

Norway

Visitors leave the world's most expensive country dumbstruck by the staggering array of variety and beauty they encountered in its vast natural landscape. From Finnmark's empty tundra to enormous blue glaciers to the unnerving beauty of narrow fjords, Norway offers terrain for some of the world's most scenic skiing, hiking and fishing. Though if such activities sound mundane, adventure seekers can dive for crabs in the Barents Sea or partake in dogsledding expeditions across frozen Svalbard in the distant polar north.

A country of just 4.6 million people, most of Norway's major cities (there aren't many) are charmingly picturesque with districts of old wooden buildings, harbours of fishing boats and ferries and plenty of café, whose outdoor terraces fill with overeager Norwegians from the very moment the country's long, dark winter comes to an end. Oslo and Bergen are the biggest cities, and each enjoys esoteric museums (think Viking Ships and Leprosy), lively nightlife and public transportation that takes you straight into the wilderness.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 324,220 sq km
- **Capital** Oslo
- **Currency** krone (Nkr); €1 = Nkr7.96; US\$1 = Nkr6.26; £1 = Nkr11.49; A\$1 = Nkr4.72; ¥100 = Nkr5.39; NZ\$1 = Nkr3.86
- **Famous for** a-ha
- **Official Language** Bokmål and Nynorsk
- **Phrases** *hei* (hello), *takk* (thanks), *ja* (yes), *nei* (no), *stengt* (closed)
- **Population** 4.6 million
- **Telephone codes** country code ☎ 47; there are no regional codes; international access code ☎ 00
- **Visa** Not necessary for most nationalities



HIGHLIGHTS

- Sleep in a fisherman's *rorbu*er (shanty) in a remote village on the craggy **Lofoten Islands** (p361)
- Explore lively **Bergen** (p330), whose hilly coastal locale and delightful urban fabric make for a pretty place to drink, eat and club
- Ruin future attempts to appreciate nature by glimpsing the incomparable beauty of **Hardangerfjord** (p340) or **Sognefjord** (p342)
- Hike or ski across the sublime **Jostedal-breen glacier** (p344)
- Enjoy the scenic countryside on the **Oslo–Bergen train** (p329), a seven-hour race over mountains and snowy plateaus

ITINERARIES

- **One week** Spend a full day in Oslo, then take the train to Bergen. Spend two nights in the city before renting a car for an unrushed jaunt around Hardangerfjord, sleeping in Lofthus. Continue to Sognefjord and stay in Balestrand or Fjærland. Drive to Bergen, return the car, and spend your last day in Bergen or Oslo.
- **Two weeks** After dumping the car in Bergen, take the overnight *Hurtigruten* to Ålesund. Look at Art Nouveau buildings, sleep, and fly to Trondheim. Poke around, take the night train to Bodø and catch a boat to the Lofoten Islands. Sleep here for two nights, then take the

overnight *Hurtigruten* to Tromsø where you can stay a day or two before returning to Oslo.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The rainy climate of mainland Norway is surprisingly mild for its latitude; thanks to the warming effects of the Gulf Stream, all its coastal ports remain ice-free throughout the year. Average July temperatures are 16°C in the Oslo area and 11°C in the north, though temperature extremes are possible. In winter, heavy snowfalls are common and make for superb skiing. In January, the average maximum temperature is 1°C in the south and -3°C in the north. However, it can get much colder, especially in areas away from the coast.

Norway is at its best and brightest from May to September. Late spring is a particularly pleasant time: daylight hours are long, and most hostels and sights are open but uncrowded. Peak tourist season is mid-June through August.

HISTORY

Norway's first settlers arrived around 11,000 years ago with the end of the ice age. As the glaciers melted, the earliest hunters and gatherers moved in from Siberia, pursuing migrating reindeer herds. You can see the prehistoric rock drawings of these hunters in the far north on Alta (p370). Shortly afterwards, nomadic European hunters arrived in the south of the country.

Norway's greatest impact on history was during the Viking Age, a period usually dated from the plundering of England's Lindisfarne monastery by Nordic pirates in AD 793. Through the next century, the Vikings conducted raids throughout Europe and established settlements in the Shetland, Orkney and Hebridean islands, the Dublin area (Ireland) and in Normandy (named after the 'North men'). The Viking leader Harald Hårfagre (Fairhair) unified Norway after the decisive naval battle at Hafrsfjord near Stavanger in AD 872; King Olav Haraldsson, adopting the religion of the lands he had conquered, converted the Norwegians to Christianity and founded the Church of Norway in 1024. See Viking artefacts firsthand in Oslo's Vikingskipshuset (p306) and the Viking Museum (p364) in Lofoten.

HOW MUCH?

- **Hot dog** Nkr15
- **Loaf of bread** Nkr18
- **Bottle of house white** Nkr120
- **Cheese slicer** Nkr20 (in a grocery store, not in tourist shops)
- **Short taxi ride** Nkr90

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- **1L petrol** Nkr9.5
- **1L bottle of water** Nkr15
- **Aass beer** Nkr52
- **Souvenir T-shirt** Nkr65
- **Kebab** Nkr50



The Viking Age declined after 1066, with the defeat of the Norwegian king, Harald Hardråda, at the Battle of Stamford Bridge in England. Norwegian naval power was finished off for good when Alexander III, King of Scots, defeated a Viking naval force at the Battle of Largs (Scotland) in 1263.

In the early 14th century, Oslo emerged as a centre of power and a period of growth followed until 1349, when the bubonic plague swept the country, wiping out nearly two-thirds of the population. In 1380, Norway was absorbed into a union with Denmark that lasted more than 400 years.

Denmark ceded Norway to Sweden in 1814. In 1884 a parliamentary government was introduced in Norway and a growing nationalist movement eventually led to a peaceful secession from Sweden in 1905. In a referendum, Norwegians voted in favour of a monarchy over a republic. Having no royal family of its own, Norway's parliament selected Prince Carl of Denmark to be king. Upon acceptance, he took the title Håkon VII and named his infant son Olav, both prominent names from Norway's Viking past.

Norway stayed neutral during WWI. Despite restating its neutrality at the start of WWII, it was attacked by the Nazis on 9 April 1940, falling to the Germans after a two-month struggle. King Håkon set up a government in exile in England, and placed most of Norway's merchant fleet under the command of the Allies. Although Norway remained occupied until the end of the war, it had an active Resistance movement.

The royal family returned to Norway in June 1945. King Håkon died in 1957 and was succeeded by his son, Olav V, a popular king who reigned until his death in January 1991. The current monarch is Harald V, Olav's son, who was crowned in June 1991.

Norway joined the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in 1960, but has been reluctant to forge closer bonds with other European nations, in part due to concerns about the impact on its fishing industry and small-scale farming industry. In 1972, Norwegians voted against joining the European Community (EC) amid a divisive national debate. It took two decades for membership to once again become a high-profile issue. During 1994 a second national referendum was held, this time on joining the EC's successor, the EU, and voters rejected that

proposal as well. For the last decade, the EU issue has waned and waxed in popular opinion, and at time of writing there were no serious proposals to initiate a membership drive.

PEOPLE

Norway has 4.6 million people and one of the lowest population densities in Europe. The majority of modern Norwegians are middle class. Immigration is strictly controlled and only bona fide refugees are admitted. The largest cities are Oslo with 500,000 residents, followed by Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger.

Most Norwegians are of Nordic origin, and are thought to have descended from central and northern European tribes who migrated northwards around 8000 years ago. In addition, there are about 40,000 Sami (formerly known as Lapps), the indigenous people of the far north of Norway who now make up the country's largest ethnic minority. Some Sami still live a traditional nomadic life, herding reindeer in Finnmark.

RELIGION

Around 86% of Norwegians belong to the Church of Norway, a Protestant Evangelical Lutheran denomination, but most Norwegians only attend church for Christmas and Easter. The Humanist & Ethical Union has around 70,000 members and there are a number of smaller Christian denominations, as well as around 50,000 Muslims and 1000 Jews.

ARTS

Norway's best-known artists include the moody painter Edvard Munch, responsible for *The Scream*; the landscape painter JC Dahl; classical composer Edvard Grieg; sculptor Gustav Vigeland; and famed playwright Henrik Ibsen, who penned *A Doll's House*.

Norway's stave churches are some of the oldest wooden buildings on earth. Named for their vertical supporting posts, these structures are often distinguished by dragon-headed gables resembling ornately carved prows of Viking ships. Of the 500 to 600 stave churches originally built, only about 20 of those remaining retain many original components. Other significant architectural features in the country include

TOP SIX NORWEGIAN ALBUMS

Stop in a record shop to pick these up.

- **Patashnik** by *Biosphere* is ambient electronic made famous in a regrettable Levi's commercial
- **Blodig Alvor (na na na na na)** The Dum Dum Boys breakout album has a stupid name
- **Melody A.M.** by Royksopp is a groundbreaking dance/pop electronic album
- **Let Them Eat Cake** by *Motorsycho* sounds kind of like psychedelic '70s rock
- **Anniemil** is top-40 candy pop, but Annie has independent cred when she DJs
- **a-ha** is so totally old school that you don't need some Lonely Planet author telling you what to buy

the romantic 'dragon style', found in some historic hotels, and occurrences of the Art Nouveau style, best observed in Ålesund.

Norwegian writers Sigrid Undset and Knut Hamsun (a Nazi collaborator) won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1928 and 1920, respectively. Undset is best known for *Kristin Lavransdottir*, a trilogy portraying the struggles and earthy lifestyle of a 14th-century Norwegian family, while Hamsun won the Nobel Prize for his novel *The Growth of the Soil*.

Not traditionally a cinematic powerhouse, Norway has recently cranked out several good films, including *Elling* (2001); *Buddy* (2003); and *Beautiful Country* (2004); and *Slipp Jimmy Fri* (Free Jimmy; 2006), an animated flick about an escaped circus elephant pursued by junkies, animal rights maniacs and a Sami. For a Norwegian classic, check out *Ni Liv* (1957), a story concerning the WWII resistance. Information on films and festivals can be found at www.nfi.no.

Classical music and jazz are very popular in Norway and there are annual music festivals around the country, the most significant being in Bergen, Molde and Kongsberg. For details of music festivals, visit www.norwayfestivals.com or contact the Norwegian Tourist Board.

Norway also has a thriving rock scene with most of the action coming out of Ber-

gen, though aficionados should not miss Kristiansand's Quart Festival (p322). It's also largely responsible for black metal (p309).

ENVIRONMENT The Land

Norway, occupying the western part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, has a land area of 324,220 sq km and shares borders with Sweden, Finland and Russia. The coastline is deeply cut by fjords – long, narrow inlets of the sea bordered by high, steep cliffs. Mountains, some capped with Europe's largest glaciers, cover more than half of the landmass. Only 3% of the country is arable.

With a combination of mountains and a wet climate, it's hardly surprising that Norway has many spectacular waterfalls, including several of the top 10 highest in the world. 'The Land of the Midnight Sun' is more than just a promotional slogan: nearly a third of Norway lies north of the Arctic Circle.

Wildlife

Norway has wild and semidomesticated reindeer herds, thriving elk populations and a scattering of arctic foxes lynxes musk oxen, bears and wolverines. Lemmings occupy mountain areas through 30% of the country. Since the ban on hunting came into force in 1973, polar bear numbers have increased to over 5000. Nearly all are found in Svalbard, though one was recently sighted in Finnmark. Polar bears usually eat seals but have been known to enjoy human flesh. Walrus are rare and are confined to Svalbard, but several species of seal, dolphin and whale may be seen around most western and northern coasts.

Birdlife is prolific in coastal areas and puffins, fulmars and kittiwakes are commonly seen. Rarer species include ospreys, golden eagles and magnificent white-tailed sea eagles. The islands of Runde (p350), Røst and Værøy (p365) are premier places to watch them.

National Parks

Norway's 21 national parks, covering 6.4% of the country, have been established to protect wildlife and distinctive natural features of the landscape. In many cases, they don't attempt to protect any specific features, but rather attempt to prevent

development of remaining wild areas. As a result, park boundaries don't necessarily coincide with the incidence of spectacular natural features, but simply follow contour lines around uninhabited areas.

Compared with their counterparts in the USA and Britain, Norwegian national parks are low profile and lack the traffic and overdeveloped facilities that have turned other countries' parks into seasonal urban areas. Some parks, notably Jotunheimen and Rondane, are increasing suffering from overuse, but in most places pollution and traffic are kept to a minimum. Norwegians sometimes look askance at foreigners' preoccupation with national parks, since fantastic wilderness areas exist everywhere.

Environmental Issues

Industrial waste is highly regulated, recycling is popular, there's little rubbish along the roadsides and general tidiness is a high priority in both urban and rural environments. Plastic bottles and cans may be exchanged for cash at supermarkets.

Loss of habitat has placed around 900 species of plants and animals on the endangered or threatened species lists, and sport hunting and fishing are more popular here than in most of Europe. Hydroelectric schemes have devastated some mountain landscapes and waterfalls, and over-fishing perpetually haunts the economy.

In 1993 Norway resumed commercial hunting of minke whales in open defiance of an international whaling ban. Norway supports the protection of other threatened species, but the government contends that the estimated 70,000 to 186,000 North Atlantic minke whales can sustain a limited harvest. The annual limit on the number of whales that can be killed is around 1000.

FOOD & DRINK Staples & Specialities

Norwegian specialities include grilled or smoked *laks* (salmon), *gravat laks* (marinated salmon), *reker* (boiled shrimp), *torsk* (cod), *fiskesuppe* (fish soup), *hval* (whale) and other seafood. Expect to see sweet brown goats' milk cheese called *geitost* and *sild* (pickled herring) alongside the breads and cereals included in breakfast buffets. A fine Norwegian dessert is warm *moltebær syltetøy* (cloudberry jam) with ice cream.

Another popular option is *eplekake* (apple cake) served with fresh cream. *Lutefisk*, dried cod made almost gelatinous by soaking in lye, is popular at Christmas but it's definitely an acquired taste.

If Norway has a national drink, it's coffee and most Norwegians drink it black and strong. Most of the beer you'll drink is watery-tasting pilsner. On the other end of the taste spectrum is Norway's bitter aquavit, which does the job at 40% proof.

Where to Eat & Drink

Common throughout all of Norway is the *konditori*, a bakery with tables where you can sit and enjoy pastries and relatively inexpensive sandwiches. Other moderately cheap eats are found at *gatekjøkken* (food wagons and street side kiosks), which generally have hot dogs for about Nkr15 and hamburgers for Nkr50. Marginally more expensive, but with more nutritionally balanced food, are *kafeterias*, with simple, traditional meals from about Nkr85. In cities, *kafes* almost always function as a hang-out, bar and restaurant. They serve filling 'small dishes' for Nkr80 to Nkr120. Many restaurants feature a *dagens rett* (daily special) for about Nkr100.

By international standards, Norwegian restaurant food is fairly bland and heavy, though the cities of Oslo, Bergen, Trondheim and Stavanger have all made vast cuisine improvements.

Urban bars come in three basic forms. The first breed involves well-dressed Norwegians and cool designs. The second is the 'brown bar', so named because of their dusty wooden interiors – these are usually accused of being dens for alcoholic men, though bohemians have gentrified many of them. The third type is found in the growing numbers of forgettable tourist traps and chain 'Irish' venues. These are easily spotted and avoided.

Vegetarians & Vegans

Being vegetarian in Norway is a challenge. In rural parts of the country, you will live out of a grocery store, though some cafés serve token dishes such as vegetables with pasta. Another easily found option is pizza, though be warned that Norwegian pizza usually tastes lousy. You'll find more options in bigger cities, though most menus are entirely based on fish and meat. Kebab stands

serve falafel about half the time. Norwegian restaurants aim to please, and will often attempt to make you a special order if you ask (don't expect fine results though).

Vegans will find Norway almost impossible. The number of places consistently serving vegan food is minuscule.

OSLO

pop 520,000

Norway's capital is easily the country's most cosmopolitan city, offering diverse nightlife options, an array of cafés and bars and some excellent museums, not least the Nasjonalgalleriet and Vikingskipshuset. While Oslo is not as picturesquely stunning as Bergen, its urban fabric does contain the famous Vigeland Park and the city is eminently strollable. For a particularly good urban walk, follow the banks of the Ankerselva where you will encounter several waterfalls and the converted factory buildings that comprise the edge of the trendy Grünerløkka district.

What distinguishes Oslo from many other capitals is its immediate proximity to expansive wilderness areas. Not only is the city at the head of a Fjord (not as impressive as those on the west coast, but a fjord all the same), but a large mountainous forest penetrates the city boundary. The pleasant result is that you can take a subway to ski lifts and an extensive network of trails.

HISTORY

Founded by Harald Hårdråda in 1048, it's the oldest Scandinavian capital. In 1299, King Håkon V constructed the Akershus Festning (fortress) here, to counter the Swedish threat from the east. Levelled by fire in 1624, the city was rebuilt in brick and stone on a more easily defended site by King Christian IV, who renamed it Christiania, after his humble self.

In 1814, the framers of Norway's first constitution designated it the official capital of the new realm but their efforts were effectively nullified by Sweden, which had other ideas about Norway's future and unified the two countries under Swedish rule. In 1905, when that union dissolved, Christiania flourished as the capital of modern

Norway. The city reverted to its original name, Oslo, in 1925.

ORIENTATION

Oslo's central train station (Oslo Sentralstasjon, or 'Oslo S') is at the eastern end of the city centre. From there the main street, Karl Johans gate, leads through the heart of the city to Det Kongelige Slott. The neighbourhood of Grünerløkka, hipster-central, is reached by taking Storgata across the Akerselva, while the Grønland immigrant district is just east of Oslo S.

Most central city sights are within a 15-minute walk of Karl Johans gate, as are the majority of Oslo's hotels and pensions (guest houses). Many sights outside Oslo centre, including Vigeland Park and Munchmuseet, are a short tram ride away, and Bygdøy peninsula is a 10-minute ferry ride across the harbour. The trails and lakes of the Nordmarka wilderness are easily reached by T-bane (the underground train system).

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Nomadén (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 56 25 40; Uranienborgveien 4; ☞ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) Travel guides, maps and gear.

Norli (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 00 43 00; Universitetsgata 24; ☞ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) Some English-language titles.

Discount Cards

Oslo Card (1/2/3 days Nkr195/285/375) Provides entry to most museums and attractions and travel on public transport. It's sold at tourist offices and hotels. Students and seniors, who get half-price entry at most sights, usually do better buying a public-transport pass (or walking) and paying separate museum admissions.

OSLO IN TWO DAYS

Poke around **Akershus Festning** (p307) before taking a ferry to the **Vikingskipshuset** (p306) and **Norsk Folkemuseum** (p306). Return to relax in Tekehtopa (p312), and wander around **Vigeland Park** (p307)

Spend the morning at **Munchmuseet** (opposite) and stroll through the **Botanisk Hage** (Botanical Gardens; p307) en route to Grønland for some curry. Window-shop on **Bogstadveien**, (p315) then eat **Frogner-seteren's** (p312) mountaintop apple cake.

Internet Access

Deichmanske Bibliotek (Map pp304-5; Henrik Ibsens gate 1; ☞ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat Sep-May, 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat Jun-Aug) Free internet access but expect to wait.

Studenten (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 42 56 80; Karl Johans gate 45; per hr Nkr60; ☞ noon-8pm Tue-Sat, noon-10pm Sun & Mon)

WTE Internet Café (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 87 01 60; Thorvald Meyers gate 85; per hr Nkr30; ☞ 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-9pm Sat & Sun)

Laundry

Selvebetjent (Map pp304-5; Ullevålsveien 15; wash/dry Nkr45/30; ☞ 8am-9pm)

Medical Services

Jernbanetorget Apotek (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 41 24 83; Fred Olsens gate; ☞ 24hr) Pharmacy opposite Oslo S.

Oslo Kommunale Legevakten (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 11 80 80; Storgata 40) Medical clinic with 24-hour emergency services.

Money

You'll find banks scattered all over town and most have ATMs accepting international cards. Most have branches along or just off Karl Johans gate near Oslo S.

American Express Amex; (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 98 37 35; Fridtjof Nansens plass 6; ☞ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Best deal for those changing small sums. Offers best rates with no commission on Amex travellers cheques and around 1% for most other brands of travellers cheques.

Post

Main post office (Map pp304-5; Dronningens gate 15; ☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) To receive mail, have it sent to 'Poste Restante, Oslo Sentrum Postkontor, Dronningens gate 15, N-0107 Oslo'. There's a convenient branch at Oslo S and on Grensen.

Tourist Information

Den Norske Turistforening (DNT, Norwegian Mountain Touring Club; Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 82 28 22; www.dntoslo.no; Storgata 3; ☞ 10am-4pm Mon-Wed & Fri 10am-6pm Thu, 10am-2pm Sat, open 1hr earlier in summer) Provides information and maps on hiking in Norway and sells memberships which include discounted rates on the use of mountain huts along the main hiking routes. You can also book huts and pick up keys.

Oslo Promotion (Map pp304-5; ☎ 24 14 77 00; www.visitoslo.com; Fridtjof Nansens plass 5; ☞ 9am-7pm Jun-Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Sat Apr-May & Sep, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri Oct-Mar) Its website has extensive information on disabled access to hotels, sights and restaurants.

Use-It (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 41 51 32; www.use-it.no; Møllergata 3; ☞ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri Jul & Aug, 11am-5pm or 6pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun) The exceptionally friendly and savvy youth information office (better known as Use-It) is aimed at (but not limited to) the backpacking crowd. It makes (free) bookings for inexpensive accommodation and provides advice from finding Oslofjord fishing spots to hitching. Pick up a copy of its (free) *Streetwise* (a comprehensive guide to Oslo on the cheap), use a (free) phone to make a room reservation anywhere in Norway, or tag along on 'off-track tourism' events, where you might see a football match or take a tour of City Hall guided by the mayor.

SIGHTS

Many sights are clustered together within easy walking distance from Karl Johans gate. Another important concentration is the Bygdøy peninsula, which contains the Vikingskipshuset and more.

Art Museums

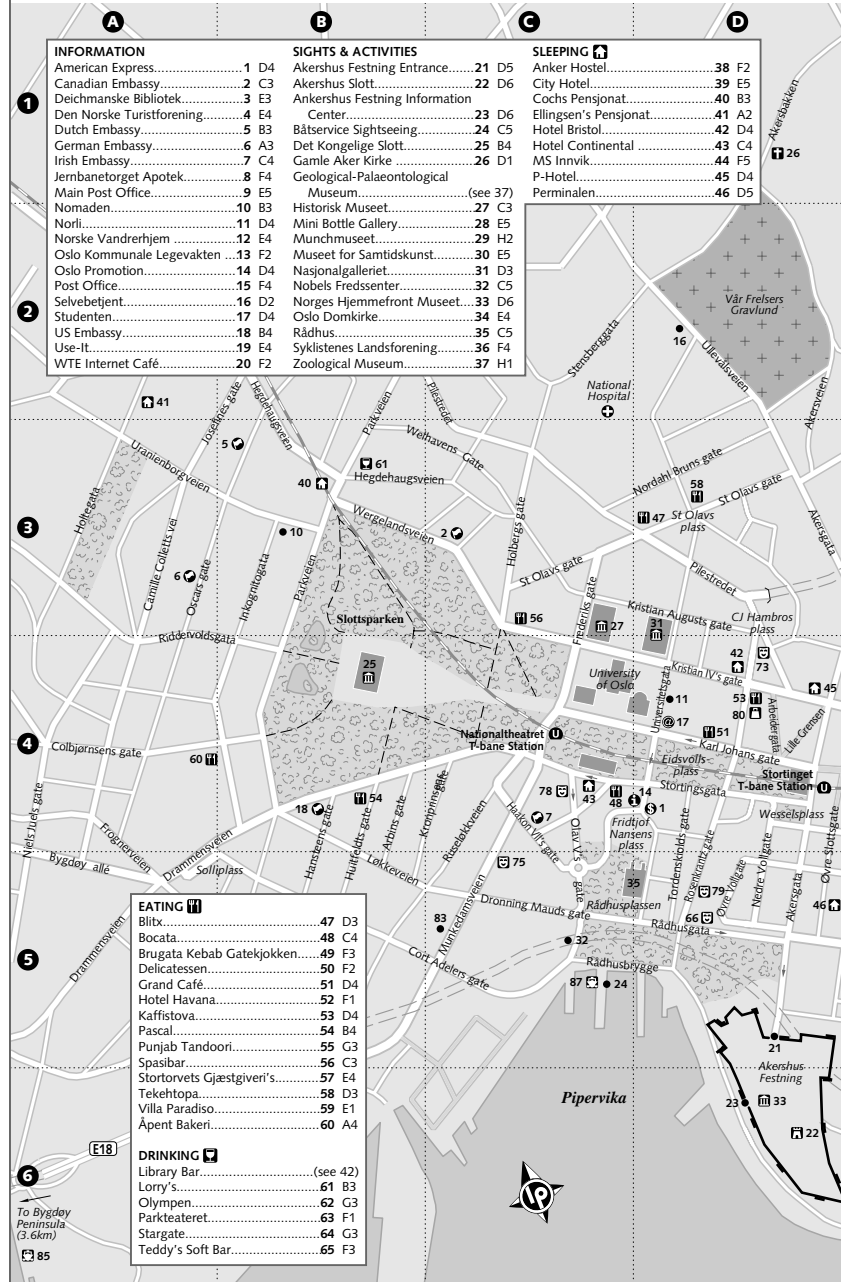
For the largest collection of Norwegian art, come to **Nasjonalgalleriet** (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 20 04 04; www.nasjonalmuseet.no; Universitetsgata 13; admission free; ☞ 10am-6pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 10am-8pm Thu, 10am-4pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun; ☎). Some of Edvard Munch's best-known works are on display, including *The Scream*, which was brazenly stolen (and later recovered) in 1994. If you dig 19th-century landscape paintings, Johan Christian Dahl keeps it real on the 1st floor.

Dedicated to the life work of Norway's most renowned artist, **Munchmuseet** (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 24 14 00; Tøyengata 53; adult/student Nkr65/30, free Oct-Mar; ☞ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun Jun-mid-Sep, shorter hrs otherwise; ☎) contains 5000 drawings and paintings that Munch bequeathed to the city of Oslo. Ten years after *The Scream* was stolen from Nasjonalgalleriet, masked gunmen pulled a similar caper on another version of the famous painting here in 2004, it too was recovered in early September, 2006.

For a freakish sensory overload, enter the **Emanuel Vigeland Museum** (Map p310; ☎ 22 14 57 88; www.emanuelvigeland.museum.no; Grimelundsveien 8; adult Nkr30; ☞ noon-4pm Sun) containing his life's work and mausoleum – a specially designed vaulted chamber where you duck under a low door (and thus pay tribute to his ashes, interned above) to enter an eerie nave with almost zero lighting. As your eyes adjust to the dark, you'll begin to discern enormous

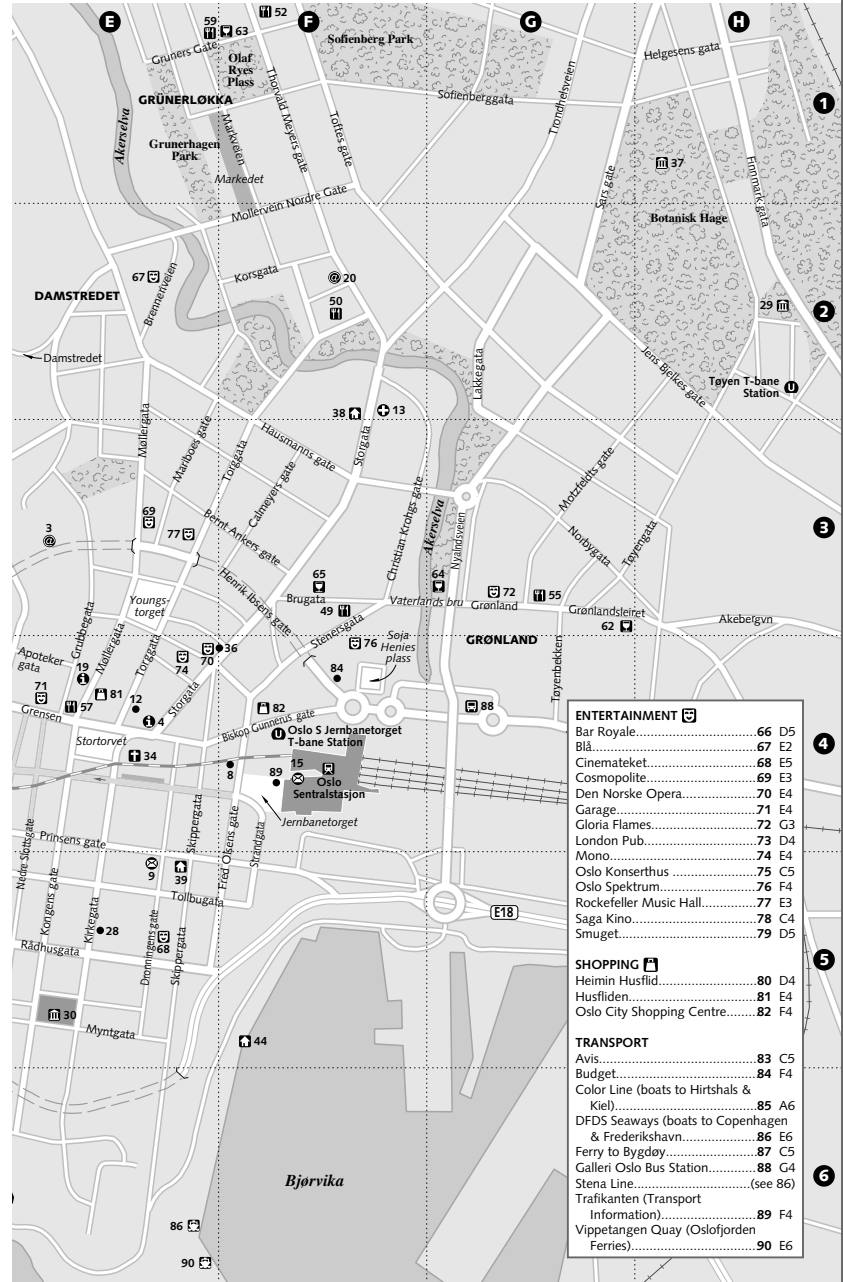
CENTRAL OSLO

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Den Norske Turistforening	4 E4	Båtservice Sightseeing	24 C5	Ellingsen's Pensjonat	41 A2
Dutch Embassy	5 B3	Det Kongelige Slott	25 B4	Hotel Bristol	42 D4
German Embassy	6 A3	Geological-Palaeontological Museum	(see 37)	Hotel Continental	43 C4
Irish Embassy	7 C4	Historisk Museet	27 C3	MS Innvik	44 F5
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Main Post Office	9 E5	Norske Vandrermuseet	29 H2	Permalen	46 D5
Nomad	10 B3	Museet for Samtidskunst	30 E5		
Norli	11 D4	Nasjonalgalleriet	31 D3		
Norske Vandrermuseet	12 E4	Nobels Fredsenter	32 C5		
Oslo Kommunale Legevakten	13 F2	Oslo Domkirke	33 D6		
Oslo Promotion	14 D4	Oslo Domkirke	34 E4		
Post Office	15 F4	US Embassy	18 B4		
Selvebetjent	16 D2	Use-It	19 E4		
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WTE Internet Café	20 F2				



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DFDS Seaways (boats to Copenhagen & Frederikshavn)	86 E6
Ferry to Bygdøy	87 C5
Galleri Oslo Bus Station	88 G4
Stena Line	(see 86)
Trafikanten (Transport Information)	89 F4
Vippetangen Quay (Oslofjorden Ferries)	90 E6

NORWAY

NORWAY

frescoes reaching up to a distant ceiling. These depict human life from conception to death (sometimes erotically). Entirely surfaced with smooth stone, the bizarre chamber has such incredible acoustics that visitors are required to wear cloth booties to deaden the echoing thuds created by the slightest footstep. Overheard mobile phone user: Sorry mum, I'm in a pornographic church museum. I can't talk now. Call you later, bye!

Museet for Samtidskunst (Museum of Contemporary Art; Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 86 22 10; Bankplassen 4; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 10am-8pm Thu, 11am-4pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun) is Norway's principal museum dedicated to post-WWII Scandinavian and international art; here you'll find Norwegian artists with names other than Munch.

Want to see the ridiculous and enormous collection of a wealthy brewer? Check out the **Mini Bottle Gallery** (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 35 79 60; www.minibottlegallery.com; Kirkegata 10; adult/child Nkr85/35; ☎ noon-4pm Sat & Sun). This 'gallery' crosses architectural elegance and haunted-house gadgetry with the crass overtures of a puerile club. As you admire tens of thousands of tiny bottles of booze set in an environment whose expensive design surpasses many museums, you're bound to wonder if the place is a joke. The answer comes readily in the toilet.

Bygdøy Peninsula

The magnificent **Vikingskipshuset** (Viking Ship Museum; Map p310; ☎ 22 13 52 80; Huk Aveny 35; adult/child Nkr50/25; ☎ 9am-6pm May-Sep, 11am-4pm Oct-Apr; ☎) houses three Viking ships excavated from the Oslofjord region. The ships had been brought ashore and used as tombs for nobility, who were buried with all they were expected to need in the hereafter, including jewels, furniture, food and servants. Built of oak in the 9th century, these Viking ships were buried in blue clay, which preserved two of them amazingly well.

The impressive **Oseberg ship**, buried in AD 834 and festooned with elaborate dragon and serpent carvings, is 22m long and took 30 people to row it. A second ship, the 24m-long **Gokstad**, is the world's finest example of a longship. Of the third ship, the **Tune**, only a few boards remain.

Dirt paths wind past sturdy old barns, *stabbur* (storehouses on stilts), rough-

timbered farmhouses with sod roofs sprouting wild flowers and a 140 other 17th- and 18th-century buildings at the **Norsk Folke-museum** (Map p310; ☎ 22 12 37 00; Museumsveien 10; adult/student/child mid-May-mid-Sep Nkr75/45/20, mid-Sep-mid-May Nkr75/40/35; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, short hrs otherwise). There's also a reproduction of an early-20th-century Norwegian town, including a village shop and an old petrol station. A highlight is a restored **stave church**, built around 1200 in Gol and brought to Bygdøy in 1885. Sunday is a good day to visit, as there's usually folk music and dancing at 2pm (summer only).

Take a look at the **Kon-Tiki** balsa raft at the **Kon-Tiki Museum** (Map p310; ☎ 23 08 67 67; Bygdøynesveien 36; adult/child Nkr45/25; ☎ 9.30am-5.45pm Jun-Aug, 10.30am-5pm Sep-May). Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl sailed from Peru to Polynesia in 1947 on the raft to demonstrate that Polynesia's first settlers could have come from South America. Also displayed is the papyrus reed boat *Ra II*, used to cross the Atlantic in 1970.

Check out the durable *Fram* (1892) at the **Frammuseet** (Map p310; ☎ 23 28 29 50; www.fram.museum.no; Bygdøynesveien 36; adult/child Nkr40/20; ☎ 9am-6.45pm mid-Jun-Aug, shorter hrs Sep-mid-Jun), which Roald Amundsen used for the first successful expedition to the South Pole in 1911. You can clamber around inside the boat, go down to the hold where the sled dogs were kept and view fascinating photographic displays of the *Fram* trapped in polar ice.

For, uh, boatloads of amazing model ships, check out **Norsk Sjøfartsmuseum** (Norwegian Maritime Museum; Map p310; ☎ 24 11 41 50; Bygdøynesveien 37; adult/student/child Nkr40/25/free; ☎ 10am-6pm mid-May-Sep, shorter hrs otherwise; ☎), with its film of the Norwegian coast.

Although only minutes from central Oslo, Bygdøy has a rural character and good **beaches**. The royal family maintains a summer home on the peninsula, as do quite a number of Oslo's other well-to-do residents.

Ferries make the run to Bygdøy (Nkr22, 15 minutes, every 20 to 40 minutes) from mid-April to early October. The ferry leaves from Rådhusbrygge 3 (opposite Rådhus) and stops first at Dronningen, from where it's a 10-minute walk up to the folk museum. The ferry continues to Bygdøynes, where the Kon-Tiki, Fram and maritime museums are clustered. You can also take

bus No 20 to Bygdøy's sights from the National Theatre. The routes between the sights are signposted.

Frognerparken & Vigeland Park

Frognerparken is a wonderful city park (Map p310) with expansive green spaces, duck ponds and rows of shady trees – a fine place for walks and picnics. Its central walkway, **Vigeland Park**, is lined with life-sized statues by Gustav Vigeland (1869–1943). In nearly 200 highly charged works of granite and bronze, Vigeland presents the naked human form in a range of emotions, from screaming pot-bellied babies to entwined lovers and tranquil elderly couples.

The most impressive piece is the monolith of writhing bodies. The circle of steps beneath the monolith is lined with voluptuous stone figures, and the form of the complex recalls Egyptian funerary monuments. The park is free and always open.

For a more in-depth look at the development of Gustav Vigeland's work, visit the **Vigeland Museum** (Map p310; ☎ 22 54 25 30; www.vigeland.museum.no; Nobels gate 32; adult/child Nkr45/25; ☎ noon-4pm Tue-Sun). The museum was built by the city as a home and workshop for Vigeland in exchange for the bulk of his life's work and contains his early statuary, plaster moulds, woodblock prints and sketches.

Nobels Fredscenter

Head inside the brand new **Peace Centre** (Map pp304-5; ☎ 48 30 10 00; www.nobelpeacecenter.org; Brynjulf Bulls Plass 1; adult/child Nkr60/free; ☎ 10am-7pm Jun-mid-Sep, shorter hrs otherwise; ☎) for hi-tech screens flashily exploring themes of peace and conflict. Aside from presenting the history of the prize and its patron, Alfred Nobel (a dynamite fellow, har har), you can view exhibits on winners from 1901 to present.

Akershus Slott & Festning

King Håkon V began construction of the earthen walled **Akershus Festning** (Akershus Fortress; Map pp304-5; admission free; ☎ 6am-9pm) in 1299. It is strategically positioned on the eastern side of the harbour and the parklike grounds offer excellent views of the city and Oslofjord. The grounds are the venue for a host of concerts, dances and theatrical productions during summer. The **Akershus Festning Information Centre** (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 09 39 17; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun mid-

Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-4pm mid-Aug-mid-Jun) recounts the building of the fortress. The changing of the guard occurs at 1.30pm.

In the 17th century, Christian IV renovated **Akershus Slott** (Akershus Castle; Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 09 35 53; adult/child Nkr40/10; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 12.30-4pm Sun May-mid-Sep) into a Renaissance palace, though the front remains decidedly medieval. In its dungeons you'll find dark cubby-holes where outcast nobles were kept under lock and key, while the upper floors have banquet halls and staterooms.

The chapel is still used for army events and the crypts of kings Håkon VII and Olav V lie beneath it. Tours of the castle (at 11am Monday to Saturday, and 1pm and 3pm daily) are led by students in period dress, and provide entertaining anecdotal history; otherwise you can wander through on your own.

During WWII, the Nazis used Akershus as a prison and execution grounds and today it's the site of **Norges Hjemmefront Museet** (Norwegian Resistance Museum; Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 09 31 38; www.nhm.mil.no; adult/child Nkr30/15; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun, longer hrs mid-Apr-Sep), providing a vivid account of the tyrannical German occupation and the Norwegian struggle against it.

Zoology, Botany & Geology

Next to Munchmuseet is the university's **Zoological Museum** (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 85 17 00; Sars gate 1; combined ticket with Geological Museum Nkr40; ☎ 11am-4pm Tue-Sun), full of stuffed Norwegian wildlife. Compare the scale of a lemming and polar bear. The adjacent **Geological-Paleontological Museum** (Map pp304-5) features displays on the history of the solar system, Norwegian geology, and examples of myriad minerals, meteorites and moon rocks. The museums sit in the grounds of the fragrant **Botanisk Hage** (Botanical Gardens; Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 85 17 00; Sars gate 1; admission free; ☎ 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep, shorter hrs Oct-Mar), whose lovely landscaped lawns feature more than 1000 alpine plants as well as tropical and temperate specimens.

City Hall

Oslo's twin-towered, redbrick **Rådhus** (City Hall; Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 46 16 00; Fridtjof Nansens plass; adult/child Nkr40/20, admission free Sep-May; ☎ 9am-5pm May-Aug, 9am-4pm Sep-Apr) features wooden reliefs with scenes from Norse mythology lining its outside entrance, and impressive

frescoes decorating the interior halls and chambers. View the main hall for free from the front corridor, walk around yourself, or take a guided tour in English at 10am, noon and 2pm daily (no extra charge).

Det Kongelige Slott

King Harald V sleeps in **Det Kongelige Slott** (Map pp304-5; Drammensveien 1), the royal palace, peering from a hill over the Karl Johans axis. Guided tours of 15 rooms are available in English, once daily at 2pm (late June to mid-August). Tickets (Nkr100) are difficult to obtain – ask the tourist office for details. The rest of the grounds comprise **Slottsparken**, an inviting public park that's free to enter. If you happen to be around at 1.30pm, watch the changing of the guard.

Historisk Museet

The **History Museum** (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 85 19 00; www.ukm.uio.no; Frederiks gate 2; admission Nkr40; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun mid-May–mid-Sep, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun mid-Sep–mid-May) consists of three museums under a single roof. On the ground floor, the **National Antiquities Collection** displays Viking-era coins, jewellery, weapons and bloodthirsty plunder, as well as a medieval church art section that includes the dragon-festooned bits of the 13th-century Ål stave church. The second level has a **numismatic collection of coins** dating from AD 995 and exhibits on indigenous arctic cultures.

Churches

Oslo Domkirke (Oslo Cathedral; Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 23 31 46 00; Stortorget 1; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm) dates from 1697 and it's worth seeing for its elaborate stained glass by Emanuel Vigeland and painted ceiling (completed between 1936–50). The exceptional 1748 altarpiece is a model of the *Last Supper and the Crucifixion* by Michael Rasch. The organ front and pulpit also require your attention.

Built of stone, the medieval **Gamle Aker Kirke** (Map pp304-5; Akersbakken 26; ☎ noon-2pm Mon-Sat) was built around 1100 and is Oslo's oldest building. It's still used for Lutheran services.

ACTIVITIES

Swimming & Sunbathing

Ferries running to the half a dozen islands in Oslofjord leave from Vipppetangen quay, southeast of Akershus Festning. **Hovedøya** (Map p310), the closest island, has a rocky

coastline, but its southwestern side is a popular sunbathing area. There are walking paths around the perimeter, some old cannons and the **ruins** (Map p310) of a 12th-century monastery. Boats to Hovedøya leave from Vipppetangen once or twice hourly from late May to mid-August, less the rest of the year.

Further south, the undeveloped island of **Langøyene** (Map p310) offers better swimming. It has both sandy and rocky beaches, including one designated for nude bathing. Boats to Langøyene depart late May to mid-August.

The Bygdøy peninsula also has two popular beaches, **Huk** (Map p310) and **Paradisbukta** (Map p310), which can be reached by taking bus No 30 from Jernbanetorget to its last stop. While there are some sandy patches, most of Huk comprises grassy lawns and large, smooth rocks ideal for sunbathing. It's separated into two beaches by a small cove; the beach on the north-western side is open to nude bathing. If Huk seems too crowded, a 10-minute walk through the woods north of the bus stop leads to the more secluded Paradisbukta.

For freshwater swimming, try the eastern side of lake **Sognsvann** (Map p310), at the end of T-bane line 5, about 6km north of central Oslo.

Hiking

An extensive network of trails leads into Nordmarka from Frognerseteren, at the end of T-bane line 1. One good, fairly strenuous walk is from Frognerseteren to lake Sognsvann, where you can take T-bane line 5 back to the city. If you're interested in wilderness hiking, contact the **DNT office** (p303).

Cycling

One popular outing is to take the *sykkeltog* (weekend bike train) to Stryken, 40km north of Oslo, and cycle back through Nordmarka. The train leaves Oslo S in the morning on Saturday and Sunday from May to October. For a shorter ride, take the T-bane to Frognerseteren where you can zip downhill by off-road to the centre or enjoy have access to road-road action.

For Norway-wide information on cycling contact the local club, **Syklistenes Landsforening** (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 47 30 30; Storgata

23c; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm min-Jun–mid-Aug, shorter hrs otherwise).

Skiing

Oslo's ski season is roughly from December to March. There are over 1000km of ski trails in the Nordmarka area north of Oslo, many of them floodlit; easy-access tracks begin right at the T-bane stations Frognerseteren and Sognsvann. **Tomm Murstad Skiservice** (☎ 22 13 95 00; www.skiservice.no; Tomm Murstadbakken 2), at Voksenkollen T-bane station, hires out downhill (Nkr280 per day) and Nordic gear (Nkr190 per day). The downhill slopes at **Tryvann Skicenter** (☎ 40 46 27 00; www.tryvann.no; day/two-hr/night card Nkr280/205/230; ☎ Mon-Fri 10am-10pm, 10am-5pm Sat & Sun) are near Voksenkollen Station, from where a ski bus (Nkr20) runs to the lifts. **Skiforeningen** (Ski Society; Map p310; ☎ 22 92 32 00; www.holmenkollen.com; Kongeveien 5) can provide more information.

TOURS

Oslo is so easy to get around that there's little need for organised tours. However, if time is tight, **Båtservice Sightseeing** (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 35 68 90; www.boatsightseeing.com; Pier 3, Rådhusbrygge; ☎ late May-late Aug) does a tidy 7½-hour tour of the Bygdøy sites, Vigeland Park, the Holmenkollen Ski Jump, plus a cruise of Oslofjord, for Nkr495; a three-hour version minus the cruise costs Nkr320. Båtservice's frequent 50-minute 'minicruise' of Oslofjord provides city orientation for Nkr100, or is free with the Oslo Card.

BLACK METAL

Bored of fjords and peace prizes? Perhaps it's time to check out Norway's highly regarded black metal scene, whose notorious, sensational exploits in the mid-1990s raised eyebrows across the globe. At that time, the members of a few big-name bands (Mayhem and Emperor being the most notable) not only committed suicide, but murdered each other, burned stave churches, made trinkets out of fragments of their mates' skulls and beat up bouncers and concert-goers alike. In addition to these and other violent acts, a lot of music was created along the way. Depending on your taste, the goods might sound like a dying Cookie Monster singing through a distortion pedal or liberation from what you perceive to be a Christian-dominated music industry.

While things have calmed down a bit since the gory days, black metal remains popular in Norway. A few of the bands to look out for include Mayhem (much of the previous line-up dead or jailed), Satyricon, Gorgoroth and Dark Throne, and a few of the clubs to view them are **Garage** (p314), **Hulen** (p338), **Rockefeller Music Hall** (p314) and **Blæst** (p356). If you're lucky enough to spend April in Oslo, you must attend the **Inferno Metal Festival** (www.infernofestival.net). If not, try **Bergen's Hole in the Sky** (www.holeinthesky.no) in August. Don't forget your leather pants!

The popular **Norway in a Nutshell** (☎ 81 56 82 22; www.fjordtours.com) day tours cost Nkr1825 – they can be booked through any tourist office or directly through NSB at train stations. From Oslo, the typical route includes a rail trip from Oslo across Hardangervidda to Myrdal, a rail descent to Flåm along the dramatic Flåmbanen, a cruise along Nærøysfjorden to Gudvangen, a bus to Voss, a connecting train to Bergen for a short visit, then an overnight return rail trip to Oslo (including sleeper compartment). You can also book one-way tours.

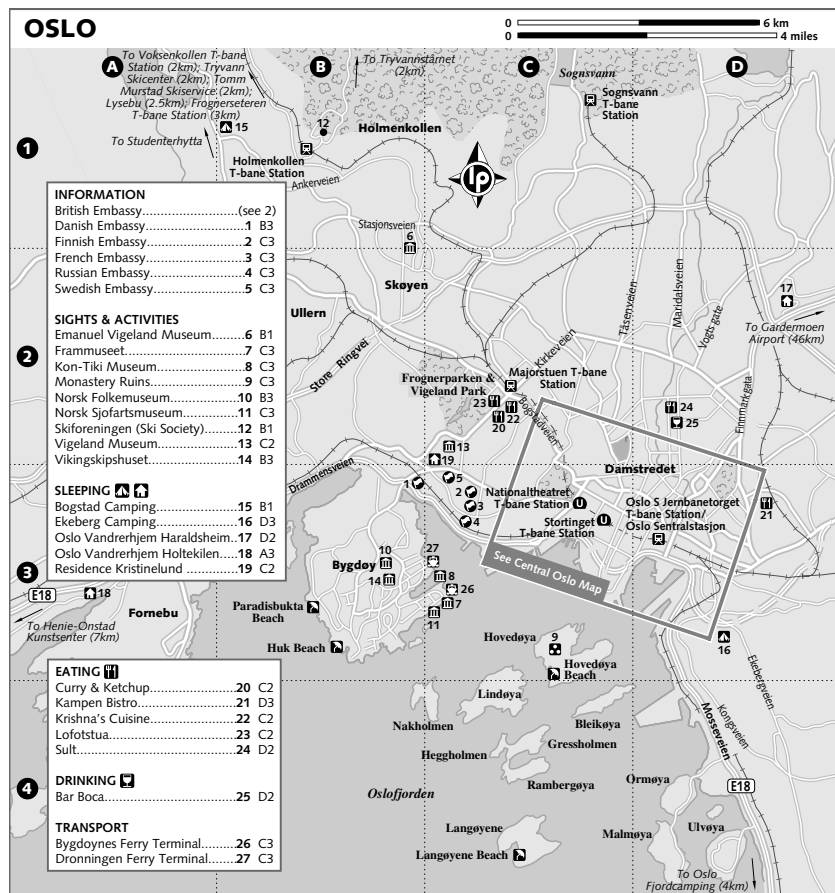
FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Oslo's most festive annual event is the **17 May Constitution Day** celebration, when city residents descend on the royal palace in traditional garb.

In March, the **Holmenkollen Ski Festival** (☎ 22 92 32 00; www.skiforeningen.no) attracts Nordic skiers and ski jumpers from around the world. August sees the **Oslo International Jazz Festival** (☎ 22 42 91 20; www.oslojazz.no), October brings **Films from the South** (☎ 22 82 24 80; www.filmfraso.no) and April the **Inferno Metal Festival** (www.infernofestival.net).

SLEEPING

When all other options seem unlikely, **Use-It** (p303) can usually find a place, helping travellers book double rooms in private homes for Nkr300 to Nkr500 (excluding breakfast). There's no booking fee. If you arrive on a Saturday or Sunday, when the office is closed, call ahead and they'll give you advance help.



The tourist offices book unfilled hotel rooms at discounted rates, which can be worth pursuing during the week but are generally close to the rates that you can book directly from hotels on weekends. There's a Nkr35 booking fee. Discounts are offered to holders of hotel passes (p378).

Also worth checking out is www.bbnoway.com, which lists around a dozen B&Bs in Oslo.

Budget

Oslo Fjordcamping (Map p310; ☎ 22 75 20 55; Ljansbruveien 1; camp sites from Nkr130, static caravan Nkr300) This family-friendly camping ground by the Oslofjord, about 8km south of the city, doesn't have the droves of loud revellers

found in Oslo's other main sites. There are showers, a kiosk selling snacks and a nearby restaurant. Take bus No 83 from Oslo S.

Ekeberg Camping (Map p310; ☎ 22 19 85 68; www.ekebergcamping.no; Ekebergveien 65; camp site from Nkr150; ☎ 7.30am-11pm Jun-early Sep; (P)) On a scenic hill southeast of the city, Ekeberg provides a great view over Oslo. For this reason, it gets crowded, sometimes unpleasantly. Take bus No 34 or 46.

Bogstad Camping (Map p310; ☎ 22 51 08 00; www.bogstadcamping.no; Ankerveien 117; camp site Nkr140; (P)) Often overcrowded and rowdy, the campground enjoys a pretty location near a valley of farms and overlooking a golf course with a lake beyond. On-site cafeteria and kitchen (no cooking implements). Take bus No 32.

Perminalen (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 09 30 81; perminalen@statenskantiner.no; Øvre Slottsgate 2; dm/s/d Nkr295/495/650; (♿)) This central 55-room pension caters to military personnel, but is open to everyone. All rooms have TV, private bathroom and less dirt than the vacuum of space. Rates include linens and breakfast, served in a slick modern room or pleasant interior court.

Anker Hostel (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 99 72 10; www.anker.oslo.no; Storgata 55; breakfast Nkr60; 4-bed dm/6-bed dm Nkr145/170, 2-person r Nkr430; (♿)) You'll find this utilitarian hostel on a cheerless intersection of wide streets. Aside from this, Anker is excellently located in the centre near Grünerløkka.

Oslo Vandrerhjem Haraldsheim (Map p310; ☎ 22 22 29 65; www.haraldsheim.oslo.no; Haraldsheimveien 4; dm/s/d Nkr205/380/515, dm/s/d with shared bathroom Nkr185/310/430; ☎ closed around Christmas; (P)) Big bright and busy, this modern hostel is surrounded by acres of athletic fields. Though it's 4km from the centre, you can still make out the Oslofjord in the distance (and a rumbling freeway that's much closer). Take tram No 13 or 17 to the Sinsenkrysset stop.

Oslo Vandrerhjem Holtekilen (Map p310; ☎ 67 51 80 40; www.vandrerhjem.no; Micheletsvei 55, Stabekk; dm/s/d Nkr185/285/470; ☎ mid-May-early Oct; (P)) This 195-bed hostel sits amid a quiet enclave of trees and grass and is close to the edge of the Oslofjord. It's far enough from the centre (8km west of Oslo) that day cards and Oslo passes won't cover bus fare. Take bus No 151, 153, 161, 162, 252 or 261.

Midrange

MS Innvik (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 41 95 00; www.msinnvik.no; Langkaia; s/d Nkr400/700) Once a car ferry used as a travelling theatre, the vessel has been reincarnated as a B&B docked in the harbour. It's still a cultural centre, so don't flush your toilet when puppet shows or theatrical events are held below deck.

Residence Kristinelund (Map p310; ☎ 40 00 24 11; www.kristinelund.no; s/d Nkr525/870; ☎ 8.30am-11pm) Set amid a swanky residential neighbourhood of mansions and embassies, this impressive turn-of-the-century building and its flowering grounds provide a hospitable experience in a quiet corner of Oslo.

Ellingsen's Pensjonat (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 60 03 59; ep@tiscal.no; Holtegata 25; s Nkr300-420, d Nkr490-590) This homey pension set in a quiet

neighbourhood dates from 1890 and many original features (tall ceilings, rose designs, tall thresholds) remain. Rooms are bright and airy. All have a sink and writing table. Bathrooms are shared.

Cochs Pensjonat (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 33 24 00; fax 23 33 24 10; Parkveien 25; s/d from Nkr400/560) Near the Royal Palace, Coch's plain pleasant rooms occupy a large turn-of-the-century building with a fine corner location overlooking the beer garden of a café across the street.

P-Hotel (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 31 80 00; www.p-hotels.no; Grensen 19; s/d Nkr595/695; (♿)) Supremely central and supremely generic, the P-Hotel provides competitively priced private rooms during the business week. No breakfast buffet, instead a bag of snacks is hung on your door.

City Hotel (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 41 36 10; www.cityhotel.no; Skippergata 19; s/d Nkr530/695, s/d with shared bathroom Nkr440/580) There's slight historical ambience in the stairwells, but the rooms are fairly basic in this pleasant budget hotel. The street nearby has become a popular place to make some cash, if you happen to be a lady or man of ill repute.

Top End

Hotel Continental (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 82 40 00; www.hotel-continental.no; Stortingsgata 24/26; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr1990/2390, s/d mid-Jun-Aug & Sat & Sun year-round Nkr995/1350; (P) ☎ (♿)) A family-run palace dating from 1890, the Continental offers exquisite period rooms with privileged views over interesting monuments. Expect top-notch service and a tear-jerkingly good breakfast. The foyer bar has more Munch lithographs than most museums.

Hotel Bristol (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 82 60 00; www.bristol.no; Kristian IV's gate 7; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr1795/1995, s/d mid-Jun-Aug & Sat & Sun year-round Nkr1095/1295; (P) ☎ (♿)) The foyer and lounge provide a glimpse into sumptuous days of steamer trunk travel. These arcaded rooms, lit by crystal chandeliers and furnished with stacks of leather chairs, will make you hanker for some tea and club sandwiches (both available). Upstairs, pleasantly renovated rooms attempt to mirror the elegance below.

Lysebu (Map p310; ☎ 21 51 10 00; www.lysebu.com; Lysebuveien 12; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr1250/1750, s/d Mid-Jun-Aug & Sat & Sun year-round Nkr940/1250; (P) ☎ (♿)) Given to Denmark as an expression of gratitude for WWII food relief, this tranquil (and swanky) hotel sits near the top of

a small, forested mountain with expansive views over distance hills. Take T-Bane line 1 to Voksenkollen (25 minutes).

EATING

Many of the coolest and cheapest dining options can be found in the neighbourhoods of Grünerløkka, the primary enclave for Oslo's young and fashionably dressed, and Grønland, whose population of Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants have established affordable ethnic eating places.

Restaurants

Frognerseteren (☎ 22 46 93 96; Holmenkollveien 200; apple cake Nkr52; 🕒 10.30am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 10.30am-9pm Sun) Perched on a mountainside overlooking the city, this 19th-century eatery has big fireplaces, spectacular views and kick-arse apple cake in an impressive building combining the rusticity of large wooden beams with the delicacy of 'dragon-style' ornamentation. Take T-Bane 1 to the Frognerseteren stop.

Lofotstua (Map p310; ☎ 22 46 93 96; Kirkeveien 40; mains Nkr170-220; 🕒 3-10pm Mon-Fri) Run by a family from the Lofoten islands, this restaurant turns out a changing menu of fantastic fish dishes, in a room that looks sort of like a brown bar.

Kampen Bistro (☎ 22 19 77 08; Bøgata 21; mains Nkr175; 🕒 2pm-1am) Off the beaten track, this former working-class eatery has been transformed into a slightly stodgy neighbourhood bistro. The good-looking room pleases a local crowd. How about some chicken confit and antipasto?

Curry & Ketchup (Map p310; ☎ 22 69 05 22; Kirkeveien 51; mains Nkr75-99) Waiters wearing black rush through an intimate room to serve quality specials (coconut duck), kormas and curries (mostly chicken and lamb

with a few vegetarian dishes). There is no ketchup to be seen.

Pascal (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 55 00 20; Drammensveien 10; cakes Nkr55, mains Nkr130-270; 🕒 9am-11pm Mon-Fri, 10am-11pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun) When a visiting Bill Clinton needed a cup of coffee, he procured it here. While most come for locally famous cakes (rich and French), there's also a menu of salads, grilled fish and sandwiches.

Villa Paradiso (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 35 40 60; Olav Ryes plass 8; mains Nkr119-139; 🕒 11am-midnight) Make reservations weeks in advance for a weekend dinner of Norway's finest pizza (not difficult in the land of soggy pies). Patrons eat the delicious goods surrounded by big windows and wood panelling.

Sult (Map p310; ☎ 22 87 04 67; Thorvald Meyersgate 26; mains Nkr89-169) Prepares a changing menu of continental fare for patrons who sit at small tables and listen to Elvis Presley. Cod encrusted with pistachios is excellent.

Krishna's Cuisine (Map p310; ☎ 22 60 62 50; Kirkeveien 59B; daily meal/plate Nkr90/70; 🕒 noon-8pm Mon-Sat) Near the Majorstuen T-bane station, Krishna's politely serves a daily vegetarian meal where you might eat corn soup, cucumber salad and a pile of broccoli in yellow curry. Portions are so huge that most just buy a plate of the hot dish.

Stortorvets Gjæstgiveri's (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 35 63 60; Grubbegata 3; mains Nkr140-235) Norway's oldest restaurant's sagging yellow, wooden walls and pretty interior courtyard provide an excellent backdrop for traditional meals. Don't try for a table on 17 May or Christmas.

Kaffistova (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 21 42 10; Rosenkrantz gate 8; mains Nkr80-110; 🕒 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) This cafeteria serves traditional Norwegian food, including reindeer or elk carbonades (locally defined as meat cakes), meatballs and fish cakes; salad is always included.

Cafés

Tekehtopa (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 20 33 52; St Olav plass 2; mains Nkr85-135) A former pharmacy, Tekeh topa serves espresso and chevre salads under a beautifully moulded and painted ceiling. It also serves Norway's ubiquitous breed of lousy pilsner, but you'll feel privileged to drink anything at all in a room this nice.

Blitx (Map pp304-5; Pilestredet 30C; sandwiches Nkr8-15; 🕒 11am-5pm Mon-Fri) Inside a barricaded, graffiti-covered building is an activist

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Spasibar (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 11 51 90; St Olavs gate 22; snacks Nkr32-58) Psychedelic '60s table cloths and lots of pinks, oranges and browns provide a suitable backdrop for an outrageous life-size portrait of the Spasibar's artist/workers dressed as cowboys and made out of 255,000 beads. It and everything else in this flea market/gallery/café/music venue (including the PA system) is for sale. Just ask. Proceeds go to an orphanage in Russia. The place serves small plates of chorizo and tandoori chicken, and plenty of beer, on which you'll get a huge discount if you can speak Russian with a convincing accent. An excellent summer garden overlooks Slottsparken. To find it, enter the Kunstcademe on Wergelandsveien and head for the rear of the yellow building.

institution with 25 years of squatting history. Friendly, tattooed volunteers run a café serving unbelievably cheap vegetarian and vegan food. Coffee costs Nkr5.

Delicatessen (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 71 45 46; Sødre gate 8; sandwiches Nkr55-75) One of Grünerløkka's numerous cool-kid cafés, it features sturdy wooden tables and big windows that fold away in the summer to overlook a riverside park across the street. Good Italian sandwiches.

Grand Café (Map pp304-5; Karl Johans gate 31; daily special Nkr140; 🕒 daily special available 11am-6pm Mon-Sat) The café at the Grand Hotel has been serving Oslo's cognoscenti for more than a century. As a reminder, a wall mural depicts the restaurant in the 1890s, bustling with the likes of Munch and Ibsen. The best deal is the traditional daily special.

Quick Eats

Brugata Kebab Gatekjokken (Map pp304-5; Brugata 10; falafel & kebab Nkr29-35; 🕒 10am-midnight Sun-Thu, 10am-5am Fri & Sat) This florescent-lit hole bucks the trend and turns out excellent falafel and properly cooked lamb on freshly made pita.

Hotel Havana (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 23 03 23; Thorvald Meyersgate 36; dishes Nkr49-89; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) A Grünerløkka delicatessen serving great takeaway food, enjoy substantial fish burgers (Nkr49) with homemade aioli, or try Brie sandwiches (Nkr49) and fish and chips (Nkr74).

Punjab Tandoori (Map pp304-5; Grønland 24; mains Nkr55-65) Oslo's favourite turbaned man dishes out curries from steam baskets. Immensely popular, the stuff moves so fast that it's always fresh. The room is no frills and sometimes the unlucky get more bones than meat.

Bocata (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 41 46 62; Stortingsgata 22; snacks Nkr35-95) Come here for takeaway

meals of Malaysian-style chicken, sweet and sour pork, spaghetti pesto, and ham sandwiches. Business types pack the counters at lunchtime.

There are numerous cheap pizza, burger and kebab joints along Grønland and Storgata. Fast food abounds in Oslo S.

Self-Catering

Eating can be extremely expensive. One way to save money is to frequent bakeries, many of which sell reasonably priced sandwiches as well as pastries and hearty wholegrain breads. Along Grønland and Storgata, you'll find many small immigrant groceries selling fresh fruit, some of which are open on Sunday.

DRINKING

Parkeateret (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 35 63 00; Olav Ryes plass 11) The yellow-and-black foyer of this cool-kid theatre and performance space serves espresso and beer to the fashionably dressed. In summer, excellent pavement seating overlooks one of Grünerløkka's English squares.

Teddy's Soft Bar (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 17 36 50; Brugata 3A) Established in 1958, Teddy's provides a clear view into the past via its thoroughly unchanged interior. An ancient Wurlitzer sets the tone. While good burgers are served, most come for the suds.

Bar Boca (Map p310; ☎ 22 04 13 77; Thorvald Meyersgate 30) This tiny bar shoots for a stylized 1950s Hawaiian surfer look with a satisfying cool design. The place is packed, serves cocktails made with fresh fruit and is home to someone who clearly spent a lot of time compiling obscure period music.

Olympen (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 17 28 08; Grønlandsleiret 15) A freakish, century-old workers' beer hall, populated by students, artists and drunks, featuring awesomely cheesy cover

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Åpent Bakeri (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 44 94 70; Inkognito Terrace 1) For stellar breads and pastries, stop by this bakery, easily one of Norway's best. An attached café makes for an elegant spot to eat giant, grainy rolls that you can load up with berry jam and butter (Nkr12) for one of the cheapest breakfasts around. In nice weather, enjoy pavement seating on a quiet, tree-lined street.

bands (Bob Jovi) and cheap beer (Nkr33) in a cavernous space full of elaborate wooden booths and huge oil paintings of faded, unrecognisable cityscapes.

Library Bar (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 82 60 00; Kristian IV's gate 7) Wear your finest tweed (not required) and sit among piles of leather-bound tomes in the Hotel Bristol's old-school drinking den. Crystal chandeliers set the tone. This is also a good place for a fancy luncheon sandwich (Nkr70 to Nkr95). Overcoats must be checked (Nkr20).

Lorry's (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 69 69 04; Parkveien 12) Overpriced, crappy food in a bar with dirty toilets. Despite this, stuffed moose heads, pleasant heated beer garden and large menu of lager ensure it's well loved. Drunk artists used to pay for their beer with some of the stuff hung on the walls.

Stargate (Map pp304-5; Grønland 2) A cross-roads between east and west Oslo, this watering hole attracts youthful cheap skates, immigrants and guys with too-red noses.

In the summer, you can enjoy a beer in one of Vigeland Park's outdoor cafés.

ENTERTAINMENT

The tourist office's monthly *What's on in Oslo* brochure lists concerts, theatre and special events, but the best publication for night owls is the free *Streetwise*, published annually in English by Use-It (p303). Dress to impress or risk being refused entry to nightspots.

Cinema

Cinematket (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 47 45 00; Dronningens gate 16; tickets Nkr60) This art-house cinema screens alternative contemporary films, classics and independent fare.

Saga Kino (Map pp304-5; ☎ 41 51 90 00; Stortingsgata 28; tickets Nkr60) Shows first-run movies in their original languages.

Gay & Lesbian Venues

There are very few strictly gay and lesbian clubs in Oslo. Several places attract mixed crowds and some venues offer a weekly gay night. For details on these nights and special events, pick up the free *Pink Planet* at the tourist office or look in *Use-It's Streetwise*.

London Pub (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 70 87 00; Cj Hambros plass 5; ☎ 3pm-3am) Oslo's oldest hang-out for the studs, where you can shoot stick and feed jukeboxes. If you feel like serious

dancing, head downstairs where DJs spin every night of the week.

Live Music

Mono (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 41 41 66; www.cafemono.no; Ploensgata 4) For indie acts (Gruff Rhys from Super Furry Animals), head to this bar where every surface is black. On nights with no performances, you'll hear the bartender play stuff like Deerhoof.

Garage (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 17 16 00; www.garage.no; Grønland 18) In addition to Norwegian bands, Garage books international rock acts such as Death Cab for Cutie and the Beautiful People. While the sound system is good, the view is not thanks to a too-low stage.

Den Norske Opera (Map pp304-5; ☎ 81 54 44 88; Storgata 23; 50% student discount) Every month except July, Oslo's opera company stages opera, ballet and classical concerts here.

Also recommended:

Cosmopolite (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 11 33 09; www.cosmopolite.no; Møllergata 26) Jazz and world music.

Oslo Spektrum (Map pp304-5; ☎ 81 51 12 11; www.oslo.spektrum.no; Sonja Henies plass 2) A large concert hall where you can barely see whoever is performing (Guns 'N' Roses).

Oslo Konserthus (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 11 31 11; www.oslokonserthus.no; Munkedamsveien 14) Emphasises fine jazz and classical music.

Rockefeller Music Hall (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 20 32 32; www.rockefeller.no; Torggata 16) Books big-name international contemporary rock (Patti Smith), jazz and more.

Nightclubs

Blå (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 20 91 81; Brenneriveien 9) A cultural centre inside an old industrial building where you will meet Oslo's best dressed hipsters, Blå also books a ton of jazz acts. There's an outdoor seating area on the river.

Bar Royale (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 42 28 88; Råhusgata 25) Inside a former public toilet, this cave-like club (previously Skansen, deemed by *Face* to be the world's greatest club) spins House and techno.

Gloria Flames (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 17 16 00; Grønland 18; ☎ 4pm-3am Sat-Thu, 3pm-3am Fri) King of the Grønland nightclub scene, the DJs and bartenders here play a heavy mix of rock and indie in a blonde-wood room.

Smuget (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 17 16 00; Grønland 18; ☎ 4pm-3am Sat-Thu, 3pm-3am Fri) If you're into huge crowds, DJs at this pop palace play to the masses, which line up outside like

Vikings assembled to behold the ferocity of Odin or to drink mead from the skull of an enemy to better slack their Viking thirst. Skol!

SHOPPING

For fashionable men's and women's clothes, independent booksellers, record shops and plastic eyeglass frames, head to Bogstadvæien, considered by many to be Oslo best shopping street. By doing so, you'll free yourself from the crowds buying rip-off souvenirs off Karl Johans gate. For more cool Scandinavian dudes, try poking around the boutiques of the Grünerløkka district.

If you want a traditional Norwegian sweaters **Husfliden** (Map pp304-5; Møllergata 4) and **Heimen Husflid** (Map pp304-5; Rosenkrantz gate 8), are both large chains selling Norwegian clothing and crafts of good quality, with items ranging from tacky wooden trolls to elaborate folk costumes.

For wine or spirits, there's a Vinmopolet in the **Oslo City** (Map pp304-5) shopping complex.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Most flights land at Oslo's main international airport in Gardermoen, 50km north of the city. Oslo Torp is a secondary airport, 123km south of the city.

Boat

Boats to and from Copenhagen, operated by **DFDS Seaways** and from Frederikshavn (Denmark) operated by **Stena Line** use the docks off Skippergata, near Vippetangen.

Boats from Hirtshals (Denmark) and Kiel (Germany), run by **Color Line** dock at Hjortneskaia, west of the central harbour. Connecting buses run to Oslo S, or take tram No 10 or 13.

Bus

Long-distance buses arrive and depart from the **Galleri Oslo bus station**, about a 10-minute walk east from Oslo S.

Car & Motorcycle

The main highways into the city are the E6, from the north and south, and the E18, from the east and west. Unless you're on a motorcycle you'll have to pay a Nkr15 to Nkr25 toll each time you enter Oslo.

All major car-rental companies have booths at Gardermoen airport. The following also have offices in the city centre:

Avis (Map pp304-5; ☎ 81 56 90 44; Munkedamsveien 27)
Budget (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 16 32 40; Oslo Spektrum)

Train

All trains arrive and depart from Oslo S in the city centre. The reservation desks are open from 6.30am to 11pm daily. There's also an **information desk** (☎ 81 50 08 88) where you can get details on travel schedules throughout Norway. Oslo S has various sizes of lockers for Nkr20 to Nkr50 per 24 hours.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

FlyToget (☎ 177, 22 17 70 30; www.flybussen.no) runs high-speed trains between Oslo S and Oslo International airport in Gardermoen (adult/student Nkr180/90, 19 minutes, every 20 minutes) between 4.45am and midnight. Alternatively, you can take a northbound local train (Nkr80, 26 to 40 minutes, hourly but fewer on Saturday) or an express airport bus (Nkr120, 40 minutes, three hourly). A taxi costs around Nkr450, though **Oslo Taxi** (☎ 02323) sometimes offers discount rates.

To get to/from Torp Airport, take the **TorpExpressen** (☎ 81 50 01 76; adult/child130/70) bus from the Galleri Oslo Bus Terminal (1½ hours). Departures from Oslo leave three hours before Ryanair departures, and leave from Torp after Ryanair flights arrive. At other times, take an hourly Telemarksekspresen bus (or a taxi; from Nkr150, 10 minutes) between Torp and the Sandefjord train station from where there are connections to Oslo.

Car & Motorcycle

Oslo has many one-way streets, but otherwise traffic is not too challenging. Still, the best way to explore central sights is to walk or take local transport.

Metered street parking (Nkr20 to Nkr40 per hour), identified by a solid blue sign with a white 'P', can be found throughout the city centre. Hours written under the sign indicate when the meters need to be fed. Unless otherwise posted, parking is free outside that time and on Sunday. There are many multistorey car parks in the

city centre, including those at major shopping centres such as Oslo City and Aker Brygge. Fees range from Nkr70 to Nkr200 per 24-hour period. The Oslo Card gives free parking in municipal car parks.

Boat

Ferries going to Bygdøy leave from Rådhusbrygge every 20 to 40 minutes, while ferries to the islands in Oslofjord leave from Vippetangen.

Public Transport

Oslo has an efficient system with an extensive network of buses, trams, T-bane trains (metro/underground) and ferries. A one-way ticket on any of these services costs Nkr20 if you buy it from a station agent or kerbside machine. You can also buy your ticket from drivers for a Nkr10 surcharge. A *dagskort* (unlimited day ticket) costs Nkr60, but can't be used between 1am and 4am. Weekly/monthly cards cost Nkr160/620 (Nkr80/310 for people under 20 and seniors over 67). Buy them at Trafikanten, staffed T-bane and train stations, and some convenience stores.

Bicycles can be taken on Oslo's trams and trains for an additional Nkr11. While it may seem easy to board the subway and trams without a ticket, if confronted by an inspector you'll be fined Nkr750.

Trafikanten (Map pp304-5; ☎ 81 50 01 76; 🕒 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm Sat & Sun), below the Oslo S tower on Jernbanetorget, provides free schedules and a handy public-transport map. Dial ☎ 177 from 7am to 11pm for schedule information.

BUS & TRAM

Bus and tram lines extend into the suburbs. There's no central station but most buses and trams converge at Jernbanetorget in front of Oslo S. Most westbound buses, including those to Bygdøy and Vigeland Park, also stop on the southern side of Nationaltheatret.

Service frequency drops dramatically at night, but on Saturday and Sunday only, Nattlinjer night buses No 200 to 218 follow the tram routes until 4am (tickets Nkr50; passes not valid).

T-BANE

The five-line T-bane metro train network, which goes underground in the city centre,

is faster and goes further outside the city centre than most bus lines. All lines pass through Nationaltheatret, Stortinget and Jernbanetorget stations.

Taxi

Taxis charge up to Nkr90 at flagfall and from Nkr12 to Nkr18 per kilometre. There are taxi stands at Oslo S, shopping centres and city squares. Any taxi with a lit sign is available for hire. Otherwise, phone **Taxi2** (☎ 02202), **Norgestaxi** (☎ 08000) or **Oslo Taxi** (☎ 02323). Meters start running at the point of dispatch, adding to what will become a gigantic bill.

SOUTHERN NORWAY

The curving south coast exists as a magnet in the summer months for vacationing Norwegian families, who come to the area for its beaches, offshore islands and sailing opportunities. Unless themselves here to pilot masted vessels, first-time foreign travellers generally visit the coast's sleepy wooden towns as a pit stop en route to more exciting locales. The most notable exception is Stavanger, a lively international city conveniently positioned for explorations of surrounding fjords and surfing spots.

STAVANGER & AROUND

pop 106,000

Don't be misled by Stavanger's title 'Oil Capital of Norway' – this is a picturesque city (Norway's fourth largest) of narrow cobbled streets and small white houses. The centre is lively, containing a fine stock of bars, cafés and places to stroll. It's an excellent point from which to begin exploring the Lysefjord.

History

Stavanger was once a bustling fishing centre and, in its heyday, had more than 70 sardine canneries. By the 1960s, the depletion of fish stocks had brought an end to the industry, but the discovery of North Sea oil spared Stavanger from hard times. This is perhaps no great tourist draw, but it has brought prosperity and a cosmopolitan community with nearly 3000 British and US oil people.

Orientation

The adjacent bus and train stations are a 10-minute walk from the harbour, around which most sights cluster.

Information

BOOKSHOP

Gardum (☎ 51 89 44 40; Sørengata 22; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Thu, 9am-5pm Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) Large travel section.

INTERNET ACCESS

Cafe.com (☎ 51 55 41 20; Søvberg gate 15; 🕒 11am-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-9pm Sun; Nkr55 per hr)

Library (☎ 51 50 72 57; Sølvergate 2; 🕒 10am-7pm Mon-Thu, 10am-5pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) In the Solvberget Stavanger Kulturhus; provides free internet access (but you'll have to wait and there's a time limit).

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist Office (☎ 51 85 92 00; www.visitstavanger.com; Rosenkildetorget 1; 🕒 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, shorter hrs & closed Sun Sep-May) Provides details of Stavanger's 12 annual festivals.

Sights

The bizarre and beautiful **Floro & Fjære** (Flower Island; ☎ 51 11 00 00; www.florogfjære.no; adult/child Nkr590/250; 🕒 May-Sep; 🚰) blooms brightly with palm trees and exotic plants. Or part of it anyway. The rest is a pile of rocks where grass struggles to grow and sheep struggle to find it. The magical bit is an oasis painstakingly constructed by a horticulturist (and his devoted family) who retired from his nursery to build this 6-acre garden of lush grass, fig cork and lemon trees, thousands of flowers and a slew of tropical plants. For your tariff, you take a pleasant boat ride (20 minutes) past offshore islands, tour the grounds, and enjoy a stellar four-course buffet. Reservations recommended.

Tracing the history of oil formation and extraction in the North Sea, the state-of-the-art **Norsk Oljemuseum** (☎ 51 93 93 00; www.norskolje.museum.no; Kjeringsholmen; adult/child Nkr75/35; 🕒 10am-7pm Jun-Aug, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun Sep-May; 🚰) nicely balances the technical side of oil exploration with archive footage of significant moments in the history of Norwegian oil. Not least among these are the coverage of the Kielland Tragedy, when 123 workers were killed and a 1950s commission report concluding that there was no oil in Norwegian waters. Excellent interactive exhibits for kids.

The following **museums** (☎ 51 84 27 00; 🕒 11am-4pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, shorter hrs early Jun & late Aug, 11am-4pm Sun Sep-May) have combined same-day admission costs of adult/family Nkr40/90. The main **Stavanger Museum** (Muségata 16) has the standard collection of stuffed animals in one wing and local history exhibits in another. More interesting is the **Maritime Museum** (Nedre Strandgate 17), in two restored warehouses, which gives a good glimpse of Stavanger's extensive maritime history. The fascinating **Canning Museum** (Øvre Strandgate 88A) occupies an old sardine cannery, where you'll see ancient machinery in action, learn about the various soul-destroying jobs provided by the cannery and ogle a large collection of old sardine-can labels. There are also two 19th-century manor houses built by wealthy ship owners: the recently restored **Ledaal** (Eiganesveien 45), which serves as the residence for visiting members of the royal family, and the excellent **Breidablikk** (Eiganesveien 40A), a merchant's opulent villa built in 1881.

A fun quarter for strolling about is Gamle Stavanger, on the west side of the harbour, where cobblestone walkways lead through rows of well-preserved early-18th-century whitewashed wooden houses.

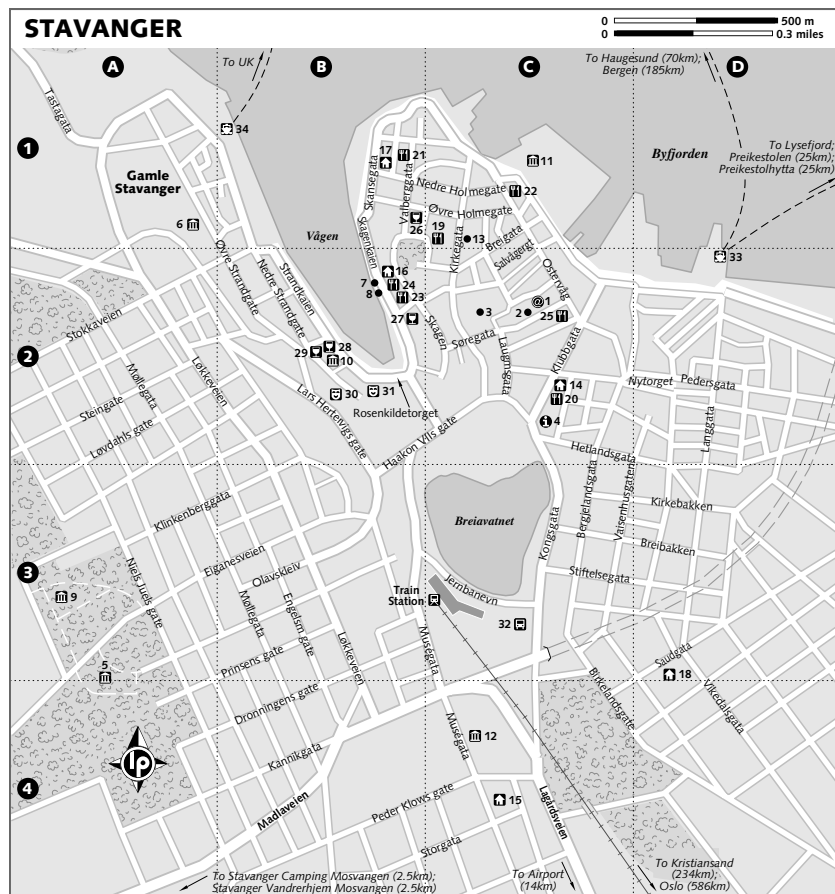
Activities

The area's most popular outing is the two-hour hike to the top of the incredible **Preikestolen** (Pulpit Rock), 25km east of Stavanger. You can inch up to the edge of its flat top and peer 600m straight down to the Lysefjord. The tourist board has details on public transport to the trailhead.

A good outing, if you have a vehicle, is to take the **car ferry** (☎ 51 86 87 80; Nkr350, four hr, one daily in mid-Jun to mid-Aug) from Stavanger to Lysebotn, at the head of the Lysefjord. From there, drive up the mountain pass to Sirdal, along a narrow road that climbs 640m with 27 hairpin turns, for a scenic ride back to Stavanger. Starting at the Øygardsstølen Café car park, near the top of the bends, a strenuous 10km-return hike leads to the second wonder of Lysefjord, the **Kjeragbolten** boulder, or chockstone, lodged between two rock faces about 2m apart but with 1000m of empty space underneath.

SURFING

If you want excellent, unpopulated surf breaks and are willing to brave some cold



water, the undeveloped coast around Stavanger attracts purists. For gear purchase, rentals (Nkr350 per day), lessons (Nkr390 gets you gear plus four hours in the water) and advice on where to go, visit **Surf Centrum** (☎ 51 33 11 22; www.surfcentrum.no; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat). The closest surfable spot is 15km to the south.

Tours

If you'd rather look up at Pulpit Rock from the bottom, the **Fjord Tours** (☎ 51 89 52 70; www.fjordpanorama.no) sightseeing boat leaves Stavanger from mid-May through August to cruise the lovely steep-walled Lysefjord, operated by an entertaining bunch of old salts who will point out fish farms along the

way. Tickets (adult/child Nkr280/140) can be purchased at the tourist office.

Sleeping

Because the local hostel is not open year-round, sleeping cheaply in Stavanger can be a challenge. In summer, rooms at all price levels sell out early. For an alternative to the places listed below, the tourist office books rooms in B&Bs (Nkr30 fee). Rooms start at Nkr300.

BUDGET

Stavanger Camping Mosvangen (☎ 51 53 29 71; www.mosvangencamping.no; Tjensvoll 18; camp sites from Nkr80, dm Nkr120, 2-person cabins Nkr350-400, 4-person cabins Nkr500-600; ☎ May-Sep) Situated in

INFORMATION

Cafe.com.....	1	C2
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Food Story.....	20	C2
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DRINKING

Armaddilo.....	26	B1
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ENTERTAINMENT

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gate 19; dm/d Nkr170/340; ☎ Jun-Aug) Lakeside and private, two- and four-bed rooms enjoy access to trails around lake Mosvangen and its ducks. Breakfast costs Nkr60.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Rogalandsheimen Gjestgiveri (☎ 51 52 01 88; Muségata 18; s/d Nkr495/595 Nkr500-550; ☎ ☎) Paintings cover every surface of this charming 19th-century guesthouse. The 13 homey rooms share bathroom facilities and attract artists and musicians.

Skansen Hotel (☎ 51 93 85 00; www.skansenhotel.no; Skansegata 7; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr845/980, s/d Sat & Sun Nkr560/645, s/d Mid-Jun-Aug Nkr620/705; ☎ ☎) This cool independent place contains simple rooms in a great location near the harbour. The joint's slick Broremann Bar is staffed by a master mixer.

Skagen Brygge Hotell (☎ 51 85 00 00; www.skagenbryggehottell.no; Skagenkaia 30; s/d Nkr1350/1450, s/d discount Nkr700/850; ☎ ☎ ☎) A modernised former warehouse containing exceedingly comfortable rooms, half of which have stellar views of the harbour. The breakfast buffet features fresh fruit and French pastry.

Also recommended:

Stavanger Bed & Breakfast (☎ 51 56 25 00; www.stavangerbedandbreakfast.no; Vikedalsgata 1A; s/d Nkr565/670; ☎) Plain, linoleum-floored rooms in a quiet neighbourhood.

Comfort Hotel Grand (☎ 51 20 14 00; www.choice.no; Kulbbgata 3; s/d Nkr870/770, s/d discount Nkr670/770) Looks grim from the outside, but rooms have high standard interiors.

Eating

Café Sting (☎ 51 89 38 78; Valberget 3; smaller dishes Nkr75-129, mains Nkr155-175) Blessed with a lovely hill-top position and sharing a yard with the Valberg Tower, Sting serves substantial smaller dishes, such as an excellent Creole pasta with shrimp. The clientele is mostly gay on Friday and Saturday nights when there is often a DJ.

Stim (☎ 51 85 00 16; Skagenkaia 28; mains Nkr189-259) A high-end design-team reworked this water-facing warehouse to include green glass stairs, silent video projections of cloudscape and subtle level changes. For food, try a Cajun fish soup, John Dory or a moderately priced three-course splurge (Nkr300).

Resept (☎ 51 55 39 80; Østerväg 43; mains Nkr49-99) This café's décor involves minimal leather

a clearing near lake Mosvangen, you'll find a large field with minimal shade trees and some mass-produced cabins. There's also a dormitory. Nearby walking trails lead to town (3km).

Preikestolhytta (☎ 97 16 55 51; www.preikestolhytta.no; dm/r Nkr210/580; ☎ Jun-Aug; ☎) Trees grow from this isolated turf-roofed hostel, 25km out of the city within walking distance of Pulpit Rock and other amazing hikes. The cafeteria works with a culinary school to prepare fine local meals. Book far in advance.

Stavanger Vandrerhjem Mosvangen (☎ 51 54 36 36; stavanger.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Henrik Ibsens

couches and solid coloured walls recalling the supergraphics of the '70s. Enjoy vegetarian pasta (Nkr79), Asian noodle soup and DJs.

Food Story (☎ 51 56 37 70; Klubbgate 3; mains Nkr55-99; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Wed, 10am-8pm Thu & Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) This deli/restaurant prepares a changing menu of high-end fare, usually organic. Eat raw tuna with citrus fruits, Italian sausages and fancy sauces.

India Tandoori Restaurant (☎ 51 89 39 35; Valberggata 14; lunch mains Nkr78-89, dinner mains Nkr89-199) Authentic northern Indian dishes (several vegetarian) and a particularly good korma navrattan come in a well-decorated room that recalls the subcontinent.

Sjøhuset Skagen (☎ 51 89 51 80; Skagenkaia 16; mains Nkr185-235) For traditionally prepared fish, this creaky-floored choice is a winner. Find exposed wooden frames, models of ships and pavement views over the harbour.

A fish market sits at the harbour, and **Våland Dampbakeri & Conditori** (☎ 51 86 19 23; Nygaten 24) turns out flaky pastry, as it has done since 1913.

Drinking

Cementen (☎ 51 56 78 00; Nedre Strandgate 25) On the 2nd floor with views across the quay, friendly bartenders play kick-arse tunes and sometimes host bands. Pick up a used book (Nkr5 to Nkr10) and Sunday beer special's (Nkr31) in a room that feels like a private library full of drunk hipsters.

Armadillo (☎ 51 89 39 59; Øvre Holmegata 15) Walk straight through Harry Pepper's (a Mexican restaurant) to this hidden neighbourhood pub on the 2nd floor. An excellent collection of worn furniture has been carefully collected from Denmark, and the bar piece is from Dublin. There's no sign.

Gnu (☎ 51 89 73 45; Nedre Strandgate 25) A super-gaudy and enormous chandelier hangs over bartenders wearing AC/DC T-shirts, some taxidermy and a foosball table. Toughest, skinniest bouncers in town.

Beverly Hills Fun Pub (☎ 51 89 51 77; Skagenkaia 14A; ☎ noon-2am) Second home to scads of oil-rig workers and international businessmen is Stavanger's most consistently (and inexplicably) crowded bar, even on rainy Monday nights. Despite the name and the startling ratio of four men to every woman, it's not even an expressly gay pub.

Entertainment

Checkpoint Charlie (☎ 51 53 22 45; www.checkpoint.no; Lars Hertervigsgate 5; ☎ 8pm-2am Sun-Fri, 3pm-2am Sat) Friendly dudes tend bar here, where the rock happens on a small stage. Happy-hour beer sells for Nkr36, and it also shows football matches.

Taket (☎ 51 84 37 01; Nedre Strandgata 15) Stavanger's biggest disco plays pop hits to a crowded space whose sense of décor is lost in blackness. Flashing lights over the dance floor reveal that the place is packed with young bodies as well as the tackiness of the floor that various kinds of liquor and biological wastes have been spilled.

Getting There & Away TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Buses leave frequently for the airport (14km south of town) from the bus station (Nkr70/110 one-way/return, 20 minutes, several times an hour). A taxi costs Nkr250 to Nkr350.

BOAT

The **HSD Flaggruten** (☎ 51 86 87 80) express passenger catamaran to Bergen (adult Nkr640/840 one-way/return, 4¼ hours) and Haugesund leaves two or three times daily.

BUS

Nor-Way Bussekspress offers connecting services to Oslo (Nkr700, 10¼ hours, one to three daily) and direct to Bergen (Nkr420, 5¼ hours, roughly one an hour).

TRAIN

Stavanger's only railway line runs to Oslo (Nkr833, 7¼ hours, two to four daily) via Kristiansand (Nkr383, three hours, three to seven daily).

MANDAL

pop 12,800

Mandal, Norway's southernmost town, is best known for having the country's finest bathing beach (though water temperatures are significantly warmer in the Oslofjord). There are enough cobbled pedestrian lanes in the centre for an hour or two of village exploration.

The 800m-long **Sjøanden** beach, about 1km from the centre, is Norway's sandy Copacabana, with a lovely forest backdrop.

At the southernmost point in Norway, 36km west of Mandal, you'll find wild coastal scenery and historical exhibitions at the classic lighthouse, **Lindenes Fyr** (☎ 38 26 19 02; www.lindenesfyr.no; Lindenes; adult/child Nkr30/free; ☎ 10am-6pm May, 10am-8pm Jun & Sep, 10am-9pm Jul & Aug). Buses from Mandal (Nkr52, one hour) travel to the lighthouse on Monday, Wednesday and Friday in summer. You'll have one hour there before the single return bus departs.

Mandal Tourist Information (☎ 38 27 83 00; Bryggegetan 10; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri Sep-May) is a five-minute walk west from the bus station.

Sleeping & Eating

Sjøanden Ferietun (☎ 38 26 60 37; saferie@online.no; Fr Nansenvei 6; camp sites Nkr100, r from Nkr450, cabins from Nkr550; (P)) Just steps from the beach in a family-friendly complex set within a forest grove. Sells out months in advance.

Kjøbmandsgaarden Hotel (☎ 38 26 12 76; www.kjobmandsgaarden.no; Store Elvegaten 57; s/d Nkr740/970) A former hardware shop dating from 1863. The basic rooms come with private bathroom but don't exhibit much character. Rooms cost 15% less on weekends. It's cafeteria serves traditional Norwegian fare in a wood-floored room with beachy furniture and an upright piano. At night, it's a more expensive restaurant.

Jonas B Gundersen (☎ 38 27 15 00; Store Elvegaten 25; mains Nkr149-164) Serves good pizza (large ones, costing Nkr189 to Nkr209, feed two to three people) in a joint packed with old music instruments and pictures of jazz dudes.

Edgar's Bakeri og Konditori (☎ 38 27 15 55; Torget) Occupying two floors of a charming white building, this place serves excellent *kaneli svingen* (pastry with vanilla filling) and has fine 2nd-floor views of the *torget* (square).

Getting There & Away

Express buses run two to four times daily between Stavanger (Nkr320, 3¼ hours) and Kristiansand (Nkr80, 45 minutes) via Mandal.

KRISTIANSAND

pop 75,000

The fifth-largest city in the country, summertime Kristiansand offers urban life and a small bathing beach right in the town centre. Strollers will enjoy poking around

Posebyen, a district containing a large concentration of white houses from the 17th and 18th centuries. Kristiansand also hosts the fantastic Quart Music Festival. It's a busy seaside holiday resort for Norwegians, but foreign tourists with limited time generally prefer Oslo, Bergen and Stavanger.

Kristiansand is Norway's closest port to Denmark and offers the first glimpse of the country for many ferry travellers from the south.

Orientation

The train, bus and ferry terminals are together on the west side of the city centre. Markens gate, a pedestrian street a block inland, is the central shopping and restaurant area.

Information

Cafe.com (Dronningensgate 56; per hr Nkr45; ☎ 11am-11pm Mon-Thu, 11am-midnight Fri, noon-5am Sat, 1-11pm Sun) Internet access.

Library (☎ 38 12 49 10; Rådhusgata 11; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Thu, 10am-4.30pm Fri, 10am-3pm Sat)

Tourist Office (☎ 38 12 13 14; www.sorlandet.com; Vestre Strandgate 32; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun mid-Jun-late Aug, 8.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri late Aug-mid-Jun)

Sights & Activities

The most prominent feature to be seen along Strandpromenaden is **Christiansholm Festning** (Christiansholm Fortress; ☎ 9am-9pm mid-May-mid-Sep), built between 1662 and 1672; there's a fine coastal view from the cannon-ringed wall. From there, walk inland along the tree-lined Festningsgata and turn left onto Gyldenløves gate, passing the **town square** and **Kristiansand Domkirke** (☎ 38 10 77 50; Kirkegata; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat late Jun-early Aug, 10am-2pm Mon-Fri early Jun & late Aug), a huge church which nicely complements the square. You can climb the tower for adult/child Nkr20/10. Organ recitals occur at noon, Tuesday to Saturday.

It's also worth taking a slow stroll around **Posebyen** (old town), which takes in most of 14 blocks at the northern end of Kristiansand's characteristic *kvadraturen* (the city's street pattern).

Baneheia, a wooded park with lakes and trails, abuts the northwest side of the city centre. The 11th-century Romanesque **Oddernes Kirke** (☎ 38 05 87 50), about 1.5km further

northeast along E18, contains a rune stone, and a baroque pulpit from 1704; it's open variable hours.

Kristiansand Dyrepark (☎ 38 04 97 00; www.dyreparken.com; adult Nkr85-240, child Nkr70-195; 🕒 10am-7pm mid-May-early Aug, shorter hr otherwise) has gradually expanded into one of Norway's most popular domestic attractions. Mainly catering to families with children, the park includes water rides, a zoo, a 'Nordic wilderness', a cruise on pirate ships and the fantasy village of Kardamomme By. It's off the E18, 9km east of town.

Festivals & Events

Quart Festival (☎ 38 14 69 69; www.quart.no; day pass Nkr470, 5-day pass Nkr1750), a weeklong music

festival, occurs in June or July. As many as 25 bands play daily and hotels sell out for miles in every direction. See Depeche Mode, Björk and Clap Your Hands Say Yeah! tear it up along with local acts.

Sleeping

Roligheden Camping (☎ 38 09 67 22; www.roligheden.no; camp sites from Nkr120, 4-person cabins Nkr650; 📍) A popular and good city camp ground. Pathways snake around slightly hilly terrain. It lies near a small, crowded beach 3km east of town. Take bus No 15.

Frosbusdal Rom (☎ 91 12 99 06; www.gjestehus.no; Frobusdalen 2; s Nkr350-400, d Nkr500-700; 📍) Loaded with stained glass and period character, this romantic home from 1917 has

intimate rooms, some with balcony. There's no breakfast, but guests have access to a kitchen and splendid dining room.

Kristiansand Vandrerhjem Tangen (☎ 38 02 83 10; kristiansand.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Skansen 8; dm Nkr195, s/d Nkr290/460 s/d with shared bathroom Nkr395/595; 🕒 mid-Jan-mid-Dec; 📍) The modern hostel offers clean rooms in a quiet, industrialised part of town a few minutes' walk from a small beach.

Scandic (☎ 38 12 86 00; www.scandic-hotels.com; Markens gate 39; s/d Nkr990/1190; 📍 🚶 🚰 🚿) Smartly refurbished rooms with hardwood floors overlook town through big windows (at least those on higher floors).

Also recommended:

Clarion Hotel Ernst (☎ 38 12 86 00; www.ernst.no; Rådhusgaten 2; s/d Nkr1025/1245; 📍 🚶 🚰) Pleasant rooms with glass-roofed courtyard. Too close to nightclubs.
Centrum Motel (☎ 38 02 79 69; www.motell.no; Vestre Strandsgate 49; s/d Nkr490/650; 📍) Central location, no breakfast, clean ugly rooms with private bathrooms.

Eating & Drinking

Snadderkioksen (☎ 38 02 90 29; Østre Strand gate 78A; dishes Nkr17-55) Follow the crowds to this popular takeaway stand. It offers a vast great-value menu, including such things as meatballs, cod with mashed potato, and sausages.

Frk Larsen (☎ 38 07 14 13; Markens gate 5; mains Nkr 65-120) A popular café filled with mismatched tables, chairs and couches, Frk Larsen serves strong coffee, messy salads and big cakes.

Hjem Cocktail (🕒 9pm-midnight Tue, Thu-Sat 9pm-3am) Hidden in a small side room of Frk Larsen, is this incredibly cool white concrete box where seating consists of a red couch and logs. Dress hip.

Herlig Land! (☎ 38 09 06 22; Markensgate 16; mains Nkr130-225) Straddling the ground between café and restaurant, candle-lit Herlig Land! is a good spot to eat chicken that led a happy life until not long before it arrived on your plate. Cheap Sunday specials.

Sjøhuset (☎ 38 02 62 60; Østre Strandgate 12A; mains Nkr215-270) This harbourside favourite with stacks of outdoor seating consistently dishes out superb seafood, such as cod fillets baked with ham and served with caramelised parsnip. The less hungry or the budget-minded should try the shellfish soup (Nkr89).

There are bakeries on Rådhus gate and produce vendors on the southeastern side of the cathedral.

Entertainment

Kick (☎ 38 02 64 44; Dronningens gate 8) With a large dance floor accommodating hundreds, this good-looking disco with its blond wood, luminous white balls and multimedia projections provides an exceedingly popular place to bust it. Arrive a bit early for a voyeuristic balcony seat.

Getting There & Away

Trains run to Stavanger (Nkr383, three hours, three to seven daily) and Oslo (Nkr569, 4¼ hours, three to seven daily).

Nor-Way Bussekspress runs to Stavanger (Nkr340, four hours, two to four daily) via Mandal (Nkr75, 40 minutes, two to four daily); to Oslo (Nkr320, 5¼ hours, eight to 10 daily) via Arendal (Nkr100, 1½ hours, eight to 10 daily); and to Bergen (Nkr610, 12 hours, one daily)

For information on ferries to Denmark, Sweden and the UK, see p383.

GRIMSTAD

pop 9500

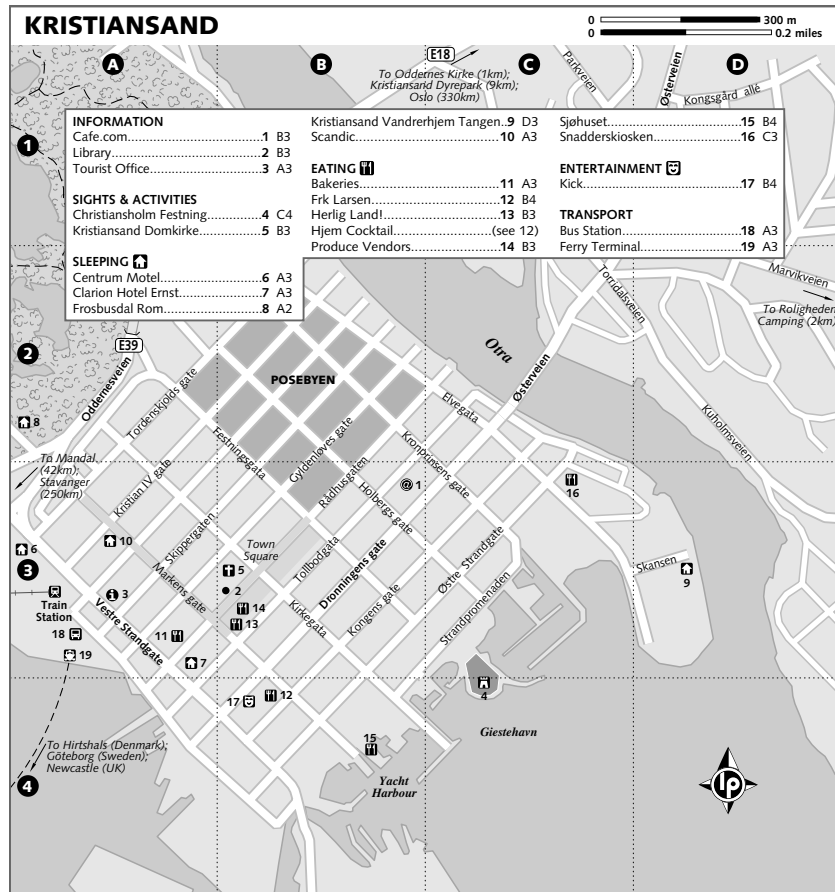
Grimstad is one of the loveliest of the 'white towns' on the Skagerrak coast and has a charming pedestrianised centre with narrow streets. These streets begin to fill in June, as attendees flock to the Norwegian Short Film Festival. By July, the small town becomes crowded with Norwegians arriving to enjoy their summer holidays. Popular activities include sunbathing on islands, fishing and ice-cream eating.

Today's low-key atmosphere belies Grimstad's past as a major shipbuilding centre – at one point in the 19th century the town had 40 shipyards, and 90 ships were under construction simultaneously.

The **tourist office** (☎ 37 04 40 41; www.grimstad.net; Smith Petersensgata 3; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug) can suggest various boat trips to the outlying skerries.

Sights

In 1847, Henrik Ibsen started work at Grimstad's Lars Nielsen pharmacy, where he lived in a small room and cultivated his interest in writing. By the time he left Grimstad for university studies in Christiania (Oslo), Ibsen had qualified as a pharmacist's assistant and was on his way to future renown as a writer. Some of his finest works are set in Grimstad's offshore skerries.



The **Grimstad By Museum** (☎ 37 04 46 53; Henrik Ibsens gate 14; adult/child Nkr40/15; ☹ 11am–5pm Mon–Sat, 1–5pm Sun May–mid-Sep) includes the virtually untouched Lars Nielsen pharmacy and **Ibsenhuset** (the Ibsen house), which contains many of the writer's belongings, such as portraits of mean-looking people.

Sleeping & Eating

Bie Apartment & Feriesenter (☎ 37 04 03 96; www.bieapart.no; Arendalsveien 85; camp sites Nkr210, cabins Nkr550–1200; 📷) Not picturesque, this place redeems itself by being the closest option to town, 800m northeast of the centre along Arendalsveien.

Grimstad Hotell (☎ 37 25 25 25; www.grimstadhotell.no; Kirkegata 3; s/d Nkr1045/1245, s/d discount summer & weekends Nkr700/900; 📷) An excellent location smack in the town centre. The exterior suggests you'll be sleeping in one of the town's white cuties, but most rooms are part of a bizarre historicist complex.

Apotekergården (☎ 37 04 50 25; Skolegaten 3; mains Nkr225; ☹ 6–11pm Sun–Thu, noon–1am Fri & Sat) Inside a former pharmacy dating to 1853. Serves swanky tapas and fixed-price menus that run up to Nkr695. It's got some lovely garden seating, though some readers complain of underwhelming food.

There are also a handful of restaurants on the water where you can grab an outdoor beer or eat some fish.

Entertainment

Satisfying nightlife options only exist in the summer. **Club Berg** (☎ 92 83 22 24; Storgata 2) is the perennial favourite, playing host to drunken nights of karaoke, hip-hop, the occasional black metal band and twangy country dudes.

Getting There & Away

The bus station is on Storgata, at the harbour. Eight to 10 daily Nor-Way Bussekspres runs to Oslo (Nkr300, 4½ hours) and Kristiansand (Nkr75, 40 minutes). Nettbuss buses to/from Arendal run once or twice hourly (Nkr40, 30 minutes).

ARENDAAL

pop 32,000

Piles of houses smile down from the steep slopes surrounding Pollen, a small bit of flat land that serves as Arendal's centre and harbour. Here you'll find one of the livelier

towns on Norway's southern coast with several harbourside cafés whose outdoor seating fills the moment things even begin to resemble warm.

There are many islands to explore in the archipelago off the coast, some appointed with 19th-century lighthouses. Ask **Arendal Turistkontor** (☎ 37 00 55 44; www.arendal.com; Sam Eydes plass; ☹ 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 11am–6pm Sat & Sun Jul, 9am–7pm Mon–Fri, 11am–2pm Sat Jun & Aug) for details.

Just a few minutes' walk south of the bus station brings you into the old harbourside area of **Tyholmen**, with its attractively restored 19th-century wooden buildings. Check out the **Rådhus** (☎ 37 01 30 00; Rådhusgata 10; ☹ 9am–3pm Mon–Fri), originally a shipowner's home dating from 1815, later becoming the town hall in 1844, or the **Aust-Agder Museum** (☎ 37 07 35 00; Parkveien 16; adult/child Nkr25/15; ☹ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, noon–5pm Sun late Jun–mid-Aug, to 3pm mid-Aug–mid-Jun), which displays objects brought home by the town's sailors (from 1832), as well as relics of Arendal's shipbuilding, timber and import-export trades.

Sleeping & Eating

For anything inexpensive, you'll have to head out of town.

Nidelv Brygge og Camping (☎ 37 01 14 25; Vesterveien 251, Hisøy; camp sites Nkr60–110, cabins Nkr250–750; 📷) This field, chock full of caravans staying for months at a time, fronts a calm, swimmable estuary. It's 6km west of Arendal. From town, take any half-hourly bus for Kristiansand or Grimstad (Nkr22).

Clarion Hotel Tyholmen (☎ 37 07 68 00; Teaterplassen 2; s/d Mon–Fri Sep–Jun Nkr1480/1680, s/d Sat & Sun Nkr790/990, s/d Mid–Jun–Aug Nkr960/890; 📷) Surrounded by boats, this smart harbourside hotel features nice rooms and fine views, close to an enclave of restaurants and cafés.

Ting Hai Hotel (☎ 37 02 22 01; ting@online.no; Østregate 5; s/d Nkr650/890) Just about the least Norwegian hotel experience in Norway, rooms over a decent Chinese restaurant (mains Nkr120) feel like sleeping in Chinatown.

Café Det Lindvedske hus (☎ 37 02 18 38; Nedre Tyholmsvei 7B; dishes Nkr40–110; ☹ 11am–midnight Mon–Sat, 1pm–midnight Sun) Occupying a 200-year-old building, this café serves salads, pasta and sandwiches, such as a delicious vegetarian number with browned cheese, tomato,

avocado, mushrooms and green beans. Booze, coffee and cakes are also offered.

For a tasty snack eat creatures from the waterfront fish market. Plenty of outdoor restaurants bars and a disco line Pollen.

Getting There & Away

Nor-Way Bussekspres runs between Kristiansand (Nkr100, 1½ hours) and Oslo (Nkr300, four hours) stopping in Arendal eight to 10 times daily. Regional buses connect Arendal with Grimstad (Nkr40, 30 minutes, once or twice hourly) and Kristiansand (Nkr100, 1½ hours, hourly).

Arendal is connected with the main rail system by a trunk line from Nelaug.

RISØR

pop 4500

With its cluster of historic white houses built up around a busy little fishing harbour, Risør is one of the most picturesque villages on the south coast. The harbour is filled with small classic vessels, ranging from old wooden motorboats to oddly designed masted contraptions. Risør is a haunt for artists, and many well-to-do yachties make it their summer base. Don't like boats? Prepare for extreme boredom.

The **Risør Trebåtfestival** (Wooden Boat Festival; ☎ 37 14 81 05; www.risor-woodenboat.no) is the town's biggest annual event. Held in early August, it constitutes an amazing sight: you're unlikely to see so many fabulous boats in such a cute setting anywhere else. During the festival, ships of different classes and ages race one another, sometimes crashing when the wind is strong.

Next to wandering around the town's harbour and the narrow streets, one of the most popular activities is to visit the off-shore islands, which can be reached by inexpensive water taxis. The most frequented island, **Stangholmen**, has an old lighthouse with a restaurant.

Though most visitors stay on their boats, there are a few spots for earth dwellers, including the charming **Det Lille Hotel** (☎ 37 15 14 95; www.detlillehotel.no; Kragsgata 12; s Nkr950–1150, d Nkr1150–1450; 📷), which occupies several small white houses on the water, with individually and exceptionally appointed suites. Parking for boats is available.

The Mediterranean-influenced menu at **Brasserie Krag** (☎ 37 15 14 95; Kragsgata 12; mains

Nkr100–210) is best enjoyed at a small pavement table under an awning.

You'll find a couple of moderately priced cafés at the harbour, as well as ice-cream shops, a market and a **bakery** (Kragsgata).

Getting There & Away

Buses (Nkr55, 45 minutes) connect with the train at Gjerstad several times daily. Nor-Way Bussekspres runs between Kristiansand (Nkr150, 1½ hours, eight or nine daily) and Oslo (Nkr300, 3¾ hours, eight or nine daily).

TELEMARK

Most of the Telemark region is sparsely populated and rural, with steep mountains, deep valleys, high plateaus, and countless lakes. Most visitors come for a few stave churches and the Telemark Canal.

Public transport in this region isn't particularly convenient; most buses run infrequently and train lines are largely absent, so sightseeing is best done by car. Telemark's westernmost train station is at Bø; from there, connecting buses lead west to Dalen, Åmot and on to Odda in Hardanger. For tourist information, contact **Telemarkreis** (☎ 35 90 00 20; www.visittelemark.com).

Telemark Canal

The Telemark canal system, a marvel completed in 1892, covers 105km of scenic lakes, towns and canals with 18 locks, some impressively narrow and wooden. It runs from the industrialised city of Skien to the small town of Dalen. Between May and September, a couple of century-old **sightseeing boats** (☎ 35 90 00 30; www.telemarkskanalen.no) make the sluggish, 11-hour journey (adult/child Nkr400/200 one way).

One kilometre from the Dalen dock, **Buøy Camping Dalen** (☎ 35 07 75 87; www.dalencamping.com; camp site from Nkr130, s/tr Nkr295/345, cabins Nkr525–625; 📷) separates tents from caravans. It's common to see elk and beavers. The 'dragon-style' **Dalen Hotel** (☎ 35 07 90 00; www.dalenhel.no; s/d Nkr950/1200) is a marvelously intact 19th-century wooden beauty with lots of projecting balconies and gables. The restaurant serves high-end traditional fare. Skien's **HI hostel** (☎ 35 50 48 70; Moflatveien 65; dm/s/d Nkr150/375/505; 📷) is a pleasant and tidy modern lodge. To find it, follow signs to 'Skien Fritidspark.'

Trains run every hour or two between Skien and Oslo (Nkr269, 2¼ hours).

Notodden

pop 12,300

Notodden is an industrial town of little note, but the nearby **Heddal stave church** (☎ 35 02 04 00; www.heddal-stavkirke.no; Heddal; adult/child Nkr35/free, Sun services free; 9am-7pm late Jun-late Aug, shorter hrs May & Sep) is Telemark's most visited attraction. It's an impressive structure and possibly dates from 1242, but parts of the chancel date from as early as 1147. Of great interest are the 'rose' paintings, a runic inscription, the bishop's chair and the altarpiece. On Sundays from Easter to November, services are held at 11am (visitors are welcome, but to avoid disruption, you must remain for the entire one-hour service); after 1pm, the church is again open to the public.

The town hosts the renowned **Notodden Blues Festival** (☎ 35 02 76 50; www.bluesfest.no) In early August featuring dozens of bands, such as the Fabulous Thunderbirds and Jeff Healey.

Between Kongsberg and Notodden (Nkr80, 35 minutes), TIMEkspressen buses run once or twice an hour.

Rjukan

pop 3600

The long, narrow industrial town of Rjukan is squeezed into the deep Vestfjord Valley at the base of the 1883m **Mt Gausta**, Telemark's highest peak. The route to the top starts at lake Heddersvann (1173m), 16km south-east of town (by road Fv651). Unless you're here to partake in outdoor activities, you won't find much entertainment.

Ask the **tourist office** (☎ 35 09 12 90; www.visitrujukan.no; Torget 2; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun late Jun-early Aug, 9am-2.30pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug-mid-Jun) about local activities, including skiing, hiking and fun **rail bicycle rides**.

The **Industrial Workers Museum** (☎ 35 09 90 00; adult/student/child Nkr55/45/30; ☎ 10am-6pm May-Sep, 10am-3pm Tue-Fri Oct-Apr), housed inside a hydroelectric plant dating from 1911, 7km west of Rjukan, details the Norwegian Resistance's daring sabotage of the heavy-water plant used by the Nazis in their atomic efforts.

From the top station of the Krossobanen cable car (Nkr35), above Rjukan, it's an

eight-hour walk north to the Kalhovd mountain hut and a network of trails that stretches north and west across the expansive moors of **Hardangervidda**, a bleak and beautiful plateau that makes a popular wilderness hiking area. It contains Norway's largest wild reindeer herd.

The town itself is thin on recommendable places to stay. **Rjukan Gjestegård** (☎ 35 09 05 27; fax 35 09 09 96; Birkelandsgata 2; breakfast Nkr60, dm Nkr175, s/d with shared bathroom Nkr290/450; 🍷) occupies a humdrum postwar building in town where the hostel used to be. The underwhelming **Park Hotel** (☎ 35 08 21 88; www.parkhotell-rjukan.no; Sam Eydes gate 67; s/d from Nkr645/795) has a restaurant.

If you're here to hike, you'll find better options in near the Glaustablikk ski area, accessible by car. **Rjukan Vandrerhjem** (☎ 35 09 20 40; www.kvitaavtn.no; Kvitåvatn; dm/s/d Nkr200/300/450; 🍷 🍷) features a cosy pine lodge, six-bunk huts, and incredible wilderness surrounds.

An express bus runs to Oslo (Nkr290, 3½ hours) via Kongsberg (Nkr150, 1¼ hours), two to five times daily.

BUSKERUD

The mainly forested county of Buskerud stretches northwest from Oslofjord to the central highlands of Norway. Mineral resources, particularly silver, have been thoroughly exploited in Buskerud's hills and mountains.

Kongsberg

pop 18,000

Today's Kongsberg attracts visitors with winter skiing and historic sites left over from its 17th-century glory days. The town was founded in 1624 following the discovery of the world's purest silver deposits in the nearby Numedal Valley. During the resulting silver rush, it briefly became the second-largest town in Norway. The Royal Mint is still in town, but the last mine, no longer able to turn a profit, closed in 1957.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Kongsberg is split into old and new by the falls of the river. The new eastern section of the area has the main shopping district, tourist office and transit stations. Find museums, the hostel and Kirkegata on the old side.

The **Tourist office** (☎ 32 73 50 00; www.visitkongsberg.no; Karsches gate 3; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Jul & Aug) serves as a **DNT** agent.

SIGHTS

The **Norwegian Mining Museum** (☎ 32 72 32 00; Hyttegata 3; adult/child Nkr50/10; ☎ 10am-5pm Jul-mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug-Jun) is in the town centre, just over the bridge on the west side of the Numedalslågen river. Set in an 1844 smelter, it has exhibits on mining and minerals as well as the Royal Mint and the local armaments industry.

The **Lågdal folk museum** (☎ 32 73 34 68; Tillischbakken 8-10; adult/child Nkr40/10; ☎ 11am-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug) has a collection of period farmhouses, WWII exhibits and an indoor museum with re-created 19th-century workshops and a fine optics section. It's a 10-minute walk south of the train station: turn left on Bekkedokk and take the walkway parallel to the tracks, following the signs.

In July and August, there are daily tours of the old **silver mines** (adult/child Nkr75/30) at Saggrenda, 8km from Kongsberg, which include a 2.3km train ride through cool subterranean shafts – bring a sweater. Tour times should be checked with the tourist office. The Oslo-Notodden TIMEkspressen bus runs from Kongsberg to Saggrenda (Nkr45, 10 minutes, hourly), then it's a 15-minute walk.

SLEEPING & EATING

Kongsberg HI Hostel (☎ 32 73 20 24; www.kongsberg-vandrerhjem.no; Vinjesgata 1; dm/s/d Nkr195/445/550; 🍷 🍷) In a new white building, the hostel lies near Kongsberg's baroque church. It is set back from a busy road and the largish grounds contain both a soccer pitch and a childrens' play area.

Quality Hotel Grand (☎ 32 77 28 00; www.choicehotels.no; Chr Augustsgate 2; s/d from Nkr790/920; 🍷 🍷) The modern rooms in this hotel are not particularly special, but they are in Kongsberg's tallest building so some have nice views over the river's falls.

Christians Kjeller (☎ 32 76 45 00; www.christianskjeller.no; Kirkegata 10; mains Nkr190-268) For excellent fillet of reindeer served in an old wainscoted room with ample fireplace, sit upstairs. Below deck, a pub serves cheap fare while occupying a cellar from the 1660s (massive stone walls) where folk bands play. Nice beer garden.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Trains run to Oslo (Nkr148, 1½ hours, roughly hourly). TIMEkspressen buses connect Kongsberg with Oslo (Nkr149, 1½ hours) and Notodden (Nkr75, 35 minutes, hourly).

CENTRAL NORWAY

The central region of Norway contains Jotunheimen, a popular wilderness area and national park characterised by dramatic ravines and multiple glaciers. The immensely scenic Oslo-Bergen rail line slices east to west, crossing the stark and white snowscape of the Hardangervidda plateau, a cross-country skiing paradise. For a resort town feel, try Lillehammer, close to several downhill slopes and a host of the 1994 Winter Olympics.

HAMAR

pop 28,000

Do you get jazzed over arenas from Olympics past? If so, you're in luck, winter of '94 style. The unimpressive commercial town sits beside **Mjøsa**, Norway's largest lake, which you can use to escape Hamar by riding **Skibladner** (☎ 61 14 40 80; www.skibladner.no), the world's oldest operating paddle steamer (1856), to Lillehammer (Nkr220/320 one way/return; four hours; three weekly).

The **tourist office** (☎ 62 51 75 03; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 8am-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug-mid-Jun) is inside the **Vikingskipshuset sports arena**, a graceful structure with the lines of an upturned Viking ship. The staff will be pleased to tell you about the enormous wooden **Northern Lights amphitheatre** built for figure-skating events.

The extensive open-air **Hedmarksmuseet** (☎ 62 54 27 00; Strandveien 100; adult/student/child Nkr70/55/30; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-May-mid-Jun & mid-Aug-mid-Sep) includes 18th- and 19th-century buildings, a local folk history exhibit featuring the crepe Devil's Finger, and the fantastic **Hamardomen** (Glass Cathedral), where the ruins of a medieval cathedral are protected within an enormous glass structure.

Seiersted Pensjonat's (☎ 62 52 12 44; www.seiersted.no; Holsetgata 64; s/d Nkr395/695) 18 centrally located rooms have painted furniture. Some share bathrooms.

For gourmet meals in an art gallery, **Artichoke** (☎ 62 53 23 33; Parkgata 21; lunch Nkr72-128, mains Nkr195-235) occupies a former bank building modified by someone who earned good grades in design school.

Drink hooch in **Siste Indre's** (☎ 62 53 55 00; Torggata 53) while relaxing on comfortable leather couches and admiring yellowing pictures of speed skaters. Towards closing time, don't be surprised if someone gets up and starts banging on a piano, while the entire bar sings along.

Trains run to Oslo (Nkr212, 1½ hours, once or twice hourly); to Røros (Nkr444, 3¼ hours, three to five daily), and to Trondheim (Nkr660, five hours, four daily) via Lillehammer.

LILLEHAMMER & AROUND

pop 25,000

Lillehammer, at the northern end of lake Mjøsa, has long been a popular ski resort for Norwegians, and since hosting the 1994 Winter Olympics it has attracted foreign visitors as well.

Lillehammer's centre is small and relatively charming. Storgata, the main pedestrian walkway, is two short blocks east of the adjacent bus and train stations. You'll find more information at the **tourist office** (☎ 61 28 98 00; www.lillehammertourist.no; Jernebanetorget 2; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-6pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs otherwise).

Sights & Activities

Many tour the former Winter Olympic sites, including **Håkons Hall** (the ice-hockey venue) and the **ski jump**; the tourist office brochure lists opening times.

The **Norwegian Olympic Museum** (☎ 61 25 21 00; www.ol.museum.no; Håkons Hall; adult/student/child Nkr60/50/30, with combined entry to Maihaugen folk museum adult/child Nkr120/55; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-May-mid-Sep, shorter hrs otherwise) provides exhibits on every Olympic Games since 1896.

At Hunderfossen, 15km north of town, speed fanatics can visit the **bobsleigh & luge track** (reservations ☎ 61 05 42 00; www.olympiaparken.no; rides adult/child Nkr190/95) and ride a rubber raft (75km/hr) down the actual Olympic run; in summer, when there's no ice, a 'wheeled bob' is used. For Nkr850, a bobsleigh driver can whisk you down at 120km/h. It is possible to poop your snowpants. Reservations are advised.

Olympics aside, Lillehammer's main attraction is the exceptional **Maihaugen folk museum** (☎ 61 28 89 00; Maihaugveien 1; adult/student/child Nkr90/75/40, with combined entry to Norwegian Olympic Museum adult/child Nkr120/55; ☎ 9am-6pm Jun-mid-Aug, 10am-5pm mid-Aug-Sep, shorter hrs Oct-May), which contains around 180 historic houses, shops, farm buildings and a stave church.

See page 327 for details of the *Skibladner* paddle steamer.

Sleeping & Eating

Lillehammer Camping (☎ 61 25 33 33; Dampsgaveien 47; camp sites from Nkr100, cabins Nkr350-650; **P**) On a grassy field overlooking lake Mjøsa, this camp ground and its modern cabins is 700m south of the *Skibladner* dock. Some large buildings lie behind it, spoiling a sense of isolation.

Gjeste Bu (☎ 61 25 43 21; ss-bu@online.no; Gamleveggen 110; dm Nkr100 s/d from Nkr225/350) Rustic rooms exude loads of character. They are also a real bargain, which is why you must book early. There's a group kitchen, where you'll drink free coffee and meet hikers and skiers. There are shared bathrooms and no breakfast.

Lillehammer Hostel (☎ 61 24 87 00; www.lillehammer.hostel@vandrerrhjem.no; dm/s/d Nkr275/475/59; **U**) On the second storey of the train station, modern bunks overlook rail tracks and the lake beyond. Rates include linens. Great for train spotters.

First Hotel Breiseth (☎ 61 24 77 77; www.firstho.tels.no; Jernbanegata 1-5; s/d Nkr898/1198; **P**) In a masonry building from 1898, rooms on the top floor contain interesting angles and head-bumping opportunities thanks to a gaggle of dormers. Floors below have typical dimensions. All contain forgettable carpeting.

Nikkers (☎ 61 27 05 56; Elvegata 18; dishes Nkr43-149) For winter beer with a roaring fire and a stuffed elk head – the ski-lodge feel will get you in the proper mood. It serves burritos, salads and minced meat.

Galleri Dryer (☎ 61 25 00 78; Bankgata 15; dishes Nkr59-99) A small café/bar and art gallery with white walls, white chairs and white synthetic sheep skins; stop by for a small menu of French onion soup, a few salads and cake.

Storgata is lined with shops, bakeries and restaurants.

Getting There & Away

Nor-Way Bussekspress runs to Oslo (Nkr304, three hours, three or four times daily). Trains run to Oslo (Nkr282, 2¼ hours, 15 times daily) and to Trondheim (Nkr596, 4¼ hours, four or five times daily).

DOMBÅS

pop 1500

Dombås, a popular adventure and winter sports centre, makes a convenient break for travellers between the highland national parks and the western fjords because it has a few good sleeping options. In town, there isn't much to do except buy fuel and groceries. The **tourist office** (☎ 61 24 14 44; www.dovrenett.no; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs otherwise) is by the central car park and commercial complex.

The **Dovre fjell-Rondane Nasjonalparksenter** (☎ 61 24 14 44; ☎ 9am-8pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug-mid-Jun), at the tourist office, has interesting displays on all Norwegian national parks. **Dovre fjell National Park**, 30km north of town, protects the 2286m-high Snøhetta massif and provides a habitat for arctic foxes, reindeer, wolverines and musk oxen.

In a forested spot with mountain views, the excellent family-run **Dombås Vandrerrhjem Trolltun** (☎ 61 24 09 60; www.trolltun.no; dm/s/d Nkr200/365/550; ☎ 7.30am-11pm), in an oversized log cabin, lies near nordic trails and alpine lifts. It also offers hotel rooms (singles/doubles Nkr640/910) in a ski lodge where you can find reindeer meals (Nkr100) and a pub. It's about 1.5km north of the centre and off the E6.

Dombås lies on the railway line between Oslo (Nkr555, four hours, three to four daily) and Trondheim (Nkr345, 2½ hours, three to four daily). The spectacular Raumabanen line runs down the Romsdalen valley from Dombås to Åndalsnes (Nkr193, 1¼ hours, three daily).

JOTUNHEIMEN NATIONAL PARK

The Sognefjellet road between Lom and Sogndal passes the northwestern perimeter of Jotunheimen National Park, Norway's most popular wilderness destination. Hiking trails lead to some of the park's 60 glaciers, up to the top of Norway's loftiest peaks (the 2469m Galdhøpiggen and

2452m Glittertind) and along ravines and valleys featuring deep lakes and plunging waterfalls. There are DNT huts and private lodges along many of the routes. For park information, maps and glacier-walk arrangements contact **Lom tourist office** (☎ 61 21 29 90; www.visitlom.com; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-8pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter otherwise). Lom contains a **stave church** dating from 1170, lit to fairy-tale effect at night.

Dramatic **Galdhøpiggen**, with its cirques, arêtes and glaciers, is a fairly tough eight-hour day hike from Spiterstulen, with 1470m of ascent, accessible by a toll road (Nkr60 per car). **Krossbu** is in the middle of a network of trails, including a short one to the **Smørstabbreen glacier**. From **Turtaggrø**, a rock-climbing and hiking centre midway between Sogndal and Lom, there's a three-hour hike to Fannaråkytta, Jotunheimen's highest DNT hut (2069m), which offers great panoramic views.

DNT's fabulous **Spiterstulen lodge** (☎ 61 21 14 80; www.spiterstulen.no; Lom; camp site per person Nkr50, dm/s/d Nkr170/250/400; **P**), situated at an old *sæter* (summer dairy), lies above the tree-line and makes a great jumping-off point for Galdhøpiggen.

Beautiful Bøverdalen, 18km south of Lom, has a riverside **HI hostel** (☎ 61 21 20 64; boeverdalen.hostel@vandrerrhjem.no; dm/s/d Nkr120/210/300; ☎ Jun-Sep), which arranges summer skiing and glacier hiking trips. Breakfast costs Nkr65. Near the head of Bøverdalen, the lovely **Krossbu Turiststasjon** (☎ 61 21 29 22; www.krossbu.no in Norwegian; Krossbu; r Nkr400-600) has 85 rooms, most of them have shared bathrooms.

OSLO TO BERGEN

The Oslo-Bergen railway line is Norway's most scenic, a seven-hour journey past forests and alpine villages, and across the starkly beautiful **Hardangervidda** plateau.

Midway between Oslo and Bergen is **Geilo**, a ski centre where you can practically walk off the train and onto a lift. There's also good summer **hiking** in the mountains around Geilo and the town has an **HI Hostel** (☎ 32 08 70 60; www.oenturist.no; Lienveggen 137; dm/d Nkr160/400-500, breakfast Nkr60), near the train station.

From Geilo the train climbs 600m through a tundralike landscape of high lakes and snowcapped mountains to the tiny village of **Finse**, near the **Hardangerjøkulen**

icecap. Finse has year-round **skiing** and is in the middle of a network of summer **hiking trails**. One of Norway's most frequently trodden trails winds from the Finse train station down to the fjord town of **Aurland**, a four-day trek. There's breathtaking mountain scenery along the way as well as a series of DNT and private mountain huts a day's walk apart – the nearest is Finsehytta, 200m from Finse station. There's also a bicycle route from Finse to Flåm (six hours, downhill) on the century-old **Rallarvegen** railway construction road.

Myrdal, further west along the railway line, is the connecting point for the spectacularly steep Flåm railway, which twists and turns its way down 20 splendid kilometres to **Flåm** village on Aurlandsfjorden, an arm of Sognefjorden.

Many people go down to Flåm, have lunch and take the train back up to Myrdal, where they catch the next Oslo–Bergen train. A better option is to take the ferry from Flåm to Gudvangen (via spectacular Unesco protected **Nærøfjorden**, with its thundering waterfalls and lofty peaks), where there's a connecting bus that climbs a steep valley on the dramatically scenic ride to Voss. From Voss, trains to Bergen run roughly hourly. To include a cruise of the Nærøfjorden in a day trip from Oslo to Bergen, you'll need to take an early train from Oslo.

BERGEN & THE WESTERN FJORDS

This spectacular region will dazzle your eyeballs with truly indescribable scenery. We'll make a go at it here, but bear in mind that all our superlatives and gushings are actually just understatements. Hardangerfjord, Sognefjord and Geirangerfjord are all variants on the same theme: steep crystalline rock walls dropping with sublime force straight into the sea, often decorated with waterfalls and small farms harmoniously blending into the natural landscape. Summer hiking opportunities exist along the fjord walls and on the enormous Jostedalbreen glacier. Bergen, a lively city with a 15th-century waterfront, is exceedingly pleasing to behold, and contains some of Norway's finest nightlife and restaurants.

Information on the entire region is available from **Fjord Norge** (☎ 55 30 26 40; www.fjordnorway.com).

BERGEN pop 231,000

Norway's second-largest city contends for the honour of being Norway's most beautiful. Set on a peninsula surrounded by mountains and the sea, the neatly contained centre offers a tangle of crooked streets, picturesque wooden neighbourhoods and hill-top views. Bergen provides ample opportunities to linger in cafés and bars, while a large university population helps to secure Bergen's claim as western Norway's cultural capital, supporting theatres, a philharmonic orchestra and a notable rock scene. Though big by Norwegian standards, the city retains a charming, almost villagelike culture. Drawback: expect rain or showers at least 275 days of the year.

Bergen is a terminus of the scenic Bergen–Oslo train line and a convenient place to stay before prolonged excursions into fjord country. The **Hurtigruten** coastal steamer begins its six-day journey to Kirkenes from the centre.

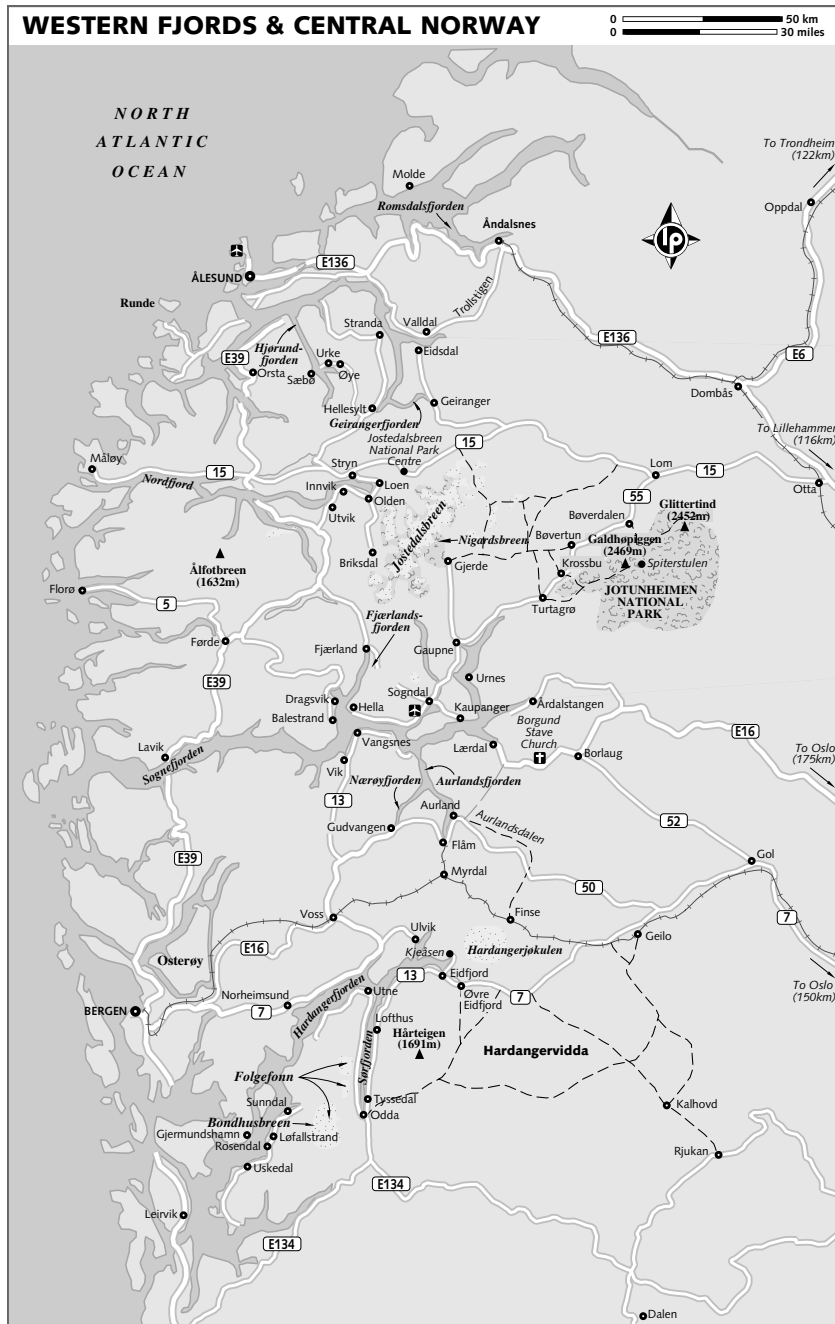
The **Bergen International Festival** (☎ 55 21 50 60; www.bergenfest.no) held for 12 days in May, is the big cultural event of the year with quality dance, music and folklore events taking place throughout the city.

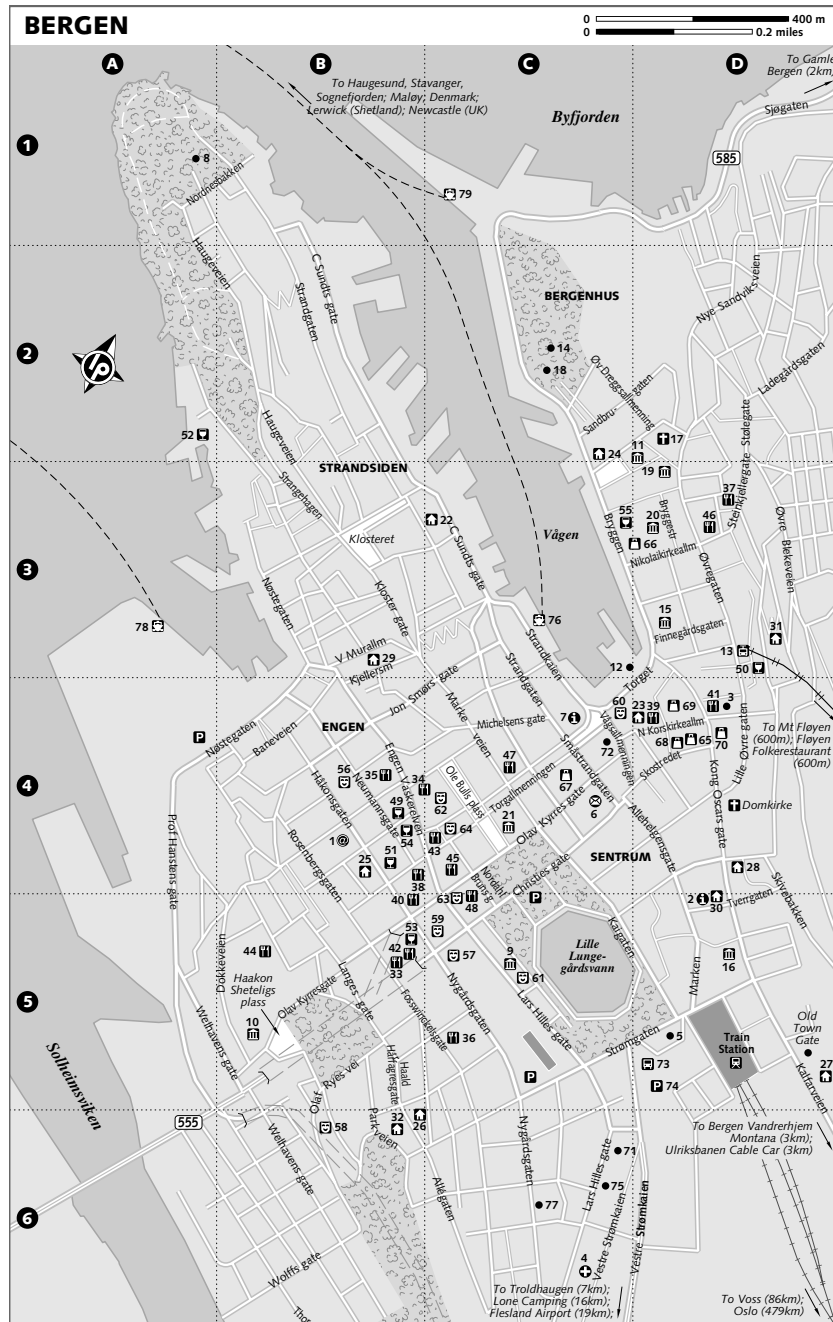
History

Bergen was the capital of Norway during the 12th and 13th centuries, and in the early 17th century had the distinction of being Scandinavia's largest city, with a population of around 15,000. Bergen's history is closely tied to the sea, as it was one of the central ports of the Hanseatic League of merchants, which dominated trade in northern Europe during the late Middle Ages. The Hanseatic influence is still visible in the sharply gabled row of buildings that lines Bergen's picturesque harbour front.

Orientation

The central area of hilly Bergen remains pleasantly compact and easily manageable on foot. The bus and train stations lie only a block apart on Strømgaten, just a 10-minute walk from the ferry terminals. Most of the restaurants, hotels and museums cluster around Vågen, the inner harbour.



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Information**DISCOUNT CARDS**

The Bergen Card allows free transport on local buses, free parking and funicular-railway rides as well as admission to most sights. Note that the Schøtstuene and Hanseatic Museum are not covered. A 24-/48-hour Bergen Card costs Nkr170/250 (Nkr70/100 for children) – it's sold at the tourist office.

INTERNET ACCESS

Byens Gørste Spillehall (Håkonsgaten 15; ☎ noon-2am Sun-Thu, noon-4am Fri & Sat; per min Nkr0.50) Cheaper than the internet cafés, with slot machines.

Library (Strømgaten 6; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Thu, 10am-4.30pm Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, shorter hrs mid-May-Sep) Free internet access.

LAUNDRY

Jarlens Vaskoteque (☎ 55 32 55 04; Lille Øvregaten 17; wash/detergent/dry Nkr45/5/15; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon, Tue & Fri, 10am-8pm Wed & Thu, 10am-3pm Sat)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Legevakten Medical Clinic (☎ 55 56 87 00; Vestre Strømkaien 19; ☎ emergencies 24hr)

Pharmacy (☎ 55 21 83 84; bus station; ☎ 8am-11pm Mon-Sat, 10am-11pm Sun)

POST

Main Post Office (Starvhusgaten at Chrisites gate; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

DNT office (☎ 55 33 58 10; Tverrgaten 4; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Wed & Fri, 10am-6pm Thu, 10am-2pm Sat)
Tourist Office (☎ 55 55 20 00; www.visitbergen.com; Vågsallmenningen 1; ☎ 8.30am-10pm Jun-Aug, 9am-8pm May & Sep, 9am-4pm Mon-Sat Oct-Apr)

Sights

The waterfront **fish market** at Torget is a good starting point for an exploration of the city's historic district. Bergen has lots of cobblestone streets lined with older homes; one particularly picturesque area good for strolls is near the funicular station on Øvregaten.

BRYGGEN AREA

Bryggen, the old medieval quarter and Unesco World Heritage site on the eastern side of Vågen, is home to museums, restaurants and shops. The alleys that run along the less-restored sides of the long timber buildings reveal an intriguing glimpse of the stacked-stone foundations and rough-plank construction of centuries past.

Some of Norway's creakiest floors are in the timber building (1704) that houses the **Hanseatisk Museum** (Hanseatic Museum; ☎ 55 54 46 90; Finnegårdsgaten 1A; adult/child Nkr45/free; ☞ 9am-5pm mid-May-mid-Sep, 11am-2pm Tue-Sat 11am-4pm Sun mid-Sep-mid-May). Period character flourishes, while furnishings and odd bedchambers give a glimpse of the austere living conditions of Hanseatic merchants. The entry ticket is also valid for **Schotstuene** (Øvregaten 50) where the Hanseatic fraternity once met for their business meetings and beer guzzling.

Norway's tiniest museum, the **Theta Museum** (☎ 55 55 20 80; Enhjørningsgården; adult/child Nkr20/5; ☞ 2-4pm Tue, Sat & Sun mid-May-mid-Sep), is a one-room reconstruction of a clandestine Resistance headquarters uncovered by the Nazis in 1942. It was hidden in an upper storey at the rear of the Bryggen warehouse with the unicorn figurehead.

The **Rosenkrantzårnet** (Rosenkrantz Tower; ☎ 55 31 43 80; Bergenhus; adult/student Nkr30/15; ☞ 10am-4pm mid-May-Aug, noon-3pm Sun Sep-mid-May) was built in the 1560s by Bergen's governor as a residence and defence post. You can climb down to bedrock and then up to the high-ceilinged bedchambers of a 16th century tower. Detours along the way allow you to suffocate in an actual dungeon or peer into ancient toilet chambers.

Håkonshallen (Håkon's Hall; ☎ 55 31 60 67; Bergenhus; adult/student Nkr30/15; ☞ 10am-4pm mid-May-Aug, noon-3pm Fri-Wed, 3-6pm Thu Sep-mid-May), completed by King Håkon Håkonsson in 1261 for his son's wedding, had its roof blown off in 1944 when a Dutch munitions boat exploded in the harbour. The hall has since been restored using archaeological artefacts. Be pleasantly disoriented while wandering through Escherian stairways, stopping to squint through blurry antique windows for a romantic view of the city.

The site of Bergen's earliest settlement is now **Bryggens Museum** (☎ 55 58 80 10; Dregalsalmenning 3; adult/student/child Nkr40/20/free; ☞ 10am-5pm May-Aug, 11am-3pm Mon-Fri, noon-3pm Sat, noon-4pm

Sun Sep-Apr; ☞). The 800-year-old foundations unearthed during the construction have been incorporated into the exhibits, along with pottery, human skulls and runes.

ART MUSEUMS

Experience the juxtaposition of form and function from the Renaissance to the present at the **West Norway Museum of Decorative Art** (Vestlandske Kunstindustrimuseum; ☎ 55 33 66 33; www.vk.museum.no; Nordahl Brunsgate 9; adult/student/child Nkr50/40/free; ☞ 11am-5pm mid-May-mid-Sep, noon-4pm Tue-Sun mid-Sep-mid-May). The eclectic collection (strong in Jugendstil and Modern decorative objects) includes a Lego set, an armchair shaped like a tarantula, Edvard Grieg's table setting and a quilt made from children's raincoats. Three buildings opposite the lake fountain house the **Bergen Art Museum** (Bergen Kunstmuseum; ☎ 55 56 80 00; www.bergenartmuseum.no; Rasmus Meyers Allé 3, 7 & 9; adult/student/child Nkr50/35/free; ☞ 11am-5pm mid-May-mid-Sep, closed Mon mid-Sep-mid-May; ☞), a superb collection of Norwegian art from the 18th and 19th centuries, including many works by Munch and JC Dahl, as well as works by Picasso, Klee and others.

LEPRAMUSEET

Wash your hands before and after visiting the **Lepramuseet** (Leprosy Museum; ☎ 55 32 57 80; Kong Oscars gate 59; adult/child Nkr30/15; ☞ 11am-3pm mid-May-Aug), an enclosed wooden complex whose wards, church and kitchen appear tranquil from a cobbled, tree-shaded interior court. Not so inside, which is creepy. Buildings date to 1754.

BERGEN AKVARIET

The **aquarium** (☎ 55 55 71 71; www.akvariet.no; Nordnesbakken 4; adult/child Nkr100/50; ☞ 9am-8pm May-Sep, 10am-6pm Oct-Apr; ☞) will provide an entire day's entertainment to travellers with small children. Frolic among outdoor pools and tanks, or if it's raining head inside to check the daily schedule of films and events. Don't miss the collection of confiscated illegal pets on the 1st floor.

BERGENS SJØFARTSMUSEUM

The knowledgeable and garrulous staff at the **Bergen Maritime Museum** (☎ 55 54 96 00; Haakon Shetelig's plass 15; adult/child Nkr30/free; ☞ 11am-3pm Jun-Aug, 11am-2pm Sun-Fri Sep-May; ☞)

will explain the models large and small of Norwegian seafaring vessels. Step inside the 'chart room' to decipher a Morse code message which plays on a continuous loop.

MARIAKIRKEN

With its Romanesque entrance and twin towers, the **St Maria church** (☎ 55 31 59 60; Dreggen 15; adult/child Nkr20/free, admission free Sep-mid-May; ☞ 9.30am-11.30am & 1-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-12.30pm mid-Aug-mid-Jun), Bergen's oldest building, dates from the 12th century. The interior has 15th-century frescoes and a splendid baroque pulpit.

BERGEN ENVIRONS

The open-air **Gamle Bergen** (☎ 55 39 43 04; Sandviken; admission free; ☞ 9am-5pm May-early Sep, shorter hrs otherwise) presents around 40 buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries, including a dentist's office, bakery and houses. It's 4km north of the city centre and can be reached by bus Nos 20, 21 and 22. Tours cost Nkr60/30 (adult/student) and leave hourly mid-May to August. Entrance to the grounds is free year-round.

If you want to tour to the former lake-side home and workshop of composer Edvard Grieg, take any bus from platform 20, get off at Hosbroen and follow signs to **Troldhaugen** (☎ 55 92 29 92; Troldhaugvegen 65; adult/student/child Nkr60/20/free; ☞ 9am-6pm May-Sep, shorter hrs Oct-Apr). Although Grieg fans will best appreciate this well-conceived presentation, the main house has excellent period furnishings and is generally interesting.

Activities

For an unbeatable city view, take the **Fløibanen funicular** (☎ 55 33 68 00; Vetrilidsalmenning 21; adult/child Nkr75/35 return; ☞ 7.30am-midnight May-Aug, 7.30am-11pm Sep-Apr; ☞) to the top of Mt Fløyen (320m). Trails marked with dilapidated signs lead into the forest from the hill-top station. Trails 1 and 3 are the longest, each making 5km loops through hilly woodlands. For a delightful 40-minute walk back to the city, take trail 4 and connect with trail 6. Find a trail map posted in what looks like a public shower behind the mountain-top Fløyen Folkrestaurant (p337).

The **Ulriksbanen cable car** (☎ 55 20 20 20; www.ulriken.no; adult/child Nkr90/45 return; ☞ 9am-9pm May-Aug, shorter hrs otherwise) to the top of Mt Ulriken (642m) offers a panoramic view of

Bergen, fjords and mountains. The tourist office sells a 'Bergen in a Nutshell' ticket for Nkr150/75 (adult/child) that includes the cable car and a return bus from Bergen. Many take the cable car one way and walk (about three hours) across a well-beaten trail to the funicular station at Mt Fløyen.

Tours

The train station sells the **Norway in a Nutshell** (☎ 81 56 82 22; www.fjordtours.com) ticket combining morning trains from Bergen to Flåm, a ferry along the spectacular Aurlandsfjorden and Nærøyfjorden to Gudvangen, a bus to Voss and a train back to Bergen (Nkr790) in time for a late dinner, or you can continue on to Oslo (Nkr1115), arriving around 10pm.

Sleeping

The tourist office books single/double rooms in private homes from Nkr250/400 (plus Nkr50 booking fee); it can also find you last-minute hotel discounts.

BUDGET

Marken Gjestehus (☎ 55 31 44 04; www.marken-gjestehus.com; Kong Oscars gate 45; 4-/6-/8-person dm Nkr155/175/195, s/d Nkr380/490) Take an old elevator to the 4th floor to find this central hostel. Rooms have wooden floors, spiffy Ikea furniture of recent vintage and big windows. Breakfast can be arranged elsewhere from Nkr55. There's a coin laundry and, often, a decent view.

Dorm.no (☎ 98 23 86 00; www.dm.no; Kong Oscars gate 44; dm Nkr165; ☞) Offers 16 beds with individual reading lamps in an attractive dormitory with linens included. There's a fine rockabilly café/pub, a wood terrace with flowers and chairs, and a spotless, good-looking shared kitchen. Breakfast costs Nkr55.

Intermission (☎ 55 30 04 00; Kalfarveien 8; Nkr150; ☞ mid-Jun-mid-Aug) This old white house has 37 beds, where the hospitable Christian Student Fellowship serves waffles to guests on Monday and Thursday nights. Laundry facilities are available. Breakfast costs Nkr50.

Bergen Vandrerhjem YMCA (☎ 55 60 60 55; www.bergenhostel.com; Nedre Korskirkealmenning 4; budget/4-/6-person dm Nkr125/160/170, d Nkr600; ☞ reception 7am-midnight) Perfectly central, dorm dwellers

reside in plain, linoleum-floored bunk rooms sleeping four to six, or in windowless caverns (it gets noisy here) sleeping 15 or 32. Private doubles are also available. Rooftop decks provide views over the water and surrounding garrets. Breakfast costs Nkr50.

Also recommended:

Bergen Vandrerhjem Montana (☎ 55 20 80 70; www.montana.no; Johan Blyttsvei 30; 20-/4-person dm Nkr160/225; s/d Nkr440/660; ☹ 3 Jan-20 Dec) A large institutional hostel 5km away by bus 31. Mountain-top with good view.

Lone Camping (☎ 55 39 29 60; www.lonecamping.no; Hardangerveien 697, Haukeland; camp site Nkr110, 4-person cabin Nkr545) Camp sites lie along a grassy lakeshore. It's 19km east of Bergen by bus No 900 (30 minutes).

MIDRANGE

Skansen Pensjonat (☎ 55 31 90 80; www.skansen-pensjonat.no; Vetrilidsalmenningen 29; s Nkr350-400, d Nkr550-650) Trudge up steep cobbled streets through a pretty neighbourhood to this hill-top house dating from 1918, with its outstanding views. If you're lucky, your period room will have a balcony.

Jacob's Apartments (☎ 98 23 86 00; www.apartments.no; Kong Oscars gate 44; 1-/2-person apt Nkr590-790/790-890; ☎) Simple apartments of ample size come with light wood floors and unadorned neutral-toned walls. All have private kitchens and bathrooms and some an interesting two-floor configuration.

Kjellersmauet Gjestehus (☎ 55 96 26 08; www.gjestehuset.com; Kjellersmauet 22; 1-/2-/4-person apt Nkr500/800/1400) A number of well-equipped apartments with private bathrooms and kitchens. These are homey, and big groups are often given good deals. No breakfast.

Crowded House (☎ 55 90 92 00; www.crowded-house.com; Håkonsгатен 27; s/d Nkr390/590) The 82 spacious, tidy rooms come with modern furniture and free use of laundry facilities. Bathrooms are shared and guests have access to a nice kitchen. The 1st floor holds a lively bar.

TOP END

Steens Hotell (☎ 55 31 40 50; www.steenshotell.no; Parkveien 22; s/d Nkr890/1080, ☎) Expect Swedish-style rooms with private bathrooms in a 19th-century home; many have pleasant views over a landscaped park. The real treat is the 1890s dining room, where breakfast is served – check out the gilded wallpaper, an odd wooden chandelier and stained glass depicting butchered meat.

Augustin (☎ 55 30 40 00; www.augustin.no; C Sundsgata 22; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr1345/1590, s/d Sat & Sun Nkr700/880, s/d Mid-Jun–Aug 750/1010; ☎) Bergen's last big family-run hotel, the Augustin dates to 1919, with age showing nicely in a few parlours. Full of contemporary Norwegian art (painting, lamps, furniture), modernised rooms look good and supercute bedspreads come covered with tiny colourful geckos. The basement is a 16th-century taverna (p338).

Hotel Park Pension (☎ 55 54 44 00; www.parkhotell.no; Harald Hårfagresgate 35; s Nkr600-840, d Nkr880-1040; ☎) A 19th-century charmer, it's family owned and stuffed to the rafters with grandma's antiques and unusual tools. Spacious rooms come with private bathrooms and breakfast.

Clarion Collection Hotel Havnekontoret (☎ 55 60 11 00; www.choicehotels.no; Slottsgaten 1; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr1295/1695, s/d Sat & Sun Nkr790/1200, s/d mid-Jun–Aug Nkr595/990; ☎) Speculation: the designer of this new hotel was a frustrated goth working within corporate constraints. Rooms are characterised by a purple-and-black colour palette, and the foyer by mild oddness. A chapelesque lounge with painted, vaulted ceiling demonstrates the age of the restored building. Free dinner buffet.

Eating

RESTAURANTS

Curry Curry Nam Nam (☎ 55 96 40 76; Steinkjeller gate 8; mains Nkr55-99; ☹ from 2pm Tue-Sun) Rich curries and vegetarian items (spinach dal, aloo gobi) come steaming and delicious at this tiny restaurant at the convergence of several pretty cobbled alleys. At an outdoor table, smoke a postmeal water pipe for Nkr50.

Krystal (☎ 55 32 10 06; Kong Oscars gate 16; lunch Nkr110-149, 4-course dinner Nkr575) Dimly lit by candles and a frosted Art Deco chandelier, this romantic room changes its seasonal menu every two weeks. Representative dish: king crab with avocado cream. It overlooks a cobbled street and medieval church.

Viva las Vegis (☎ 97 19 72 33; Steinkjeller gate 2; meals Nkr79) Enter this neon-green and Elvis-themed vegetarian restaurant to eat veggie burgers and fabulous baked chips covered in sesame seeds and herbs. Cheap wine (Nkr35) and peanut butter and banana sandwiches (Nkr25).

Zupperia (☎ 55 55 81 44; Nordahl Bruns gate; soup Nkr50-100) From fish to gazpacho, Zupperia

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Pingvinen (☎ 55 60 46 46; Vaskerelven 20; mains 89-129; ☹ 2pm-3.30am) A casual hang-out with old brick walls and barstool seating, the blackboard of this pub announces the day's four offerings. A reaction against the trend towards fusion and other international food fads, cooks embrace traditional Norwegian cuisine and prepare hearty meals (fish with macaroni; meatloaf with leeks; cabbage in a buttery sauce) with finesse. The fish soup can be described with every superlative in the dictionary. Come here for hipsters and exceptional fare at half the price of the tourist traps. One criticism: occasionally, sides aren't warm enough.

serves 11 kinds of soups with sides of bread. We like the *Husenottsuppe* (oxtail boiled with vegetables).

Zumo (☎ 55 90 19 60; Newmanns gate 25; lunch specials Nkr69; mains Nkr139-169) This Japanese restaurant's pleasing modern design involves every thinkable texture and shade of brown wood. Different grains collide on all surfaces (table, place mat, bathroom sink, floor), and big windows provide a view of the street while you slurp udon or eat raw fish.

Brød & Vin (☎ 55 32 67 04; Christies gate 13; mains Nkr35-75) Eat piles of Asian noodle dishes such as vegetable chop suey (Nkr53) and drink cheap beer (Nkr35) with crowds of Bergen penny pinchers. The room is comfortable, though the filling fare could be tastier.

Fløyen Folkerestaurant (☎ 55 33 69 99; Bellevebakken 9; pastries & cakes Nkr18-43; ☹ 11am-8pm May-Sep, 11am-8pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr) On the summit of Fløyen, this restaurant presides over Bergen with unbeatable views and good hot chocolate. In the warmth of summer, the patio fills with sunbathers and beer drinkers.

CAFÉS

Café Opera (☎ 55 23 08 15; Engen 18; light meals Nkr89-116, sandwiches Nkr30-40) A continental vibe permeates through this early-20th-century café, serving brown rolls with brie, walnut butter and cherries, salads and daily soups. Big corner windows stare at the opera house and you can lounge on 2nd floor couches. DJs at night.

Chaos Coffee Bar (☎ 55 32 15 50; Fosswinkels gate 16; light meals Nkr50-60) Bustling at lunch, this neighbourhood café with its thrift-store assortment of colourful table cloths, lamps and upholstered chairs serves coffee, beer and peppery vegetable pasta to chatting students. Charming service.

Café Jonsvoll (☎ 55 23 00 77; Vaskerelven at Engen; dishes Nkr40-98; ☹ kitchen 10am-11pm, bar to 3am) Filled with a trendy crowd making use of long plate-glass windows and stools. Eat sandwiches, lasagne, quiche (Nkr53) and couscous with marinated vegetables (Nkr98).

Le Rustique (☎ 55 13 47 74; Christies gate 11; sandwiches Nkr45-65; ☹ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun) Serves high-calibre, freshly baked baguettes. Also offers smoothies, coffee and French pastries. Good art, but no bathroom.

Studentkafeene (☎ 55 54 50 50; Ivar Aasens gate; lunch Nkr30-40; ☹ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Thu, 9.30am-4pm Fri late Aug-early Jun) The university's student cafeteria might look ugly, but you can grab pasta with fish (Nkr39), asparagus soup (Nkr19) or a big sandwich with juice (Nkr30) at low prices. Enter the courtyard of the large, yellow brick building behind the red church.

QUICK EATS

Godt Brød (☎ 55 32 80 00; Nedre Korskirkealmenningen 12 or Veste Torggata 2) This bakery does organic breads, pastries and delicious, filling herb dough pizzas topped with marinated vegetables (Nkr35).

Søstrene Hagelin (☎ 55 32 69 49; Olav Kyrres gate 33; dishes Nkr35-89; ☹ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) Delicious fish pudding, fish casserole and other such delicacies. Filling takeaway fish balls (Nkr35) come with potatoes.

SELF-CATERING

Storsenter, at the bus station, has fast-food outlets, a Vinmonopolet and Rimi and Spar supermarkets. Torget's fish market provides fresh fruit and seafood snacks, including salmon rolls for Nkr15 and boiled crab legs or shrimp for Nkr35 to Nkr75.

Kinsarvik Frukt (Olav Kyrres gate 38) is a small grocery store with a health-food section.

Drinking

Bergen loves to drink. In addition to the following, consider doing it in the cafés mentioned above, or in many of our entertainment recommendations.

Logen Bar (☎ 55 23 38 01; Øvre Ole Bulls plass 6) A hang-out for artists and journalists, the salonlike rooms benefit from tall ceilings and a balcony. Drink here to feel like you're part of a postimpressionist painting. Hard to find: enter, go up one set of stairs, turn left and climb a second stairwell. The conversational mood is deliberately set by a lack of music.

Legal (Christies gate at Nygårdsgaten; bar menu Nkr45-72) The design theme comes from 1960s English rock. Find red lighting, retro flooring, period lamps and tattooed university graduates. The bar menu offers fancy cheese plates and burgers.

Det Lille Kaffekompaniet (☎ 55 32 92 72; Nedre Fjellsmug 2) Hidden on a narrow cobbled street behind the funicular station, this intimate coffee shop brews with skill and serves cakes.

Altona Vinbar (☎ 55 30 40 72; Strandgaten 81; ☎ 6pm-12.30am Mon-Thu, 6pm-1.30am Fri & Sat) A taverna since the 16th-century, the small, cell-like rooms of this wine bar create a subterranean maze connected by incredibly short openings (duck through a hole 1m high). Except for coloured light emitting from some incredible lanterns, the place is candle lit.

Biskopen (Sigurds gate 5) A huge crowd is attracted to the great beer selection at this dark pub filled with books. Thanks to piles of old furniture, it feels like it's been here forever, though really the goods were imported from an airfield in Evenes.

Sjøboden (☎ 55 31 67 77; Bryggjen 29; ☎ 6pm-1am Sun-Thu, 6pm-2am Fri & Sat) In a Hanseatic-era building, it's a long, narrow and unpretentious route from entry to bar. Friday nights, your odyssey will involve squeezing through crowds, dodging ceiling-suspended barrels and bumping into a bad two-piece passionately playing 'Summer of 69'. Everyone dances, everyone sings along, and no-one wears cool clothing. Kim Larsen plays here whenever in town.

Naboen (☎ 55 90 62 90; Sigurds gate 4b) This quiet pub serves beer (Bayer Ale Nkr47) that actually has taste. Laid-back regulars quaff it while eating Swedish meatballs and lingonberries (Nkr86) from a fancy restaurant upstairs.

Kafe Kippers (☎ 55 31 00 60; Georgernes Verft) Part of a cultural centre, enjoy outdoor, harbourside tables filled with beer drinkers. The view takes in water, rocky hills, islands and boats. Jazz many nights.

Fotballpuben (☎ 55 90 05 79; Vestre Torggate 9; ☎ from 9am) A long-standing favourite among football freaks, this sports bar provides plenty of scarves, televisions and fans to ensure quality match watching.

Entertainment

For details and schedules of entertainment events, including classical concerts, contact the tourist office (or see www.visitbergen.com). Atop Mt Fløyen, classical concerts are held nightly at 8pm from mid-June to mid-August. Bergen is the epicentre of Norwegian rock.

CINEMA

Bergen Kino (Neumannsgate 3) A 13-screen cinema showing first-run movies.

GAY & LESBIAN

Kafé Fincken (☎ 55 32 13 16; Nygårdsgaten 2A; ☎ 7pm-1.30am Wed & Thu, 7pm-2.30am Fri, 8pm-2.30am Sat, 7pm-12.30am Sun) Contemporary and stylish, this white, black and chrome venue provides a subdued environment to grab a drink.

The frisky should check out the far more flaming **Sailor** (Olav Kyrresgt 28; ☎ 10pm-3am Fri & Sat), a disco whose lively dance floor is apt to have someone actually dressed in a sailor outfit.

LIVE MUSIC

Garage (☎ 55 32 19 80; www.garage.no; Christies gate 14; ☎ from 6pm) Norway's rock headquarters consistently books top bands, including international acts. Concerts are held in a big, black basement space.

Hulen (☎ 55 33 38 38; www.hulen.no in Norwegian; Olaf Ryes vei 47) Carved into the bowels of a hill, Hulen occupies a former bomb shelter. The renowned rock club is over 30 years old.

Logen Teater (☎ 55 23 38 01; www.logen-teater.no; Øvre Ole Bulls plass 6) You'd never know it from the street, but drag yourself inside and you'll find a century-old, two-storied, pillared theatre. Concerts are held several times a month. Expect to see classical performances, pop and rock (Tindersticks, Waterboys).

NIGHTCLUBS

Landmark (☎ 55 31 77 55; Rasmus Meyers Alle 5; ☎ noon-1am Sun-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat) This place hosts experimental media artists and DJs (such as pop princess Annie). White car-

pet, white walls and tall ceilings covered in white cushions create a muted, subtle space of modernist high-design. At night, lighting transforms the room with eerie results. Weekdays, grab a subdued drink. Weekends, dance with Bergen's coolest.

Kameleon (☎ 40 00 59 15; Vågsallmenning 16) Some of Norway's most famous DJs (DJ Torske) spin under the distant ceiling of this old and beautiful former bank, now reinvented as a disco and music venue with a large dance floor.

Studenten (☎ 55 90 23 90; Vaskeriveien; ☎ 10pm-3.30am Thu-Sat) Enter through a dark ally and forbidding steel door near a huge sign proclaiming amazing drink prices (shots Nkr30/30/40 Thu/Fri/Sat). The disco faithfully attracts a young and loud crowd.

Shopping

Two blocks long, intimate Skostredet (Shoe Street) provides two blocks of independent boutiques, many of which sell goods made by hip designers and art-types from Bergen. Stop in **Boogaloo** (☎ 55 32 83 99; Skostredet 16) for hand-sewn bags, cool duds for both genders, and feminine skirts with strong silhouettes by local maker Stina Lunde. In the same store, find **Robot** (☎ 91 69 73 50), selling obscure records and books. Otherwise, browse vintage suits and gowns in **Kless Kapet** (☎ 94 37 58 85; Skostredet 12) or head around the corner to **Tilsammans** (☎ 55 32 55 55; Kong Oscars gate 26) for trendy shoes, hats and silk-screened t-shirts depicting famous dead Italian football referees.

Elsewhere, the chain **Bryggjen Husflid** (☎ 55 32 88 03; Bugården) offers quality stock of traditional knit sweaters and mittens in a Bryggjen environment.

For protection against all that rain, **Paraply Reparatoren** (☎ 55 32 69 11; 16 Høndergaten) sells designer umbrella, flasks, walking sticks and fancy toilet kits.

The **Galleriet shopping centre**, northwest of the post office, has boutiques, camera shops, a grocery store and a good bookshop, Norli.

Getting There & Away

AIR
The airport is in Flesland, 19km southwest of central Bergen. Direct flights connect Bergen with major cities in Norway, plus a handful of international destinations.

BOAT

Sognefjorden express boats run to Balestrand (Nkr425, four hours, one daily) and Flåm (Nkr585, 5½ hours, one daily). North-bound express boats go to Måløy (Nkr625, 4½ hours, one daily) and southbound express boats to Stavanger (Nkr640/840 one-way/return, 4½ hours, two daily). These leave from **Strandkai terminalen** on the western side of Vågen.

The *Hurtigruten* leaves from a newly built terminal east of Nøstegaten.

International ferries dock north of Rosenkrantzårnet.

BUS

Daily express buses run to Odda in Hardanger (Nkr265, 3½ hours, eight daily) and to the western fjord region. Buses also run from to Stryn (Nkr419, seven hours, three daily); to Ålesund (Nkr545, 10 hours, two daily); to Trondheim (Nkr719, 14½ hours, two daily); and to Stavanger (Nkr420, 5¾ hours, seven daily).

TRAIN

Trains run to Oslo (Nkr716, 6½ to 7¾ hours, three to five daily) and to Voss (Nkr148, 1½ hours, seven to 15 daily). Lockers at the train station cost Nkr15 to Nkr40.

CAR

Avis (☎ 55 55 39 55; Lars Hilles gate 20A; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

Centrum Bilutleie (☎ 55 21 29 50; Lars Hilles gate 20; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri)

Hertz (☎ 55 96 40 70; Nygaardsgaten 89; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) It has a 2nd office near the airport. Discount with Bergen card.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Flybussen (☎ 177) runs between the airport and Bergen bus station (Nkr70, 45 minutes, at least twice hourly), stopping at many large hotels. Taxis cost Nkr250 to Nkr300.

BUS

City buses cost Nkr20 to Nkr25, while fares beyond the centre are based on the distance travelled. Route information is available by calling ☎ 177. The free bus No 100 runs back and forth between the main post office and the bus station.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

It's best to park and explore the city centre on foot. Except in spots where there are meters, street parking is reserved for residents. If you see a 'P' for parking but the sign has 'sone' on it, it's a reserved area. Metered parking has a 30-minute limit in the busiest spots and two hours elsewhere. The parking area at Syndnes allows up to nine hours (free at night). The easiest and cheapest garage to use is **ByGarasjen** (Nkr75 per 24hr; ☎ 24hr).

VOSS

pop 6000

Voss is a year-round sports centre with an attractive lakeside location. Conveniently positioned within a short drive of many top-notch athletic experiences and containing a centre that provides most modern amenities, Voss attracts many adventuresome tourists. Unfortunately, the town's collection of modern buildings are pretty drab. The **tourist office** (☎ 56 52 08 00; www.visitvoss.no; Uttrågata; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 2-7pm Sun late Jun-early Aug, 9am-2.30pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug-mid-Jun) is a short walk east from the train station.

Voss's second claim to fame is a culinary oddity: deliciously prepared sheep heads. Hundreds of the things are eaten at an annual sheep festival in late September or early October.

Sights & Activities

For bookings or to get an idea about what's available, the tourist office or **Voss Aktivitet-sbooking** (☎ 99 47 65 65; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Thu & Sun, 10am-8pm Fri & Sat) can advise on skiing (December to April), white-water rafting (Nkr700), canoeing (Nkr650), waterfall abseiling (Nkr700), riverboarding (Nkr750) and just about any adrenaline inducing behaviour your loved ones would rather not know about, such as bungee jumping from a parasail (Nkr1495).

The **Mølstertunet Museum** (☎ 56 51 15 11; Mølstervegen 143; adult/child Nkr35/free; ☎ 10am-5pm May-Sep, shorter hrs Oct-Apr), on the hillside north of town, features 16 farm buildings standing in their original positions, which date from the mid-17th to mid-19th centuries and display various aspects of life in earlier times. A **cable car** (Nkr50; ☎ 11am-5pm mid-May-Aug) whisks you up to the spectacular view from Mt Hangur every 15 minutes.

Sleeping & Eating

Voss Camping (☎ 56 51 15 97; www.vosscamping.no; Prestegardsalléen 40; camp sites Nkr120, cabins Nkr450) Small and lakeside, this crowded spot, a convenient 300m from the tourist office, has a few shade trees that break up its grassy field. It attracts caravans.

Voss Vandrerhjem (☎ 56 51 20 17; voss.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Evangervegen 68; dm/s/d Nkr205/445/590; ☎ ☎) Modern rooms with private bathrooms throughout and a fine lakeside position, find it 600m west of the train station. Breakfast/dinner costs Nkr45/90. The hostel has bicycles, canoes, kayaks and rowing boats for hire and there's a sauna.

Fleischer's Hotel (☎ 56 52 05 00; www.fleischers.no; Evangervegen; s/d Nkr1125/1490; ☎ ☎ ☎) For historic character, check out this classic behemoth from 1888. With its massive dormers and steep roof peaks, it looks vaguely Swiss. Ye Olde rooms need to tone down the floral curtains.

Indremisjonskaféen (☎ 56 51 14 08; Vangsgata 12; mains Nkr40-100) Serves cakes, sandwiches and bland Norwegian meals in a busy cafeteria. Try the daily soup (Nkr40), which just might be split pea.

Ivar Løn's farm (☎ 56 51 69 65; meal 275-325; ☎ from 5pm) For a sheep head, visit Ivar's farm. He'll show you around and serve you one of the finest heads to be found, along with homemade beer, cake and coffee. Call ahead. The farm is 5km towards Oslo on the E16.

Getting There & Away

Buses stop at the train station. NSB operates the renowned Bergensbanen to/from Bergen (Nkr148, 1¼ hours, eight to 15 daily) and Oslo (Nkr623, 5½ hours, four or five daily) connect at Myrdal (Nkr90, 45 minutes, eight to 15 daily) with the scenic line down to Flåm.

HARDANGERFJORDEN

A notch less jagged and steep than Sognefjord, Hardangerfjord's slopes support more farms and wildflowers, which picturesquely enhance the green hills as they plunge into the water. The second-longest fjord in Norway, it stretches inland from a cluster of rocky coastal islands to the frozen heights of the **Folgefonn** and **Hardangerjøkulen** ice-caps. The area is known for its orchards (apples, cherries and plums) and bursts into

bloom from mid-May to mid-June. Route 13 between **Brimnes** and **Lofthus** is particularly pretty farm country, with bleating goats and stands selling eggs, honey and fruit.

The villages along the east coast of the central part of the fjord (also called Kvinnheradsfjorden) are connected to the national road network by an 11km tunnel under the Folgefonn; **Rosendal** and **Sundal** are popular destinations, with great mountain and glacier scenery. At Rosendal there's the **Baroniet Rosendal** (☎ 53 48 29 99; www.baro.niet.no; adult/child Nkr75/10; ☎ from 11am May-Sep), Norway's only baronial mansion, dating from 1665 and surrounded by flowering gardens and mountains. From Sundal, an easy walk leads 3km to lake Bondhusvatnet and the glacier **Bondhusbreen**.

On the other side of Folgefonn, **Odda** is an ugly industrial town with a dramatic location. For information on hikes and glacier tours, contact the **tourist office** (☎ 53 65 40 05; www.visitodda.com; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) located near the Sørfjorden shore. **Tysedal**, 6km north of Odda, has a **hydroelectric power plant museum** (☎ 53 65 00 50; adult/student/child Nkr70/35/free; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-May-Aug, shorter hrs Sep-mid-May) and an impressive **funicular railway**.

At the innermost reaches of Hardangerfjorden you'll find the **Eidfjord** area, with sheer mountains, huge waterfalls, spiral road tunnels and the extraordinary **Kjeåsen**, a deserted farm perched on a mountain ledge about 6km northeast of Eidfjord.

The **Hardangervidda Natursenter** (☎ 53 66 59 00; Øvre Eidfjord; adult/child Nkr80/40; ☎ 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, 10am-6pm Apr, May, Sep & Oct) has an excellent 19-minute movie, interactive displays and interesting natural history exhibits. For information, contact **Eidfjord tourist office** (☎ 53 67 34 00; www.visitidfjord.no; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Fri & Sat Jun-Aug, shorter otherwise).

At picturesque **Utne**, 55km north of Odda, you'll find an interesting collection of old buildings at the **Hardanger Folk Museum** (☎ 53 67 00 40; www.hardanger.museum.no; adult/child Nkr40/free; ☎ 10am-4pm May & Jun, 10am-6pm Jul & Aug), and the pretty Utne Hotel.

Helpful regional information can be found at www.hardangerfjord.com.

Sleeping & Eating

In Rosendal, you can stay near the baronial grounds in a **B&B** (☎ 53 48 29 99; s Nkr350-600, d Nkr600-800; ☎), once a 19th-century farmhouse. It's operated by the museum.

Utne Hotel (☎ 53 66 64 00; www.utnehotel.no; Utne Sentrum; s/d Nkr825/1300; ☎ Mar-Dec) This historic wooden hotel, known for its fabulous décor, was built in 1722 and has been in romantic business ever since. Meals are available in the dining room (three-courses Nkr429). Book ahead.

Getting There & Away

While thorough exploration of Hardangerfjord is best accomplished with a car, those with little time and no wheels would do well to book a round-trip **Fjord Tour** (☎ 81 56 82 22; www.fjordtours.no; adult/child Nkr635/430) from

WORTH A TRIP

Lofthus

In the heart of orchard country, the buildings forming Lofthus' tiny centre are oriented along the water edge and not the highway, giving the place a yesteryear feel. Many feel it's the prettiest village on Hardangerfjord. In it you'll find the glitzy and new **Hotel Ullensvang** (☎ 53 67 00 00; www.hotel-ullensvang.no; s/d Nkr1200/1500; ☎ ☎), in whose predecessor Edvard Grieg took his holidays, a single café that occasionally books live music and a grocery store.

Back in the 12th-century, the town's orchards stretched up to the mountain ridge and medieval monks' built steps into the mountain to make the hike easier. The steps are still there to make your own hike easier.

To sleep, try **Lofthus Camping** (☎ 53 66 13 64; www.lofthuscamping.com; camp site Nkr135, 2-/4-bed cabin Nkr390/480; ☎ May-Sep; ☎ ☎). Climb a sliver of a road through 2km of flowering fruit trees before finding this treasure on a grassy bluff with stupendous views over the fjord and the distant glacier Folgefonna. The camp ground lies within an old orchard, and you'll pitch your tent under apple, pear and plum trees (pick and eat freely). Simple cabins cling to the cliff's edge.

Bergen, which combines bus, ferry and train with a three-hour break in Eidfjord.

Hardanger Fjord Cruises (☎ 55 23 87 80; www.hsd.no) operates many of Hardangerfjord's buses and ferries. In summer, there are numerous possibilities for day-trips to Hardangerfjord from Bergen using buses and ferries. These last for up to 12 hours with stops of two to six hours allowing brief explorations of towns and surrounds. Destinations include Rosendal (adult/child Nkr375/255); Lofthus (Nkr460/280); Utne (Nkr460/280) and Eidfjord (Nkr635/430). Tickets can be purchased at major train stations or the Bergen tourist office.

One to three daily Nor-Way Bussekspress buses run between Bergen (Nkr258, 3¼ hours) and Oslo (Nkr480, 7¼ hours) via Odda and Utne, with connections at Haukeligrend for Kristiansand.

SOGNEFJORDEN

Sognefjorden, Norway's longest (204km) and deepest (1308m) fjord, cuts a deep slash across the map of western Norway. In some places sheer, lofty walls rise more than 1000m above the water, while in others there is a far gentler shoreline with farms, orchards and small towns.

The broad main waterway is impressive, but by cruising into the fjord's narrower arms, such as the deep and lovely Nærøyfjorden (on the World Heritage List) to Gudvangen, you'll have idyllic views of sheer cliff faces and cascading waterfalls.

Tourist information is dispensed by **Sognefjorden** (☎ 57 67 30 83; www.sognefjorden.no).

Getting There & Away

Fjord1 (☎ 55 90 70 70; www.fjord1.no) operates express boats between Bergen and Sogndal (Nkr510; 4½ hours; one daily), as well as a tourist route to Flåm (Nkr585, 5½ hours, one daily) stopping at 10 small towns.

From mid-May to mid-September, Fylkesbaatane runs a second express boat along the same route, except that it terminates in Flåm (Nkr550) instead of Sogndal.

There are numerous local ferries linking the fjord towns and an extensive (though not always frequent) network of buses. They're all detailed in *Sogn og Fjordane Rutehefte* (www.ruteinfo.net/en/index.html), the 208-page timetable which is available at tourist offices.

Flåm

pop 400

A tiny village of orchards and a handful of buildings scenically set at the head of Aurlandsfjorden, Flåm is a jumping-off spot for travellers taking the Gudvangen ferry or the Sognefjorden express boat. It's also the only place on Sognefjorden with rail connections, and is the turnaround point for those doing the 'Norway in a Nutshell' tour, serving as the base station for the dramatic Flåm railway. Though it sees an amazing 500,000 visitors every summer, walk a few minutes from the centre and you'll soon experience solitude. Adventurous visitors arrive from Finse by mountain bike. It's a five- or six-hour downhill ride, obscenely picturesque, and you can return your rented bike in the Flåm centre. Call the **tourist office** (☎ 57 63 21 06; www.visitflam.com; ☎ 8.30am-8pm Jun-Aug, 8.30am-4pm May & Sep), at the train station, for details.

The extraordinarily friendly **Flåm Camping & Hostel** (☎ 57 63 21 21; flam.hotel@vandrerhjem.no; dm/s Nkr135/225, d Nkr345-395; ☎ May-Sep; Ⓟ) has just 31 beds – book early. It's a few minutes' walk from the station: go up the riverside track and over the bridge. If fully booked, they might install you in a large dollhouse, but no promises. At water level on the fringe of the village, **Heimly Pensjonat** (☎ 57 63 23 00; www.heimly.no; s Nkr550-695, d Nkr695-895; Ⓟ) has ordinary rooms with impressive views.

Near the station, there's a **cafeteria** and the novel **Togrestauranten** (☎ 57 63 21 55; mains Nkr90-135), housed in wooden rail cars, serves traditional Norwegian dishes. For a traditional feast, try the buffet at the high-end **Fretheim Hotel** (☎ 57 63 23 00; www.fretheim-hotel.no; buffet Nkr400), where chefs cure, salt and smoke their own meat and prepare an 'ecological' menu. There's a **Coop** supermarket.

The **Flåmsbana railway** (☎ 57 63 21 00; www.flaamsbana.no; adult/child Nkr175/85; 10 daily) runs to Myrdal, some in sync with the Oslo-Bergen service.

Fjord1 ferries and express boats head out to towns around Sognefjorden. The most scenic trip steams up Nærøyfjorden to Gudvangen (Nkr205, two hours, four daily). Other service runs to Balestrand (Nkr200, two hours, two daily) and Bergen (Nkr585, 5½ hours, one daily). These frequencies for bus boat and trains are during summer season.

Balestrand

pop 800

Quiet Balestrand enjoys a mountain backdrop and fjord views. The beauty of its surroundings and the eerie quality of its summer light attracted a community of landscape painters in the early 19th century, whose work then popularised the area for well-heeled tourists. Today, the low-key farming village remains a favourite destination for travellers, who spend a lot of their time walking and contemplating. The **tourist office** (☎ 57 69 12 55; www.sognefjord.no; ☎ 8am-6pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 9am-5pm Mon-Fri May, early-Jun & late Aug-Sep) rents bikes.

The road that runs south along the fjord has little traffic and is a pleasant place to stroll. It's lined with apple orchards, ornate older homes and gardens, a **19th-century English church** and **Viking burial mounds**. One mound is topped by a statue of the legendary King Bele, erected by Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II, who spent his holidays here until WWI.

For a longer **hike**, take the small ferry (Nkr15) across the Esefjord to the Dragsvik side, where there is an abandoned country road that forms the first leg of an 8km walk back to Balestrand.

At **Sjøtun Camping** (☎ 57 69 12 23; www.sjotun.no; camp sites from Nkr50, cabins Nkr230; ☎ Jun-Sep), a 15-minute walk south along the fjord, you can pitch a tent amid apple trees or rent a rustic four-bunk cabin. **Balestrand HI Hostel** (☎ 57 69 13 03; www.kringsja.no; dm/d Nkr190/580; ☎ late Jun–mid-Aug; Ⓟ) is a pleasant lodge-style place perched near the water. **Midtnes Pensjonat** (☎ 57 69 11 33; www.midtnes.no; s/d Nkr610/700; Ⓟ), next to the English church, occupies a charming white house where you'll eat breakfast with great views. There's an attractive terrace and complimentary rowing boat moored steps away.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Kvikne's Hotel (☎ 57 69 42 00; www.kviknes.no; s/d in main Bldg Nkr1200/1500, d Nkr1030-2600; ☎ Apr-Sep; Ⓟ) This supremely grand and pristinely preserved timber hotel from the late 19th century boasts a fabulous collection of art and superb craftsmanship in its 'dragon-style' lounges. As you sit in a chair once owned by the landscape painter JC Dahl staring at the summer-lit fjord, you might weep as your mind struggles to comprehend vast interior and exterior beauty. Many rooms have lovely, fjord-oriented balconies – you want one of these. The newer wing – whose rooms are comfortable to a fault – is a grotesque pile of concrete by comparison.

Also enjoy a lavish dinner buffet (Nkr370) that would satisfy the most discerning gourmand and then head to the bar for some aquavit. Book far in advance.

Consider paying a bit more for a room with fjord-staring balcony.

There's a **supermarket** and a fast-food **café** opposite the dock, and the hotel restaurant serves dinner for Nkr110. For a splurge, eat at **Kvikne's** fjordside dining room.

Buses run to Sogndal (Nkr95, 1¼ hours, three to five daily). Express boats run to/from Bergen (Nkr385, 3½ hours, one to two daily) and Sogndal (Nkr120, 45 minutes, one daily). Between May and September, local ferries run to/from Balestrand (Nkr147, 1¼ hours, two daily).

Sogndal & Around

pop 6600

Sogndal, a modern regional centre, is a starting point for day trips in the area. While it has more amenities than many of the area's smaller towns, it is also far less beautiful. Of most interest is the **Nigardsbreen glacier**, 70km to the north, followed by Norway's oldest **stave church** (dating from 1150 and on the Unesco World Heritage List), in Urnes across the Lustrafjord, and the **Sogn Folkmuseum** near Kaupanger, 11km east of Sogndal. Also in Kaupanger, there's a superb **stave church** dating from 1184. The **tourist office** (☎ 57 67 30 83; Kulturhus, Gravensteinsgaten; ☎ 9am-8pm late Jun-Aug, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri Sep–mid-Jun) is about 500m east of Sogndal bus station.

The tourist office books rooms in private homes from Nkr150 per person. There's an **HI Hostel** (☎ 57 67 20 33; sogndal.hotel@vandrerhjem.no; dm/s/d Nkr160/235/370; ☎ mid-Jun–mid-Aug), only 15 minutes east of the bus station.

The hotel restaurant **Compagniet** (☎ 57 62 77 00; Hotel Sogndal, Gravensteinsgaten 5; buffet Nkr230; ☎ 7am-10.30pm) has formal evening buffets, but there's also a cheaper section with some light meals under Nkr100. For an

inexpensive meal, try **Kaffir & Co**, a cafeteria in the **Domus** supermarket on Gravensteinsgata.

Buses run to Balestrand (Nkr95, 1¼ hours, three to five daily) and Fjærland (Nkr60, 45 minutes, four to six daily). Twice-daily buses (mid-June to late August) go northeast past Jotunheimen National Park to Lom (Nkr220, 3½ hours) and on to Otta (Nkr295, 4½ hours), on the Oslo–Trondheim railway line.

JOSTEDALSREEN

With an area of 487 sq km, the many-tongued Jostedalbreen dominates the highlands between Nordfjord and Sognefjord and is mainland Europe's largest icecap, in some places it is 400m thick. Protected as a national park, the icecap provides extraordinary opportunities for otherworldly glacier hiking.

Nigardsbreen

Among the glacier tongues visible from below, Nigardsbreen ranks among the most dramatic and easily visited, with guided hikes from late May to mid-September across the glacier's rippled blue ice. Small avalanches along distant ice walls sound like gunshots as they fall, and ice chips dropping through crevasses sound like tinkling bells.

Outings include easy 1½-hour family walks (Nkr160) and challenging four-hour, blue-ice treks (Nkr490), crossing deep crevasses and requiring hiking boots and warm clothing (instruction and technical equipment included); there's also multiday options. More information on summer glacier walks and kayaking on glacier lakes is available from **Jostedal Breheimssenteret** (☎ 57 68 32 50; www.jostedal.com; Jostedal; ☞ 9am–7pm late Jun–Aug, 10am–5pm May & Sep), which books trips and operates a cafeteria and informative museum (admission Nkr50).

In the winter, contact friendly **Fimbul Jostedal** (☎ 99 45 09 21; www.fimbuljostedal.no) to learn about multiday courses on avalanche survival, ice climbing and Telemark skiing. It also guides experienced skiers along fabulous and remote glacial terrain. A five-day trip with accommodation in mountain huts costs Nkr3200.

A bus leaves Sogndal at 8.45am (Nkr150, 1½ hours) Monday to Friday for Jostedal Breheimssenteret. A return bus leaves at 6.40pm. Although this will give you time

to do a short hike, if you're doing anything longer you might want to stay at **Nigardsbreen Camping** (☎ 57 68 31 35; Jostedal; camp sites Nkr90, cabins Nkr350; ☞ late-May–Sep), whose basic facilities lie 400m from the Breheimssenteret. About 5km away in Gjerde village, **Jostedal Hotell** (☎ 57 68 31 19; www.jostedalhotel.no; Jostedal; s/d 600/800), an unofficial community centre, has clean rooms and lots of character. Its cafeteria functions as the village pub and has a Friday-night bingo session that attracts droves.

Fjærland

pop 300

The location of this farming village at the head of the beautiful Fjærlandsfjorden, near two arms of the **Jostedalbreen** icecap, makes it one of the most inviting destinations in Norway. The tiny village is Norway's 'Book Town', with a dozen **bookshops** (www.bokbyen.no; ☞ 10am–6pm May–mid-Sep) selling used stock from an impressive 4km of shelves. Fjærland's centre is called Mundal. Its annual book fair, held the Saturday nearest 23 June pulls in booksellers and antiquarians from around the country.

The **Norwegian Glacier Museum** (☎ 57 69 32 88; Fjærland; adult/child Nkr80/40; ☞ 10am–4pm Apr–Oct) offers hands-on exhibits for children. Learn how fjords are formed and wind your way through a tunnel of mock ice. You can drive within 300m of two arms of the glacier: the **Supphellebreen**, where you can walk up to the glacier's edge and touch the ice; and the creaking, blue-iced **Bøyabreen**, where it's not uncommon to witness ice breaks plunging into the lake beneath the glacier tongue.

Tired? Sleep in the stunning **Hotel Mundal** (☎ 57 69 31 01; www.fjordinfo.no/mundal; Mundal; s Nkr820–1180, d Nkr980–1950; ☞ May–Sep), built in 1891. A wooden beauty, it features a welcoming lounge and lovely tower (drop Nkr1950 and you can sleep in its one panoramic guestroom). The place overlooks the village and fjord from a gentle hill. Eat a traditional four-course meal in the fabulous dining room (Nkr415).

Broke? **Bøyum Camping** (☎ 57 69 32 52; camp sites Nkr125, dm Nkr125, s Nkr250–300, d Nkr300, 6-person cabins Nkr680; ☐) offers simple turf roofed cabins and camp sites on a broad grassy field with mountains rising in the background. Find it near the glacier museum, 2km from the centre. Be sure to visit **Brævasshytta Cafeteria** (☎ 57 69 32 96; snacks Nkr36–75,

mains Nkr95–110; ☞ May–Sep), built into the moiraine of the glacier's most recent advance. As one Lonely Planet author put it 'with the glacier right there and in your face, it's like eating in an IMAX cinema, but for real'.

Four to six daily buses connect Fjærland to Sogndal (Nkr60, 45 minutes) and Stryn (Nkr160, two hours). If driving, prepare for a heart-stopping toll (Nkr150) along Rv5 between Sogndal and Fjærland.

Between May and September, ferries run to/from Balestrand (Nkr147, 1¼ hours, two daily). The morning departure connects in Balestrand with the boat to Flåm and links with the Bergen-bound ferry.

Briksdalsbreen

From the small town of Olden at the eastern edge of Nordfjord, a scenic road leads 23km up Oldedalen to the Briksdalsbreen glacial tongues. It's an extremely accessible place and as such attracts hordes of tour busses.

Glacier hiking tours are operated by **Briksdal Breføring** (☎ 57 87 68 00; www.briksdalsbreen.no), near Briksdalsbre Fjellstove, and **Olden Aktiv** (☎ 57 87 38 88; www.briksdalsbreen.com), near the Melkevoll Bretun camping ground. Both organise glacier walks of varying duration (Nkr250 to Nkr350) that include equipment and don't demand previous experience.

It's a 5km return hike to the glacier face, either up a steep path or a longer and gentle cart track. **Oldedalen Skyslag** (☎ 57 87 68 05; adult/child Nkr250/125) will be glad to install you on a pony cart.

To sleep, head to Stryn or grab one of six rooms in **Briksdalsbre Fjellstove** (☎ 57 87 68 00; www.briksdalsbreen.no; s/d Nkr400/800), a cosy mountain lodge run by the climbing company. Eat trout and reindeer (mains Nkr100 to Nkr150) in an attached café.

Between June and August, a bus runs to Stryn (Nkr65, one hour, one to two daily).

Stryn

pop 2100

Since it lies conveniently on several long-distance routes, many travellers break their journeys here. An hour's drive from Briksdalsbreen, it and the neighbouring town of Loen provide a relatively convenient base from which to make glacial excursions, particularly for those who want a restaurant or bar on hand after a day on the ice.

The helpful **tourist office** (☎ 57 87 40 40; www.nordfjord.no; ☞ 8.30am–8pm Jul, 8.30am–6pm Jun & early Aug, 8.30am–3.30pm Mon–Fri mid–Aug–May) is two blocks south of Tonningsgata, the main drag.

SLEEPING & EATING

Removed from the centre, **Sande Camping** (☎ 57 87 45 90; www.sande-camping.no; Loen; camp site Nkr90, cabin Nkr250–400; ☐) provides a breathtaking lakeside setting (in summer, warm enough for a swim), with step mountains rising dramatically beyond. There's a shop, canoe rentals and cafeteria.

Stryn Vandrerhjem (☎ 57 87 11 06; www.vandrerhjem.no; Geilevegen 14, Stryn; dm/s/d Nkr200/350/450; ☞ late May–early Sep; ☐) Nicely perched on a hill with the fjord in the distance, these former German military barracks lie 2km from town. Member guests receive a discount on glacier hikes from Olden Aktiv (left).

Vesla Pensjonat (☎ 57 87 10 06; www.veslapensjonat.no; Stryn; s/d Nkr600/800; ☐) Boasting a lovely garden, this Victorian place will make you feel like you're living in a gingerbread house. There are plenty of cats to scratch and books on the walls.

Loen has a few worthwhile beds, including those found at **Hotel Alexandra** (☎ 57 87 50 00; www.alexandra.no; s/d Nkr960/1480; ☐ ☞ ☞), a modern hotel where many rooms have good views over the fjord. Its pricey dinner buffet provides a top-notch survey of Norwegian cuisine.

For nightlife, food and caffeine, Stryn is the place to go, with several bars, restaurants and a disco in the Stryn Hotel.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses run from Stryn to Bergen (Nkr435, 7¼ hours, one to two daily) and to Ålesund (Nkr238, 3½ hours, two to four daily). The Ålesund route passes Hellesylt (Nkr80, one hour) where there are boat connections to Geiranger.

NORANGSDALEN & SUNNMØRESALPANE

One of the most inspiring parts of the western fjords is Norangsdalen, a hidden valley west of Hellesylt. The partially unsealed Rv665 road to the villages of Øye and Urke, and the Leknes-Sæbøferry on beautiful Hjørundfjorden are served by

bus from Hellesylt once daily, Monday to Friday mid-June to mid-August.

Hikers and climbers will find plenty of scope in the dramatic peaks of the adjacent Sunnmørsalpane, including the incredibly steep scrambling ascent of Slogen (1564m) from Øye and the superb Råna (1586m), a long and tough scramble from Urke.

GEIRANGERFJORDEN

Added to Unesco's World Heritage List in 2005, this archetypal fjord boasts towering, twisting walls which curve inland for 20 narrow kilometres. Along the way abandoned farms cling to the cliffs and breathtakingly high waterfalls with names such as the Seven Sisters, the Sutor and the Bridal Veil drop straight into the sea from forests above.

The cruise by public ferry between Geiranger and Hellesylt is almost too nice to view.

Geiranger

pop 270

High mountains with cascading waterfalls and cliffside farms surround Geiranger, at the head of the crooked Geirangerfjorden. Although the village is tiny, it's one of Norway's most-visited spots. Nevertheless, it's reasonably serene in the evening when the cruise ships and tour buses have gone.

The **tourist office** (☎ 70 26 30 99; www.geiranger.no; ☹ 9am-7pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 9am-5pm mid-May–mid-Jun & mid-Aug–mid-Sep) is beside the pier and details hikes.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **Norsk Fjordsenter** (☎ 70 26 18 00; www.fjordsenter.info; adult/child Nkr75/35; ☹ 10am-5pm May-Sep) depicts local culture with tools and uprooted buildings. Learn about the essentials that shape culture in the middle of nowhere: mail packets, avalanches and building roads over impossible terrain.

There's great hiking all around Geiranger to abandoned farmsteads, waterfalls and some beautiful lookout points. One special walk is to **Storseter waterfall**, a 45-minute hike that takes you between the rock face and the cascading falls. You'll get the most spectacular fjord views from **Flydalsjuvet**, about 5km uphill from Geiranger on the Stryn road, and from **Ørnevegen**, about 4km from Geiranger towards Valldal and Åndalsnes.

The highest and most splendid view of the Geiranger valley and fjord is from the **Dalsnibba** lookout (1500m). A bus (Nkr100 return) runs from Geiranger between 15 June and 20 August.

SLEEPING & EATING

Hotels in Geiranger can be quickly booked out by package tours, but cabins and camping spots are plentiful. A dozen camping grounds skirt the fjord and hillsides.

You'll see *Rom* signs around the village advertising rooms at around Nkr200/400 (singles/doubles) – the tourist office maintains a list and can help book one for you.

Grande Fjord Hotell (☎ 70 26 30 90; www.grande.fjordhotell.com; s/d Nkr800/980; ☹ ☹) At a scenic spot on the fjord 2km northwest of the village, the hotel also has cabins and camp sites nearby. The buffet breakfasts (included) and dinners are particularly good here.

The tiny town centre has **Café Ole**, where you can pick up good coffee; **Olebuda**, a decent restaurant; and a supermarket, open even on Sunday. Stop by **Geiranger Galleri** a self-designated 'troll-free zone' representing artists from the Western Fjords.

Also recommended:

Geiranger Camping (☎ 70 26 31 20; www.geirangercamping.no; camp sites from Nkr80; ☹ 20 May-Sep) Right in the centre of Geiranger.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From mid-June to late August, buses run to Åndalsnes (Nkr148, three hours). Change at Linge for buses to Ålesund (Nkr172). The Geiranger–Hellesylt ferry (passengers/cars Nkr37/116, one hour, four to 10 daily) runs May to late September.

ÅNDALSNES

pop 2000

By Romsdalsfjorden, Åndalsnes is the northern gateway to the western fjords. Most travellers arrive on the train from Dombås, a scenic route that descends through a deeply cut valley with dramatic waterfalls. Just before reaching Åndalsnes, the train passes **Trollveggen**, a sheer 1500m-high rock face whose jagged and often cloud-shrouded summit is considered the ultimate challenge among Norwegian mountain climbers. Highway E136 between Dombås and Åndalsnes runs parallel to the railway line and is equally spectacular.

The town itself is rather nondescript, but the scenery is fabulous, camping grounds are plentiful and it has one of the finest hostels in Norway. The **tourist office** (☎ 71 22 16 22; www.visitandalsnes.com; ☹ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri otherwise) is at the train station.

Hiking

The mountains and valleys surrounding Åndalsnes offer excellent hiking – contact the tourist office for details of guided trips. One good trail, which goes to the top of Nesaksla (715m), starts right in town 50m north of the roundabout and makes a fine half-day outing.

Sleeping & Eating

Åndalsnes Camping (☎ 71 22 22 79; www.andalsnescamp.no; camp sites from Nkr80, 4-/7-person cabin Nkr350/750; ☹ ☹) Dramatically situated on the southeastern side of the scenic Rauma river, find it 2km from the centre. It rents canoes and bikes.

Åndalsnes Vandrerhjem Setnes (☎ 71 22 13 82; aandalsnes.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; dm/s/d Nkr205/370/550; ☹ late May–early Sep; ☹) This turf-roofed place offers rustic accommodation and a pancakes and pickled herring breakfast. It's 2km from the train station (follow E136 towards Ålesund), just far enough from town to be surrounded by idyllic flowering pastures with fine mountain views.

Grand Hotel Bellevue (☎ 71 22 75 00; www.grandhotel.no; Åndalgata 5; s/d Nkr795/995; ☹ ☹ ☹) Perched on a rise in the town centre, the Bellevue delivers on its name: both sides of the hotel overlook stunning water and mountain scenes. Comfortable rooms are bland and yellow, and there's a minigolf course (not challenging at all).

The town centre contains a grocery store, bakery, cafeteria and pizza joint.

Getting There & Away

The train from Dombås runs to Åndalsnes (Nkr193, 1¼ hours, two to four daily), in sync with Oslo–Trondheim trains. Buses to Ålesund (Nkr182, 2¼ hours) meet the trains.

ÅNDALSNES TO GEIRANGER

The **Trollstigen** (Troll's Path) winding south from Åndalsnes is a thriller of a road with hairpin bends and a 1:12 gradient, and to

add a daredevil element it's practically one lane all the way. On request, the bus makes photo stops at the thundering, 180m-high **Stigfossen waterfall** on its way up to the mountain pass. At the top, the bus usually stops long enough for you to walk to a lookout with a dizzying view back down the valley.

There are waterfalls galore smoking down the mountains as you descend to **Valldal**. You could break your journey here – there are camping grounds, cabins and a hotel – though most travellers continue on, taking the short ferry ride from Linge across to **Eidsdal**. From there, a waiting bus continues along the **Ørnevegen** (Eagle's Hwy), with magnificent bird's-eye views of Geirangerfjorden during the descent into Geiranger village.

ÅLESUND

pop 44,000

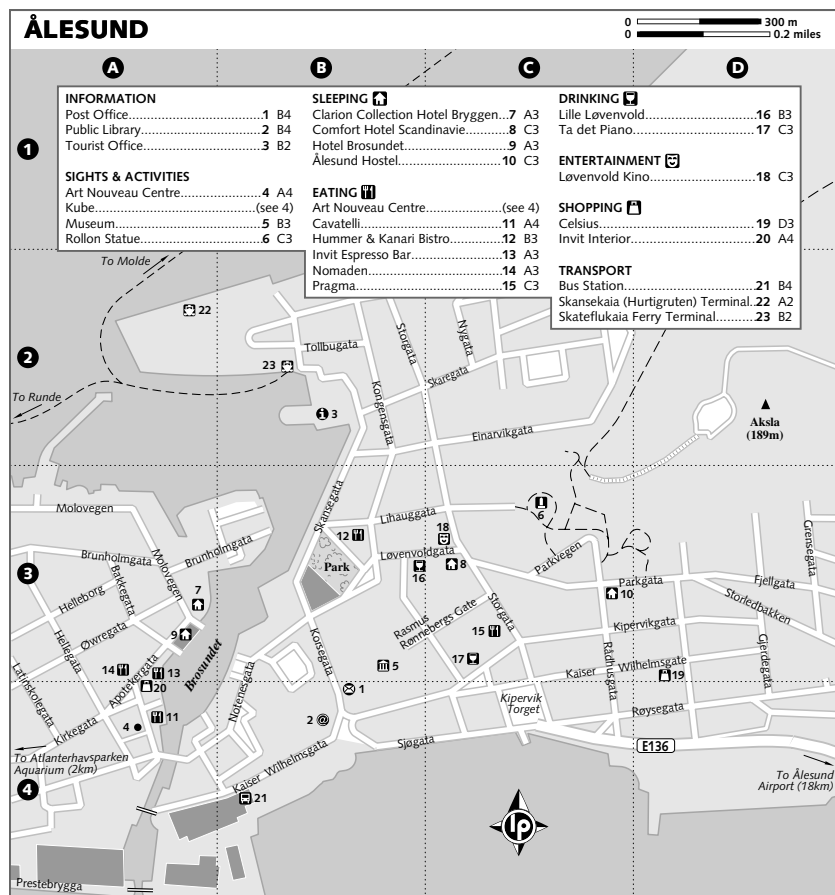
Lucky for you, this pretty coastal town burned to the ground in 1904. The amazing rebuilding created a fantastical downtown centre unlike anything else you'll see in Norway – a harmonious collection of pastel buildings almost entirely designed in the Art Nouveau tradition. All the loveliness is well staged on the end of a peninsula, surrounded by islands, water and hills.

The **tourist office** (☎ 70 15 76 00; www.visitalesund.com; ☹ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 11am-5pm Sun Jun-Aug, shorter hrs Sep-May) is near the **Hurtigruten** quay. The post office is on **Korsegata**. For free internet, visit the **public library** (Kremmergarden, Korsegata).

Sights & Activities

A popular thing to do is to walk the 418 steps up **Aksla** (189m) for a splendid view of Ålesund and the surrounding islands. Take **Lihuggata** from Kongensgata, pass the **Rollon statue** and begin the 20-minute puff to the top of the hill.

The brilliant **Art Nouveau Centre** (☎ 70 10 49 70; www.jugendstilsenteret.no; Apotekergata 16; adult/student/child Nkr50/40/25; ☹ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun Jun-Aug, shorter hrs Sep-May), occupies the fabulously restored interior of a former pharmacy. Exhibits explain the town's rebuilding with a weird time machine and presents the work (furniture, paintings, textiles and glass) of well-known continental Art Nouveau masters alongside



their Norwegian counterparts. A tunnel connects you to **Kube** (☎) whose gleaming white interior strongly counterbalances the wooden splendour next door. It exhibits an eclectic range of art from medieval to contemporary.

The town **museum** (☎ 70 12 31 70; Rasmus Ronnebergs gate 16; adult/child Nkr30/10; ☎ 11am-4pm Mon-Fri, noon-3pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs otherwise) concentrates on local history, including sealing, fishing, shipping, the fire of 1904 and the German occupation during WWII. A few boats are also shown, including the *Uræd* lifeboat, piloted across the Atlantic in 1904.

The aquarium **Atlantehavsparken** (☎ 70 10 70 60; Tuenseset; adult/child Nkr85/55; ☎ 10am-7pm

Sun-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug-mid-Jun; ☎), 3km from the centre at the western extreme of the peninsula, introduces visitors to marine life around the Norwegian coast.

Ålesund is a good base for touring the surrounding islands, including the bird island of **Runde** (p350), lighthouses, and Fjords. The tourist office provides a list of sailing times and itinerary suggestions. Ferries depart from the Skateflukaia ferry terminal.

Weekdays in summer there's a scenic bus-ferry day trip (Nkr410) that includes a cruise down Geirangerfjorden, an hour in Geiranger and return to Ålesund via Ørnevegen.

Sleeping

The tourist office keeps lists of a few private rooms that start at around Nkr250 per person.

Hotel Brosundet (☎ 70 12 10 00; www.brosundet.no; Apotekergata 5; s Nkr570-770, d Nkr760-990; ☎) A former warehouse contains modern rooms interestingly punctuated by massive timbers. Large pulleys used to haul up fish still exist inside. Sleep inches from the canal.

Clarion Collection Hotel Bryggen (☎ 70 12 64 00; www.choicehotels.no; Apotekergata 1; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr810/1080, s/d mid-Jun-Aug & Sat & Sun year-round Nkr1425/1650; ☎) This canalside choice occupies a pastel yellow warehouse dating from the town's reconstruction. In addition to breakfast, a basic dinner buffet is included.

Ålesund Hostel (☎ 70 11 58 30; aalesund.hostel@vandrherjem.no; Parkgata 14; dm/s/d Nkr225/415/535, ☎) Tidy and central, the hostel offers somewhat industrial rooms where touches of old charm show through. Impressive barrel vaulted breakfast room.

Comfort Hotel Scandinavie (☎ 70 15 78 00; www.choice.no; Løvenvoldgata 8; s Nkr690-1090, d Nkr890-1390; ☎) While its exterior, stairs and hallways retain lavish *Jugendstil* touches, the rooms of this hotel have been stripped and redone with a conventional modern design.

Eating & Drinking

Art Nouveau Centre (☎ 70 10 49 70; www.jugendstilcenteret.no; Apotekergata 16) Aside from Brie (Nkr60) and tuna sandwiches on grainy bread, the museum's stylish café serves homemade chocolate/marzipan cake (Nkr35) so good that you will evoke Plato.

Hummer & Kanari Bistro (☎ 70 12 80 08; Kongensgata 19; mains Nkr100-250) Downstairs, the bistro serves up ample pizzas and pasta (Nkr90 to Nkr120) with a well-stocked bar beckoning nearby. The more formal restaurant upstairs turns out a daily menu of fish specialities.

Cavatelli (☎ 70 12 27 33; Apotekertorget; dinner mains Nkr180-270) For excellent fish in a candle-lit, tall stemware kind of place, head to Cavatelli, which crosses Art Nouveau and country club. Its canalside terrace is a great place for smokers to dine.

Nomaden (☎ 97 15 89 85; Apotekergata 10; sandwiches Nkr50) Our eyes mist up recalling enormous slabs of moist chocolate layer cake with just

the right amount of cherry filling (Nkr35). Eat it yourself in Nomaden's well-lit parlour with wood stove for winter cheer.

Invit Espresso Bar (☎ 70 15 66 44; Apotekergata 9; sandwich Nkr70) This modern espresso bar serves the best steamed drinks in town. Enjoy them with snacks, milkshakes and smoothies on original chairs designed next door, or on a barge on the water.

Pragma (☎ 70 12 61 50) Eat light meals, pastries and coffee in an authentic and carefully restored Art Nouveau interior with excellent vegetal wallpaper. Find it on the 2nd floor of the Storcenter shopping mall.

Lille Løvenvold (☎ 70 12 54 00; Løvenvoldgata 2; ☎ from 11am Mon-Sat, 1pm-1am Sun) Serves beer to a young crowd with rock playing in the background; rooms have couches and are lit with dim red light.

Ta det Piano (☎ 70 10 06 99; Kipervikgata 18; ☎ from 11am) A bar and café, attracting conversationalists and intellectuals with outdoor seating, occasional live music and constant redecoration. There's a decent bar menu.

Entertainment

Løvenvold Kino (☎ 70 16 24 46; Løvenvoldgata 11) A little changed neobaroque movie house from 1922; come inside for flicks (Nkr80) and original wall paintings.

Shopping

Celsius (☎ 70 10 01 16; Kaiser Wilhelmsgata 52; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) The small glass studio blows unconventional pieces with vivid colours. The kiln is at the front of the studio, the shop at the back.

Invit Interior (☎ 70 15 66 44; Apotekergata 9; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat) For creative modern furniture and the best of Norwegian kitchen appliances, teapots and cool home goods, head to this design firm and shop.

Getting There & Away

Ålesund has daily flights to Oslo and other Norwegian cities. A taxi to/from the airport costs Nkr350, thanks to numerous tolls. Or take the airport bus (Nkr75, 25 minutes). There are buses to Stryn (Nkr220, 3½ hours, one to four daily) via Hellesylt and to other major coastal and fjord towns. The bus to Åndalsnes (Nkr182, 2¼ hours, two to four daily) is timed to meet arriving and departing trains.

The *Hurtigruten* docks at Skansekaia Terminal.

RUNDE

pop 160

The impressive island of Runde, 27km west of Ålesund, plays host to half a million sea birds of 230 to 240 species, including kittiwakes, fulmars, storm petrels and 100,000 pairs of migrating puffins that arrive in May and stay until late July. You'll see the best bird-watching sites on a 2½-hour boat tour (adult/child Nkr150/100; three sailing daily May to August). Buy tickets at the campground's shop. Ring in advance in high-season.

Runde Camping & HI Vandrerhjem (☎ 70 08 59 16; www.runde.no; camp site Nkr60, dm/s/d Nkr150/250/350), attractively facing the harbour, has cosy rooms with bunk beds. We particularly like the feel of those in the attic. The grassy camp sites are basic and waterside.

Runde is connected to the mainland by bridge. It can be reached by a pleasurable catamaran-bus combination day trip that gives you six hours on the island. It departs from Ålesund's **Skateflukaia ferry terminal** (Nkr266 return, 2½ hours each way, daily) from mid-June to mid-September. You can also go one way.

NORTHERN NORWAY

With several great cities and some wondrous natural terrain, you'll be mighty pleased with yourself by undertaking an exploration of this huge territory that stretches on either side of the Arctic Circle. A vast plateau reaches across much of the interior, while small fishing villages cling to the incredibly steep and jagged Lofoten Islands which erupt vertically out of the ocean. Medieval Trondheim, Norway's third-largest city, provides plenty of culture and charm, while Tromsø, the world's northernmost university town, parties year-round. On some freezing inland mountains you'll find Roros, a Unesco-protected copper mining town, and back on the coast is Narvik, an ugly mess of a town with incredible downhill skiing.

An interesting alternative to land travel is the *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer, which

pulls into every sizable port passing some of the best coastal scenery in Scandinavia. A good thing, too, since trains only run as far as Bodø.

RØROS

pop 2590

Røros is a wonderful old copper-mining town with a well-preserved historic district, protected under Unesco's World Heritage List. The little hillside town is dominated by a large wooden church, and contains several galleries. The first mine opened in 1644 but in 1977, after 333 years of operation, the company went bankrupt. The town makes for delightful strolling and everything's within easy walking distance. The **tourist office** (☎ 72 41 11 65; Peder Hiortsgata 2; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-12.30pm Sat) can advise on canoeing, fishing, hiking and skiing.

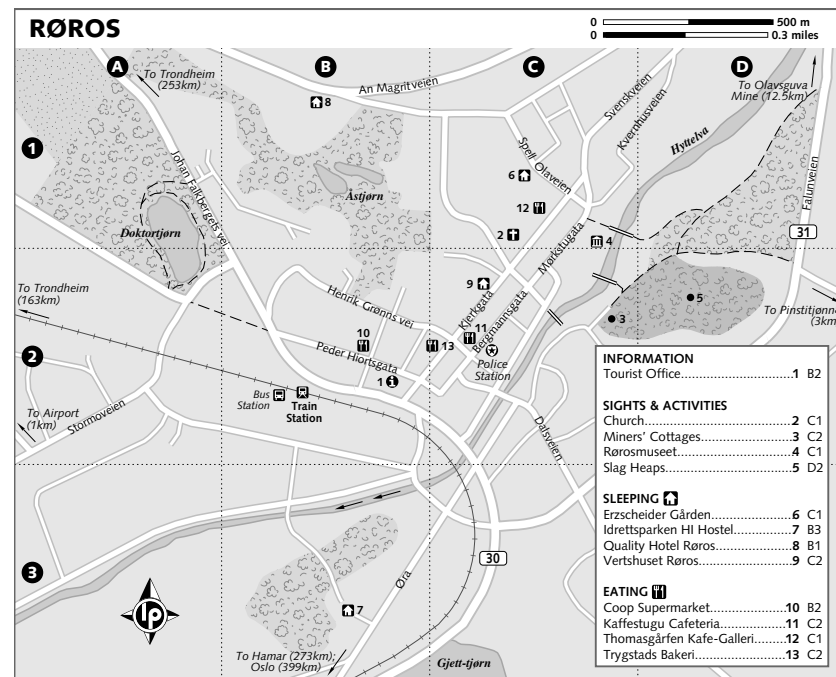
Sights & Activities

Røros' main attractions are the turf-roofed **miners' cottages** and other centuries-old timber buildings; a prominent green and white 1784 **church** (Kjergata; tours adult/child Nkr25/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 2-4pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, tours 2pm) with an excellent baroque interior; **slag heaps**; and the old smelting works, now part of the **Rørosmuseet** (☎ 72 40 61 70; Malmplassen; adult/student/child Nkr60/50/30; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug-mid-Jun). The museum features intricate scale models that brilliantly outline the water- and horse-powered smelting process.

Don't miss the now defunct **Olavsguva mine** (☎ 72 41 11 65; Kojedalen; tours adult/student/child Nkr60/50/30; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug), 13km northeast of town. Subterranean tours pass through the historic Nyberget copper mine, which dates from the 1650s, into the modern Olavsgruva mine, which operated from 1936 to 1970. The ground can be muddy and the air is a steady 5°C – so bring a sweater and good footwear. A car or taxi (Nkr450 return) is needed to get there.

Tours

In winter, the tourist office organises ski tours and excursions by dogsled (Nkr600 to Nkr1000 for two to six hours) or horse-drawn sleigh (Nkr600 per hour for four people). You can also join a winter day trip to the Southern Sami tent camp in



Pinstjøenna, 3km from town and 1km off the road, where you'll dine on reindeer and learn to ice fish and throw axes. The three-hour tour costs Nkr500 per person (minimum 10 people).

Sleeping & Eating

Vertshuset Røros (☎ 72 41 93 50; www.vertshusetros.no; Kjergata 34; s/d from Nkr720/900, 2-person apt per person from Nkr435; P) Many of the inviting rooms have floors painted in a folk style common in the Roros area and they overlook an enclosed backyard surrounded by 18th-century buildings. The intimate dining room (mains Nkr205 to Nkr270) turns out aquavit-marinated reindeer with glazed apples and risotto flavoured with local cheese. There's a cheaper lunch menu.

Erzscheider Gården (☎ 72 41 11 94; www.erzscheidergaarden.no Spell Olaveien 6; s/d Nkr590/890; P) Cosy Erzscheider sits atop a hill, and many of the rooms have fine views across the cathedral's cemetery and the town beyond. It dates from 1780.

Idrettsparken HI Hostel (☎ 72 41 10 89; Øra 25; www.idrettsparken.no; camp sites Nkr145, dm/s/d

Nkr250/395/500, cabins s/d Nkr420/650, hotel s/d from Nkr500/650; P) Family run, this pleasant hostel occupies a modern building surrounded by football pitches. Rooms are tidy and comfortable, and some have traditional furniture.

Quality Hotel Røros (☎ 72 40 80 00; www.choicehotels.com; An-Magrittsvei; s/d from Nkr500/700; P) A 15-minute walk uphill from the train station, generic, clean rooms enjoy views over the valley and low, distant mountains. Trailheads lie nearby.

Thomasgården Kafe-Galleri (☎ 72 41 24 70; Kjergata 48; snacks Nkr35-50) For a nice read in a rustic room filled with ceramics, grab a table and enhance your experience with apple cake and coffee (Nkr35).

Trygstad's Bakeri (☎ 72 41 20 29; Kjergata 12) Enjoy great coffee and top-notch blueberry muffins in this bustling town favourite. It has outdoor seating, sandwiches and pastries.

Kaffestugu Cafeteria (☎ 72 41 10 33; Bergmannsgata 18; light meals Nkr60-85, mains Nkr100-120) This cafeteria looks like a ski lodge or a Victorian parlour, depending on where you sit.

It offers a filling range of bland Norwegian usuals.

You'll also find a **Coop supermarket**.

Getting There & Away

Trains run between Oslo (Nkr629, 5¼ hours, three or four daily) and Trondheim (Nkr270, 2½ hours, two to three daily). Buses run to Trondheim (Nkr245, three hours, two to four daily) and overnight to Oslo (Nkr470, six hours, one daily except Saturday). The Røros airport is served by Widerøe from Oslo. It's 1km from town; a taxi to it costs Nkr60.

TRONDHEIM

pop 145,000

Norway's third-largest city, beautiful Trondheim is a lively university town whose rich medieval history remains prominently visible in the centre. While you can get a feel for the city in a day, there's enough nightlife, food and charm to linger.

Trondheim was founded at the estuary of the winding Nidelva in AD 997 by the Viking king Olav Tryggvason. After a fire razed most of the city in 1681, Trondheim was redesigned with wide streets and Renaissance flair by General Caspar de Cicignon. Today, the steeple of the medieval Nidaros Domkirke is still the highest point in the city centre.

Orientation

The central part of town is on a triangular peninsula that's easy to explore on foot. The train station, bus station and coastal-steamer quay are across the canal, a few minutes walk north of the centre.

On and around **Torvet**, the central square, are a produce market, a **statue of King Olav** and the 13th-century stone church, **Vår Frue Kirke**. From Torvet there's a head-on view of the cathedral, Nidaros Domkirke, to the south.

Information

Ark Bruns Bokhandel (☎ 73 51 00 22; Kongens gate 10) Sells English-language books.

Library (Kongens gate; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat Jul-mid-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug-Jun) Peruse international newspapers. Free internet.

Main Post Office (Dronningens gate 10)

Space Bar (☎ 73 51 55 50; Kongens gate 19; ☎ 10am-2am Sun-Thu, 24hr Fri & Sat; per hr Nkr40) Provides late-night internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 73 80 76 60; www.visit-trondheim.com; Torvet; ☎ 8.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Jul-Aug, 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun mid-May-Jun, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun Sep-mid-May)

Sights

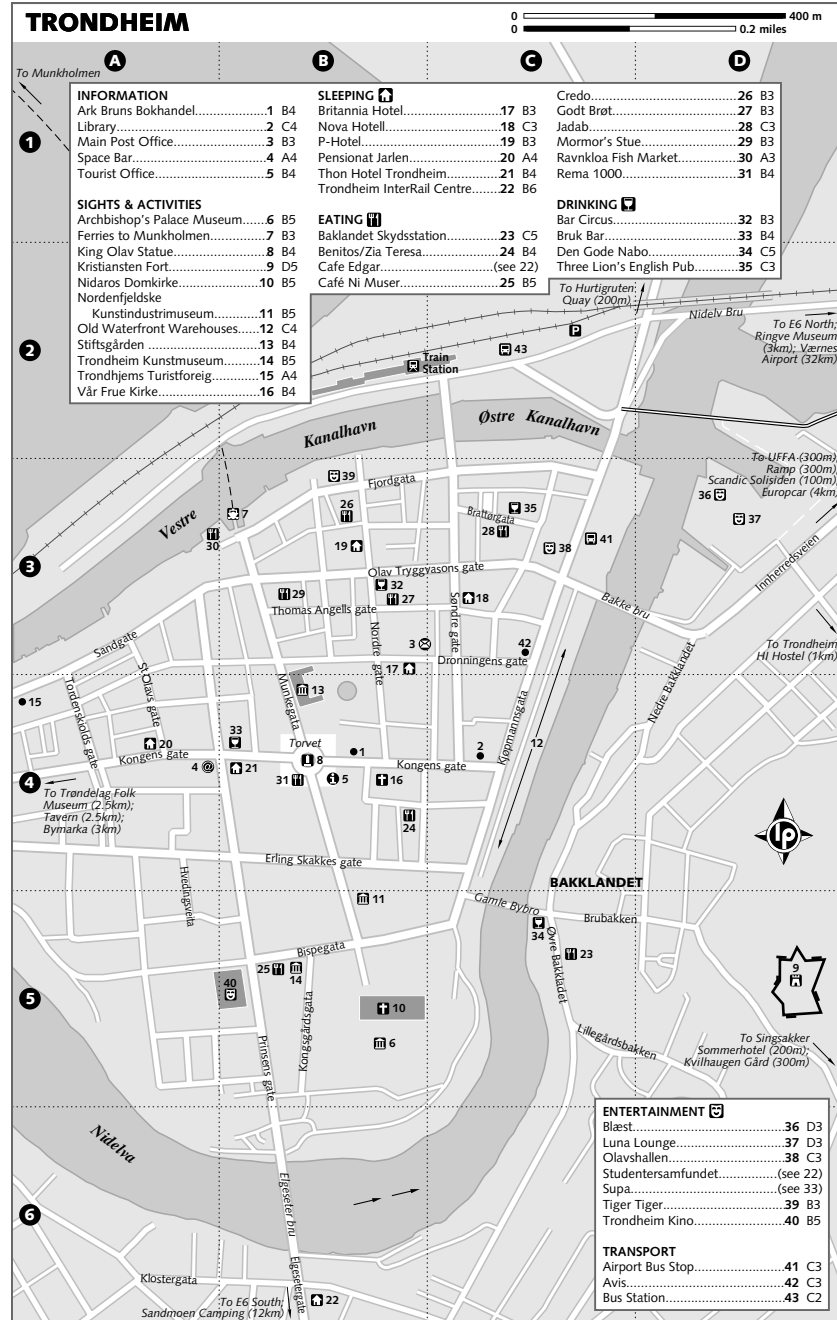
NIDAROS DOMKIRKE & ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE

The **Cathedral** (☎ 73 53 91 60; Kongsgårdsgate; adult/child Nkr50/20; ☎ from 9am Mon-Sat, 1-4pm Sun May-mid-Sep, noon-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-2pm Sat, 1-3pm Sun mid-Sep-Apr) is Trondheim's most dominant landmark and Scandinavia's largest medieval building. The oldest wing dates to the 12th century, and popular belief holds that the high altar lies precisely over the grave of St Olav, the Viking king who replaced the worship of Nordic gods with Christianity. While you may roam freely, consider attaching yourself to an informative tour (available in German, English and French). Magnificent organ recitals take place from Monday to Saturday at 1pm. From July to August, visitors can climb the cathedral tower for a splendid view of the city (Nkr5).

In addition to walking on the nave's memorial flagstones (naturally, these praise the centuries' old cadavers disintegrating below), be sure to take a gander at the Norwegian royal family's **crown jewels**. The site of coronations, Nidaros Domkirke contains three crowns, the sword of the realm and some other jewel-encrusted trinkets.

An interesting feature of the cathedral is its ornately embellished west wall, lined with statues of biblical characters and Norwegian bishops and kings. Destroyed in the 19th century, the rebuilding of this wing lasted into the 20th century. Though none of the sculptures are original, prominent Norwegian artists helped make them.

Admission includes entrance to the courtyard of the adjacent 12th-century **Archbishop's Palace**. Commissioned around 1160, it's the oldest secular building in Scandinavia. Since the palace can only be admired from the outside, the modern **museum** (☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug-mid-Jun), in the same compound, provides greater interest. It details the history of the cathedral as it underwent enlargement, modification and multiple conflagrations. Also displayed



are archaeological finds from the Archbishop's Palace, which provide a glimpse into everyday medieval life.

ART MUSEUMS

The eclectic **Nordenfjeldske Kunstindustrimuseum** (Museum of Decorative Arts; ☎ 73 80 89 50; Munkegata 5; adult/student Nkr50/25; ☹ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun late Jun-late Aug, 10am-3pm Tue-Sat, noon-4pm Sun Sep-mid-Jun) exhibits a fine collection of contemporary arts and crafts including work by Hannah Ryggen, Norway's highly acclaimed tapestry artist. **Trondheim Kunstmuseum** (☎ 73 53 81 80; Bispegata 7B; adult/student Nkr40/20; ☹ 10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-May), has a corridor of Munch's lithographs and displays Norwegian and Danish art from 1850 onward.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS & NEIGHBOURHOODS

Scandinavia's largest wooden palace, the late-baroque **Stiftsgården** (☎ 73 84 28 80; Munkegata; adult/student/child Nkr50/25/25; ☹ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun, Jun-mid-Aug) was completed in 1778 and is now the official royal residence in Trondheim. Admission is by tour only, on the hour.

The picturesque Gamble Bybro (Old Town Bridge) originally dates from 1681, but the current wooden structure was built in 1861. From it, enjoy marvellous views over the Bryggen, an amazingly intact collection of tall red, yellow, green and orange **18- & 19th-century warehouses** reflected colourfully in the calm river.

On the east side of the bridge lies Bakklandet, a neighbourhood of cobblestone streets containing cafés and plenty of revived working-class residences from the 19th century.

Puff up the hill from this neighbourhood, and there's a good view of the city from the top of the 17th-century **Kristiansten Fort** (☎ 73 99 58 31; Festningsgaten; admission free; ☹ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug). Though its buildings open only during the summer, the parklike grounds can be viewed year-round.

The **Trøndelag Folk Museum** (☎ 73 89 01 00; Sverresborg Allé; adult/student/child Nkr80/55/30; ☹ 11am-6pm Jun-Aug, 11am-3pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun Sep-May), set around the ruins of a medieval castle, is one of Norway's best open-air museums. On a hill with views over town, it

displays over 60 period buildings, including a small, 12th-century stave church (visit in winter to understand how cold, dark and miserable services must have been). Catch bus No 8 or 9 from Dronningens gate.

RINGVE MUSEUM

The **Ringve Museum** (☎ 73 87 02 80; www.ringve.no; Lade Allé 60; adult/student/child Nkr75/50/25; ☹ 11am-3pm or 5pm mid-May-mid Sep, 11am-4pm Sun mid-Sep-mid-May) is a fascinating music-history museum set in an 18th-century manor. Music students give tours, demonstrating the antique instruments on display. Take bus No 3 or 4 from Munkegaten 3km northeast of the city centre.

A lavish **botanical garden** (☎ 73 59 22 69; Lade Allé 58; admission free; ☹ 24hrs) surrounds the estate, covering 35 acres near Trondheimfjord. Some sections are strictly geometrical, modelled after Renaissance tastes. Others have sinuous, winding paths typical of 19th-century Romanticism.

Activities

A popular place to sunbathe and picnic is **Munkholmen Island**, site of an 11th-century Benedictine monastery and later converted to a prison, a fort and a customs house. From mid-May to early September, ferries (adult/child Nkr50/30 return) leave from the small harbour east of the Ravnkloa fish market.

The western side of Trondheim is bordered by the **Bymarka**, a woodland area crossed with good skiing and wilderness trails. To get there, take the tram from St Olavs gate to **Lian**, which has good city views, a bathing lake and hiking paths.

For help with wilderness skiing and hiking, contact the local DNT office, **Trondhjems Turistforeig** (☎ 73 92 42 00; Sand gate 30).

Sleeping

The tourist office books rooms in private homes, mostly on the city outskirts, averaging Nkr300/400 for singles/doubles plus a Nkr20 fee.

Sandmoen Camping (☎ 72 59 61 50; www.sandmoen.no; camp sites from Nkr130, cabins Nkr650, with shared bathroom Nkr450; ☐) The nearest camping ground is 12km south of the city on the E6. There's a bar on site. The cabins look mass-produced. Take bus No 46.

Trondheim InterRail Centre (☎ 73 89 95 38; www.tirc.no; Elgesetergate 1; dm Nkr135; ☹ mid-Jun-mid-Aug;

☒) During summer recess, university students operate this crash pad. Yeah, you'll sleep on an assortment of military cots and other hastily assembled beds with 15 to 40 others, but the place attracts lots of convivial, laid-back people and its café sometime offers backpackers specials on beer (Nkr25).

Scandic Solisiden (☎ 21 61 46 00; www.scandic-hotels.com/solisiden; Beddingen 1; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr1095/1295, s/d Sat & Sun & mid-Jun-Aug Nkr680/880; ☐ ☒ ☹) Adjacent to a sunny district of cafés and converted warehouse buildings, this good-looking green modern cube with its pleasing wooden interiors has the most and best disabled rooms in Trondheim.

Britannia Hotel (☎ 73 80 08 00; www.britannia.no; Dronningens gate 5; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr1500/1700, s/d Sat & Sun Nkr895/1095, s/d mid-Jun-Aug Nkr795/995; ☐ ☹ ☒ ☹) Trondheim's oldest (1897) hotel contains Palmehaven, a magnificent and palm-filled Moorish-revival dining hall, and the Lobby Lounge, which looks like a British men's club. Refurbished rooms upstairs attempt to evoke the aura of age.

P-Hotel (☎ 73 80 23 50; www.p-hotels.no; Nordre gate 24; s/d Nkr595/695; ☒) A recently renovated old hotel, with crisp rooms of Scandinavian design. There is no breakfast buffet, but you do get a sack with food.

Trondheim HI Hostel (☎ 73 87 44 50; trondheim.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Weidemannsvei 41; dm/s/d from Nkr215/400/500; ☐ ☒) About 2km east of the train station, this is a plain, comfortable hostel with concrete walls and small windows.

Nova Hotell (☎ 73 80 63 00; www.nova-hotell.no; Cigognons Plass; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr995/1195, s/d Sat & Sun Nkr595/765, s/d mid-Jun-Aug Nkr650/850; ☒ ☹) Finding the reception desk at this combination hotel and movie theatre requires detective work. Proceed past the ticket counter to the 4th floor. Recently refurbished rooms come with subtle herringbone wall coverings and wooden floors.

Thon Hotel Trondheim (☎ 73 88 47 88; www.thon.no/trondheim; Kongensgate 15; s/d Nkr595/795; ☒ ☹) This budget hotel occupies two buildings, a turn-of-the-century guy where rooms are carpeted and a modern box where they have wooden floors with simple, smart design. Some on the 6th floor have modest views.

Pensionat Jarlen (☎ 73 51 32 18; p-jarlen@frisurf.no; Kongens gate 40; s/d/6-person apt Nkr400/500/1200) Though barren and utilitarian (think beaten, ugly linoleum), the rooms here are clean, and contain showers and kitchen-

ettes. It's centrally located and, at time of publication, is slated for renovation.

Singsaker Sommerhotel (☎ 73 89 31 00, http://sommerhotell.singsaker.no; Rogertsgata 1; dm Nkr155, s/d Nkr485/690, s/d with shared bathroom Nkr380/550) Set on a hill amid a grassy neighbourhood of beautiful homes, sleep either privately or in a dark 12-person bunkroom. During the school year only dorm beds are available – the rest of the building becomes a student house. Linen hire is Nkr35.

Eating RESTAURANTS

Mormor's Stue (☎ 73 52 20 22; N Enkelts Killingsveile 2; mains Nkr62-97) Eat sandwiches (Nkr51), pasta and salads in a house full of lace, parlours and dusty pictures of grandma. The best but most dangerous time to visit is Sunday, when a calorifically evil cake and coffee buffet (Nkr54) ensures every seat is filled.

Tavern (Vertshuset; ☎ 73 87 80 70; Sverresborg Allé 11; mains Nkr130-270) Dating from 1739 and blessed with enormous fireplaces, the menu features items such as roast elk and a superb halibut with hazelnuts and creamed spinach. For atmosphere on a budget, eat some pancakes with jam and bacon (Nkr78).

Kvilhaugen Gård (☎ 73 60 06 60; Blussvollsbakken 40; mains Nkr195-245; ☹ from 4pm Tue-Sat, from 2pm Sun) Occupies a lovely hill-top farmstead overlooking the city. It's 300m uphill from the centre, and the traditional food is worth the trip.

Credo (☎ 73 53 03 88; Ørjaveita 4; 3-/5-course meals Nkr350/520) Original concoctions emerge from this decorated kitchen, which beautifully prepares Spanish influenced fair. A bar for the trendy is upstairs.

Benitos/Zia Teresa (☎ 73 52 64 22; Vår Frue strete 4; mains Nkr75-185) Pick between a fancy Italian trattoria or an informal pizza joint under the same, tall, moulded ceiling.

Jadab (☎ 73 52 46 00; Brattørgata 3A; mains Nkr119-195) An Indian place with a large vegetarian menu, it serves so much rice that a side of naan probably won't be needed. For the price, the food and décor are mediocre.

For cheap vegetarian meals with young activists, see **UFFA** (p356).

CAFÉS

Baklandet Skydsstation (☎ 73 92 10 44; Øvre Bakklandet 33; dishes Nkr58-169) A wood-burning stove and hearty fish soup of amazing quality

keep people warm in the winter in this old wooden home with listing floor. There's a daily meal for Nkr100.

Ramp (Strandveien at Gregus gate; dishes Nkr50-135) A neighbourhood café/bar attracting few tourists, Ramp serves 'ecological' fare (meaning organic and/or vegetarian). Eat bacon and eggs for breakfast (Nkr59) and lamb burgers or vegetarian pie for dinner. Well furnished with vintage furniture, the bohemian joint often books experimental bands and is a good place for booze. Follow E6 east. Pass the Scandic Hotel and pick up Strandveien on the left side of the rotary.

Café Edgar (☎ 73 89 95 00; Elgesetergate 1; dinner Nkr40; ☎ from 5pm Sun-Fri, from 3pm Sat) Full of students, Café Edgar prepares an amazingly low-priced daily meal. It's one of many enterprises inside the Studentersamfundet.

Café Ni Muser (☎ 73 53 63 11; Bispegata; light dishes Nkr58-95) The sunlit rooms here look onto a small plaza (on sunny days, it's a beer garden) and attract a crowd of artists and architects. It serves tuna sandwiches, quiche and cake.

QUICK EATS & SELF-CATERING

There's an open-air fruit and vegetable market on Torvet each morning, as well as a **Rema 1000** (Torvet). The **Ravnkloa fish market** (☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) provides waterside fish cakes (Nkr75) and fishermen (free). For baguette sandwiches and pastries, try **Godt Brøt** (Thomas Angells gate 16).

Drinking

Den Gode Nabo (☎ 73 87 42 40; Øvre Bakklundet) This bar occupies the lower level of an ancient warehouse. Navigating the cavernous space requires beam-dodging and careful foot placement. Inside, admire several centuries of patchwork carpentry.

Bruk Bar (☎ 73 50 37 08; Kongens gate) A dark room with podlike green chairs, candles and interesting lights illuminates a crowd with hipster hair (receding on a few heads).

Bar Circus (☎ 93 46 11 00; Norde gate 17; ☎ 8pm-2am Thu-Sun) By 11pm the line out the door becomes formidable. On our visit it contained two guys dressed like a pirate and cyborg respectively with blasé attitudes. Inside, listen exclusively to loud rock in a basement with a beer swilling young crowd.

Three Lion's English Pub (☎ 40 00 70 66; Bratøtga 10) An English pub featuring imported

beer on tap, live wide-screen international football, bar meals for around Nkr90 and lots of dark wood.

You would also do yourself a favour by drinking in Ramp, Baklandet Skysdstation or Café Edgar (see p355).

Entertainment

Studentersamfundet (☎ 73 89 95 00; Elgeseter-gate 1; ☎ from 5pm) An ideal university student centre that includes a huge maze of bars and organises an excellent calendar of film screenings, discos and cool bands. Thousands of students come on weekend nights, with numerous events occurring simultaneously. During summer recess, it's quiet.

Supa (☎ 73 50 37 08; Kongens gate; ☎ Fri & Sat) Bruk Bar's underground den books weekend DJs spinning some serious House, jungle, drum and bass or R&B for cool kids dismissive of giant clubs.

Tiger Tiger (☎ 73 53 16 06; Fjordgata 56; ☎ 10pm-3am Thu-Sat) Sweaty people wearing designer clothes enjoy this three-storey disco whose theme involves a Disney-esque combo of pretend artefacts 'from' South Africa, India and Polynesia. Very popular, with DJs catering to the masses. No cover on Thursday.

Luna Lounge (☎ 73 60 06 10; TMV Kaia 5; ☎ Fri & Sat) The sweaty might also try this smaller club featuring more sophisticated DJs. Here, the fashionably dressed try to lounge in whatever comfortable furniture they can find. Summer brings scads of outdoor seating. Small dance floor.

Blæst (☎ 73 60 01 01; TMV Kaia 17) Incongruously surrounded by yuppie restaurants in a waterfront redevelopment, Blæst occupies an old warehouse and books international and Norwegian rockers (Sivert Høyem), folk bands and black metal.

Olavshallen (Kjøpmannsgata 44) At the Olavskvartalet cultural centre, Olavshallen is the city's main concert hall, hosting performers ranging from the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra to international rock and jazz musicians.

Uffa (☎ 72 52 48 50; www.uffa.hus.org; Innherredsveien 69C; ☎ from 4pm Mon-Fri) Long ago, the Sex Pistols played in this centre for activists. It still organises monthly punk shows in a squat white house with interiors covered in graffiti. Uffa hosts many informal political meetings, and you can usually pick up a vegetarian dinner (Nkr25 to Nkr35) around

5pm. Find it east on E6 opposite a green-steeped church.

For cinema, try **Trondheim Kino** (☎ 73 80 88 00; Prinsens gate 2B).

Getting There & Away

AIR

The airport is located in Værnes, 32km east of Trondheim.

BOAT

The *Hurtigruten* docks in Trondheim.

BUS

Nor-Way Bussekspress services run to and from Ålesund (Nkr500, 7½ hours, one to three times daily), Bergen (Nkr735, 14½ hours, one to two daily), Oslo (Nkr620, nine hours, one to three daily) and Røros (Nkr245, four hours, two to four daily).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The E6, the main north-south motorway, passes west of the city centre and tolls total Nkr35, both northbound and southbound (on the Trondheim-Stjørdal section). There's also a Nkr15 toll on vehicles entering the city from 6am to 6pm from Monday to Friday.

For car rentals, there's **Avis** (☎ 73 84 17 90; Kjøpmannsgata 34) and **Europcar** (☎ 73 82 88 50; Thonning Owesens gate 36).

TRAIN

Trains go to Oslo (Nkr797, 6½ to 7½ hours, three to five daily), Bodø (Nkr924, 9¾ hours, two daily) and Røros (Nkr270, 2½ hours, two to three daily). If you're in a hurry to get north, consider taking the overnight train from Oslo, tossing your gear into a locker at the station and spending the day exploring Trondheim before continuing on an overnight train to Bodø (which, incidentally, goes through Hell).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport bus, **Flybussen** (☎ 78 82 25 00; Nkr60; 40 min), leaves from the train station, the Britannia Hotel and other hotels frequently from 5am to 8pm.

BUS

The central transit point for all city buses is the intersection of Munkegata and

Dronningens gate. The bus fare is Nkr22 (Nkr64 for a 24-hour ticket). Exact change is required.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Parking garages throughout town offer better rates and greater convenience than the krone-gobbling streetside meters.

BODØ

pop 42,000

Travellers generally use Bodø as a gateway to the Lofoten Islands and elsewhere in Nordland. Most get off their boat or train, poke around for a few hours and then get on the first ferry. Unless you've got an unusual agenda, you'll be glad to follow suit.

The city's harbour is picturesque, chock full of small fishing vessels with steep granite islands rising behind. The town, hurriedly rebuilt after thorough destruction in WWII, is not. Even so, it has good cafés and the closest thing to nightlife you'll find for hundreds of kilometres.

Information

Library (Kongens gate at Havnegata; ☎ 11am-7.30pm Mon, Tue & Thu, 11am-3pm Wed & Fri, 11am-2pm Sat) Free internet.

Ludvig's Brukbokhandel (☎ 75 52 02 99; Dronningens gate 42) Good selection of used books in English.

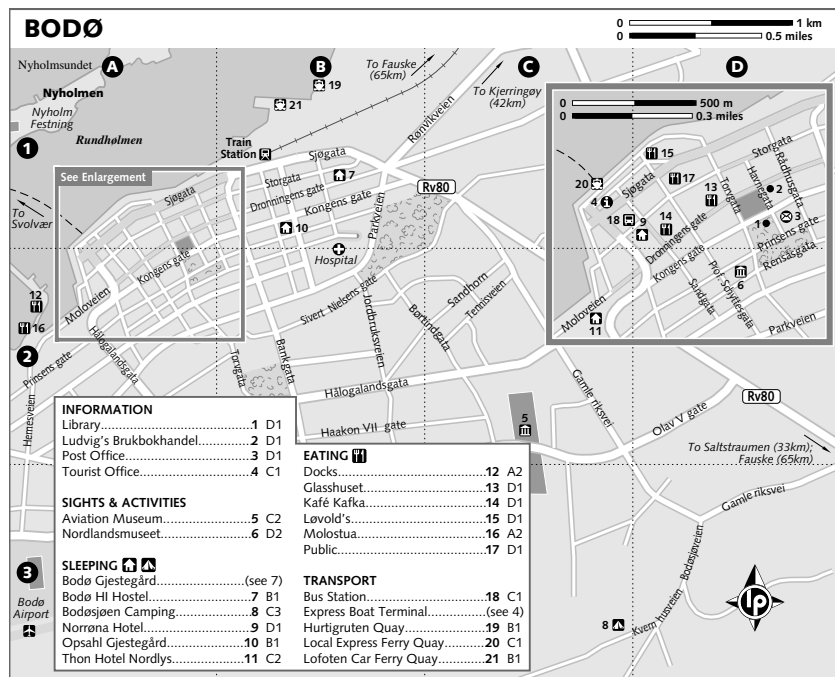
Post office (☎ 75 54 80 00; www.visitbodo.com; Sjøgata 3; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, noon-8pm Sun Jun-Aug, shorter hrs Sep-May) has internet terminals (per hour Nkr60) and the worthwhile Bodø Guide.

Sights & Activities

Nordlandsmuseet (☎ 75 52 16 40; Prinsens gate 116; adult/student Nkr35/free; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun May-Aug, shorter hrs Sep-Apr) provides cursory exhibits on Lofoten fishermen, Sami nomads and Bodø's history, much of it oriented around the tragic bombing. The **aviation museum** (☎ 75 50 78 50; Olav V's gate; adult/student Nkr75/50; ☎ 10am-7pm Sun-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun mid-Aug-mid-Jun; ☎), 2km southeast of town, appeals to children and includes some scary simulations of jet-fighter flying. Exhibits include a control tower.

Sleeping

The tourist office books private rooms from Nkr200 per person.



Bodøsjoen Camping (☎ 75 56 36 80; Kvernhusveien; camp sites from Nkr130; cabins Nkr250-500) Three kilometres from town via bus No 12, this modern camp ground offers a grassy field for tents and the grounds have fine views over water and mountain.

Bodø HI Hostel & Bodø Gjestegård (☎ 75 52 04 02 for guesthouse, ☎ 75 52 11 22 for hostel; bodo.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Storgata 90; dm/s/d Nkr150/250/350) A friendly staff operates this cluttered, clapboarded guesthouse full of small, homey rooms. A hostel occupies an adjacent building. Breakfast costs Nkr60. Bike rental is Nkr50.

Opsahl Gjestegård (☎ 75 42 07 04; Prinsensgata 90; s/d Nkr470/770; 📺) On a quiet residential street a few blocks from the centre, this white house with yellow trim comes with lots of red and floral wall coverings and mismatched furniture.

Thon Hotel Nordlys (☎ 75 53 19 00; nordlys@thonhotels.no; Moloveien 14; s/d mid-Jun-Aug Nkr620/820, s/d Sep-Jun Nkr1195/1395; 📺 📺 📺 📺 📺) Tall windows and newly finished pine floors provide the foundation for the well executed (and generic) modern design you'd expect

from a Scandinavian chain hotel. Half the rooms offer views over the water, the remainder over a parking lot.

Norrøna Hotel (☎ 75 52 55 50; norrøna.hotel@radissonsas.com; Storgata 4B; s Nkr690-860, d Nkr630-860; 📺 📺 📺 📺 📺) Plain, tidy rooms lack luxury. Most stay here because they feel the big hotel conveniences make up for rooms that won't inspire you to stay indoors.

Eating & Drinking

Kafé Kafka (☎ 75 52 35 50; Sandgata 5B; food Nkr69-139; ☎ 11am-1am Mon-Sat, 3pm-midnight Sun) Serving marinated vegetable sandwiches and light fare, this café/bar with its upholstered couches and numerous references to Prague makes for a good place to read. Bands play some weekends.

Molostua (☎ 75 2 05 30; Moloveien 9; mains Nkr85-215; ☎ from 5pm) Enjoy lots of fish at this red dockside restaurant dishing out regional specialities. It overlooks a pretty part of the harbour.

Løveld's (☎ 75 52 02 61; Tollbugata 9; dishes Nkr35-115; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) The 2nd-floor cafeteria above a fisherman's outfitter

bustles at lunch time, offering daily specials of traditional Norwegian grub to a crowd of sea dogs and old-timers. Big windows have views over the water.

Public (☎ 75 55 83 30; Sjøgata 12; ☎ 8pm-3.30am Sun-Thu, 4pm-3.30am Fri & Sat) Supersized stills from punk-rock shows line the walls of this minimalist bar with black leather stools and a good-sized evening crowd.

For inexpensive food, head to the **docks** for fresh shrimp or **Glasshuset** (Storgata 12), with a supermarket and several fast-food choices.

Getting There & Around

The airport is 2km away, with flights to Svolvær, Trondheim, Tromsø and more. Local buses (Nkr30) marked 'Sentrumstrunden' bring you to town. A taxi costs about Nkr100.

Bodø is the northern terminus of the Norwegian train network, with a service to Trondheim (Nkr924, 10 hours, twice daily). If you're continuing north by bus, be sure to get off before Bodø at Fauske. Connections to Narvik (Nkr467, six hours, twice daily) connect with the train.

The *Hurtigruten* travels to/from Lofoten, stopping in Stamsund (Nkr261, 4½ hours, one daily) and Svolvær (Nkr279, six hours, one daily). OVDs runs car ferries to Moskenes (Nkr440/140 for car and driver/passenger, 3¼ hours, five to six daily) and Hurtigbåt operates express boats to Svolvær (Nkr260, 3½ hours, one to two daily).

AROUND BODØ

The timber-built 19th-century trading station at sleepy **Kjerringøy**, by luminescent turquoise seas and soaring granite peaks 42km north of Bodø, is fantastically preserved as an **open-air museum** (☎ 75 51 12 57; www.kjerringoy.no; adult/child Nkr40/20; ☎ 11am-5pm late May-late Aug) set on a sleepy peninsula. Buses run from Bodø to Kjerringøy (Nkr82, 1½ hours, one daily). In summer, it's possible to do a return trip on the same day.

The spectacular **Saltstraumen Maelstrom**, claimed to be the world's largest, sufficiently boggles the mind. At high tide an immense volume of water violently churns its whirlpool way through a 3km-long strait that empties one fjord into another. The spectacle occurs four times daily. Consult with the **Bodø tourist office** on when to arrive.

NARVIK

pop 14,200

Welcome to what many Norwegians consider to be the country's ugliest town, a coastal city whose waterfront is obliterated by a monstrous transhipment facility, where the ore from the Kiruna mines in Swedish Lapland is off-loaded from rail cars onto ships bound for distant smelters.

While some find a kind of grotesque beauty in this industrial display, most visitors take pleasure in the ski lift just 500m from the centre, as well as the excellent hiking and skiing in the surrounding mountain landscape. Many travellers end up here because it's the terminus of a rail line from Sweden.

Orientation & Information

The train station is at the north end of town and the Lofoten express boat dock is on Havnegata, just over 1km south of the centre, down Kongens gate.

Ask the helpful **Narvik tourist office** (☎ 76 94 33 09; www.narvikinfo.no; Kongens gate 26; 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-7pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug-mid-Jun) for details of local hiking routes.

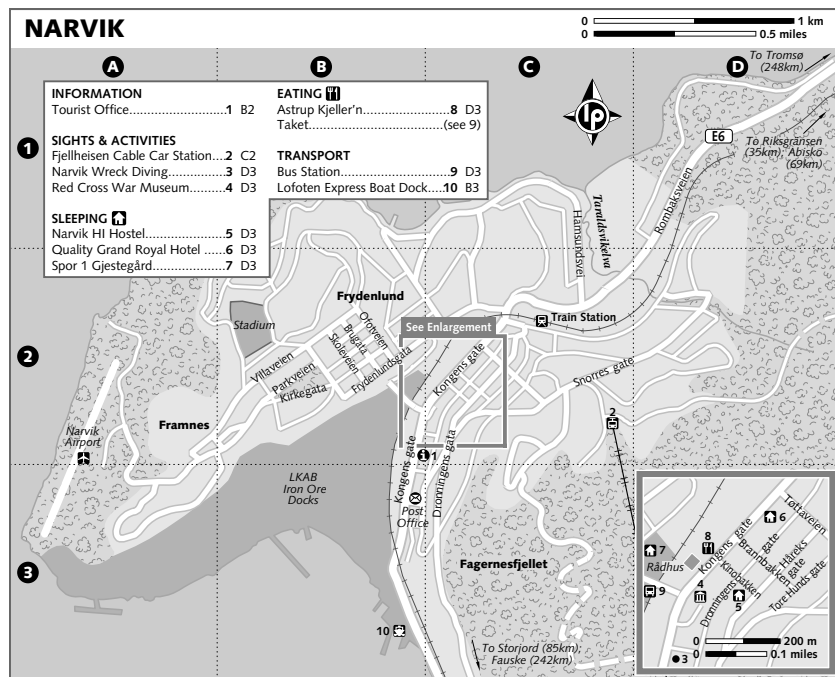
Sights & Activities

The intelligently handled exhibits at the **Red Cross War Museum** (☎ 76 94 44 26; Kongens gate; adult/child Nkr50/25; ☎ 10am-10pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 11am-3pm Mar-mid-Jun) provide a glimpse into the fierce land and naval battles that took place around the town as the Germans and the Allies fought to control the iron-ore trade.

Weather permitting, the **Fjellheisen cable car** (☎ 76 96 04 94; Mårveien; adult/child return Nkr100/60; ☎ 10am-1am mid-Jun-Jul, 1-9pm early Jun & Aug) soars 656m for breathtaking views of the midnight sun and the surrounding peaks and fjords.

During ski season, take the cable car to the largest vertical drop in Scandinavia (1000m) on one of Norway's finest downhill mountains. Speed to town while enjoying a stupendous view of the sea glistening in the near distance. Contact the tourist office for information, or see www.skiinfo.no/narvik.

Narvik Wreck Diving (☎ 76 94 41 44) can set you up with diving equipment to check out the local waters, chock-a-block with sunken ships from WWII.



Tours

Arrange sightseeing, fishing and whale-watching on several small boats with the tourist office; during the herring runs between October and December you may see orcas (killer whales). In October and November, **Tysfjord Turistsenter** (☎ 75 77 53 70; www.tysfjord-turistsenter.no/safari; Storjord; Nkr850) runs extraordinary orca-watching cruises from Storjord, about 85km south of Narvik on the E6. The Nor-Way Bussekspress bus to/from Fauske passes less than 1km from Storjord.

Sleeping & Eating

Spor 1 Gjestegård (☎ 76 94 60 20; post@spor1.no; Brugata 2; dm/s/d from Nkr160/450/500) Made for backpackers and in former rail cabins by the tracks, this place has well-kept dorm rooms, friendly hosts, a sauna and a well-equipped, clean kitchen.

Narvik HI Hostel (☎ 76 96 22 00; narvik.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Dronningens gate 58; dm/s/d Nkr170/350/450; ♿) Centrally located and sharing space with the modern Victoria Hotel, the hostel's rooms come clean and spare with

bunks and institutional flooring. Breakfast is Nkr60 extra.

Quality Grand Royal Hotel (☎ 76 97 70 00; www.choice.no; Kongens gate 64; s/d from Nkr600/800; ♿) Narvik's most luxurious hotel provides a sauna and rooms with butter-coloured walls, good views and ugly ceilings.

Astrup Kjeller'n (☎ 76 96 04 02; Kinobakken 1; mains Nkr150-225) Established in 1903, the heavy stonewalls, dim lighting and intimate nooks of this warm place serves local specialities and a superb fillet of reindeer.

Taket (☎ 76 96 34 30; AFMI shopping centre; mains Nkr70-150) By day you can suck down stir-fried noodles with good window seats. By night, the café turns into a drinking den, and on weekends, a disco.

There are several places to eat within easy walking distance of the tourist office.

Getting There & Away

Narvik's airport is served by SAS BraathensWiderøe from Bodø, Tromsø and Oslo.

Some express bus connections between Fauske and Tromsø require an overnight

break in Narvik. Nor-Way Bussekspress runs to/from Bodø (Nkr466, 6½ hours, twice daily) to/from Tromsø (Nkr340, four to five hours, one to three daily) and to/from Svolvær (Nkr433, 5½ hours, one daily).

Trains run between Narvik and Stockholm (Skr649, 20 hours, three daily) via Kiruna (Skr210, three hours, three daily). See the following Lofoten section for information on the express boat to Svolvær.

June to September, express boats sail to/from Svolvær (Nkr310, 3½ hours, one daily) from the Dampskipskaia dock on Havnegata. In winter, boats runs twice a week.

LOFOTEN

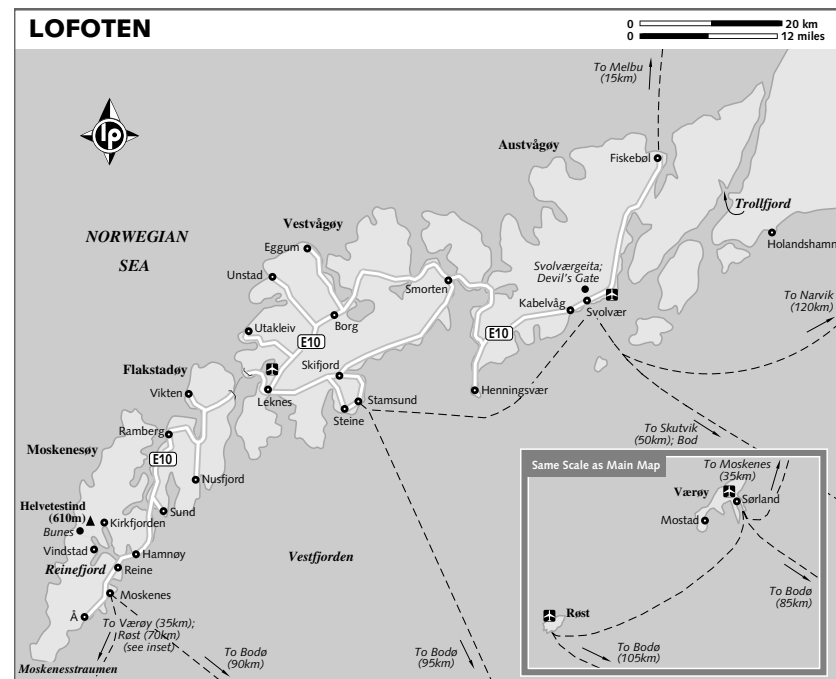
The spectacular glacier-carved mountains of Lofoten, separated from the mainland by Vestfjorden, soar straight out of the sea – from a distance they appear as an unbroken line, known as the Lofoten Wall.

Lofoten is Norway's prime winter fishing ground. The warming effects of the Gulf Stream draw spawning arctic cod from the Barents Sea south to the Lofoten waters each winter, followed by migrating north-coast

farmer-fishermen, who for centuries have drawn most of their income from seasonal fishing. Although fish stocks have dwindled greatly in recent years, fishing continues to be Lofoten's largest industry and cod is still hung outside to dry on ubiquitous wooden racks through early summer.

Many of the fishing community's *rorbuer* (winter shanties) and *sjøhus* (former fishermen's bunkhouses) have been converted into luxurious tourist accommodation. They provide some of Norway's most atmospheric places to stay.

The main islands of Austvågøy, Vestvågøy, Flakstadøy and Moskenesøy are all ruggedly beautiful. Artists are attracted by Austvågøy's light and there are art galleries in Svolvær, Kabelvåg and the busy fishing village of Henningsvær. Vestvågøy has Lofoten's richest farmland. Flakstadøy and Moskenesøy have sheltered bays and fjords, sheep pastures and sheer coastal mountains looming above strikingly picturesque fishing villages. Cyclists should be sure to try the unbelievable Kaiser Route (see p362).



The four main islands are all linked by bridges or tunnels, with buses running the entire length of the Lofoten road (E10) from Fiskebøl in the north to Å at road's end in the southwest.

Tourist information is available at www.lofoten-info.no or www.lofoten.info.

Svolvær

pop 4300

A compact town of old wooden buildings and modern concrete blocks, the principle town of Lofoten might be two notches less picturesque than its brothers, but it's still a pretty spot from which to base your explorations, with steep mountains rising sharply in the background and a busy harbour. More than other places in Lofoten, in Svolvær you'll find modern conveniences and the best of what passes for nightlife.

On the main square, you'll find a couple of banks, a taxi stand, car rental agency and the regional tourist office, **Destination Lofoten** (☎ 76 06 98 00; www.lofoten.info; Torget; ☎ 9am-9.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat, 10am-9.30pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs otherwise).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Daredevils like to scale **Svolværgeita** (the Svolvær Goat), a distinctive, two-pronged peak visible from the harbour, and then jump the 1.5m from one horn to the other – a graveyard at the bottom awaits those who miss. For phenomenal views, hikers can ascend the steep path to the base of the Goat and up the slopes behind it. There's also a rough route from the Goat over to the extraordinary **Devil's Gate**; ask the tourist office for details.

For a moving excursion, ride a boat into the **Trollfjord**, so spectacularly steep and narrow that you might just experience the kind of terror and awe associated with the romantic sublime. Tours run five times daily in high season and cost Nkr300 per person; the tourist office has details. In summertime, the Northbound **Hurtigruten** also visits and makes a stupefying three-point turn upon departure.

For 83km of breathtaking cycling, take the Narvik ferry to Holandshamn and make your way back to Svolvær along the **Kaiser Route**. Lonely shoreline, jagged mountains and abandoned farms will be your constant companion. Unlike the west side of Lofoten,

this trip takes in parts of the islands that are largely undiscovered by tourists. A long stretch runs parallel to the Trollfjord. The Danish site www.digermulen.de (no English) outlines the journey (click on Kaiseroute), and provides a glimpse of the scenery. Do your preplanning at the tourist office, where you can pick up the handy **Sykkel Guide** (Nkr120) containing topographic maps.

Also contact the tourist office in advance for help booking world-class fishing trips (Nkr400). **Svolvær Sportscenter** (☎ 76 07 58 55; Roald Amundsensgt; 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, ☎ 10am-3pm Sat) sells biking, fishing and hiking gear and rents quality wheels (Nkr185 a day). For a reasonable surcharge, cycle one-way and they'll pick up your rental.

SLEEPING & EATING

Svolvær Sjøhuscamping (☎ 76 07 03 36; www.svolver-sjohuscamp.no; Parkgata 12; r Nkr440-490) On stilts sticking and projecting over the water, this 100-year-old house has small rooms with bunks and pleasant views. Guests share bathrooms and a kitchen. Turn right on the first road past the library.

Skarheim Sjøhus Svolvær (☎ 76 07 18 33; www.skarheim-sjohus.no; s/d Nkr350/490) An immaculate private house with a dock and cosy social space, rooms come with bunks and are set on a small cove. Some have private kitchens, others share facilities. It's about 1km from the centre. Follow E10 towards the airport.

Rica Hotel Svolvær (☎ 76 07 22 22; rica.hotel.svolvar@rica.no; Lamholmen; s/d Nkr795/995; P ☎ ☎) Perched on a pier and hovering over the water, this flamboyant place combines modern hotel comforts with nifty *rorbuer* styling. One suite has a hole cut in the floor for indoor fishing.

Bacalao (☎ 76 07 94 00; Kirkegata; mains Nkr70-125) For a minimalist café/bar in a room that feels like a retro-fitted garage, head over to this hang-out for fishermen and students. On the menu are salads, club sandwiches and pasta with reindeer.

Du Verden (☎ 76 07 70 99; JE Paulengate 12; dinner mains Nkr160-265) For inventive fish concoctions by an award-winning chef (halibut over cheesy risotto and squash), head to this modern, romantic room with tones of light wood and soft grey, contrasting with bright oil abstracts.

Kjøkkenet (☎ 76 06 64 66; Lamholmen; mains Nkr195-250) For excellent traditional fare, this

kitchen turns out cod tongues, cured cod with crunchy bits of fat and boiled vegetables, and grilled cod neck. The dining room with its old fireplace looks like grandma's house. There's a dark pub next door.

There's a **bakery** near the square and a **Rimi supermarket** (Torggata) a block inland.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Svolvær has a small airport (4km from town) where you can catch Widerøe flights to Bodø.

Buses to/from Vesterålen travel between Svolvær and Sortland (Nkr150, 3¼ hours, three or four daily). Buses to Leknes (Nkr120, two hours, three to six daily) make connections to Å (Nkr205, 3½ hours, two to four daily), stopping at points west. The Narvik-Lofoten Ekspressen runs between Svolvær and Narvik (Nkr410, eight to 9¼ hours, one to two daily).

OVD's express boats ply the waters between Svolvær and Bodø (Nkr260, 3½ hours) and Narvik (Nkr300, 3½ hours), daily except Saturday (but there's no Monday sailing from Svolvær to Narvik).

Svolvær is also a stop for the **Hurtigruten**.

Kabelvåg

If you got off the boat and thought Svolvær's blend of traditional and modern wasn't cute enough, this pleasing village lies only 5km west and is connected by the E10 and a paved walking trail. Narrow channels lined with old warehouses lead to the circular cobbled wharf, whose pattern of paving recalls the hulls of small fishing boats themselves docked in the channel.

Behind the old prison, a trail leads uphill to the **statue of King Øystein**, who in 1120 ordered the first *rorbu* to be built to house fishermen who had been sleeping under their overturned rowing boats – not just a kind gesture, as the tax on the exported dried fish was the main source of the king's revenue.

Some of these original *rorbuer* have been excavated as part of the **Lofotmuseet** (☎ 76 06 97 90; www.lofotmuseet.no; Storvågan; adult/student Nkr50/40; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug-mid-Jun), a regional history museum on the site of the first town in the polar regions.

Nearby, the seafront **Lofoten Aquarium** (☎ 76 07 86 65; Storvågan; adult/student/child Nkr80/60/40;

☎ 10am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-3pm mid-Aug-Nov & Feb-mid-Jun) shows you some of the personalities which made Lofoten great, including the heroic cod and some harbour seals in an outdoor tank. You can eat their relatives in the museum café (not the seals).

The **Kabelvåg HI Hostel** (☎ 76 06 98 98; kabelvaag.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; dm/s/d Nkr245/405/605; ☎ Jun-mid-Aug; P) is at a school 1km north of the village centre. Dorms have two, four and ten beds and there's a cafeteria with sporadic opening hours. The **Kabelvåg Hotel** (☎ 76 07 88 00; kabelvaag@dvgl.no; s/d Nkr855/1210; ☎ mid-May-mid-Aug) lies in the centre of town. The original wooden beauty was destroyed by fire in 1995 and has since been convincingly rebuilt with an attractive Art Deco bar.

Sandvika Fjord og Sjøhuscamp (☎ 76 07 81 45; www.sandvika-camping.no; bike/car sites Nkr90/120; cabins Nkr500-1200), 3km and two inlets west of Kabelvåg, sits near the head of a rocky peninsula with good views. Tent sites are few and small, set on grassy patches a bit removed from the RVs. There's a cafeteria on site.

The charming fish, sandwich and pizza pub **Præstenbrygga** (☎ 76 07 80 60; Torget; mains Nkr35-140; ☎ from 11am), affiliated with an outdoor school for college-types and other students, is in the village centre. It often books live music.

From Svolvær you can walk the 5km to Kabelvåg or catch one of the roughly hourly buses (Nkr26, 10 minutes).

Henningsvær

pop 470

Picturesque buildings of red and white crowd the narrow channel that bisects this village, with cod racks perched in the background and fishing boats wherever space allows.

While Henningsvær's nickname, the 'Venice of Lofoten', is a tad overblown, few people would disagree that this bohemian enclave and active fishing village is the brightest and trendiest place in the archipelago. Especially on weekends, the outdoor seating at the waterside bars and restaurants is ideal for observing the lively scene. There are also a couple of **art galleries** and a climbing school.

The climbing school's **Den Siste Viking** (☎ 76 07 49 11; www.nordnorskklatteskoole.no in Norwegian; Mislørveien 10; dm Nkr180) crosses a Lofoten

rorbuer with an English pub and a Himalayan trekkers' lodge. Its **Klatrekafeen** (☎ 11am-1am) serves up a small selection of homemade light meals (Nkr75 to Nkr130) and snacks, as well as coffee and desserts. It books some of Lofoten's best music gigs.

In summer, **Johs Giær Sjøhus og Rorbuer** (☎ 76 07 47 19; www.giaever-rorbuer.no; Hellandsgata 790; rorbuer Nkr500-1050; r Nkr400-600; w) lets out workers' accommodation in a modern house on the harbour belonging to the local fish plant. Spruce wood-panels rooms share kitchen and bathrooms. It also has three *rorbuer*.

Henningsvær Bryggehotel (☎ 76 07 47 50; booking@henningsvaer.dvlg.no; Hjellskjæret; s/d from Nkr1050/1200; ☎) abuts the harbour with modern rooms furnished in contemporary stylings. There's a rack of rods by the door if you'd like to catch something.

Buses shuttle between Svølvær (Nkr40, 35 minutes), Kabelvåg (Nkr38, 30 minutes) and Henningsvær two to eight times daily.

Lofotr Vikingmuseum

This 83m-long chieftain's hall, Norway's largest Viking building, has been excavated at Borg, near the centre of Vestvågøy. The **museum** (☎ 76 08 49 00; adult/student/child Nkr90/70/45; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-May-Aug, 1-3pm Fri Sep-Apr) offers an insight into life in Viking times, complete with a scale-model reconstruction of the building, guides in Viking costume and a replica Viking ship, which you can row daily at 2pm (Nkr20).

Stamsund

pop 1000

The traditional fishing village of Stamsund makes a fine destination largely because of its dockside hostel, a magnet for travelers who sometimes stay for weeks on end. Here, as elsewhere on Lofoten, highlights include hiking and fishing. A popular town activity is to stare at the *Hurtigruten*'s approach.

The wonderful old beach house **Justad HI Hostel/Rorbuer** (☎ 76 08 93 34; fax 76 08 97 39; dm/s/d Nkr115/250/300, cabins Nkr600-800; ☎ mid-Dec-mid-Oct; Ⓟ), 1.2km from the quay, attracts many repeat customers drawn by the waterside building, friendly manager (ask about hiking routes) and free loans of fishing gear and row boats. Bike rentals cost Nkr80 to Nkr100 per day.

The village centre contains a supermarket and the **Skæbrygga** (fish mains Nkr150-175) bar and restaurant and little else.

The *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer stops en route between Bodø (Nkr398, 4½ hours) and Svølvær (Nkr132, 1½ hours). In July and August, buses from Leknes to Stamsund (Nkr30, 25 minutes) run up to eight times daily, less often on Saturday and Sunday.

Reine & Hamnøy

The delightful village of Reine, on the island of Moskenesøy, is on a calm bay backed by ranks of mountain cliffs and pinnacles. With its almost fairy-tale setting, it's easy to see the reasons why the village has been voted the most scenic place in all of Norway. Aside from eating some fish, however, the town is pretty deadsville.

For an exceptional panorama of the lagoon, town and island, hike up the precipitous track to Reinebringen (670m), which starts at the tunnel entrance 1.2km south of the Reine turnoff from the E10 and climbs very steeply to the ridge (448m). Experienced hikers can continue to the peak and then drop steeply down a very exposed route to the col of Navaren and on to Navaren's summit (730m).

In summer, ferries run from Reine to **Vindstad** (Nkr64 return, 40 minutes) through the scenic Reinefjord. From Vindstad, it's a one-hour hike over a ridge to the abandoned settlement of **Bunes** on the other side of the island, with a magnificent beach, vast quantities of driftwood and the 610m-high cliff of **Helvetestind**. Here you'll find some extremely basic camping.

The family run **Hamnøy Mat og Vinbu** (☎ 76 09 21 45; Hamnøy; mains Nkr130-165; ☎ May-Sep) restaurant serves stellar local specialities, including *bacalao* (dried and salted cod), cod tongues, and other fish dragged from the nearby harbour. There's a deck with picnic tables and a cosy dining room.

There's a Coop supermarket in Reine.

All buses from Leknes to Å stop in Reine.

Å

Å is a very special place. It's a preserved fishing village perched on forbidding rocks connected by wooden footbridges. It's shoreline is lined with red-painted *rorbuer*, many of which jut into the sea. Racks of

drying cod and picture-postcard scenes occur at almost every turn. Visitors enliven the tiny place in summer, while in winter it's stark, haunting and empty.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The **Tørrefiskmuseum** (Stockfish Museum; ☎ 76 09 12 11; adult/student Nkr40/25; ☎ 10am-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 11am-5pm Mon-Fri early Jun & late Aug, otherwise by appointment), inside a cod plant dating from 1920, details the history of the stockfish industry, taking in every step from catching to cooking. Steinar Larson, the gregarious operator, has long family ties to Å, and explains everything cod (and Å) in excited detail.

Many of Å's 19th-century buildings are set aside as the **Norwegian Fishing Village Museum** (☎ 76 09 14 88; admission Nkr40; ☎ 10am-5pm late Jun-late Aug, 11am-3pm Mon-Fri Sep-mid-Jun), complete with old boats and boathouses, a bakery from 1844, Europe's oldest cod-liver oil factory and storehouses.

Walk to the camping ground at the end of the village for a good hillside view of Værøy Island, which lies on the other side of **Moskenesstraumen**, the swirling maelstrom that inspired the fictional tales of, among others, Jules Verne and Edgar Allan Poe.

SLEEPING & EATING

Moskenesstraumen Camping (☎ 76 09 13 44; camp sites from Nkr60, huts Nkr300-500; Ⓟ) This basic campground lies at the south end of Å near an oceanside cliff. Paths and sites wind around granite boulders that seem to erupt from the ground.

Å HI Hostel (☎ 76 09 11 21; www.lofoten-rorbuer.com; dm Nkr175, rorbuer Nkr800-1550; Ⓟ) The hostel has accommodation in some of the museum's historic seaside buildings that form the picturesque centre of town. Breakfast is Nkr60 extra.

Å-Hamna Rorbuer (☎ 76 09 12 11; www.lofotenferie.com/dm/d Nkr100/350, rorbuer Nkr600-950; Ⓟ) Also at the museum, this inviting place is run by a crazy guy who knows way too much about stockfish. Pleasant dorms come with a pretty communal space in a restored 1860s home. Cosy wooden *rorbu*, perched magnificently on the rocks, contain four to eight beds each. Off-season you can get the best *rorbuer* for around Nkr350, firewood included.

Brygga restaurant (☎ 76 09 11 21; mains Nkr170-210; ☎ Jun-Sep) The village's only restaurant

cantilevers dramatically over the water and serves fantastic fish. It also serves a vegetarian plate and is a great place to drink beer.

Self-caterers can also buy fresh fish from local fishers and pick up other supplies at the small food shop behind the hostel office.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Nordtrafikk runs one to three daily buses from Å to Leknes (Nkr107, 1¾ hours), Svølvær (Nkr200, ¾ hours) and Sortland (Nkr312 plus Nkr30 for a ferry, 5¼ hours).

OVDs runs car ferries from Bodø to Moskenes (Nkr440/140 car and driver/passenger, 3½ hours, five to six daily in high season, less during low season), 5km north of Å. Some of these ferries run via Værøy and Røst.

Værøy & Røst

pop 1400

Lofoten's southern islands of Værøy and Røst have some of the finest **bird watching** in Norway, with large colonies of fulmars, guillemots, kittiwakes and terns. There are puffins as well, but the population has dropped by more than 50% in the past decade as a result of dwindling stocks of herring, the main food source for puffin chicks.

Craggy high and rugged, Værøy has only 775 people, but 100,000 nesting sea birds. **Hiking trails** take in some of the more spectacular sea-bird rookeries. The main trail goes along the west coast, beginning about 300m past the island's airstrip, and continues south all the way to the virtually deserted fishing village of Mostad, passing by steep cliffs, sandy beaches and isolated settlements. This 10km hike makes for a full day's outing and is not too strenuous, but it's exposed to the elements, so is best done in fair weather.

Røst, south of Værøy, enjoys one of the mildest climates in northern Norway, thanks to its location in the middle of the Gulf Stream. Access to the best bird-watching requires a boat, as the largest rookeries are on offshore islands. **Kårøy Sjøhus** (☎ 76 09 62 38; rt-finni@online.no) can arrange all-day boat trips (Nkr250) that cruise past major sea-bird colonies and stop at an 1887 **lighthouse** and a vista point. En route it's common to see seals and there are

occasional sightings of orcas. Røst itself is pancake flat and, other than the boat trip, there's not much to do.

The **tourist office** (☎ 76 09 52 10; 🕒 10am-3pm Mon-Sat mid-Jun-mid-Aug) is 200m from the ferry landing at Sørland.

SLEEPING & EATING

Preste Gården (☎ 76 09 54 11; www.pretegaarden.no; Nordland; s/d with shared bathroom Nkr475/690, s/d Nkr400/600) Sleep in an old vicarage next to little onion-domed church in a knotty pine attic or cosy turf-roofed cottage with ocean out front and cliff behind. It's the large house with the flagpole.

Kornelius Kro (☎ 76 09 52 99; korn-kro@online.no; Sørland; r Nkr350-700) Værøy's only nightlife option also has a restaurant, a pub and a few simple but clean cottages out the back. Check out the wood-fired seawater hot tub.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

OVDS ferries run from Bodø to Værøy (Nkr121, four to six hours, one to two daily except Sunday) before continuing to Røst. There are fewer in the low season. A local ferry (☎ 94 80 31 15) provides addition summer service between Værøy, Røst and Moskenes.

VESTERÅLEN

The islands of Vesterålen aren't quite as dramatic as Lofoten, but they're still very attractive to visitors. For tourist information, consult **Vesterålen Reiseliv** (☎ 76 11 14 80; www.vistivesteralen.com; Kjøpmannsgata 2, Sortland).

Vesterålen is connected by ferry from Melbu on Hadseløya to Fiskebøl on Austrvågøy (Lofoten). Melbu has a couple of **museums** and a famous **music festival**, featuring classical, jazz and blues, every July. The other main town, **Stokmarknes**, is a quiet market community best known as the birthplace of the *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer.

Nyksund (www.nyksund-info.com) on Langøya is a former abandoned fishing village that's now re-emerging as an artists' colony. There's a great **walk** over the headland from Nyksund to Stø (three hours return), at the northernmost tip of Langøya. Ask the tourist office for details of **whale-watching tours** from Stø.

Andenes on Andøy seems a long way from anywhere, but there's whale-watching,

a whale centre, a natural history centre, a lighthouse and a couple of museums. **Whale Safari** (☎ 76 11 56 00; www.whalesafari.no) runs popular three- to five-hour whale-watching cruises from the whale centre between late May and mid-September. Trips depart at least once daily (at 10.30am) and cost Nkr695. Sightings of sperm whales are guaranteed, or your next trip is free. Dress warm.

Sleeping & Eating

Holmvik Brygge (☎ 76 13 47 96; www.nyksund.com; Nyksund; s/d Nkr300/500) Offers irregular but cosy rooms done up like those in an old fisherman's house. Facilities are shared.

Andenes HI Hostel (☎ 76 14 28 50; andenes.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Havnegata 31, Andenes; dm/s/d Nkr150/215/325; 🕒 Jun-Aug; 📍) The hostel occupies the Lankanholmen Sjøhus, a wonderful old timber-frame building by the sea; breakfast is Nkr60 extra.

Den Gamle Fyrmesterbolig (☎ 76 14 10 27; Richard Withs gate 11, Andenes; s Nkr250-350, d from Nkr300; 📍) So charming that you need to book far in advance, this lighthouse keepers' cottage has four rooms adjacent to the seaside beacon.

There's a bakery and an informal café at the Andenes whale centre, while the restaurant at the Norlandia Hotel serves a good Arctic menu.

Getting There & Away

Sortland is the main transport hub in Vesterålen. Both Sortland and Stokmarknes are stops for the *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer.

Nordtraffik buses from Leknes (Nkr270, four hours) stop in Sortland and continue to Narvik (Nkr200, three hours), with stops in Svolvær (Nkr150, two hours).

In summer, buses connect Sortland with Andenes (Nkr130, two hours, one to four days) via Risøyhamn.

TROMSØ

pop 52,000

Tromsø, at latitude N69°40', is the world's northernmost university town. In contrast to some of the more sober communities dotting the north coast of Norway, Tromsø is a spirited place with street music, cultural happenings and more pubs per capita than any other Norwegian town – it even has its own brewery.

A backdrop of snowcapped peaks provides spectacular scenery, excellent hiking in summer and skiing and dogsledding from September to April. Many polar expeditions have departed from Tromsø, earning the city the nickname 'Gateway to the Arctic'. A statue of explorer Roald Amundsen, who headed some of the expeditions, stands in a little square down by the harbour.

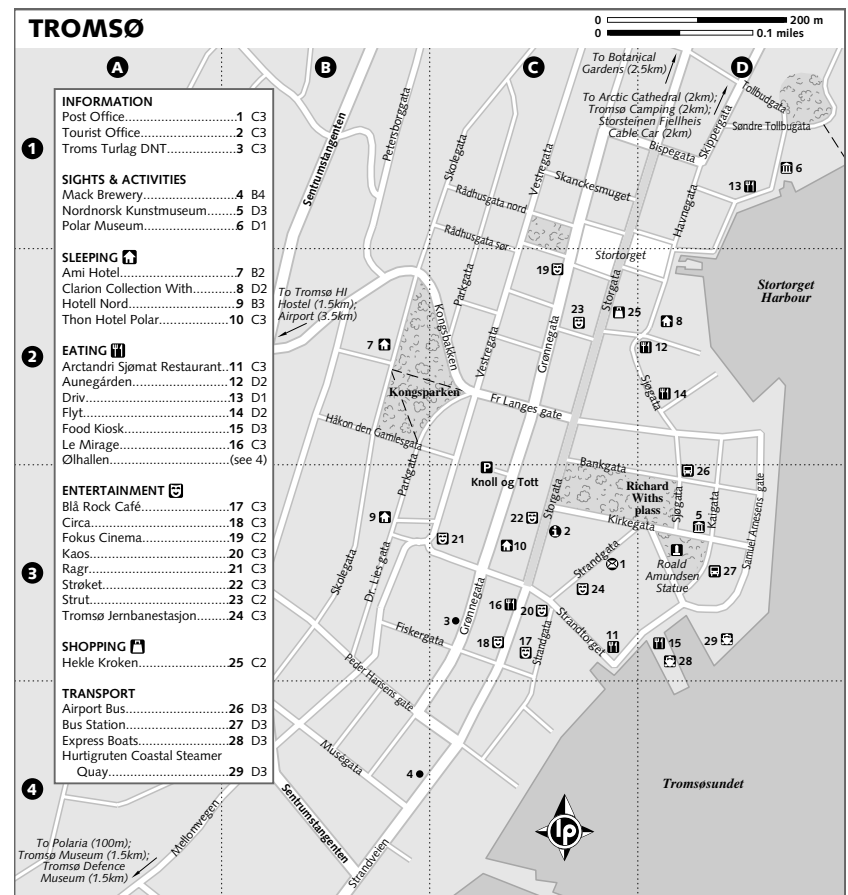
Orientation & Information

Tromsø's city centre and airport are on the island of Tromsøya, which is linked by bridges to overspill suburbs on both the mainland and the much larger outer island Kvaløya. Storgata is the principal drag.

The **tourist office** (☎ 77 61 00 00; www.destinasjon tromsø.no; Kirkegata 2; 🕒 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-5pm Sat & Sun Jun-mid-Aug, 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug-May) is particularly knowledgeable and attentive. Send or collect your mail from the main **post office** (Strandgata 41). For maps, hiking info and cabin reservation, visit **Troms Turlag DNT** (☎ 77 68 51 75; www.turistforening.no; Grønnegata 32; 🕒 10am-2pm Tue-Wed & Fri, 10am-6pm Thu).

Sights & Activities

Tromsø's daringly designed museum of the Arctic **Polaria** (☎ 77 75 01 00; Hjalmar Johansens gate 12; adult/child Nkr80/40; 🕒 10am-7pm mid-May-mid-Aug, noon-5pm mid-Aug-mid-May; 📍) presents panoramic films on Svalbard (caution: these



inspire spontaneous and expensive trips to the remote icy netherworld), an aquarium with Arctic fish and cohort of bearded seals.

Northern Norway's largest museum, **Tromsø Museum** (☎ 77 64 50 00; www.imv.uit.no; Lars Thøringssvei 10; adult/child Nkr30/15; ☎ 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, shorter hr Sep-May, ♿) simulates the Northern Lights for visitors currently experiencing the midnight sun. It also presents some well-done displays on Arctic wildlife, Sami culture and regional history. Take bus No 28.

Occupying a restored artillery battery with six big Nazi guns, the **Tromsø Defence Museum** (☎ 77 62 88 36; Solstrandveien; adult/child Nkr30/15; ☎ noon-5pm Wed-Sun Jun-Aug, noon-5pm Sun May & Sep) includes a former ammunition store with an exhibition on the 52,600-tonne German battleship *Tirpitz*, sunk by British air forces at Tromsø in 1944.

Established in 1877, **Mack Brewery** (☎ 77 62 45 00; www.mack.no in Norwegian; Storgata 5; tours Nkr100; ☎ tours at 1pm) produces Mack's Pilsner, Isbjørn, Haakon and several dark beers; the tour fee includes a beer stein, pint and souvenir. You can smell it from a block away. For more information, see opposite.

In addition to exhibits of contemporary paintings, sculpture and applied art, check out **Nordnorsk Kunstmuseum** (Art Museum of Northern Norway; ☎ 77 64 70 20; Sjøgata 1; adult/student/child Nkr30/20/20; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun; ♿) with its fine collection of 19th-century landscape paintings, which reveal what the far north looked like 150 years ago.

Ever wondered how to skin a polar bear? Want to see a creepy wax figures with dead, zombie eyes whack a baby seal? Such wonders await you inside the low-ceiling warehouse of the **Polar Museum** (☎ 77 68 43 73; Søndre Tollbugata 11; adult/student/child Nkr50/45/10; ☎ 10am-7pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug-mid-Jun; ♿), as well as artefacts from polar explorations conducted from Tromsø.

Take a midnight sun stroll through the **botanical garden** (☎ 77 64 50 78; Breivika; admission free; ☎ 24hr), which blooms brightly despite its northern locale. Take bus No 20.

You can get a fine city view by taking the **Storsteinen Fjellheis** (☎ 77 63 87 37; Solliveien 12; adult/child return Nkr70/30; ☎ 10am-5pm Apr-Sep), a cable car that runs up the 420m Mt Storsteinen from where a network of trails radiate. Take bus No 26 from Stortorget harbour. It's open to 1am on clear nights when the midnight sun is in view.

Festivals & Events

The **Tromsø International Film Festival** (☎ 77 75 30 90; www.tiff.no), in mid-January, perhaps the most exciting of Norway's film festivals. Every screening is packed both by locals and A-list types excited to have major screenings in such an exotic place. Check out movies from northern Norway and the Baltic countries, forgotten classics, weird shorts, American independents and more.

TIL (☎ 77 66 38 00; www.til.no) services the town's football mania in a small stadium. Team members have received yellow cards for throwing snowballs. Buy tickets at the Fokus Cinema (opposite).

Sleeping

Tromsø Camping (☎ 77 63 80 37; www.tromsøcamping.no; camp sites Nkr150, 2-/4-bed cabins from Nkr400/500; ♿) Some spots lie next to a small river, others have leafy pitches. It's on the mainland, 2km east of the Arctic Cathedral. Cabins have cooking facilities. Take bus No 26.

Clarion Collection With (☎ 77 68 70 00; www.with.no; Sjøgata 35-37; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr1100/1300, s/d mid-Jun-Aug & Sat & Sun year-round Nkr845/1400; ♿) A waterfront modern building that mirrors the old warehouses on either side, Head straight upstairs to the glass-roofed relaxation deck. Rooms are comfy and hallways have pictures of sea captains.

Ami Hotel (☎ 77 68 22 08; www.amihotel.no; Skolegata 24; s/d Nkr550/650, s/d with shared bathroom Nkr450/590; ♿) Ami's plain rooms vary in quality: some are bright and cheery, others worn and drab with bathrooms that look like utility closets. Guests share kitchens and the staff are consistently helpful.

Hotell Nord (☎ 77 68 31 59; www.hotellnord.no; Parkgata 4; s/d from Nkr400/550; ♿) Up on the hillside just west of the centre, this informal guesthouse offers plain rooms, a few of which peak nicely over the city below. Many of them share bathrooms.

Thon Hotel Polar (☎ 77 68 64 80; www.thonhotels.n/polar; Grønnegata 45; s/d Nkr595/795; ♿) This budget hotel with its geometric blue carpeting and chipboard furniture with too-red finish sits adjacent to Tromsø's loudest disco.

Tromsø HI Hostel (☎ 77 65 76 28; tromsø.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Åsgårdveien 9; dm/s/d Nkr170/300/400; ☎ mid-Jun-mid-Aug; ♿) Student accommodation most of the year, this concrete tower has clean bunk-bed rooms. It's 1.5km west of the city centre. Take bus 26.

Eating & Drinking

Aunegården (☎ 77 65 12 34; Sjøgata 29; dishes Nkr118-135, cake Nkr63; ☎ 10.30am-midnight, 1pm-midnight Sun) Serving amazing cakes (try the chocolate truffle with meringue and syrupy hazelnut crust), this café operates out of a former general store from 1830. It makes salads out of greens that are actually green! There's lots of wine and intimate spaces.

Arctandria Sjømat Restaurant (☎ 77 60 07 25; Strandtorget 1; mains Nkr195-260; ☎ from 4pm) Near the harbour and festooned with nautical instruments, this pretty room with white stucco walls and big overhead beams serves an Arctic menu that includes monkfish and reindeer steaks.

Driv (☎ 77 60 07 76; Tollbugata 3; dishes Nkr75-117) This student culture house occupies an old warehouse and serves pizzas and big burgers with great chips. They also books bands, programs events such as the Fucking North Pole Festival (a music and culture festival organised by students) and often serves as a disco. A student ID earns you discounted beer (Nkr42) and 15% off food. Harbour-side hot tub in winter.

Knoll og Tott (☎ 77 66 68 80; Storgata 62; sandwich Nkr55; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) Filling, large sandwiches come on warm baguettes. Take your pick from pepperoni and brie, vegetable (many toppings tasted canned), roast beef and more in a two-storey place with warm yellow walls.

Flyt (☎ 77 69 68 00; Sjøgata 25; dishes Nkr119-159) In a city that sucks for vegetarians, the veggie burger at this café is a tear-jerking find. Otherwise, you'll find the usual meaty light meals. Some nights it turns into a disco with pillows on the floor and a clientele of climbers and guides.

Le Mirage (☎ 77 68 52 34; Storgata 42; mains Nkr79-159; ☎ from 11am) Brown overstuffed faux-leather chairs are the dominant feature in this trendy café/bar long favoured by Tromsø's fashionably dressed. Not loud, it's a good place for conversation. Most use it for the drinks, less for the eats.

Ølhallen (Storgata 4; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Wed, 9am-6pm Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) Try Tromsø's own Mack beer at pubs, cafés or here, next to the brewer. It makes up for its pathetic hours with old brick walls and décor from the 1920s. Stuffed polar bears greet visitors by the door, as do drunk guys.

Tromsø's fast-food scene is led by various kebab carts, and a food kiosk at the express boat dock. You can buy fresh boiled shrimp from fishing boats at Stortorget harbour. There are several bakeries.

Entertainment

Tromsø enjoys a thriving nightlife, with many arguing that it's the best scene in Norway. On Friday and Saturday, most nightspots stay open past 4am. Many also serve light meals. See Driv (left) for a student hang-out.

Kaos (☎ 77 63 59 99; Strandgata 22) Hidden in a low-ceiled basement with exposed beams and ripped up brick walls, this cool hangout attracts arthouse DJs and bands. They only let 90 people inside, so show up early. Beer costs Nkr30 before midnight.

Blå Rock Café (☎ 77 61 00 20; Strandgata 14) Live bands and DJs (playing rock, naturally) cause hearing damage in a black-coloured club with Elvis pinball and 50 kinds of beer spilling on the floor. Excellent burgers.

Strøket (☎ 77 68 44 00; Storgata 46) Packed and sweaty on weekends, the three levels of this large disco attracts a young crowd (in May, this means every *Russ* in the city) with its pop dispensing DJs. The 3rd floor allows a view over the masses.

Ragr (Vestregata 1) The name of Tromsø's queer hang-out comes from Old Norse and shouldn't be translated for fear of making some readers blush. Not a pick-up joint, it's an elegant room of warm woods and some enviable green velvet couches.

C (Storgata 36) Crowded C attracts a broad range of ages – from 19-year-old art students to a mature set with greying hair and sophisticated glasses – with talented weekend DJs and no cover. By day it's a pleasant café.

Strut (☎ 77 68 49 06; Grønnegata 81) Downstairs looks like a pub with pool tables and a piano man singing 'Sweet Home Alabama' (why?). Upstairs is a slicker '70s-inspired disco with a small dance floor and lots of people dressed to look good.

Tromsø Jernbanestasjon (☎ 77 61 23 48; Strandgata 33; ☎ 11am-2am) A brown bar whose name means 'Tromsø's Railway Station', and supports some serious drinking. It's filled with railway artefacts, but the unspoken joke is that this remote city was never even close to being connected by rail.

For films, the six-screen **Fokus Cinema** (☎ 77 75 63 00; Rådhusgata 2) does the job.

Shopping

Hekle Kroken (☎ 77 68 17 89; Storgata 91; ☞ from 11am Mon-Sat) A knitting store selling yarn and pattern books, this shop is mostly frequented by locals. It sometimes sells a limited selection of handmade mittens and sweaters a notch cooler (and more expensive) than the mass-produced stuff (also on hand).

Getting There & Away

Tromsø is the main airport hub for northern Norway, with direct flights to Oslo, Bergen, Bodø, Trondheim, Alta, Hammerfest, Kirkenes and Longyearbyen.

Express buses run to Alta (Nkr460, 6½ hours, one daily), and to Narvik (Nkr360, 4½ hours, three daily), some of them timed to continue to Bodø. The bus to Narvik also has a timed connection to Svølvær, though you can save some time by taking a **TFDS** (☎ 77 64 81 00) ferry to Harstad (Nkr430, 1½ hours, two daily) and then bussing to Svølvær (Nkr265, five hours).

The *Hurtigruten* stops here.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport bus (Nkr45/70 one-way/return) can be picked up at the Radisson SAS Hotel; a taxi to the airport costs about Nkr100.

BUS

Thoroughly exploring Tromsø can take time, as the city is spread out and many of the sights are outside the centre. Rides on city buses cost Nkr23.

CAR

If you have your own car, you'll find it convenient for getting around. Tromsø has numerous parking areas spread around the city, including a huge underground car park off Grønnegata.

FINNMARK

Along the jagged coast, deeply cut by forbidding fjords, you'll find numerous isolated fishing villages; Alta with its StoneAge rock carvings; Kirkenes, a frontier-like town sharing a border with Russia; and

Nordkapp, mainland Europe's northmost point. Or very nearly so; to reach the actual end of the earth, prepare to enjoy an 18km round-trip hike across the eerie peninsula.

Those that head inland will find the vast and empty Finnmarksvidda plateau, a stark expanse with only two major settlements: Karasjok and Kautokeino. They and Finnmarksvidda are part of the heartland of the Sami people (traditionally known as Lapland), where reindeer herding has occurred for centuries. At either, enjoy a dog-sled journey across empty tundra half lit under the bruise-blue winter sky.

Drawback: virtually every town in Finnmark was razed to the ground at the end of WWII by retreating Nazis, whose scorched-earth policy was intended to delay the advancing Soviet troops. Unfortunately, the rebuilt towns all look rather grim. Satisfying urban life north of Tromsø does not exist. In the summer, the eerie midnight sun takes over, as do swarms of mosquitoes (at their peak from late June to late July).

You can get information about the entire region from the **Finnmark Tourist Board** (☎ 78 44 00 20; www.visitnorthcape.com).

ALTA

pop 18,000

If anything in Finnmark can be called cosmopolitan, Alta is it. It's easily Finnmark's largest town, and, thanks to the Finnmark Municipal University, it's home to 2000 students. The biggest attraction in town is a collection of Unesco-protected rock carvings, which date to 4000 BC. If this doesn't grab your fancy, wilderness surrounds the city, as do opportunities to go ice fishing or dogsled riding (inquire at the tourist office). Some accuse the place of being an ugly bore.

Orientation & Information

Alta is a sprawling town occupying 15km of coastline. The town's two main centres, Sentrum (it looks like an office park) and Bossekop (hey, at least it's hilly), are 3km apart, connected by the E6. Sentrum's **tourist office** (☎ 78 45 50 00; Parksentret Bldg; ☞ 8.30am-4pm, Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) is 1km northwest of Sentrum off the E6. Bossekop's **tourist office** (☎ 78 44 50 50; www.altatours.no; Sorekskriverveien; ☞ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5pm Sat, noon-6pm Sun Jun-Aug) has internet access (Nkr15 per 10

minutes). Check your email at the Sentrum **library** (☞ 10am-6pm Mon-Thu, 10am-3.30pm Fri, 11am-3pm Sat).

Sights & Activities

Alta's main sight is the impressive, World Heritage-protected, **prehistoric rock art** (☎ 78 45 63 30; www.alta.museum.no; Altaveien 19; adult/child Nkr75/free; ☞ 8am-9pm Jun-Aug, 9am-6pm May & Sep, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun Oct-Apr) at Hjemmaeluft, on the E6, 4km southwest of Bossekop. A 3km-long network of boardwalks leads past many of the 3000 rock carvings of hunting scenes, boats, fertility symbols, bears and reindeer that date back as far as 4000 BC. Wait for the snow to melt before visiting, otherwise the rocks are covered. The admission charge includes a guide and the entry to adjacent **Alta Museum**, with regional exhibits.

The Altaelva rushes through the 400m-deep **Sautso**, northern Europe's grandest canyon. The scenic gorge is best seen as part of a tour (Nkr350), which gains you access to the Alta Power Station dam and includes a snack in a traditional Sami *lavvo* (tent). Contact **Alta Tours** (☎ 78 44 95 55; www.altatours.no) for bookings.

Alta is also renowned for its **salmon run**; several local companies organise fishing tours.

Sleeping

Alta Igloo Hotel (☎ 78 43 33 78; www.alta-friluftspark.no; Storeldalen; per person Nkr1295; ☞ mid-Jan-mid-Apr) Entirely made of snow and ice (even the drinking glasses), enjoy a pleasurable morning sauna and lights that have been embedded in walls, causing them to glow yellow, blue and red.

Hotel Aurora Borealis (☎ 78 45 78 00; www.hotel.aurora.no; Saga; s/d Nkr730/875; ☞) Cosy, art-filled and secluded, about 6km east of Bossekop by the E6, staff will help plan snowmobile trips (with the option of spending a night in a Sami tent), dogsled excursions or fishing trips, and the kitchen will even prepare what you catch.

Vica Hotell (☎ 78 43 47 11; www.vica.no; Fogdebakken 6; s/d from Nkr1000/1200; ☞) In a timber-built former farmhouse in Bossekop, Vica offers free sauna, and outdoor hot tub overlooking snowcapped peaks. The rooms come with knotty pine, and public spaces are filled with stuffed creatures.

Alta HI Hostel (☎ 78 43 44 09; alta.hostel@vandrerhjem.no; Midttrakkveien 52; dm/s/d Nkr150/255/300; ☞ late Jun-late Aug; ☞) Find Alta's hostel in a wooded residential neighbourhood. It's a 10 minutes' walk from the Sentrum bus stop.

Eating

Alpha-Omega (☎ 78 44 54 00; Markedsgata 14-16; lunch Nkr64-104, dinner Nkr89-200) A popular choice on the pedestrian drag in Sentrum, Omega serves excellent tapas and salads. One of these involves a filling piece of salmon baked under a layer of chevre and accompanied with fried onion, mushrooms and greens (Nkr89). For a casual bar, head across the hall to Alpha.

Henrik Restaurant (☎ 78 43 47 11; Fogdebakken 6; mains Nkr170-250) The Vica Hotell's kitchen serves huge portions from an Arctic menu that includes reindeer, elk, cod and a warm soup of cloudberry served with homemade ice cream.

Self-caterers should head to one of Sentrum's three supermarkets.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The **airport** (☎ 78 44 95 55) is 4km east of Sentrum; follow the E6. Norwegian Air, SAS Braathens and Widerøe service the Alta airport. Many domestic flights arrive each day, often routed through Tromsø. Direct flights to Oslo are plentiful.

Taxis (☎ 78 43 53 53) to town cost about Nkr90. The return trip is often inflated with a pick-up charge.

BUS

Nor-Way Bussekspress runs between Tromsø and Alta (Nkr449, 6½ hours, one daily). **FFR** buses run to/from Kautokeino (Nkr193, 2½ hours, four times weekly), Hammerfest (Nkr205, 2¾ hours, three daily) and Nordkapp (Nkr292, 5¾ hours, one to two daily).

HAMMERFEST

pop 9200

Most visitors to Hammerfest arrive by the *Hurtigruten* and have an hour or two to poke around. Unless you have unusual interests, that's about as much time you'll need. The fishing town's oddest experience can be found at the Royal & Ancient Polar Bear Society.

Purporting itself to be Norway's northernmost town (other settlements lie further north, but they are too small to qualify as towns), Hammerfest has suffered as much as that Walrus in the Polar Bear Society: a gale decimated it in 1856, a fire totalled it in 1890 and the Nazi's burned it again in 1944, after which it was rebuilt in the 'Finnmark Ugly' style. Nowadays a newly opened pipe line (the world's longest) sucks in gas from the Barents Sea to a small island in the bay. This will certainly impact the town's economy and depressing landscape.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 41 31 00; www.hammerfest-turist.no; Havnegata 3; ☹ 10am-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug) operates out of the Polar Bear Society.

Sights & Activities

The **Gjenreinsningsmuseet** (Reconstruction Museum; ☎ 78 42 26 30; Kirkegata 21; adult/child Nkr40/15; ☹ 9am-5pm mid-Jun-Aug, 11am-2pm otherwise) details the rebuilding of Hammerfest after the German bombings of 1944. As you might guess, such things are neither easy nor pleasurable 600km above the Arctic Circle. Nearby, in the town hall, the bizarre **Royal & Ancient Polar Bear Society** (☎ 78 41 31 00; Rådhuset; adult/child Nkr20/free; ☹ 9am-5pm late Jun-early Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug-mid-Jun) dedicates itself to preserving northern culture and features exhibits on Arctic hunting and local history. Any visitor can become a member (Nkr185) and waive the admission fee for life, get a certificate and a champagne toast. The bone they use to 'knight' you – something a male walrus misses dearly – is a real crowd-pleaser.

Into Nobel Peace Prizes? Stop by **Galleri Systerna** (☎ 78 41 01 60; Fjordaveien 27; ☹ Mon-Fri), where local artist Eva Arnesen displays a copy of the one she designed for the 1997 honour awarded to Jody William's campaign against landmines. Her paintings evoke the light of the north.

For lovely views of the town, coast and mountains, climb the 86m-high **Salen Hill**; the 10-minute walking trail begins behind the small park directly up from the town hall. The town keeps some binoculars (free) up top to better enjoy the panorama.

Sleeping & Eating

AF Camping Storvannet (☎ 78 41 10 10; Storrannsvæien; cabins Nkr320-340; ☹ late May-late Sep; 📍) Beside a lake and overlooking an apart-

ment complex, this small site fills up early because it's the only decent option around. About 2km east of the town centre, it offers cooking facilities.

Quality Hotel Hammerfest (☎ 78 42 96 00; www.hammerfesthotel.no; Strandgata 2; s/d from Nkr1100/1300; 📍) Some rooms overlook the fjord and many resemble cabins on ocean liners. The cosy 'library bar' has been nicely dressed with rich wood panelling and leather couches. Also enjoy the sauna and solarium.

Hotel Skytterhuset (☎ 78 41 15 11; www.skytterhuset.no; Skytterveien 24; s/d Nkr695/895; 📍) The arms of this hotel, up a hill with views over town, originally served as barracks for Finnish fishwives. Despite the utilitarian history, the modern rooms are cheery and sometimes reindeer chew up the garden. Free sauna.

Odd's Mat & Vinhus (☎ 78 41 37 66; Strandgata 24; mains Nkr190-340; ☹ Mon-Sat) For fantastically prepared Arctic game and fish, the rustic digs of the region's favourite restaurant are accented with rope coils and wooden booths.

Sandberg bakery (☎ 78 41 18 08; Strandgata 19; sandwiches Nkr36; ☹ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) serves coffee and pastries tastier than you'll find in other bakeries.

There's a **Coop supermarket** east of the town hall.

Getting There & Away

The *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer stops daily.

FFR (☎ 78 40 70 00; www.ffr.no) operates buses to/from Hammerfest. Go to/from Alta (Nkr205, 2½ hours, one to three daily) or to/from Kirkenes (Nkr740, 10 to 12 hours, four weekly), via Karasjok (Nkr283, 4½ hours, one to three Sunday to Friday).

NORDKAPP

Nordkapp (North Cape), a coastal plateau at N71°10'21" latitude, claims to be the northernmost point in Europe and is the main destination for most visitors to the far north (Knivskjelodden is actually the northernmost point – see p373 for details). The sun never drops below the horizon from mid-May to the end of July. To many visitors, Nordkapp, with its steep cliffs and stark scenery, emanates a certain spiritual aura – indeed, long before other Europeans took an interest in the area, Nordkapp was considered a power centre by the Sami people.

It was Richard Chancellor, the English explorer who drifted this way in 1553 on a search for the Northeast Passage, who named North Cape. Following a much-publicised visit by King Oscar II in 1873, Nordkapp became a pilgrimage spot of sorts for tourists.

Nowadays, there's a rip-off Nkr190 entrance fee and a touristy complex with exhibits, eateries, souvenir shops and a post office. The 180-degree theatre runs a rather repetitious short film, but if you want to really appreciate Nordkapp just take a walk out along the cliffs. If the weather is fair you can perch yourself on the edge of the continent and watch the polar mist roll in.

The continent's real northernmost point, **Knivskjelodden** (latitude N71°11'08") is, thankfully, inaccessible to vehicles and devoid of tourist fluff. To reach it, head to the marked car park about 7km south of Nordkapp, lace up your boots and hike 9km (18km return) to a lovely promontory. It takes about five hours.

Depending on snow conditions, the toll road to Nordkapp is usually open from May to mid-October; the **Road User Information Centre** (☎ 177) gives opening dates.

The closest town of any size is **Honningsvåg**, 35km from Nordkapp with a population of 3500. Here you'll find a **tourist office** (☎ 78 47 70 30; www.northcape.no; Fiskerveien 4B; ☹ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, noon-8am Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri otherwise), the hotel **Honningsvåg Brygge** (☎ 78 47 64 64; www.hvg.brygge.no; Vågen 1a; s/d Nkr950/1200), which occupies a nicely converted fishing warehouse, a few restaurants and, unbelievably, a **micro-brewery**. Contact the tourist office for area camping options.

Getting There & Away

The *Hurtigruten* stops in Honningsvåg. Northbound ships stop for 3½ hours, long enough for the ship to offer its passengers a Nordkapp tour (Nkr580).

Nor-way Bussekspress runs buses from Alta to/from Honningsvåg (Nkr457, 3¾ hours, one or two daily). FFR runs buses to/from Hammerfest (Nkr351, three hours, one or two daily).

Getting Around

From mid-June to mid-August, local buses run from Honningsvåg (adult/child

Nkr90/45, 45 minutes) to Nordkapp departing at 10.45am and 8.30pm, and setting off from the Cape at 1.15pm and 12.15am (observe the midnight sun at midnight). Avoid so-called 'tours', which may charge considerably more for similar services. And get ready to cry: even bus riders get hit with that Nkr190 toll.

You can also rent a bike from the tourist office (Nkr250/600 per day/three days). Bring a windbreaker for the bleak, exposed ride and, of course, Nkr190 for the pending tear-duct workout.

KIRKENES

pop 4500

Okay you made it – the end of the line for the *Hurtigruten* and the eastern most point in the country. Now what? Kirkenes itself isn't much – after all, it was Norway's most bombed place during WWII, with over 1000 air-raid alarms. A lot of people use it as a jumping-off point into Russia, though be advised that you'd best have your visa in order prior to arrival (see p374). To find the small town centre from the *Hurtigruten* quay, head west (make a right) from the dock and follow the signs. It's about 1.5km. Or just take the waiting shuttle bus.

Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 99 25 44; www.kirkenes.info.no; Presteveien 1; ☹ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5.30pm Sat & Sun Jun-mid-Aug, 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug-May) is exceptionally helpful.

The **library** (☎ 78 99 32 51; Town Sq; ☹ 11am-5pm Mon, Tue & Thu, 11am-3pm Wed & Fri, 11am-2pm Sat) has free internet access.

Sights & Activities

The **Sør-Varanger Grenselandmuseet** (☎ 78 99 48 80; Forstevannslia; adult/student/child Nkr30/15/free; ☹ 10am-6pm mid-Jun-Aug, 10am-3.30pm Sep-mid-Jun) presents the history of the converging cultures in this border region, with displays on WWII history, local geography, religion and Sami crafts.

Check out the particularly worthwhile **Savio Museum**, which features the work of the Sami artist Andreas Savio, whose poignant woodcuts and paintings evoke the tension between indigenous life and nature. It's temporarily inside the Sør-Varanger Grenselandmuseet and shares the same hours.

VISITING RUSSIA

Crossing the border requires dealing with bureaucracy at its worst. Independent travellers first need to obtain an official invitation to visit Russia. You then need to visit a Russian consulate with the invite and your passport at least 14 days in advance. If you plan on crossing in Kirkenes, consider using a service that handles invitations and visas and offers package tours to Russian destinations near Kirkenes. Even from outside Norway, you can send your passport in advance (give them at least 16 days) by certified mail for processing and return.

Government-set fees are based on country of citizenship. For example, a one-day visa cost from Nkr100 for Japanese to Nkr550 for Americans. It escalates according to length of stay. **Grenseland Travel Agency** (☎ 78 99 50 80; www.pasvikturist.no) then charges a processing fee of Nkr500, or Nkr1300 for same day service. It offers weekend trips to Murmansk (Nkr1600), where price includes transport and a hotel room, but not the visa.

For something like help, try Kirkenes's **Russian consulate** (☎ 78 99 37 37; Kirkegata).

The super tourist office will help arrange a ton of activities including snowmobile trips along the border (Nkr950) and night-time dogsled rides (Nkr1075). Our peculiar readers will freak out over underwater trips arranged by **Arctic Dive Adventure Resort** (☎ 95 15 07 55; www.arctic-dive.no; Jarfjordbotn; ☞ May-Oct). For Nkr750, you get equipment and two dives where you'll try to catch the most badass giant crabs imaginable, plus a night's lodging in a seaside cabin. The place is 25km south of Kirkenes.

Sleeping & Eating

Direktørboligen (☎ 78 99 18 09; www.dirboligen.no; Kristen Nygårdsgate 37; s/d from Nkr700/1000) With just six rooms, book ahead to ensure your place in the former residence for the directors of Kirkenes' mining industry. Sophisticated and slick, rooms cantilever over a garden where reindeer sometimes sneak in breakfast. Free sauna and cosy library. It's a 10-minute walk from the centre.

Kirkenes Snowhotel (☎ 78 97 05 40; www.radius-kirkenes.co; s/d Nkr1200/1650; ☞ Dec) Sleep on reindeer pelts inside a small hotel made entirely of ice a kilometre outside town. You'll especially enjoy the sauna.

Rica Arctic Hotel (☎ 78 99 29 29; www.rica.no; Kongensgate 1-3; s/d Mon-Fri Sep-Jun Nkr1195/1300, s/d Sat & Sun Nkr750/900, s/d mid-Jun-Aug Nkr760/960; ☞) This modern block contains decent rooms with generic character (salmon-coloured walls, cheap furniture) and wins points with its heated pool.

Vin og Vilt (☎ 78 99 38 11; Kirkegata 5; mains Nkr165-340) Seasonal Arctic game and fish (reindeer, grouse, crabs) comes in a room that feels like a hunting lodge.

Getting There & Around

AIR

SAS, Braathens, Norwegian Air and Widerøe fly into Kirkenes' airport, a 20-minute (15km) drive from town; flying in/out of Ivalo, Finland, some 250km away, may be cheaper. The airport bus costs Nkr64 and a taxi is about Nkr275.

BOAT

Kirkenes is the terminus of the *Hurtigruten* coastal steamer.

BUS

By land, FFR buses serve Karasjok (Nkr460, 5½ hours, four weekly), Hammerfest (Nkr750, 10¼ hours, four weekly) and Alta (Nkr780, 12¼ hours, three weekly).

CAR

Avis (☎ 78 97 37 05) and **Hertz** (☎ 78 99 39 73) have offices in Hesseng, but they'll deliver cars to you.

KARASJOK

pop 2900

Karasjok is the most accessible Sami town and the site of the Sami Parliament. It has Finnmark's oldest **church** (1807), the only building left standing in Karasjok after WWII. Because of the Nazis' destruction, the centre of today's Karasjok consists of a couple of strip malls connected by the E6 and Rv92.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 46 88 10; www.koas.no; Porsangerveien; ☞ 9am-7pm Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug-May), in the Sami Park at the junction of the E6 and route Rv92, can book winter dogsled rides, and arranges

salmon fishing, riverboat trips and other summer activities.

The **Sami Park** (☎ 78 46 88 10; Porsangerveien; adult/child Nkr95/60; ☞ 9am-7pm mid-Jun-late Aug, shorter hrs Sep-mid-Jun) theme park and reindeer farm feels a bit flashy and plastic, though its presentations do a good job presenting the Sami as the normal fellow human beings they are and not exotic anachronisms. The more staid **Sami museum** (☎ 78 46 99 50; Museumsgata 17; adult/child Nkr25/5; ☞ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun early Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hrs mid-Aug-May), just 500m northeast of the town centre, covers Sami history and culture in more academic depth. Visit the **Sami Parliament** (Sámediggi; ☎ 78 47 40 00; Kautokeinovien 50; admission free), inside a new building with a stunning birch, pine and oak interior. Thirty-minute tours take in a tent-shaped assembly hall and the parliamentary library with its tiny starlike lights.

At **Engholm's Husky** (☎ 78 46 71 66; www.engholm.no; Rv92; cabins Nkr150-300 plus Nkr100 for each guest; ☞), dog-lovers will enjoy the rustic, pelt-furnished cabins in a forested haven near where Sven keeps his sled dogs and pups. Most cabins have a kitchen but no bathroom. There's a free sauna, trails through the woods and a salmon river. It's 6km west of town on the Rv92. Eat an eggy breakfast (Nkr70) and big dinners (Nkr200).

Sven's place also serves as Karasjok's HI-affiliated **Hostel** (dm/s/d Nkr175/300/450).

Gammen (☎ 78 46 74 00; Porsangerveien 1; mains Nkr190-250), at Sami Park, offers traditional dishes in a 'Sami-inspired' dining room. The place consists of four squat, turf-covered huts with a central hearth. There's a grocery store in the town centre.

FFR buses connect Karasjok with Alta (Nkr350, 4¾ hours, six weekly) Hammerfest (Nkr283, 4½ hours, one to three Sunday to Friday) and Kirkenes (Nkr460, 5½ hours, four weekly). Finnish Lapin Linjat buses run to Rovaniemi (Nkr350, eight hours, one daily) via Ivalo (Nkr160, 2½ hours, one daily).

KAUTOKEINO

pop 3000

In Kautokeino, around 85% of the townspeople have Sami as their first language; the town is unlike anywhere else in Nor-

way and it's not uncommon to see locals dressed in traditional garb. Around one-third of the population earns its living working in some aspect of reindeer herding.

Because Kautokeino is a small one-road town, there isn't much to do. Sleepy as it is, some find it preferable to livelier Karasjok, whose developed tourist industry gives it a plastic feel.

The best time to visit is during the **Easter Festival** (www.saami-easterfestival.org), when thousands of costumed Sami participate in championship reindeer racing, theatre and cultural events, and the little town bursts at the seams.

The **tourist office** (☎ 78 48 65 00; ☞ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri May-Aug) is in a kiosk by the main road through town.

The **Kautokeino Hamlet & Museum** (☎ 78 48 71 00; Boavonjarga 23; adult/child Nkr20/free; ☞ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, noon-7pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-3pm Mon-Fri mid-Aug-mid-Jun) presents a traditional Sami settlement, complete with an early home, temporary dwellings, a trapping exhibit and several agricultural and pastoral outbuildings.

Inside a cool bit of sloping architecture modelled after drifting snow, **Juhls' Silver Gallery** (☎ 78 48 71 00; www.juhls.no; Galaniitoluodda; admission free; ☞ 8.30am-9pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-6pm otherwise) creates traditional and modern silver jewellery and offers the best of Scandinavian design. The place started 50 years ago, long before anyone dreamed of tourists visiting the town.

Kautokeino Camping (☎ 78 48 54 00; Suomalvodka 16; camp sites Nkr130, cabins Nkr650-800, with shared bathroom Nkr300, motel rooms Nkr500), south of the river, provides a Sami *lavvo* with an open fire. It's operated by an extremely friendly family whose café will often cook up some *bidos*, the traditional reindeer stew served at celebrations.

Alfred's Kro (☎ 78 48 61 18; Hannoluohka 4; mains Nkr60-135; ☞ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sat & Sun) offers diners traditional Sami dishes involving reindeer, as well as burgers and Mack draught. **Mara's Pub** occasionally books small bands. With rough wooden floors, booths and benches, the intimate pub is the town's main nightlife spot. Find it beneath Alfred's.

Buses connect Kautokeino with Alta (Nkr193, 2½ hours, four weekly).

SVALBARD

The world's most readily accessible piece of the polar north, and one of the most spectacular places imaginable, Svalbard is *the* destination for an unforgettable holiday. This wondrous archipelago is an assault on the senses: vast icebergs and floes choke the seas, and icefields and glaciers frost the lonely heights. Svalbard also hosts a surprising variety of flora and fauna, including seals, walrus, Arctic foxes and polar bears.

Plan your trip well in advance. When you arrive, you'll almost certainly want to participate in some kind of organised trek or tour, and many need to be booked early. Since travel outside Longyearbyen is both difficult and dangerous, you miss out on a lot if you don't sign up for one.

History

Although known to the Icelanders as early as 1194, the official discovery of Svalbard (then uninhabited) is credited to Dutch voyager Willem Barents in 1596. During the 17th century Dutch, English, French, Norwegian and Danish whalers slaughtered the whale population. They were followed in the 18th century by Russians hunting walrus and seals. The 19th century saw the arrival of Norwegians, who hunted polar bears and Arctic foxes. In 1906, commercial coal mining began and is continued today by the Russians (at Barentsburg) and the Norwegians (at Longyearbyen and Sveagruva). The 1920 Svalbard Treaty granted Norwegian sovereignty over the islands.

Orientation & Information

Longyearbyen, the largest settlement on Svalbard, has an airport with flights to/from Tromsø and Oslo. You'll find a post office, bank (with an ATM) and library. Barentsburg, the Russian settlement, is about 40km west, while Ny Ålesund, a Norwegian research station with an airstrip, is about 100km northwest. Except in settlements, there are no roads.

The **tourist office** (☎ 79 02 55 50; www.svalbard.net; ☎ 8am–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–4pm Sat, noon–4pm Sun mid-Jun–Aug, shorter hr otherwise) is in central Longyearbyen. For more on travelling in Svalbard, see Andreas Umbreit's *Spitsber-*

gen: Svalbard, Franz Josef, Jan Mayen, published by Bradt Publications.

Tours

View dozens of exciting options on the tourist office website. Accommodation, transport and meals are usually included in longer tours, but day tours are also available. Some popular tour operators:

Basecamp Spitsbergen (☎ 79 02 46 00; www.basecampexplorer.com; Postboks 316, N-9171 Longyearbyen) Offers unique lodgings including rooms on an ice-locked ship, three-day dog mushing trips from the ship (Nkr12,000), and week-long wilderness expeditions (Nkr24,900).

Spitsbergen Tours (☎ 79 02 10 68; www.terrarpolaris.com; Postboks 6, N-9171 Longyearbyen) The oldest locally based operation, owned by Andreas Umbreit. Spend a week in the polar night (Nkr10,500), in wintry April (Nkr14,000) or in the summertime high season, when prices range from Nkr7800 if you camp to Nkr20,000 in single room accommodation. Prices include dogsledding expeditions, snowmobile tours, and boat cruises.

Spitsbergen Travel (☎ 79 02 61 00; www.spitsbergentravel.no; Postboks 548, N-9171 Longyearbyen) The giant of the travel scene offers six-day cruises on a former Hurtigruten coastal steamer, putting in at Barentsburg and Ny Ålesund (Nkr7450 to Nkr12,000).

Svalbard Wildlife Service (☎ 79 02 56 60; www.wildlife.no; Postboks 164, N-9171 Longyearbyen) Offers varied tours including a seven-day ski/snow mobile expedition that summits mountains, crosses glaciers and visits an abandoned Russian mining town (Nkr18,500).

Getting There & Away

SAS Braathens fly regularly from Tromsø to Longyearbyen. In summer they offer direct flights to/from Oslo.

LONGYEARBYEN

pop 1500

The frontierlike community of Longyearbyen, strewn with abandoned coal-mining detritus, enjoys a superb backdrop including two glacier tongues, Longyearbreen and Lars Hjertabreen.

The **Svalbard Museum** (☎ 79 02 13 84; Skjæringa; admission Nkr30; ☎ 11am–7pm Mon–Fri, noon–4pm Sat, 1–7pm Sun Jul & Aug, shorter hrs Sep–Jun), occupies a former pigsty, one of the oldest buildings in town. Exhibits cover mining, 17th-century whaling and the history of the archipelago.

Tours

Short day trips are commonly offered, including fossil hunting (Nkr300); mine

tours (Nkr590); boat trips to Barentsburg and Pyramidien (Nkr990); dogsledding (Nkr800); glacier hiking (from Nkr490); ice-caving (from Nkr520); kayaking (from Nkr550); horse riding (Nkr420); and snowmobiling (from Nkr1000). Contact the tourist office.

Sleeping & Eating

Sleeping prices are greatly reduced off-season.

Longyearbyen Camping (☎ 79 02 10 68; www.longyearbyen-camping.com; camp sites per person Nkr80; ☎ late Jun–early Sep) Next to the airport and an hour's walk from town, pitch a tent on some marshy tundra and enjoy the empty expanse around you. There's a building with a kitchen. Tent and sleeping-bag rentals are available.

Basecamp Spitsbergen (☎ 79 02 46 00; www.basecampexplorer.com; s/d Nkr1290/1580) This 15-room hotel provides top accommodation in the centre of town. It shoots for the look of a seal-hunter's cabin (bunks, rough-hewn boards). Each cosy room has a shower, and a common space has a glass roof for polar night viewing.

Gjæstehuset 102 (☎ 79 02 57 16; www.wildlife.no; dm/s/d Nkr290/475/790) Sleep in a former miners' lodge, a utilitarian structure sarcastically dubbed 'Millionaire's Residence'. Shared bathroom, kitchen and lounge. It lies at the southern end of town, a 20-minute walk.

Mary-Ann's Polar Rigg (☎ 79 02 37 02; riggen@longyearbyen.net; s/d Nkr595/850) A simple place with a kitchenette and hot tub. Most of the 43 rooms have shared facilities. Linen is Nkr100 extra and breakfast is Nkr95.

Huset (☎ 79 02 25 00; light dishes Nkr135; mains Nkr225–350) For top-notch arctic and French-style meals, hoof it to Huset. It's worth paying the extra quid for their 'Touch of the Arctic' menu, where you'll get to shove Arctic char, scallops, reindeer, grouse and dessert down your oesophagus. Lots of wine.

In the central shopping mall, you'll find the Svalbardbutikken supermarket and **Fruene Kaffe og Vinbar** (☎ 79 02 36 50; mains Nkr70–120), a welcoming café serving coffee, pizza and pasta before metamorphosing into a wine bar at 5pm.

Getting Around

Longyearbyen Taxi (☎ 79 02 13 75) charges Nkr120 for a cab trip between the town

and the airport. The airport bus (Nkr40) connects with flights.

AROUND SVALBARD

Independent travel around Svalbard is heavily regulated in order to protect both the virgin landscape and travellers. Travel to the very few settlements is usually done as part of a tour package. One of these settlements is Barentsburg (population 900), a Soviet-era relic. Simultaneously depressing and fascinating, this tiny Russian town still mines and exports coal. A statue of Lenin still stares over the bleak built landscape and the impressive natural landscape that surrounds it.

Tourist cruises might also bring you to **Ny Ålesund**, which, at latitude N79°, is a wild place with scientists and downright hostile Arctic terns. Remnants of past glories include a **stranded locomotive**, previously used for transporting coal, and an **airship pylon**, used by Amundsen and Nobile on their successful crossing of the North Pole in 1926.

NORWAY DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

During summer, it's wise to reserve all accommodation, particularly at hostels. The cheapest lodging costs less than Nkr300, midrange accommodation is less than Nkr650, while top-end luxury can reach Nkr2000.

Camping & Cabins

Camping grounds are abundant. Tent space costs from Nkr80 at the most basic sites to Nkr150 in Oslo. Many camping grounds rent simple cabins with basic cooking facilities from about Nkr300. Bedding is rarely provided, bring your own sleeping bag. Visit www.camping.no to see extensive listings.

Norway has an *allemannsretten* (Right of Common Access) dating back 1000 years. This allows you to pitch a tent anywhere in the wilderness for two nights, as long as you camp at least 150m from the nearest house or cottage and leave no trace of your stay. From 15 April to 15 September, lighting a fire in the proximity of woodlands is strictly forbidden.

The Norwegian Mountain Touring Association, **Den Norske Turistforening** (DNT; Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 82 28 22; www.turistforeningen.no; Storgata 3, N-0101 Oslo), maintains an extensive network of mountain huts, a day's hike apart, in much of Norway's mountain country, ranging from unstaffed huts with just a few beds to large, staffed lodges with more than a hundred beds and generally superb service.

For unstaffed huts, you must pick up keys (Nkr100 to Nkr150 deposit) in advance. There are two types of unstaffed huts: bare bones and chalets stocked with blankets, pillows, firewood, and freeze-dried food for sale (pay by honour system). In these, members/nonmembers pay Nkr145/240 for a bed.

In staffed huts, simply show up – no one is ever turned away, though you might sleep on the floor. Nightly fees for members/nonmembers in a room with one to three beds are Nkr185/240; rooms with four to six beds Nkr145/210; dormitories Nkr95/160; and overflow on the floor Nkr70/135. Breakfast (members/nonmembers Nkr75/95), sandwiches (Nkr10/15), dinner (Nkr175/210) and snacks are served, though members might do better by ordering a full-board option with their room. At all huts, staffed or not, children pay less.

Basic membership for one calendar year costs Nkr425/250/50 for adult/student/child.

Many DNT huts are closed between mid-October and mid-February.

Hostels

Norway has 72 *vandrerrhjem* (hostels) affiliated with Hostelling International (HI) and several independent operators. Most have two to six beds per room. Most also have single, double and family rooms at higher prices. Guests must bring their own sleeping sheet and pillowcase, although most hostels hire linen for Nkr50. Nearly all hostels have kitchens where guests can cook their own meals.

The Norwegian Hostelling Association is **Norske Vandrerhjem** (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 13 93 00; fax 23 13 93 50; www.vandrerrhjem.no; Torggata 1, N-0181 Oslo). You can book hostels through their website. Prices listed in this book are those for HI members; nonmembers pay an additional Nkr25 per night.

Hotels

Although standard prices are high, most hotels give substantial discounts on Saturday and Sunday and in summer season (mid-June through until the end of August), which are slow periods for business travel. One important consideration in this land of sky-high food prices is that hotels usually include an all-you-can-eat buffet breakfast, while most pensions do not. Many nationwide chains offer hotel passes which might entitle you to discounts:

Choice Club (www.choicehotels.no) Offers a free pass and is available at Comfort, Quality and Clarion hotels; entitles you to free nights and discounts.

Fjord Pass (www.fjordpass.no) Costs Nkr100 and is valid year-round at 170 Norwegian hotels. Provides significant discounts on nightly rates.

Rica Feriepass (www.rica.no) Offers a free pass from mid-June to mid-August; entitles you to a fifth night free.

Skapplus (www.skanplus.no) Costs Nkr100 and entitles you to weekend and summer discounts in Thon and Norlandia hotels. Every sixth night is free.

Private Rooms & Pensions

Private rooms, usually bookable through tourist offices, average Nkr300/400 for singles/doubles and breakfast isn't normally included. Along highways, you may see 'Rom' signs, indicating informal accommodation for around Nkr250 (without breakfast).

ACTIVITIES

Hiking

Norway has some of northern Europe's best hiking (over 20,000km of trails), ranging from easy routes in the forests around the cities to long treks through mountains. Due to deep winter snows, hiking in many areas is seasonal; in the highlands, it's often limited to the period of late June to September. The most popular wilderness hiking areas are Jotunheimen, Rondane and Hardangervidda, but no matter where you are a lovely hike will be, too.

There are organised glacier hikes in Briksdal and on Nigardsbreen; Åndalsnes and Lofoten are major centres for mountain climbing. For more information, contact **Den Norske Turistforening** (DNT; p377).

Skiing

'Ski' is a Norwegian word and Norway makes a credible claim to having invented

the sport. It's no exaggeration to say that it's the national winter pastime and you're seldom far from a ski run. Norway has thousands of kilometres of maintained cross-country (nordic) ski trails and scores of resorts with excellent downhill runs. The Holmenkollen area near Oslo, Geilo (on the Oslo-Bergen railway line), Narvik and Lillehammer are just a few of the more popular spots. If you're a summer skier, head for the glaciers near Finse, Stryn or Jotunheimen. DNT is a good source of information about skiing.

Rafting

Norway's wild and scenic rivers are ideal for rafting, with trips ranging anywhere from short Class II doodles to Class III and IV adventures and up to rollicking Class V punishment. **Norges Padleforbund** (☎ 21 02 98 35; www.pading.no; Service boks 1, Ullevål stadion, N-0840 Oslo) provides a comprehensive list of rafting operators.

Fishing

Norway's salmon runs are legendary – in June and July, you can't beat the rivers of Finnmark. No licence is required for salt-water fishing. Regulations vary between rivers, but generally you can't keep fish under 30cm in length. In fresh water, a national licence (available from post offices for Nkr200) is mandatory and often a local licence (available from tourist offices, sports shops, hotels and camping grounds for Nkr100 to Nkr300 per day) will also be required. The lengthy book *Angling in Norway*, available in tourist offices for Nkr175, details fees, regulations and choice spots.

BUSINESS HOURS

Opening hours for shops are 10am to 5pm weekdays, 10am to 2pm on Saturday; post offices 9am to 5pm weekdays, 10am to 2pm on Saturdays; banks 8.15am to 3pm weekdays; supermarkets 9am to 9pm weekdays, 9am to 6pm on Saturday; and restaurants 8am to 11am, noon to 3pm and 6pm to 11pm. Opening hours for tourist offices are listed under each city throughout the Norway chapter.

Be aware that many museums have short hours (11am to 3pm is quite common), which can make things tight for sightsee-

ing. On Sunday most stores – including bakeries and supermarkets, and some restaurants – are closed.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Norwegian Embassies

Find up-to-date listings at www.norway.info.

Australia & New Zealand (☎ 02-6273 3444; emb.canberra@mfa.no; 17 Hunter St, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

Canada (☎ 613-238 6571; www.emb-norway.ca; Royal Bank Centre, Suite 532, 90 Sparks St, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5B4)

Denmark (☎ 33 14 01 24; emb.copenhagen@mfa.no; Amaliegade 39, DK-1256 Copenhagen K)

Finland (☎ 09-686 0180; emb.helsinki@mfa.no; Rehbindervägen 17, FIN-00150 Helsinki)

France (☎ 01 53 67 04 00; emb.paris@mfa.no; 28 rue Bayard, F-75008 Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-505050; emb.berlin@mfa.no; Rauchstrasse 1, D-10787 Berlin)

Ireland (☎ 01-662 1800; emb.dublin@mfa.no; 34 Molesworth St, Dublin 2)

Netherlands (☎ 070-311 7611; emb.hague@mfa.no; Lange Vijverberg 11, NL-2513 AC The Hague)

Sweden (☎ 08-665 6340; emb.stockholm@mfa.no; Skarpögatan 4, SE-11593 Stockholm)

UK (☎ 020-7591 5500; emb.london@mfa.no; 25 Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8QD)

USA (☎ 212-333 6000; www.norway.org; 2720 34th St NW, Washington DC 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in Norway

Australia Refer to the UK embassy, which handles Australian consular affairs in the absence of an embassy.

Canada (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 99 53 00; www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca; Wergelandsveien 7, 0244 Oslo)

Denmark (Map p310; ☎ 22 54 08 00; www.amboslo.um.dk; Olav Kyrres gate 7, 0244 Oslo)

Finland (Map p310; ☎ 22 12 49 00; www.finland.no Thomas Heftyes gate 1, 0244 Oslo)

France (Map p310; ☎ 23 28 46 00; www.ambafrance-no.org; Drammensveien 69, 0244 Oslo)

Germany (Map pp304-5; ☎ 23 27 54 00; www.oslo.diplo.de; Oscars gate 45, 0244 Oslo)

Ireland (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 12 20 00; osloembassy@dfa.ie; Haakon VII's gate 1, 0212 Oslo)

Netherlands (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 19 71 90; Oscars gate 29, 0244 Oslo)

New Zealand (☎ 66 77 53 30; fax 66 77 53 31; Billings-tadsløtta 19B, Postboks 113, 1376 Billingstad)

Russia (Map p310; ☎ 22 55 32 78; www.norway.mid.ru; Drammensveien 74, 0244 Oslo)

Sweden (Map p310; ☎ 24 11 42 00; www.swedenabroad.com; Nobels gate 16, 0244 Oslo)

UK (Map p310; ☎ 23 13 27 00; www.britishembassy.gov.uk; Thomas Heftyes gate 8, 0244 Oslo)

USA (Map pp304-5; ☎ 22 44 85 50; Henrik Isbens gate 48, 0255 Oslo)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Norway is chock-a-block with festivals, which take place in every city, town and village. Most of these are held during the summer, and a few of the most popular are outlined within this chapter's listing. Among the offerings are festivals dealing with rock music, wooden boats, film and cultural spectacles.

Most notable is Norway's Constitution Day (17 May) when people take to the streets in traditional dress and attend celebratory events throughout the country, with the biggest bash in Oslo, where marching bands and thousands of school children parade down Karl Johans gate to be greeted by the royal family. Midsummer's Eve, celebrated by bonfires on the beach, is generally observed on 23 June, St Hans Day. The Sami (Lapps) hold their most colourful celebrations at Easter in Karasjok and Kautokeino, with reindeer races, *joik* (traditional chanting) concerts and other festivities.

For information about all of the country's largest festivals, check out www.norwayfestivals.com.

HOLIDAYS

Public Holidays

New Year's Day 1 January

Maundy Thursday Thursday before Easter

Good Friday March/April

Easter Monday March/April

Labour Day 1 May

Constitution Day 17 May

Ascension Day 40 days after Easter

Whit Monday Eighth Monday after Easter

Christmas Day 25 December

Boxing Day 26 December

Norway practically shuts down during Christmas and Easter weeks, when you'll be lucky to find an open bar or grocery store even in Oslo. See Festival & Events, above, for information on Constitution Day and Easter.

School Holidays

Norwegian children enjoy the following school holidays: eight weeks from mid-June

to mid-August; two weeks over Christmas and New Year; one week at the end of September or early October; one week at the end of February; and one week at Easter.

MONEY ATMS

The machines are ubiquitous and available in almost every town mentioned in this book.

Currency

The Norwegian krone is most often written NOK in international money markets, Nkr in northern Europe and kr within Norway.

One Norwegian krone equals 100 øre. Coins come in denominations of 50 øre and one, five, 10 and 20 kroner, and bills in denominations of 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1000 kroner.

Exchanging Money

Some post offices and all banks will exchange major foreign currencies and accept all travellers cheques, which command a better exchange rate than cash (by about 2%). Banks open Monday to Friday and close around 3pm, while post offices open later (see Post below). You can also change money in kiosks and hotels, but the rate won't be as good.

POST

See p379 for opening hours. Postal rates are high and continue to soar: cards and letters weighing up to 20g cost Nkr6.50 within Norway, Nkr8.50 to other Nordic countries, Nkr9.50 to elsewhere in Europe and Nkr10.5 to the rest of the world. Mail can be received *poste restante* at almost all post offices in Norway.

TELEPHONE & FAX

All domestic numbers consist of eight digits.

Most pay phones accept Nkr1, Nkr5, Nkr10 and Nkr20 coins, and will return unused coins but won't give change so only insert the minimum amount (Nkr5 for all calls) to ensure a connection. Directory assistance (☎ 180) costs Nkr9 per minute. A peak-rate national call costs Nkr7 then Nkr0.60 per minute. It is more expensive to call a mobile phone than a landline. Using

a hotel room's phone carries prohibitive charges.

Mobile Phones

GSM mobile telephone networks cover over 80% of Norway's populated areas. There are two main service providers: **Telenor Mobil** (☎ 22 78 50 00) and **NetCom** (☎ 23 88 80 00).

To use your home-county mobile in Norway, contact your carrier about the cost of roaming charges. If you want to use your mobile, but with a Norwegian SIM card, check with your network before leaving home to make sure you won't be blocked from using other carriers. If your phone does accept foreign SIM cards, these can be purchased from any 7-Eleven and from some Narvesen Kiosks. As the connection instructions are entirely in Norwegian, you're better off purchasing the card from a Telehuset outlet, where they'll help you connect on the spot. Cards start at Nkr200, which includes Nkr100 worth of calls.

Mobile phone rental is not possible, though you can buy one with some minutes at Telehuset shops and other phone stores (from Nkr500).

Phone Codes

Norway has no telephone area codes. To make international calls from Norway, dial ☎ 00 then the country code and phone number. The country code for calling Norway from abroad is ☎ 47.

Phoncards

Telekort (phoncards) are sold in Nkr40, Nkr90, Nkr140 and Nkr210 denominations and work out cheaper than using coins. Cards can be purchased at post offices and convenience stores. Credit cards can also be used with many cardphones. For making international calls, your cheapest bet is to forsake Telenor and buy a card issued by a private company. Usually costing Nkr100, these aren't inserted into phones – on the back are local access numbers and a PIN which you dial after following prompts. The cards can be used from a payphone (Nkr5) or private or hotel line (free). Some of the better cards for Western Europe, Australia and North America are EuroCity and Unity. Such cards are hard to find. Look for them in Oslo and Bergen in 'ethnic' grocery stores.

TIME

Time in Norway is one hour ahead of GMT/UTC, the same as Sweden, Denmark and most of Western Europe.

When telling time, note that in Norwegian the use of 'half' means *half before* rather than half past.

Norway observes daylight-saving time, with clocks set ahead one hour on the last Sunday in March and back an hour on the last Sunday in October. Timetables and business hours are posted according to the 24-hour clock.

TOURIST INFORMATION

There are tourist offices in nearly every town in Norway, usually near the train station, dock or town centre. In smaller towns they may be open only during peak summer months, while in cities they're open year-round.

The **Norges Turistråd** (Norwegian Tourist Board; ☎ 24 14 46 00; www.visitnorway.com; PO Box 722 Sentrum, N-0105 Oslo) will send you information on request. You can download brochures from their website.

Useful Norwegian Tourist Board offices abroad:

UK (☎ 020 7389 8800; www.norway.org.uk; 5th fl, Charles House, 5 Lower Regent St, London SW1Y 4LR)

USA & Canada (☎ 212-885-9700; www.norway.org; Suite 1810, 655 Third Ave, New York, NY 10017)

VISAS

Citizens of the USA, Canada, the UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand need a valid passport to visit Norway, but do not need a visa for stays of less than three months. The same is true for EU and European Economic Area (EEA – essentially EU and Scandinavia) countries, most of Latin America and most Commonwealth countries.

TRANSPORT IN NORWAY

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Oslo's **Gardermoen airport** (airport code OSL; ☎ 81 55 02 50; www.osl.no) is Norway's principal connection to major European and North American cities. Other international

airports, which have limited direct flight connections to international destinations: **Flesland airport, Bergen** (code BGO; ☎ 55 99 80 00; www.avinor.no)

Haugesund airport, Karmøy (code HAU; ☎ 33 42 70 02; www.avinor.no)

Kjevik airport, Kristiansand (code KRS; ☎ 38 06 56 00; www.torp.no)

Sola airport, Stavanger (code SVG; ☎ 51 65 80 00; www.avinor.no)

Torp airport, Sandefjord (code TRF; ☎ 33 42 70 02; www.torp.no)

Tromsø airport, Tromsø (code TOS; ☎ 77 64 84 00; www.avinor.no)

Værnes airport, Trondheim (code TRD; ☎ 74 84 30 00; www.avinor.no)

Airlines flying to and from Norway:

Aeroflot (airline code SU; ☎ 23 50 20 01; www.aeroflot.no)

Air France (airline code AF; ☎ 23 50 20 01; www.airfrance.no)

British Airways (airline code BA; ☎ 81 53 31 42; www.britishairways.com)

British Midland Airways (airline code BD; www.flybmi.com)

Finnair (airline code AY; ☎ 81 00 11 00; www.finnair.com)

Icelandair (airline code FI; ☎ 22 03 40 50; www.icelandair.com)

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines (code KL; ☎ 22 64 37 52; www.klm.com)

Lufthansa (airline code LH; ☎ 81 52 04 00; www.lufthansa.com)

Nordic Airlin (airline code LF; ☎ 24 14 87 58; www.flynordic.com)

Norwegian Air (airline code DY; ☎ 81 52 18 15; www.norwegian.no)

Ryanair (airline code XY; ☎ 82 00 07 20; www.ryanair.com)

SAS Braathens (airline code BU; ☎ 91 50 54 00; www.sasbraathens.no)

Spanair (airline code JK; ☎ 81 52 40 00; www.spanair.com)

Sterling (airline code NB; ☎ 81 55 88 10; www.sterling.dk)

Land

BUS

Eurolines (www.eurolines.com) runs buses to Oslo from hundreds of European cities, including Stockholm, Göteborg (Gothenburg) and Copenhagen.

Denmark

The **Säfflebus** (☎ 771-15 15 15; www.safflebussen.se) from Copenhagen to Oslo (Dkr250,

eight hours, five daily) runs via Malmö in Sweden. **Swebus Express** (☎ 0200 218 218; swebusexpress.se) also runs to/from Copenhagen (Skr450, 8½ hours, four daily).

Finland

The E8 highway runs from Tornio, in Finland, to Tromsø and secondary highways connect Finland with the northern Sami towns of Kautokeino and Karasjok. **Eskelisen Lapin Linjat** (☎ 016-342 2160 in Finland; www.eskelisen-lapinlinjat.com) runs buses from Rovaniemi (Finland) to Karasjok (€59, 6½ hours, year-round), Nordkapp (€96, twelve hours, via Karasjok; summer only) and Tromsø (€68, eight hours, summer only).

Sweden

Nor-Way Bussekspress (☎ 81 54 44 44; www.nor-way.no) runs from Oslo and Göteborg (Skr200, 4¼ hours, five daily) and Malmö (Skr340, 7½ hours, twice daily). **Swebus Express** (☎ 0200 218 218; www.swebusexpress.se.no) runs from Stockholm and Oslo (Skr435, 7½ hours, three daily). **Nordlandsbuss** (☎ 75 55 22 10; www.nbus.no) runs from Skellefteå and Bodø (Nkr400, nine hours, once daily except Saturday).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The main highways between Sweden and Norway are the E6 from Göteborg to Oslo, the E18 from Stockholm to Oslo, the E14 from Sundsvall to Trondheim and the E12 from Umeå to Mo i Rana. Many secondary roads also cross the border.

TRAIN

Sveriges Järnväg (SJ; ☎ 0771-757575; www.sj.se) runs trains from Stockholm (1st/2nd class Skr778/642, six hours, two daily), Göteborg (1st/2nd class Skr698/392, 7½ hours, one daily) and Malmö (1st-/2nd-class Skr945/794, 8½ hours) to Oslo. Journeys from Östersund to Trondheim via Storlien require a change of trains at the border. If you buy tickets seven days in advance, you can usually get a better rate. **Connex** (☎ 771 26 00 00 in Sweden; www.connex.se) trains run between Narvik and Stockholm (Skr649; 20 hours, three daily) via Kiruna (Skr210, three hours, three daily).

Sea

DENMARK

DFDS Seaways (☎ 22 41 90 90 in Norway, ☎ 33 42 33 42 in Denmark; www.dfdsseaways.com) runs daily

overnight ferries between Copenhagen and Oslo, with fares ranging from €80 to €400 depending on what time of year you travel and what kind of cabin you select.

Color Line (☎ 81 00 08 11 in Norway, ☎ 99 56 19 77 in Denmark; www.colorline.com) runs ferries between Hirtshals and Kristiansand (4½ hours, two to five daily); Larvik (6¼ hours, two to five daily); Stavanger (12 hours, three weekly); and Bergen (21 hours, three weekly). **Oslo ferries** run to/from Frederikshavn (9½ hours, one daily) and to/from Kiel (5½ hours, five weekly). Fares are the same for all routes – depending on the day of the week and the time of year, they range from €24 to €65 for passengers and from €59 to €264 for cars. Overnight routes require that you book a cabin for an additional charge.

Fjord Line (☎ 81 53 35 00 in Norway, ☎ 97 96 14 01 in Denmark; www.fjordline.com) sails from Hanstholm to Bergen (Nkr540, 16 hours, four weekly), stopping in Egersund en route. Cabins, cars and folding deck chairs cost extra.

Stena Line (☎ 23 17 91 00 in Norway, ☎ 02010 in Denmark; www.stenaline.com) operates daily ferries between Frederikshavn and Oslo (€47, 12 hours, six weekly). Cars cost extra.

ICELAND & FAROE ISLANDS

See **Smyril Line**, p502.

SWEDEN

DFDS Seaways (☎ 22 41 90 90 in Norway, ☎ 0526-62000 in Sweden; www.dfdsseaways.com) runs overnight ferries from Helsingborg to Oslo (passenger/car €65/120, 14 hours, one daily) and from Göteborg to Kristiansand (passenger/car €22/55, seven hours, three days weekly).

Color Line (☎ 81 00 08 11 in Norway, ☎ 0526-62000 in Sweden; www.colorline.com) runs between Strömstad (Sweden) and Sandefjord (€24, 2½ hours, two to six daily).

UK

Fjord Line (☎ 55 54 88 00 in Norway, ☎ 01595-690845 in UK; www.fjordline.com) sails from Newcastle to Bergen (€60 to €120, two to three weekly, from 21 hours). Some run to Stavanger. For cars and up to four passengers, packages begin at €240.

GETTING AROUND

Public transport in Norway is usually quite efficient, with trains, buses and ferries often timed to link effectively. The handy **NSB**

Togruter, available free at train stations, has rail schedules and information on connecting buses. Boat and bus departures vary with the season and the day, so pick up the latest *ruteplan* (timetables) from regional tourist offices. The Norwegian Tourist Board also publishes a free, annual national transport timetable.

When planning your route, particularly if heading into more remote areas, keep in mind that Saturday and Sunday bus services are often greatly reduced, and some are nonexistent on Saturday. Nearly every boat, bus and train offers a substantial discount (usually 50%) to students. Always ask when buying a ticket.

Air

Norway has nearly 50 airports, with scheduled commercial flights from Ny Ålesund (Svalbard) in the north to Kristiansand in the south. Air travel is worth considering, even by budget travellers, due to the great distances involved in overland travel.

Norway's main domestic airlines are:

Coast Air (☎ 81 54 44 42; www.coastair.no)

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

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

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

Bicycle

Given its great distances, hilly terrain and narrow roads, Norway is not ideally suited for extensive touring by bicycle. A big headache for long distance cyclists will be tunnels, and there are thousands of them.

A number of regions, however, are good for cycling. The *Sykkelguide* series of booklets, with maps and English text, is available from larger tourist offices for Nkr120 each – routes include Lofoten, Rallarvegen and the North Sea Cycle Route (from the Swedish border at Svinesund to Bergen). Bike rentals are easy to find; for example, from some tourist offices, hostels and camping grounds (usually around Nkr150 to Nkr200 per day). For further information, contact **Sykklistenes Landsforening** (☎ 22 47 30 30; post@sif.no) or visit www.bike-norway.com.

Rural buses, express ferries and non-express trains carry bikes for an additional fee (around Nkr100), but express trains don't allow them at all and international trains treat them as excess baggage (Nkr250). Norwegian Bussekspress charges half the adult

fare to transport a bicycle. If you plan to take your bike on long-distance trains, you must make a reservation well in advance.

Boat

An extensive network of ferries and express boats links Norway's offshore islands, coastal towns and fjord districts. See specific destinations for details.

CANAL

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 p325.

HURTIGRUTEN COASTAL STEAMER

For more than a century Norway's legendary **Hurtigruten** (☎ 81 03 00 00; www.hurtigruten.no) has been the lifeline for villages scattered along the western and northern coasts. The modern steamers still carry supplies and mail, though the passenger desks now resemble those found on cruise liners.

One ship heads north from Bergen every night, pulling into 35 ports on its 11-day journey to Kirkenes and back. With agreeable weather, expect spectacular scenery.

Many (but not all) ships accommodate deck-class travellers. Those that do have baggage rooms, shower rooms, 24-hour cafeterias and coin laundry, though you'll struggle to sleep among the 24-hour activity in the public lounges. Most passengers prefer cabins (Nkr300 to Nkr1000 per night).

Sample fares for trips from Bergen are Nkr1194 to Trondheim, Nkr2049 to Svølvær, Nkr2449 to Tromsø and Nkr3798 to Kirkenes. At many ports of call, you can leave the ship for several hours. Cars are carried for an extra fee. Students, children, seniors over 67 and accompanying spouses all receive 50% discount.

There are some great low-season deals: from September to April, passengers get 40% discount off basic fares for sailings on any day except Tuesday, with return journeys at a further 50% reduction on the return portion of the ticket.

Bus

Nor-Way Bussekspress (☎ 82 02 13 00; www.nor-way.no), the main carrier, has routes connecting every main city. There's a host of local

buses companies; most of them operate within a single county.

Most local and some long-distance bus schedules are drastically reduced on Saturday. Sunday and low-season schedules may also be reduced – and nonexistent in some cases. For a complete listing of timetables (and prices for major stops) pick up a copy of the free *Rutehefte* from larger bus stations. Tourist offices and bus stations have smaller timetables for routes passing through town.

BUS PASSES

Nor-Way Bussekspress offers nontransferable passes valid for 21 consecutive days (Nkr2300). With it, you can travel on the Oslo airport bus for free.

In Nordland, several Togbuss (train-bus) routes offer half-price fares to Eurail, InterRail and ScanRail passholders. It runs between Fauske and Bodø, Narvik, Tromsø, Svølvær and Harstad. InterRail and ScanRail passes get half-price bus tickets to/from the western fjords, between Oslo and Åndalsnes, Ålesund, Molde and Måløy, as well as various other routes in southern Norway.

COSTS

Tickets are sold on the buses or in advance at the station. Fares are based on the distance travelled, averaging Nkr150 for the first 100km. Many bus companies quote prices excluding any ferry costs. Most bus companies offer child, student, senior, group and family discounts of 25% to 50% – always ask.

RESERVATIONS

Advance reservations are almost never required in Norway, and Nor-Way Bussekspress even has a 'Seat Guarantee – No Reservation' policy. Unless there's more than 12 in your party – then you might be stuffed.

Car & Motorcycle

If you plan to drive through mountainous areas in winter or spring, check first to make sure the passes are open, as some are closed until May or June. The **Road User Information Centre** (☎ 175) can tell you about the latest road conditions. Main highways, such as the E16 from Oslo to Bergen and the E6

from Oslo to Kirkenes, are kept open year-round. Cars in snow-covered areas should have studded tyres or carry chains.

If you plan to travel along Norway's west coast, keep in mind that it isn't only mountainous, but deeply cut by fjords. While it's a spectacular route, travelling along the coast requires numerous ferry crossings, which can be time-consuming and costly. For a full list of ferry schedules, fares and reservation phone numbers, consider investing in a copy of *Rutebok for Norge*, the comprehensive transport guide available in larger bookshops. Some counties publish free booklets detailing bus and ferry timetables – tourist offices usually stock copies.

AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATIONS

For motoring information, contact the national automobile club, **Norges Automobil-Forbund** (NAF; ☎ 22 34 14 00; www.naf.no; Storgata 2, N-0105 Oslo). For 24-hour breakdown assistance call the NAF on ☎ 81 00 05 05. Ask your home automobile association for a Letter of Introduction (Lettre de Recommendation), which entitles you to services offered by affiliated organisations in Norway.

DRIVING LICENCE

Short-term visitors may hire a car with only their home country's driving licence.

FUEL

Leaded and unleaded petrol is available at most petrol stations. Regular unleaded averages Nkr9 per litre in the south, and can be well over Nkr10 per litre in the north. In towns, there are some 24-hour petrol stations, but most close by 10pm or midnight. In rural areas, many stations close in the early evening and don't open on weekends. Many don't take foreign credit cards.

HIRE

Major car-rental companies, such as Hertz, Avis, Rent-a-Wreck and Europcar, have offices at airports and in city centres. Car rentals are expensive: the walk-in rate for a compact car with free 200km is about Nkr1000 a day, including VAT and insurance. You're likely to get much better deals by booking with an international agency before you arrive in Norway.

One relatively good deal is the weekend rate offered by major car-rental companies,

which allows you to pick up a car after noon on Friday and keep it until 10am on Monday for about Nkr1400 – make sure it includes unlimited kilometres.

To rent a car you must be at least 21 years old with at least one year's driving experience and hold a valid driver's licence.

INSURANCE

Third-party car insurance (unlimited cover for personal injury and Nkr1 million for property damage) is compulsory and, if you're bringing a vehicle from abroad, you'll have fewer headaches with an insurance company Green card, which outlines the coverage granted by your home policy. Ensure your vehicle is insured for ferry crossings.

ROAD RULES

In Norway, traffic keeps to the right. All vehicles, including motorcycles, must have their headlights on at all times. The use of seat belts is mandatory and children under the age of four must have their own seat or safety restraint. You're required to carry a red warning triangle in your car for use in the event of breakdown. Motorcycle helmets are mandatory; motorcycles cannot park on the pavement and must follow the same parking regulations as cars.

On motorways and other main roads, the maximum speed is generally 80km/h (a few roads have segments allowing 90km/h or 100km/h), while speed limits on through roads in built-up areas are generally 50km/h. Mobile police units lurk at roadsides. In particular, watch for signs designating *Automatisk Trafikkontrol*, which means that there's a speed camera ahead. Big, ugly and grey, these boxes will nab you for even 5km/h over the limit. Fines range from Nkr1000 to well over Nkr10,000.

Tolls are common on highways, bridges and tunnels. Make sure you have plenty of cash (and loose change) to pay for tickets; if you pass an automatic toll station without paying, call in at the next petrol station or tourist office and ask for assistance on how to pay in retrospect and avoid a whopping fine. Rental-car agencies will automatically add fines (including speed-camera tickets) to your credit-card bill.

Drink-driving laws are strict in Norway: the maximum permissible blood alcohol

concentration is 0.02% and violators are subject to severe fines and/or imprisonment.

The speed limit for caravans (and cars pulling trailers) is usually 10km/h less than for cars. There are a few mountain roads where caravans are forbidden and numerous other roads that are only advisable for experienced drivers, as backing up may be necessary to allow approaching traffic to pass. For a map outlining these roads, and caravan rules, contact **Vegdirektoratet** (☎ 22 07 35 00; Gaustadalleen 25, N-0371 Oslo).

Hitching

Hitching is legal but uncommon.

Train

Norway has an excellent, though somewhat limited, national rail system. **NSB** (Norges Statsbaner, Norwegian State Railways; ☎ 81 50 08 88; www.nsb.no) operates most lines.

Second-class travel is comfortable. Komfort-class travel, which costs Nkr75 more, isn't worth the extra tariff, unless you really dig free coffee.

Discounted Minipris tickets are sometimes available. Extremely cheap, you could travel from Oslo to Bergen for Nkr199 or to Stavanger for Nkr299. These tickets may only be purchased online, at least a day in advance. Buy early – these sell out.

The Norway Rail Pass (US\$218/258/298 for three/four/five days' travel within one month) allows unlimited train travel for three to eight days within Norway. Purchase before or after you arrive in Norway. The Flåm line isn't covered (there's a 30% discount). There's a 50% discount on Bergen–Stavanger ferries.

Regular fares from Oslo are Nkr716 to Bergen, Nkr692 to Åndalsnes, Nkr833 to Stavanger and Nkr797 to Trondheim. On many long-distance trains reservations (Nkr35) are mandatory.

Second-class sleepers provide high standard compartments. These cost Nkr750 and have two beds.

Most train stations have luggage lockers for Nkr15 to Nkr40 and many also have a luggage-storage room.