

# Faroe Islands

Adrift in the foggy North Atlantic Ocean midway between the north of Scotland and Iceland, the stunning Faroe Islands are a largely undiscovered slice of Scandinavia, where the terms 'remote' and 'windswept' usually feel inadequate.

Yet from the first moment you catch sight of these majestic grass-coated rocks that jut vertically out of the water, you'll be glad you made the decision to come. With the scenery dwarfing the colourful villages and turf-roofed churches nestled within it, a dizzying collection of sea cliffs (including the world's highest) and a fascinating old Norse culture to explore, the Faroes won't disappoint anyone looking for accessible adventure.

Made up of 18 islands, each with a personality and identity of its own, the Faroes will appeal to anyone who likes unforgettable scenery, long walks, clean air and watching birdlife on an unprecedented scale. Less expected is the islands' buzzing art and music scene, its raucous taverns and the friendly capital city of Tórshavn. So even if the weather proves uncooperative, this self-assured little demi-nation is likely to surprise and delight even the most cynical traveller.

## FAST FACTS

- **Area** 1399 sq km
- **Capital** Tórshavn
- **Currency** Danish krone (Dkr): €1 = Dkr7.44; US\$1 = Dkr5.61, UK£1 = Dkr8.29, \$A1 = Dkr4.06, CA\$1 = Dkr4.66, NZ\$1 = Dkr3.16, ¥100 = Dkr5.76
- **Famous for** puffins, wool, whales, Viking sagas
- **Official Languages** Faroese, Danish
- **Phrases** *góðan dag* (hello), *takk* (thanks), *farvæl* (goodbye), *orsaka meg* (excuse me)
- **Population** 48,668
- **Telephone Codes** country code ☎ 298; international access code ☎ 00
- **Visa** not required for citizens of the EU, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (see p134)



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Take to the skies and see the Faroes at their most dramatic on a great value **helicopter trip** (p135) linking the further-flung islands like a bus service.
- Brave the waves beneath the towering bird cliffs on magical boat tours from **Vestmanna** (p123) or **Gjógv** (p124), the Faroes' prettiest village.
- Gasp at the superb panorama of cliffs and headlands viewed from **Kallur light-house** (p126), one of the Faroes' most rewarding short hikes.
- Hike across spectacular cliffs and wander among the largest puffin colonies in the country on peaceful **Mykines** (p122).

## ITINERARIES

- **Two nights/three days** Head straight for Vestmanna for a boat ride along the spectacular bird cliffs. If driving, continue to charming Gjógv with side trips to Saksun and Eiði outbound, and Funningur, Elduvík and Kirkjubøur on return. Spend the last night in Tórshavn strolling the historical Tinganes district and exploring the lively pubs.
- **Ten days** Fly in on a Friday and take the boat the next morning out to the puffin island of Mykines. Returning on Sunday by helicopter to the capital Tórshavn. Visit the old town, flit up to the Vestmanna Bird Cliffs, explore northern Eysturoy then head for Klaksvík, the launching point for day-trip excursions to Kalsoy and the dramatic boat trip to Fugloy. On Friday buzz by helicopter to Froðba on Suðuroy, explore for a day or two and then return back to Tórshavn by ferry.

### CONNECTIONS

The Faroes are well connected to the rest of the region by the Norröna car ferry. For a real Atlantic adventure, pick up the ferry anywhere along its route: it starts out in Hanstholm (Denmark), and stops in Bergen (Norway), Lerwick (Shetland Islands) before arriving at Tórshavn and the heading on to Seyðisfjörður (Iceland).

### HOW MUCH?

- **Norðoya toll-tunnel fare** Dkr130
- **Sheepskin jacket** Dkr2600
- **Cuddly toy puffin** Dkr500
- **Medium-sized Faroese flag** Dkr200
- **Faroese sweater** Dkr750-1200

### LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L of blýfrítt (unleaded petrol)** Dkr9.33
- **1.5L bottle of water** Dkr20
- **330ml bottle of Black Sheep beer (in a pub)** Dkr30
- **Souvenir T-shirt** Dkr150
- **Street snack of fish and chips** Dkr40

## CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The Faroes joke that they enjoy 'four seasons in one day' – its weather is theatrically unpredictable, but you're usually guaranteed some rain, some sun, some cloud and some wind on any given day. Rainfall is very common (280 days per year on average) but unpredictable and often highly localised.

June to August is by far the best time to visit the Faroe Islands. Days are dreamily long and the weather is comparatively passable, though don't expect anything near Mediterranean heat: July temperatures average only 11°C. In winter, time stands still as daytime darkness, closed hotels and shuttered museums add to the stormy sense of a land forgotten. While never fearfully cold (January average 3°C), it can snow as late as May.

## HISTORY

According to Irish missionary Brendan, Celtic monks were already living in eremitic seclusion on the Faroes by the 6th century. Their isolation was ended from around AD 800 when the first Norse farmers arrived. The farmers' independence dwindled with the often forceful imposition of Christianity, and the isles became part of the Kingdom of Norway in 1035. The first bishop's seat was established in Kirkjubøur.

The Faroese parliament (Løgting) lost further influence after Norway fell to Denmark