

HEALTH & SAFETY

The Nordic countries provide modern healthcare services, and can cater to just about any special diet or preference – with some advance notice in certain areas, of course. However, be mindful of some the region’s health and safety laws, which include very strict drinking laws.

❖ Medication

Bring medications in their original, clearly labeled containers in your carry-on luggage. It is also recommended to bring any prescription documentation from your doctor, and if possible in English. For those with severe allergies or chronic illnesses, it is a good idea to wear a medical alert bracelet.

Most medications are available in the Nordic countries, but may go by a different name than at home, so be sure to have the generic name, as well as the brand name. If carrying syringes or needles be sure to have a physician’s letter documenting their medical necessity.

Common medicine (ibuprofen, paracetamol etc.) is available in all Nordic countries but only at pharmacies (called “Apotek”, “Apteekki” in Finland). There is a limited variety of medication in Nordic countries. Convenience and grocery stores have a limited selection.

❖ Medical Care and Travel Insurance

Good healthcare is easily available in all Nordic countries. If you need to go to the hospital, remember to bring with you your passport and travel insurance card, or you will be charged the full cost of the treatment, which can become very costly, depending on the treatment. Please note that unless included in your travel insurance, travelers may have to pay for the full cost of dental treatment.

Citizens coming from the EU/EEA or other countries with which the Nordic country you are traveling to has a special agreement with, are entitled to the same medical services as its citizens.

Should you require medical attention, most hotels and accommodations maintain contact with a nearby doctor, who can be called on for emergencies, or can direct and arrange transportation for travelers to the local emergency center or hospital. You will also need to present your travel insurance card and passport in such situations.

Do not worry about the long distances between cities, especially in Norway, as medical helicopters are available in emergency cases.

❖ Special Diets and Preferences

The Nordic diet is dominated mostly by the consumption of root vegetables, bread and potatoes and a certain kind of meat. For travelers with special diets (gluten-free, peanut allergies, etc.) and preferences (vegetarian, vegan, etc.), it is always recommended to inform the Travel Designer ahead of time, so that special arrangements can be made during restaurant reservations and for tours/excursions that include meals or are centered around the local area's cuisine (food tours and food safaris). This is because rural areas in Scandinavia and countries like the Faroe Islands, Greenland and even Iceland, do not stock diet-specific ingredients on a regular basis due to a relatively low demand.

Travelers with special diets and preferences, should be aware that when traveling through the countryside, to not expect varied menu options in restaurants. It is important to do your research or ask the Travel Designer, who will be able to provide you with options in the area where you are at (if there are any).

❖ Drinking Laws

When you are staying at a property, whether it is a large hotel or a small guesthouse, the general rule in the Nordic region is that you can only consume alcohol that you have purchased there and only on their premises.

Another general rule is that drinking in public areas is only allowed if the area is separated and designated as a drinking area by a specific licensed premises and you are consuming alcohol purchased from the premises. If the public area is not designated for drinking, then drinking is not allowed and can be punishable by a fine.

Norway has a strict alcohol policy, making alcoholic beverages very expensive. Most restaurants offer alcoholic beverages. If you want to buy a bottle yourself, you need to visit the government owned Vinmonopolet for alcoholic beverages stronger than 4.75%, which are open from Monday to Saturdays until 6pm on weekdays and 3pm on a Saturday. You may also purchase beer from grocery stores between 9am and 8pm on weekdays, and between 9am and 6pm on Saturdays. The Vinmonopolet is closed on Sundays and most grocery stores are as well. The age limit for buying and consuming alcohol is 18 years for alcohol with 22% or less, and 20 years for alcohol with more than 22% alcohol.

In **Sweden** you can purchase beer with up to 3.5% alcohol in grocery stores. Wine and spirits can be purchased at the state run Systembolaget stores, which have daytime opening hours, and are closed on Sundays. Age limit is 18 years for alcohol up to 3.5% and 20 years for more than 3.5% alcohol. Some bars and clubs choose to have age limits higher than 18, often 20 or 23.

In **Denmark** you can purchase beer, wine and liquor in package stores, convenience shops and grocery stores. Drinking age in serving establishments (restaurants, bars, etc.) is 18 years and purchasing age (grocery stores, convenience stores, etc.) is 16 years for beverages 16.5% and under.

In **Iceland** you can purchase liquor at licensed bars, restaurants, or Vínbúðin, the state monopoly (locally known as Ríkið: "the state") which is closed on Sundays. The age limit for buying and consuming alcohol is 20 years old.

In **Finland** you can buy mild beer and cider up to 4.7% in the supermarket between 9am and 9pm. Wine, strong beer and spirits are only sold in government owned stores called ALKO. ALKO shops are closed on public holidays and Sundays. Age limit for buying and consuming alcohol is 18 years for alcohol with 22% or less, and 20 years for alcohol with more than 22%.

Tap water is drinkable in all five Nordic countries: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Finland. In fact it is possibly some of the cleanest and healthiest water in Europe.

