

Norway 2023 Hut tour - Dalseter to Bygdin in the Langsua National Park

Our group of Loipers (Neil, Peter, Alison, Paramjeet and Lewis) travelled from Northumberland and Newcastle via Edinburgh to meet up with non-Loiper Andy Roberts at Oslo Airport. We left our ski bags and a fresh change of clothing at the Radisson Hotel at Gardemoen and then travelled by mini-bus to join the 3rd week of GB Nordic at Dalseter. As usual, we were warmly welcomed by Grethe who had saved us an evening meal.

We were only at Dalseter for 3 nights but it gave us a perfect chance to get our ski legs going and to check out our kit.

On our first morning we decided to ski to the summit of Ruten (1517m). Snow conditions were excellent and we quickly got into our stride. After a welcome stop at Bingsbu warming hut we continued to the top of Ruten where we found ourselves in a nithering wind with much of the snow blown away. The descent was interesting as we tried to find the best snow and a reasonable angle to ski with everyone enjoying the day out despite the challenges.



Ascent of Ruten 1517m

High winds and less visibility were predicted for the second day so we stuck to the trees and headed east with Lewis finding us an interesting route to return to the Hotel. Lewis and I decided to put in an extra couple of loops to finish the day.

That evening we went to a fascinating talk by Pete Curwen on cross-country skating in Sweden. Unfortunately, Paramjeet received some bad news about a poorly relative and had to make a quick decision about whether he should return to the UK or come on the tour. He made the right decision and travelled home. Then, fortunately, his relative recovered.

We had researched and discussed the hut-to-hut route into the Langsua National Park and the idea of skiing directly from the hotel in Dalseter was one of the main appeals for this trip. We wanted to enjoy touring in the Langsua and to end in the south of Jotunheimen. With the abundance of self-service DNT huts available, we chose a route which would give us option of staying one or two nights at each hut with the plan to change if weather conditions dictated. Andy had toured in this area before and was a great help with planning.

We left Dalseter Hoysfjellhotell after breakfast and joined the track steeply down to the bottom of the valley, using some of the downhill piste which was covered in deep snow from the night before,

giving us the chance to practice our telemarking. The weather prediction for the day had been for lots of high winds and a serious dump of snow and we were surprised by, and grateful for, the good conditions in the shelter of the river valley. From here we followed a marked route to the west and then south, deviating offtrack at one point to shorten the distance to Storholister DNT hut. This section required good navigation uphill and through trees, to join the marked route again. During the day we only met one other group pulling pulks as we neared the hut. Looking over to Storhopiggen (1433m) we could see that the wind had blown much of the snow from the higher elevations. Storholister had a collection of small huts and we chose one which unbelievably had a water tap which made it much easier to get our first hot drinks on the go. The hut was well provisioned although we did need to visit the other hut for some 'Bog' (which is meat in a packet!) which was lovely combined with Paramjeet's Chilli spices.



Storholister hut

The next day we awoke to -10degC and sunshine! Our plan was to move on to the next hut at Skriurusten and after filling in the logbook and paying for the accommodation and food (using the DNT App) we followed the marked route for 3km then turned south across the plateau with the summit of Skaget, Nordre Langsua and Sore Langsua in the distance. We arrived at the DNT hut Skriurusten at 3.30 pm and found the place empty apart from a couple from Barra on the Western Isles. The hut was one of the older types, with lots of character, absolutely lovely, clean, warm, comfortable and with wonderful views of the Langsua.



Inside the Langsua hut

The next day was windy and with very poor visibility, so we decided to stay another night at Skriurusten. The day was spent relaxing and enjoying hut life – digging snow for water and keeping the stove lit. Surprisingly the hut had solar powered lighting and wifi! Lewis decided to go out for a short ski tour and was joined by Neil and Alison. It was really enjoyable as we didn't need to take heavy rucksacks. When we got back, we found that we had been joined in the hut by a Danish man 'Per' (81-year old) who was travelling alone through the National Park. He was knowledgeable about the area and helped us with our route choices to Bygdin. Our problem was that the DNT hut at Oskampen was closed for repairs and this hut was the key to finishing our tour without an extremely long 30km last day. Fortunately he knew about a small private hut, Titrabu, to the west of Bygdin, which we managed to book on his advice. Perfect!

Day 4 took us from Skriurusten to Storkvolvbua. This was an easy 3 hour ski which mainly followed the contour east. There were two huts (one for people with dogs) and ours which was again of the older style. We were the only group here and again we settled in quickly. The next day we decided on a day tour up Nontjohnkampen which was an interesting but easy ascent with a gentle ski down. When we returned we were joined by 5 Danish orienteers who took a separate room. We played a game of Maxi Yatzi (with our own rules!) that evening and watched out of the windows the snow falling thickly.

Day 6 morning we struggled off in poor light which made navigation quite difficult. Eventually we found a marked route to Haldorbu DNT via a small hut at Lansubua. Here we stopped for a snack before again heading into the whiteness and finally we gained some visibility as we descended towards the hut. As we approached the hut, we were taken aback by its newness. Everything inside was like an IKEA showroom – clean pine floors, tables, low windows, cushions, rugs and lovely bunkrooms and a separate drying room with its own stove. It was Peter's birthday so we celebrated with a fruitcake which I had brought with us. Again, we had the hut to ourselves, as a Norwegian with a team of 6 husky dogs was leaving as we arrived.



The new hut at Haldorbu. And Peter's birthday cake!

Day 7 was a lovely sunny day and we had new overnight snow! It was exciting to ski toward Skaget and Storeskag DNT hut with easy skiing the whole way. Andy chose a superb line to approach the hut which was well plastered with snow up to the windows! We would have chosen to stay in the old hut but it was already occupied by a large Spanish group. So, our accommodation was the lovely new hut similar to the one we left in Haldorsbu. We got the stoves going and nearly expired with the heat as everything was so well insulated! Snow came heavily in the afternoon and we played 'Contract Whist' in Alan Mitcham's honour (he turned 80 years old while we were away!).



View from the window

Day 8 allowed us to have a day trip, in beautiful snow conditions and blue skies, up to a hut for a snack break and then to the top of Marstein Logda (1384m). We disturbed a solitary reindeer who was also enjoying the amazing view over Jotunheimen. Lewis and Andy continued to explore other tops nearby (Buatinden 1381m). Alison, Peter and I decided to try telemarking down the gentle slopes. With perfect snow, we achieved some elegant turns.

On Day 9 we needed to leave Storeskag DNT to get to Titrabu (the private hut 'Per' had told us about) before the final push to Bygdin. The problem was that high winds were driving the new snow into near white out conditions. We set out at 9 am with snow in our faces and the wind numbing any exposed skin. Fortunately, as we turned the corner of Skaget we were more sheltered and we warmed up a little as we ascended to a col and then had a great ski down towards the hut at Titrabu. It was lucky that the visibility had improved as it would have been very easy to miss this little hut. We had been given a keycode to get in and once inside we discovered it was perfect for our group of 5. There were two parts to the accommodation and we quickly contacted the owner and paid for extra space as we had originally thought we would be sleeping on the floor. As it was a private hut, we had carried provisions from Storeskag. A menu of packet soup, dehydrated spaghetti bolognese and the last of the fruit cake would do! We made ourselves comfortable for the night ready for an early start the next day.



Day 10 was our last day of touring. We woke early at 6 am, although Andy's alarm went off even earlier at 5 am! (It needed adjusting for Norway but the clocks had moved forward that night!). Packed and ready we set off on a bearing for Skindoo and then hugged a contour above Lake Vinstre. Cutting a corner across the lake at Vestefjorden, then onto a tracked piste for short time before heading through some complicated scenery of fjells to arrive at the road beside Bygdin Hoysfjellhotell.

The hotel at Bygdin is a lovely old building with an outside sauna , antique furniture, a gramophone and a grand piano, attentive staff dressed in typical Norwegian dress and rooms with lovely soft beds and immaculate clean linen. Quite a difference from the previous week! Lewis and I had an indoor (free!) sauna and then we joined everyone for a wonderful 3 course meal.



Day 11 was a travelling day where we took a Hotel taxi to Beitostolen then buses to Fagarnes, Honefoss and Gardemoen which went like clockwork. Everything seems to work in Norway! We had a last evening meal together in the Radisson Hotel at the airport and celebrated with a Juicy IPA beer. Breakfast was early and we said goodbye to Andy who was getting a later flight to Aberdeen before collecting ski bags and rucksacks for the return flight to Edinburgh.

Neil Waters.