



PERFECT DIVER

diving freediving passion knowledge

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TWO POLES

The land of the ice giants

Sardinia "Pilot". My piece of paradise on earth
Cyprus and everything is clear ... like the sun there

Norway

DIVE BERGEN

Text and photos MICHAL ČERNÝ



Like most European divers, until recently I directed my diving trips mainly to warm coral seas. This time we decided to try a slightly different cold water diving and chose Norway as our destination, specifically places around the former capital of Norway – Bergen.

GEOGRAPHY

Norway is located in the west of the Scandinavian Peninsula and is the eighth largest European country, about four times larger than the Czech Republic, but due to its low population density, it only has about half the population. In the

past, the landscape was modeled by several glaciers. Thanks to them, the typical Norwegian fjords were created, which in fact are glacial valleys flooded by the sea. They are countless, and some of them extend many kilometers inland, which is why Norway is often referred to as the land of the fjords. We chose the area around Bergen for diving, which was the capital of Norway until 1299, and today, with 250,000 inhabitants, is the second largest city in the country. There is still a long way to the Arctic Circle, but even here in summer it is practically bright at night. The sun sets below the horizon only for a moment, causing more dusk than night. In summer we can forget about the classic night dives.

TRANSPORT

Bergen is easy to reach by plane, but if you want to bring your own snorkeling gear, it's definitely better to go by car. There are several options to choose from, using the ferry



or bridges between Denmark and Sweden which are paid. We decided to use the ferries. On the way we drove through Germany and Denmark, making about 1,200 kilometers to reach the Hirtshals port, where we boarded the ferry. After about four hours of sailing, we reached Larvik, Norway. Ferry tickets need to be purchased well in advance, I also recommend purchasing a seat at the restaurant serving buffet meals and the selection including fish and seafood is very wide so the journey will be gone very quickly.

It is about 450 kilometers from Larvik to Bergen, but thanks to the narrow and winding roads, the journey takes about 8 hours. It is a wonderful journey, it leads through the amazing Norwegian landscape, beautiful mountains with forever snow-capped peaks, turquoise-blue mountain lakes and tall waterfalls. On the way back, we chose the direct ferry route from Bergen to Hirtshals in Denmark, which takes a total of 18 hours (you can buy a cabin and sleep well).

Norway is not a member of the European Union and there are relatively strict restrictions on the importation of alcohol, tobacco and food. They are checked frequently, so it is definitely not worth going over these limits as the fines are not small. Of course, upon arrival in Norway, you can

report that the limit has been exceeded and pay the duty.

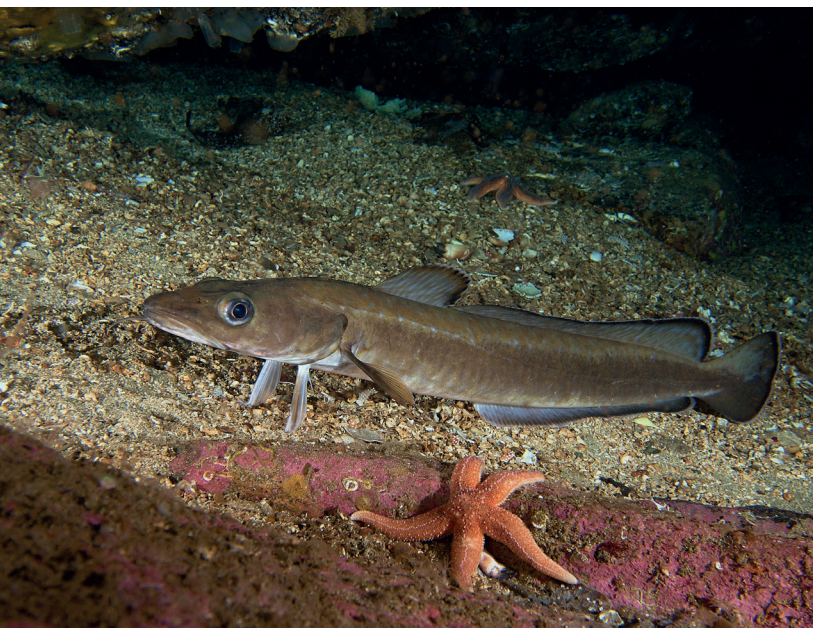
Tolls require motorways and selected roads (mostly bridges and tunnels). Toll collection is automatic electronically based on your passage through the toll gate, it is not payable on site, for which you will receive an invoice that you must pay by credit card or bank transfer. For this reason, before entering Norway, it is a good idea to register the vehicle you are traveling with in the Internet toll system.

IMMERSE YOURSELF IN BERGEN

Our goal and the second home for a week was the Dive Bergen Dive Center, located in the south of the island of Sotra, about 40 kilometers from Bergen. The center is part of the hotel resort of Panorama, which offers divers very pleasant accommodation in apartment houses overlooking the fjord. In addition, accommodated divers have free diving at the house reef. Cylinder refilling is already included in the accommodation price, including Nitrox up to EAN 32.

As the walls drop to a depth of about 40 meters, Nitrox is absolutely perfect for these dives. We were also very pleasantly surprised by the enthusiasm of the staff who described us very well where to dive where there is no point. They





gave us tips not only about the home corral but also about other interesting places in the area that can be reached by car. We were able to dive completely freely as we wanted, the compressor was constantly available and we could refill our tanks whenever we needed. Full freedom and freedom. The dive center also provides diving on wrecks, more distant walls or in a kelp forest. There is a fast zodiac, used mainly for shorter trips for one dive, or a large luxury yacht, which we sail on for one-day diving trips. Of course, the boat has all the amenities, as well as fresh coffee or a place to rest after diving.

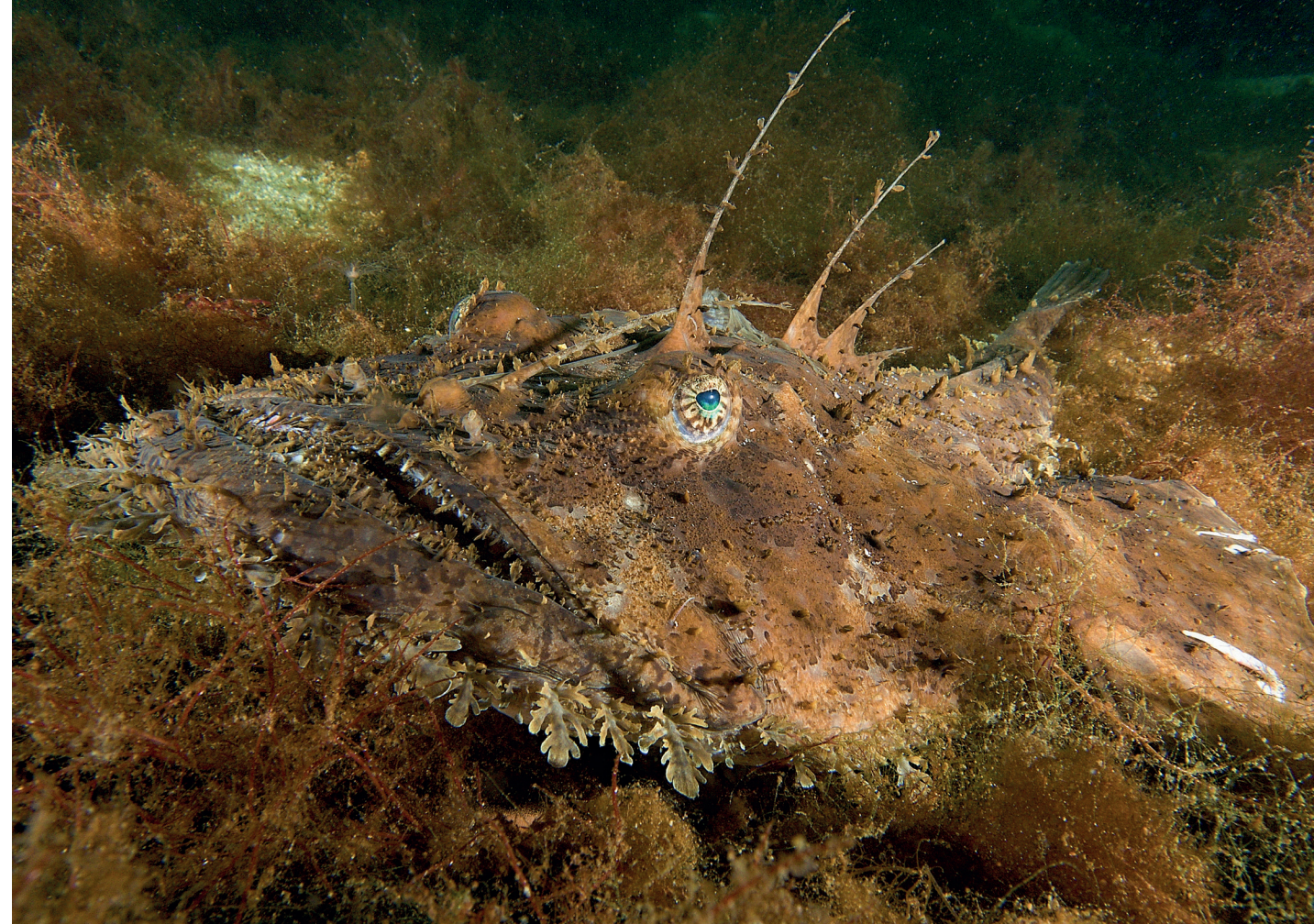
DIVING

Of course, this is a completely different dive than in the coral seas or the Mediterranean. The water is colder, less colorful, and visibility seems less due to the amount of plankton. Nevertheless, the diving is absolutely fascinating and underwater you will meet animals that you will not meet anywhere else.

For diving in Norway, it is certainly a good idea to equip yourself with a dry suit, because even in summer the water temperature at greater depths is only 7 or 8°C. On the surface it is a maximum of about 15°C.

Kelp is abundant in shallower waters and is found almost everywhere. Seaweed is said to cover an area of up to 5,800 square kilometers off the coast of Norway. Kelp is obviously a natural home and a refuge for many animals, mainly smaller ones. You can find various species of sea urchins, starfish, crustaceans, small fish and of course my favorite nudibranchs.

For me personally, one of the reasons I went to Norway was the monkfish. Yes, this ugly fish is so ugly that's beautiful, it is very abundant in Norway, which I can fully confirm now. Immediately during the first dive, we met two monkfish, and during the following dives the number only increased, some of them reaching over a meter in length. This fish is absolutely perfect for underwater photographers, it just lies in one place and hardly moves. So sometimes it wags an appendix on its head that is supposed to resemble a worm and thus attract other fish, which then end up in the giant's huge mouth. I even spent twenty minutes taking pictures of some specimen which didn't move at that time. Finding a monkfish in water, however, is not easy as it has very good camouflage and sometimes it literally melts into the bottom. Some I noticed only while browsing the photos, when, for example, I captured some of the cargo from the wreck, I did not even notice that there was a monkfish next to it.



The waters here are rich in fish and the variety of species is relatively large. At the bottom, in addition to the already mentioned monkfish, there are also large amounts of flounder, catfish or cephalopods. In open waters, you can mainly see cod, there are the following types of cod: common, dark, beardless, single-spotted or pollock. You can often find a fish here that looks like it has lost its way and that it shouldn't be here at all. It has a deep blue-yellow color and is a rainbow wrasse.

WRECKS

There are many wrecks in Norwegian waters, but not all are available for recreational divers because of their depth. Wrecks can be divided into two groups according to the dumping method. Namely, the wrecks of World War II and the wrecks of ships that sank due to bad weather, crashing against the rocks. There are wrecks of both of these groups in and around Bergen, some directly accessible from the shore, and others by boat.

We visited a few of them:

Spring – the wreck of this 65-meter cargo ship can also be reached from the shore. The ship sank on the night of

January 16, 1914 after a collision with another ship, when it began to take on water quickly. The captain was still trying to save the ship by steering it towards the shore, but the steep bottom allowed the ship to sink completely. The crew survived completely. Today the wreck lies just a few meters from the shore on a sloping bottom at a depth of 8 to 50 m. The stern is broken off, but the rest of the wreck is relatively well preserved. However, it is not recommended to enter the wreck due to the possible collapse of the structure.

"Siggen" – just a few minutes by boat from the diving center there is a picturesque island with a lighthouse, and at a depth of 30 to 40 meters, the wreckage of an old steamer or what is left of it parks. The steamer sank in bad weather in January 1892. On its first voyage, it struck a small island. Today, we can still see the remains of the fuselage, propeller, anchor, and especially the steam engine, which surprises with its dimensions. The wreck has become a home for whales and other sea animals. We met here, for example, Kamchatka crabs.

The "Fusa" – a Norwegian steamer 34 meters long was sunk during WWII on January 8, 1945. After an attack by about fifteen British planes, even though it was clear-





ly marked with Norwegian national emblems. The planes carried out three attacks on the ship in total, killing eight people and injuring many others. The ship eventually sank at a depth of 25 to 35 meters, where today it stands on a sandy bottom in an upright position. In the wreckage you can still find leftover equipment such as plates and other kitchen utensils.

Contact with the base:

Immerse yourself in Bergen, Panorama Hotell & Resort AS, Austefjordveien 165, 5379 Steinsland
tel.: (+47) 56 31 90 00, e-mail: booking@panoramahotell.no, www.divebergen.no

August Bolten – The wreck of this 110-meter cargo ship is about 140 m deep and so far only a few divers have dived on it. However, at a depth of up to 40 m, you can see part of the ship's cargo that fell out of it when it sank. We can find several car and truck chassis, motorcycles, car trailers, and on some even cannons. The ship sank in the morning of November 20, 1944 after a two-day attack by Allied planes.

Helene Jensen – is one of the newer wrecks in the area, a cargo ship built in the Netherlands in 1931 sank in bad weather after hitting a small island on March 11, 1980. The relatively short time underwater meant that the wreck is well preserved, including some wooden superstructures. The wreck is also lying vertically on the slope, its bow is 12 m deep and the stern 35 m. We managed to find several species of snails on this wreck.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Of course, you don't need to dive here, there is a wide range of other water and land sports available. You can rent a sea kayak, jet ski or boat and go fishing in the fjords. Mainly they take cod here, so we also went on a fishing trip to eat fresh fish for dinner. In less than two hours, we managed to catch fifteen cod, which we then cooked on the grill.

In between boat dives we visited one of the salmon farms, of which there are countless in the local fjords. Here we not only tasted the fresh salmon but also got to know how to breed fish on the farm which was very interesting.

There is also a fortress from the World War II Fjell festivities not far from the resort, which was the largest German fortress in Norway. You can see exhibitions of military equipment and weapons both outside and inside.

Of course, Bergen itself is worth a visit as it has typical architecture with wooden houses in the harbor. There is also a fish market where you can not only buy seafood, but most of the ones on offer will be prepared for you right away, so you can try some really fresh specialties straight from the sea. The nearby hill, accessible by cable car, offers a beautiful view of the entire city with its harbor and fjords.

We were very excited about diving and being in Norway. We will definitely come back here in the coming years as we haven't seen everything yet, for example we ran out of a wolf – it didn't show itself to us so we have reason to come back to this beautiful country. ■

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