



In Cod We Trust: Living the Norwegian Dream

Eric Dregni

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Eric Dregni's great-grandfather Ellef fled Norway in 1893 when it was the poorest country in Europe. More than one hundred years later, his great-grandson traveled back to find that—mostly due to oil and natural gas discoveries—it is now the richest. The circumstances of his return were serendipitous, as the notice that Dregni won a Fulbright Fellowship to go there arrived the same week as the knowledge that his wife Katy was pregnant. Braving a birth abroad and benefiting from a remarkably generous health care system, the Dregnis' family came full circle when their son Eilif was born in Norway.

In this cross-cultural memoir, Dregni tells the hair-raising, hilarious, and sometimes poignant stories of his family's yearlong Norwegian experiment. Among the exploits he details are staying warm in a remote grass-roofed *hytte* (hut), surviving a dinner of *rakfisk* (fermented fish) thanks to 80-proof aquavit, and identifying his great-grandfather's house in the Lusterfjord only to find out it had been crushed by a boulder and then swept away by a river. To subsist on a student stipend, he rides the meat bus to Sweden for cheap salami with a busload of knitting pensioners. A week later, he and his wife travel to the Lofoten Islands and gnaw on klippefisk (dried cod) while cats follow them through the streets.

Dregni's Scandinavian roots do little to prepare him and his family for the year in Trondheim eating herring cakes, obeying the conformist *Janteloven* (Jante's law), and enduring the *mørketid* (dark time). *In Cod We Trust* is one Minnesota family's spirited excursion into Scandinavian life. The land of the midnight sun is far stranger than they previously thought, and their encounters show that there is much we can learn from its unique and surprising culture.

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