

## SEASONS & NATURAL PHENOMENA

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*The Nordic countries, like most temperate countries, goes through all four seasons – from ice cold winters to balmy summers, and if you're lucky, you may even get to experience them all in day!*

### ❖ Spring

In Spring, the trees and flowers begin to sprout their leaves and petals, as the last of the winter's snow – though lingering still on the tops of the mountains – begins to creep away. The orchards burst into full bloom creating the image of paradise. And while summer may still be a few months away, you will find that festivals and activities typically reserved for the balmy months of June and July in other parts of the world are already on the verge of a full swing.

### ❖ Summer

Summer is the time when the days grow long and the entire region explodes in a celebration of light, culture and music. In the waters, you will find fishers and swimmers, and those who simply want to bask under the glittering sun. In the mountains, where the view is astounding, you will find the campers and hikers. This is the season when travelers explore remote coasts and islands by land and by sea, or hike the deep mountain trails where not a sound is heard save for mother nature's song. And for those looking to have a good time, there are a number of exciting festivals and events that take place during the summer, offering something for everyone – good music, culture, food, art and fashion.

### ❖ Arctic Light and Midnight Sun

In the north, the sun never sets and for a couple of months, the sun is visible all day, every day. This can be explained by two natural phenomena: the Arctic Light and its culmination, which is the Midnight Sun. Both events are caused by the tilt in the Earth's axis, making the North Pole face towards the sun in the summer, keeping it in seemingly perpetual brightness in spite of the Earth's constant spin.

The Arctic Light occurs approximately 2-4 weeks before one normally sees the Midnight Sun, offering a whole range of colorful light experiences. Both the sunset and sunrise are connected in one magnificent show of light and color lasting anywhere between 8 to 12 hours, with the sun barely going below the horizon before coming back up again.

The further north you travel, the longer the Midnight Sun is visible. While along the Arctic Circle, one can experience the Midnight Sun for just over a two-week period – from mid-June to early July – it is quite different at the top edges of the northern region, where one can see

the Midnight Sun from mid-May to the end of July. In Svalbard, it even extends from late April to late August.

It is only in the North where travelers can do a whole range of activities around the clock in seemingly perpetual brightness.

### ❖ Fall

Fall is a wonderful and relaxing time to visit the Nordic region. This is the season for winding down as you walk or bicycle through charming historic towns, visit castles and museums, or perhaps treat yourself to a spa and a gourmet meal.

Fall gives way to shorter days, and the leaves grow gold and red. In the northern regions, the evergreen forests offer a beautiful backdrop for the landscape and the first snowfall.

### ❖ Winter

In winter, the Nordic region opens up a secret world of spectacular natural attractions – the northern lights, snow-clad mountains, glittering ice hotels, and pristine white forests. Amidst the beautiful flurry of snow and long serene nights, travelers will be delighted to find activities suited for just about everyone – skiing and snowboarding, dog sledding, reindeer rides, snowmobile safaris and indoor pleasures like saunas.

The Arctic, though often thought of as a desolate wasteland steeped in months-long darkness and white snow, is in fact a peaceful and enchanting place to be. In fact, there are only a handful of places on Earth where the sun displays so much variation in light and color, all thanks to the low angle of the sun reflected on the mountains, snow and sky over long periods of time. Depending on where you are, the Arctic light leaves the sky in a palette of blues, greys, reds, oranges and purples before giving way into the pitch blackness of night, increasing one's chances to see Lady Aurora dance in the sky as she flaunts her beautiful greens and purples.

### ❖ Northern Lights

Winter is one of the best times to travel to the northern region, especially to the Arctic Circle, where the northern lights are in full bloom. Caused when plasma ejections from the sun interact with the earth's magnetosphere and atmosphere, the northern lights are at their most vivid and bright in the Nordic region's northernmost corners, appearing in the darkness like dancing ribbons of green or red light – caused by reactions with the oxygen atoms – or purple or violet hues – caused by reaction with nitrogen atoms.

Most auroral displays begin with a faint grey and greenish tint in the night sky. The intensity of these lights vary as well as the color(s) that one may see. Some people are only able to see a light grey color, or perhaps shades of green, which is the most commonly seen northern lights color. In very intense displays, the colors red and violet can be seen. Since color perception and night vision are dependent on the individual person, there is no way to predict how you

will see the northern lights – and this is probably why every experience is regarded to be unique.

Nevertheless, whatever color you may end up seeing, the movement of the lights – be they in curtains, waves or rays – is a momentous occasion, and if you have a camera properly set-up to capture the moment, you will see an even brighter display of colors than what your naked eyes can perceive.

