

## Jotunheimen 2007

It was 10 years since last time I was in Jotunheimen and 8 years since I was in the Norwegian Mountains. My friend Bengt Gustavsson died in October 2001 in lung cancer. I lost a good friend and my hiking companion. At about the same time I fell off the roof of our house and broke my left foot. Later I have had problems with my hip joint so, I thought I had had it, regarding hiking in the Norwegian Mountains.

What happened in 2006 was that my son, Mattias, asked if I thought he and I could do some hiking in the Norwegian mountains. That started a process in my head. Should I take a risk and maybe had to be fetched by helicopter half way between two cabins? But, the prospect was very tempting and I started to plan a route that would not be too exhausting and strenuous and not too dull for Mattias.

The following summer I asked him whether he was serious about the proposition about us hiking in the Norwegian mountains. He confirmed that it was seriously meant and we fixed a time that would fit us both and would also be a time when most of the snow would have melted: August 6 was the starting date.

I continued to look for a good route and finally settled for a hike from Fondsbu at the west end of lake Bygdin to Gjendebu at the west end of lake Gjende. It was classified as a 5 hour hike but we would of course have to use more than that. We would start at about 1050 meter above sea level and climb to about 1375 and then descend to about 985 again with no steep climbing and plenty of views to lots of peaks well over 2000 meter.

The weather forecast for the week was not too good and the weather turned out to be cloudy with little or no rain and not too strong wind. Quite ideal but the clouds were hanging a bit too low and blocking the expected view to the peaks.

We started from Ärla a bit too late to reach the dinner at Fondsbu. So, we stopped at Tyinkrysset for a good night's rest and a good meal. After a hearty breakfast we continued to Fondsbu where we parked the car and paid for three days parking. We hoped we would be able to continue from Gjendebu to Torfinnsbu the day after we had arrived at Gjendebu and finish the hike by boat from Torfinnsbu to Fondsbu.

The clouds were hanging low but the temperature and the wind were OK and there was no rain. We changed to a more correct clothing, adjusted the backpack and took off. I was feeling quite good. No pain - that is, nothing that really bothered me. We followed the trail along the northern shore of the Bygdin lake for 4½ km before starting to ascend the hill. The climb was tough for fairly untrained bodies so we needed frequent stops to study the view. In less than 1 km we climbed about 200 meters. At the top of the climb we crossed a dangling



bridge over a waterfall. No real danger, but exiting! After the bridge we took the first rest with water and a sandwich.

From the bridge the terrain was gentle slope up to the highest point of the hike for about 4 km. However, before we got so far we had to cross a creek with no bridge. The water was rushing quite fast and we were exploring ways to cross the creek without getting too wet. Finally we found out that we had to change the boots with our indoor shoes and wade over. The water was freezing cold in the creek but it took only about 60 seconds to cross it. On the other shore, we changed back to regular footwear and took another rest with water and sandwich.

That was when I discovered that my left boot was about to lose the sole. Mattias had noticed that it seemed like the heel of the boot was loose. But now I found out that I was praying that the sole would stick to my boot until we arrived at Gjendebu.

The boot was leaking a little and I was wet but I had good socks and I did not have any real problems with it.

We carried on walking and I was happily surprised that my foot did not really bother me nor did the hip joints. I had brought my walking sticks - the type used for Nordic Walking. I believe they helped a lot.



We started to realize that we had to skip longer pauses if we were to arrive before 6 PM. We passed the small lake at the peak of our hike at 1372 meter over the sea. The lake had two outflows, one to the south and one to the north. From the lake we started to descend for the next 4 -5 km and I started to feel some problems with the knees. I had put on support bandages for the knees from the start. I assume that they helped a lot.

The last stretch was tedious and we started to get tired and hungry. The path went through a low forest of birches the last two or three km and we could no longer see the destination. We arrived at Gjendebu at a quarter past 6 PM. I managed to get a bunk due to my age and Mattias had to make do with a mattress on the floor. Dinner was served at 9 PM so we easily managed to drink a couple



of beers before that. It was wonderful to get out of the boots and change the wet sweaty shirt with something light and dry. However, the shoes were still wet from the creek we had to wade. But, what the hell we had made it! We felt great.



I felt that even if I should get a good night's sleep I would not be in shape for the hike to Torfinnsbu the next day and besides my boot was finished. It was not in a shape for more walking. So, we investigated ways to get back to the car the next day. It turned out it was just a perfect way to do it.

We went by boat to Gjendesheim at the other end of the lake Gjende. A bus was waiting to take us to the eastern end of Bygdin where another boat was waiting to take us back to Fondsbu. A very nice trip and the low clouds even let the sun through now and then.

On the way home from Fondsbu we took a detour over Flåm through the longest road tunnel in the world, 24,5 km long. Flåm was crowded with tourists and all tickets for the "Flåmsbanen" was sold out. I would have liked to show that piece of railrode engineering to Mattias! From Flåm we started towards home via Gol and Hønefoss. Mattias wanted to go by train from Oslo to Gothenburg to his Elin. So, we ended up in Oslo. We took a little detour even here and got some pictures of my mother's home of childhood and also where I grew up, close to Vestre Aker's church. We also had time for a visit our friends, Berit and Erling Kjærstad, before leaving Mattias at the Oslo railway station. I spent the night with our friends and went home to Ingrid the day after.

It was great being able to carry through the hike with my son. I had asked my other son, Christopher, if he could come along but he assumed that he did not have the constitution nor the condition to do it.

I also felt that I shall give it a try again next year if possible, but with some new boots. The old ones ended up in the thrash can.

It was a pity the clouds were hanging so low. The high peaks were invisible. Perhaps we can have a look at them next year?!

