

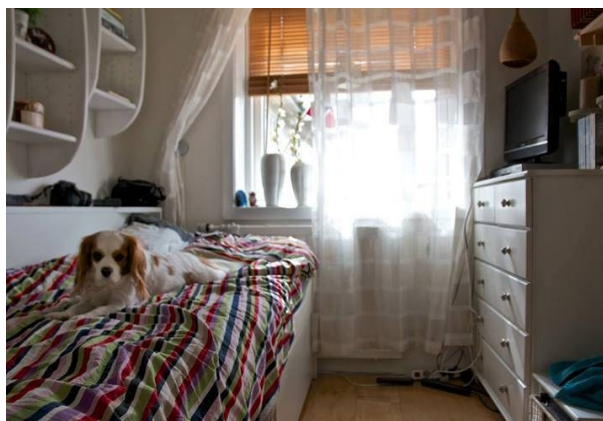
My Life in Norðragøta



The stream going past my house in Norðragøta.

I have now been in the Faroe Islands for just over a week. It feels like much longer (in the best possible way). Though I am just getting started with my journalism work and research, it's been a very busy week as I've adapted to my new lifestyle.

My situation could not be any better. I am staying with an incredibly friendly family who include me in all of their activities and love helping me to learn the Faroese language and the culture. A lot of my time this week has been spent doing things with them, from making a late mother's day breakfast to going to the extended family knitting club. I have been settling in to the routines of the house, and just like anyone else, I wash dishes, cook meals and take out the dog, Lolli. Even during the day, when most of the others are working, I am never lonely. Eight people live in this house, and other relatives and friends drop by regularly as well, coming and going at all hours.



My bedroom and puppy for the summer!



A Faroese Stamp featuring Húsini hjá Peri, the old part of Norðragøta with its lovely turf roofs.

My village, Norðragøta, is a beautiful and very old village with a central location on the main bus route and road between the two biggest Faroese towns, Tórshavn and Klaksvík. Though I ended up here by chance, I couldn't have picked a better place to live.

Norðragøta has a population of 550, and the larger "Gøta" area, which comprises Norðragøta as well as Gøtueiði, Gøtugjógv and Syðrugøta, is home to just over 1,000. By Faroese terms, that's right in the middle — not a booming metropolis like the capital (population 12,500), nor one of the many tiny, remote villages. I can walk to a small grocery store, a gas station, a soccer stadium, a fairly large and modern church and several other commodities, but the village still has a friendly and relaxed bucolic feeling.



Horses and mountains from my window.

Wherever you are, you can hear the crying of the gulls and the bleating of the sheep. From my window, I can almost always see children playing in the stream, dogs walking around freely on the roads and even a few horses, who are allowed to graze in alternating yards and fields and confined only by portable rope fences that are moved every few days.



The Faroe Islands in Vertical: Here you can quickly see the difference between the Bøur, or infield, and the Hagi, or outfield, where sheep are kept in different seasons.

Norðragøta is quite a typical Faroese village situated, like everything in the Faroes, on narrow bits of almost-flat land between the mountains and the sea. Things are arranged almost vertically here — the sea; the beach and the harbour; the fish factory; the houses and businesses; the infield; the outfield; the cliffs; the mountain-top fog; the sky — are all stacked like layers of coloured sand in a jar.

Gøta also has a few special distinctions. It is the home of Eivør Pálsdóttir, one of the most famous Faroese singers, and the annual G! Music Festival. Gøtuvík is one of the largest bays in the Faroes, and the Stóragjógv cleft that empties into it is the largest such canyon on the islands.

Gøta also features prominently in the Faroe Islander's Saga, or Færeyingasaga, as one of the main characters, the heathen Viking chief, Tróndur í Gøtu, had his farm right here! In the oldest part of Norðragøta, there are several turf-roofed houses, a 200-year-old traditional Faroese church, and a living-history museum at the old house Blásastova, where my host family's ancestors lived. This is one of the best places in the islands for visitors to experience what Faroese village life was like not so long ago.

Norðragøta already feels like home to me. I'm very excited to spend the summer here!

In the Wake of the Grind — Who's Who

In the wake of all the recent whale hunting action, there are now a surprising number of involved parties in the Faroe Islands. Here's a little "Who's Who" and update about each of them!

Vice Magazine – Ed Ou and Elise Coker

A duo of journalists have been spending a few months in the Faroe Islands to create a documentary about the whaling for Vice magazine. I have followed their postings in various Facebook groups and even had a chat with Ed myself. I am very excited to see their documentary, as I believe it will be one of the most balanced explorations of the grindadráp tradition to come out in international media so far.

Here you can listen to [an interview conducted by Kringvarp Føroya with the two journalists.](#)

The two were, of course, happy to have been in the islands during the Sandoy grind, where they gathered a lot of footage. They have also met with many Faroese whalers, families, and various other parties in their attempt to portray the multiple sides of the issue. Ou says that while the grindadráp itself will be the single biggest focus of their work, "we're also showing other things, like daily life, we're showing grocery stores, just people doing their thing, music, all that stuff... and that will like hopefully put the grind into context."



Benjamin Hansen added 3 new photos — with **Elise Coker** and **Ed Ou**.

30 August at 07:17 PM · 🌐



Ed Ou and Elise Coker filming for a Vice documentary about the Grind.

“The Propaganda Busters” – Tony Marano and friends



“The Propaganda Busters”

American right-wing vlogger Tony Marano, or PropagandaBuster, [has come to the Faroe Islands to show his support for Faroese whaling and disdain for the Sea Shepherd Organization.](#) Marano, who is also very critical of many domestic issues in the United States, first attracted a large following for his videos when he came out in favor of Japanese whaling and other nationalist issues. [Naturally, this made him very popular with a large segment of the Japanese population.](#) Marano was even offered a Book + DVD deal, which has been released in Japan under the title [“The Speeches from Texas Daddy.”](#)

Marano had already attracted the attention of many Faroese with his posts and videos calling Sea Shepherd “the clowns of the floating circus.” His visit to the Faroes has been [advertised in the Faroese media](#) since its announcement. [Since coming to the islands, he has been welcomed by the mayor of Tórshavn, Heðin Mortensen,](#) and Hans Jákup Hermansen from the Faroese Whalers’ Association among many other Faroese.

Marano has spent a lot of his visit looking for and confronting “clown cars” full of Sea Shepherd volunteers.

While some grindadráp proponents are in fact against the Japanese whale hunt and disagree with Marano’s views on that issue, and others simply find Marano’s approach overly silly or “cheap”, others find him hilarious and are happy to see Sea Shepherd getting some harassment of their own.

Patrick Corsi wrote in the Facebook group, [Whale Wars Faroe Islands / Hvalakríggj í Føroyum](#):

“I must say that although Tony is giving them back some of their own medicine, and in a funny way sometimes, I find his approach a bit cheap, turning this whole affair of the grind & Taiji into a circus act, when it’s something very important to the Japanese local fisherman and the locals of the Faroe Islands; I believe it deserves more serious and respectful consideration than clowing around like Tony is doing. I’m starting to feel that he’s just going from place to place looking for controversial subjects to fuel his “Texas daddy Propaganda Buster blog / business than doing it out of genuine concern for the locals of Taiji or the Faroe Islands. Well, just saying that won’t help me make new friends I suppose, and sorry Tony if you read this; at least you’re out there while I’m back home not helping much, but I prefer to be honest than to make new friends or holding back what I feel about all this just to be popular on Facebook, haha. So everyone & anyone I have offended, please forgive me for my respectful honesty.”

To which Anker Eli Petersen replied:

“Ahh well, humour is one of many means to fight fanaticism. And I have to admit, that I find Tony’s satire quite amusing. Especially when he calls them “girly men” – an insult to the phony “bad-ass” image they (sic) try to create for themselves. :)”

Faroese Public Opinion

Most Faroese people were happy to see a successful grind take place on Sandoy on August 30th. Some were almost as happy about the police actions against Sea Shepherd — when volunteers from the organization tried to interfere, which is illegal under Faroese law, several were arrested and Sea Shepherd boats were also seized.

Grindin legði beinini og seks fólk handtíkin



Mynd: Savnsmynd

Coverage of the event from Kringvarp Føroya — [click image for their story.](#)

Katrin Petersen, a mother of three who lives on Sandoy, told me:

“Yes, I was there (at the Grind). And this time I also took some whale meat as well. **I have otherwise been a pretty strict non-Grind-eater for many years.** Because I was thinking of the contamination (of mercury). I thought that, “as long as I am of childbearing age...” **But you know — these Sea Shepherd people provoke me! They shouldn’t be the ones to decide, whether we eat grind or not.** And I am NOT against the killing, I have only been concerned about eating mercury...”

So, I ate a meal of pilot whale for the first time in years — and mamma mia, it was delicious!

I think that the grindadráp went well. And also the work of the police went well. But — I think, **it can’t go on like this, that we have three helicopters and 20 policemen there at the grind!** So — it went fine, but I’m a little bit worried about the next time, the next year, and the next 5 years...”

(In the Faroese Original: Ja, eg var har. Og hesaferð fekk eg grindapart, eisini. Eg havi annars verið nokkso strict ikki-grindaetari í nógv ár. Tí eg hugsi um dálkingina. Havi hugsað, at “so leingi eg eri í aldri at fáa børn...” Men veitst tú – hesi SS-fólkini provokera meg! Tey skulu so ikki gera av, um eg eti grind ella ikki. Og eg eri IKKI ímóti drápinum, eg havi bara ikki hug at eta kyksilvur....

So eg át eina grindamáltíð fyri fyrstu ferð í áravís – og mamma mia, tað smakkaði væl!

Eg haldi, drápið gekk væl. Og eisini arbeiðið hjá lögreluni gekk væl. Men - eg hugsi, at tað kann ikki blíva við, at vit hava 3 tyrlur og 20 politimenn við í grind! So – tað gekk fint, men eg stúri eitt sindur fyri næstu ferð, næsta ár, og tey næstu 5 árin...)

[A law has been proposed in the Faroe Islands to ban Sea Shepherd, and other “organizations that come to the Faroe Islands with the intent to break the law” from entering.](#)

Some Faroese are opposed to the whale hunt, and may stand with or separate from Sea Shepherd on the issue. After the grind on Sandoy, for example, I saw one Faroe Islander post an image of a famous Faroese waterfall, but with the water photoshopped to be blood-red like the sea becomes at a grind.

The Faroese media has also outdone itself with its least newsworthy Sea Shepherd story yet. Apparently, [one of the Sea Shepherd volunteers had the audacity to hide... a geocache?](#)

Must have been a slow news day.

Sea Shepherd

[Captain Paul Watson](#), for his part, has written the following about the grind on Sandoy:

“What we observed and the documentation we have secured is priceless. The publicity from the arrests has been amazing.

The Faroese police in the beginning saw the potential consequences and they said that it was best if a Grind did not take place because otherwise it would play right into Sea Shepherd’s hand. They were right.”

He also happily posted a political cartoon that was drawn about the event on Portal.fo:



"Endamálið hjá Sea Shepherd, er at fáa færoyingar at detta í allar fellurnar tey leggja fyrri okkum." J. P. Lassen

"The objective of Sea Shepherd is to get the Faroese people caught in all the traps that they lay out in front of us."

Not only did Watson appreciate the publicity and footage from the Sandoy grind, he was also able to identify further silver linings in the situation:

"...Now that this slaughter has taken place, we can mention that over the last 85 days, Sea Shepherd boat crews have deflected three pods of whales away from the island before the killers could spot them. Unfortunately covering 18 islands is a difficult task, but I am proud of the fact that our volunteers saved those whales and made a valiant attempt to save these 33.

The positive side of this encounter is we now have evidence to implicate the Danish government and Sea Shepherd will take this evidence to the European Parliament to demand that action be taken against Denmark for collaboration with an illegal slaughter of whales. No European member of the EU may be involved with whaling, and although the Faroe Islands are not a member of the EU, they receive massive subsidies from the EU through Denmark. The Faroese may be exempt but Denmark is not and now we have the evidence that pilot whale blood is on the hands of Danish sailors and Danish Police. **What is rotten in the Faroes is also very much rotten in Denmark."**

The Halfway Point / By the Numbers

Time for just a quick update:

I'm about halfway through my Faroese summer, and nowhere near ready to leave. Right now, I'm wandering around in a bit of a midsummer haze. My days and nights are flipped almost completely upside down. I can't remember the last time I went to bed before 4 am or got up before noon... I think it's been a week. Mostly to break the cycle, I've planned a trip to Tórshavn and Nólsoy tomorrow, so I have to get up in time to take the 8 am bus.

I think it's time to say I've learned what I've needed to learn and met the people I've needed to meet in order to really do the bulk of my work here. Of course I could still keep learning and practicing and preparing forever, but the halfway point is a good time to wake up and realize that I need to really get started on serious formal interviews, writing, and such.

In three weeks, things are going to start getting really crazy here. My last few weeks in the Faroe Islands are going to see the G! Festival in my home village, the Ólavsøka national day and festival in Tórshavn, and my best friend here taking off work for a few weeks so that we can travel around and see as much of the country as possible. So I'm going to try to get some of the work done now, before the summer really lights on fire...

Here's what my halfway point looks like, by the numbers:

Days spent in the Faroes: **34**

Days left in the Faroes: **39**

Photos taken: **8,814**

Faroese words I know: **2,000+** (ability to speak badly, unlocked!)

Manual gears acquainted with: **5** (ability to drive badly, unlocked!)

Faroe Islands Visited: 9

Vágar, Streymoy, Eysturoy, Borðoy, Viðoy, Kunoy, Kalsoy, Suðuroy, Koltur

Faroe Islands Not (Yet) Visited: 9

Nólsoy, Hestur, Sandoy, Svínø, Fugloy, Mykines (plan to visit)

Skúvoy, Stóra og Lítla Dímun (maybe not this time)

Formal interviews conducted and recorded: **4**

Formal interviews planned for the coming week: **4**

Cups of tea consumed: **69+** Containers of garlic cheese consumed: **7**

Potatoes peeled in the correct Faroese style: **< 2**

Potatoes peeled in Miranda's roughshod redneck style: **> 15**

Potatoes eaten unpeeled: **> 15**

Faroese (and fellow Faroese-phile) Facebook friends: **58**

Times mistaken for a Sea Shepherd Spy: **3+**

New Definition of "Good Weather": **10°C/50°F (and not rainy or foggy)**

New Definition of "Hot Summer Weather": **15.5°C/60°F (and maybe some sun)**

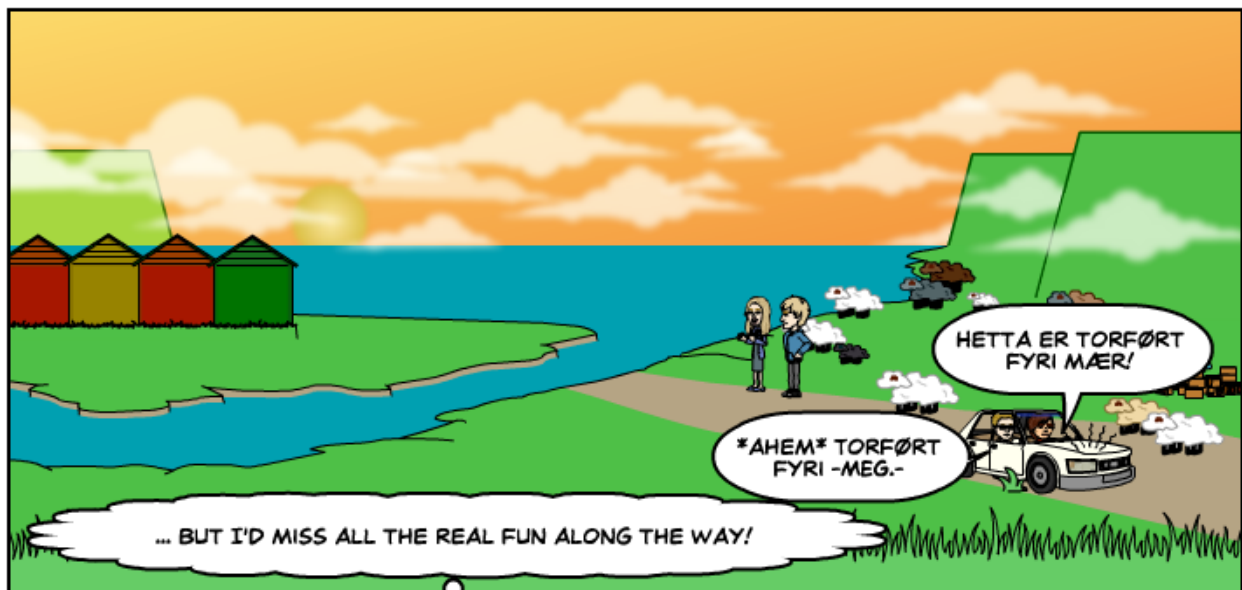
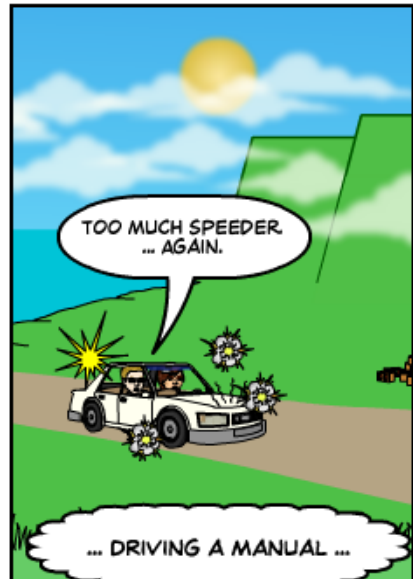
New Definition of "Grass Green": **#00FF00**

New Definition of "Large": **500-inhabitant villages**

New Definition of "Busy": **8 cars in a parking lot...**

FAROESE MONTAGE

BY MIRANDA METHENY



The Missing “Missing” Women of the Faroe Islands

Faroeese Population: **48,228**

Of Which Male: **24,937**

Of Which Female: **23,291**

Difference: **1,646**

A quick look at [current Faroeese demographics](#) reveals an oddity — the country is short on women. Though the gender imbalance has fallen from a 2012 high (when there were over 2,000 more men than women in the country), there’s still a striking and problematic discrepancy, especially when you consider that the missing women are mostly in their twenties and thirties, prime ages for dating and having children.

[Media coverage](#) and common sense would have you believe that the Faroe Islands is facing an enormous problem in the near future, as fewer women means fewer babies. Population growth could stagnate or reverse if no incentives are made for the women to come home, or if new women aren’t found elsewhere, such as from Thailand or the Philippines. In other places, gender imbalances are also known for leading to all sorts of sociological ills, such as increased violence against women.



A young Thai-Faroeese woman attends the Joansøka festival in Vágur, Suðuroy, with her boyfriend and another friend.

But since coming to the Faroes a month ago, I've seen none of that. Okay, so I've seen a few ethnically Asian women here and there. Mostly beautiful, with very cute children. And maybe they're the reason that I can buy coconut milk and curry paste in even the smallest Faroese grocery store. If that's the case, I'm grateful to them. I have a hard time living on meat and potatoes alone, even smothered in tasty Faroese gravy.

Otherwise, though, the country seems to be missing its 'missing' women. Everyone knows where they women have gone — Denmark, mostly — but where are the holes they've left behind?

I'm just not seeing many schools shuttering for lack of children, restless single men, women left behind by all their friends and desperate to get away. Yes, everyone knows someone who has “gone down” to Denmark to study or work, and most families have at least one member away across the water, but it's young men they're missing, too. And most are hoping to come home to the Faroes in due time.



Graduates of the Studentaskúlin (junior college) in Eysturoy gather on the beach in Gøtu as part of their graduation ceremony. This year's graduating class was more than two-thirds female.

Most people I've asked about the lack of women know that the issue exists, but in an almost abstract sense. They all know women who have gone abroad, and they understand why — to get certain types of educations, pursue certain careers, to marry foreign men with whom they've fallen in love — but they're not seeing dramatic effects, and they don't seem too worried about the future. They don't believe they're in a society on the verge of collapse, instead they are optimistic that, despite some problems, things are moving in the right direction.

Take this all “with a grain of salt,” because I still need to do some actual background reporting on this issue, gather statistics and hard facts and talk to the experts. So far, I just have my own observations and those of the many women who have so far made time to talk to me.

“No, no, I don’t see it,” says Bárð Joensen, a mother of three who lives in Norðragøta. **“The only thing is that some are getting foreign women. But I haven’t really noticed that there are more men.”**



Jóna Venned walks with a friend outside of the SMS shopping center in Tórshavn. Jóna has been abroad to work in Switzerland and travel and visit friends in several other countries. She will leave next year to study in Denmark, but plans to move back home to the Faroe Islands afterward.

“I think the circumstances have changed and it is a lot easier to be a woman in the Faroe Islands compared to what it has been. It is kind of conservative, it has always been conservative,” says Jóna Venned, a 24-year-old from Tórshavn. She says the society is continuing to move towards greater equality in homes and workplaces, and that there is also an effort underway to make it easier for single parents to live in the Faroes.

From Island to Island

Not content with visiting 16 islands and an islet in the Faroes, I planned a long way home, postponing my return to the mainland by two weeks and stops on the islands of Amager and Zealand (Denmark), Great Britain (England and Wales), The Isle of Man, and Ireland. Just as I had done on my way in through Norway, I kept my eyes and ears open for traces of the Faroe Islands in its neighboring countries.

First Stop: Denmark



The Faroe Islands are part of the Kingdom of Denmark, and Faroe Islanders often joke that Copenhagen is the largest Faroese city, since the population of ethnic Faroese there is higher than that of Tórshavn. Logically, then, I expected it to be easy to find the Faroese here. And it was... and wasn't.

First, I tried to find some Faroese people. This task was much harder than I'd anticipated, because so many of the Faroese residents of Copenhagen were on summer holiday at the time — in fact, most of them were visiting their family back home on the islands!

Still, I found myself joined by a whole Atlantic Airways flight of islanders going the other way — and I even knew many of them personally. And so I had the surreal experience of traveling, for however short a time, with Faroese people and speaking with them in Faroese while the Danes carried on around us, not understanding more than a word here or there. It was an oddly cozy feeling.

Through the wonders of the internet and multi-degree connectivity, I'd also managed to track down two Faroese women currently residing in the city – Heidi and Krista. Heidi invited me to temunn and breakfast at her home, and gave me insight into how she has carried her Faroese identity while living and, to a large degree, assimilating into Danish society. Krista and I spent two fun evenings together while we chatted about her own life and plans. Krista has been in Copenhagen for a far shorter time than Heidi, spends most of her time with the Faroese people living there, and plans to return to the Faroe Islands as soon after getting more work experience in Denmark.

It was also fashion week, and among the other big names being interviewed live and broadcast on a big screen in the city center, I saw a name and a face that was by this time familiar: Barbara í Gongini, a famous Faroese designer.

Aside from the Faroese themselves, there was little in Copenhagen to remind me of the Faroe Islands. The land was flat, the buildings tall, the streets busy, the sky startlingly big and blue after spending time in the misty Faroese mountains. Oh, and it was hot. I broke out pieces of my wardrobe that hadn't seen the light of day since I'd packed them optimistically into my suitcase in May.



The Faroese House in Copenhagen

I made a map of Faroese places and things I might be able to see in the city. There was The Faroese House, a cultural meeting place and cafe; it was closed for the summer holidays. The “Faroese student ghetto” of Øresundskollegiet was likewise empty for the season. I found nothing Faroese in the Danish National Museum, which returned most such artifacts to the National Museum of the Faroe Islands several years ago. A search for Faroese restaurants, or even a restaurant serving Faroese ingredients, revealed only that Tórshavn’s beloved sushi restaurant, Etika, had tried in 2010 to establish a Copenhagen branch; despite some good initial reviews, it had not even lasted a season.

I took a walking tour of Copenhagen, which started outside the City Hall. Our guide proudly told us that the polar bears on the hall’s roof were there to represent Greenland, a Danish territory. As we started walking, I asked her to please point out to me if we passed anything related to the Faroe Islands.

She answered shortly: “No. There’s nothing about the Faroe Islands.”

“Okay,” I began, “Thanks anyw — “

“In fact,” she continued, “I don’t really know anything about the Faroe Islands. At all.”

Most of the Danes I met were not so abrupt. Still, if my summer plans came up, most didn’t comment at all. Some said it was interesting in a tone that told me they thought it was anything but. There were exceptions. I met another journalist who had been living in Greenland, and we were eager to hear about each other’s work. And one young woman excitedly asked me if I was Faroese — she had spent time in the Faroe Islands, and recognized my sweater.

On the whole, the Danes just didn't show anywhere near the interest that the Norwegians had back in Bergen, which I found a little bit strange considering the relationship between the two nations.

Second Stop: Great Britain



I was one degree and ten minutes away from a Faroese man in Oxford. They get around, I'm finding. I met a Cuban man in my hostel, and when he heard why I was in Europe, he threw up his hands in astonishment. "Seriously?" he asked, "I just found out about that place ten minutes ago! I was talking to this awesome Faroese guy at my conference. This is too weird."

The British occupied the Faroe Islands during World War II and left behind an airport, a strong tea-drinking tradition and Cadbury chocolate. But the cultural exchange was mostly unilateral, and the rest of my connections to the Faroe Islands on Great Britain were comparative. The apologies the locals made for the changeable weather made me smile that one-upping smile. The sea felt so warm. The houses and gardens looked so fine and pretty, even in the small villages of the Cotswolds and the mountains of Wales. The land just seemed so safe, protected, and fertile compared to what I had come from.

A language geek as ever, Welsh fascinated me. I saw more of it than I expected to — just about everything written was bilingual — but I didn't hear *any* of it until I reached northern Wales, where I was happy to hear it spoken much more, and by all generations, in Caernarfon. The scarcity still made me a little bit sad. *There, I thought, but for the grace of a thousand kilometers of salt water, or some truly commendable island obstinacy, goes Faroese.*

Third Stop: The Isle of Man



I stayed with a family in the Isle of Man who positively astonished me with their knowledge of the Faroes. They asked me intelligent questions about the political system, showed me an old book with photographs of artist Tróndur Patursson harpooning a whale, and expressed avid concern for the puffin colonies on Mykines.

Now, this family was most likely exceptional in this regard: not only especially intellectually curious but specifically about topics that would pull the Faroe Islands into their view. The two island nations are, after all, linked by many obvious political and cultural parallels, varying degrees of Norse heritage, and, especially intriguing to my host's father (a part-time ornithologist) large populations of sea birds.

The Isle of Man is much bigger than any of the Faroe Islands, and it's only the one. It was hard for me to buy, comparatively, the word "isolated" describing any of the Manx settlements. The people of Man have a few towns that could reasonably be called cities, albeit small ones, with multiple pubs and Chinese and Indian carry-outs... and lovely, brooding castles. They've also got much larger expanses of flat, fertile land as well as trees and forests. Despite some resistance, English has almost completely overtaken their Manx language.

But when I stood on the shore, the strength of the wind took me by surprise and the crashing surf revealed the fury of the full force of the Atlantic, even on a mild and sunny day. And I thought, yes, these islands are close cousins, after all.

Fourth Stop: Ireland



Once I read a long scholarly article that promised to examine the historic cultural relationship between Ireland and the Faroe Islands. It basically concluded there wasn't any... and wasn't that strange? Okay. So I didn't spend much time looking in that direction.

Irish Gaelic gave me yet another reminder of how amazing Faroese is doing for such a small language. For my next visit to Ireland, I think I better head to the Aran Islands, which I was able to glimpse not too far off the coast of the Burren. They're as Gaelic as Gaelic comes, everyone says — that little bit of saltwater separation having a powerful preservative effect.

The Irish landscape was broader and flatter and more forested than the Faroese, once again (it doesn't take much.) To give credit where it's due, I experienced more changeable weather in Ireland than anywhere else I've ever visited, including the Faroes. So many of these Northern European countries tell the same jokes — *"If you don't like the weather, wait five minutes."* But only in Ireland did I really experience, within the hour, sunshine turn to black skies and driving rain and back again.

The Cliffs of Moher, apparently Ireland's second most visited tourist attraction, were lovely. But I'd seen just as good in the Faroes and not had to share them with hundreds of tourists. And the Irish are going around claiming they have the highest sea cliffs in Europe. You can Google it and see.

"As high as the Cliffs of Moher (217m) are," our guide said proudly, "they are not the highest in Ireland! For that, you'll have to go to Sliabh Liag (601m), which are the highest sea cliffs in all of Europe!"

Now, I happen to know that the Faroese Cape Enniberg, which also claims that lofty title (they discount Norway's Hornelen for not being vertical enough for proper cliffs) rises 750 meters above the sea.

When I questioned the guide on the matter while the rest of the bus was going to the bathroom, he sort of deflated.

“Maybe my facts are wrong,” I offered. “I’m not very good at remembering numbers.”

“No, no, you’re probably right,” he said. “This is just what we learned in school...”

I doubt he’ll change his rehearsed speech on the matter. After all, how often is someone going to know enough about some little nowhere islands to call him on it?

180° – Reflections from Half a World Away

My summer in the Faroe Islands is over, but much remains to be done. I left the Faroe Islands a few weeks ago, and after detouring in Denmark, England, Wales, Man, and Ireland on the way home, I'm finally back in Missouri.

There's still a lot of summer left here — and here, summer means the concrete's so hot you can watch your footprints disappear in seconds, sweating is natural and welcome, and the lake water's so still and warm, you can almost fall asleep in it, lying on your back beneath the stars on a sultry dark night.

It's been a strange transition.

I was able to readjust to some aspects of life off the islands (trees, large buildings, busy roads...) along the way, but it still hit me surprisingly hard to look out of the window of my Chicago – St. Louis flight at endless, hazy blue and realize that it wasn't the billowing sea I was looking at, but land... an unimaginable amount of solid land.

And then there was the moment I stepped out of the airport — still clad in jeans, wool socks, hiking boots and a long-sleeved shirt (though I had taken my heavy sweater off moments earlier) — and into what felt like a solid wall of heat and humidity. I found myself gasping for breath. The heat index on my first day back reached nearly 42 C.

In quiet moments, I've felt a strange longing for the cold blue fog of so many summer nights in Gøta.

And this from the girl who, just a few months ago, had a secret fear of falling off the islands — so unused to the lack of a whole continent as a cradle. The girl who once saw a photo of Greenlandic children wearing thick sweaters in July and swore, shivering, that she'd never live in such a terrible place. The girl whose only reference point, the first time she was enveloped by a rush of bright summer mists, was the cinematic white-out that signals entrance into some other, higher dimension.



I guess I've come 180 degrees... and back again.

Though I've now left the Faroes behind me physically, I doubt I'll ever get them out of my mind or my heart. I certainly hope to maintain a lifelong connection with the nation and with the wonderful Faroese people who welcomed me into their homes and lives.