

Whaling in Norway

By Helen Linea Aall, 2019

Whales in Norway:

- 21 species

Whales Hunted:

- Minke whales



Whale meat consumed in Norway:

- Less than 5% of the Norwegian Population (mostly older people) consumes whale meat.
- In the northern parts of Norway, whale meat is a tradition and usually served with potatoes.
- The Norwegian government is trying to make whale meat a “trend” by promoting it at big and popular restaurants around the country, as well as during music and food festivals.
- The Government has recently tried to enforce the use of whale meat for school children.
- Tourists are being offered whale meat on cruise ships and at restaurants.
- Tourist demand on whale meat has dropped from 40% in 2009, to 10% in 2018.



Other Use of Whale Meat:

- Food for minks and foxes in Norwegian fur farms. In 2014, more than 113 tons of whale meat -equivalent to the amount of marketable meat from 75 minke whales- was delivered to Rogaland Pelsdyrfôrlaget, the largest manufacturer of animal feed for the Norwegian fur industry.
- Shipped to Japan, Faroe Islands and Iceland.
- Food (steaks, sushi and burgers).
- Other parts of the Whales are being used in cosmetics, vitamin supplements, protein powder and some pet foods.



Photo 1: Whale protein powder, whale energy drinks and whale oil skin cream — which claims to prevent scarring, heal sunburn and repair bad skin — are all sold in Norway.

Photo 2: Commercials from Myklebust; “Shinier fur, fresher heart and a stronger dog”, Product Kato dog consists of appetizer, whale bites and Whale fast-food for dogs.

Read more <http://nettbutikk.hvalprodukter.no/categories/hundefor>
 Supplied: Myklebust website
 Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/hvalprodukter/>

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Whaling in Norway:

- Between 2000 – 2015, 68% of the Minke whales who were caught were female, and over 40% of them were pregnant, because they are easy targets.
- Since 1993, Norway has killed more than 12,000 minke whales.
- From 1993 to 2016, more than 181 tons of whale products have been exported from Norway to Iceland, Japan and Faroe Islands.
- Norway claims whaling is a strong part of their tradition and ignore modern day reality and the declining demand for whale meat. The fishing minister *Per Sandberg* says, “I want to make sure that whaling stays alive”
- Norway kills more whales than Iceland and Japan combined, (Report from the Times 2016)



Who is Killing:

- Fishermen in the northern parts of Norway (Due to the remote location and its difficulties to get there and film, there is not many people who knows about whaling and massacre in Norway).
- **Myklebust is the biggest whaling company in Norway.** They are the distributors of whale meat for shops and restaurants across Norway.

Whaling History in Norway:

- Whaling has been a Norwegian tradition for hundreds of years, yet their methods of whaling remains the same. The only thing that has changed, other than the boats, is the exploding harpoons that were introduced in the mid 1930's. Because of these harpoons, Norway was the dominating whaling country in the mid 1930's.
- The International Whaling Commission (IWC) imposed a global ban on Whaling in 1982, which came into effect in 1986, however in 1986 Norway initially undertook a small-scale scientific hunt of minke whales.
- In 1993, Norway announced that they would once again resume with commercial whaling, which they still do as of today.
- Co-written by three environmental and animal rights NGO's – Animal Welfare institution, Ocean Care and Pro Wildlife – the report concludes that Norwegian whalers are responsible for killing 12,000 whales since 1993.
- In 2015, 660 whales were killed, in 2016, 591 were killed, in 2017, 432 were killed which was the lowest number in 20 years, and in 2018, 434 were killed.
- The whaling quota was raised from 999 to 1278 in 2018 & 2019.

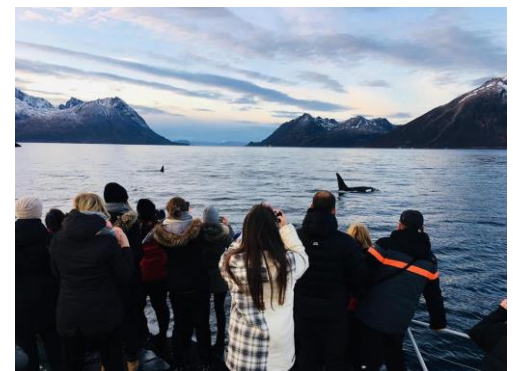
How they Hunt Whales:

- A harpoon loaded with explosives go off once they've penetrated about a foot into the flesh of the whale. The internal blast is supposed to cause enough brain damage to kill or knock out the whale within a few seconds, but sometimes it goes wrong and it can take up to 15 minutes for the whale to die. In several cases, it took several hideous painful hours before the whale died.



Whale Watching:

- Norway has been said to be one of the best places for whale watching.
- Every year, after the calves are born, Humpback whales go back to Norway and Iceland, which makes it almost guaranteed to see Humpback whales during the winter whale safaris.
- Orcas are the most common whales to be spotted during November to February Safaris.
- In Norway, whale watching is mostly done near Troms (Skjervoy), and Andenes.
- There are many whale watching companies, but the biggest ones in Troms are: “Active whale Tours/Active explorer”. *Wild Seas* is the most sustainable one.
- There can be up to 50-60 boats and many snorkelers in the water chasing the orcas at the same time without any guidelines respected, making whale watching completely out of control and harmful for the orca population.



Economic Effects of the Whale Industry:

- The economic figures from whaling in Norway is not public, but since they are trying very hard to market whale meat into other industries, it is surely not a profitable business.
- In 2015 Japan dumped the whale meat shipped from Norway. After routine safety tests, it was discovered that it contained up to twice the permitted level of aldrin, dieldrin and chlordane (suspected of causing birth defects, neurological harm and some cancers if consumed in high quantities).

- The whaling industry does not have a positive impact on the Norwegian economy. If anything, it is a negative effect, due to the government spending money and resources to promote the meat, while the public still not is buying it. The majority of the time, the whale meat is on sale, because no one is buying it and it is taking up space in the supermarket.

TAF's Opinion:

- TAF visited in November 2018 NOAH and BELONA in Oslo, to hear their view on the whaling industry in Norway. NOAH is probably the only one who is actively working against the whaling industry, but so far has yet to succeed.
- Furthermore, TAF went to Troms where we had an interview with the university (UIT. University of Troms) and the Norwegian Polar institute. None of them wanted to comment on the whaling industry considering it, a delicate subject. However, the **Polar institute could confirm that the Orcas are in grave danger in the Norwegian waters** due to increased whale watching without any guidelines as well as the highly toxic water and seismic testing.
- We interviewed the whale watching company “Active Explorer” (the biggest one in the industry) which could confirm on the numerous boats and traffic going to Skjervoy.
- **The whales have disappeared from Troms because the food source (herrings) has moved to Skjervoy.**
- In general, there seems to be a significant decline in the whale abundances, due to lack of food and toxic waters.
- We accommodated Wild Seas on a whale watching trip to Skjervoy, where we saw Orcas. We were devastated by the unrespectable behavior from other boats not obeying the guidelines and not keeping distance to the whales.
- The whales are clearly trying to get away and seemed very disturbed and stressed.
- **Whale watching is a huge business in Norway**, such as in other countries, but if the Orcas' food source moves further away, it would soon put a limit to the industry as it would be too difficult and costly to get there.
- We also visited many restaurants and supermarkets who still serve whale meat to a price below regular pasta. When the **staff in Rema and the waiters and owners of restaurants were interviewed by us, they did not seem very concerned nor did they care.**
- TAF noticed that healthcare stores were promoting krill and seal oil, inappropriate in our opinion considering krill is the main food source to the baleen whales. The seal oil is controversial as the big attraction in Troms is a Seal aquarium and that they promote to protect them!
- Some in Norway still have the opinion that whaling must continue because of the fish stocks. ¹ which is completely absurd, as **the whales are the oceans fertilizers and help sustain the fish stocks.**



Its disgraceful to see that Norway still is promoting whale hunting, despite the fact that the population is losing the taste for it and not only in Norway, but the countries that they are exporting to (Japan, Iceland, and Faroe Islands).

The government subsidizes in Oslo, which is a modern capital with high standard of universities and knowledge, and therefore should know that **we need the whales who indirectly provide us with over half of our oxygen.**



Killing the whales is therefore the same as killing ourselves.

Unfortunately, the whales are passing by Norway, making Norway responsible for less oxygen in the world! Furthermore, consuming whale meat also presents big health risk due to the high amount of mercury and dangerous toxics in the meat. **For the government to promote whale meat for children at schools pose a high health risk and should be stopped.**

They claim that whaling is sustainable in Norway, but how do they count the whales? TAF has talked to the statistics apartment in other whaling countries, and the procedure seems to be the same, they say. They spot and count the whales while onboard a boat, but how can they be sure that it is not the same whale coming up multiple times, or how can they follow a whale, as whales can be under water for over an hour, and can change direction. Counting each whale's tail or other specific marks seems very dubious and for sure not reliable statistics!

What to Do?

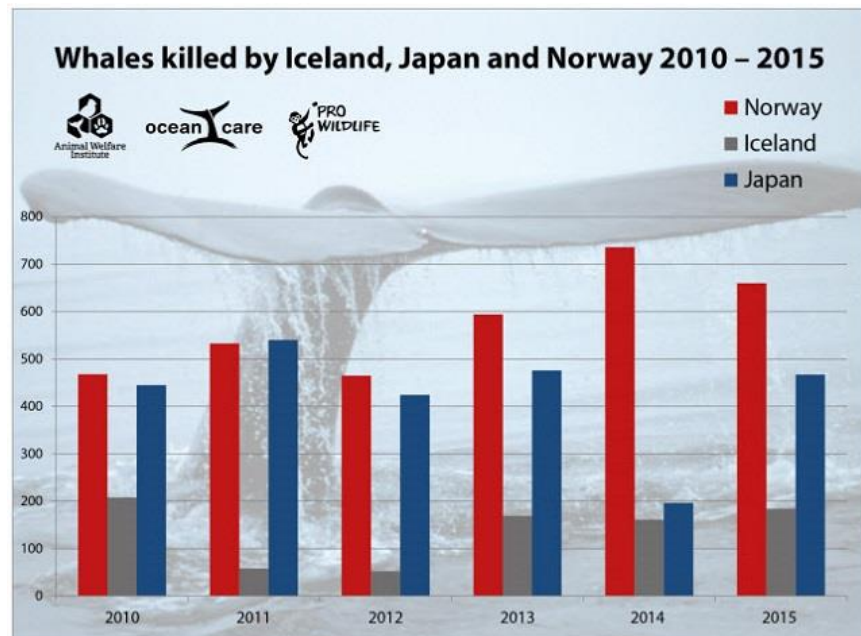
If the government in Oslo would listen to the majority of the public who is no longer interested in whaling, and if the politicians would admit the negative economic effect on whaling and also try to understand the whale's importance to humanity, whaling could end with an immediately effect!

The public can stop buying whale meat in general and they can boycott the hunt.

Please read here the report from an Animal Communicator JOY and her opinion on the Orcas in Norway:



Orcas from Norway from JOY in english.p



Source: <https://awionline.org/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/Whales-Killed-by-Iceland-Norway-Japan-2001-2015.pdf> | Photo: © NOAA

Toxic Pollution in the Fjords:

- Multiple times in 2019 and 2018, the public was informed that it was not allowed to swim in the Fjord in Oslo, because it was polluted, either from what came down with “Akerselva” which goes though the city and runs out into the fjord; or from the waste that comes from the enormous cruise ships that comes and goes almost every day from March to October.
- Every day tank ships and container ships enter and exits the harbor in Oslo, leaving or picking up shipments.
Not only are these ships polluting the water, but they are also threatening the local ecosystems. When a ship has delivered hundreds of containers in a harbor, they have to go back to where they came from, or somewhere else, and because they do not carry hundreds of tons of goods, they fill enormous rooms in the bottom of the ship with water from the harbor, so that they don’t tilt when in open waters and storm. When they then arrive at the next harbor to pick up a shipment, which could be on the other side of the world, they dump out the water, and with it, plankton, seaweed, fish and bacteria.



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