



# Norway – hiking Solstien out of Rjukan

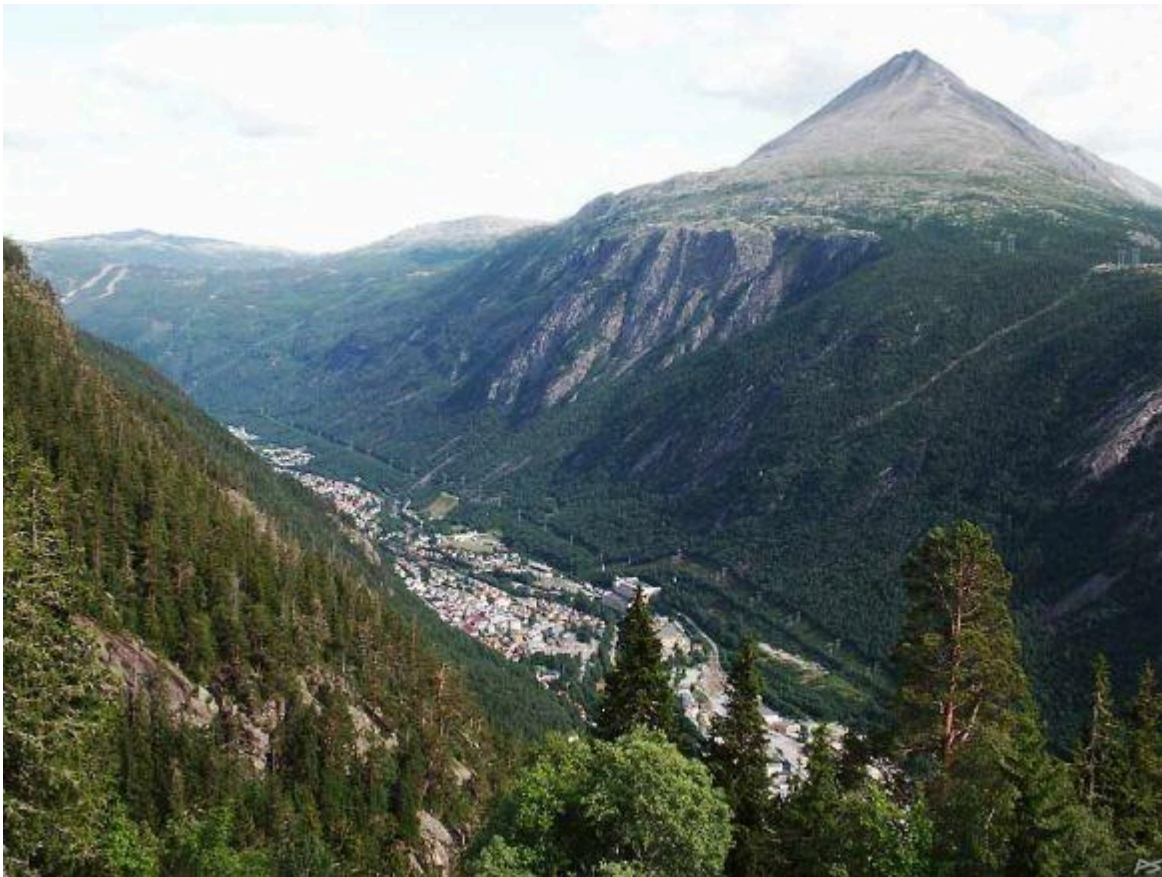
*trip report by BestHike editor Rick McCharles*

Driving in after dark, I slept at the base of **Mt. Gausta**, Norway, hoping to get a very early start. It's the highest mountain in [Telemark](#), a [super popular hike](#).

When I awoke, however, it was **cloudy atop the peak**.

After making some coffee I finally decided to drive on and hike instead nearby [Hardangervidda plateau](#).

I drove way, way down to [Rjukan town](#).



For 6 months a year no sun reaches this deep valley.

*Why would people live in Rjukan?*

**Hydroelectricity**, of course.

**Rjukan Falls**, a 104-metre waterfall, provided easy means of generating large quantities of electricity. In 1934 this was the world's largest power plant.

Easiest way up the opposite side of the valley is via the [Krossobanen aerial tramway](#), built 1928 as a gift from Norsk Hydro to the people of Rjukan (*most of them Hydro employees*), offering them a view of the sun during winter.

Actually that's the [oldest in Scandinavia](#). It looks old.



I was in the first car. Happy to **gain 814m** quickly.

There's a restaurant and good views across the valley to the mountain.





At the top of the lift I was a bit disappointed to see road, cabins, snow machines, quads. It's a community up here, not wilderness.

Lonely Planet recommended a 9km walk-in to [Helberg cabin](#).

**I had been advised the hike was wet.** And it was wet.

Hardangervidda is characterised by barren, treeless moorland interrupted by numerous pools, lakes, rivers and streams. **Erosion in this environment makes any trail muddy.** Too wet for me.

I turned around.

Instead I tried the **Solstien loop**. I knew it had a stepping stone stairway. I could keep my feet relatively dry.





*Nice.*

The **sun came out** as I got to the top.

Germans in World War II tried to produce heavy water for future nuclear weapons in this valley. They built these gun emplacements to shoot down British planes.



This weird, bleak, inhospitable environment really appeals to me. I recommend the hike. By the way, I small-stepped down the 814m back to my car. It did seem long.

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There's some good news. The people of Rjukan now get some sunlight without climbing out of their valley. Martin Andersen, an artist who moved there in 2002, pushed an initiative to build a **computer-controlled array of three giant mirrors** that moves with the sun to light 600 square meters of the town square.



related – [Visit Telemark – Solstien](#)

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