

NORWAY

Norway's cities offer countless attractions and are a great starting point for travelers. Oslo, Norway's sleek capital, radiates Scandinavian cool while brightly colored Bergen, with its mountainous backdrop and Hanseatic architecture, feels more like Innsbruck. Its vibrant boardwalk and narrow cobbled side streets bring to life the persistent charm of an old port town. Up north, snowcapped mountains envelope Tromsø, the city of perpetual darkness in the wintertime, and the land of the midnight sun in the summer.

Outside of its cities, travelers will find a vast expanse of unspoiled nature, making it quite unique in Europe. In fact, Norway has one of the last great wildernesses in the continent, with its rugged beauty stretching from the remote corners of frozen Svalbard in the North Atlantic to its tranquil woodlands in the balmy south. It is in Norway, where you will find a balance of modernity and frontier appeal.

The best way to travel throughout Norway is by road and by sea. Roads in the country, though paved and well-maintained, are often winding and few and far between, and super highways do not exist at all outside metropolitan areas; and many villages continue to be accessible only by boat as they are spanned between vast stretches of fjords. Though over the course of the last several years, Norway's port towns and port cities have witnessed a great influx of tourism, especially during the summer months when the days are long and the weather more or less predictable.

In Norway, travelers will surely find themselves fully immersed not only in its beautifully preserved nature, but also deep into its rich and proud culture and history wherever in the country they go. In no time at all, you would have imbibed the Norwegians' penchant for living off the land and their desire for unspoiled nature and wide-open space, evoking the spirit of the American west.

Did You Know?

- ❖ Norwegians are well known for their skill in skiing and are fiercely competitive with neighboring Sweden. Norway has hosted the Winter Olympics twice, in 1952 (Oslo) and 1994 (Lillehammer).
- ❖ Norway has the world's largest sovereign fund, accrued from the country's oil and gas revenues, now worth almost 1 trillion US dollars.
- ❖ The country runs predominantly (98%) on hydroelectric power, more than any country in the world.
- ❖ During the Nazi invasion of Norway of World War 2, the king of Norway was protected and defended by a local rifle club.
- ❖ Famous Norwegian names you might be familiar with include composer Edvard Grieg, artist Edvard Munch and former female prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland.