

NW TRAVELER

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Family members Katie Trammell, from left, Shelly Hesch and Misty Walker visit Front Street in downtown Poulsbo, which calls itself "Little Norway."

ERIKA SCHULTZ / THE SEATTLE TIMES



**\$99
ROAD
TRIP**

Editor's note: Got college loans to pay? Are Seattle rents pinching your pocketbook? This recurring feature, \$99 Road Trip, is for anyone on a budget. We've taken a day trip from Seattle to see just how much fun two people can have for less than a hundred bucks.

By **BRIAN J. CANTWELL**
Seattle Times travel & outdoors editor

POULSBO, Kitsap County — If you're poking around this town and start to forget you're in one of the more Scandinavian-flavored communities in America, don't worry. Your memory will be jogged when you pass the corner of Viking Avenue and Lindvig Way with its 12-foot-tall Viking statue, complete with horned hat, ready to pillage. Or wander by the Sons of Norway Hall. Or the Nordic Maid gift shop.

For me, it was the lutefisk tacos at the Slippery Pig brew pub. More about that in a minute.

Poulsbo ("PAWLS-boe"), population 10,210, perches on the shore of narrow Liberty Bay almost in the shadow of the Olympic Mountains. The resemblance to fjord country attracted Jorgen Eliason, from Fordefjord, Norway, who founded the town in the 1880s.

Before that, Chief Seattle's Suquamish Tribe hunted, fished and gathered shellfish here for thousands of years and never once committed the folly of soaking their catch in lye (as far as we know).

Today, the downtown shopping street is known as Little Norway, complete with murals of stripey-sailed Viking ships and plenty of shops and restaurants that pay homage to the Old Country.

It could be tough, I told my wife, to hold our day's expenses to \$99, including gasoline, ferry fare, meals, souvenirs and sales tax. With no pillaging allowed.

OVER THE NARROWS

We left Seattle at 8 a.m., drove via Tacoma, crossed the Narrows Bridge and by 10 were enjoying a late breakfast snack at Douche's Eat Apple Bakery.

Land of the horned hat

COLORFUL SCANDINAVIAN HERITAGE AND STINKY FISH IN POULSBO



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Seattle Time - NW Traveler

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Circulation:

Print: 1.2 million - Sunday Edition
Online: 6.9 million unique visitors, 31 million page views monthly

Earned Media: \$25,000

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One entrance of the Boehm's Chocolates shop blends into a mural reflecting Poulsbo's Scandinavian heritage.

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< Poulsbo

FROM 11

My maple-bacon-apple scone (fluffy, with a crunch, \$2.50) went well with the locally roasted coffee. My wife liked her herb-roasted breakfast potatoes. (Total bill: \$9 + 8.7 percent tax = \$9.79)

Poulsbo's Front Street is made for wandering — in and out of shops, galleries and a couple of free museums. We got busy.

Thor's Hammer & Needle Tattoo parlor was new since we last visited, demonstrating that the old twee Poulsbo might be toughening up (while not turning its back on its heritage).

Our first stop: the aforementioned **Nordic Maid** (18954 Front St. N.E., nordic-maid.com). Here's where to get your **Ebelskivers** cookbook (they're a kind of Danish pancake) or Finnish children's stories about Moomins, hippo-like beings that like to take whiskey and shotguns on their picnics. (Our daughter loved these stories when she was little, which probably should have worried us.)

My Seattle childhood of watching Scandinavian funnyman Stan Boreson on TV came to the fore when I couldn't pass up a coffee mug with a Campbell's Soup-like label that advertised "Thorvald's Cream of Lutfisk Soup" (\$10.95 + tax = \$11.91). Stan loved to make fun of lutfisk.

On the way down the street, we stepped in and out of shops such as **Indigo Plum**, a shoe shop with the biggest selection of Birkenstocks I've seen since college, and **Truelux**, where owner Lindsay Reyes sells lotion candles in aromas such as citrine and mint eucalyptus, and a dog named Kat is the official greeter.

At **Sluys' Bakery** (18924 Front St. N.E.), we resisted the Viking Cup cinnamon rolls erupting with gooey cream cheese (\$2.96), and instead took home a bag of artery-friendly Poulsbo Rolls, the same recipe as the wholesome Poulsbo Bread that originated here and is now licensed for sale around the world (\$5.61, with no tax).

But we couldn't be such purists as to walk past **Boehm's Chocolates** (18864 Front St. N.E.), a branch of the Issaquah-based confectioner. My licorice-loving spouse picked up a half-pound of licorice-covered chocolate drops for the holidays (\$4.95, no tax).

I took a brief browse through **Cargo Hold**, a shop full of shiny brass nautical things, where a scale model of the Titanic drew my eye but the \$795 price tag would have sunk my budget.

At the south end of the street we poked our noses into **SEA Discovery Center**, the former Poulsbo Marine Science Center, which last May transferred to the auspices of Bellingham-based Western Washington University (18743 Front St. N.E., wp.wvu.edu/seacenter-poulsbo).

"It brings us a lot of resources," education director Bruce Claiborne said of the change as he took a moment from shepherding a class of fifth-graders on a field trip.

The best feature for casual visitors to the free facility: a



Brittany Beckmark, working at Viking Brew, on Front Street, talks with her babysitter Jamie Osborn and her children William Beckmark, 5 months, and Mary-jane Beckmark.

ERIKA SCHULTZ / THE SEATTLE TIMES

large touch tank just inside the front entry where you can get up-close and personal with a sea anemone or urchin. Kids love it, Claiborne said.

Running total for our budget outing: \$32.26.

SMELLY TACOS

Lunchtime took us to **Slippery Pig Brewery**, just across from the marine center and new to downtown in 2014 (18801 Front St. N.E., slipperypigbrewery.com).

It's a friendly bunch inside, including kilt-wearing co-owner Dave Lambert, who earned the title of Lutfisk King a couple of years ago when he choked down 4½ pounds of the stuff in an annual contest. (After about 4 pounds, his gums started to tingle from the lye, he confided.)

For the uninitiated: Lutfisk is dried codfish that's been soaked in water and caustic lye until it turns to a gel and smells

like dirty socks. It's one of those things that you wonder why anybody ever came up with it, but it became a holiday standard for Norwegians.

On the Slippery Pig menu: lutfisk tacos, \$8. As the visiting journalist who'd never tried lutfisk, I was obligated.

The bottom line: The more sauces you can pile on (hot sauce, barbecue sauce, you name it), the better. Good beer helps, too. (Lunch tab: Three tacos, baked potato with sauerkraut, schooners of Amber Rye and Coffee Brown Porter, \$17.02 + tax = \$18.50.)

SHAKE BREAK

We skipped dessert at the Slippery Pig because I knew that the 1950s-themed **Green Light Diner**, across the street, specialized in hand-dipped milkshakes, which sounded like a good palate cleanser after chemically treated fish (18820



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Besides lutfisk tacos, the Slippery Pig Brewery in Poulsbo offers a loaded **Bloody Mary**, which comes with a pulled-pork slider speared on a swizzle stick, along with salami, pepper-jack cheese, sweet pickle, okra and several other veggies, all in a 22-ounce mug.

Front St. N.E., greenlightdiner.com).

A poster above our booth told us that top hits of 1958 included Pat Boone's "April Love" and Elizabeth Taylor in "Cat On a Hot Tin Roof." We shared a Green Grasshopper shake, made with vanilla ice cream, chocolate pieces, mint syrup and Oreo cookie crumbles (\$6.99 + tax = \$7.60).

Toddling back up the other side of Front Street, at **Verksted Gallery Artists' Cooperative** my wife bought eight buttons made from slices of deer antler. They're for her sister who knits sweaters. "I'm a sander and a filer; Mother Nature is the artist!" said Jerry Lyman, who creates the buttons (as well as other items such as cribbage boards) from discarded antlers he's scavenged all over the West (\$8 + tax = \$8.70).

We wound down our day at the Poulsbo Historical Society's free **Maritime Museum**, which opened in fall 2015 (19010 Front St. N.E., poulsbohistry.com/poulsbo-maritime-museum). Displays include photos of the Mosquito Fleet, the intrepid steam vessels that made remote communities such as Poulsbo viable around early 20th-century Puget Sound.

After a walk by the water, we ended with coffee, tea and a blueberry danish (\$7.75 + tax = \$8.42) at the wonderfully named **Poulsbohemian Coffeehouse** (19003 Front St. N.E.), which Mentalfloss.com recently named Washington state's best coffeehouse.

We sipped and read books near windows overlooking vintage sailboats anchored in the misty bay. Classical music played on the sound system. There was nothing Viking about it, just a calm end to an entertaining day.

We soon headed for Kingston, 20 minutes away, and caught the 5:30 p.m. Edmonds ferry homeward.

The final tally: Adding \$9.90 for our gasoline (based on 116 miles of driving at 32 mpg, with gas at \$2.75 per gallon) and \$14.60 in one-way car-and-driver ferry fare, the grand total for the day: \$99.98.

Next time, we'll get one of those horned hats.

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CUNNING ROUTING SAVES A FEW BUCKS

If you're heading to Poulsbo from the Seattle side of Puget Sound, ferry fare can eat up \$37 of your \$99 budget.

If you avoid the ferry entirely, drive through Tacoma each way and take the Tacoma Narrows Bridge to get to Poulsbo, the travel time can be about the same — but you burn more fuel, there's a bridge toll and a lot more driving.

But — aha — the bridge toll is collected only on the eastbound span. And the ferry system collects passenger fares only on westbound trips.

So we drove over the bridge the way there — the free crossing — and along the way got a bonus glimpse of aircraft carriers moored at the Bremerton naval yard. To ease the driving burden, we took the ferry on the way home, with no passenger charge.

Total savings over taking the ferry both ways: about \$18. Not huge, but just about enough to buy lunch.

—Brian J. Cantwell



MARK NOWLIN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

IF YOU GO

Where
Poulsbo is roughly 1 hour 45 minutes by car from Seattle, whether you drive through Tacoma and cross the Tacoma Narrows Bridge or take the ferry from Edmonds and through Kingston. (Taking the Bainbridge Island ferry can shave some driving time if downtown Seattle traffic isn't gridlocked.)

Share the love
Tips and museum donations aren't included in this accounting. Keep some extra bucks in your pocket to show appreciation.

More information
visitkitsap.com/poulsbo