de montaña no ofrecen posibilidades de deportes de nieve, existe mucha más población en su entorno, y cuenta con un patrimonio arquitectónico muy superior al contemplado en esta visita (apenas dos iglesias de madera). Por lo demás, sus condiciones de vida vienen facilitadas por una renta nacional que permite el cuidado del entorno, las infraestructuras no agresivas que posibilitan mejora de las condiciones de vida para muy pocos habitantes, y el fomento del desarrollo rural con políticas públicas. El escaso número de habitantes permite mantener una actividad empresarial suficiente para los que allí viven, a diferencia de las condiciones a las que nos enfrentamos en la provincia de Córdoba. Con todo, ha sido una visita interesante, muy instructiva, y que facilita el aprendizaje a través de los contrastes.

² Including the meeting with the deer breeders even if we did not see the farm and the animals..