



Trøndelag

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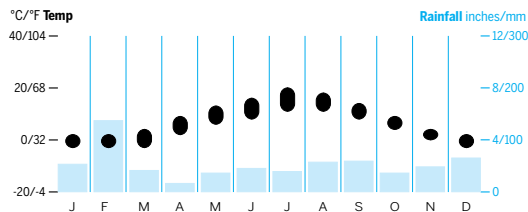
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Why Go?

Trøndelag, where Norway begins to narrow and head for the Arctic, may be small but it sure packs a lot in. Trondheim is the centrepiece, a beguiling city brimful of historic architecture, including Nidaros Cathedral, Scandinavia's largest medieval structure. But Trondheim's present is as appealing as its past, with buzzing student life and pretty waterfront restaurants and bars. Not far away to the northeast, and an easy detour from the Arctic Highway, atmospheric Stiklestad is famous as the site of the martyrdom of King Olav (St Olav) and lies at the heart of every Norwegian's sense of national identity. Elsewhere in Trøndelag is quintessential Norway, a region of rumpled hills, stippled with ox-blood-coloured farmsteads and ruffled green with wheat and barley. Here, there's always water near at hand, whether sea, lake or incised fjord with fascinating coastal settlements worth lingering over.

When to Go

Trondheim



Mid- to late Jun Winter has retreated, and visitors are relatively few.

Last week of Jul Festivities in honour of St Olav in Trondheim and Stiklestad.

Sep Trondheim has a fresh buzz as its student population returns.

TRONDHEIM

POP 182,035

Trondheim, Norway's original capital, is nowadays the country's third-largest city after Oslo and Bergen. With wide streets and a partly pedestrianised heart, it's a simply lovely city with a long history. Fuelled by a large student population, it buzzes with life, has some good cafes and restaurants, and is rich in museums. All the while, boats come and go and seagulls screech overhead. You *can* absorb it in one busy day, but it merits more if you're to slip into its lifestyle.

History

In 997, King Olav Tryggvason moored his longboat alongside a broad sandbank at Nidaros (meaning 'mouth of the River Nid') and established his farm. One plausible theory has it that Leifur Eiríksson (or Leif Ericson as he's usually transcribed in English) visited the king there before setting sail for Iceland and Greenland and possibly becoming the first European to set foot in North America. (If you're from the USA, the Viking staring out to sea near the Hurtigruten quay may seem familiar. That's because he's an exact replica of the Ericson statue in Seattle that commemorates the tens of thousands of Norwegian emigrants to the New World.)

In 1030 another, subsequently more famous, King Olav (Haraldsson) was martyred in battle at Stiklestad, about 90km to the northeast, and canonised. Nidaros became a centre for pilgrims from all over Europe, its bishopric embracing Norway, Orkney, the Isle of Man, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. It served as the capital of Norway until 1217, ruling an empire that extended from what is now western Russia to, possibly, the shores of Newfoundland. The cult of St Olav continued until the Reformation in 1537, when Norway was placed under the Lutheran bishopric of Denmark.

After a fire razed most of the city in 1681, Trondheim was redesigned with wide

streets. It enjoyed its golden age in the 18th century, when merchants outdid each other in the grandeur of their dwellings. The city's location became key once again in WWII, when German naval forces made it their base for northern Norway, although fortunately the city avoided major damage. Nowadays, Trondheim, with its Norwegian University of Science & Technology and a research institute that employs more than 2000 staff, is the recognised technological capital of Norway.

The epicentre of town is Torvet, the central square (also spelt 'Torget') with its statue of King Olav Tryggvason atop a column that acts as a huge sundial.

Sights

★ Nidaros Domkirke

CATHEDRAL

(www.nidarosdomen.no; Kongsgårdsgata; adult/child/family Nkr70/30/170, tower Nkr30; ☉9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat, 9am-5pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) Nidaros Cathedral is Scandinavia's largest medieval building. Outside, the ornately embellished, altar-like west wall has top-to-bottom statues of biblical characters and Norwegian bishops and kings, sculpted in the early 20th century. Several are copies of medieval originals, housed nowadays in the museum. Within, the cathedral is subtly lit (just see how the vibrantly coloured, modern stained-glass glows, especially in the rose window at the west end), so let your eyes attune to the gloom.

The altar sits over the original grave of St Olav, the Viking king who replaced the Nordic pagan religion with Christianity. The original stone cathedral was built in 1153, when Norway became a separate archbishopric. The current transept and chapter house were constructed between 1130 and 1180 and reveal Anglo-Norman influences (many of the craftsmen were brought in from England), while the Gothic choir and ambulatory were completed in the early 14th century. The nave, repeatedly ravaged by fire across the centuries, is mostly a faithful 19th-century reconstruction.

Down in the crypt is a display of medieval carved tombstones (the majority restored from fragments since many headstones were broken up and carted away to be recycled in domestic buildings). Look for one inscribed in English and dedicated to William Miller, Shipmaster, of Dundee, Scotland, who met his end near Trondheim in the 18th century.

COMBINATION TICKET

If you're planning to visit all three sights within the Nidaros Cathedral complex, it's worthwhile purchasing a combined ticket (adult/child/family Nkr140/60/340) that gives access to the cathedral, Archbishop's Palace museum and the crown jewels.