

The new (sailing) bridge for trade & tourism

by Przemysław Myszka and Przemysław Opłocki

This year's BTJ Trip season kicked off on Monday, the 27th of May, when we boarded a morning train in Gdynia heading for Szczecin. Destination: Euro Terminal in the Port of Świnoujście, from where Finnlines' Sweden-flagged ferry *Finnfellow* sails to & from the Port of Malmö daily as of 10 April 2024. It demanded great patience (counting four-five in years) from the Finnish shipping line to launch the crossing, but here it is finally! Finnlines invited us to get a taste of the new service as well as to partake in the official ribbon-cutting ceremony aboard the vessel on 28 May.



Photo: CMP

In Szczecin, we rented a car as the service currently requires a vehicle to make use of it. It gave us the opportunity to contemplate West Pomeranian nature en route to Świnoujście (including a rampaging thunderstorm...). At the same time, we had to cope with the heavy road construction works along the way; then again, wheeled

traffic will certainly get smoother on the north-south axis once everything's done, something Świnoujście's ferry cargo flows will only benefit from.

Sun welcomed us at Euro Terminal, where we had to wait for a check-in. Two things were immediately visible when we parked near the facility. First, the Malmö-Świnoujście

is a classic Finnlines' business: focused on freight (the 188.3-metre-long *Finnfellow* offers 3,099 lane metres of capacity). The parking area was filled with trucks (also meaning that accompanied traffic dominates the route, in contrast to, as we saw on the Swedish side, the company's Malmö-Travemünde service, whose *Finntreader* was loaded mainly



Photo: Finnlines

with trailers the next day). Second, there were just a few private vehicles (including one with a cat, as *Finnfellow* is pet-friendly, with suitable cabins – and a sizeable litter tray outside one of the decks). That said, more of the latter joined in Malmö, among which one was with a Nor-

wegian number plate (making us wonder whether the couple who drove it was on a road-ferry trip, which sounds like an interesting alternative to flying between Norway and Poland, also from an environmental point of view as the car was electric).

Although we arrived earlier at the terminal than needed and had to wait some time, we received our boarding cards and were guided to our place on board *Finnfellow* (to park in a safe spot, as we were the only ones not disembarking in Sweden). By coincidence



Photo: Przemysław Myszka



Photos: Przemyslaw Myszka

(probably not), our cabins were located at the very front of the ferry's bow, which made the porthole view even more impressive (especially when the vessel's loudspeakers woke us in the morning the next day with the Øresund/Öresund Bridge in close sight). We have already had the occasion to sail between Poland and Sweden on other companies' ships and can testify that, although *Finnfellow* is 24 years old, the cabins are very fresh and spacious. The ferry offers room for 440 passengers across over 180 cabins of six

different categories (from 8.0 through 11 m², with and without portholes, up to 21 m²). We can also state that *Finnfellow's* kitchen staff doesn't have to be ashamed of anything: the dining offer is appreciably decent (and unlimited, so nobody should leave the restaurant still feeling half-hungry).

Apart from a small duty-free shop, a pirate-themed children's play area, a conference room, and a few slot machines, *Finnfellow* has got the thing that makes it a truly Nordic ferry: a Finnish sauna (two to be precise:

for men and women). Without a doubt, a relaxing visit to it was *the* highlight on Tuesday after the press brief. Curiously enough, the sauna was unoccupied at the moment of our arrival. We 'blame' it on culture: saunas are (regrettably) still very much a foreign concept to Poles. That said, a Polish-speaking fellow later joined us, but judging from his accent, he was, in all probability, from a country east of Poland (so from the banya culture, so to speak). Anyhow, the man had with him a bottle of mint oil-infused water to pour





Photo: Przemysław Myszka

over the blistering rocks – now that’s some experienced insighter sauna know-how!

After the steam bath and a hearty meal on a Tuesday evening, we disembarked *Finnfellow* as smoothly as we boarded it the day before. A late road cruise awaited us, luckily, this time without heavy rain thundering rampantly against the car’s roof. After another sleepover, the first BTJ Trip in 2024 ended with a train ride back to Northcentral Poland.

Tuesday ribbon cutting

Finnlines used the brief span of time after arrival in Sweden on Tuesday morning to host an official inauguration of the Malmö-Świnoujście ferry service. Jesper Axelsson, Captain of *Finnfellow*, kicked off the meeting by presenting the ferry’s particulars. Next was Tom Pippingsköld, President and CEO of Finnlines, who underlined, “First of all, I would like to thank everyone who came to celebrate with us. With our new direct connection to Poland, we have opened up for new opportunities in trade and tourism. We are proud to secure an important trade route between Malmö and West Pomerania in Poland and, at the same time, contribute to a pleasant travel environment for both business and leisure travellers.” Katrin Stjernfeldt Jammeh, Mayor of the Malmö Municipality, topped things off by saying, “Malmö is Sweden’s bridge to the rest of the world. With Finnlines’ new maritime connection across the Baltic Sea to Poland, our city’s position is further strengthened.”

Once the speeches were over, the trio cut the Swedish-Polish ribbons. After that, there was still time to chat, including with Antonio Raimo, Finnlines’ Line Manager, and Marco Palmu, the shipping line’s Head of Passenger



Photo: Finnlines



Photo: Canva

Services. Others also offered their comments on the new service. Katarzyna Buława, CEO of Euro Terminal, said, “The new connection is a response to market demand. The inauguration of the new route will strengthen the position of the Świnoujście Port as the main gateway connecting Poland and Sweden. We strongly believe that the new service will enable optimisation of transport and provide added benefits for business and travellers alike. We are pleased to move this service forward together with Finnlines and look forward to further development.” Barbara Scheel Agersnap, CEO, Copenhagen Malmö Port, also stressed, “Finnlines is a long-standing and very important partner to the port, and we are pleased that the cooperation has

now been deepened. With the new route between Malmö and Świnoujście, a large and growing market is opened up, which also creates opportunities for other activities in the port area and for the development of intermodal transport in the port.”

When everybody else left, we stayed to discover other nooks and crannies of *Finnfellow*. Thanks to buddying up with the crew, we had the chance to enter the captain’s bridge just as the ferry approached the Øresund/Øresund Bridge (we could also go outside and admire the view from the spectacularly windy uppermost deck). Back inside, we got to know the ship’s firefighting system, including the anti-fire grenades (but with no demonstration, of course). After that, it was sauna time! ■