



By Tyler Fish

After a 24-hour stop over in London to join the grand opening celebration of Victorinox's new flagship store on Bank Street, John and I traveled to Norway for a week of busy, time-zone maladjusted days.

In Norway we met with personal contacts, equipment companies like our official performance apparel sponsor Bergans of Norway and experts in the realm of polar travel. Norway has a population slightly smaller than that of the state of Minnesota; it is one of the least densely populated countries in the world. However, it may be the country with the highest concentration of polar explorer-type people anywhere.

Norway geography is a stunning, diversely packed mix of sea, cliffs, mountains, glaciers, forests and plenty of nasty weather. Here accomplished adventurers abound. You never know when you've walked past one of the best skiers in the world or someone who has a few long distance ski trips under their belt.

We spent last weekend a small town named Hell. No joke, that's the real name. Hell sits on a fjord 30 minutes north of Trondheim, Norway's second largest city. We went to Hell to spend some time with Rune Gjeldnes, John's friend, mentor and teammate from a 2005 expedition on the Greenland Ice Cap. Rune lives in Hell with his fiance and a boarder collie/poodle puppy.

Rune has skied unsupported across Greenland lengthwise, across the Arctic Ocean via the North Pole and across Antarctica via the South Pole. He is a wealth of expedition knowledge and is a master at the mental approach to huge expeditions. He loves John's Mexican cooking and has a great sense of humor. Two other members of the 2005 Greenland expedition team, Harald Kippenes and Ketil Reiten, also convened in Hell. The strong social vibe of that expedition was clearly evident all weekend.

After Hell, we flew south to Oslo and met with Sjur Mørdre, one of the founders of modern polar ski travel. He and Rune are well known in Norway, but because they do not seek the limelight, they are little known elsewhere. I find this humble nature quite admirable. Their accomplishments may make them famous, but they don't set out on their expeditions in hopes of becoming famous. Like John and I, they are pretty normal people who live typical day to day lives, but chase dreams from time to time.

Next time more from Norway. We may start blogging twice a week now, as a lot is happening right now with sponsors, CaringBridge our charity partner and with our outreach events.