

# Have needle will travel!

Join Lynn Cornish on a quilting-themed cruise



Sunrise merges with sunset



King Neptune at the crossing the Arctic Circle ceremony

Knelt in front of a ship's captain as he baptises you by pouring a small ladle of iced water down your back inside many layers of clothing is not where you would expect to find a typical quilter. Yet this is what happened last November when a group of quilters joined the Hurtigruten vessel mv Nordnorge on a spectacular Norwegian coastal voyage. It was all part of a ceremony, presided over by King Neptune, to mark the crossing over the Arctic Circle – and what's more everyone loved it.

The quilters, who came from all over the UK, were part of a group comprising quilters and



knitters travelling with specialist tour operator Arena Travel. All had chosen the Northern Lights Knitting & Quilting Cruise holiday as it provided a perfect opportunity to combine an amazing travel experience with the chance to stitch or knit. Quilters were accompanied by patchwork and quilting expert Karin Hellaby and she hosted a

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welcome dinner on the first evening for everyone to get to know each other. The shared interest meant that conversation flowed and friendships were immediately established as everyone discussed

which of the many exciting projects Karin had brought with her they would be stitching. Karin's workshops would take place on the ship but first was a sightseeing tour of Bergen with chance to visit shops selling delicate Hardanger lace, the traditional world famous embroidery technique that originated in a small Norwegian fjord town.

Recognised as one of the world's most beautiful voyages, the cruise aboard mv Nordnorge traces Norway's stunning coastline, which is laced with island chains and deeply inset with craggy fjords. Between Bergen and our final destination of Kirkenes, our northbound voyage called at 32 ports. Hurtigruten ships are working vessels and some of the stops were as short as 15 minutes and some were made in the middle of the night. The



Sandra stitching the 'Warm Hands' kit in the lounge



The aptly named 'World Knitting Championship' group



The Jovial Christmas Tree

“Cruising in November, Karin had chosen projects suitable for the upcoming festive season”



The group outside Quiltgården in Trondheim



Bag designed by Debbie Abrahams for the knitters

Short daylight hours of November might seem a strange time to venture into the Arctic Circle, but this cruise combined scenery and stitching with the winter pastime referred to onboard as 'Hunting the Northern Lights'.

From the moment my Nordnorge left Bergen we were treated to a kaleidoscope of fabulous vistas. Not wanting to miss anything we opted to quilt in one of the ship's very comfortable lounges, where windows that stretched almost ceiling to floor promised the most magnificent panoramic views. Quilters in the group gathered together on one side of the room and knitters on the other. We were able to draw inspiration from the remarkable landscapes passing by outside as we indulged in some leisurely stitching and expert tuition.

Cruising in November, Karin had chosen projects suitable for the upcoming festive season. Workshops saw Karin demonstrating a simple way to make English paper pieced stars which could be used to make a decorative wall hanging. Christmas table runners are always popular and Karin showed us a design using her very effective Simple Pineapple technique. Colourful

Christmas trees formed the border of a second attractive table runner and the group were delighted to be the first to try Karin's new easy technique for making the trees. Several of the group had bought kits to make the Jovial Christmas Tree that Karin designed for Moda Bakeshop. Others chose to stitch the Warm Hands kit; the small felt mittens with appliquéd snowmen, holly, a Father Christmas and gingerbread men would make the perfect addition to any tree. Everyone enjoyed the workshop on folded patchwork, choosing to make either a Christmas pillow or small coasters, and an easy folding technique that transformed semi-circular table napkins into lovely Christmas trees.

Each day we stopped in one port for several hours and there was a chance to go ashore. Husfliden – a chain of stores selling quality souvenirs, traditional knitwear and Norwegian crafts – soon became a magnet for both quilters and knitters. In Trondheim we enjoyed a special treat. After a sightseeing tour that included the magnificent Nidaros Cathedral we visited Quiltgården. It was the most charming of quilt shops and, in keeping with many things in Norway, both fabrics and quilts were displayed



The redwork at Quiltgården



Patterns and fabrics at Quilttegården

in a simple yet most eye-catching way. Not only did the shop owner Siv give us a warm welcome, with coffee and Norwegian waffles, she was happy for everyone to take photos. A wonderful display of redwork inspired many to purchase fabrics and kits to make typical Scandinavian style Christmas projects. Whilst we were at Quilttegården a workshop was taking place with AnnAKA, Norway's most famous designer, and Karin was very excited to purchase a pattern and have it signed.

**“A wonderful display of redwork inspired many to purchase fabrics”**

In Norway, shops close on a Sunday but Hanne, the owner of the quilt shop Lappedilla, was more than happy to open specially for the group when we visited her home town of Bodø. The shop was a real family affair with Hanne, her husband and daughter happy to help as we discovered unusual finishing touches, which included beautiful buttons, ribbons and delicate lace zippers. The shop had a wonderful selection of fabric and the knitting group were delighted with the choice as they selected for the perfect lining for their cruising project - a bag designed by their expert Debbie Abrahams that reflected the Fair Isle type patterns often found in traditional Norwegian knitwear.

As we headed further north the snow on the mountains and the frozen ground added a new glow. The sun rose later and later each day, with a remarkable pink glow just above the horizon which seemed almost to merge with the red skies of sunset just a few hours later. Close to midnight we all gathered on deck in the pitch dark and marvelled as the ship sailed into the amazing Trollfjord. The entrance was so narrow we felt we could reach out and touch the scarred rock face on either side, which was illuminated in spotlights from the bridge. mv



Nidaros Cathedral in Trondheim



Above: Hand feeding reindeer  
Left: A favourite quilt at Quilttegården  
Below: The Russian border



Nordnorge then made the perfect pirouette and we looked for mischievous trolls in the beams of light bouncing off the sheer rock walls of the fjord.

Our voyage took us around the spectacular North Cape and finally to Kirkenes, where we bade a sad farewell to mv Nordnorge. Although we'd all thoroughly enjoyed incredible scenery and hours of leisurely stitching, we'd not been lucky enough to see the Northern Lights. However, we did spy Santa's reindeer amidst a magical winter landscape on one last adventure that took us all the way to Norway's border with Russia! ♦

The Northern Lights Knitting & Quilting Cruise in Norway was organised by Arena Travel.

For details of future quilting holidays, which include destinations such as Carcassonne in France, Sisters in Oregon and the Bernina Creative Centre in Switzerland, visit [www.arenatravel.com](http://www.arenatravel.com) or call 01473 660800.