



Southern Norway

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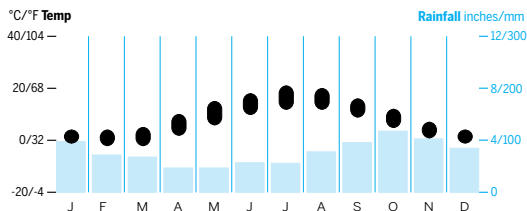
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Why Go?

Come summer, the southern coastline draws Norwegian holidaymakers in droves. With a string of pristine coastal villages of whitewashed timber beside an island-studded sea, it's not difficult to see why. For travellers, the 'Norwegian Riviera' offers a chance to experience a totally different destination from that of the fjords and high plateaus of the tourist brochures, one that is at once cosmopolitan and essentially Norwegian.

Venture inland and the scenery turns ever more dramatic. Deep in the region's interior is Rjukan, gateway to some of Norway's most scenic high country – the Hardangervidda National Park and the spectacularly formed mountain of Gausta. Elsewhere, scattered among a landscape smothered in forest and decorated in dark lakes filled with beavers, you'll discover idyllic, remote villages, wooden stave churches and a rich traditional culture.

When to Go Kristiansand



Feb–Mar Prime season for ice-climbing, skiing and dog-sledging in Rjukan.

Jul For south-coast beach towns at their most lively.

Aug–Sep Inland trails beckon as the autumn colours begin to appear.

THE COAST

You probably didn't come to Norway for the beaches, but if you did, expect to be accompanied by masses of local tourists drawn by the lure of a paddle and picturesque islands. The towns along the coast are gorgeous, but *way* overpriced in peak season.

Tønsberg

POP 41,485

Tønsberg is the oldest town in Norway, although so distant are its origins that few interesting remnants remain. There are nonetheless a few Viking-era ruins and a decrepit castle that make the town worth a brief detour as you head along the coast.

Sights

Tønsberg Castle

FORTRESS

(Castrum Tunsbergis; ☀ tower noon-5pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) **FREE** Tønsberg Castle, spread across the hill behind the town, was the largest fortress in Norway in the 13th century. In 1503 the Swedes destroyed what they could, but nonetheless, the modern (1888), 17m-high **Slottsfjell-stårnet tower** provides a good viewpoint over the ruins. Parts of the 600m-long outer wall remain intact, while the extant medieval stone foundations include **King Magnus Lagabøte's keep**, the 1191 **Church of St Michael**, the **hall of King Håkon Håkons-son** and various **guard towers**. The park is always open.

Vestfold County Museum


MUSEUM

(Vestfold Fylkesmuseum; www.vfm.no; Farmannsveien 30; adult/child Nkr60/40, Tue free; ☀ 11am-4pm mid-May-mid-Sep, shorter hours rest of year) At the foot of **Slottsfjellet** (Castle Rock) at the northern end of town, a five-minute walk northwest of the train station, this museum's highlights include displays on the excavation of the impressive **Oseberg Viking ship** (now shown in Oslo's Viking Ship Museum), a collection of historic period-furnished farm buildings, and a section on Tønsberg's whaling history.

Sleeping

Tønsberg Vandrerhjem

HOSTEL €

(☎ 33 31 21 75; tonsberg@hihostels.no; Dronning Blancasgata 22; dm Nkr350, s/d with shared bathroom Nkr750/850, d with bathroom Nkr895, q Nkr1600; ) This exceptionally well-run and friendly hostel is well equipped, clean

and tidy, and just a five-minute walk from the train station. The common areas would be the envy of many a fancy hotel. A good breakfast is served. The reception area is shut between noon and 3pm.


Thon Hotel Brygga

BUSINESS HOTEL €€

(☎ 33 34 49 00; www.thonhotels.no; Nedre Langgate 40; d Nkr1115; ) Inside a traditional wooden warehouse, this modern waterfront hotel has pleasant, if smallish, rooms and great breakfasts; it's popular with car-tripping families.

Quality Hotel Tønsberg

BUSINESS HOTEL €€€

(☎ 33 00 41 00; www.nordicchoicehotels.com; Ollebukta 3; d Nkr1480; ) Big chain hotel with neat, stylish rooms and lots of public space by the waterfront. The rooftop pool and deck is a bonus when the weather's good. Parking is a steep Nkr189 per day.

Eating

Tønsberg has dozens of decent restaurants, with the best atmosphere along the water.

Restaurant Havariet

INTERNATIONAL €€

(☎ 33 35 83 90; havariet.no; Nedre Langgate 30e; mains Nkr110-325; ☀ 11am-1am) Arguably the most popular along the waterfront, this place offers solid pub grub in a warm, inviting interior. It has good-value lunch deals and plenty of marine life on the menu, including some tasty, if sometimes overburdened, salads.

Roar I Bva

SEAFOOD €€

(roaribua.com; Nedre Langgate; sandwiches Nkr80-99, mains Nkr150-199; ☀ 10am-6pm) This cute wooden shack is half fishmonger and half seafood cafe. However you choose to class it, the well-priced fish is so fresh it might well flop off your plate and back into the sea. If you're looking for picnic provisions, grab a slab of its smoked salmon to take away.

Information

Tourist Office (☎ 48 06 33 33; www.visit-tonsberg.com; Storgaten 38; ☀ 9am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat mid-Jun-early Aug, 9am-2pm Mon-Fri rest of year) Just off the main square.

Getting There & Around

The **Tønsberg Rutebilstasjon** (☎ 33 30 01 00; Jernbanegaten) is a block south of the train station. Nor-Way Bussekspress buses run to/from Kristiansand (Nkr425, 4½ hours, one to two daily) via most coastal towns en route, including