



≡ *Fast Talk*

Norwegian

Guaranteed to get you talking

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Before You Go

Many visitors to Norway get around without speaking a word of Norwegian, but just a few phrases go a long way in making friends, inviting service with a smile, and ensuring a rich and rewarding travel experience.

Norway has two official written language forms. They are very similar, and every Norwegian learns both at school. Bokmål (BM), literally ‘book-language’, is the urban-Norwegian variety of Danish, the language of the former rulers of Norway. It’s the written language of 80 percent of the population. Although many Norwegians speak a local dialect in the private sphere, most of them speak BM in the public sphere. BM is therefore very appropriate for the traveller who wants to communicate with Norwegians all over the country.

The other written language is Nynorsk (NN), or ‘New Norwegian’ – as opposed to

Old Norwegian, the language in Norway before 1500 AD, that is, before Danish rule. It’s an important part of Norwegian cultural heritage as it is the truly ‘Norwegian’ language, as opposed to the Danish-based BM.

In speech the distinction between BM and NN is no problem since Norwegians understand either. Many people are put off trying to speak Norwegian because of the two languages, but in reality, BM is the ruling language. This book uses BM only.

In the rural areas you may come across people who hardly speak a word of English, and if you show

an effort to speak Norwegian, it will help a great deal to establish contact. Many Norwegians will answer you in English, as they are only too eager to show off their knowledge. Their use of English is usually very good.

If you read our coloured pronunciation guides as if they were English, you'll be understood.

PRONUNCIATION TIPS

★ Nearly all vowels in Norwegian have short and long versions. This can affect the meaning, so look at the word carefully.

★ Length, as a distinctive feature of vowels, is very important in the pronunciation of Norwegian. Almost every vowel has a (very) long and a (very) short counterpart, when appearing in a stressed syllable. Generally, it's long when followed by one consonant, and short when followed by two or more consonants.

Fast Talk Norwegian

Don't worry if you've never learnt Norwegian before – it's all about confidence. You don't need to memorise endless grammatical details or long lists of vocabulary – you just need to start speaking. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain when the locals hear you making an effort. And remember that body language and a sense of humour have a role to play in every culture.

“you just need to start speaking”

Even if you use the very basics, such as greetings and civilities, your travel experience will be the better for it. Once you start, you'll be amazed how many prompts you'll get to help you build on those first words. You'll hear people speaking, pick up sounds and expressions from the locals, catch a word or two that you know from TV already, see something on a billboard – all these things help to build your understanding.



Phrases to Learn Before You Go

1. How do you say ... ? Hvordan sier du?

voorr-dahn see-ehrr doo?

Making an effort to speak the language is always appreciated and Norwegians are usually happy to help.

2. What would you recommend? Hva anbefaler du?

vah ahn-beh-fah-lehrr doo?

When in doubt, ask a local for advice.

3. One coffee (with milk), please En kaffe (med melk), takk.

ehn kah-feh (may mehlk), takh

If Norway has a national drink, it's coffee. Most Norwegians drink it black and strong, but foreigners requiring milk and/or sugar are normally indulged.

4. Where are the toilets? Hvor er toalettene?

voorr aar too-ah-leh-teh-neh?

This phrase is an oldie but a goodie.

5. Shall I take my shoes off? Skal jeg ta av skoene mine?

Skahl yai ta ahv skoo-eh-neh mee-neh?

Norwegians usually take their shoes off when entering someone's home, particularly when the weather is wintry.

10. *Phrases to Sound Like a Local*

Hey! **Hei!** hai

Great! **Supert!** soo-parrt

Sure. **Ok** oo-koh/oh-kai

No way! **Er det sant?** ehrr day sahnt

Just joking! **Bare tuller.** bah-rreh tü-lehrr

No problem. **Ingen problem.** ing-ehn proo-blehm

Well done! **Bra jobba!** brrah jo-bah

What a shame. **Det var synd.** day vahrr sün

Not bad. **Ikke så verst.** i-keh soh varsht

Maybe. **Kanskje** kahn-sheh

10. *Phrases to Start a Sentence*

When is (the tour)?

Når er (omvisningen)?
norr arr (*ohm-vees-ning-ehn*)?

Where is (the bus stop)?

Hvor er (bussholdeplassen)?
voorr arr (*bus-hoh-leh-plahs-ehn*)?

Where can I (put this)?

Hvor kan jeg (legge dette)?
voorr kahn yai (*leh-geh deh-teh*)?

Do you have (a map)?

Har du (et kart)?
hahrr du (*eht kahrt*)?

Is there (a bus to...)?

Er det (en buss til...)?
arr day (*ehn bus til*)?

I'd like (a one-way ticket)

Jeg vil gjerne ha (en enveisbillett)
yai vil yarr-neh hah (*ehn ehn-vais-bi-leht*).

I'd like to (pay the bill).

Jeg vil gjerne (betale regningen).
yai vil yarr-neh (*beh-tah-leh rrai-ning-ehn*).

Can I (take this)?

Kan jeg (ta dette)?
kahn yai (*tah deh-teh*)?

Do I need to (book)?

Må jeg (bestille)?
moh yai (*beh-sti-leh*)?

Can you (show me)?

Kan du (vise meg)?
kahn du (*vee-seh mai*)?

Chatting & Basics

≡ Fast Phrases

Hello.

Goddag.
goo-dahg.

Goodbye.

Ha det.
hah-day.

Do you speak English?

Snakker du engelsk?
snah-kehr du ehng-ehlsk?

Essentials

Yes.

Ja.
yah.

No.

Nei.
nai.

Please.

Vær så snill.
varr shoo snil.

Thank you.

Takk.
tahk.

You're welcome.

Vær så god.
varr-shoo-goo.

Excuse me.

Unnskyld.
un-shül.

Sorry. (forgive me)

Beklager.
beh-klah-gehrr.