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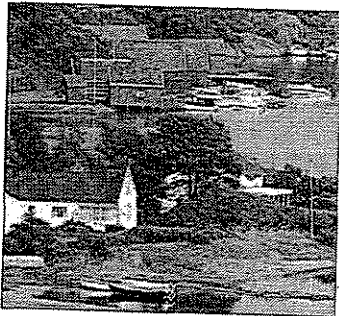
MIKE GIBB finds time to unwind with a relaxing break in Norway You Norwegian would

EVERYTHING you thought or imagined about Norway is true. The dramatic, breathtaking fjord scenery, rolling meadowlands and vivid green pine forests decorate this delightful country.

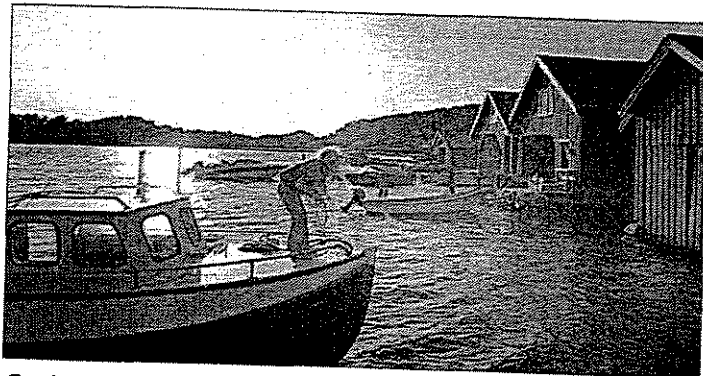
Our Norwegian adventure started courtesy of DFDS Seaways from Newcastle aboard the Scandinavian Princess, a glide down the Tyne, a wave to home, on and into the North Sea, next stop Norway.

Or rather, next stop the bar. This impressive vessel hosts numerous bars, from cocktail to a more traditional pub-type, and two restaurants, where the quality of the food is matched by the friendly service. To occupy your time on board there is a casino, a cinema, comfortable cabins, a sun deck and pool – though the bracing North Sea breeze put paid to use of the pool – and of course a duty free shop. In fact, everything you could need for a week, let alone just 15 hours.

Morning broke for us to be met by a rather large and tasty breakfast – choose whatever you want from either a self-service or waitress served restaurant. Sit back and admire the picture-postcard scenery as the ship slides through islets and skerries and onto the Port of Kristiansand, which is the main city of southern Norway. We disembark swiftly and efficiently – how do they



Home from home: Tregde cabins



On the waterfront: boats at Tregde village. Pictures: MIKE GIBB

organise it so well?

Remembering now to drive on the right, we headed for our holiday resort. An hour's drive along virtually deserted but first-class modern roads, we reach the charming town of Mandal. A 300-acre nature park, 2,000 metres of sandy beaches punctuated by rocky outcrops, a bustling harbour, and intriguing narrow streets with a mix of ancient and modern shops. After a stroll around town and a coffee at a pavement café, we feel the tension ebb away in this delightful town.

Our home for five days was at Tregde, five minutes from Mandal, a picturesque collection of cabins dotted on the hillside overlooking quite awesome fjord scenery.

The cabin has everything you need and is surprisingly spacious. It has a well-appointed kitchen, comfy lounge/diner, bedrooms with views to die for, radio and TV, and a shower room with underfloor heating.

The Tregde village has a small shop, restaurant and pool, but what really strikes you is the clean, fresh air and surroundings. If you want to savour the atmosphere, enjoy glorious walks or cycle in complete safety on the cycle trails, then this holiday is for you. Perhaps you are into

boating and fishing. Then you have come to mortal heaven – boats of all shapes, sizes and prices – lakes, rivers, fjords, sheltered bays are there in abundance. You can even take the fish you've caught back to your cabin and cook them on the barbecue, which is also supplied.

It doesn't have to be activity all day – the crystal clear waters, superb beaches and long rounded coastal rocks are an ideal backdrop to relax, explore and even doze in the warm sunshine. If you want nightclubs and loud music, then this is not for you. But if you want to give your body, mind and senses a lift, think about Norway for a short break.

TRAVELFACTS

Two nights aboard ship and five nights at Tregde for two adults and two children, sailing in July, taking a standard car costs £1,490. An early booking discount until the end of February reduces the cost to £1,288.40.

DFDS Seaways sails to Norway and Sweden each Monday and Thursday afternoon from its port at North Shields and sails each day to Holland. For further information call 08705 333 666 or log on to www.dfdsseaways.co.uk

