

Cruise – 6	North Cape and the Midnight Sun		
Itinerary	Southampton to Southampton		
Line	Princess		
ship	 <p data-bbox="707 1155 1166 1189">Sea Princess at anchor off Hellesylt</p>		
No of Days	No of Nights	Cum Nights (This Line)	Cum Nights
15	14	45	51
Cabin Number	A439		
Cabin Standard	Interior		
Overall Notes	<p data-bbox="387 1621 1414 1659">When we booked, the only cabin available was an inside cabin with no outside view. Despite several attempts to get moved to an outside cabin, we were not successful.</p> <p data-bbox="387 1697 1437 1736">This was not a great experience! We vowed never to book an inside cabin again.</p>		

Day 1 - Saturday 17th June 2006 – Southampton, Embarkation



- 11:30 We leave home almost exactly at the time we planned, but stopped in Basingstoke to get a replacement battery charger for Sue's video camera.
- 13:15 After a slow drive down the M3, we check-in at the QEII terminal in Southampton. The valet car parking was easy; we had to queue for about 15 minutes to check-in for the cruise. No upgraded cabin, so we find our way to A439, which was neither as small nor as dark as we feared. As we got on to the ship, the power failed. That meant that we needed to climb 6 flights of stairs to get to our cabin. Very quickly we went for lunch; heavy hygiene in place, so the buffet was very slow. The air conditioning was off because of the power problems, so we ate as quickly as possible.
- 14:20 We are now finding our way round the deck of the Sea Princess. The weather is glorious; warm sun. Just North of us there is an identical ship from P&O Cruises. Lots of traffic in Southampton Water, including of course the Red Funnel ferries to the Isle of Wight. After walking around the ship, we settled down for an hour and a half on deck.
- 16:15 The mandatory Muster Station drill. No changes, but heavy emphasis on fire safety (following the fire on Star Princess a couple of months earlier) and hygiene (following an outbreak of Norovirus on the previous cruise).
- 17:00 Advertised departure time. We are on deck ready, stationed at a table overlooking the pool and the Movies Under the Stars screen. We are delayed by about 20 minutes because fuelling is incomplete.
- 17:21 Finally underway and we sail serenely past landmarks we know well, including Calshot, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth, while a Tina Turner concert plays on the big screen. After Portsmouth we move away from the shoreline and the landmarks are lost in the mist.
- 19:15 Still great weather and we are still on deck. To avoid losing our table, we visit the Horizon Court buffet one at a time.
- 20:00 Still on deck and watching World Cup Football (USA v Italy) on the big screen. By the time it finished, the sun was gone and we were getting quite chilly.

Day 2 - Sunday 18th June 2006 – At Sea



09:00 With the prospect of a day at sea, we don't rush out of bed. We were just about in time to make it to the restaurant for a leisurely breakfast.

12:00 Misty, but still warm enough for people to be on deck. At noon we are still off the coast of East Anglia, which shows just how long it takes to get anywhere at 20 knots. We pass a number of other ships and weave our way around gas and oil platforms.

19:45 Not bothering to wait around for the Captain's speech, we settle down for the first formal dinner of the cruise.

22:15 Being in the right time zone, we are awake enough to be interested in the entertainment on board. After trying for the variety show and finding it full, we go to the Vista Lounge and a surprisingly funny comedian.



Day 3 - Monday 19th June 2006 – Stavanger



06:30 No staying in bed this morning, we have an early tour booked. We are on deck eating breakfast not longer after the ship moored in Stavanger. The deck was very wet and there was still rain about, does not auger well for our sightseeing trip up the fjord.

06:40 Now it is raining quite hard.

07:35 After a rather chaotic half an hour in the Princess Theatre, we are sitting inside a rather overcrowded boat that doubles as a ferry when it is not doing sightseeing tours.

07:45 Things are looking up. We are allowed on the open deck and the rain seems to have stopped. Everything is very wet, so we spend some time drying the chairs so that we can sit down. The wind is cold but bearable and we leave Stavanger harbour and head towards Høgsfjorden.

07:55 We enter Høgsfjorden, lined on both sides by very comfortable waterside summer houses, some with traditional sod roofs for insulation. There are also a number of fish farms.

08:23 We pass Oanes near the entry into Lysefjord.

08:30 Passing under the slender suspension bridge that connects Oanes and Forsand and which marks the entrance to Lysefjord.

08:34 Passing the only large island in the fjord, inhabited by a single family. Looking inland, we see for the first time the kind of scenery that we associate with fjords, steep, almost vertical rocks sides.

08:44 Fantahåla - one of the points of interest. A small inlet where a bunch of criminals are reputed to have evaded capture by clambering up the cliffs. Our boat nosed right in and had to back out. There were four tour boats taking turns for each place we went.

08:54 Three goats left by a local farmer to take advantage of a small area of grazing. They are fed by every tour boat, so came running to meet us. They are obviously a permanent feature because they are marked on the map.

08:57 Passing under Pulpit Rock. An almost square block with a perfectly flat top and a popular vantage point for locals.



09:05 Fossen - one of the most dramatic waterfalls in the fjord. The boat goes close enough for one of the crew to fill a bucket with fresh water which is then offered to passengers to drink. Surprisingly, the water is not very cold.

09:11 This is as far as we are going to come. The boat turns back towards the sea. Looking inland, there is plenty more fjord.

09:35 We were promised a refreshment stop. There is a queue for the dock at Hellenen, a pretty spot with a barbecue area used by the tours.

09:40 We make it on shore for coffee and waffles (with sour cream that took some people by surprise)

09:58 Time for a short stroll along the waterline before we have to reboard our boat.

10:14 Everyone back on board; we are heading back towards Stavanger.

10:20 Leaving Lysefjord

10:50 Getting near Stavanger, we encounter various ferries entering or leaving Stavanger.

11:00 Right on schedule we are back at the dock alongside the Sea Princess. We take advantage of a nearby ATM to get some Norwegian currency and have a short stroll around the harbour, then decide to head back to the Sea Princess for coffee as it looks as if more rain is on the way.

11:57 Back on board, I take a stroll around deck to look around. This is curtailed by quite heavy rain. We find a sheltered spot under cover on deck and that becomes our base for a few hours.

14:50 Nearing our scheduled departure time. The weather has improved and people are enjoying the sunshine on deck. Ominously some people are complaining about the cold and expressing the hope that it won't get any colder. They obviously haven't looked at a map!

14:56 The last tour boats return.

15:40 We gently pull away from the dock as we take our leave of Stavanger. The Fjord Line ship that follows us out and eventually passes us provide a return service between Newcastle and Bergen via Stavanger.

Day 4 - Tuesday 20th June 2006 – Hellesylt/Geiranger



07:00 Sea Princess arrives off Hellesylt in an arm of Geiranger Fjord. There is nowhere for the ship to tie up and the water is too deep to anchor, so the ship has to use its thrusters to maintain position. We are on deck for breakfast as the ship finally comes to a halt surrounded by the steep sides of the fjords and several energetic waterfalls. The weather is misty and cold, but it is not raining.

07:56 After a long queue to get into the Theatre and a frustrating wait, we are eventually ready to board a tender to get ashore. The first tender we board doesn't work ("no forward" was the diagnosis). We are taken back on board the Sea Princess and wait for another tender to be available.

08:39 We are finally on shore. Looking back we see the Sea Princess looking very small in the middle of fjord. As we walk the hundred yards or so to our tour bus, we pass a caravan park, obviously a popular pastime in this part of the world.

08:50 After less than five minutes we are off our coach again to view the waterfall in Hellesylt and to admire the white painted church set just above the village.

08:59 As we drive up the hillside out of Hellesylt, we get a good view down towards Sea Princess in the fjord.

09:10 A brief unscheduled stop as our driver exchanges details with the driver of a car, after exchanging wing mirrors on a narrow bridge. (The driver claimed that coaches have right of way).

09:21 The stops come thick and fast through the morning. The first is at an old stone bridge somewhere in Hornindal Kommune where we stay for about 20 minutes.

10:06 Next stop is a pretty viewpoint alongside Hornindalsvatnet, with spectacular reflections in the crystal clear water.

10:30 We stop in a small town called Stryn where there are public toilets that can cope with coachloads of people, and a local group of children being allowed to enjoy summer in a fountain/paddling pool.

11:00 After driving along the shores of Nordfjord from Stryn, we turn left at Olden and very soon we are driving along the shore of Oldevatnet.



11:40 We arrive at the visitor centre for Briksdal Glacier to be given some extremely confusing instructions. We are told that we need to be back at the nearby restaurant by 1pm, which seems a remarkably short period of time for a hike of at least 45 minutes in each direction towards the glacier.

11:55 There are two different paths to the glacier. One involves climbing over rocks and quite steep sections; the other is a longer but gentler zig-zag road. We agree that I will go up the shorter track and try to reach the glacier and Sue will take the easier route.

12:21 I realise that I am not going to make it all the way up and back by 1pm so turn back.

12:26 I meet Sue who is a surprising way up the hill and we decide to ignore the 1pm deadline and try to make it to the glacier. After a while Sue decides that she doesn't want to go any further but encourages me to continue.

12:37 I reach the end of the lake fed by the glacier and decide that going further isn't really worth it.

13:05 Taking the zig-zag road back down, we get rather wet crossing the bridge just below the waterfall.

13:20 We are back at the visitor centre for lunch. We have plenty of time and there are a lot of people who arrive a lot later than us.

14:15 On our way again.

14:50 Photo stop near Sunde, with a great view of a glacier (not Briksdal) across the lake. By this time we realise that time is slipping by and we may not see everything that was promised if we are to be back on board Sea Princess by 5:30pm. Our guide does not seem concerned.

15:55 Stop at the National Park Visitor Centre. Sue and I decide to give the movie a miss and enjoy a stroll and an ice-cream instead.

16:25 We finally leave the Visitor Centre. Our guide told us to be back at the bus by 4:15. We were; she and the driver arrived 10 minutes later.

17:01 One of the highlights of the day. Someone announces that there are some goats. In fact it turns out to be a herd of reindeer. We stop for a few minutes but don't get out of the bus.



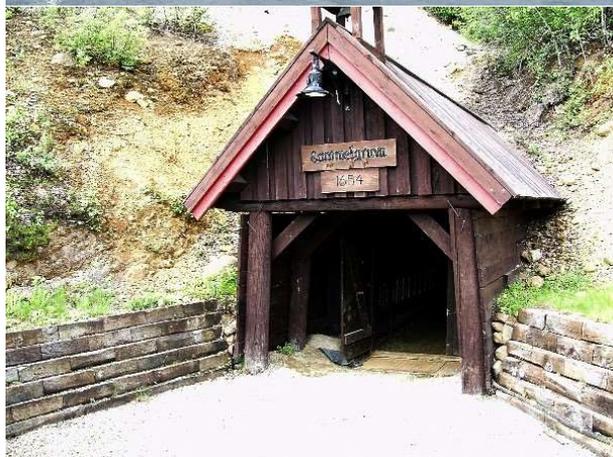
17:22 It is clear that our guide has no concern at all over how late we are. After a hair raising ride up hairpin bends which look impossible for a coach to negotiate, we are at the summit of Mt Dalsnibba overlooking Geiranger in one direction and Djupvetnet in the other. Our ship and another are in the fjord and there is a pall of smog between the fjord and us. All around there is lots of snow and the lake beneath the mountain is still partly frozen over even in the second half of June.

18:18 Almost an hour late and still no sense of urgency. We have a photo stop overlooking Geiranger fjord and Sea Princess, which we are relieved to see is still waiting for us. Instead of setting a time, our guide says we have at least 5 minutes, so inevitable some people walk away from the coach.

18:35 We are finally on dockside for the last tender back to the ship and almost as soon as we are on board it seems that we are underway.

20:39 We had an early dinner and then took our seats, all wrapped up against the cold waiting to watch the Sweden v England world cup match. Initially there was no satellite signal, but about 9 minutes into the game, the communications people locked on to satellite broadcasting the game with a German commentary. It was worth being a crowd, despite the cold.

Day 5 - Wednesday 21th June 2006 – Trondheim



- 07:54 Safely docked in Trondheim. Beautiful weather early in the morning.
- 08:30 Sue has gone off to join her selected tour, taking a tramcar up to the ski jumping centre. I am waiting on deck watching the coaches manoeuvre on the dockside. There isn't a great deal of room; it seems to take an age. Sue later confirms that she has held in the Princess Theatre for almost an hour waiting for the coach for her tour. Taking a tour around the deck, I see the railway leading to the main terminal in Trondheim, lots of activity in the harbour, Monks Island off-shore and an aquatic centre on the dockside.
- 09:18 Waiting for my tour, a visit to a historic mine and a ride on a train.
- 09:58 Finally, underway and travelling through the historic docks of Trondheim.
- 10:20 Travelling inland a little and passing through very green farming country following one of the rivers leading down to Trondheim fjord.
- 10:54 Passing through the village where Alf Engen, the ski jumper from the 1950s was brought up. There is a small ski jump next to the schoolhouse and a very pretty wooden church on a hill overlooking the village.
- 11:30 First stop is the Lokken Mine, dating back to 1654, We are all dressed in plastic rain capes to protect us from the drips inside the cave.
- 11:45 Inside the mine. The tour in fact involves a walk through a variety of relatively narrow passages into a large chamber, set out as an auditorium. Along the way we pass a number of exhibits of mining equipment.
- 12:00 Seated inside the auditorium we are listening to a short violin recital to illustrate the acoustics of the cave, which from time to time is used for weddings and concerts.
- 12:12 On our way back out of the mine.
- 12:21 We emerge back into daylight to rejoin our coaches for the next part of the tour.
- 12:40 At the station at Lokken, getting ready for our train ride back down towards the coast. The train is under the control of a vintage electric locomotive. It has little



work to do on our journey, other than providing braking.

- 12:46 On our way down-hill towards Thamshavn, following a river flowing from Lokken. Despite the fact that the mine is now closed, the river is strongly coloured from the copper tailings.
- 13:24 At our destination station, Fannrem, where we get a few minutes to photograph the train before reboarding our (motor) coaches.
- 13:40 Stopped at an old manor house, Bårdshaug Herrgård, for lunch. For some reason we are given almost 2 hours at a location with very little to do. Part of the manor house is now restored as a museum; next door there is a small shopping mall.
- 15:35 Finally, back on our coach and headed towards Trondheim.
- 16:25 Before returning to the ship, we have a short stop at Nideros Cathedral.
- 17:00 Back at the Sea Princess and ready to reboard.
- 17:40 On deck for the sailaway on a beautiful sunny evening.
- 18:02 Pulling away from the dock and heading for the North Pole.
- 00:00 Midnight and the sun is about to set for the last time for several days.

Day 6 – Thursday 22nd June 2006 – At Sea



12:05 A relaxing day at sea and the ice carving demonstration.



Day 7 – Friday 23rd June 2006 – At Sea



08:50 The weather has turned rough; it is raining and we are sailing towards a Force 9 gale. Water is swilling from end to end in the swimming pool.

10:25 On deck. The sea is getting rougher; Sue needs to see the horizon, not easy as we pass through banks of fog. The deck is almost deserted, but still the movie plays as scheduled.

12:10 The worst of the weather. The swimming pool is now a spectacular attraction, with water splashing 15 feet into the air. Gradually, the pool empties itself.

Day 8 – Saturday 24th June 2006 – Spitzbergen



06:15 Entering Magdalene Fjord. Rather earlier than scheduled, we enter the fjord with glaciers on each side. It is cold with heavy overcast. The swimming pool on deck is closed and virtually empty, following the rough weather of the previous day.

07:15 We are as close as we are able to get to the face of the tidewater glacier in Magdalene Fjord. Apparently, wind conditions prevent us going any closer.

08:00 Almost an hour earlier than scheduled we leave Magdalene Fjord. It is a good job we got up early.

09:20 Sailing along the South Coast of Spitzbergen we pass a number of tidewater glaciers.

10:00 The Princess Polar Bear awards for those mad enough to go into the swimming pool. The air temperature is only just above freezing (warm water was however used to refill the pool).

11:35 Approaching Ny Alesund.

12:07 At anchor off Ny Alesund and the start of the lengthy process of getting everybody on-shore. With only a single pier ashore only about 3 tenders per hour are operating and a ticket system is in use. We got in line quickly and were on the 3rd tender to go ashore. Other people had to wait more than 4 hours.

13:09 We are on a tender waiting to get to the pier. For some strange reason, there isn't a great demand for the outside seats on the tender.

13:18 Ashore on the most Northerly permanently settled research station on earth. We are asked to stay on the gravel roads. There is an "interpretive trail" and a few buildings to visit. Overall Ny Alesund is rather bleak. The temperature is still only just above freezing and there is a persistent drizzle.

13:26 We pass our first clump of flowers. People were working hard to take photographs without leaving the path. One of two people ventures off the path and were promptly reminded of the need to respect the fragile tundra environment.

13:35 The first of many Arctic Terns. The female is protecting her egg; the male is protecting the female by attacking anyone who gets too close (including me). They are





nesting very close to the roadway so it is difficult to keep far enough away.

13:44 A solitary, rather scruffy reindeer. The background is impressive; a tidewater glacier on the other side of the bay.

14:20 Enough is enough. We are cold and damp and ready to go back to the ship. We have "done" Ny Alesund.

14:23 The only polar bears we saw came off the Sea Princess!

14:50 On a tender on our way back to Sea Princess. We only had to wait around 25 minutes. Later in the afternoon, the queue to get back to ship was more than an hour.

16:23 There are still people waiting to go ashore and a long queue waiting to return.

Day 9 – Sunday 25th June 2006 – At Sea



11:35 Well on the way to North Cape. Seagulls fly backwards and forwards along the ship. The weather is cold with the occasional fog patch and snow flurries. The sea however is much calmer than a few days before.

Day 10 – Monday 26th June 2006 – Honingsvag



07:45 We are tied up at Honningsvag, a small part about 30km south of the North Cape, the most northerly point on continental Europe. The weather is heavily overcast.

08:30 As we board our bus for our shore excursion, it is just starting to rain.

09:15 At the small village of Gjesvær we board a small boat for our bird watching expedition to the island of Stappen. The organisers of the trip provide thermal suits. We soon realise why, with a combination of cold wind and rain.

09:37 Our first encounter with birds, literally thousands of puffins on the water and flying around us.

09:50 We move close to shore. There are birds nesting and perched everywhere, from the water-line to the top of the cliffs.

10:15 A flock of gannets with yellow heads provides a splash of colour on a very grey day.

10:35 The weather deteriorates further, with cloud at the top of the mountains and more rain.

10:46 More diversity. A Sea Eagle perched high up on the hill side; a Seal in the rocks.

11:17 Back at Gjesvær and the bus back to Honningsvag and the Sea Princess.

15:00 After lunch on the Sea Princess, we venture ashore to the souvenir shop near the ship. It is pouring down with rain and the shop is packed. We quickly return to the ship.

15:18 A quick walk around deck in the rain. There are two other (smaller) cruise ships at dock: The Braemar (Fred Olson Lines) and the Midnatsol (Hurtigruppen Line).

16:30 Harry Potter is playing on the Movie Screen on deck, as the Midnatsol departs.

Day 11 – Tuesday 27th June 2006 – Tromso



07:30 At dock in Tromso, the most Northerly City in Norway. The weather in Tromso is heavily overcast but there is sunlight on the distant snow-capped mountains.

08:54 We are on board a very modern and very new high-speed Whale Watching boat, a few hundred yards from the Sea Princess taking on board provisions (coffee, sandwiches and Dramamine!)

09:05 On our way along the fjord that separates the island of Tromso from the mainland. Ominously we are warned that sea conditions "might" prevent us from going to the Whale Watching area. (Later it became clear that the decision had already been taken).

10:10 Approaching the open sea; we are told that we would be going bird watching instead of whale watching. There is general discontent.

10:23 Starting to pass by some spectacular islands and cliffs. Turning out to be a very pleasant trip, but not worth what we have paid.

11:06 We stop to look for seals. The seals must have seen us coming; they do not appear.

11:41 We stop for bird watching. Lots of birds, but nothing to compare with Stappen yesterday.

11:57 Heading back towards Tromso.

13:07 Back in Tromso alongside the Sea Princess. Once again it is pouring with rain.

14:05 Walking round deck to take in the surroundings.

16:45 We push away from the docks at Tromso.

Day 12 – Wednesday 28th June 2006 – At Sea



17:08 Passing by an oil rig; the weather is improving but still cold.

22:25 The sun is still shining even though we are now South of the Arctic Circle.

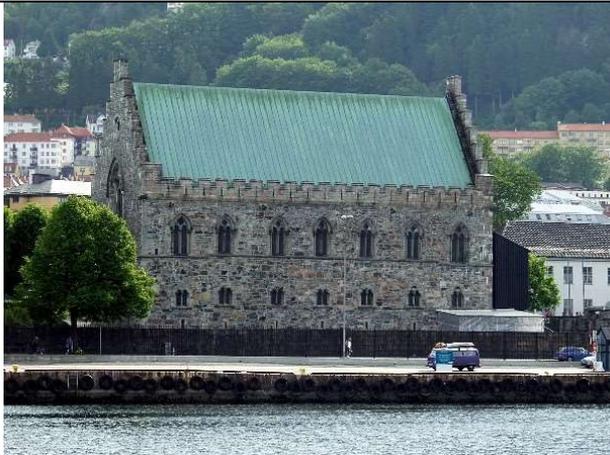
23:18 The Maitre D builds a tower of champagne glasses.

23:30 The tower is complete and the champagne released.

00:30 Still daylight and some magnificent pink skies.



Day 13 – Thursday 29th June 2006 – Bergen



08:20 We are docked in the harbour of Bergen. Lots of other ships are in port.

09:00 On a coach for our tour of historic Bergen. (We abandoned our original plan to join a hike because of a problem with Sue's toe).

09:23 Stopped on the waterfront with a great view of the old town of Bergen.

10:11 Tour of Håkon's Hall. A very impressive mediaeval building, but we remember why we don't like guided tours.

11:15 At the Hansa Museum. This time we opted out of the tour and go for a short walk instead, taking in a brief visit to the wooden houses of Bryggen on the waterfront and the Mariakirken.

11:47 At the Gamle Bergen Open Air Museum. Once again, we opt out of the guided tour; several others join us! From time to time we encounter groups.

11:51 We encounter a group of children enjoying a day out.

11:58 A spectacular view back across the bay to the rather smoky Maxim Gorky.

12:55 Back at the Sea Princess and navigating the trucks and fork lift trucks to get back on board from our tour bus.

14:31 Walking around deck to take in the surroundings of a working container port.

16:30 We slowly drift away from the dock as we leave Bergen.

17:10 Passing under a high suspension bridge on our way out of the inner harbour area.

17:30 Our trip through the fjord takes in a half circle around a ship yard where an oil rig is under construction.

17:47 Looking back, we see the Costa Magica following us out to sea.

Day 14 – Friday 30th June 2006 – At Sea



09:15 No land to be seen, but at last the weather is warm enough for people to be sun bathing on deck, for once all of the deck bars are open.

12:10 Lots of people are on deck. Looking back we are certainly doing our bit to contribute to global warming. The ship's band, The Barnacles are performing on deck, but still look cold.

14:15 We are back in our cabin working on computers .. how sad!

14:20 A tour of the ship to take some picture of the many paintings on display in the stair areas.



Day 15 – Saturday 1st July 2006 – Southampton, Disembarkation



07:55 Arrival in Southampton and our last breakfast of the cruise.

09:55 We are on deck waiting to be called for disembarkation. We arrived a little late, so the start of disembarkation is delayed. Sister ship the P&O Oceana is also back in port.

10:05 Red Funnel ferries are still hard at work as we get called to disembark.

