HARDANGERVIDDA – From high mountain plateaus to the nature of Western Norway

The fact that the road crosses the biggest high mountain plateau in Northern Europe tells you something about what lies in wait, but not everything. Here you will encounter vast plateaus, deep, lush valleys, high mountains, glaciers in the far distance, waterfalls and azure fjords. Hardangervidda offers a variety of experiences starting from where the road snakes lazily across the wide plains to the narrow, steep, untamed valley of Måbødalen, until suddenly you are no longer in the high mountain region but in the little village of Eidjford innermost in the Hardangerfjord. In winter, road conditions over the mountains change from hour to hour and often you will find yourself driving in a convoy behind large snowploughs striving to clear the road for drivers. This is also a thrilling experience. The plateau can be inhospitable in wintertime but in summertime it is far more welcoming. The terrain is ideal for walking and you have the chance to catch your own dinner if the fish are biting in one of the many wonderful mountain tarns. Remember that at this high altitude the weather can be changeable even in summer but that in itself is an integral part of your contact with nature. The Hardangervidda plateau boasts one of the biggest populations of wild reindeer in Europe and if you are very patient and very lucky you can marvel at these amazing animals in their proper element. Perhaps that’s when we first understand who belongs here and who is just a passing guest.

TRAVEL INFORMATION. National Tourist Route Hardangervidda runs from Eidjford to Haugastøl, a total distance of 67 km (rv. 7).
1 HARDANGERVIDA. With its 8,000 km, Hardangervidda is Norway’s largest national park and Europe’s largest high-altitude plateau. Hardangervidda has a diverse fauna and bird life, and is perhaps best known as the home of wild reindeer. The road over the plateau may occasionally be closed in the winter season to allow the reindeer to graze in peace.

2 VØRINGSFOSSEN. Vøringfossen is perhaps Norway’s most famous waterfall. Here, huge volumes of water plunge 182 metres from the Hardangervidda plateau down into the Måbødalen valley. The gushing water and the dramatic contrast from the fjord landscape to the plateau are impressive sights. You can also admire the waterfall from below. From the main road there is a 30-minute walk to the waterfall. Unfortunately, the landscape around Vøringfossen is characterised by many years of wear and tear. A renovation programme will start in 2015, the objectives of which are to create more consistency between the viewing points and to provide a safe experience for visitors. Architect: Carl-Viggo Hølmebakk.

3 MÅBØDALEN VALLEY. Måbødalen is a narrow, steep and scenic valley that reaches from Eidjford up to the Hardangervidda plateau. In ancient times, a number of roads passed through the Måbødalen valley. To ease the journey for travellers, 1,300 stone steps were added in the 1780s. The road leading through the valley up to Fossli was built with impressive masonry and completed in 1916. The old road can still be explored by bike or on foot. The modern roadway through Måbødalen consists of a number of tunnels, but there are many interesting vantage points and places to make a stop.

THE NATIONAL TOURIST ROUTES comprise 18 selected motoring trips through natural surroundings in Norway. Viewing points and rest areas have been created along the routes employing innovative architecture and thought-provoking works of art. All of the 18 routes, from Jæren in the south to Varanger and in the north, have their own unique character in terms of the roads, the natural surroundings and history.