

Welcome to Norway

Norway is a once-in-a-lifetime destination and the essence of its appeal is remarkably simple: this is one of the most beautiful countries on earth.

Scandinavian Sophistication

The counterpoint to Norway's natural beauty is found in its cultural life. Norwegian cities are cosmopolitan and showcase the Scandinavian flair for design. Bergen, Trondheim and Ålesund surely rank among Europe's loveliest cities, while contemporary Arctic-inspired architectural icons grace cities and remote rural settings alike. Food, too, is a cultural passion through which Norwegians push the boundaries even as they draw deeply on a heartfelt love of tradition. At the same time, a busy calendar of festivals is worth planning your trip around.

Stirring Landscapes

Steep-sided Norwegian fjords of extraordinary beauty cut gashes from a jagged coastline deep into the interior. Glaciers snake down from icefields that rank among Europe's largest. Elsewhere, the mountainous terrain of Norway's interior resembles the ramparts of so many natural fortresses, and yields to rocky coastal islands that rise improbably from the waters like apparitions. Then, of course, there's the primeval appeal, the spare and staggering beauty of the Arctic. And wherever you find yourself in this extraordinary country, these landscapes serve as a backdrop for some of Europe's prettiest villages.

The Call to Action

Enjoying nature in Norway is an active pursuit, and this is one of Europe's most exciting and varied adventure-tourism destinations. Some activities may be for the energetic and fearless, but most – hiking, cycling and rafting in summer; dog-sledding, skiing and snowmobiling in winter – can be enjoyed by anyone of reasonable fitness. On our travels we've encountered 93-year-old snowmobilers and whole families racing down rapids. Whether you're here for endless summer possibilities, or in winter for the northern lights, these activities are an exhilarating means of getting close to nature.

Wonderful Wildlife

When it comes to wildlife, Norway has few peers in Europe. Here you can watch whales – humpback, sperm and orca, depending on the season – off Andenes, Stø or Tromsø, while the interior offers wild reindeer atop Hardangervidda and elsewhere, prehistoric musk oxen, ponderous elk (moose) or beguiling Arctic foxes. Birdwatching, too, is a highlight, from the puffins of Bleik to the migratory seabirds of Runde and Varanger. But the real prizes inhabit Norway's High Arctic, in Svalbard, where polar bears and walrus are the poster species for a wilderness of rare and dramatic beauty.



Why I Love Norway

By Anthony Ham, Writer

The first time I stood on the waterfront at Aurland and contemplated the fjords, not long after having passed among the peaks of Jotunheimen National Park, I was utterly convinced that there was no more beautiful country anywhere on earth. On my many Norwegian journeys since then, in winter and in summer, I've never lost that feeling. Even more than the fjords and the high country, I now find myself drawn to the gravitas of Svalbard, to the perfect juxtaposition of water, rock and human habitation in the Lofoten Islands, and to the far horizons and Sami encampments of Norway's Arctic North.

For more about our writers, see p448.



Bergen & the Southwestern Fjords

Includes ➔

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- ➔ Colonialen Restaurant (p164)
- ➔ Renaa Matbaren (p201)
- ➔ Egget (p202)
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Best Places to Stay

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- ➔ Utne Hotel (p190)
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Why Go?

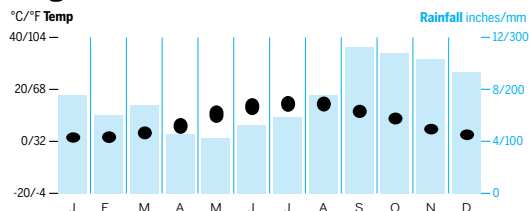
If we could visit only one region of Norway and hope to grasp the essence of the country's appeal, this would be our choice.

Cool, cultured Bergen is one of the world's most beautiful cities, with its streets of whitewashed timber cottages climbing steep hillsides from busy Vågen Harbour. It's a destination in itself, but also the ideal starting point for a journey into splendid Hardangerfjord, with its gorgeous fjord-side villages, or the vast Sognefjorden network. En route to the latter, Voss is Norway's destination of choice for thrill-seekers.

Down south, boom-town Stavanger is a diverting staging post for Lysefjord, home to two of Norway's most recognisable images, impossibly high above the ice-blue waters of the fjord: Preikestolen (Pulpit Rock) and Kjeragbolten.

When to Go

Bergen



Jun Bergen International Festival and Voss' Veko for extreme sports and music.

May Hardangerfjord's fruit farms spring into a riot of blossom.

Aug & Sep Perfect for hiking to Pulpit Rock or Trolltunga.

Bergen & the South-western Fjords Highlights

1 Bergen (p154)

Soaking up the Hanseatic heritage of Norway's most beautiful harbour.

2 Preikestolen

(p204) Trekking up to the edge of the dizzying, sky-topping cliff.

3 Lysefjord

(p205) Taking a leisurely cruise along the course of this stunning wateryway.

4 Folgefonna

(p192) Crossing the ice – carefully – on a guided glacier walk.

5 Hardangerfjord

(p175) Driving through the orchards and farms of this peaceful fjord.

6 Trolltunga

(p190) Dangling your feet over the edge on this stomach-turning ledge.

7 Voss (p172)

Kayaking, skydiving or climbing in the area's centre for adrenaline-fuelled activities.

8 Kjeåsen Farm

(p178) Hiking up the mountain from Eidfjord to this remote, olde-worlde farm.

9 Stavanger

(p197) Enjoying the nightlife of Norway's high-rolling oil town.





Central Norway

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Best Places to Stay

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- ➔ Brimi-Fjellstugu (p145)

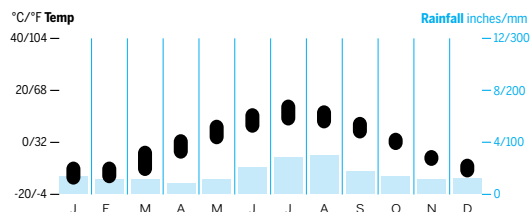
Why Go?

Bleak tundra and dramatic mountain massifs at seemingly every turn, charming villages, stave churches, fascinating wildlife and arguably Norway's best hiking and white-water rafting – with so much going for it, central Norway more than matches the fjords.

Here on the roof of Norway, trails snake their way past glaciers, waterfalls and snow-bound peaks in more than a dozen national parks. Jotunheimen National Park is one of Europe's premier hiking destinations, and is bisected by one of Norway's most beautiful drives. But Rondane, Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella and the desolately beautiful Hardangervidda are also superb. Within the parks' boundaries you may find wild reindeer, elk and musk ox. At the gateway to the parks, Unesco World Heritage-listed Røros, a centuries-old mining town of timber houses and turf-roofed cottages, and Lom, with its beautiful stave church, are two of inland Norway's most attractive villages.

When to Go

Røros



Feb Catch the Rørosmartnan (Røros Market) and skiing at Trysil. Be prepared to be very cold.

May & Jun Generally fine weather without the crowds of midsummer.

Jul & Aug Hiking trails are passable, rafting is in full swing and wildlife safaris are possible.

EASTERN CENTRAL NORWAY

Lillehammer

POP 27,476

Long a popular Norwegian ski resort, Lillehammer became known to the world after hosting the 1994 Winter Olympics. These Olympics, overwhelmingly considered a great success, still provide the town with some of its most interesting sights. Lying at the northern end of the lake Mjøsa and surrounded by farms, forests and small settlements, it's a laid-back place with year-round attractions, although in winter it becomes a ski town *par excellence*.

Sights

★ Olympic Park

AREA, MUSEUM

(Map p126; ☎ 61 05 42 00; www.olympiaparken.no; Nordsetervegen 45) After Lillehammer won its bid for the 1994 Winter Olympics, the Norwegian government ploughed over two billion kroner into the town's infrastructure. In an example to other Olympic host cities, most amenities remain in use and visitors can tour the main Olympic sites over a large area called the Olympiaparken.

Lillehammer Art Museum

MUSEUM

(Lillehammer Kunstmuseum; Map p126; ☎ 61 05 44 60; www.lillehammerartmuseum.com; Stortorget 2; adult/child 100kr/free; ☎ 11am-5pm) Lillehammer's stunning metal-and-glass art museum looks like a spaceship that's landed in the middle of town. It explores Norwegian visual arts from the early 19th century to the present. There are a few minor works by Edvard Munch, but it's mostly devoted to less well-known names. There's a lovely cafe serving lunch.

Aulestad

MUSEUM

(☎ 61 22 41 10; www.aulestad.no; Aulestadvegen 6-14, Follebu; adult/child 130/65kr; ☎ 10am-5pm late May-Aug, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Sep) Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1903, lived on a farm at Aulestad, 18km northwest of Lillehammer. It has been lovingly restored and is stuffed to the rafters with antiques, furniture, books and busts reflecting the well-to-do life of the author and his wife Karoline. It's a way out of town, so you'll need your own vehicle to get here.

WORTH A TRIP

OLYMPIC SKI SLOPES

Lillehammer has two Olympic ski slopes: **Hafjell Alpine Centre** (☎ 61 27 47 00; www.hafjell.no), 15km north of town, hosted the downhill events, while **Kvitfjell Alpine Facility** (☎ 61 28 36 30; www.kvitfjell.no), 50km north of town, was used for cross-country. Both offer public skiing between late November and late April and they're connected by bus with Lillehammer Skysstasjon.

Norwegian Olympic Museum

MUSEUM

(Map p126; www.ol.museum.no; Olympiaparken; adult/child 130/65kr; ☎ 10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-May) The excellent Olympic museum is at the Håkons Hall ice-hockey venue. On the ground floor there is a well-presented display covering the ancient Olympic Games, as well as all of the Olympic Games of the modern era, with a focus on the exploits of Norwegian athletes and the Lillehammer games.

Maihaugen Folk Museum

MUSEUM

(Map p126; www.maihaugen.no; Maihaugveien 1; adult/child/family Jun-Aug 170/85/425kr, Sep-May 130/65/325kr; ☎ 10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-May) Step back into the past at this surprisingly fascinating folk museum, which collects together around 180 buildings from other parts of Norway, mostly from the early 1900s. They've been rebuilt to resemble a small inland village: among the buildings on show are a stave church from Garmo, traditional turf-topped houses and shops, a post office, a schoolroom, fishing cabins and farmers' barns. Costumed actors help bring the experience to life.

Bjerkebak

MUSEUM

(Map p126; ☎ 61 28 89 00; www.bjerkebak.no; Sigrid Undsets veg 1; adult/child/family 110/55/275kr; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-May-Aug, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun Sep) Bjerkebak celebrates the life of Sigrid Undset, one of Norway's most notable authors who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1928. Her home has been restored with memorabilia from her life.

Combination tickets with Lillehammer's other museums are available.



Nordland

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- ➔ Fiskekrogen (p296)
- ➔ Børsen (p293)
- ➔ Anitas Sjømat (p302)
- ➔ Krambua (p302)
- ➔ Umami (p311)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Svinøya Rorbuer (p293)
- ➔ Henningsvær Bryggehøtel (p295)
- ➔ Lofoten Suite Hotel (p292)
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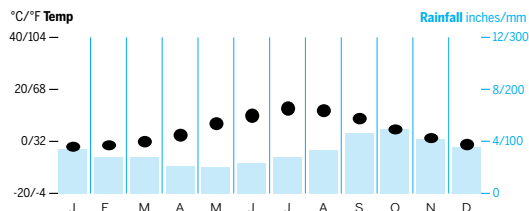
Why Go?

For those with a love of all things Arctic, this is where Norway really starts to get interesting. Heading northwards through long, slim Nordland, lush fields give way to lakes and forests, vistas open up, summits sharpen and the treeline descends ever lower on the mountainsides. Above the imaginary curve of the Arctic Circle, travellers get their first taste of the midnight sun in summer, while in winter, the northern lights dance across the night sky.

Linger along the spectacular Kystriksveien Coastal Route. Or travel the inland Arctic Highway: more direct, yet almost as lovely. And then there's Lofoten, where razor-sharp peaks stab at the sky and timeless fishing villages survive. Connected by bridges, the islands are easy to hop around, cycling is possible and hiking is as gentle or as tough as you care to make it.

When to Go

Bodo



Late Mar Take in Lofoten and then Svolvær's World Cod Fishing Championship.

Late May–mid-July Midnight sun on Lofoten and elsewhere and good weather for activities.

Nov–Jan Long nights and good chances to see the northern lights.

Nordland Highlights

1 Kystriksveien

Coastal Route

(p283) Driving along one of the most beautiful coastlines in the world from Sandnessjøen to Storvik.

2 Lofoten ferry

(p294) Taking the ferry from Skutvik to Svolvær, one of the world's great ferry journeys.

3 Nusfjord

(p300) Returning to the postcard-perfect fishing past of Lofoten in this lovely village.

4 Vega

(p281) Experiencing the eider-duck economy and leaving the clamour of the modern world behind in Unesco-recognised Vega.

5 Å

(p300) Lingering in the tiny, preserved fishing village that lies in Lofoten's deep south.

6 Nyksund

(p305) Discovering the blissful isolation of this reborn village, then hiking the coastal Queen's Route to Stø in Vesterålen.

7 Andenes

(p306) Taking to the seas to look for whales and puffins then driving west-coast Andøya.

8 Saltfjell-Svartisen National Park

(p275) Getting cold feet on one of the glaciers in this spectacular park.





Oslo

POP 666,760

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

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- ➔ Bass (p73)
- ➔ Maaemo (p70)
- ➔ Pjøltergeist (p73)
- ➔ Sentralen Restaurant (p68)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Ellingsens Pensjonat (p67)
- ➔ The Thief (p66)
- ➔ PS: Hotell (p67)
- ➔ Hotel Grand Central (p66)
- ➔ Lysebu Hotel (p68)

Why Go?

Surrounded by mountains and the sea, this compact, cultured, caring and fun city is Europe's fastest-growing capital, with a palpable sense of reinvention. Oslo is also home to world-class museums and galleries to rival anywhere else on the European art trail.

But even here Mother Nature has managed to make her mark, and Oslo is fringed with forests, hills and lakes awash with opportunities for hiking, cycling, skiing and boating. Add to this mix a thriving cafe and bar culture, top-notch restaurants, nightlife options ranging from opera to indie rock, and a large and visible immigrant community who add their own colourful touch to the city, and the result is a thoroughly intoxicating place in which to forget about the fjords for a while.

When to Go

Oslo

°C/°F Temp

40/104 —

20/68 —

0/32 —

-20/-4 —

Rainfall inches/mm

— 12/300

— 8/200

— 4/100

— 0

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Apr–May Spring flowers fill the parks, and National Day brings crowds.

June The days are long and there's a packed cultural calendar.

Dec The first snow falls and Christmas markets and concerts bring seasonal magic.



Oslo Highlights

- 1 Oslo Opera House** (p47) Dreaming of operatic perfection while admiring Oslo Opera House.
- 2 Astrup Fearnley Museet** (p47) Checking out the arresting artwork at this daring contemporary art museum.
- 3 Tim Wendelboe** (p78) Going to the source of Norway's coffee obsession.
- 4 Vikingskipshuset** (p55) Returning to the glorious Viking age at this remarkably intact longship museum.
- 5 Blå** (p81) Getting to the heart of Oslo's pulsating nightlife.
- 6 Nasjonalgalleriet** (p51) Screaming with delight at *The Scream* by Edvard Munch.
- 7 Ekebergparken** (p59) Wandering through forested parkland with contemporary sculptures at every turn.



Southern Norway

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Bønder i Byen (p107)
- ➔ Blom Restaurant (p101)
- ➔ Tollboden (p99)
- ➔ Kafe Strandhaven (p103)
- ➔ Sanden (p97)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Grand Hotell (p111)
- ➔ Farris Bad (p97)
- ➔ Lillesand Hotel Norge (p103)
- ➔ Grand Hotell (p110)
- ➔ Clarion Tyholmen Hotel (p101)

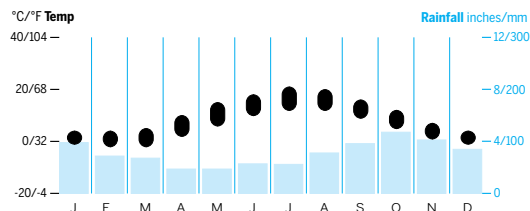
Why Go?

Come summer, the southern coastline draws Norwegian holidaymakers in droves. With a string of pristine coastal villages of whitewashed timber beside complex networks of bays and *skerries* (rocky islets) and a shimmering sea, it's not difficult to see why. For travellers, the 'Norwegian Riviera' offers a chance to experience a totally different destination from that of the fjords and high plateaus of the tourist brochures, one that is at once cosmopolitan and essentially Norwegian.

Venture inland and the scenery turns ever more dramatic. Deep in the region's interior is Rjukan, gateway to some of Norway's most scenic high country – the Hardangervidda National Park and the spectacularly formed mountain of Gausta. Elsewhere, scattered among a landscape smothered in forest and decorated in dark lakes filled with beavers, you'll discover idyllic, remote villages, wooden stave churches and a rich traditional culture.

When to Go

Kristiansand



Feb–Mar Prime season for ice-climbing, skiing and dog-sledding in Rjukan.

Jul For south-coast beach towns at their most lively.

Aug–Sep Inland trails beckon as the autumn colours begin to appear.

THE COAST

You may have not come to Norway for the beaches, but plenty of Norwegians are drawn to the south coast by the lure of a paddle and a punt around its picturesque islands and *skerries*. The towns along the coast are almost all gorgeous, with town centres and harbourfront areas of whitewashed wooden cottages, and cafes, bars and restaurants all geared to seasonal holidaymakers. That it's appealing is never in doubt, and it's a wonderful way to experience Norwegian life at an even more gentle and relaxed pace than usual.

Tønsberg

POP 41,485

Tønsberg is the oldest town in Norway, although so distant are its origins that few interesting remnants remain. There are nonetheless a few Viking-era ruins and a decrepit castle that make the town worth a historical detour as you head along the coast.

Sights

Tønsberg Castle

FORTRESS

(Castrum Tunsbergis; Map p88; ☉ tower noon-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) **FREE**

Tønsberg Castle, spread across the hill behind the town, was the largest fortress in Norway in the 13th century. In 1503 the Swedes destroyed what they could, but nonetheless, the modern (1888), 17m-high **Slottsfjellstårnet tower** provides a good viewpoint over the ruins. Parts of the 600m-long outer wall remain intact, while the extant medieval stone foundations include **King Magnus Lagabøte's keep**, the 1191 **Church of St Michael**, the **hall of King Håkon Håkonsson** and various **guard towers**. The park is always open.

Vestfold County Museum

MUSEUM

(Vestfold Fylkesmuseum; Map p88; www.slottsfjells-museet.no; Farmannsveien 30; adult/child 100/50kr, Tue free; ☉ 11am-4pm mid-May-mid-Sep, shorter hours rest of year) At the foot of **Slottsfjellet** (Castle Rock) at the northern end of town, a five-minute walk northwest of the train station, this museum's highlights include displays on the excavation of the impressive **Oseberg** Viking ship (now shown in Oslo's Vikingskipshuset (p55)), a collection of historic period-furnished farm buildings, and a section on Tønsberg's whaling history.

Sleeping & Eating

Tønsberg Hostel

HOSTEL \$

(Map p88; ☎ 33 31 21 75; tonsberg@hihostels.no; Dronning Blancagata 22; dm 350kr, s/d with shared bathroom 750/850kr, d/q 895/1600kr; ☐ ☉) This exceptionally well run and friendly hostel is well equipped, clean and tidy, and just a five-minute walk from the train station. The common areas would be the envy of many a fancy hotel. A good breakfast is served. The reception area is shut between noon and 3pm.

Thon Hotel Brygga

BUSINESS HOTEL \$\$

(Map p88; ☎ 33 34 49 00; www.thonhotels.no; Nedre Langgate 40; d 1215kr; ☉ ☉) Inside a traditional wooden warehouse, this modern waterfront hotel has pleasant, if smallish, rooms and great breakfasts; it's popular with car-tripping families.

Roar I Bua

SEAFOOD \$\$

(www.roaribua.com; Nedre Langgate 42; sandwiches 80-99kr, mains 150-199kr; ☉ 10am-10pm) This cute wooden shack is half-fishmonger and half-seafood cafe. However you choose to class it, the well-priced fish is so fresh it might well flop off your plate and back into the sea. If you're looking for picnic provisions, grab a slab of its smoked salmon to take away.

Restaurant Havariet

INTERNATIONAL \$\$

(Map p88; ☎ 33 35 83 90; www.havariet.no; Nedre Langgate 30e; mains 110-325kr; ☉ 11am-2am) Arguably the most popular option along the waterfront, this place offers solid pub grub in a warm and inviting interior. It has good-value lunch deals and plenty of marine life on the menu, including some tasty, if sometimes over-burdened, salads.

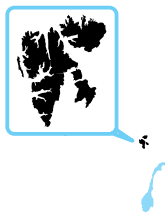
Information

Tourist Office (Map p88; ☎ 480 63 333; www.visittonsberg.com; Storgaten 38; ☉ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat mid-Jun-early Aug, 9am-2pm Mon-Fri rest of year) Just off the main square.

Getting There & Around

The **Tønsberg Rutebilstasjon** (Map p88; ☎ 33 30 01 00; Jernbanegaten) is a block south of the train station. Nor-Way Bussekspress (p420) buses run to/from Kristiansand (437kr, 4½ hours, one to two daily) via most coastal towns en route, including Larvik (142kr, one hour, two daily). Nettbuss (p424) runs to Oslo (210kr, 1½ hours).

Intercity trains run hourly between Tønsberg and Oslo (237kr, 1½ hours) or south to Larvik (112kr, 34 minutes).



Svalbard

POP 2573

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Huset (p357)
- ➔ Fruene Kaffe og Vinbar (p357)
- ➔ Coal Miners' Bar & Grill (p357)
- ➔ Gruvelageret (p358)
- ➔ Kroa (p358)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Basecamp Spitsbergen (p356)
- ➔ Svalbard Hotell & Lodge (p356)
- ➔ Coal Miners' Cabins (p356)
- ➔ Radisson Blu Polar Hotel (p357)

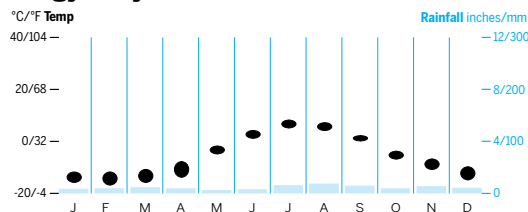
Why Go?

Svalbard is the Arctic North as you always dreamed it existed. This wondrous archipelago is a land of dramatic snow-drowned peaks and glaciers, of vast icefields and forbidding icebergs, an elemental place where the seemingly endless Arctic night and the perpetual sunlight of summer carry a deeper kind of magic. One of Europe's last great wildernesses, this is also the domain of more polar bears than people, a terrain rich in epic legends of polar exploration.

Svalbard's main settlement and entry point, scruffy Longyearbyen, is merely a taste of what lies beyond and the possibilities for exploring further are many: boat trips, glacier hikes, and expeditions by snowmobile or led by a team of huskies. Whichever you choose, coming here is like crossing some remote frontier of the mind: Svalbard is as close as most mortals can get to the North Pole and still capture its spirit.

When to Go

Longyearbyen



Dec–Feb Deep immersion in the polar night and a winter jazz festival.

Feb–Apr The light returns with week-long festivities; from late February there's a blue tinge to the light.

Jun–Aug Days without end and an array of activities in the summer light.



Svalbard Highlights

- 1 Hiking** (p354) Walking onto Longyearbreen glacier.
- 2 Dog-sledding** (p355) Experiencing the polar silence like explorers of old.
- 3 Walrus safaris** (p354) Taking a summer day trip to see walruses on Prins Karls Forlandet.
- 4 Pyramiden** (p360) Travelling to this eerie abandoned Soviet outpost.
- 5 Ny Ålesund** (p362) Taking a day trip to this remote settlement.
- 6 Barentsburg** (p359) Drinking vodka in this intriguing Russian village.
- 7 Longyearbyen museums** (p352) Immersing yourself in Svalbard's history.
- 8 Boat expeditions** (p357) Circumnavigating Svalbard in search of polar bears.
- 9 Longyearbyen dining** (p357) Sampling Arctic cuisine at Gruvelageret, Coal Miners' Bar & Grill and Huset.



The Far North

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Gammen (p346)
- ➔ Gapahuken (p343)
- ➔ Restaurant Haldde (p327)
- ➔ Emma's Drømmekjøkken (p321)
- ➔ Senja Mat Studio (p324)

Best Places to Stay

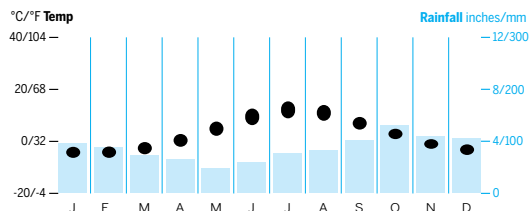
- ➔ Engholm Husky Design Lodge (p346)
- ➔ Scandic Ishavshotel (p320)
- ➔ Hamn i Senja (p325)
- ➔ Trasti i Trine (p327)
- ➔ Smarthotel Hammerfest (p330)

Why Go?

Norway's northernmost counties of Troms and Finnmark arc across the very top of Europe, where broad horizons share the land with dense forest. Although winter tourism is on the rise, most travellers come in summer to enjoy Tromsø, the region's only town of any size. The museums of this sparky, self-confident place will orient you for the Arctic lands beyond. You'll probably respond to the call of Nordkapp (North Cape), the European mainland's self-declared most northerly point. But to really feel the pull of the north, you need to venture further to explore the sparsely populated plateaus of Inner Finnmark and its wild northeastern coast, the Norwegian heartland of the Sami people. For alternative adventure (say, scudding aboard a snowmobile or behind a team of yapping huskies), plan to return in winter, when soft blue light envelops the snowy lands, outsiders are few and the northern lights streak the sky.

When to Go

Tromsø



Early Feb Lots of snowy activities and, with luck, the northern lights on tap.

Easter Week The Sami party in Kautokeino before dispersing to their summer pastures.

Mid- to late Jun Hotels and sights reopen, and the crowds have yet to come.

TROMS

Troms, where the Gulf Stream peters out, mitigating the harshness of winter, boasts a couple of near-superlative places: Tromsø, the only place large enough to merit the name 'city' in northern Norway, and Senja, Norway's second-largest island, a less trodden rival to the Lofotens for spectacular scenery. Deep in the interior, Øvre Dividal and Reisa national parks are wilderness gems.

Tromsø

POP 72,681

Located 400km north of the Arctic Circle at 69°N, the small town of Tromsø bills itself as Norway's gateway to the Arctic, and there's definitely more than a hint of polar atmosphere around town. Surrounded by chilly fjords and craggy peaks that remain snow-capped for much of the year, Tromsø sits on the eastern edge of Tromsøya, and is linked to the mainland by a gracefully arched bridge.

In previous centuries, the town was a centre for seal hunting, trapping and fishing, and was later a launch pad for several important Arctic expeditions, including some led by Roald Amundsen. These days it's best known as one of the better places in the north of the country to spot the northern lights.

It's also a notoriously lively city, with a large university, a happening cultural calendar and an animated nightlife (Tromsø prides itself on having more pubs per capita than any other Norwegian town).

👁️ Sights

Tromsø's northerly location means that it's subject to the polar night and the midnight sun. Due to the inclination of the earth, from the end of November to mid-January the sun never quite makes it above the horizon, while from mid-May to mid-July, the sun never quite sets.

Around town you'll find a number of interesting churches. **Domkirke** (Map p318; www.kirken.tromso.no; Storgata; ☀️ 1-3pm Mon-Fri Jun & Jul, 1-4pm Mon-Fri Aug, 1-5pm Mon-Fri rest of the year) **FREE** is one of Norway's largest wooden churches. Up the hill is the town's **Tromsø Catholic Church** (Map p318; Storgata 94; ☀️ 9am-7.30pm) **FREE**. Both were built in 1861 and each lays claim to be 'the world's northernmost bishopric' of its sect.

You'll find more early-19th-century timber buildings around the town centre, including a stretch of 1830s shops and merchants' homes along Sjøgata.

★ Arctic Cathedral

CHURCH

(Ishavskatedralen; ☎️ 476 80 668; Hans Nilsens veg 41; adult/child 50kr/free, organ recitals 70-170kr; ☀️ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 1-7pm Sun Jun-mid-Aug, 3-6pm mid-Aug-mid-May, opens at 2pm Feb) The 11 triangles of the Arctic Cathedral (1965), aka Tromsdalen Church, suggest glacial crevasses and auroral curtains. The glowing stained-glass window that occupies the east end depicts Christ descending to earth. The west end is filled by a futuristic organ and icicle-like lamps of Czech crystal. Unfortunately, its position beside one of Tromsø's main thoroughfares somewhat spoils the serenity outside. It's on the southern side of the Bruveien bridge, about 1km from town. Take bus 20 or 24.

★ Fjellheisen

CABLE CAR

(☎️ 77 63 87 37; www.fjellheisen.no; Solliveien 12; adult/child 170/60kr; ☀️ 10am-1am late May-mid-Aug, shorter hours rest of the year) For a fine view of the city and the midnight sun, take the cable car to the top of Mt Storsteinen (421m). There's a restaurant at the top, from where a network of hiking routes radiates. Take bus 26 to get here.

★ Mack Brewery

BREWERY

(Mack Ølbryggeri; Map p318; ☎️ 77 62 45 80; www.mack.no; Storgata 5) This venerable institution merits a pilgrimage. Established in 1877, it produces 18 kinds of beer, including the very quaffable Macks Pilsner, Isbjørn, Haakon and several dark beers. At 3.30pm Monday to Friday year-round (plus 2pm June to August) tours (170kr, including two tastings) leave from the brewery's own Øllhallen Pub (p321). It's wise to reserve in advance.

★ Polar Museum

MUSEUM

(Polarmuseet; Map p318; ☎️ 77 62 33 60; www.uit.no/tmu/polarmuseet; Søndre Tollbodgate 11; adult/child 60/30kr; ☀️ 9am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-5pm rest of the year) Fittingly for a town that was the launch pad for many pioneering expeditions to the Pole, Tromsø's fascinating Polar Museum is a rollicking romp through life in the Arctic, taking in everything from the history of trapping to the groundbreaking expeditions of Nansen and Amundsen. There are some fascinating artefacts and black-and-white archive photos; the stuffed



Trøndelag

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Baklandet Skydsstasjon (p262)
- ➔ Restaurant Norge (p269)
- ➔ Ravnkloa Fish Market (p261)
- ➔ Brod & Cirkus (p267)
- ➔ Vertshuset Tavern (p262)

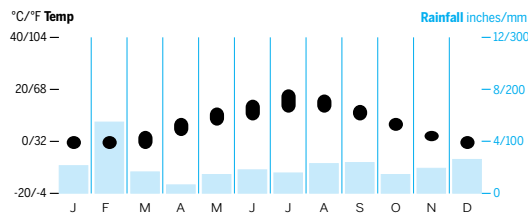
Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Scandic Nidelven Hotel (p261)
- ➔ Radisson Blu Royal Garden Hotel (p261)
- ➔ Pensjonat Jarlen (p260)
- ➔ Scandic Stiklestad Hotell (p266)
- ➔ Scandic Rock City (p268)

Why Go?

Trøndelag, where Norway begins to narrow and head for the Arctic, may be small but it sure packs a lot in. Trondheim is the centrepiece, a beguiling city brimful of historic architecture, including Nidaros Cathedral, Scandinavia's largest medieval structure. But Trondheim's present is as appealing as its past, with buzzing student life and pretty waterfront restaurants and bars. Not far away to the north-east, and an easy detour from the Arctic Highway, atmospheric Stiklestad is famous as the site of the martyrdom of King Olav (St Olav) and lies at the heart of every Norwegian's sense of national identity. Elsewhere, Trøndelag is quintessential Norway, a region of rumpled hills, stippled with oxblood-coloured farmsteads and ruffled green with wheat and barley. Here, there's always water near at hand, whether sea, lake or incised fjord with fascinating coastal settlements worth lingering over.

When to Go Trondheim



Mid-late Jun
Winter has retreated, and visitors are relatively few.

Late Jul
Festivities in honour of St Olav in Trondheim and Stiklestad.

Sep Trondheim has a fresh buzz as its student population returns.

TRONDHEIM

POP 190,464

With its colourful warehouses, waterways and wooded hills, Trondheim is without doubt one of Norway's most photogenic towns. Norway's third-largest city and its historic capital is a pleasure to explore, with wide streets and a partly pedestrianised

heart, some great cafes, restaurants and museums to visit – plus Europe's northernmost Gothic cathedral. Fishing boats putter around the harbour, gulls wheel and screech overhead, and beyond the city's outskirts there's a wealth of wilderness to explore.



Trøndelag Highlights

1 Nidaros Cathedral (p255) Exploring Norway's most sacred building and one of its most handsome.

2 Stiklestad (p265) Stepping back to the dawning of Norway at the place where St Olav was martyred.

3 Baklandet Skysstasjon (p262) Crossing Trondheim's

Gamle Bybro to eat at this marvellous eatery, then down to Solsiden for a drink.

4 Bymarka (p260) Hiking in the wilderness right in Trondheim's backyard.

5 Norveg (p269) Learning about coastal life at this stunning multimedia museum in Rørvik.

6 Leka (p269) Leaving behind well-travelled byways and heading offshore to this beautiful island with an intriguing story.

7 Hell (p265) Snapping a selfie at the 'Welcome to Hell' sign, which will win gasps back home.



The Western Fjords

Includes ➔

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Maki (p245)
- ➔ Restaurant Arven (p212)
- ➔ Knutholmen (p232)
- ➔ Sødahl-Huset (p236)
- ➔ Ciderhuset (p220)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Juvet Landscape Hotel (p237)
- ➔ Hotel Aak (p236)
- ➔ Villa Norangdal (p241)
- ➔ Hotel Brosundet (p245)
- ➔ Walaker Hotell (p217)
- ➔ Sveggvika (p249)

Why Go?

Scoured and gouged by glaciers, ancient and modern, Western Norway's deep, sea-drowned valleys are covered by steep, rugged terrain. It's a landscape that is so utterly unique and so profoundly beautiful that it is one of the most desirable destinations in the world.

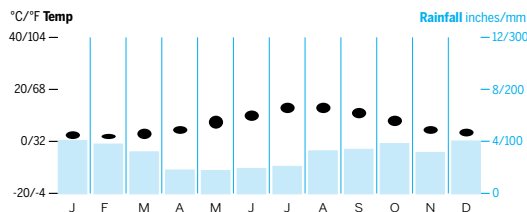
Although overshadowed by the sublime fjords, the coastline is nonetheless extraordinary, blasted by an often ferocious ocean and backed by deep green mountain peaks.

Ferries are a way of life in the west. These reliable workhorses make navigating the insane geography possible, but are also an enjoyable part of your journey as they offer staggering, otherwise inaccessible, panoramas.

This is great hiking country, whether wild walking, following one of the many signed trails or lumbering along in a guided glacier-walking group. And if, after so much fresh air, you crave some small-town sophistication, the bijou art-nouveau settlement of Ålesund has that in spades.

When to Go

Ålesund



Early Jul Norsk Fjellfestival, a folk and outdoor celebration, takes place in stunning Åndalsnes.

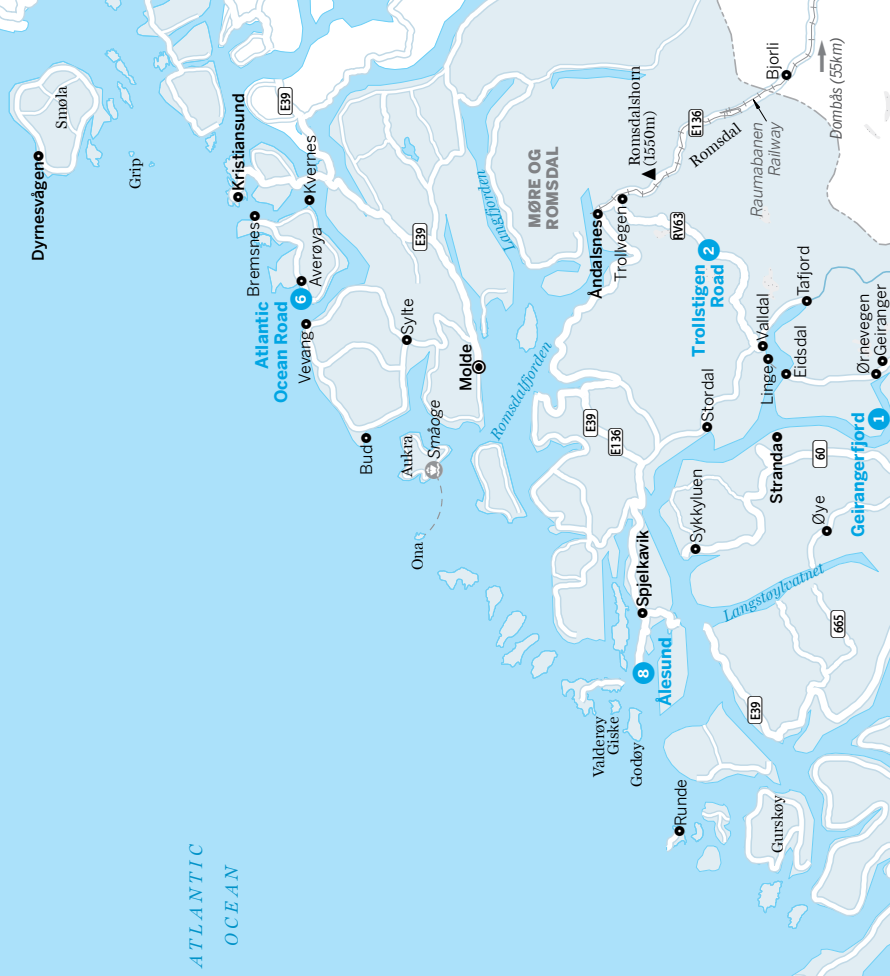
Mid-Jul Molde parties all week long during Moldejazz.

Late Aug Savour Ålesund's seafood haul during the town's Norwegian Food Festival.

The Western Fjords Highlights

- 1 Geirangerfjord** (p238) Taking a cruise along Norway's most famous – and frequented – fjord.
- 2 Trollstigen Road** (p235) Braving the hairpin turns and dizzying drops on this roller-coaster road.
- 3 Nigardsbreen** (p225) Kayaking on a glacial lake and crunching across the ancient ice.
- 4 Loen Skylift** (p227) Zipping up the mountains for an epic fjord view.
- 5 Flåmsbana Railway** (p211) Enjoying the journey on Norway's most scenery-packed railway.
- 6 Atlantic Ocean Road** (p250) Crossing the many

ATLANTIC
OCEAN



Understand Norway

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More comfortable perhaps than any other people on earth, Norwegians are looking afresh at what it means to be Norwegian.

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LANDSCAPES & NATIONAL PARKS 378

From high mountains to the high Arctic, Norway's landscapes are breathtaking in their diversity and cinematic scope.

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Norway is home to one of the richest and most diverse collections of species in Europe.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES 391

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Learn why Norway punches above its weight in the arts world, and discover the secrets of stave churches and beyond.

NORWEGIAN CUISINE.....404

Everything you need to know about one of Europe's least-known cuisines.

Norway Today

Few countries can look to the future with quite the same confidence as Norway – economic crises are, after all, something that other countries have. Norway is nonetheless facing some important issues that threaten to cause, if not a crisis, then at the very least some ripples of disquiet among Norwegians. Will the oil ever run out? Can we be good environmental citizens? Should we spend more of the oil bounty on the present? And how do we build a harmonious multicultural future?

Best in Print

The Thirst (Jo Nesbø; 2017) The latest instalment of the Harry Hole crime fiction series that Norway can't get enough of.

The Almost Nearly Perfect People (Michael Booth; 2014) Entertaining look at modern Scandinavia.

A Death in the Family (Karl Ove Knausgaard; 2013) Publishing phenomenon and window on the Norwegian soul.

The Ice Museum (Joanna Kavenna; 2006) Captures our fascination with the Arctic North.

Hunger (Knut Hamsun; 1890) An early masterpiece by Norway's finest (if most controversial) writer.

Best on Film

The King's Choice (2016) Fine modern recounting of Norway's struggle to remain neutral during WWII.

Bølgen (The Wave; 2015) Thriller depicting a mountain collapse that triggers a Geiranger tsunami.

North of the Sun (2013) Documentary depicting nine months on a remote stretch of Arctic coast.

Nine Lives (1957) Widely ranked among the best Norwegian films of all time.

Kon-Tiki (1951) Thor Heyerdahl's Oscar-winning documentary and an evocation of Norway's adventurous spirit.

A Multicultural Norway?

Norway's response to the right-wing terrorist attack in 2011 has been extraordinary – in short, the country has responded to intolerance with its antithesis, tolerance. But the fact remains that many Norwegians continue to feel uneasy about what has happened in their once homogenous nation. In less than a generation, Norwegians have gone from being a nation where the overwhelming majority of citizens were white, Lutheran and ethnic Norwegians to a society where nearly one in six Norwegians come from somewhere else. While most have adjusted to the change with that customary Norwegian aplomb and equanimity, the rise in popularity of the Fremskrittspartiet – which is supported by around one in five Norwegians – suggests that a significant proportion of Norwegians find the transformation unsettling. How the country's politicians respond will go a long way towards determining Norway's social future.

Environmental Incongruity

Norway is rightfully proud of its care for the environment. One hundred percent of the country's electricity comes from renewable sources, recycling is near universal and the country is well along the road towards a carbon-neutral future. By 2025 the government hopes that all cars sold in Norway will be electric. Its policies are a model for the rest of the world. And yet, the picture isn't as simple as that. For a start, the average Norwegian produces the same amount of carbon dioxide emissions as most other Western, developed countries. Just as importantly, as one of the world's largest oil producers and exporters, Norway makes a contribution to global carbon dioxide emissions far out of proportion to its size. The result is that Norway's claims to being a responsible global environmental citizen boil down to