

Jotunheimen 1997

This year Bengt Gustavsson and I had decided on a trip to Jotunheimen and to traverse Besseggen. We planned to continue after "we had done" Besseggen with a hike from Gjendebu to Torfinnsbu and the further as we far as we felt it would be nice and pleasant.

I started on August 3 with my car and caravan from Solhejdan Naturistcamp where I had participated in the annual meeting of Swedish Naturist Federation, SNF, to Gustavsberg Naturistcamp outside Nora where I left the caravan. I stayed the night at the camping and had a nice sauna. The next morning I drove to Karlskoga where I picked up Bengt. We drove to Gjövik and Glomstadbukta where we had a nice afternoon and evening with our friends Evy and Stein Erik Vik.

The next day we drove to Gjendesheim Tourist Hotel at the east end of the lake Gjende. At the other end of the long narrow lake is Gjendebu, a hostel for back-packers. These two hostels are owned and operated by The Norwegian Mountain Touring Association (DNT). And at the middle of the lake, on the north shore is Memurubu, yet another place to stay over night for backpackers. This is a private place but gives a discount for members of DNT.



Every morning and afternoon there is a boat going from Gjendesheim to Gjendebu. The boat can take about 100 passengers. We had planned to take the boat from Gjendesheim to Memurubu and traverse Besseggen on the way back to Gjendesheim on foot.

We parked the car not very far from Gjendesheim.

After a good nights sleep and a solid breakfast we collected our gear and went down to the pier from which the boat should leave. We were not alone and we feared we would not be able to get a place on the boat. But we did. However, there were a lot of people left on the pier. I assume they had to the choice of either walking Besseggen the opposite way or wait until the next day.

We arrived at Memurubu and started climbing. It is quite a stiff job to climb those 400 meters or so at the start of the trip. We were passed by most of our fellow passengers from the boat but who cares! We were out in a very spectacular landscape and the sun was shining and we did not need to be back until 6 or 7 PM in time for the dinner! Plenty of time.

The whole trip is supposed to take 6 hours. We assumed we would use at least 8. Once we had finished the sharp climb from Memurubu it was quite an easy walk to the foot of the actual Besseggen. At the bottom of the climb up the sharp ridge there is a lake, Bessvatnet, at 1373

meter above sea level and 389 meter above Gjende. From the southern end of Bessvatten to the absolutely vertical drop to Gjende it is around 400 meter! Quite some scenery as you can see from the pictures!



At the beginning of the climb the ridge is fairly wide but as you get higher it becomes very narrow. It is steep down on each side and marvellous views. The top of the ridge is 1743 meters above sea level or 759 above the lake Gjende. At the top you have finished about 2/3 of the trip and now it just the quite steep descent down to Gjendesheim that remains.

Climbing up is hard on your muscles and your breathing. You sweat like hell and you have to make several stops to regain your normal breathing. You can always pretend that you have to stop to take some pictures of the beautiful scenery and some nice girls.

Descending does not take muscles or breathing but it sure hits your knees and kills your feet. However, climbing Besseggen is very rewarding on a sunny summer day. I was not sure I would be able to do very much the day after but somehow I felt much better the day after and a

breakfast.

By the way, we did manage to arrive in time for dinner!

We took the boat again. This time all the way to Gjendebu. We did not stop there. We just passed it and went south-east and up the steep rise up to the Svartdalen (Black Valley) that lies about 450 meters above Gjende. We had magnificent views toward Gjende and the steep mountains north of the lake. Svartdalen is a wide valley with high mountains on both sides, actually 10 peaks at 2000 meters above sea level



or more in plain view from the valley. And with spectacular glaciers that no picture can do justice to. Seeing it and being in the midst of it is just fascinating!

When we had passed about 2/3 of the valley it changed name to Torfinnsdalen and was slowly descending towards Bygdin and Torfinnsbu. We had planned to stay overnight at Torfinnsbu. As we got closer to Bygdin we could see the large lake, one of the largest in Norway. The valley ended with a very sharp descent that killed my feet again. However, when we arrived at Torfinnsbu, we were rewarded with a very good dinner and very nice company.

I had a very good sleep that night. In fact the girls sleeping in the next room complained about snoring. They must have had a very easy day with not very much exercise the day before!



The next day we decided we should go for the Youth Hostel at Valdresflya. This trip should be fairly easy eastward along Bygdin. However, we should cross a lot of wet terrain and that can be pretty tricky. You may have to turn back several times to find the best way to cross some of the creeks and swamps.

On the whole it was a very nice walk and we actually did see several reindeer. We did get

wet feet but it did not matter too much. We arrived at the hostel, got something to eat and put on some dry shoes on our feet. We met some people there that talked us into trying the Hardangervidda (Hardanger Plains) the year after. However, we did not know at that time.

Saturday, August 8, we took the bus to Gjendesheim, fetched the car and drove to Gustavsberg Naturist Camp for a sauna and relaxation. We talked about the trip and mused over the pictures for a long time after this trip, Bengt and I. Of course I have a lot more pictures than I show here.

This was in fact the best trip we ever had. We made two more trips the next two years but this was the best. We had beautiful weather all the time. We could have shorts all the time and only a T-shirt or nothing but the light backpack on top.

Bengt left us in October 2, 2001 and I still miss him a lot.