

# Directory

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## ACCOMMODATION

Norway offers a wide range of accommodation, from camping, hostels and pensions to international-standard hotels. You'll pay a lot more for what you get compared with other countries, but standards are high. Remember that if you're making enquiries in advance about prices, they're often quoted *per person*, so always check. Most hotels have wi-fi access for those lugging computers; see p398 for more details.

Throughout this book, quoted prices are for a room with private bathroom unless stated otherwise, except for hostels and camping where you can expect most rooms to come with a shared bathroom. Budget accommodation ranges from Nkr80 to Nkr150 (camping

### BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels). You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

per site) and up to Nkr350/550 for singles/doubles in other types of accommodation. Midrange accommodation, usually in hotels, costs up to Nkr990/1200, while for top-end accommodation the sky's the limit.

A handy source of information (and discounts) for budget travellers is **VIP Backpackers** ([☎](tel) 90 62 16 44; [www.vipbackpackers.no](http://www.vipbackpackers.no)).

By law, all bars and restaurants and 50% of hotel bedrooms must be nonsmoking but in reality it's rare to find hotels that still offer smoking rooms.

Many tourist offices can help you find accommodation, usually for a fee of around Nkr30 to Nkr50; apart from in some larger tourist offices, this service usually operates only if you're physically present in the tourist office and not for advance bookings.

### B&Bs, Pensions & Private Homes

Tourist offices in many towns have lists of private rooms, which are among the cheapest places to stay. In some cases, they allow you to stay with a Norwegian family, a far more intimate option than the hostel or hotel experience. Prices vary, but you'll rarely have to pay more than Nkr300/400 for a single/double; breakfast isn't normally included. Showers sometimes cost Nkr10 extra.

Some places operate as B&Bs, where prices start from single/double Nkr250/450 and can go up to Nkr500/800. These options can be tracked down through **Bed & Breakfast Norway** ([www.bb-norway.com](http://www.bb-norway.com)), which has extensive online listings for B&Bs throughout Norway; it also sells *The Norway Bed & Breakfast Book*, with listings throughout the country.

Many towns also have *pensjonat* (pensions) and *gjestehus* (guesthouses). Prices usually

start at Nkr350/550, but linen and/or breakfast will only be included at the higher-priced places. Some of these are excellent.

Along highways, you'll also see a few *rom* signs, indicating informal accommodation typically costing from Nkr150 to Nkr275 per room (without breakfast); those who bring their own sheets or sleeping bags may get a discount.

## Camping

Norway has more than 1000 camp sites. Tent space ordinarily costs from Nkr80 at basic camp sites up to Nkr150 for those with better facilities or in popular or expensive areas, such as Oslo and Bergen. Quoted prices usually include your car, motorcycle or caravan. A per-person charge is also added in some places, electricity often costs a few kroner extra and almost all places charge Nkr10 for showers.

Most camp sites can also rent simple cabins with cooking facilities starting at around Nkr250 for a very basic two- or four-bed bunkhouse. Bring a sleeping bag, as linen and blankets are provided only at an extra charge (anywhere from Nkr50 to Nkr100).

Unless you opt for a more expensive deluxe cabin with shower and toilet facilities (Nkr500 to Nkr1100), you'll also have to pay for showers and washing water (there are a few enlightened exceptions). Normally, cabin occupants must clean their cabin before leaving or pay an additional cleaning charge (around Nkr120).

Note that although a few complexes remain open year-round, tent and caravan sites are closed in the off season (normally early September to mid-May).

## ALLEMANSRETTE

Anyone considering camping or hiking in Norway should be aware of *allemansretten* (every man's right, often referred to as 'right of access'). This 1000-year-old law, in conjunction with the modern Friluftslven (Outdoor Recreation Act), entitles anyone to: camp anywhere for up to two days, as long as it's more than 150m from a dwelling (preferably further and out of sight); hike or ski across uncultivated wilderness areas, including outlying fields and pastures (except in fields with standing crops and close to people's houses); cycle or ride on horseback on all paths and roads; and canoe, kayak, row and sail on all rivers and lakes. However, these freedoms come with responsibilities, among the most important of which are the prohibition against fires between 15 April and 15 September and the requirement that you leave the countryside, any wildlife and cultural sights as pristine as you found them. For more on what these responsibilities mean in practice, see the boxed text, p390.

## PRACTICALITIES

- Like most of Western Europe (but not the USA), Norway uses the PAL (Region 2) DVD system.
- Electricity sockets use 220V AC and 50Hz (train sleeping cars 110V or 220V AC) with round, continental-style, two-pin plugs.
- Major international newspapers and magazines are available a day after publication in cities.
- Government-run NRK (one TV and four radio channels) competes with TV2 and TV Norge networks and satellite broadcasts of TV3. Foreign-language programmes are subtitled. Hotels often have cable TV.
- Norway uses the metric system. Watch out for the use of *mil* (mile), which is a Norwegian mile (10km).

For a comprehensive list of Norwegian camp sites, pick up a copy of the free *Camping* (available at most tourist offices) or visit [www.camping.no](http://www.camping.no).

## DNT & Other Mountain Huts

**Den Norske Turistforening** (DNT; Norwegian Mountain Touring Club; Map pp96-7; ☎ 22 82 28 22; [www.turistforening.no](http://www.turistforening.no); Storgata 7, Oslo) maintains a network of over 440 mountain huts or cabins located a day's hike apart along the country's 20,000km of well-marked and maintained wilderness hiking routes. These range from unstaffed huts (over 400 around the country) with two beds, to 42 large staffed lodges with more than 100

beds and renowned standards of service. All unstaffed huts offer cooking facilities, but in most places you must have your own sleeping bag or hostel-style sleeping sheet; sleeping sheets are often sold or included in the price at staffed huts. Staffed lodges don't normally have cooking facilities for guests, but a self-service section with cooking facilities is available at some lodges when unstaffed.

At staffed huts, which are concentrated in the south, you can simply turn up and pay your fees. In compliance with international mountain hospitality, no-one is turned away, even if there's only floor space left; DNT members over 50 years of age are guaranteed a bed, even if it means displacing a younger hiker! Huts tend to be packed at Easter and consistently busy throughout summer.

For details of becoming a DNT member, see p392.

In the staffed huts, nightly fees for DNT members/nonmembers in a room with one to three beds are Nkr205/270; rooms with four to six beds Nkr165/235; dorms Nkr105/170; and overflow on the floor Nkr75/140. Lodging and full board (for DNT members only) in one- to three-bed rooms/dorms costs Nkr535/495 in low season, Nkr555/515 in summer and Nkr605/565 during Easter; these prices apply to people staying three nights or more. Otherwise, a full breakfast (members/nonmembers Nkr85/110) or dinner (Nkr200/250) is available, as are sandwiches (Nkr10/15), a thermos of tea or coffee (Nkr25/40) and lighter dinners (Nkr125/145). Dinners, often including local specialities, can be excellent. A sleeping sheet costs Nkr55/70.

Members/nonmembers who prefer to camp outside the huts and use the facilities will pay Nkr50/60.

For unstaffed huts, you must pick up keys (Nkr100 to Nkr150 deposit) in advance from a DNT office or a staffed hut. To pay, fill out a Once-Only Authorisation slip and leave either cash or a valid credit-card number in the box provided. There are two classes of unstaffed huts. Self-service chalets are stocked with blankets and pillows and have wood stoves, firewood, gas cookers and a wide range of tinned or freeze-dried food supplies for sale (on the honour system). In these, DNT members/nonmembers pay Nkr165/265 for a bed. At other unstaffed huts, users must carry in their own food. Visit the DNT website for a full list of prices.

Most DNT huts are open from 16 February to 14 October. Staffed DNT lodges also open from the Saturday before Palm Sunday until Easter Monday, but staffed huts along the Oslo-Bergen railway and a few others open for the cross-country ski season as early as late February. DNT can provide lists of opening dates for each hut.

There are also numerous private hikers' huts and lodges peppered around most mountain areas, but not all are open to the public. Some offer DNT members a discount.

## Hostels

In Norway, reasonably priced hostels (*vandrerhjem*) offer a dorm bed for the night, plus use of communal facilities that usually include a self-catering kitchen (you're advised to take your own cooking and eating utensils), internet access and bathrooms. Hostels vary widely in character, but increasingly, they're open longer hours and family-run places have largely replaced those presided over by 'wardens' with a sergeant-major mentality; consumption of alcohol on most hostel premises is prohibited. That said, the designation 'hostel', even when HI-affiliated, can be a loosely interpreted term. While some hostels have quite comfortable lodge-style facilities and are open year-round, some are used for school accommodation except during summer months and others are the cheaper wing of a hotel; occasionally prices work out more expensive than a cabin or budget hotel. In most hostels, guests must still bring their own sleeping sheet and pillowcase, although most hire sleeping sheets for a one-off Nkr50 fee regardless of the number of nights.

Several hostel guides are available, including HI's annually updated Europe guide. The Norwegian hostelling association, **Norske Vandrerhjem** (☎ 23 12 45 10; [www.vandrerhjem.no](http://www.vandrerhjem.no)), also publishes the free *Hostels in Norway*, which contains a full listing of hostels and updated prices.

Most hostels have two- to six-bed rooms and beds cost from Nkr140 to Nkr240. The higher-priced hostels usually include a buffet breakfast, while other places may charge from Nkr50 to Nkr70 for breakfast. Some also provide a good-value evening meal for around Nkr110.

In summer, reservations are recommended, particularly for popular destinations. Most places in Norway accept phone reservations

and are normally happy to book beds at your next destination for a small fee (around Nkr20). Note, however, that popular hostels in Oslo and Bergen are often heavily booked in summer.

Prices listed in this book are those for non-HI members; members pay 15% less. Contact **Hostelling International** ([www.hihostels.com](http://www.hihostels.com)) to find its office in your home country so that you can join and qualify for members' prices in Norway.

There are very few private hostels in Norway.

## Hotels

Although hotel prices are high, most hotels offer substantially discounted rates on weekends and in summer (usually mid-June to mid-August, but sometimes July only), which are slow periods for business travel.

Although a few Norwegian hotels have consistent year-round prices, most charge exorbitant rates (singles/doubles from around Nkr1200/1500) from Monday to Thursday outside the summer months. This is largely because the only people travelling are businesspeople on expense accounts. If you're travelling at this time, ask the hotel about special offers to see if discounts are available. In summer and on weekends, prices can drop by around 40%. The some-time exception to this rule is the southern Norwegian coast where beach resorts raise their prices to cash in on the school-holiday influx. Be aware also that listed prices for hotels in particular are representative only as many establishments have almost as many different prices as there are days in the year.

Nationwide chains or hotel networks sometimes offer chain-hotel passes, which can entitle you to a free night if you use the chain enough times; some passes only operate in summer. The main nationwide chains (whose discounts sometimes also apply in other Scandinavian countries) include:

**Best Western** ([www.bestwestern.no](http://www.bestwestern.no)) Free pass at Best Western's 15 Norwegian hotels from June to August; entitles you to third consecutive night at same hotel free.

**Choice Hotels** ([www.choice.no](http://www.choice.no)) Covering Choice, Clarion Collection and Comfort Hotels, the Choice Club can add up to free nights. There's also the Choice Hotel Cheque (12 nights for Nkr11,940). In some Comfort Hotels, you get a light evening buffet included in the price.

**Fjord Pass** ([www.fjordpass.no](http://www.fjordpass.no)) Probably the pick (and certainly the largest) of the hotel passes, the Fjord Pass

costs Nkr120 (valid for two adults and any children under 15) and is available at 150 hotels year-round; no free nights, but the discounts on nightly rates are considerable. **Rica Feriepass** ([www.rica.no](http://www.rica.no)) Offers a free pass at 90 Rica hotels in Norway and Sweden; earns bonus points that can add up to the 10th night free at any Rica hotel.

**Thon Hotels** ([www.thonhotels.com](http://www.thonhotels.com)) Free membership that qualifies you for discounts or free nights.

One other worthwhile network (although it offers no discounts) is **De Historiske Historiske Hotels and Restaurants** ([www.dehistoriske.no](http://www.dehistoriske.no)), which links Norway's most character-filled old hotels. The quality on offer is consistently high, every hotel is architecturally distinguished and many are family-run. Admittedly, they can be expensive, but are almost always worth it.

## Summer Homes & Cabins

Most tourist offices in popular holiday areas keep lists of private huts, cabins and summer homes that are rented out to holidaymakers when the owners aren't using them; these arrangements sometimes also apply in the ski season. The price for a week's rental starts from around Nkr1200 for a simple place in the off season to about Nkr14,000 for the most elaborate chalet in midsummer. Most cabins sleep at least four people, and some accommodate as many as 12; if you have a group, it can be an economical option. Advance booking is normally required, and you'll probably have to pay a deposit of around Nkr500 or 20% of the total fee, whichever is less.

For further information, contact **Novasol** ([www.novasol.com](http://www.novasol.com)), which publishes an English-language photo catalogue describing nearly 2000 self-catering cabins and chalets in Norway. A similar scheme is offered by the Danish company **Dansommer** (in Denmark [www.dansommer.com](http://www.dansommer.com)).

## ACTIVITIES

Norway is one of the world's premier wilderness destinations and it has a world-class adventure industry to match. Just about anything's possible and each of these activities is covered in the relevant regional chapters, but what follows here is an overview to whet your appetite.

### Cycling

Whether you're keen for a two-wheeled amble around the flat shoreline of your favourite

### TOP FIVE CYCLING EXPERIENCES

- Sognefjellet Road, through the Jotunheimen National Park (p184)
- The exhilarating descent from Finse down to Flåm along the Rallarvegen (see the boxed text, p189)
- Lofoten (p312) offers leisurely cycling through some wonderful, rugged scenery
- Across the Hardangervidda Plateau near Rjukan (see the boxed text, p157)
- The high country around Trysil (p171)

fjord or a serious cyclist with your sights set on the ultimate Norwegian challenge, Norway won't disappoint. For the ambler, many tourist offices and some bicycle shops rent out bicycles for casual cyclists, while Trondheim has taken this to a whole new level with free bicycles; for details see the boxed text, p286. For the serious cyclist, there are some extraordinary routes that the world cycling community raves about; some of our favourites are covered in the boxed text, above, while the National Tourist Routes (p414) are another possibility.

An excellent website with route descriptions of some of the better long-distance cycling routes in Norway is [www.bike-norway.com](http://www.bike-norway.com). It also sells online nine different

cycling maps, some with route descriptions, for Nkr120 to Nkr298; click on 'Brochure' on its home page. For further information on long-distance cycling routes and tunnels, contact **Syklistenes Landsforening** (Map pp96-7; [www.slf.no](http://www.slf.no); Storgata 23d, Oslo), the main contact point for Norway's cycling clubs. The map *Sykkelruter i Norge* (Nkr120) is sold by Syklistenes Landsforening; it's only available in Norwegian, but the English-text *Sykkelguide* series of booklets with maps are available for Nkr125 each and include Lofoten, Rallarvegen, the North Sea Cycleway from the Swedish border at Svinesund to Bergen, and other routes.

Most tourist offices can offer advice on cycling trails (and sometimes maps) in their local area, while Syklistenes Landsforening is good for maps and advice for longer expeditions.

For the practicalities of cycling and bicycle hire in Norway, turn to p411.

### Dog-sledding

This Inuit means of transport readily transfers to the Norwegian wilds, and several operators can take you on a range of winter adventures. While some people are content with just a half-day taster – Alaska Husky Expeditions in Røros organises short expeditions (p173) – keen prospective 'mushers' can jump in the deep end and opt for a two-week dog-sled safari through Øvre Dividal National Park (p343), Tromsø (p337), Karasjok (p369),

### 11 COMMANDMENTS FOR ANGLERS

- 1 Foreigners may fish for free on the Norwegian coast but can't sell their catch.
- 2 Fishing is prohibited within 100m of fish farms, or cables and nets that are anchored or fastened to the shore.
- 3 Anyone who damages fishing equipment must pay compensation.
- 4 Anchoring is prohibited close to drift nets or line-fishing sites.
- 5 It's forbidden to shoot off firearms or make noises that can disturb the fish.
- 6 Fishing with live bait is prohibited.
- 7 It's forbidden to abandon fishing tackle or other rubbish that can disturb, delay or damage fish catches or fishing boats.
- 8 Only Norwegian citizens or permanent residents may catch lobsters.
- 9 Salmon, trout and char fishing with a rod is permitted year-round. For rivers with fishing bans, you may still fish within 100m of the river mouth. From 1 June to 4 August, between 6pm on Friday and 6pm on Monday, you can fish for salmon, trout and char with a hook and troll. All anglers for these fish must have a national fishing permit, and must also follow other local fishing regulations (which may include compulsory disinfection of fishing equipment).
- 10 All anglers from boats must wear life jackets.
- 11 Don't throw rubbish or pollute the waters in any way.

around Alta (p347), Kirkenes (p361) and Svalbard (p374). Tour operators, some of which offer dog-sledding, are covered on p409, while dog-sled endurance races take place in January from Røros (p173) and in March from Alta (p344).

### Fishing

Norway's rivers and lakes have drawn avid anglers since the 19th century. Norway's salmon runs are still legendary and, in June and July, you can't beat the rivers of Finnmark; try Tana Bru (p356) for starters. In addition to salmon, 41 other fish species inhabit the country's 200,000 rivers and lakes. In the south, you'll find the best fishing from June to September, and in the north, in July and August. In Svalbard, the best fishing holes are well-kept secrets, but Arctic char inhabit some rivers and lakes.

The 175-page book *Angling in Norway*, available from tourist offices for Nkr185, details the best salmon- and trout-fishing areas, fees and regulations.

Regulations vary between rivers but, generally, from mid-September to November, fish under 20cm must be thrown back. At other times between August and May, the limit is 30cm.

All river and lake fishing in Norway requires an annual licence (Nkr225 for salmon, trout and char and Nkr110 for other fish), which is sold at post offices. A weekly licence is also available for Nkr55. To fish on private land, you must also purchase a local licence (Nkr55 to Nkr375 per day), which is available from sports shops, hotels, camp sites and tourist offices. Some areas require a compulsory equipment disinfection certificate (Nkr110).

### RESPONSIBLE HIKING

To help preserve the ecology and beauty of Norway, consider the following tips when hiking:

#### Rubbish

- If you've carried it in, you can carry it back out – *everything*, including empty packaging, citrus peel and cigarette butts, can be stowed in a dedicated rubbish bag, as can rubbish left by others.
- Never bury your rubbish: Digging disturbs fragile soil and ground cover and encourages erosion. Buried rubbish may take years to decompose and will likely be dug up by animals, who may be injured or poisoned by it.
- Minimise waste by taking minimal packaging and no more food than you'll need. Take reusable containers or stuff sacks.
- Sanitary napkins, tampons, condoms and toilet paper should be carried out despite the inconvenience. They burn and decompose poorly.

#### Fires & Low-Impact Cooking

- Don't depend on open fires for cooking. The cutting of wood for fires in popular trekking areas causes rapid deforestation; use only dead, fallen wood. Cook on a light weight kerosene, alcohol or Shellite (white gas) stove and avoid those powered by disposable butane gas canisters.
- If trekking with a guide and porters, supply stoves for the whole team. In alpine areas, ensure all members are outfitted with enough clothing so that fires aren't a necessity for warmth.
- If you patronise local accommodation, select places that don't use wood fires to heat water or cook food.
- Fires may be acceptable below the tree line in areas that get very few visitors. If you light a fire, use an existing fireplace. Don't surround fires with rocks. Remember the adage 'the bigger the fool, the bigger the fire'. Use minimal wood, just what you need for cooking. In huts, leave wood for the next person.
- Ensure that you fully extinguish a fire after use. Spread the embers and flood them with water.

### Flying & Helicopter Trips

If the sight of a helicopter or light plane circling over the fjords makes you wonder just how this extraordinary landscape looks from above, ask at your nearest tourist office to see if it's possible to board a short, often 45-minute flight. Prices start from around Nkr700 per person. Some of the more spectacular places where this is possible include Bergen and Ulvik, but options abound throughout Norway's fjord country.

### Glacier Hiking

One of Norway's most rewarding outdoor activities is glacier hiking. As it's a potentially perilous undertaking, you should only set out on such a venture with an experienced local guide. The best places include: Jotunheimen National Park (see the boxed text, p186), which has more than 60 glaciers;

the otherworldly Hardangerjøkulen glacier on Hardangervidda (p189 or p190); Folgefonn (p219); Nigardsbreen (p246); Briksdalsbreen (p247); Bødalsbreen (p248); Saltfjellet-Svartisen National Park (p296); Lyngen Alps (p341); and Svalbard (p374).

If you find yourself captivated by glaciers, the Norwegian Glacier Museum (Norsk Bremuseum; p244) or the Breheimsenteret (p246), which serves as the visitors centre for Nigardsbreen, should both be on your itinerary.

### Hiking

Norway has some of Europe's best hiking, including a network of around 20,000km of marked trails that range from easy strolls through the green zones around cities, to long treks through national parks and wilderness areas. Many of these trails are maintained by

### Water Pollution

- Don't use detergents or toothpaste in or near streams or lakes; even if they are biodegradable they can harm fish and wildlife.
- For personal washing, use biodegradable soap and a water container (or even a lightweight, portable basin) at least 50m away from the watercourse. Disperse the waste water widely to allow the soil to filter it fully.
- Wash cooking utensils 50m from watercourses using a scourer, sand or snow instead of detergent.
- Contamination of water sources by human faeces can lead to the transmission of all sorts of nasties. Where there is a toilet, please use it. Where there is none, bury your waste. Dig a small hole 15cm deep and at least 100m from any watercourse. Cover the waste with soil and a rock. In snow, dig down to the soil.

### Erosion

- Always stick to existing trails and avoid short cuts to minimise erosion.
- If a well-used trail passes through a mud patch, walk through the mud so as not to increase the size of the patch.
- Avoid removing the plant life that keeps topsoils in place.

### Wildlife Conservation

- Don't engage in or encourage hunting.
- Don't attempt to exterminate animals in huts. In wild places, they are likely to be protected native animals.
- Discourage the presence of wildlife by not leaving food scraps behind you. Place gear out of reach and tie packs to rafters or trees.
- Don't feed the wildlife as this can lead to animals becoming dependent on hand-outs, to unbalanced populations and to diseases.

**WEATHER WARNING**

Always check weather and other local conditions before setting out cross-country. This applies whenever traversing any exposed area, but is particularly an issue for cross-country skiers (two Scottish cross-country skiers died after being caught in snow and freezing fog in March 2007 on the Hardangervidda Plateau despite, according to some reports, being warned by local experts not to set out). The only months that favourable conditions can be almost guaranteed for hiking are July and August. You should always be prepared for sudden inclement weather and stay aware of potential avalanche dangers, which are particularly rife in Jotunheimen but are a possibility anywhere in Norway's high country. Also, never venture onto glacial ice without the proper equipment and experience. And trust the advice of locals who understand the conditions better than even the most experienced out-of-town hikers – if they say not to go, don't go.

DNT and are marked either with cairns or red Ts at 100m or 200m intervals.

The hiking season runs roughly from late May to early October, with a much shorter season in the higher mountain areas and the far north. In the highlands, the snow often remains until June and returns in September, meaning that many routes are only possible in July and August. The most popular wilderness hiking areas are the Jotunheimen (see the boxed text, p186) and Rondane (p180) National Parks and the Hardangervidda Plateau (see the boxed text, p188). If you're after a wilder experience, try such national parks as Dovrefjell-Sunddalsfjella (p178), Øvre Dividal (p343), Stabbursdalen (p355), Rago (p298), Reisa (p367), Saltfjellet-Svartisen (p296) and/or any of the vast number of unprotected areas throughout the country, such as Trollheimen (p177). Avid hikers will never run out of options!

There are many excellent books for hikers in Norway. Erling Welle-Strand's 1993 *Mountain Hiking in Norway* includes hiking itineraries, sketch maps and details on trail huts. More recent is Constance Roos' *Walking in Norway* (2003) and *Walks and Scrambles in Norway* by Anthony Dyer et al (2006). A good choice for avid hikers is probably *Norwegian Mountains on Foot* by DNT, which is the English edition of the Norwegian classic, *Til Fots i Fjellet*.

For a full list and description of Norway's major national parks, see p70.

**DEN NORSKE TURISTFORENING**

Den Norske Turistforening (DNT) and its various chapters maintain a network of over 440 mountain huts and lodges throughout the

country. For details and prices for the use of these huts, see p386.

If you're going to do lots of hiking, it's certainly worth joining DNT. The standard annual membership starts at Nkr465, including seven *Fjell og Vidde* magazines; the *DNT Yearbook* costs an extra Nkr50. Memberships for 13 to 18-year-old/student/senior cost Nkr150/265/355; members' families pay Nkr210 per person. For further information, contact DNT (☎ 22 82 28 22; www.turistforeningen.no). DNT also sells hiking maps and topographic sheets (see p399).

**Paragliding, Parasailing, Bungee & Base Jumping**

Those who either have no fear or would simply love a bird's-eye view of some of Europe's most spectacular country have three main options. The first is to head to Voss, which has the widest range of possibilities such as paragliding, parasailing and bungee jumping from a parasail, most of which are organised by **Nordic Ventures** (☎ 56 51 00 17; www.nordicventures.com). True adrenaline junkies will want to be in Voss in late June for Extremesport Week when skydiving and base jumping are added to the rush; see the boxed text, p211, for more information.

The second option, although for bungee jumping only, is in Rjukan (see the boxed text, p156), home to the highest land-based bungee jump in Norway.

Finally, if plummeting towards the earth at breakneck speed is your thing, base jumping is possible from the precipitous cliffs of Lysefjord at Kjeragbolten (p231). Remember, however, that base jumping is fraught with risk – three people have died while base jumping in Norway since 2005.

**Rock Climbing & Mountaineering**

Norway's astounding vertical topography is a paradise for climbers interested in rock, ice and alpine pursuits. In fact, outside the Alps, Norway is probably Europe's finest climbing venue, although Norway's climatic extremes mean that technical climbers face harsh conditions, short seasons and strict restrictions. The most popular alpine venues in Norway include the area around Åndalsnes (p256), the Lyngen Alps (p341), Bondhusbreen (p220) and Lofoten (p317); the latter has a good climbing school that organises expeditions. In addition to having wonderful surrounding peaks, Åndalsnes has a very popular mountaineering festival, Norsk Fjellfestivalen (p257). Lom also has the Norwegian Mountain Museum (p183) that's worth checking out.

For general information on climbing in Norway, contact **Norsk Tindeklub** (☎ 22 50 54 66; www.ntk.no; c/o Egil Fredriksen, Sorkedalsveien 202b, N0754, Oslo).

In addition to the rock climbers' classic *Climbing in the Magic Islands* by Ed Webster, which describes most of the feasible routes in Lofoten look for *Ice Fall in Norway* by Sir Ranulph Fiennes, which describes a 1970 sojourn around Jostedalbreen. The more practical *Scandinavian Mountains* by Peter Lennon introduces the country's finest climbing venues.

**Skiing**

'Ski' is a Norwegian word and thanks to aeons-old rock carvings depicting hunters travelling on skis, Norwegians make a credible claim to having invented the sport. Interest hasn't waned over the years and these days, it's the national pastime. Most skiing is of the cross-country (nordic) variety, and Norway has thousands of kilometres of maintained cross-country ski trails. However, visitors should only set off after closely studying the trails/routes (wilderness trails are identified by colour codes on maps and signposts) and ensuring that they have appropriate clothing, sufficient food and water, and emergency supplies, such as matches and a source of warmth. You can either bring your own equipment or rent on site.

Most towns and villages provide some illuminated ski trails, but elsewhere it's still worth carrying a good torch, as winter days are very short and in the north there's no day-

**THE TELEMAR MANOEUVRE**

The Telemark region of Norway has lent its name to the graceful turn that has made nordic (cross-country) skiing popular around the world. nordic ski bindings attach the boot at the toes, allowing free movement of the heel; to turn, one knee is dropped to the surface of the ski while the other leg is kept straight. The skis are positioned one behind the other, allowing the skier to smoothly glide around the turn in the direction of the dropped knee.

light at all in December and January. The ski season generally lasts from early December to April. Snow conditions vary greatly from year to year and region to region, but February and March, as well as the Easter holiday period, tend to be the best (and busiest) times.

There are also scores of resorts with downhill runs, but these are quite expensive due to the costs of ski lifts, accommodation and the après-ski drinking sessions. The spring season lasts longer than in the Alps and the snow is better quality too.

Popular skiing spots include the Holmenkollen area (p106) near Oslo, Geilo (p189) on the Oslo-Bergen railway line, Voss (p211), Lillehammer (p168), Trysil (p171) and Hovden (p161). Summer skiers can head for Stryn (p248), Folgefonn (p219), or Jotunheimen National Park (p185).

For general information on skiing in Norway, contact DNT (p386), or visit the website [www.skiingnorway.com](http://www.skiingnorway.com).

**Whale-Watching**

One of the best places for watching whales is from Stø (p326) on Vesterålen, while the waters off nearby Andenes (p327) are equally good and there's also a whale centre (p327) to add context to your trip. Trips are also possible from Narvik (p300), Henningsvær (p317) and Kabelvåg (p315).

**White-Water Rafting & Sea-Kayaking**

Norway's steep slopes and icy, scenic rivers create an ideal environment for avid rafters, and a number of reputable operators offer trips, primarily in central Norway. These range from short, Class II doddles to Class III and IV adventures and rollicking Class V

punishment. Most are guaranteed to provide a thrill, and the rates include all requisite equipment and waterproofing. Among the finest venues are Evje (Setesdalen; see the boxed text, p159), Sjøa (Heidalen; see the boxed text, p182), Oppdal (Drivadalen; see the boxed text, p176) and Voss (see the boxed text, p211).

**Norges Padleforbund** (☎ 21 02 98 35; www.padling.no; Service boks 1, Ullevål stadion, 0840 Oslo) provides a comprehensive list of rafting operators in Norway, many of which can also organise sea-kayaking and river-boarding.

If you're into sea-kayaking, you may want to be in Langøya for the 170km Arctic Sea Kayak Race in July (see p325); the event sponsors introductory and more advanced courses.

## BUSINESS HOURS

Offices, including most post offices, are open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and 10am to 2pm Saturday. Post offices in larger cities open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 6pm Saturday and shorter hours in other places. For opening hours for shops, supermarkets, banks and restaurants, see the Quick Reference inside the front cover of this book. The opening hours for tourist offices are listed under each city throughout the book.

## CHILDREN

Travelling through Norway with children couldn't be easier, although successful travel with young children requires planning and effort. Don't try to overdo things; packing too much into the time available causes problems, even for adults. Make sure the planning includes kids as well; if they've helped to work out where you're going, chances are they'll still be interested when you arrive. Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* by Cathy Lanigan is a useful source of information.

## Practicalities

Car-rental firms hire out children's safety seats at a nominal cost, but it's essential that you book them in advance. The same goes for highchairs and cots (cribs); they're standard in many restaurants and hotels, but numbers may be limited. Norway offers a relatively wide choice of baby food, infant formulas, soy and cow's milk, disposable nappies (diapers) etc; after the supermarkets close, you'll have to resort to more expensive convenience stores.

Children aged under two travel for 10% of the full fare (or free on some airlines), as long

as they don't occupy a seat. They don't get a baggage allowance. 'Skycots', baby food and nappies should be provided by the airline if requested in advance. Children aged between two and 12 can usually occupy a seat for half to two-thirds of the full fare and get a standard baggage allowance.

Hotels, HI hostels, camp sites and other accommodation options often have 'family rooms' or cabins that accommodate up to two adults and two children. In hotels, this may cost little more than the price of a regular double.

Many restaurants have children's menus with servings designed to satisfy a child's appetite and prices to avoid sending the parents bankrupt. For more information, see p60.

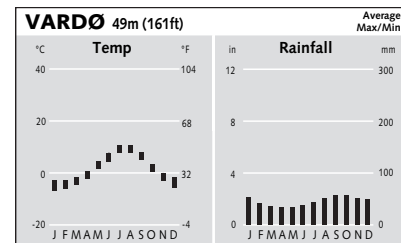
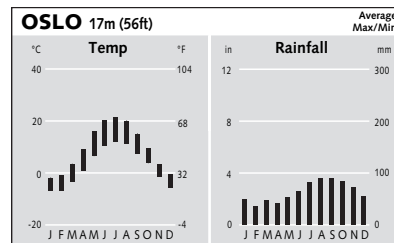
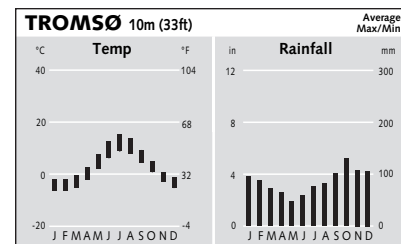
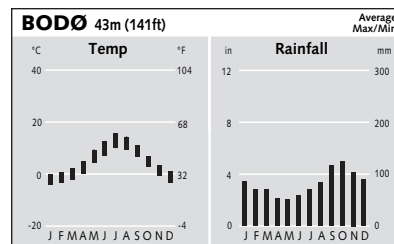
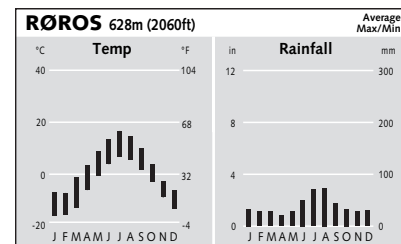
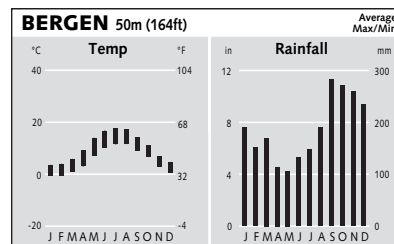
## Sights & Activities

In many ways, Norway is a children's country, and most towns have attractions and museums specifically targeted for the younger crowd. Domestic tourism is often organised around children's interests: regional museums invariably have a children's section with toys and activities, and there are also numerous public parks for kids to play at. Most attractions are generous and allow free admission for young children up to six years of age and half-price (or substantially discounted) admission for those aged up to 16. Family tickets are available at Norway's sights.

For a list of the some of the best places in Norway for kids, see p20.

## CLIMATE CHARTS

Although Norway covers the same latitude range as Alaska (and much further north when you include Svalbard), most of the country enjoys a surprisingly temperate climate. For this you can thank the Gulf Stream, which flows north along the coast. Average maximum temperatures for July hover around 16°C in the south (although they can be double that) and around 13°C in the north. In January, the average maximum temperature is 1°C and -3°C respectively. Bergen, on the southwest coast, is the wettest city, with 2250mm of annual precipitation, while Rondane and Gudbrandsdal, protected by coastal mountain ranges from the moisture-laden prevailing southwesterly winds, are among the driest districts of Norway, with less than 500mm of precipitation annually. Alta in the country's far north receives less rain than the Sahara!



Extreme temperatures are possible even in the Arctic region. In July 1998, even Narvik rose above 30°C and Svalbard positively soared to over 20°C a month later. At the other end of the scale, winter temperatures can plummet (in January 1999, the temperature in Kirkenes dropped to a chilly -56°C) and snow up to 10m deep can accumulate in the mountains; a mere 2m to 3m is more usual in the lower areas.

The **Norwegian Meteorological Institute** (www.dnmi.no) has the latest weather information.

## CUSTOMS

Alcohol and tobacco are extremely expensive in Norway. To at least get you started, it's worth importing your duty-free allotment: 1L of spirits and 1L of wine (or 2L of wine), plus 2L of beer per person. Note that drinks with an alcohol content of over 60% may be treated as narcotics! You're also allowed to import

200 cigarettes duty-free. Importation of fresh food and controlled drugs is prohibited.

## DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Your personal belongings are safer in Norway than in most people's home countries, and the cities – even east Oslo, which has a relatively poor reputation – are reasonably safe at all hours of the night. However, don't become blasé about security: be careful near the nightclubs in the Rosenkrantz gate area of Oslo and beware of pickpockets around the Torget area of Bergen. Normally, the greatest nuisance value will come from drug addicts, drunks and/or beggars (mainly in Oslo) who can spot a naive tourist a block away. Oslo and other larger cities suffer from a growing drug problem. Although dope may be readily available in places, it isn't legal.

While the risk of theft in Norway is minimal, it's wise to keep photocopies of all your

## CHRISTMAS IN NORWAY

Christmas, or *jul*, is a wonderful time to be in Norway. The name *jul* is derived from *joulu* or *lol*, a pagan fertility feast that was celebrated all over Europe in pre-Christian times and synchronised nicely with the holiday to honour the birth of Christ. Currently, most people celebrate between Christmas Eve and Epiphany, or 12th night, although some continue until the Feast of St Canute (the 20th day of Christmas).

A Christmas tree is a requisite part of the décor in most homes, and gifts are exchanged on Christmas Eve. In the countryside, sheaves of oats known as *julenek* are mounted on a pole and left out for the birds. In gratitude for past blessings, a bowl of porridge is also left out for the *nisse*, the gnome that historically brought good fortune to farmers. This concept has now been merged with the international tradition of Santa Claus in the personage of Jule-nissen, whom Norwegians believe makes his home in Drøbak (p117), south of Oslo; there's a Santa Crossing road sign there to prove it!

For a run-down on traditional Christmas foods, turn to p59, while more information on this special time of the year in Norway is contained in the free *Christmas in Norway* brochure available from some tourist offices.

important documents (passport data page, air tickets, insurance policy, travellers cheques serial numbers) in a separate place in case of loss or theft; stash US\$100 alongside, just in case. Leave copies of these documents at home, too.

## TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Norway is generally well set up for disabled travellers and all newly constructed public buildings are required by law to have wheelchair access. That said, like in most countries, the situation remains a work-in-progress. As a result, anyone with special needs should plan ahead.

Most Norwegian tourist offices carry lists of wheelchair-accessible hotels and hostels – for an excellent example, go to the English-language section of the website of **Bergen tourist office** ([www.visitbergen.com](http://www.visitbergen.com)) and click on 'For the physically disabled' – but your best bet is to contact the Norwegian Association for the Disabled (see below). Nearly all street crossings are equipped with either a ramp or a very low kerb (curb), and crossing signals produce an audible signal – longer beeps when it's safe to cross and shorter beeps when the signal is about to change. Most (but not all) trains have carriages with space for wheelchair users and many public buildings have wheelchair-accessible toilets.

## Organisations

For information on disabled travel and sites of special interest to disabled travellers in Norway, contact the **Norwegian Association for**

**the Disabled** (Norges Handikapforbund; ☎ 24 10 24 00; [www.nhf.no](http://www.nhf.no); Schweigaards gate 12, Grønland, Oslo).

Other national associations in other countries that can offer (sometimes including Norway-specific) advice:

**Access-able Travel Source** (☎ 303-232 2979; [www.access-able.com](http://www.access-able.com); PO Box 1796, Wheatridge, CO, USA)

**Holiday Care** (☎ 0845 124 9971; [www.holidaycare.org.uk](http://www.holidaycare.org.uk); The Hawkins Suite, Enham Pl, Enham Alamein, Andover SP11 6JS, UK)

**Mobility International USA** (☎ 541-343 1284; [www.miusa.org](http://www.miusa.org); 132 East Broadway, Suite 343, Eugene, Oregon 97401, USA)

**Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation** (Radar; ☎ 020-7250 3222; [www.radar.org.uk](http://www.radar.org.uk); 12 City Forum, 250 City Rd, London, EC1V 8AF, UK) Publishes a useful guide called *Holidays & Travel Abroad: A Guide for Disabled People*.

**Society for Accessible Travel and Hospitality** (☎ 212-447 7284; [www.sath.org](http://www.sath.org); 347 5th Ave, Ste 610, New York, NY 10016, USA)

## Tours

A number of tour companies offer tailored trips to Norway for travellers with a disability, with a special focus on wheelchair travellers.

**Accessible Journeys** (☎ 800 846-4537; [www.disabilitytravel.com](http://www.disabilitytravel.com); 35 West Sellers Ave, Ridley Park, PA 19078, USA)

**Accessible Travel & Leisure** (☎ 01452-729739; [www.accessibletravel.co.uk](http://www.accessibletravel.co.uk); Avionics House, Naas Lane, Quedgeley, Gloucester GL2 2SN, UK) Claims to be the biggest UK travel agent dealing with travel for the disabled and encourages people with a disability to travel independently.

**Easy Access Adventures** ([www.easyaccessadventures.com](http://www.easyaccessadventures.com))

**Flying Wheels Travel** (☎ 507-451 5005; [www.flyingwheelstravel.com](http://www.flyingwheelstravel.com); 143 W Bridge St, Owatonna, MN 55060, USA)

## DISCOUNT CARDS

For details on benefits of purchasing a HI card before you leave home, see p387.

## Senior Cards

*Honnør* (senior) discounts are the same as those for students and are normally available to those aged 67 years or over for admission to museums, public pools, transport etc. The discounts are usually less than for children (entry usually amounts to 75% of the full price). You don't require a special card, but those who look particularly youthful may, apart from enjoying the compliment, need proof of their age to qualify, as the ever-friendly Norwegian ticket sellers won't believe you're a day over 50.

## Student Cards

The most useful student card is the International Student Identity Card (ISIC), a plastic ID-style card with your photograph. Some travellers have reported being refused access with their normal university cards (unless it's from a Norwegian university) so the ISIC card is a good investment. It can provide discounts on many forms of transport (including airlines, international ferries and local public transport) and in some internet cafés, reduced or free admission to museums and sights, and cheap meals in some student restaurants.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

### Embassies & Consulates in Norway

**Australia** The nearest Australian embassy is in Copenhagen; contact the British embassy in an emergency.

**Canada** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 22 99 53 00; [www.canada.no](http://www.canada.no); Wergelandsveien 7, N-0244 Oslo)

**Denmark** (Map p91; ☎ 22 54 08 00; [www.amboslo.um.dk](http://www.amboslo.um.dk); Olav Kyrres gate 7, N-0244 Oslo)

**Finland** (Map p93; ☎ 22 12 49 00; [www.finland.no](http://www.finland.no); Thomas Heftyes gate 1, N-0244 Oslo)

**France** (Map p93; ☎ 22 28 46 00; [www.ambafrance-no.org](http://www.ambafrance-no.org); Drammensveien 69, N-0244 Oslo)

**Germany** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 22 27 54 00; [www.oslo.diplo.de](http://www.oslo.diplo.de); Oscars gate 45, N-0244 Oslo)

**Ireland** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 22 01 72 00; [osloembassy@dfa.ie](mailto:osloembassy@dfa.ie); 4th fl, Håkon VII's gate 1, N-0212 Oslo)

**Japan** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 22 99 16 00; [www.no.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.no.emb-japan.go.jp); Wergelandsveien 15, N-0244 Oslo)

**Netherlands** (Map p93; ☎ 23 33 36 00; [www.netherlands-embassy.no](http://www.netherlands-embassy.no); Oscars gate 29, N-0244 Oslo)

**New Zealand** The British embassy handles consular affairs; the nearest New Zealand embassy is in The Hague.

**Russia** (Map p93; ☎ 22 55 32 78; [www.norway.mid.ru](http://www.norway.mid.ru); Drammensveien 74, N-0271 Oslo)

**Sweden** (Map p91; ☎ 24 11 42 00; [www.sverigesambassad.no](http://www.sverigesambassad.no); Nobelsgata 16, N-0244 Oslo)

**UK** (Map p93; ☎ 23 13 27 00; [www.britain.no](http://www.britain.no); Thomas Heftyes gate 8, N-0244 Oslo)

**USA** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 22 44 85 50; [www.usa.no](http://www.usa.no); Henrik Ibsens gate 48, N-0244 Oslo)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Norway is chock-a-block with special festivals, which take place at all times of year in every city, town and village. Large and popular ones are covered on p22 and in the regional chapters of this book.

## FOOD

For a comprehensive insight into eating in Norway for both carnivores and vegetarians, see p56. Throughout this book, restaurants are open for lunch and dinner unless otherwise stated, the timings of which are given in the Quick Reference inside the front cover of this book. Only significant deviations from these general times are listed in full.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Norwegians are generally tolerant of alternative lifestyles, and Norway, along with several neighbouring countries, allows gay and lesbian couples to form 'registered partnerships' that grant every right of matrimony, except access to church weddings, adoption and artificial insemination. There's an ongoing debate at a public and political level as to whether adoption rights should be extended to gay couples and whether the Church should continue to be exempt from Norway's strong anti-discrimination laws. There have been numerous gay or lesbian members of parliament and Oslo's mayor at the time of writing is openly gay.

That said, public displays of affection are not common practice, except perhaps in some areas of Oslo. Oslo is generally the easiest place to be gay in Norway, although even here there have been occasional recent attacks on gay couples holding hands, especially in the central-eastern areas of the capital. You're most likely to encounter difficulties wherever conservative religious

**MAY I SEE YOUR ID, PLEASE?**

For the record:

- The legal age for drinking beer is 18, but for spirits and wine it's 20; some bars won't let you in unless you're 24 or over.
- The legal age for voting is 18.
- You can drive when you are 18, but not necessarily rent a vehicle.
- The legal age of sexual consent is 16 (heterosexual or homosexual).

views predominate, whether among newly arrived Muslim immigrant communities or among devoutly Lutheran communities in rural areas.

For information on gay issues, contact **Landsforeningen for Lesbisk og Homofil frigjøring** (LLH; Map pp96-7; ☎ 22 36 19 48; www.llh.no in Norwegian; Kongensgate 12, Oslo), the Norwegian National Association of Lesbian and Gay Liberation. Other good sources of information (if you speak Norwegian) include the website for the gay-and-lesbian magazine **Blikk** (www.blikk.no in Norwegian) or the website for the **Oslo Pride Festival** (www.skeivedager.no), which runs in late June or early July.

Gay and lesbian travellers can find gay entertainment spots in larger cities and towns. The *Spartacus International Gay Guide*, published by Bruno Gmünder Verlag (Berlin), is an excellent international directory of gay entertainment venues, but it's now well out of date and best used in conjunction with up-to-date listings in local papers. More accessible for English speakers is the Oslo-specific 'Gay Guide' section of the excellent *Streetwise* booklet published annually by Use-It (p92).

Oslo has the liveliest gay scene (see the boxed text, p114).

**INSURANCE**

You should seriously consider taking out travel insurance that covers not only medical expenses and luggage theft or loss, but also cancellation or delays in your travel arrangements (due to illness, ticket loss, industrial action etc). It's a good idea to buy insurance as early as possible, as late purchase may preclude coverage of industrial action in force before you bought the policy. Note that

some policies specifically exclude 'dangerous activities' such as motorcycling, skiing, mountaineering, scuba diving or even hiking. Make sure the policy covers ambulances and an emergency flight home. A policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly may be preferable to one where you pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later, make sure you keep all documentation.

In Norway, EU citizens may be required to pay a service fee for emergency medical treatment, but presentation of an E111 form will certainly expedite matters and minimise the amount of paperwork involved. Inquire about these at your national health service or travel agent well in advance.

For health insurance see p420, and for car insurance see p415.

**INTERNET ACCESS**

Apart from in larger towns, there are fewer internet cafés around Norway than you might expect; young waiters, waitresses and students are good people to ask if you need to find one. However, the scarcity of internet cafés is compensated for by having free internet access available in most municipal libraries. As it's a popular service, you may have to reserve a time slot earlier in the day; in busier places, you may be restricted to a half-hour slot. At private internet cafés, expect to pay around Nkr55 to Nkr70 per hour; students sometimes receive a discount. Internet access is also available at some tourist offices around the country for a fee.

If your laptop has a wireless internet facility, connecting couldn't be easier as most hotels, and even some hostels and guesthouses, offer wireless access; most often this is free for guests, although some hotels charge around Nkr120 per 12 hours. Unless you're using a web-based email service such as **Yahoo!** (www.yahoo.com), **Hotmail** (www.hotmail.com) or **Gmail** (www.gmail.com), ask your internet service provider (ISP) if they have local Norwegian access numbers.

For useful Norwegian, travel-related websites see p19.

**LAUNDRY**

*Myntvaskeri* (coin laundries) can be expensive and hard to find, with two exceptions. The guest-harbour facilities in most towns along Norway's coast (particularly in the south) have coin-operated machines (Nkr45 to Nkr60 per

wash-and-dry). In addition, hostels and camp sites often have coin-operated washers and dryers available to guests.

In both Oslo (p90) and Bergen (p193), laundries provide detergent, and will wash, dry and even fold your clothes nicely; expect to pay anywhere between Nkr75 and Nkr110 for the full service. Some places also let you do it yourself, which works out cheaper. Unless you're on an expense account, avoid hotel laundry and dry-cleaning services.

**MAPS**

One of the best maps of Norway for general travellers is the colourful and popular *Bilkart over Norge*, published by Nortrabooks. This detailed map includes useful topographic shading and depicts the entire country on one sheet at a scale of 1:1,000,000.

Statens Kartverk covers the country in 21 sheets at a scale of 1:250,000, and also produces 1:50,000 hiking maps. You'll find details at <http://showcase.netins.net/web/travelgenie/norway.htm>.

Most local tourist offices distribute user-friendly and free town plans.

**Hiking Maps**

The best source of hiking maps is **Den Norske Turistforening** (DNT; Norwegian Mountain Touring Club; Map pp96-7; ☎ 22 82 28 22; www.turistforeningen.no; Storgata 7, Oslo) and hikers can pick up topographic sheets at any DNT office, although the offices in larger cities have a wider selection beyond the local area. National-park centres and nearby tourist offices are also good sources for the excellent *Turkart* or Statens Kartverk hiking maps.

**Map Shops**

General road maps are available in Norway in bookshops, Narvesen kiosks, rural general stores, DNT offices, larger petrol stations and from most large tourist offices. If you want to pick up maps before leaving home, the following have comprehensive catalogues and some allow you to order online:

**Map Land** (☎ 03-9670 4383; www.mapland.com.au; 372 Little Bourke St, Melbourne, Vic 3000, Australia)

**Map Shop** (☎ 01684-593146; www.themapshop.co.uk; 15 High St, Upton-upon-Severn, Worcester, WR8 0HJ, UK)

**Omni Resources** (☎ 336-227 8300; www.omnimap.com; 1004 S Mebane St, Burlington, NC 27216-2096, USA)

**Stanfords** (☎ 020-7836 1321; www.stanfords.co.uk; 12-14 Long Acre, London, WC2E 9LH, UK)

**Travel Bookshop** (☎ 02-9261 8200; www.travelbooks.com.au; shop 3, 175 Liverpool St, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia)

**Road Maps**

The best road maps are the Cappelens series, which are sold in Norwegian bookshops for Nkr95. There are three maps at 1:335,000 scale: *No1 Sør-Norge Sør*, *No2 Sør-Norge Nord* and *No3 Møre og Trøndelag*. Northern Norway is covered in two sheets at 1:400,000 scale: *No4 Nordland og Sør-Troms* and *No5 Troms og Finnmark*. The *Veiatlas Norge* (Norwegian Road Atlas; Nkr235), published by Statens Kartverk (the national mapping agency), is revised every two years. Another reasonable map is Michelin's *711-Scandinavia & Finland* (1:500,000).

**MONEY**

The Norwegian krone is most often represented either as Nkr (preceding the number, as in this book), NOK (preceding the number) or simply kr (following the amount). One Norwegian krone (Nkr1) equals 100 øre. Coins come in 50 øre and Nkr1, Nkr5, Nkr10 and Nkr20 denominations, and notes are worth Nkr50, Nkr100, Nkr200, Nkr500 and Nkr1000.

For exchange rates at the time of publication, see the Quick Reference inside the front cover of this book.

**ATMs**

Norwegian ATMs allow you to access cash in your home account with an ATM card from your home bank. 'Mini-Banks' (the Norwegian name for ATMs) are found adjacent to many banks and around busy public places, such as shopping centres. They accept major credit cards as well as Cirrus, Visa Electron and/or Plus bank cards, although check with your bank before leaving about which banks charge the lowest withdrawal fees.

**Cash & Travellers Cheques**

Don't assume that all banks will change money and in some places you may need to shop around to find one that does. Post offices, some tourist offices and banks exchange major foreign currencies and accept all brands of travellers cheques, which command a better exchange rate than cash by about 2%. Rates at post offices and tourist offices are generally poorer than at banks, but can be convenient for small amounts



outside banking hours. Post offices charge a service fee of Nkr15 per travellers cheque or Nkr30 per cash transaction. Some banks, including Kreditkassen and Den Norske Bank, have slightly higher fees but similar exchange rates. Other banks tend to charge steeper travellers cheque commissions (1% to 5%).

### Credit Cards

Visa, Eurocard, MasterCard, Diners Club and American Express cards are widely accepted throughout Norway. Although credit or debit cards allow you to avoid the fees charged for changing cash or travellers cheques, such gains can be cancelled out by bank fees and not all places accept debit cards. Credit cards can be used to buy train tickets and are accepted on some (eg Hurtigruten), but not all, domestic ferries.

If your card is lost or stolen in Norway, report it immediately:

**American Express** (☎ 22 96 08 00)

**Diners Club** (☎ 21 01 50 00)

**Eurocard/MasterCard** (☎ 21 01 52 22)

**Visa** (☎ 08989)

### Tipping

Service charges and tips are included in restaurant bills and taxi fares and tipping on an American scale is not expected. It is, however, customary (and always greatly appreciated by often poorly paid service staff) to round up the bill. If the service has been particularly helpful, feel free to leave more.

### PHOTOGRAPHY

For digital and other photographic supplies, Japan Photo is a good nationwide chain, while you'll find other well-stocked shops around the country, particularly in larger towns.

Although few Norwegians are camera-shy, it's still a courtesy to first ask permission. This is especially important in Sami areas, where you may encounter some camera sensitivity, as well as in villages where whaling is a mainstay (people may be concerned that the photos will be used against them in environmental pieces).

Due to the clear northern light and glare from water, ice and snow, photographers may want to use a UV or skylight filter and a lens shade. In winter, you may want to polar oil your camera so that the mechanism doesn't freeze up. In temperatures below around -20°C, digital cameras may fail altogether.

For comprehensive advice on taking terrific photos, Lonely Planet's *Travel Photography*, *Landscape Photography*, *Urban Photography* and *People Photography* are designed to take on the road.

### POST

Norway has an efficient postal service, but postal rates have soared in recent years. Postcards and letters weighing up to 20g cost Nkr7 within Norway, Nkr9 to elsewhere in Europe and Nkr11 to the rest of the world. For larger parcels, the good-value Verdenspakke rate (up to 20kg) will provide delivery anywhere in the world within 15 working days. Poste restante services are available at all but a handful of Norwegian post offices.

For post office opening hours, see p394.

### SHOPPING

Given the prices, few people would consider a shopping holiday in Norway, although there are some specialty items, including some that you won't find anywhere else in the world. Look for items such as wool sweaters and other hand-knitted clothing, pewter ware, intricate silver jewellery, Sami sheath knives, reindeer-leather products, troll figurines, wooden toys and woodwork adorned with *rosemaling* (painted or carved floral motifs). Some of the best shopping (especially in larger cities) is covered in the relevant regional chapters, while the online **Shopping Guide** ([www.guide4you.no](http://www.guide4you.no)) lists a range of shops in Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, Trondheim and Tromsø. Items in shops are mostly high quality, but beware of cheaper kitsch in tourist areas.

### Taxes & Refunds

The 25% MVA (the equivalent of value-added or sales tax), locally known as MOMS, is normally included in the marked prices for goods and services, including meals and accommodation. One exception is car hire, where quoted rates may not include MVA.

At shops marked 'Tax Free for Tourists', goods exceeding Nkr315 (Nkr285 for food-stuffs) are eligible for an MVA refund, less a service charge (11% to 19% of the purchase price). At the point of sale, ask the shop for a 'Tax-Free Shopping Cheque', which should be presented along with your purchases at your departure point from the country (ferry passengers normally collect their refund from

the purser during limited hours once the boat has sailed).

Most tourist offices and some tourist shops have the brochure *How to Shop Tax Free in Norway*, which explains the procedure and lists border crossings at which refunds can be collected. Alternatively, visit [www.globalrefund.no](http://www.globalrefund.no).

### TELEPHONE & FAX

All Norwegian phone numbers have eight digits. Most pay phones accept Nkr1, Nkr5, Nkr10 and Nkr20 coins and will return unused coins but won't give change. To call anywhere in the country costs a fixed national rate (Nkr8 plus Nkr0.65 during peak times). National calls get a 33% discount on standard phone rates between 5pm and 8am on weekdays, and any time on weekends. Directory assistance (☎ 180) is available throughout the country and costs Nkr9 per minute. Numbers starting with '800' usually indicate a toll-free number, while those beginning with '9' are mobile or cell-phone numbers.

International calls can be prohibitively expensive. Card phones accept Telenor phone-cards and most also accept credit cards. Card and coin phones are found at post offices, transport terminals, kiosks and other public places, but they're not as ubiquitous elsewhere as you might expect. Telekort (Telenor phone-cards) are sold in Nkr40, Nkr90 and Nkr140 denominations and work out slightly cheaper than using coins, but they're still expensive. Cards can be purchased at post offices and Narvesen kiosks.

For making international calls, you're best bet is to forsake Telenor altogether and go for one of the phonecards issued by private companies. Usually costing Nkr100, they allow you to make over six hours of calls using a scratch PIN number on the back and a local access number. The only drawback is that they can be difficult to find – some kiosks sell them, but the easiest place to look is an 'ethnic' grocery store.

Otherwise, internet-connected calls (eg [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com)) are the way to go, although unfortunately if you're not travelling with a laptop, not many internet cafes are Skype-enabled; you cannot make phone calls from municipal library computers.

To make international calls from Norway call ☎ 00. If you're calling from outside Norway, the country code is ☎ 47.

### Fax

Faxes can be received and sent from most hotels, but it's considerably cheaper to send one from any post office.

### Mobile Phones

There aren't too many places where you can't get GSM mobile access with coverage for close to 90% of the country. This doesn't, of course, apply to wilderness areas and the hiking trails of most national parks. There are two main service providers: **Telenor Mobil** (☎ 81 07 70 00; [www.telenor.com](http://www.telenor.com)) and **NetCom** (☎ 23 88 80 00; [www.netcom.no](http://www.netcom.no) in Norwegian).

If you want to use your home-country mobile in Norway, always check with your carrier about the cost of roaming charges to avoid a nasty surprise when your next bill arrives; although agreements between European countries have substantially reduced calling costs in recent years, prices remain high.

If you wish to use your mobile, but with a Norwegian SIM card, check with your network before leaving home as some phones sold by some networks (eg Vodafone) are blocked from using other carriers. If your phone will accept a foreign SIM card, these can be purchased from any 7-Eleven store and some Narvesen kiosks. However, as the connection instructions are entirely in Norwegian, you're better off purchasing the card from any Telehuset outlet, where they'll help you connect on the spot. SIM cards start from Nkr200, which includes Nkr100 worth of calls.

Mobile-phone rental isn't currently possible in Norway.

### TIME

Time in Norway is one hour ahead of GMT/UTC, the same as Sweden, Denmark and most of Western Europe. Clocks go forward one hour on the last Sunday in March and back an hour on the last Sunday in October.

When telling the time, Norwegians use 'half' as signifying *half before* rather than half past. Always double-check unless you want to be an hour late!

### TOILETS

Most towns (and many roadside stops) have public facilities. However, at many shopping malls, train stations, bus terminals and even some (but not many) restaurants you may have to pay up to Nkr10. If you resent paying for an entirely necessary and natural bodily

function, hang on until lunchtime or until you reach your hotel.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

It's impossible to speak highly enough of tourist offices in Norway. Most serve as one-stop clearing houses for general information and bookings for accommodation and activities. Nearly every city and town – even the tiniest place – has its own tourist office. Most tourist offices publish comprehensive annual booklets giving the complete, up-to-date lowdown on their town.

Offices in smaller towns may be open only during peak summer months, while in cities they're open year-round but with shorter hours in the off season. Opening hours and contact details are listed under each city throughout the book.

Tourist offices operate under a variety of names – *turistkontor* and *reiseliv* are among the most common – but all have the information symbol (i) prominently displayed outside and are easy to identify and find.

For general information on travelling in Norway, contact the **Norwegian Tourist Board** (Norges Turistråd; ☎ 24 14 46 00; www.visitnorway.com; PO Box 722, Sentrum, N-0105 Oslo).

Outside Norway, tourist offices are usually attached to Norwegian embassies, but there's so much information available on the internet that you're unlikely to need to visit one.

## VISAS

Citizens of Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Sweden may enter Norway freely without a passport. Citizens of EU and other European Economic Area (EEA; essentially EU countries, plus Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Greenland and the Faroe Islands) countries, the USA, Canada, the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand most Latin American and Commonwealth countries need a valid passport to visit Norway, but do not need a visa for stays of less than three months. Norway belongs to the Schengen group of countries (named after the treaty that allows free movement within EU countries), so there are only limited border controls at

Norwegian frontiers. For more information on entering Norway, see opposite.

## WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Women travellers will have few worries in Norway, and sober Norwegian men are normally the very picture of decorum. While alcohol-impaired men may become tiresome or obnoxious, they're probably no different from the same breed you'll encounter in your home country.

Norway's main feminist organisation is **Kvinnefronten** (Women's Front; Map pp96-7; ☎ 22 20 64 00; www.kvinnefronten.no; Osterhaugsgt 27, Oslo). Women who have been attacked or abused can contact the **Krisesenter** (☎ 23 01 03 41; www.krisesenter.com) in Oslo or dial ☎ 112 nationwide.

First-time women travellers should track down the eminently practical *Handbook for Women Travellers* by Maggie and Gemma Moss, although remember that most of the situations described are no more likely to confront you in Norway than they are in your home country.

Of the general websites dedicated to women travellers, **Journeywoman** (www.journeywoman.com) is outstanding. There's also a women's page on Lonely Planet's **Thorn Tree** (www.lonelyplanet.com).

## WORK

In order to work in Norway, knowledge of basic Norwegian is required at the very least. As a member of the EEA, Norway grants citizens of other EEA countries the right to look for work for a three-month period without obtaining a permit; those who find work have the right to remain in Norway for the duration of their employment. For other foreigners, it's very difficult and an application for a work permit must be made through the Norwegian embassy or consulate in your home country before entering Norway.

For help with looking for work, the best places to start are the **Norwegian Labour & Welfare Organisation** (www.nav.no), which distributes two free booklets, *Looking for Work in Norway* and *Norway – Access to Job Vacancies*, or Use-It (p92).

# Transport

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## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### ENTERING THE COUNTRY

Crossing most borders into Norway is usually hassle-free, particularly if you're arriving by road, although if you're from a non-Western country you may find yourself and your baggage under greater scrutiny than other travellers. If arriving in Norway from a non-EU country, expect your papers to be checked carefully.

For visa requirements info, see opposite.

### AIR

#### Airports

For a full list of Norwegian airports, visit [www.avinor.no](http://www.avinor.no). The main international Norwegian airports:

**Ålesund, Vigra Airport** (airport code AES; ☎ 70 11 48 00; fax: 70 18 37 38)

**Bergen, Flesland Airport** (airport code BGO; ☎ 55 99 80 00; [infosenteret.bergen@avinor.no](mailto:infosenteret.bergen@avinor.no))

**Haugesund, Karmøy Airport** (airport code HAU; ☎ 52 85 79 00; [haugesund.lufthavn@avinor.no](mailto:haugesund.lufthavn@avinor.no))

**Kristiansand, Kjevik Airport** (airport code KRS; ☎ 38 06 56 00; fax 38 06 31 22)

**Oslo, Gardermoen Airport** (airport code OSL; ☎ 81 55 02 50; [www.osl.no](http://www.osl.no))

### THINGS CHANGE....

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket you may buy) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

**Sandefjord, Torp Airport** (airport code TRF; ☎ 33 42 70 00; [www.torp.no](http://www.torp.no))

**Stavanger, Sola Airport** (airport code SVG; ☎ 51 65 80 00; [stavanger.lufthavn@avinor.no](mailto:stavanger.lufthavn@avinor.no))

**Tromsø Airport** (airport code TOS; ☎ 77 64 84 00; fax 77 64 84 93)

**Trondheim, Værnes Airport** (airport code TRD; ☎ 74 84 30 00; [info.vaernes@avinor.no](mailto:info.vaernes@avinor.no))

### Airlines

Airlines that use Norway as their primary base:

**Coast Air** (☎ 52 84 85 00; [www.coastair.no](http://www.coastair.no)) Flies to Copenhagen from Haugesund.

**Norwegian** (☎ 81 52 18 15; [www.norwegian.no](http://www.norwegian.no)) Low-cost airline flying from 28 European cities to Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, Trondheim and Tromsø.

**SAS Braathens** (☎ 91 50 54 00; [www.sasbraathens.no](http://www.sasbraathens.no)) Flies from many Norwegian airports to 30 destinations around Europe, and with hundreds more cities around the world.

**Widerøe** (☎ 81 00 12 00; [www.wideroe.no](http://www.wideroe.no)) Flies to Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Newcastle and Copenhagen, mostly from Bergen and Stavanger.

Other international airlines that fly to/from Norway:

**Aeroflot** (☎ 22 35 62 00; [www.aeroflot.aero](http://www.aeroflot.aero))

**Air France** (☎ 23 50 20 01; [www.airfrance.com](http://www.airfrance.com))

**Austrian Airlines** (☎ 81 52 10 52; [www.aa.com](http://www.aa.com))

**British Airways** (☎ 81 53 31 42; [www.british-airways.com](http://www.british-airways.com))

**British Midland Airways** ([www.flybmi.com](http://www.flybmi.com))

**Brussels Airlines** (☎ 23 16 25 68; [www.brusselsairlines.com](http://www.brusselsairlines.com))

**City Star Airlines** (☎ 51 65 81 65; [www.citystarairlines.com](http://www.citystarairlines.com)) Flies to Oslo, Stavanger and Kristiansund from Aberdeen.

## CLIMATE CHANGE & TRAVEL

Climate change is a serious threat to the ecosystems that humans rely upon, and air travel is the fastest-growing contributor to the problem. Lonely Planet regards travel, overall, as a global benefit, but believes we all have a responsibility to limit our personal impact on global warming.

### Flying & Climate Change

Pretty much every form of motorised travel generates CO<sub>2</sub> (the main cause of human-induced climate change) but planes are far and away the worst offenders, not just because of the sheer distances they allow us to travel, but because they release greenhouse gases high into the atmosphere. The statistics are frightening: two people taking a return flight between Europe and the USA will contribute as much to climate change as an average household's gas and electricity consumption over a whole year.

### Carbon Offset Schemes

Climatecare.org and other websites use 'carbon calculators' that allow travellers to offset the level of greenhouse gases they are responsible for with financial contributions to sustainable travel schemes that reduce global warming – including projects in India, Honduras, Kazakhstan and Uganda.

Lonely Planet, together with Rough Guides and other concerned partners in the travel industry, support the carbon offset scheme run by climatecare.org. Lonely Planet offsets all of its staff and author travel.

For more information check out our website: [www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com).

**Danish Air Transport** (☎ 57 74 67 00; [www.dat.dk](http://www.dat.dk))

Flies to Stavanger from Esbjerg and Billund.

**Finnair** (☎ 81 00 11 00; [www.finnair.fi](http://www.finnair.fi))

**Fly Nordic** (☎ 24 14 87 58; [www.flynordic.com](http://www.flynordic.com))

**Iberia** ([www.iberia.com](http://www.iberia.com))

**Icelandair** (☎ 22 03 40 50; [www.icelandair.com](http://www.icelandair.com))

**Jet 2** ([www.jet2.com](http://www.jet2.com)) Flights between Bergen and Newcastle.

**KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines** (☎ 22 64 37 52; [www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com))

**Lufthansa** (☎ 22 33 09 00; [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com))

**Ryanair** (☎ 82 00 07 20; [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com)) Flies to Sandefjord.

**Spanair** (☎ 91 50 54 00; [www.spanair.com](http://www.spanair.com))

**Sterling** (☎ 81 55 88 10; [www.sterling.dk](http://www.sterling.dk)) Budget airline with dozens of destinations from Oslo.

**TAP Portugal** (☎ 81 00 00 15; [www.flytap.com](http://www.flytap.com))

**Welcome Air** ([www.welcomeair.com](http://www.welcomeair.com))

**Wizz Air** ([www.wizzair.com](http://www.wizzair.com)) Flights between Polish cities and Sandefjord.

For details of these and other airline safety records, visit [www.airsafe.com](http://www.airsafe.com) or [www.waas.info.net](http://www.waas.info.net).

## Tickets

For bargain air fares, your first option should be shopping around on the internet. If you plan on flying with a national airline (as opposed to a budget or no-frills carrier), you

should also check for cheaper fares with a travel agent who knows about special deals and can offer advice on other aspects of your trip. Reliable online flight-booking sites:

**Cheap tickets** ([www.cheaptickets.com](http://www.cheaptickets.com))

**eBookers** ([www.ebookers.com](http://www.ebookers.com))

**Expedia** ([www.expedia.com](http://www.expedia.com))

**Lowest Fare** ([www.lowestfare.com](http://www.lowestfare.com))

**Opodo** ([www.opodo.com](http://www.opodo.com))

**Orbitz** ([www.orbitz.com](http://www.orbitz.com))

**Plane Simple** ([www.planesimple.co.uk](http://www.planesimple.co.uk))

**STA** ([www.sta.com](http://www.sta.com))

**Travel.com** ([www.travel.com.au](http://www.travel.com.au))

**Travelocity** ([www.travelocity.com](http://www.travelocity.com))

The only intercontinental flights to Norway are from the USA, so the first step for everyone else is to get to Europe where you'll find plenty of deals to Norway from European 'gateway' cities, particularly London, Paris, Frankfurt, Berlin or Copenhagen.

Another possibility to consider is an open-jaw ticket, which allows you to fly into one city and leave from another at no extra cost. SAS Braathens, with its extensive network of Norwegian routes, is particularly useful in this regard. You could for example fly into Ålesund and fly out from Bergen, Oslo or a number of other cities in Norway or elsewhere in Scandinavia.

## Africa

Nairobi and Johannesburg are the best places in Africa to buy tickets to Europe. Several West African countries offer cheap charter flights to France, and charter fares from Morocco can be incredibly cheap if you're lucky enough to find a seat.

**Rennies Travel** ([www.renniestravel.com](http://www.renniestravel.com)) and **STA Travel** ([www.statravel.co.za](http://www.statravel.co.za)) have offices throughout Southern Africa.

## Asia

**STA Travel** ([www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com); Bangkok ☎ 02-236 0262; [www.statravel.co.th](http://www.statravel.co.th); Singapore ☎ 6737 7188; [www.statravel.com.sg](http://www.statravel.com.sg); Japan ☎ 03-5391 2922; [www.statravel.co.jp](http://www.statravel.co.jp)) proliferates in Asia, with branches just about everywhere. Another resource in Japan is **No 1 Travel** (☎ 03-3205 6073; [www.no1-travel.com](http://www.no1-travel.com)); in Hong Kong try **Four Seas Tours** (☎ 2200 7777; [www.fourseastravel.com](http://www.fourseastravel.com)).

In India, **STIC Travels** ([www.stictravel.com](http://www.stictravel.com); Delhi ☎ 11-233 57 468; Mumbai ☎ 22-221 81 431;) has offices in dozens of cities.

## Australia & New Zealand

If you're coming from Australasia, there's a large difference between low- and high-season fares. From Australia, flights to Oslo usually require a couple of stopovers on the way, usually Singapore or Bangkok and another European city. Good deals are often to be found with Air France, Qantas, KLM or Cathay Pacific. From New Zealand, Lufthansa offers some of the best deals for travel to Oslo.

Both **STA Travel** (☎ 134 782; [www.statravel.com.au](http://www.statravel.com.au)) and **Flight Centre** (☎ 133 133; [www.flightcentre.com.au](http://www.flightcentre.com.au)) have offices throughout Australia. For online bookings, try [www.travel.com.au](http://www.travel.com.au).

In New Zealand, both **Flight Centre** (☎ 0800 243 544; [www.flightcentre.co.nz](http://www.flightcentre.co.nz)) and **STA Travel** (☎ 0800 474 400; [www.statravel.co.nz](http://www.statravel.co.nz)) have branches throughout the country. The site [www.travel.co.nz](http://www.travel.co.nz) is recommended for online bookings.

## Continental Europe

There's not much variation in air fare prices for departures from the main European cities.

In France there is a student travel agency, **Voyages Wasteels** (☎ 01 55 82 32 33; [www.wasteels.fr](http://www.wasteels.fr) in French), which has offices around the country and specialises in student and youth travellers. **Voyageurs du Monde** (☎ 08 92 23 56 56; [www.vdm.com](http://www.vdm.com) in French) and **Nouvelles Frontières** (☎ 08 25

00 07 47; [www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr](http://www.nouvelles-frontieres.fr) in French) are also recommended. Online agencies include **Lastminute** ([www.fr.lastminute.com](http://www.fr.lastminute.com) in French).

In Germany **STA Travel** (☎ 069-743 032 92; [www.statravel.de](http://www.statravel.de) in German) is an ever-reliable agency, with offices across Germany. Online agencies are **Lastminute** (☎ 01805 284 366; [www.lastminute.de](http://www.lastminute.de) in German) and **Expedia** ([www.expedia.de](http://www.expedia.de) in German).

Dutch travellers will find **Airfair** (☎ 0900 771 7717; [www.airfair.nl](http://www.airfair.nl)) to be a reliable source of discounted tickets.

Travellers from Italy should check out **CTS Viaggi** ([www.cts.it](http://www.cts.it)), while Spaniards could consider **Barcelo Viajes** (☎ 902 116 226; [www.barcelo.viajes.com](http://www.barcelo.viajes.com)); good online Spanish booking agencies include **Atrapalo** ([www.atrapalo.com](http://www.atrapalo.com)) and **Despegar** ([www.despegar.es](http://www.despegar.es)).

## UK

Travellers from the UK have the widest range of options for flying to/from Norway with services from London and many other cities in England and Scotland. In addition to internet fares (see opposite), recommended travel agencies include **Flight Centre** (☎ 0870 499 0040; [flightcentre.co.uk](http://flightcentre.co.uk)) and **STA Travel** (☎ 0871 230 0040; [www.statravel.co.uk](http://www.statravel.co.uk)).

## USA & Canada

The North Atlantic is the world's busiest long-haul air corridor and the flight options are bewildering. Thanks to the large ethnic Norwegian population in Minnesota, Wisconsin and North Dakota, you may find small local agencies specialising in travel to Norway and offering good-value charter flights.

Some of the best deals are offered by Icelandair, which flies to Bergen and Oslo via Reykjavik, from a number of US cities; on some of its transatlantic flights it allows a three-day stopover in Reykjavik. If you're planning on flying within Norway (or around Scandinavia), SAS Braathens has some interesting regional discounts available to passengers who fly on its transatlantic flights.

**Airhitch** ([www.airhitch.org](http://www.airhitch.org)) specialises in cheap stand-by tickets to Europe, but you'll need a flexible schedule.

Recommended agencies include **Air-Tech** ([www.airtech.com](http://www.airtech.com)) and **Educational Travel Centre** (☎ 800 747-5551; [www.edtrav.com](http://www.edtrav.com)). In Canada, try **Travel Cuts** (☎ 1866-246-9762; [www.travelcuts.com](http://www.travelcuts.com)), Canada's national student travel agency.

## LAND

### Border Crossings

Border crossings between Norway and Sweden or Finland are straightforward; half the time you aren't even aware that you've crossed a border. If you're travelling by bus, some bags may be checked by customs, but you'll rarely stop for more than a few minutes. For Russia, however, everyone needs a visa and travellers face greater scrutiny.

### Bus

For almost all international bus services to/from Norway, the best website is [www.eurolines.nu](http://www.eurolines.nu), which acts as a feeder for national companies. For some country-specific information, see opposite.

### Train

Train travel is possible between Oslo and Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Hamburg, with less frequent services to northern and central Swedish cities from Narvik and Trondheim. For more details, see opposite.

### TRAIN PASSES

The ScanRail pass is no more. Instead, Eurail has expanded its coverage to include a pass that covers Norway only, as well as a pass that covers either three, four or five countries covered by Eurail that share a common border. Inter-Rail passes are also an option. In addition to the websites listed in the following sections, details about rail passes can also be found at [www.railpass.com](http://www.railpass.com).

**Eurail passes** ([www.eurailpass.com](http://www.eurailpass.com)) can only be bought by residents of non-European countries (residents of Turkey and Russia are also excluded), and are supposed to be purchased before arriving in Europe, although passes can be purchased within Europe if your passport proves you've been there for less than six months; the passes are, however, more expensive than getting them outside Europe. Try the **Oslo 5 train station** (Map pp96-7; ☎ 23 15 24 48) if you've arrived in Europe without one.

### Eurail Global Passes

Eurail Global Passes (often referred to as the Eurailpass) are valid for unlimited travel on national railways and some private lines in 20 European and Scandinavian countries. The passes do not cover the UK or the

Baltic countries. Eurail is also valid for some international ferries.

The Global Passes offer reasonable value to people aged under 26. A Youthpass is valid for unlimited 2nd-class travel for 15 days (US\$485), 21 days (US\$639), one month (US\$779), two months (US\$1099) or three months (US\$1359).

For those aged over 26, a standard 1st-class Eurailpass is valid for 15 days (US\$745), 21 days (US\$965), one month (US\$1199), two months (US\$1695) or three months (US\$2089). Two to five people travelling together can get good discounts on a Saverpass, which works like the standard Eurailpass. A 15-day Saverpass costs US\$629 per person for 15 days of continual travel and up to US\$1785 for three months. Children under four years travel free, and those between four and 11 pay half price.

There is also a Global Flexi option that allows 10/15 days travel within a two-month period for US\$879/1155 for people aged 26 or over.

### Eurail Select Passes

Eurail Select Passes allow travel within three to five bordering countries by rail or sea. Select Passes now includes all Scandinavian countries. They cover between five and 10 days travel (15 days for the five-country option) over two months and the pass must be used within six months of purchase. The cost is US\$459/505/599/695 for five/six/eight/10 days of travel in three countries for a person aged 26 and over in 1st class. There are greater discounts for people under 26 years of age (US\$335/365/425/485 in 2nd class) and people in groups of two to five people can use the Eurail Select Saverpass (US\$435/479/555/635 in 1st class). Reservations are required. The pass also offers some free ferry crossings within the selected region and also various discounts on other ferry crossings, selected bus services and car rental.

Note that Norway and Finland are not considered to be bordering countries as they are not adjoined by rail or ship.

### Eurail Norway Passes

The Norway passes cover from three to eight days of 2nd-class travel within one month. Sample costs for a person aged 26 years or over are US\$279/299/379/425 for three/four/six/eight days. For those aged under

26 years the costs are US\$209/229/289/319. There is also a Saverpass for groups of two or more. These passes offer discounts on selected bus services as well as international ferry services.

### Inter-Rail

**Inter-Rail passes** ([www.inter-rail.com](http://www.inter-rail.com)) are available to European residents of six-months standing (passport identification and evidence is required). Terms and conditions vary, but in the country of origin there's a discount of around 50% on normal fares.

Travellers over 26 can get the Inter-Rail 26+, valid for unlimited rail travel in many European and Scandinavian countries. The pass also gives 30% to 50% discounts on various other ferry routes (more than covered by Eurail) and certain river and lake services. A one-country pass for Norway costs UK£291/216 in 1st/2nd class for eight days of travel during a one-month period. An all-zone, one-month pass costs UK£583/431/288 for 1st/2nd/youth class, while all-zone Flexi Passes are also available.

### Denmark

**Nor-Way Bussekspress** ([www.nor-way.no](http://www.nor-way.no)) buses travel between Copenhagen and Oslo (Dkr340, eight hours, at least twice daily) via Göteborg, Malmö and the Øresund bridge. Three **Swebus Express** (☎ 8070 3300; [www.swebusexpress.se](http://www.swebusexpress.se)) buses also run to/from Copenhagen each day (from Skr323).

A cheaper alternative is **Lavprisekspresen** ([www.lavprisekspresen.no](http://www.lavprisekspresen.no) in Norwegian), which sells tickets over the internet for as little as Nkr49 for Oslo to Copenhagen, although Nkr149 or Nkr199 is more common; it all depends on how early you book.

### Finland

#### BUS

The E8 highway extends from Tornio, in Finland, to Tromsø, and secondary highways connect Finland with the northern Sami towns of Karasjok and Kautokeino. Regular buses serve all three routes.

The Finnish company **Eskelisen Lapin Linjat** (☎ 016-342 2160; [www.eskelisen-lapinlinjat.com](http://www.eskelisen-lapinlinjat.com)) has cross-border services (one daily service only), some of which are covered in the table, right; some services run only in summer.

### BUS TRAVEL FROM FINLAND

From	To	Price	Duration
Rovaniemi	Tana Bru	€74.40	7hr
Rovaniemi	Alta	€80.70	8hr
Rovaniemi	Karasjok	€61.80	7hr
Rovaniemi	Lakselv	€73.80	12½hr
Rovaniemi	Nordkapp	€113.70	12hr
Ivalo	Kirkenes	€39.50	3¼hr
Helsinki	Tromsø	€126.30	21½hr

### Germany

#### BUS

**Nor-Way Bussekspress** ([www.nor-way.no](http://www.nor-way.no)) buses connect Berlin with Oslo (€97, 15¼ hours) each day, via Rostock, Germany and Gothenburg (Göteborg), Sweden.

#### TRAIN

Hamburg is the central European gateway for Scandinavia; with up to three daily trains to Oslo, you may need to change in Malmö. For these services and online booking, contact **Deutsche Bahn** ([www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de)).

**Berlin Night Express** ([www.berlin-night-express.com](http://www.berlin-night-express.com)) has a daily overnight train from Berlin to Malmö in Sweden (bed in single/double compartments €250/125, 17¾ hours). Travelling to/from Oslo requires changing trains in Malmö, and in Gothenburg from late August until mid-June.

### Russia & Asia

#### BUS & TRAIN

Russia has a short border with Norway and buses run daily between Kirkenes and Murmansk. The rail link to/from eastern Asia via Russia can work out at about the same price as flying, depending on how much time and money you spend along the way, and it can be a lot more fun. Russian trains run as far as Murmansk (from St Petersburg).

For more details on overland travel to Russia, see p362. Check out Lonely Planet's *Trans-Siberian Railway* for detailed information on trans-Siberian travel.

### Sweden

#### BUS

**Lavprisekspresen** ([www.lavprisekspresen.no](http://www.lavprisekspresen.no), in Norwegian), which sells cheap tickets over the internet, operates a service that runs from Oslo to Copenhagen making stops in Gothenburg (Göteborg) and Malmö. Fares can be as low as Nkr49 or Nkr199, depending on how early you book.

Otherwise, the cheapest fares are with **Swibus Express** (☎ 0200 218 218; www.swibusexpress.se). Up to five daily buses run between Stockholm and Oslo (from Skr348, eight hours), with four each to Gothenburg (Göteborg; from Skr128, 4½ hours, four daily) and Malmö (from Skr210, eight hours, four daily).

There are also buses between Bodø and Skellefteå (Skr565, 8¾ hours, once daily except Saturday) and along the Blå Vägen, or 'Blue Highway', between Mo i Rana and Umeå (Skr282, eight hours, once daily).

## TRAIN

After three years of uncertainty, regular rail services have finally resumed between Oslo and Stockholm (Nkr454, six hours). Two trains run in each direction daily (one requiring a change in the Swedish city of Karlstad) from Monday to Friday and once daily on weekends. For more information, visit either **Norwegian Railways** (NSB; ☎ 81 50 08 88; www.nsb.no) or **Swedish Railways** (SJ; ☎ in Sweden 0771-75 75 99; www.sj.se).

There are also daily trains from Stockholm to Narvik (Skr1650, 18¾ hours). Journeys from Trondheim to Sweden via Storlien and Östersund require changing trains at the border. Trains also run between Oslo and Malmö (Skr733, 8¾ hours, twice daily), via Gothenburg (Skr573, four hours, four daily).

## UK BUS

Given that slow travel doesn't necessarily equate to environmentally sound travel, and given that it's cheaper to fly, it's difficult to see why you'd take the bus journey from London to Oslo (from UK£120, 36 hours, five weekly) via Brussels, Copenhagen and Gothenburg. Should you discover a good reason, contact **National Express** (☎ 0870 580 8080; www.national-express.com) or **Nor-Way Bussekspress** (☎ 81 54 44 44; www.nor-way.no).

## TRAIN

Travelling by train from the UK to Oslo (29 hours) can also be more expensive than flying, although it is much better for the environment. For tickets, contact **Euro Railways** (☎ 1-866-768 8927; www.eurorailways.com).

## SEA

### Transatlantic Passenger Ships

Regular, long-distance passenger ships disappeared with the advent of cheap air travel and

were replaced by a small number of luxury cruise ships. **Cunard Line** (www.cunardline.com; USA ☎ 800 728-6273; UK ☎ 0845 071-0300;) has sailings between New York and Southampton; summer cruises (late April to mid-August) operate from Southampton to the Norwegian coast (even into the fjords at Flåm) and back again. Basic prices for seven-day cruises start at UK£937 from Southampton.

## Ferry

Ferry connections between Norway and Denmark, Germany, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Sweden and also the UK provide straightforward links. Most ferry operators offer package deals that include taking a car and passengers, and most lines offer substantial discounts for seniors, students and children. Taking a bicycle incurs a small extra fee.

If you're travelling by international ferry, consider picking up your maximum duty-free alcohol allowance on the boat.

## DENMARK

The following companies operate ferries between Norway and Denmark.

**Color Line** (www.colorline.com; Denmark ☎ 99 56 19 77; Norway ☎ 81 00 08 11)

**DFDS Seaways** (www.dfdsseaways.com; Denmark ☎ 43 42 30 82; Norway ☎ 21 62 13 00)

**Fjord Line** (www.fjordline.com; Norway ☎ 81 53 35 00; Denmark ☎ 97 96 14 01)

**Stena Line** (☎ in Norway 02010; www.steneline.no)

The table opposite lists the possible routes. Listed fares are for high season (mid-June to mid-August); at other times, fares can be half the high-season price but departures are much less frequent.

On all of the Color Line routes in the table (p409) except Bergen–Hirtshals, a car with up to five people costs €198/231 on weekdays/weekends, while DFDS Seaways charges €195, including two passengers. On Stena Line, a car with driver includes costs from €122, while to Bergen with Fjord Line costs around €120, including driver and one passenger.

## GERMANY

**Color Line** (www.colorline.com; Germany ☎ 0431-7300 300; Norway ☎ 81 00 08 11;) has a daily ferry link between Kiel and Oslo (20 hours). From mid-June to mid-August, reclining chairs start at

## FERRY ROUTES BETWEEN DENMARK & NORWAY

To	From	Fare per person	Duration	Times per week	Ferry operator
Bergen	Hanstholm	€20-160	18hr	3	Fjord Line
Bergen	Hirtshals	€74-80	22½hr	3	Color Line
Egersund	Hanstholm	€10-160	6¾hr	7	Fjord Line
Haugesund	Hanstholm	€20-160	13¾hr	3	Fjord Line
Kristiansand	Hirtshals	€54-60	4½hr	6	Color Line
Larvik	Fredrikshavn	€54-60	6¼hr	11	Color Line
Larvik	Hirtshals	€54-60	5¾hr	7	Color Line
Oslo	Copenhagen	€184	16hr	7	DFDS Seaways
Oslo	Fredrikshavn	from €24	12hr	7	Stena Line & Color Line
Oslo	Hirtshals	€54-60	8½hr	4	Color Line
Stavanger	Hirtshals	€54-60	11hr	3	Color Line

€98 (Sunday to Thursday) or €108 (Friday and Saturday). Cars cost €80. Outside high season, one-way/return packages are available for a car and basic cabin for two people for €328/350.

## ICELAND & THE FAROE ISLANDS

**Smyril Line** (www.smyril-line.fo; in the Faroes ☎ 345900; Norway ☎ 55 59 65 20;) runs once weekly from May to mid-September between Bergen and Seyðisfjörður (Iceland), via Lerwick (Shetland, Scotland) and the Faroe Islands. One-way fares from Bergen begin at €195 to Tórshavn (25 hours) in the Faroes, and €295 to Seyðisfjörður (46 hours).

## SWEDEN

**Color Line** (www.colorline.com; Sweden ☎ 0526-62000; Norway ☎ 81 00 08 11) operates ferry services between Sandefjord and Strömstad (€22, 2½hr, twice daily).

## UK

**Smyril Line** (www.smyril-line.fo; UK ☎ 01595-690845; Norway ☎ 55 59 65 20;) sails between Lerwick (Shetland) and Bergen, from May to mid-September, and takes at least 10½ hours. Couchette fares in low/high-season are UK£53/73 and cars up to 5m long are priced at UK£42/61.

The popular **DFDS Seaways** (www.dfdsseaways.com; UK ☎ 01255-240240; Norway ☎ 22 41 90 90) operates services from Newcastle to Bergen (with/without car from UK£149/80, 27 hours, twice weekly), Stavanger (with/without car from UK£225/167, 19½ hours, three weekly) and Haugesund (with/with-

out car from UK£297/167, 22½ hours, twice weekly).

## TOURS

Given the expenses involved in Norwegian travel, it may be worth looking into an organised tour. Several reputable operators offer affordable itineraries. For details of some Norwegian operators, see p418.

## Australia

**Bentours International** (☎ 02-9251 1574; www.bentours.com.au; Level 7, 189 Kent St, Sydney) is one of the few Australian travel agencies specialising in Scandinavia.

## France

**Grand Nord Grand Large** (☎ 01 40 46 05 14; www.gngl.com in French; 15 rue du Cardinal Lemoine, F-75005 Paris) seeks out the locations and activities that are noticed by only a handful of other companies. In Norway, it offers cruises and hiking in Svalbard and Lofoten, among other destinations.

## North America

**Backroads** (☎ 800 462-2848; www.backroads.com; 801 Cedar St, Berkeley, CA 94710-1800) offers up-market cycling tours of Lofoten and the Vesterålen archipelago as well as a six-day hiking, rail and ferry tour between Geilo and Sognefjorden.

**Borton Overseas** (☎ 800 843-0602; www.bortonoverseas.com; 5412 Lyndale Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55419) specialises in adventure travel with dozens of Norwegian tours including hiking, cycling and cross-country skiing.

**Brekke Tours** (☎ 800 437-5302; www.brekketours.com; 802 N 43rd St, Grand Forks, ND 58203) caters mainly for North Americans of Norwegian descent, and has both excellent escorted and independent tours.

**Destination Wilderness** (☎ 1800 423-8868; www.wildernesstrips.com; PO Box 1965 Sisters, OR 97759) promises medium-level hiking in the Jotunheimen and Rondane national parks among others.

**Scanam World Tours & Cruises** (☎ 800 545-2204; www.scanamtours.com; 108 N Main St, Cranbury, NJ 08512) organises cruises and shorter upmarket tours, including an eight-day fjord tour.

**Scantours** (☎ 800 223-7226; www.scantours.com) has an extensive range of short tours in Norway, from one day around Sognefjord ('Norway in a Nutshell') to 12 days aboard the Hurtigruten coastal ferry.

## UK

**Arctic Experience** (☎ 01737-218800, www.arctic-experience.co.uk; 8 Bolters Lane, Banstead, Surrey SM7 2AR) is one of the most popular tour operators for Scandinavia and offers a range of hiking tours, skiing expeditions, snowmobile safaris and short breaks, mostly in Svalbard.

**Arcturus Expeditions** (☎ 1432-850 886; www.arcturusexpeditions.co.uk; PO Box 41, Hereford, HR1 9DP) is one of Britain's most inventive operators and organises tours through the furthest reaches of the polar regions. In Norway, it offers hiking and dog-sledding in Finnmark and Dividalen, and icebreaker cruises and trekking in and around Svalbard.

**Go Fishing Worldwide** (☎ 0208-742 1552; www.gofishingworldwide.co.uk; 2 Oxford House, 24 Oxford Rd N, London, W4 4DH) organises tailor-made fishing trips to Norway.

**Scantours** (☎ 020-7554 3530; www.scantoursuk.com; 73 Mornington St., London NW11 7QE) offers a wide range of options throughout Norway and Svalbard, lasting from five to 13 days.

**Taber Holidays** (☎ 01274-594 642; www.taberholidays.co.uk; Tofts House, Tofts Rd, Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire BD19 3WX) offers highlight-oriented, and all-inclusive tours around Norway, including cruises, coach and self-drive tours.

**Tangent Expeditions International** (☎ 01539-822363; www.tangent-expeditions.co.uk; Glebe House, Crook, Kendal, Cumbria LA8 8LG) runs well-organised ski and mountaineering trips to Svalbard.

**Waymark Holidays** (☎ 0870-9509800; www.waymarkholidays.com; First Choice House, London Rd, Crawley, West Sussex, RH10 9GX) specialises particularly in

Nordic skiing and hiking holidays in the Gol and Oslo areas.

For more information on tours at Svalbard, see p373.

## GETTING AROUND

Norway's has an extremely efficient public transport system and its trains, buses and ferries are often timed to link with each other. The handy *NSB Togruter*, available free at most train stations, details rail timetables and includes information on connecting buses. Boat and bus departures vary with the season and the day (services on Saturday are particularly sparse, although less so in the summer high season), so pick up the latest *ruleplan* (timetables) from regional tourist offices.

Rail lines reach as far north as Bodø (you can also reach Narvik by rail from Sweden); further north you're limited to buses and ferries. Inter-Rail and Eurail pass holders are entitled to discounts on some northern routes. Some express boats and buses offer a 50% discount for the second person when two people travel together. A fine alternative to land travel is the Hurtigruten coastal ferry, which calls in at every sizable port between Bergen and Kirkenes.

One thing that you should always watch out for, whether you're travelling by bus, train or air, are cheaper *minipris* tickets; they're usually available only if you book early and/or over the internet.

## AIR Airlines in Norway

Norway has nearly 50 airports with scheduled commercial flights, from Kristiansand in the south to Longyearbyen and Ny Ålesund (Svalbard) in the north. For a full list visit [www.avinor.no](http://www.avinor.no). Due to the time and distances involved in overland travel, even budget travellers may want to consider a segment or two by air.

The five airlines operating on domestic routes:

**Coast Air** (☎ 52 84 85 00; www.coastair.no)

**Danish Air Transport** (☎ 57 74 67 00; www.dat.dk)

**Norwegian** (☎ 81 52 18 15; www.norwegian.no)

**SAS Braathens** (☎ 91 50 54 00; www.sasbraathens.no)

**Widerøe** (☎ 81 00 12 00; www.wideroe.no)

The major Norwegian domestic routes are quite competitive, meaning that it is possible (if you're flexible about departure dates and book early) to travel with SAS Braathens from Oslo to Bergen (from Nkr461), Ålesund (from Nkr380), Stavanger (from Nkr380), Tromsø (from Nkr547) and Trondheim (from Nkr461) for little more than the equivalent train fare. That said, fares vary widely – for example, on the Bergen–Oslo route, you could pay anywhere from Nkr461 to Nkr1724.

Although their coverage is not quite as extensive, both Widerøe (a subsidiary of SAS) and Norwegian usually offer cheaper fares (eg Oslo–Bergen with Norwegian starts at Nkr320, while the cheapest fare we found with Widerøe was Nkr361). Coast Air, based in Haugesund, flies small planes and has a much smaller network, which includes Haugesund–Bergen (from Nkr399), Haugesund–Sandefjord (from Nkr490) and Oslo–Roros (Nkr499).

Danish Air Transport has flights to Florø from Bergen and Oslo; one-way fares start at Nkr353.

## Air Passes

Air passes have become less important in recent years as most airline companies have slashed the prices of their regular one-way or return tickets. As always, keep an eye out for *minipris* return tickets, which can cost just 10% more than full-fare one-way tickets. There are also sometimes promotional fares that make return tickets even cheaper than one-way tickets. In addition, spouses (including gay partners), children aged two to 15 and senior citizens over 67 years of age are eligible for 50% discounts. Both SAS Braathens and Widerøe offer significant discount deals for travellers aged under 26 (and students aged under 32).

## BICYCLE

Given Norway's great distances, hilly terrain and narrow roads, only serious cyclists engage in extensive cycle touring, but those who do rave about the experience. Assuming you've steeled yourself for the challenge of ascending mountain after mountain, the long-distance cyclist's biggest headache will be tunnels (see the boxed text, p416), and there are thousands of them. Most of these, especially in the Western Fjords, are closed to

nonmotorised traffic; in many (although not all) cases there are outdoor bike paths running parallel to the tunnels. If no such path exists, alternative routes may involve a few days' pedalling around a long fjord or over a high mountain pass.

Rural buses, express ferries and nonexpress trains carry bikes for various additional fees (around Nkr100), but express trains don't allow them at all and international trains treat them as excess baggage (Nkr250). Nor-Way Bussekspress charges half the adult fare to transport a bicycle!

There are also opportunities for those who see cycling as more a hobby than a mode of transport. For details of possible cycling routes in Norway, turn to p388; our favourite cycling routes are covered in the boxed text, p389.

The Norwegian government takes cycling seriously enough to have developed an official **Cycling Strategy** ([www.sykkelby.no](http://www.sykkelby.no)), among the primary goals of which are to increase cycling in larger Norwegian cities.

## Hire

Although there are few dedicated bicycle hire places outside larger towns, most tourist offices and many hostels and camping grounds rent out bicycles. Bicycle shops are another good place to ask. Rental usually starts at around Nkr50 for an hour and is rarely more than Nkr250 per day, although prices drop if you rent for a few days.

## BOAT

Norway's excellent system of ferries connects otherwise inaccessible, isolated communities with an extensive network of car ferries crisscrossing the fjords; express boats link the country's offshore islands to the mainland. Most ferries accommodate motor vehicles, but express coastal services normally take only foot passengers and cyclists, as do the lake steamers.

Highway ferries are subsidised and therefore aren't overly expensive (at least in a Norwegian context), but long queues and delays are possible at popular crossings in summer. They do, however, run deep into the night, especially in summer, and some run around the clock, although departures in the middle of the night are less frequent. Details on schedules and prices for vehicle ferries and lake steamers are provided in the timetables published by the Norwegian Tourist Board,

or *Rutebok for Norge*. Tourist offices can also provide timetables for local ferries.

### Canal Trips

Southern Norway's Telemark region has an extensive network of canals, rivers and lakes. There are regular ferry services or you can travel using your own boat. See the boxed text, p152 for details.

### Hurtigruten Coastal Ferry

For more than a century, Norway's legendary **Hurtigruten coastal ferry** (☎ 810 30 000; www.hurtigruten.com) has served as a lifeline linking coastal towns and villages and it's now one of the most popular ways to explore Norway. Year in, year out, one of 11 Hurtigruten ferries heads north from Bergen almost every night of the year, pulling into 35 ports on its six-day journey to Kirkenes, where it then turns around and heads back south. The return journey takes 11 days and covers a distance of 2500 nautical miles. In agreeable weather (which is by no means guaranteed) the fjord and mountain scenery along the way is nothing short of spectacular. Most of the ships are modern, others are showing their age; the oldest ship dates from 1982, but all were substantially remodelled in the 1990s.

If you're travelling as a deck-class passenger, there are baggage rooms, a shower room, a 24-hour cafeteria and a coin laundry. Meals are served in the dining room and you can buy snacks and light meals in the cafeteria. At night, some people roll out a sleeping bag on the floor in one of the lounges, but all-night activity will mean short nights of little sleep, especially in the 24-hour summer daylight; at least one Lonely Planet author enjoyed a blissful sleep curled up in a cupboard.

Summer fares, which run from mid-April to mid-September, are considerably more

#### HURTIGRUTEN – READER'S TIP

Australian travellers Bruce and Jo praise the Hurtigruten coastal steamer service as being very pleasant and well organised, but provide the advice that 'pressure is exerted to sign up for a 'water plan' that provides still/sparkling water in bottles in the dining room that you can take to your cabins.' Be aware that this option is expensive and the quality of water from taps is fine. They note that tap water is served in the dining room if the staff are pushed. They also note that, on their trip at least, the pay phones on board did not return your money if you failed to get a connection.

expensive than winter prices. Sample summer/winter deck-class fares from Bergen are Nkr1705/1194 to Trondheim, Nkr2708/1895 to Bodø, Nkr3499/2449 to Tromsø and Nkr5426/3798 to Kirkenes. Cars can also be carried for an extra fee. Children aged four to 16, students, and seniors over the age of 67, all receive a 50% discount, as do accompanying spouses and children aged 16 to 25. Ask also about cheaper, 21-day coastal passes if you're aged between 16 and 26 years.

If you prefer an en suite cabin you'll pay an additional Nkr210 to Nkr3380. Cabins are extremely popular; book well in advance.

You may want to break up the trip with shore excursions, especially if you're travelling the entire route. The possibilities, which are organised by the shipping company, include the following (northbound/southbound excursions are denoted by N/S): an overland tour between Geiranger and Ålesund or Molde (N; three or seven hours); a short tour of Trondheim (S; two hours); a day trip to Svartisen (N; six hours); spins around

#### THE HURTIGRUTEN – SLOW TRAVEL?

Although the Hurtigruten route is a marvellous journey, some travellers are keen to emphasise that it's more useful as a means of getting from one town to the next than it is for sightseeing at towns along the route as the ferry usually only stops in ports for 15 to 60 minutes and these times can be cut shorter if the ferry is behind schedule. As David, a traveller from Australia noted: 'There was only one stop which gave any opportunity to visit a town, Trondheim, but that was at 6am till 9.30am... The attitude of the ship was geared to meeting the route times.'

It is important to keep in mind that even though the majority of passengers are tourists, the Hurtigruten is a regular ferry service not a tour. David also notes 'There are few activities on the boat – passengers need to take plenty of books to read.'

Lofoten (S; three hours) and Vesterålen (S; four hours); a haul from Honningsvåg up to Nordkapp (N; four hours); an overland tour between Honningsvåg and Hammerfest, via Nordkapp (S; seven hours); and a tour from Kirkenes, at the end of the route, to the Russian border (two hours). These offer fairly good value (contact the operators for prices) but, in some cases, you'll miss segments of the coastal scenery.

The Hurtigruten website carries a full list of international sales agents. You can also purchase tickets through **Fjord Tours** (☎ 81 56 82 22; www.fjordtours.no).

### Yacht

Exploring the Norwegian coastline aboard your own yacht is one of life's more pleasurable experiences, although harsh weather conditions may restrict how far north you go. Almost every town along Norway's southern coast has an excellent *gjestehavn* (guest harbour) where the facilities include showers, toilets, electricity and laundries as a bare minimum, while some offer bicycle hire and wireless internet. Standard mooring fees generally range from Nkr100 to Nkr150 per 24 hours.

### BUS

Buses on Norway's extensive long-distance bus network are comfortable and make a habit of running on time.

**Nor-Way Bussekspress** (☎ 82 02 13 00; www.nor-way.no) operates the largest network of express buses in Norway, with routes connecting most towns and cities, from Mandal in the far south to Alta in the far north. There are also a number of independent long-distance companies that provide similar prices and levels of service.

Considerably cheaper are buses operated by **Lavprisrekspressen** (☎ 67 98 04 80; www.lavprisrekspressen.no in Norwegian), which sells tickets over the internet. At the time of writing, it only operates along routes from Oslo to Bergen, Trondheim and Kristiansand, but let's hope that the number of routes expands and that the competition drives down the prices of other companies. In the meantime, Oslo to Bergen costs as little as Nkr149 with Lavprisrekspressen; the cheapest fare with Nor-Way Bussekspress is Nkr700.

In northern Norway, there are several *Togbuss* (train-bus) routes, while elsewhere there's also a host of local buses, most of

which are confined to a single *fylke* (county). Most local and even some long-distance bus schedules are drastically reduced everywhere in Norway on Saturday, Sunday and in the low (usually mid-August to mid-June).

To get a complete listing of bus timetables (and some prices) throughout the country, pick up a copy of the free *Rutehefte* from any reasonably sized bus station and some tourist offices. All bus stations and tourist offices have smaller timetables for the relevant routes passing through town.

### Costs & Reservations

Advance reservations are almost never required in Norway and Nor-Way Bussekspress even has a 'Seat Guarantee – No Reservation' belief in its ability to get you where you want to go at the time of your choosing. That said, you're more likely to find cheaper fares the further in advance you book.

Buying tickets over the internet is usually the best way to get the cheapest fare. Tickets are also sold on most buses or in advance at the bus station, and fares are based on the distance travelled, averaging around Nkr165 for the first 100km. Some bus companies quote bus fares excluding any ferry costs so always check.

Many bus companies offer student, child, senior and family discounts of 25% to 50%, so it pays to inquire when purchasing. Groups (including two people travelling together) may also be eligible for discounts. In northern Norway, holders of Inter-Rail and Eurail passes (see p406) are also often eligible for discounts on some routes.

In summer, special *minipris* tickets are frequently offered for some of the more popular long-distance services if you book early.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

There are no special requirements for bringing your car to Norway. For details on ferry services to Norway from other European countries, see p408.

### Automobile Associations

By reciprocal agreement, members affiliated with AIT (Alliance Internationale de Tourisme) national automobile associations are eligible for 24-hour breakdown recovery assistance from the **Norges Automobil-Forbund** (NAF; ☎ 08505, 22 34 14 00; www.naf.no). NAF patrols





through rocky impediments to straighten routes. To get an idea of just how hard-won were Norway's roads and tunnels through the mountains, visit the Norwegian Museum of Road History (p168) outside Lillehammer.

Most tunnels are lit and many longer ones have exhaust fans to remove fumes, while others are lined with padded insulation to absorb both fumes and sound. Motorcyclists must be wary of fumes in longer tunnels and may want to avoid them.

We do, however, have two complaints. For all their considerable expertise in road-building, Norway's transport authorities seem incapable of understanding the frustration of sitting behind a slow vehicle for an hour or more. More overtaking lanes please!

Which brings us to our other complaint. When you've spent four hours going just 200km along a major, though single-lane, highway, it's galling to say the least to have to pay a toll (up to Nkr150) for the privilege. Road tolls are particularly common in the south, where you should always keep a stack of coins handy. New segments of highway and recently built tunnels and bridges must be paid off in user tolls. In theory, the tolls are dropped when the construction project is paid off, although some privately funded facilities become quite lucrative so this doesn't always happen. Then again, by one estimate,

one-quarter of the road construction budget comes from tolls. Oslo, Bergen, Tønsberg, Trondheim, Stavanger, Kristiansand and little Evje also impose tolls on drivers every time they cross the city limits. Note that there's a Nkr350 fine if you use a lane reserved for vehicles with *abonnement* (subscription) passes. Motorcycles aren't subject to the tolls.

A good guide for those wanting to know more is Erling Welle-Strand's concise *Motoring in Norway*.

### Road Hazards

Older roads and mountain routes are likely to be narrow, with multiple hairpin bends and very steep gradients. Although most areas are accessible by car (and very often tour bus), some of the less-used routes have poor or untarred surfaces only suitable for 4WD vehicles and some seemingly normal roads can narrow sharply with very little warning. On some mountain roads, caravans and campervans are forbidden or advisable only for experienced drivers, as it may be necessary to reverse in order to allow approaching traffic to pass. Restricted roads for caravans are outlined on a map published by **Vegdirektoratet** (☎ 02030; www.vegvesen.no; Brynsengfarete 6A, 0667 Oslo); it also has a handy route planner at [www.visveg.no/norguide/](http://www.visveg.no/norguide/).

### TUNNELS IN NORWAY

In November 2000, after nearly six years of construction, the world's longest road tunnel, from Lærdal to Aurland (24.51km long, 7.59km longer than the St Gotthard tunnel in Switzerland), was completed at a total cost of Nkr1082 million. There are no tolls to use the tunnel as it was paid for entirely by the national government. The two-lane tunnel, part of the vital E16 road connecting Oslo and Bergen, reduces the difficulties of winter driving and replaces the lengthy Gudvangen-Lærdal ferry route. It was drilled through very hard pre-Cambrian gneiss, with over 1400m of overhead rock at one point. There's a treatment plant for dust and nitrogen dioxide in the tunnel, 34 gigantic ventilation fans, emergency phones every 500m and three bizarre 'galleries' with blue lighting to 'liven up' the 20-minute trip.

Motorists should tune into NRK radio (p386) when driving through the tunnel (yes, there are transmitters inside!) in case of emergency.

Norway has three out of the 10 longest road tunnels in the world, and other long road tunnels in Norway include: Gudvangentunnelen in Sogn og Fjordane (11.43km, also on the E16); Folgefonnentunnelen in Hardanger (11.15km, on Rv551 and passing beneath the Folgefonn icecap); Steigentunnelen in Nordland (8.06km, on Rv835); and Svartisentunnelen in Nordland (7.61km, on Rv17 and passing beneath the Svartisen icecap).

Norway also has a number of undersea tunnels, which typically bore around 40m below the sea bed. The longest ones include Oslofjordtunnelen (7.2km, on Rv23, south of Oslo), Nordkapptunnelen (6.87km, on the E69 and connecting Magerøya Island to the mainland) and Byfjordtunnelen (5.86km, on the E39 just north of Stavanger).

### HASTE MAKES WASTE

The national speed limit is 80km/h on the open road, but pass a house or place of business and the limit drops to 70km/h or even 60km/h. Through villages limits range from 50km/h to 60km/h and, in residential areas, they're 30km/h. A few roads have segments allowing 90km/h, and you can drive at 100km/h on a small part of the E6 – bliss! The speed limit for caravans (and cars pulling trailers) is usually 10km/h less than for cars.

The lethargy-inspiring national speed limits may seem laborious by your home standards, but avoid the temptation to drive faster as they're taken very seriously. Mobile police units lurk at the side of the roads. Watch for signs designating *Automatisk Trafikkontrol*, which means that there's a speed camera ahead; these big and ugly grey boxes have no mercy at all.

You'll be nabbed for even 5km/h over the limit – there's no leniency, no compromises, and fines range from Nkr1000 to well over Nkr10,000. Norwegian nationals risk losing their driving licences and could even land in jail.

If you're expecting snowy or icy conditions, use studded tyres or carry snow chains. In Oslo, snow chains can be hired from **Hakres** (☎ 35 51 48 57; fax 35 51 52 50) for Nkr1000/1500 for one/two weeks, including changing of tyres. Your ordinary tyres are kept as a deposit. Snow chains can also be obtained in the UK from **Snowchains Europroducts** (☎ 01732-884 408; [www.snowchains.co.uk](http://www.snowchains.co.uk)).

One reader wrote to us that 'Norwegian drivers treat speed limits with utter contempt', that 'all Norwegian drivers are wannabe rally drivers' and told of being tailgated, overtaken on blind turns, experiencing general lack of courtesy and leaving Norway 'a nervous wreck'. Our only explanation for such an experience is that he must have encountered a Lonely Planet author succumbing to a sudden rush of blood in frustration at the sedate pace of Norwegian driving. In all our years of driving on Norwegian roads, we have far more often encountered politeness and a general adherence to speed limits.

### Road Rules

In Norway, traffic keeps to the right. At road junctions, you must give way to cars coming from the right, which are liable to shoot across your bows 'like a troll from a box', as one Norwegian told us. The use of seat belts is obligatory at all times and children under the age of four must have their own seat or safety restraint. The use of dipped headlights (including on motorcycles) is required at all times and right-hand-drive vehicles must (in theory) have beam deflectors affixed to their headlight in order to avoid blinding oncoming traffic. Drivers must carry a red warning triangle to use in the event of a breakdown;

motorists must always give way to pedestrians at zebra crossings; and vehicles from other countries should bear an oval-shaped nationality sticker on the back. Motorcycles may not be parked on the pavement (sidewalk) and are subject to the same parking regulations as cars.

Drink-driving laws are strict in Norway: the maximum permissible blood alcohol content is 0.02% and violators are subject to severe fines and/or imprisonment. Because establishments serving alcohol may legally share liability in the case of an accident, you may not be served even a small glass of beer if the server or bartender knows you're driving.

UK-registered vehicles must carry a vehicle registration document (Form V5), or a Certificate of Registration (Form V379, available from the DVLA in the UK). For vehicles not registered in the driver's name, you'll require written permission from the registered owner.

Most road signs are international, but a white M on a blue background indicates a passing place on a single-track road (the 'm' stands for *møtepass*). *All Stans Forbudt* means 'No Stopping', *Enveiskjøring* is 'One Way'; *Kjøring Forbudt* is 'Driving Prohibited' or 'Do Not Enter'; *Parkering Forbudt* is 'No Parking'; and *Rekverk Mangler* is 'Guardrail Missing'.

For more detail than you probably need, there's a downloadable PDF of Norway's road rules on the website for **Vegdirektoratet** ([www.vegvesen.no](http://www.vegvesen.no)); follow the links to 'Road Users', then 'Traffic Rules'.

### Vehicle Ferries

While travelling along the scenic but mountainous and fjord-studded west coast may be

spectacular, it also requires numerous ferry crossings that can prove time-consuming and costly. For a complete list of ferry schedules and fares, get hold of the Nkr225 *Rutebok for Norge*, a phone book-sized transport guide sold in bookshops and larger Narvesen kiosks. Otherwise, order directly from **Norsk Reiseinformasjon** (☎ 22 47 73 40; www.reiseinfo.no; Karl Johans gate 12A, 0154 Oslo), or download it at www.rutebok.no.

## HITCHING

Hitching isn't entirely safe and we don't recommend it. Travellers who decide to hitch should understand they're taking a potentially serious risk. People who choose to hitch will be safer if they travel in pairs and let someone know where they're planning to go.

If you're determined to hitch, you'll find Norwegians generally friendly, and they understand that not all foreigners enjoy an expense-account budget or earn Norwegian salaries. Your chances of success are better on main highways, but you still may wait for hours in bad weather. One good approach is to ask for rides from truck drivers at ferry terminals and petrol stations; that way, you'll normally have a place to keep warm and dry while you wait.

## LOCAL TRANSPORT

### Bus

Nearly every town in Norway supports a network of local buses, which circulate around the town centre and also connect it with outlying areas. In many smaller towns, the local bus terminal is adjacent to the train station, ferry quay and/or long-distance bus terminal. Fares range from Nkr16 to Nkr25 per ride. Day- or multitrip tickets are also available.

### Taxi

Taxis are best hailed around taxi ranks, but you can also reserve one by phone. If you're phoning for a taxi immediately, remember that charges begin at the moment the call is taken. Daytime fares, which apply from 6am to 7pm on weekdays and from 6am to 3pm on Saturday, cost from Nkr31.20 at flagfall (more in larger cities), plus Nkr12 to Nkr19 per kilometre. Weekday evening fares are 22% higher, and in the early morning, on Saturday afternoon and evening, and on Sunday, they're 30% higher. On holidays, you'll pay 45% more. In some places, you may find 'maxi-taxis',

which can carry up to eight passengers for about the same price.

## TOURS

Norway has some outstanding local tours that enable you to make the most of limited time and which save the hassle of having to arrange your own transport. In every tourist office you'll find an exhaustive collection of leaflets, folders and brochures outlining their offerings in the immediate area.

### Fjord Tours

#### NORWAY IN A NUTSHELL

An extremely popular option is the almost legendary, year-round 'Norway in a Nutshell' tour, organised through travel agencies, NSB rail services and tourist offices around southern and western Norway. To find out more, contact **Fjord Tours** (☎ 81 56 82 22; www.fjordtours.no). Itineraries vary, but most involve a one- or two-day excursion taking in the rail line between Bergen or Oslo and Myrdal, the Flåmsbana line to Flåm, a cruise along Nærøfjord to Gudvangen, a bus to Voss, and then rail trips to Bergen or to Oslo on the overnight train. The full tour from Oslo to Bergen costs Nkr1165/1896 one-way/return. The cheaper (and shorter) options from Bergen/Voss cost Nkr820/530.

#### OTHER TOURS

Fjord Tours also organises a number of other, similar self-guided tours around southern and western Norway. These include: the Triangle Tour (from Oslo to Stavanger with a 'Norway in a Nutshell' itinerary en route; Nkr1770); the Golden Route (round trip to/from Oslo via Otta, Geiranger, Åndalsnes, Trondheim and Dombås; from Trondheim/Oslo Nkr1530/1760); Explore Hardangerfjord (round trip to/from Bergen via Voss, Ulvik, Eidfjord and Norheimsund; Nkr645); and a host of other one- to five-day tours, some of which include the Hurtigruten Coastal Ferry. Each of these tours can, like 'Norway in a Nutshell', be taken in whole or in part. Full details are available on the Fjord Tours website or from most larger tourist offices.

Other companies that offer fjord tours include **Norway Fjord Cruise** (☎ 57 65 69 99; www.fjordcruise.no) whose offerings include Lofoten and Sognefjord, and **Fjord1** (☎ 55 90 70 70; www.fjord1.no/fylkesbaatane), which runs a range of tours and ferries.

## MINIPRIS – A TRAVELLER'S BEST FRIEND

If you plan to travel on longer routes by train through Norway and know your itinerary in advance, the following information will save you hundreds of kroner. On every route, for every departure, Norwegian State Railways sets aside a limited number of tickets known as *minipris*. Those who book the earliest can get just about any route for just Nkr199. Once those are exhausted, the next batch of *minipris* tickets goes for Nkr299 and so on. These tickets cannot be purchased at ticket counters and must instead be bought over the internet (www.nsb.no) or in ticket-vending machines at train stations. The other catch is that *minipris* tickets may only be purchased in advance (minimum one day). One NSB official told us that in peak seasons (especially from mid-June to mid-August) on popular routes, you may need to book up to three weeks in advance to get the cheapest fares, which may reduce the appeal of the *minipris* system. That said, the savings are considerable.

For more information on touring the Western Fjords, see the boxed texts, p201 and p215.

## Den Norske Turistforening

**Den Norske Turistforening** (DNT; Norwegian Mountain Touring Club; ☎ 22 82 28 22; www.turistforeningen.no; Storgata 3) organises hundreds of year-round adventure trips in the Norwegian mountains, including cycling, fishing, hiking, skiing, glacier hiking, rock and ice-climbing, family activities, hut-to-hut trekking, Svalbard tours, and so on. Information on the tours is available on the DNT website, or you can pick up the brochure *Norwegian Summer* from any DNT office.

## TRAIN

**Norwegian State Railways** (Norges Statsbaner; NSB; ☎ 81 50 08 88; www.nsb.no) operates an excellent, though limited, system of lines connecting Oslo with Stavanger, Bergen, Åndalsnes, Trondheim, Fauske and Bodø; lines also connect Sweden with Oslo, Trondheim and Narvik. Most train stations offer luggage lockers for Nkr20 to Nkr50 and many also have baggage storage rooms.

Most long-distance day trains have 1st- and 2nd-class seats and a buffet car or refreshment trolley service. Public phones can be found in all express trains and most Inter-City trains. Doors are wide and there's space for bulky luggage, such as backpacks or skis.

Reservations cost an additional Nkr35 and are mandatory on a number of long-

distance routes, including between Oslo and Bergen.

## Classes & Costs

On long-distance trains, 2nd-class carriages provide comfortable reclining seats with footrests. First-class carriages, which cost 50% more, offer marginally more space and often a food trolley, but they're generally not worth the extra expense.

Travelling by train in Norway is (like everything else) expensive. Indeed, the fact that it often costs less to fly than it does to catch a train puts a serious dint in Norway's otherwise impressive environmental credentials. However, if you learn how to work the *minipris* system (see the boxed text, above), or the train passes (see p406), train travel suddenly becomes affordable. And think of the scenery...

There's a 50% discount on rail travel for people aged 67 and older and for children under 16. Children under four travel free. Students get a 60/40% discount on departures marked green/white in timetables.

Second-class sleepers offer a good, cheap sleep: a bed in a three-berth cabin costs Nkr135; two-berth cabins cost Nkr240/295 per person in old/new carriages.

## Train Passes

For details of rail passes that can be used in Norway (but which should be bought before you arrive in the country), see p406. Eurail now has a pass that includes only Norway.

# Health

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Travel health depends on your predeparture preparations, your daily health care while travelling and how you handle any medical problem that does develop. If you do fall ill while in Norway you will be very well looked after as health care is excellent.

Norway is, in general, a very healthy place and no special precautions are necessary when visiting. The biggest risks are likely to be viral infections in winter, sunburn and insect bites in summer, and foot blisters from hiking.

For a medical emergency dial ☎ 113; visit a local pharmacy or medical centre if you have a minor medical problem and can explain what it is. Hospital casualty wards will help if the problem is more serious. Nearly all health professionals in Norway speak English; tourist offices and hotels can make recommendations.

## BEFORE YOU GO

Prevention is the key to staying healthy while abroad. A little planning before departure, particularly for pre-existing illnesses, will save trouble later – see your dentist before a long trip, carry a spare pair of contact lenses and glasses, and take your optical prescription with you. You will have no problem getting new glasses or contact lenses made up quickly and

### TRAVEL HEALTH WEBSITES

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel-health website (if available) before departure:

**Australia** [www.dfat.gov.au/travel](http://www.dfat.gov.au/travel)

**Canada** [www.travelhealth.gc.ca](http://www.travelhealth.gc.ca)

**UK** [www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice](http://www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice)

**USA** [www.cdc.gov/travel](http://www.cdc.gov/travel)

competently in Norway, but you will pay for the privilege. Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled containers. A signed, dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications is also a good idea. Most medications are available in Norway, 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.

### INSURANCE

If you're an EU citizen, an E111 form (available from health centres, or post offices in the UK) covers you for most medical care, except nonemergencies or emergency repatriation home. Citizens from other countries should find out if there is a reciprocal arrangement for free medical care between their country and Norway. If you do need health insurance, strongly consider a policy that covers you for the worst possible scenario, such as an accident requiring an emergency flight home. If you're planning on engaging in activities such as hiking, dog-sledding, skiing, rock climbing or more high-speed pursuits such as bungee jumping, make sure that your insurance policy doesn't exclude such 'dangerous' activities. Find out in advance if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. The former option is generally preferable, as it doesn't require you to pay out of pocket in a foreign country.

### RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that all travellers should be covered

### MEDICAL KIT CHECK LIST

Following is a list of items you should consider including in your medical kit – consult your pharmacist for brands available in your country.

- antibiotics – consider including these if you're travelling well off the beaten track; see your doctor, as they must be prescribed, and carry the prescription with you
- antifungal cream or powder – for fungal skin infections and thrush
- antihistamine – for allergies, eg hay fever; to ease the itch from insect bites or stings; and to prevent motion sickness
- antiseptic (such as povidone-iodine) – for cuts and grazes
- aspirin or paracetamol (acetaminophen in the USA) – for pain or fever
- bandages, Band-aids (plasters) and other wound dressings
- calamine lotion, sting-relief spray or aloe vera – to ease irritation from sunburn and insect bites or stings
- cold and flu tablets, throat lozenges and nasal decongestant
- eye drops
- insect repellent
- loperamide or diphenoxylate – 'blockers' for diarrhoea
- multivitamins – consider for long trips, when dietary vitamin intake may be inadequate
- prochlorperazine or metaclopramide – for nausea and vomiting
- rehydration mixture – to prevent dehydration, which may occur, for example, during bouts of diarrhoea; particularly important when travelling with children
- scissors and tweezers
- sunscreen and lip balm
- thermometer – note that mercury thermometers are prohibited by airlines
- water purification tablets or iodine

for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, regardless of their destination. Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, visit a physician at least six weeks before departure.

### ONLINE RESOURCES

The WHO's publication *International Travel and Health* is revised annually and is available online at [www.who.int/ith](http://www.who.int/ith). Other useful websites include [www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com) (travel-health recommendations for every country, updated daily), [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) (general travel advice), [www.agecon.cern.org.uk](http://www.agecon.cern.org.uk) (advice on travel for the elderly) and [www.mariestopes.org.uk](http://www.mariestopes.org.uk) (information on women's health and contraception).

### FURTHER READING

*Health Advice for Travellers* (currently called the 'T6' leaflet) is an annually updated leaflet by the Department of Health in the UK

available free in post offices. It contains some general information, legally required and recommended vaccines for different countries, reciprocal health agreements and an E111 application form. Lonely Planet's *Travel with Children* includes advice on travel health for younger children. Other recommended references include *Traveller's Health* by Dr Richard Dawood (Oxford University Press), and *The Traveller's Good Health Guide* by Ted Lankester (Sheldon Press).

## IN TRANSIT

### DEEP VEIN THROMBOSIS (DVT)

Blood clots may form in the legs during plane flights, chiefly because of prolonged immobility – the longer the flight, the greater the risk. The chief symptom of DVT is swelling or pain of the foot, ankle or calf, usually but not always on just one side.

When a blood clot travels to the lungs, it may cause chest pain and breathing difficulties. Travellers with any of these symptoms should immediately seek medical attention.

To prevent the development of DVT on long flights you should walk about the cabin, contract and move leg muscles by completing exercises while sitting, drink plenty of fluids and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

## JET LAG & MOTION SICKNESS

To avoid jet lag (common when crossing more than five time zones) try drinking plenty of nonalcoholic fluids and eating light meals. Upon arrival, get exposure to natural sunlight and readjust your schedule (for meals, sleep and so on) as soon as possible.

Antihistamines such as dimenhydrinate (Dramamine) and meclizine (Antivert, Bonine) are usually the first choice for treating motion sickness. A herbal alternative is ginger.

# IN NORWAY

## AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Good health care is readily available in Norway, and for minor, self-limiting illnesses, pharmacists can dispense valuable advice and over-the-counter medication. They can also advise when more specialised help is required. The standard of dental care is usually good; however, it is sensible to have a dental checkup before a long trip. Remember that, like almost everything else, medical care can be prohibitively expensive in Norway.

## INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Tick-borne encephalitis is spread by tick bites. It is a serious infection of the brain and vaccination is advised for those in risk areas who are unable to avoid tick bites (such as campers, forestry workers and hikers). Two doses of vaccine will give a year's protection; three doses up to three years.

## TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

Stomach upsets are as possible in Norway as they are at home and the same rules apply. Take great care when eating fish or shellfish (for instance, cooked mussels that haven't opened properly can be dangerous). As autumn approaches, collecting mushrooms is

a favourite pastime in this part of the world, but don't eat any mushrooms unless they have been positively identified as safe by someone qualified to know.

If you develop diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution (eg dioralyte). A few loose stools don't require treatment, but if you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should start taking an antibiotic (usually a quinoline drug) and an antidiarrhoeal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking, chills or severe abdominal pain, you should seek medical attention.

## ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

### Giardia

Giardia is an intestinal parasite that lives in the faeces of humans and animals, and is normally contracted through drinking water. Problems can start several weeks after you've been exposed to the parasite and symptoms may sometimes remit for a few days and then return; this can go on for several weeks or even longer.

The first signs are a swelling of the stomach, followed by pale faeces, diarrhoea, frequent gas and possibly headache, nausea and depression. If you exhibit these symptoms you should visit a doctor for treatment.

Tap water is always safe to drink in Norway, but it's wise to beware of drinking from streams, as even the clearest and most inviting water may harbour giardia and other parasites. For extended hikes where you must rely on natural water, the simplest way of purifying water is to boil it thoroughly. Vigorous boiling should be satisfactory; however, at high altitude water boils at a lower temperature, so germs are less likely to be killed. Boil it for longer in these environments (up to 10 minutes).

If you cannot boil water it should be treated chemically. Chlorine tablets (Puritabs, Steritabs or other brands) will kill many pathogens, but not giardia and amoebic cysts. Iodine is more effective in purifying water and is available in tablet form (such as Potable Aqua). Follow the directions carefully and remember that too much iodine can be harmful.

Although some unpopulated lands in Norway serve as sheep pastures, there seems

to be little giardia. However, while most people have no problems drinking untreated surface water, there's still a possibility of contracting it.

## Hypothermia & Frostbite

Proper preparation will reduce the risks of getting hypothermia. Even on a hot day in the mountains, the weather can change rapidly – carry waterproof garments and warm layers, and inform others of your route.

Acute hypothermia follows a sudden drop of temperature over a short time. Chronic hypothermia is caused by a gradual loss of temperature over hours.

Hypothermia starts with shivering, loss of judgment and clumsiness. Unless rewarming occurs, the sufferer deteriorates into apathy, confusion and coma. Prevent further heat loss by seeking shelter; wearing warm, dry clothing; drinking hot, sweet drinks; and by sharing body warmth.

Frostbite is caused by freezing and subsequent damage to bodily extremities. It is dependent on wind-chill, temperature and length of exposure. Frostbite starts as frostnip (white, numb areas of skin) from which complete recovery is expected with rewarming. As frostbite develops, the skin blisters and becomes black. Loss of damaged tissue eventually occurs. Wear adequate clothing, stay dry, keep well hydrated and ensure you have adequate calorie intake to prevent frostbite. Treatment involves rapid rewarming. Avoid refreezing and rubbing the affected areas.

## Insect Bites & Stings

In northern Norway, the greatest nuisances are the plagues of blackflies and mosquitoes that swarm out of tundra bogs and lakes in summer. Fortunately, malaria is unknown, but the mental risks can't be underestimated, as people have literally been driven insane by the ravenous hordes. Midsummer is the worst, and regular mosquito coils and repellents are scarcely effective; hikers must cover exposed skin and may even need head nets to keep the little buggers from making kamikaze attacks on eyes, nose, ears and throat. If you're camping, a tent with mosquito netting is essential. Most people get used to the mosquito bites after a few days as their bodies adjust and the itching and swelling become less severe. An antihistamine cream

should help alleviate the symptoms. Use a DEET-based insect repellent.

Bees and wasps cause real problems only to those with a severe allergy (anaphylaxis.) If you have such an allergy, make sure you carry EpiPen or similar adrenaline injections at all times.

## Rabies

Rabies, caused by a bite or scratch by an infected mammal, is found in Svalbard and (occasionally) in eastern Finnmark. Dogs are a noted carrier, but cats, foxes and bats can also be infected. Any bite, scratch or even lick from a warm-blooded, furry animal should be cleaned immediately and thoroughly. Scrub with soap and running water, and then apply alcohol or iodine solution. If you've been infected by a rabid animal, medical help should be sought immediately.

## Snakes

Snakes are rarely seen in Norway and adders (the only poisonous variety) don't exist north of Tysfjorden in Nordland. To minimise your chances of being bitten always wear boots, socks and long trousers when walking through undergrowth where snakes may be present. Don't put your hands into holes and crevices, and be careful when collecting firewood.

Adder bites aren't normally fatal and antivenins are available. Immediately wrap the bitten limb tightly, as you would for a sprained ankle, and then attach a splint to immobilise it. Keep the victim still and seek medical help, if possible with the dead snake for identification; don't attempt to catch the snake if there is a possibility of being bitten again. Tourniquets and sucking out the poison are now comprehensively discredited.

## Sunburn

You can get sunburnt surprisingly quickly, even through cloud. Use a sunscreen, a hat, and a barrier cream for your nose and lips. Calamine lotion or Stingose are good for mild sunburn. Protect your eyes with good-quality sunglasses, particularly if you will be near water, sand or snow.

## Ticks

Check your body after walking through tick-infested areas, as ticks can cause skin infections and other more serious diseases.

If a tick is found, press down around its head with tweezers, grab the head and gently pull upwards. Avoid pulling the rear of the body as this may squeeze the tick's gut contents through the attached mouth parts into the skin, increasing the risk of infection and disease.

### TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN

All travellers with children should know how to treat minor ailments and when to seek medical treatment. Make sure the children are up-to-date with routine vaccinations and discuss possible travel vaccines well before departure, as some vaccines are not suitable for children under the age of one.

Remember to avoid contaminated food and water. If your child has vomiting or diarrhoea, lost fluid and salts must be replaced. It may

be helpful to take rehydration powders for reconstituting with boiled water.

Children should be encouraged to avoid and mistrust any dogs or other mammals because of the risk of rabies and other diseases; see p423 for further advice.

### SEXUAL HEALTH

Condoms are widely available at *apótek* (pharmacies). When buying condoms, look for a European CE mark, which means they have been rigorously tested, and then keep them in a cool, dry place or they may crack and perish.

Emergency contraception is most effective if taken within 24 hours after unprotected sex. The **International Planned Parent Federation** ([www.ippf.org](http://www.ippf.org)) can advise about the availability of contraception in different countries.