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## **Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines celebrates its heritage on Norway's 'National Day'**

Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines – with its strong Norwegian heritage, having been established in the small Norwegian town of Hvitsten by the three Olsen brothers, Fredrik Christian, Petter and Andreas, in 1848 – is today [17<sup>th</sup> May 2013] proud to be celebrating one of the most important days in the Norwegian calendar, its 'National Day', or 'Constitution Day'.

The Constitution of Norway was signed at Eidsvoll 17<sup>th</sup> May 1814, and declared Norway to be an independent nation. The Storting, the Norwegian Parliament, held the first '17th of May' celebration in 1836, and from then on, this date – or 'Syttende Mai' in Norwegian – has been regarded as the 'National Day'.

Guests aboard Fred. Olsen's *Balmoral* can join in the lively Norwegian festivities this year, as the ship is making a special call in the country's capital city, Oslo. Guests will be able to witness an array of colourful national costumes and the longest parade in the country, where some 100,000 people travel to the city centre to participate in the main celebrations. It is the custom for boys and girls from all the city's schools – over 100 in total – to gather together in traditional costume to parade past the Royal Palace with marching bands, where they and the Royal Family exchange waves and greetings. *Balmoral*'s guests will be able to get the full flavour of these historic festivities as they continue on into the evening, as the ship will be making an overnight stop in the city.

The Norwegian theme of this 10-night 'Norwegian Experience' cruise is complemented by the special guest speaker on board *Balmoral*, **Colonel Ivar Hellberg**, who will be educating and entertaining guests as part of Fred. Olsen's award-winning enrichment programme, *Vistas*.

**Colonel Ivar Hellberg**, who has Norwegian ancestry through his father, was a Commando Soldier, and saw operational service in many parts of the world, including in the Falklands War as Commanding Officer of the Commando Logistics Regiment, Royal Marines. He has participated in many winter training deployments in Norway with the Royal Marines, and has spent much of his life climbing, skiing and training in Norway. He left the Armed Forces in 1998 after serving as Defence Attaché in Indonesia, and is now a university lecturer, currently writing a book on the Vikings, entitled 'Wolves from the Sea'.

From Oslo, *Balmoral* will continue to the Norwegian port of Flåm, Sognefjord, a tiny village on the banks of the Aurlandsfjord, boasting spectacular views and the famous Flåm Railway.

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Fred. Olsen Cruise Line operates in the UK with four intimately sized ships for a more personal cruising experience.

## Contacts



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