

# NORGE NEWS

Saturday-Monday 23-25 February 2019

Åsa, Norway



## *It's Oh So Nice In Åsa*



Mama Moose/Elk and her son/daughter saunter across the back yard of Hanne Hovden's house in Åsa (pronounced OH-sa), where I ended my trip to Norway. It was the second time that week that she'd gotten up earlier than the visitors she was hosting and took an iPhone picture of these visitors, which she and a museum exhibit in Oslo both identified as "elk." As I am from North America, where the identification of large land mammals that live in the Great White North is under the jurisdiction of our friends in Canuckistan, I saw two "moose" in this picture. But I checked, and this animal is known as an elk in Eurasia. Since that's where Hanne and they both live, I now stand corrected and see two elk. But the son/daughter question remains. More important stuff that you need to know if you ever visit Norway is on the next page.

There's a joke being played on us Americans by the fun-loving Norwegians in this supermarket, but it's not what you think. Those appelsin look awfully expensive at \$15, but when you realize these prices are in Norwegian Krone (NOK), each of which is worth about 12 cents, you realize NOK 15.00 is about \$1.73. And that's per kilogram, about 2.2 pounds, which means the appelsin are selling for about 79 cents a pound. That's not the joke, though. It's that "appelsin" aren't apples, they're oranges. Apple is "eple." When you're at breakfast in your hotel and you see Norwegians looking at you while they dab their mouths with napkins, they're really laughing at you because you thought you just ordered orange juice. By the way, the oranges are from Spain and the apples from China (Norwegian apples aren't in season). The only fruit or produce I saw in the store from North America were pineapples from Costa Rica.



Here's what I consider the most outstanding thing about Hanne and Eirik's new house, which they moved into last fall. This thing is in the cabinet door next to the cabinet door that hides their refrigerator. It grinds up the coffee beans and then you press a button on the touch screen and it makes coffee, latte, espresso, cappuccino or any of those other Italian-named coffee or chocolate drinks of your choice. Hanne changed the language on the displays so I wouldn't make any mistakes. Most of the previous week it was in German for her colleagues who were visiting from the school near Munich, where they teach. By the way, the clock at the bottom lets me know that it's 11:31 p.m. the night before back home in California, which is nine hours behind Norway's Central European Time.



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Åsa, Norway, is the kind of town where the back yard stretches up into the hills and the elk cross it to get to the river. The family skis lean against the wall outside the back door and their boots are just inside.

The river runs down to the lake where the kids fish in the summer, but in February the lake is hard and white.

It's where Hanne, my other Norwegian friend whom I first met in Hamlet, lives with Eirik and the boys, Per and Olav, in the new house they moved into last fall. A year and a half ago, the last time I saw them, she lived one town over in Hønefoss, where the waterfall and train station are.

After they hosted a group of German school teachers for a week – she and her German language classes visit them every other year – I dropped in for my last couple of days in Norway.

We spent a day over the hill in Oslo so I could see some things that tourists like to see, and which I wrote about here: [put link here. https://bit.ly/2EYVxYT](https://bit.ly/2EYVxYT)

But the rest of the time we spent in Åsa, where only honored guests get to go.  
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There, cappuccino flows from a magic panel in the cabinet, the bathroom floor is warm when you step on it on a dark winter morning, and people don't mind if you shoot video of them in the supermarket because you sound like an American, your craziness is already accepted as proven.

Hanne, Eirik and I played a board game one night called "Pandemic," which Americans wouldn't play because you're not playing against

the other people around the table. Instead, each player takes on a role, and the idea is that everyone has to work cooperatively to stop the spread of disease around the world. It's so Norwegian. In three games we saved the world once.

We ate cod and bacon, porridge and fruit, cloudberry and bread, pasta and wine. Cheese, coffee, chocolate.

Hanne brought out the box in which she had saved her memories of her year in Hamlet - a bulletin from First Presbyterian, where she sat on Sunday mornings with the Gregsons. They used to sit in the pew behind my family. Johnny was in my class and became a railroad engineer like his daddy A.K.; Glenn

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Hanne is refilling the canister for the magic cabinet coffee machine with "melk." The window is the one you can see elk through. Our breakfast porridge is ready to eat. There's a coffee / hot chocolate cup on the shelf for everybody in the family: Per, Eirik, Hanne and Olav.

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beaned me with a pitch in a Little League game and went on to become a major league pitching coach. Hanne showed me her high school yearbook in which she and Eli Nilsen, our friend in Bergen, were interviewed about being exchange students. There were ads from businesses I remembered as a boy.

We played in the snow in front of the house. I fell off the wooden bench while we sat around the fire and I spilled my chocolate. Per and Olav got a kick out of that.

It's nice to have friends who will warm you up when you've just returned from the North Pole.



Room for a Brio railroad yard and a Lego building while Per and Olav learn how to program the robot that Eirik built.



**Eirik and Olav**



Hanne and Per