

# Norway

## The Western Fjords

(PDF Chapter)

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# The Western Fjords

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## Why Go?

Scoured and gouged by glaciers, ancient and modern, western Norway's deep, sea-drowned valleys are pinched by steep, rugged terrain. It's a landscape that is so utterly unique and so profoundly beautiful that it is one of the most desirable destinations in the world.

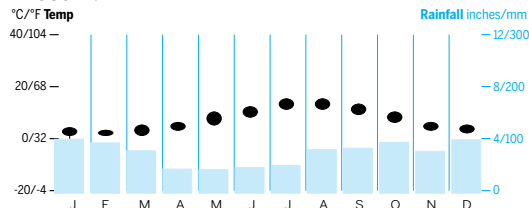
Although overshadowed by the sublime fjords, the coastline is nonetheless extraordinary, blasted by an often ferocious ocean and backed closely by deep green mountain peaks.

Ferries are a way of life in the west. These reliable workhorses make navigating the insane geography possible but are also an enjoyable part of your journey, offering staggering, otherwise inaccessible, panoramas.

This is great hiking country, whether wild walking, following one of the many signed trails or lumbering along in a guided glacier-walking group. And if, after so much fresh air, you crave some small-town sophistication, the bijou art nouveau settlement of Ålesund has that in spades.

## When to Go

### Ålesund



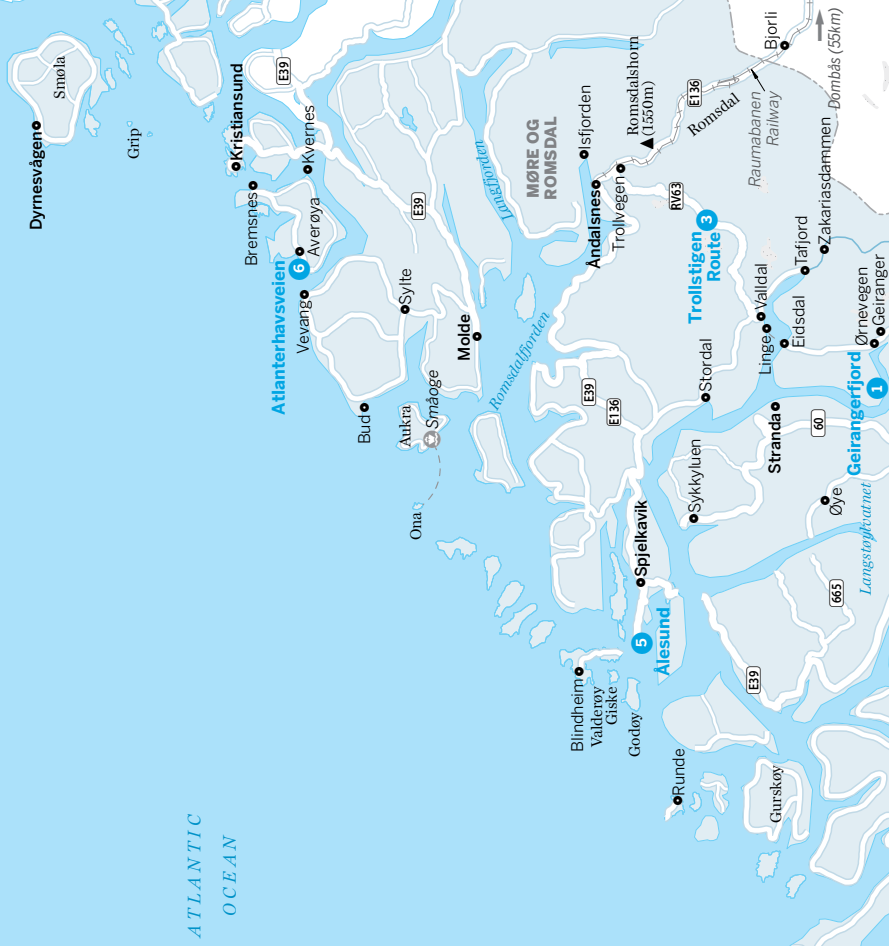
**Early Jul** Norsk Fjellfestival in stunning Åndalsnes, a folk and outdoor celebration.

**Mid-Jul** Molde parties all week long during Moldejazz.

**Late Aug** Savour Ålesund's seafood haul during the town's Norwegian Food Festival.

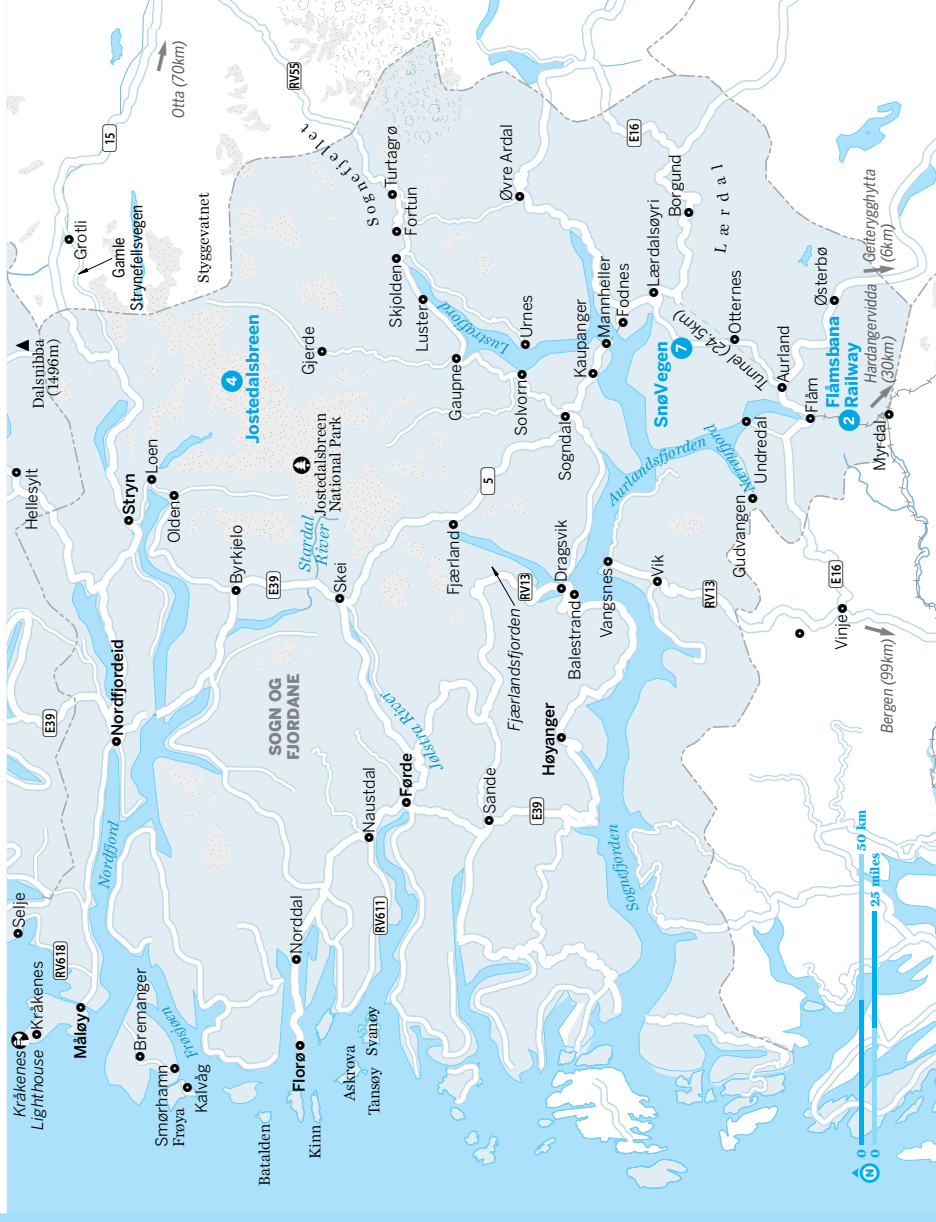
## The Western Fjords Highlights

- 1 Cruise between Geiranger and Hellesylt in the embrace of the towering cliffs of **Geirangerfjord** (p236).
- 2 Ride the dramatic **Flåmsbana railway** (p210) between wild Hardangervidda and Flåm.
- 3 Take the other-worldly **Trollstigen road** (p232) between Andalsnes and Valldal.
- 4 Get your boots damp on a tiny icy tongue of the vast **Jostedalsgreen icecap** (p222).
- 5 Immerse yourself in the Jugendstil era in architecturally unique **Ålesund** (p240).



**6** Witness the ferocious power of the sea along the Atlantic Ocean Road, **Atlantterhavsveien** (p281).

**7** Drive or ride the spectacular Snow Road, **Snøvegen** (p214), between Aurland and Lærdal.



## SOGNEFJORDEN

Sognefjorden, the world's second-longest (203km) and Norway's deepest (1308m) fjord, cuts a deep slash across the map of western Norway. In places, sheer walls rise more than 1000m above the water, while elsewhere a gentler shoreline supports farms, orchards and villages. The broad, main waterway is impressive, but cruise into its narrower arms, such as the deep and lovely Nærøyfjord to Gudvangen, for idyllic views of abrupt cliff faces and cascading waterfalls.

### **i** Getting There & Away

**Norled** ([www.norled.no](http://www.norled.no)) operates a daily express boat between Bergen and both Flåm (Nkr750, 5½ hours) and Sogndal (Nkr645, 4¾ hours), stopping along the way at 10 small towns including Vik (Nkr510, 3½ hours) and Balestrand (Nkr545, 3¾ hours). Several local ferries also link Sognefjord towns, and there's an extensive, if infrequent, bus network.

## Flåm

POP 450

Flåm, at the head of Aurlandsfjorden, sits in a truly spectacular setting. As a stop on the popular Norway in a Nutshell tour, this tiny village receives over 500,000 visitors every year. It's a charming place, but this piece of heaven can turn hellish if too many of those visitors end up here at the same time.

### **i** WESTERN FJORDS WEBSITES

These websites will help in your planning.

**[www.fjordnorway.com](http://www.fjordnorway.com)** Detailed coverage of the fjords region.

**[www.nordfjord.no](http://www.nordfjord.no)** Equally comprehensive about Nordfjord.

**[www.visitmr.com](http://www.visitmr.com)** Møre og Romsdal region's official website with a host of useful links.

**[www.fjordkysten.no](http://www.fjordkysten.no)** Covers the region's northern coastline.

**[www.sognefjord.no](http://www.sognefjord.no)** Great for the whole of Sognefjord and its environs.

**[www.stavechurch.com](http://www.stavechurch.com)** A great introduction to stave churches, plus in-depth coverage of the major ones.

The seasonal **tourist office** (☎ 57 63 33 13; [www.visitflam.com](http://www.visitflam.com); ☀ 8.30am-8pm Jun-Aug, 8.30am-4pm May & Sep) is in the train station.

### **👁** Sights

#### Flåmsbana Railway

SCENIC RAILWAY

([www.flaamsbana.no](http://www.flaamsbana.no); adult/child one way Nkr300/150, return Nkr400/300) A 20km-long engineering wonder hauls itself up 864m of altitude gain through 20 tunnels. At a gradient of 1:18, it's the world's steepest railway that runs without cable or rack wheels. It takes a full 45 minutes to climb to Myrdal on the bleak, treeless Hardangervidda plateau, past thundering waterfalls (there's a photo stop at awesome Kjosfossen). The railway runs year-round, with up to 10 departures daily in summer.

#### Flåmsbana Museum

MUSEUM

(☎ 9am-7pm May-Sep, shorter hours rest of year) **FREE** This little museum is right by the Flåmsbana Railway platform. It's not, however, just about railways: there are fascinating photos of construction gangs and life in and around Flåm before cars and buses made it this far up the fjords.

### **🚲** Activities

To simply pedal along the shoreline or for something more strenuous, rent a bike from the tourist office (Nkr50/250 per hour/day). The tourist office also has six easy-to-interpret free sheets describing local walks, varying from 45 minutes to five hours, with routes superimposed upon aerial photos.

#### Riding the Rallarvegen

CYCLING

([www.rallarvegen.com](http://www.rallarvegen.com)) Cyclists can descend the Rallarvegen, the service road originally used by the navvies who constructed the Flåmsbana railway, for 83km from Haugastøl (1000m) or an easier 56km from Finse. You can rent bicycles from the **Haugastøl Turistsenter** (☎ 32 08 75 64; Haugastølvegen, Haugastøl; 2-day bike hire incl return transport from Flåm weekday/weekend Nkr480/580) and the company also offers packages that include accommodation.

#### Njord

KAYAKING

(☎ 91 31 66 28; [www.njord.as](http://www.njord.as)) Njord operates from Flåm's handkerchief of a beach. It offers a two-hour sea-kayaking induction (Nkr350), three-hour gentle fjord paddle (Nkr550) and four-hour paddle and hike trips (Nkr710), plus multiday kayaking, hiking and camping trips.

**Fjord Safari**

ADVENTURE

(www.fjordsafari.com; adult/child 1½hr trips Nkr480/290, 3hr Nkr690/420) Bounce along in a Zodiac/RIB inflatable to see more of the fjord in less time. The team supplies full-length waterproof kit – you'll need it for this exhilarating scoot across the waters. Trips, with stops, last from 1½ hours (adult/child Nkr510/310) to three hours (adult/child Nkr610/380).

**Flåm Marina****og Apartement Boat Hire**

BOAT HIRE

(☎ 57 63 35 55) If you'd like to paddle your own canoe, row or simply sit back at the tiller, Flåm Marina og Apartement, a five-minute walk from the jetty, hires out rowing boats and canoes and motorboats.

**🛏 Sleeping****★ Flåm Camping & Hostel**

HOSTEL, CAMPGROUND ●

(☎ 57 63 21 21; www.flaam-camping.no; car/caravan sites Nkr215/220, dm/s/tw/q Nkr300/500/865/1255, with shared bathroom Nkr230/390/650/950; ☀ Mar-Oct; 📶) Family-run and built on the site of their old family farm, there's a lot of love gone into every aspect of this operation. Rooms, from dorms to ensuite doubles, are spread across the lush site, each with a stylish simplicity of their own. Campsites are idyllically located too. In a gorgeous spot a few minutes' walk from the station.

It has been consistently judged by Hostel-ling International as one of the best in Norway and the world.

**Flåm Marina og Apartement**

APARTMENTS ●●

(☎ 57 63 35 55; www.flammarina.no; apt Nkr1198) This modern block, right at the water's edge, offers a magnificent outlook down the length of the fjord from the terrace of its small bar-cafe (dishes Nkr110 to Nkr185), open to all. Its 10 self-catering apartments, comfortable for two, can sleep up to five (Nkr300 extra per bed); living spaces have fjord views but bedrooms are tucked away.

**Heimly Pensjonat**

GUESTHOUSE ●●

(☎ 57 63 23 00; www.heimly.no; s/d Nkr795/1195; 📶) Overlooking the water on the fringe of the village and away from all the port hubbub, this 1930s home has basic rooms. The more expensive ones have magnificent views right down the fjord.

**Fretheim Hotel**

HOTEL ●●●

(☎ 57 63 63 00; www.fretheim-hotel.no; s/d Nkr1195/2190; 📶📶📶) A haunt of fly-fishing English aristocracy in the 19th century, the vast, 122-room Fretheim, despite its size, manages to be intimate and welcoming. In the original 1870s building, 17 rooms have been restored to their historic selves, although with full modern comfort, while the American wings are straight-up contemporary luxe.

The hotel will arrange and advise on walking and bike trips. Exertions over, the 3rd-floor bar in the tower does a great range of beers and is a pleasant place to enjoy the view (but for the very best panorama, climb the spiral staircase to the glass-floored eyrie at the top).

**Flåmsbrygga**

HOTEL ●●●

(☎ 57 63 20 50; www.flamsbrygga.no; s/d Nkr1390/1790) All but two of the rustic, woody rooms in this modern dockside place have a balcony, making for some superb fjord vistas. It's a busy location, but super handy to everything, including the attached pub and restaurant, Ægir Bryggeri.

**🍴 Eating & Drinking****Restaurant Arven**

RESTAURANT ●●●

(☎ 57 63 63 00; Fretheim Hotel; set menu/buffet Nkr545/464) At the Fretheim Hotel's restaurant, chefs salt and smoke their own meat and there's an 'ecological and local' menu, sourced from the region's agricultural college. You can also sample locally raised lamb, reindeer and goat kid, grilled in the barbecue hut.

**Ægir Bryggeri**

BREW PUB

(www.flamsbrygga.no/bryggeri; ☀ noon-10pm May–mid-Sep, from 6pm rest of year) Looking for all the world like a stave church, Ægir Brewery, all appealing woodwork and flagstones, offers six different kinds of draught beer, all brewed on the spot. It also does a tasty, creative take on Norwegian comfort food as well as burgers and pizzas (Nkr160 to Nkr210).

**📍 Getting There & Away****BOAT**

From Flåm, boats head out to towns around Sognefjorden. The most scenic trip from Flåm is the passenger ferry up Nærøfjord to Gudvangen (one way/return Nkr295/400). It leaves Flåm at 3.10pm year-round and up to five times daily between May and September. You can also hop aboard in Aurland. At Gudvangen, a connecting

## BUSES FROM FLÅM

DESTINATION	PRICE (NKR)	DURATION	FREQUENCY (DAILY)
Gudvangen	52	20min	4-8
Aurland	36	15min	4-8
Sogndal	184	1¾hr	2-6
Lærdalsøyri	95	45min	2-6
Bergen	330	3hr	2-6

bus takes you on to Voss, where you can pick up the train for Bergen or Oslo. The tourist office sells all ferry tickets, plus the Flåm to Voss ferry-bus combination. From Flåm-Bergen, there's at least one daily express boat (Nkr695, 5½ hours) via Balestrand (Nkr265, 1½ hours).

### TRAIN

Flåm is the only Sognefjorden village with a rail link, via the magnificent Flåmsbana railway. There are train connections to Oslo and Bergen at Myrdal.

## Aurland

POP 777

Peaceful Aurland is much less hectic than its neighbour, Flåm, a mere 10km south along the fjord. These days it's renowned as one end of Lærdalstunnel (24.5km), the world's longest road tunnel. This essential link in the E16 highway connects Oslo and Bergen; before its completion traffic had to ferry-hop between Lærdal and Gudvangen. It's a fast alternative to the sinuous and seasonal 45km-long Snøvegen. Your choice: speed and convenience, or a hair-raising, view-feast on the ascent and descent, and an eerily serene, waterfall and lake-strewn high mountain plateau in the middle.

It also marks the end of the spectacular Aurlandsdalen hiking route.

### Activities

The Aurland and Lærdal tourist offices have produced six walker-friendly sheets of local walks, where the route is superimposed upon an aerial photo.

### Flåm to Aurland Hike

HIKE

For consistently outstanding views and near solitude, hike the 12km trail that mainly follows the old road between Aurland and Flåm, passing by Otternes. Until 1919 and the construction of the coast road, it was the

only means of land communication between the two villages. Allow around three hours.

### Geiteryggen to Aurland Hike

HIKE

The classic trek down Aurlandsdalen from Geiteryggen to Aurland follows a stream from source to sea as you tramp one of the oldest trading routes between eastern and western Norway. From mid-July, you can start this four-day walk in Finse, on the Oslo-Bergen rail line, with overnight stops at Geiterygghytta, Steinbergdalen and Østerbø.

The final section, usually open between early June and late September, from Østerbø (820m) to Vassbygdi (95m) is the most scenic and makes for a hugely enjoyable day hike (allow six to seven hours). Buses run twice daily between Aurland and both Vassbygdi (15 minutes) and Østerbø (one hour).

### Sleeping & Eating

#### Lunde Gard & Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎99 70 47 01; www.lunde-camping.no; campsites Nkr240, cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr600, with bathroom Nkr1050, 3-bed apt Nkr820; ☺ May-Sep; ☺) This small campsite nestles agreeably beside a river, 1.2km up a side valley. Kitchen and toilet facilities are impeccable.

#### Vangsgaarden

HOTEL €€

(☎57 63 35 80; www.vangsgaarden.no; d/f Nkr1100/1350, 4-bed cabins Nkr1250 (linen per person Nkr65); 🚽) Four 18th-century buildings along with six cabins down at sea level and the **Duehuset (Dovecot) Cafe & Pub** (mains from Nkr129; ☺ 3-11pm Jun-Aug) make up this friendly prime waterfront place. Some rooms are furnished in antique style, others are simpler. It's atmospheric – the dining room, for example, could be your grandmother's parlour – and the gardens are pretty.

#### Aurland Fjordhotell

HOTEL €€

(☎57 63 35 05; www.aurland-fjordhotell.com; s/d from Nkr920/1240) At this 30-room, family-owned hotel, most rooms have fjord

views and balcony. It's old-fashioned, but both comfortable and friendly.

### Aurlandskafeen

(mains Nkr110-170; ☺10am-9pm) A typical small-town Norwegian cafe but with a neat little terrace overlooking the rippling river where it flows into Aurlandsfjord, plus all-day beer and wine.

CAFE €

## i Information

**Aurland Tourist Office** (☎57 63 33 13; www.alr.no; ☺9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-5.30pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) The tourist office is beside the village church.

## i Getting There & Away

Buses run up to eight times daily between Aurland and Flåm (Nkr36, 15 minutes) and up to six times daily between Aurland and Lærdal (Nkr83, 30 minutes). Express buses to/from Bergen (Nkr300, three hours) call in up to six times daily.

Watch out for the speed cameras in Lærdalstunnelen – all 24.5km of them.

## Undredal

POP 112

Undredal, tucked midway between Flåm and Gudvangen, is a truly lovely little village, its pleasures enhanced – and its traditional quality sustained – because you need to make that bit of extra effort to get there. However, it has recently been added as a brief stop to some boat tours and its former tranquillity is at risk.

Undredal's local claim to fame is its cheeses. Well, not exactly fame, as you'll only find them in a few specialised cheese shops and delicatessens within Norway. Around 500 goats freely roam the surrounding grassy slopes and between them they provide the milk for around 10 tonnes of cheese per year (work it out: that's a hugely impressive yield per nipple). Farmers from the valley supply the village's two remaining dairies – once there were 10 – which still produce the firm yellow Undredal cheese and its brown, slightly sweet variant, made from the boiled and concentrated whey. You can pick up a hunk of each at the village shop; it's the light-blue building beside the shore.

Undredal is 6.5km north of the E16 down a narrow, steeply threading road (until its construction in 1988, the only access was by sea). If travelling by bus, get off at the eastern end of the 11km tunnel that leads

## WORTH A TRIP

### OTTERNES

**Ottnes** (☎57 63 11 32; www.ottnes.no; admission/tour Nkr50/80, children free; ☺10am-6pm Jun–mid-Sep), a restored hamlet, perches high above the fjord, between Flåm and Aurland. The 27 scattered buildings, the oldest dating from the early 17th century, were lived in until the 1990s. It's largely the initiative of one person, the ebullient Laila Kvellestad. Follow her half- to one-hour guided tour (in English, four times daily) of the houses and working farm. Plan a rest break to lick a locally made organic ice cream, sip fresh apple juice or eat pancakes.

If you are staying nearby, book for one of the traditional dinners, where you can sample dishes like *rommegrøt*, a rich sour-cream porridge served with thin shavings of locally cured meat and sometimes featuring organic lamb from these very hillsides.

to Gudvangen. Best of all, take the bus out, walk down the spectacular valley along the lightly trafficked road and return by boat (press the switch beside the yellow blinking lamp on the cafe wall beside the jetty to alert the next passing ferry).

## 👁 Sights

### Undredal Church

CHURCH

(adult/child Nkr30/free; ☺noon-5pm mid-May–mid-Sep) Originally built as a stave church in 1147 and seating 40, this barrel-vaulted village church is the smallest still-operational house of worship in mainland Scandinavia. Look up at the roof with its charmingly naive roof paintings of angels, Christ on the cross and other biblical figures, surrounded by stylised stars.

## Gudvangen & Nærøyfjord

Nærøyfjord, its 17km length a Unesco World Heritage Site, lies west of Flåm. Beside the deep blue fjord, only 250m across at its narrowest point, are towering 1200m-high cliffs, isolated farms, and waterfalls plummeting from the heights. It can easily be visited as a day excursion from Flåm.

**Kjelsfossen waterfall** tumbles from the southern wall of Nærøydalen valley,



## SNØVEGEN

The 45km **Snow Road** (☺ Jun–mid-Oct), officially signed **Aurlandsvegen**, climbs from sea level, twisting precipitously to the desolate, boulder-strewn high plateau that separates Aurland and Lærdalsøyri (Lærdal). This heart-stopping drive – strictly for summertime as snow banks line the road and tarns are still deep-frozen even in late June – has been designated as a National Tourist Route, so get there before the coaches catch on. Even if you don't opt for the whole route, drive the first 8km from Aurland to the magnificent **Stegastein observation point**. Projecting out over the fjord way below, the biomorphic pine-clad structure is striking to look at, not to mention designed to push you just a little out of your comfort zone, rather like Norway itself.

above Gudvangen village. Notice too the **avalanche protection scheme** above Gudvangen. The powerful avalanches here typically provide a force of 12 tonnes per square metre, move at 50m a second and, local legend reckons, can bowl a herd of goats right across the fjord!

The approach by boat is wondrous but Gudvangen itself, like a mini Flåm only more constricted, can disappoint when overwhelmed with boat and coach traffic.

## Sleeping

**Gudvangen Camping** CAMPGROUND **cc**  
(☎993 80 803; [www.visitgudvangen.com](http://www.visitgudvangen.com); campsites Nkr120, 2-/4-person cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr420/480, with bathroom Nkr820/1290; ☺mid-Apr–mid-Sep) On the right side of the E16, just over 1km from the ferry port, this is a well-equipped campground at the base of sheer cliffs.

**Vang Camping** CAMPGROUND **cc**  
(☎57 63 39 26; [www.vang-camping.no](http://www.vang-camping.no); campsites Nkr100, cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr300-500, with bathroom Nkr950-1200; ☺May–mid-Sep) On the left side of the E16, around 1km out of Gudvangen, these cabins and campsites nestle between the road and the river.

## Getting There & Away

Scenic ferries between Gudvangen and Flåm (one way/return Nkr295/400) via Aurland run

up to five times daily in summer. A car ferry runs three times daily to/from Lærdal (car and driver/passenger Nkr665/280, three hours) via Kaupanger (Nkr630/280).

Up to eight buses daily run to/from Flåm (Nkr52, 20 minutes) and Aurland (Nkr65, 30 minutes).

## Lærdalsøyri (Lærdal)

POP 2200

The village of Lærdalsøyri, usually called Lærdal, is where the lovely green dale of the same name – whose fertile lower reaches produce the juiciest of cherries – meets the fjord. A quiet place nowadays, it was once a busy port, where produce from the surrounding area was loaded on Bergen-bound boats. A fire swept through streets in the town's southwest in early 2014, and while devastating for those who lost homes and were injured, has not affected the town's charm for visitors.

## Sights & Activities

The historic centre (Gamle Lærdalsøyri) makes for pleasant strolling through its well-preserved 18th- and 19th-century heart. There are well over a hundred lovingly maintained homes, warehouses and fisherfolk's shacks to explore here. The tourist office has a free town map that describes the best of them and sets out a walking route.

There's free **fishing** in the fjord, and the upper reaches of the Lærdal river are good for trout (day permits are available from the tourist office or nearest campsite).

For **hiking**, pick up the tourist office's free leaflet of walks in the area. It also sells a much more detailed local map (Nkr139) at a scale of 1:50,000.

**Norsk Villaks Senter** AQUARIUM  
([www.norsk-villakscenter.no](http://www.norsk-villakscenter.no); adult/child Nkr90/60; ☺10am-6pm end-Jun–mid-Sep) You can watch wild salmon and sea trout through viewing windows, see an excellent 20-minute film about the salmon's lifecycle, try to tie flies to increase the odds of you hooking one of your own and do a little virtual casting.

**Lærdal Sport og Rekreasjon** OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES  
(☎57 66 66 95; [www.laerdalsport.com](http://www.laerdalsport.com); Lærdal Ferie-og Fritidspark, Grandavegen; ☺May-Sep 8am-10pm, Oct-Apr by appointment) There's a good

range of bikes for hire here (from Nkr45/125 per hour/day). They also arrange guided hiking and biking trips ranging from three hours to full days (bike tours from Nkr230, hiking from Nkr75).

## Sleeping & Eating

### Sanden Pensjonat

GUESTHOUSE €

(☎57 66 64 04; www.sandenpensjonat.no; Øyragata 9; s/d Nkr850/950, with shared bathroom Nkr550/490, apt Nkr1300) Used as a guesthouse for almost 100 years, this charming historic house was restored and returned to its original use by owners Jon and Hallvard in 1994. It retains the simplicity and cosy scale of its era, but is furnished with care and a clever eye for detail. For families or small groups, they also have a nearby apartment.

### Lærdal Ferie

#### og Fritidspark

CAMPGROUND, MOTEL €

(☎57 66 66 95; www.laerdalferiepark.com; campsites Nkr250, 2-/3-/4-bed cabins Nkr995/1095/1195, motel s/d Nkr500/595; 📶) This campsite, almost at the water's edge, has sweeping views of the fjord. Its 'motel' has communal self-catering facilities, plus a common room with a terrace and broad picture window that give a magnificent panorama of the fjord.

### Lindstrøm Hotell

HOTEL €€

(☎57 66 69 00; www.lindstroemhotel.no; s/d Nkr900/1200; ☺Apr-Oct; 📶📺📶) This central fifth-generation family-run hotel is divided between a beautiful Swiss-style gabled building in a garden and the main '60s block across the road. The latter, a charming warren of lounges and libraries, filled with splendid original mid-century Scandinavian design and some Norwegian baroque for good measure, has neat rooms that follow suit. The 19th-century ones are stylish too.

Their pale floorboards and bright walls contrast nicely with beautiful antique iron beds. There are cosy armchairs and big windows overlooking the garden. The restaurant serves a nightly buffet (Nkr365).

### Laksen

PUB €€

(☎57 66 86 20; lunch dishes Nkr190, dinner mains Nkr210-275; ☺11am-9.30pm Jul & Aug) The informal Laksen Pub & Restaurant at the Wild Salmon Centre offers substantial meals. It dispenses tempting snacks and sandwiches during the daytime, then morphs into a restaurant from 6pm to 9pm.

## Information

The **tourist office** (☎57 66 67 71; www.alr.no; Øyrapllassen 7; ☺10am-6pm Jul & Aug) occupies a lovely old clapboard house, once the town's bank, set back from the main street. It has a neat little photo exhibition on early Lærdal and a free internet point.

## Getting There & Away

If you're driving south, you have the choice between the world's longest road tunnel, linking Aurland and Lærdal (mercifully, it's toll free), or, in summer, climbing up and over the mountain, following the Snøvegen. Express buses run to/from Bergen (Nkr385, 3¼ hours) two to six times daily via the tunnel.

Three daily car ferries run to/from Gudvangen (car and driver/passenger Nkr620/265, three hours) via Kaupanger (Nkr605/245).

## Vik

POP 2731

Vik has two splendid small **churches** (combined entry adult/child Nkr80/70), each owing their existence and present form to the 19th-century architect Peter Blix (who designed, among much else, many of the stations on the Oslo-Bergen railway line).

## Sights

### Hopperstad Stave Church

CHURCH

(adult/child Nkr60/50; ☺10am-5pm late May-late Sep) On the southern outskirts of the village of Vik is this splendid stave church, about 1km from the centre. Built in 1130 and Norway's second oldest, it escaped demolition by a whisker in the late 19th century. Inside, the original canopy paintings of the elaborately carved baldaquin have preserved their

## NORWAY IN A NUTSHELL

Although most visitors do the classic Norway in a Nutshell tour from either Oslo or Bergen, you also can do a mini version (adult/child Nkr775/400).

This circular route from Flåm – boat to Gudvangen, bus to Voss, train to Myrdal, then train again down the spectacular Flåmsbana railway to Flåm – is truly the kernel within the nutshell and takes in all the most dramatic elements. The Gudvangen boat leaves Flåm at 9am and the Flåmsbana train brings you home at 4.55pm.

freshness of colour. A combined ticket for the Hove stone church, 1km to the south, is Nkr80/70.

### Hove Stone Church

CHURCH

(adult/child Nkr50/40; ☀11am-4pm end Jun-mid-Aug) The region's oldest stone building, dating to the late 12th century, this church retains its original form beneath Peter Blix's elaborate makeover. This includes the abstract wall painting of nave and chancel, the wooden figures from Norse legend in the roof beams and the external gables.

## Balestrand

POP 1337

Balestrand sits facing an impressive stretch of fjord, at its rear an impressive mountain backdrop. It has been a tranquil, small-scale holiday resort ever since the 19th century, and can sometimes out-twee itself.

### Sights

#### Norwegian Museum of Travel & Tourism

MUSEUM

(Norsk Reiselivsmuseum; ☎57 69 14 57; reiselivsmuseum.no) This new museum is housed in a beautiful piece of architecture that reflects the surrounding rocky landscape.

#### Church of St Olav

CHURCH

This charming wooden church (1897), in the style of a traditional stave church, was built at the instigation of English expat Margaret Green, who married a local hotel-owner. It's just up the hill; should you find it closed, the owner of Midtnes Hotel has the key.

#### Viking Age Barrows

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Less than 1km south along the fjord, excavation of this pair of barrows revealed remnants of a boat, two skeletons, jewellery and several weapons. One mound is topped by a statue of legendary **King Bele**, erected by Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II. Obsessed with Nordic mythology, he regularly spent his holidays here prior to WWI (a similar monument, also funded by the Kaiser and honouring Fridtjof, the lover of King Bele's daughter, peers across the fjord from Vangnes).

#### Sognefjord Aquarium

AQUARIUM

(adult/child Nkr70/35; ☀10am-7pm May-Sep) View the 15-minute audiovisual presentation then tour the 24 aquariums in which lurk saltwater creatures from Sognefjord, large, small and very small. The entry price includes an hour of canoe or rowing-boat hire.

## Activities

The tourist office's free pamphlet *Outdoor Activities in Balestrand* has plenty of suggestions for **hiking**, ranging from easy to demanding. It also stocks *Balestrand Turkart* (Nkr70), a good walking map at 1:50,000 with trails marked up.

### Njord

KAYAKING

(☎91 32 66 28; www.kajakk.com) Njord explores the fjord off Balestrand in a range of guided sea-kayak tours, lasting from three hours (Nkr600) and including multinight trips. Reserve at the tourist office.

## Sleeping

### Sjøtun Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎95 06 72 61; www.sjotun.com; campsite Nkr210, 4-/6-bed cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr300/400; ☀Jun-mid-Sep) At this green campsite, a 15-minute walk south along the fjord, you can pitch a tent on soft grass amid apple trees or rent a sweet cabin at a very reasonable price.

### Vandrørhjem Kringsjø

HOSTEL €

(☎57 69 13 03; www.kringsja.no; Laerargata 9; dm Nkr290, s/d/f with bathroom Nkr690/890/990, all incl breakfast; ☀mid-Jun-mid-Aug) Uphill from the dock, Balestrand's family-run HI-affiliated hostel is nowadays an outdoor activities centre during the school year. It started life as a hotel, and this shows; it's a fine lodge-style place with comfortable rooms and decent self-catering facilities.

### Balestrand Hotel

HOTEL €€

(☎57 69 11 38; www.balestrand.com; s/d Nkr850/1340; ☀mid-May-mid-Sep) This summertime-only, family-run hotel, is a friendly, jolly, intimate place that eschews the tour groups that fill so many beds elsewhere in town. It's well worth paying more for inspirational views over the fjord.

### Midtnes Hotel

HOTEL €€

(☎57 69 42 40; www.midtnes.no; s Nkr790, d Nkr850-1290; ☐☑) Beside St Olav's church, this 32-room family-run place, has a breakfast room with great views of the water, an attractive terrace and a lawn that extends down to a jetty, where a rowing boat, free for guests, is moored. Breakfast, with three kinds of pickled herring, hams, prawns and more, is a meal in itself.

### Kvikne's Hotel

HOTEL €€€

(☎57 69 42 00; www.kviknes.no; s/d from Nkr1110/1720; ☀May-Sep; ☐☑) The dreamy

pale-yellow, timber exterior of Kvikne's Hotel belies the more-is-more late-19th-century Norwegian aesthetic in its lounges and dining halls. Of its 190 rooms, all but 25 are in the newer building, erected in the 1960s. They're comfortable to a fault, but a little dated for the price.

Balholm Bar og Bistro serves snacks and light meals and you can take your drinks into the salon where there's plenty to look at outside and in. The hotel is on a point just south of the ferry landing.

## Eating

### Pilgrim

CAFE €

(☎ 915 62 842; www.detgylnehus.no; meals Nkr90-185) Near the tourist office, this kooky-as-anthing little place is integrated into Det Gylne Hus (Golden House), an equally eccentric art gallery. The food, by contrast, is simple, traditional stuff: locally caught sea trout, elk patties, reindeer sausage or meatballs. If it's sunny, the terrace, with freshly cut flowers adorning the tables, is just the spot.

### Ciderhuset

NORWEGIAN €€

(☎ 98 47 77 65; www.ciderhuset.no; Sjøtunsvegen 32; mains Nkr140-250; ☎ 4-10pm late-Jun-mid-Aug) Within a fruit farm that produces organic juices, jams, bottled fruits, cider and cider brandy, this happy restaurant fuses Nordic and Mediterranean culinary traditions. They use local produce wherever possible; even the dinnerware is fired by a local potter. Dine on the first-floor terrace or inside the cosy glass house, where fresh herbs and cherry tomatoes climb the panes.

Do savour one of the desserts of organic fruit from their orchards, enhanced by a dollop of equally organic, locally made ice cream. Signs for Ciderhuset run off Sjøtunsvegen, which runs inland from Villavegen.

## Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 99 23 15 00; www.visitbalestrand.no; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Jun-Aug, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri May & Sep) This tourist office, run by an extremely knowledgeable and helpful local, is opposite the ferry quay. It hires out bicycles for Nkr70/170/270 per hour/half-day/full day.

## Getting There & Away

Express boats run to/from Bergen (Nkr545, 3¾ hours, twice daily) and Sogndal (Nkr240, 45 minutes, once daily).

## WORTH A TRIP

### BORGUND STAVE CHURCH

Some 30km southeast of Lærdalsøyri along the E16, the 12th-century **Borgund Stave Church** (adult/child Nkr80/60; ☎ 8am-8pm May-Sep, 10am-5pm Oct-Apr) was raised beside one of the major trade routes between eastern and western Norway. Dedicated to St Andrew, it's one of the best known, most photographed and certainly the best preserved of Norway's stave churches. Its simple, inky interior and sublimely rustic alter are deeply moving. Beside it is the only free-standing medieval wooden bell tower remaining in Norway.

Buy your ticket at the visitors centre, where an exhibition (included in the price of your admission) on this peculiarly Norwegian phenomenon as well as recent early Viking finds from a nearby archaeological dig are evocatively displayed. There's also a nice two-hour circular hike on ancient paths and tracks that starts and ends at the church.

From June to August, a daily ferry (Nkr240/390 one way/return, 1½ hours, twice daily) follows the narrow Fjærlandsfjorden to Fjærland, gateway to the glacial wonderlands of Jostedalbreen.

Express buses link Balestrand and Sogndal (Nkr128, one hour, three daily).

The scenic Gaularfjellsvegen (Rv13) is an exciting drive to Førde, on Førdefjord, negotiating hairpin bends and skirting Norway's greatest concentration of roadside waterfalls.

## Sogndal

POP 7050

Sogndal, though not the area's prettiest town, has a nice community and makes a good base for a trio of magnificent day drives: Jostedalen and Nigardsbreen, Urnes, and Lustrafjord and the spectacular Sognefjellet circuit.

## Sights & Activities

### Sogn Folkmuseum

MUSEUM

(www.dhs.museum.no; Kaupanger; adult/child Nkr70/30; ☎ 10am-3pm May & Sep, to 5pm Jun-Aug, 10am-3pm Mon-Fri Oct-Apr) This extensive open-air folk museum is between Sogndal and Kaupanger, beside the Rv5. More than 30 buildings, including farms, a schoolhouse

and a mill, have been brought from their original sites and embedded in the surrounding woods. Each is well documented in Norwegian and English. There are three short, themed walking trails with informative panels (reception has English translation sheets).

Children can pet the animals, build their own log cabin and indulge in other backwoods activities, plus there are gorgeous picnic spots.

**Sogn Fjordmuseum** MUSEUM  
(Kaupanger; ☎10am-3pm or 5pm May-Sep) Part of the much larger Sogn Folkmuseum, also on the Rv5, this museum has a collection of 19th- and 20th-century fishing and freight boats and equipment, and some striking old photos, illustrating in particular the coastal trade in timber for then-booming Bergen's needs.

**Stave Church** CHURCH  
(Kaupanger; adult/child Nkr60/50; ☎10am-5pm Jun-Aug) The area's main attraction was raised in 1184. It impresses from within by its sheer height, although much of what you see dates from a fundamental renovation in the 17th century. Wall paintings in the nave feature musical annotation, while vine and flower motifs entwine around the chancel. The Celtic-style chancel arch is unique.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Kjøernes Camping** CAMPGROUND €  
(☎57 67 45 80; www.kjornes.no; campsites Nkr240, 2-/5-bed cabins Nkr900/1350, with outdoor bathroom Nkr410/580, apt Nkr800; 📶) This large, well-maintained campground, where the young owners have expanded and improved facilities, enjoys a gorgeous fjord-side setting. Choose a large cabin with fjord-side terrace and heated floors; there's a few that allow you to be almost alone with the forest at your back and the fjord before you.

Kjøernes Camping is 3km from Sogndal, off the Rv5, in the direction of Lærdal.

**Sogndal Vandrerhjem** HOSTEL €  
(☎57 62 75 75; www.hihostels.no/sogndal; Helgeheimsvegen 9-10; dm/s/d with shared bathroom Nkr310/410/620, d with bathroom Nkr755; ☎mid-Jun-mid-Aug) This well-equipped, summer-time-only HI-affiliated hostel, near the bridge that carries the Rv5, functions as a boarding school during the rest of the year.

**Loftesnes Pensjonat** GUESTHOUSE €€  
(☎57 67 87 00; Fjøravegen; s/d Nkr650/850) This small, central place above the China House restaurant, and run by the restaurant's own-

ers, is great value. Nine of its 12 rooms have a bathroom and there are self-catering facilities and a rooftop terrace.

★ **Sogndal Lodge & Guiding** HOSTEL €€  
(☎57 62 99 88; www.sogndalodge.no; Almenningen 10; 2-/3-/4-bed r with shared bathroom Nkr850/1260/1600, whole house Nkr3600) This 12-bed lodge is sparkling new, with rooms that are Scando-simple in style, plus nice vintage finds to lend character. It may be right in the middle of the village but, with owners Sigrid and Sander's local guiding expertise, serves as a direct gateway into the surrounding landscape.

You can organise kayaking, climbing, glacier walks and skiing, or longer trips involving all of the above through the lodge. They also do an interesting culinary tour, exploring the area's traditional food producers. There's also rental of kayaks, bikes and paddleboards.

**Hofslund Fjord Hotel** HOTEL €€  
(☎57 62 76 00; www.hofslund-hotel.no; s/d Nkr1095/1395; 📶📺🚰) This venerable 100-bed hotel, approaching its first century, has been run by the same family for four generations. It enjoys a wonderful location; most rooms have a balcony and view of the fjord and a neat lawn sweeps down to the water.

The outdoor pool's heated and there are a couple of rowing boats and fishing gear, loaned free to guests. The restaurant has a nightly buffet (Nkr295) that's good value and open to all-comers.

**Galleri Krydder Kaffé** CAFE €  
(www.gallerikrydder.no; Parvegen 6; salads Nkr80-110, sandwiches, Nkr80-95; ☎11am-7pm Mon-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) Good espresso coffee's guaranteed at this friendly cafe attached to an art gallery - most of the town passes through for a double shot at some time of the day. There's a trampoline and swings next door and a big terrace to eat salads, sandwiches and super-size brownies.

## Information

**Tourist office** (☎91 13 64 03; www.sognefjord.no; Hovevegen 2; ☎10am-10pm Mon-Sat, from 11am Sun mid-Jun-Aug, limited hours May & Sep) Sogndal's seasonal tourist office, a five-minute walk east of the bus station and at the back of a convenience store, can book accommodation. It has a huge stock of hiking maps and local guides, rents bike (Nkr70 per day) and issues one-week fishing permits (Nkr150).

## **i** Getting There & Away

Sogndal has Sognefjord's only airport, which has two daily flights to/from Bergen and three to/from Oslo.

Express passenger boats connect Sogndal with Balestrand (Nkr175, 45 minutes, daily) and Bergen (Nkr645, 4½ hours, twice daily).

Bus destinations include Kaupanger (Nkr32, 20 minutes, up to 12 per day), Fjærland (Nkr73, 30 minutes, up to six per day), Balestrand (Nkr94, 1¼ hours, three per day).

Twice-daily buses (mid-June to late August) head northeast past Jotunheimen National Park to Lom (3¾ hours) and Otta (4¼ hours).

## Solvorn & Around

Diminutive Solvorn is everything you'd want a fjord-side village to be: spectacularly sited, fetchingly pretty, quiet as a mouse but with warm, welcoming locals. It's all that *and* in striking distance of some of the region's best hiking, biking and paddling.

There are two very different, but equally appealing, accommodation options here, making it a wonderful place to base yourself for at least a few days.



## Activities

### FjordSeal

KAYAKING

(☎ 95 77 41 96; www.fjordseal.com; adult/child Nkr550/400; ☀ tours 9.30am daily May-Sep)

For a delightful four hours of peaceful paddling on smooth-as-silk Lustrafjord, and the chance to cruise among a colony of seals, sign on with one of the daily guided kayak tours of FjordSeal, based at Marifjøra, just off the Rv55, 17km north of Svolvorn.

### Mollandsmorki Circuit

MOUNTAIN BIKING

This 25km circuit from Solvorn travels a combination of sealed, gravel and finally dirt roads, with stunning views for much of the distance. It's not easygoing, with some sections of dirt rugged enough to require you to get off and push, but it's incredibly rewarding. Some say, despite its modest distance, even more so than Rallarvegen (p210) cycle route.

## Sleeping

### ★ Eplet

HOSTEL €

(☎ 41 64 94 69; www.eplet.net; camping per person Nkr100, dm Nkr200, s/d Nkr500/600; ☀ May-Sep; @ ☎) Among a bountiful apple orchard and circled by raspberry canes and blueberry bushes, this special hostel is set in terraced gardens, in two rustic wooden buildings, along with some garden campsites. From its windows there are magnificent views of Lustrafjord (they seem even nicer from a hammock in the garden). Rooms are sweetly furnished with local touches.

## THE SOGNEFJELLET CIRCUIT

A spectacular circular, day-long driving route, the Sognefjellet circuit runs beside one of Norway's loveliest fjords, climbs a sizeable chunk of the magnificent **Sognefjellet National Tourist Route**, meanders along a lonely, lightly travelled single-lane road that threads across the heights, then plunges in a knuckle-clenching descent, once more to fjord level. The trip can't be done by public transport and cyclists will need to be very fit, and attempt it over a few days.

From Sogndal, head out on the Rv55 to the northeast as it hugs, for the most part, lovely Lustrafjord all the way to Skjolden at the head of the waters. About 5km beyond this tiny settlement, the road starts to seriously twist and climb. You're following an ancient highway where for centuries, when it was no more than a rough track, fish and salt would be hauled up from the coast to be exchanged for iron, butter and hides from communities deep inland.

At wind-battered Turtagrø you can continue along the Rv55, which runs through Jotunheimen National Park, up and over northern Europe's highest road pass (1434m) and on to Lom.

To return to Sogndal, turn right to leave the Rv55 and head for Årdal. The narrow road, known as **Tindevegen** (Route of the Peaks) keeps climbing, just above the treeline, until the pass (1315m) and a toll booth (Nkr75 per vehicle). Then it's a plunge down through woods of spindly birch to the emerald-green waters of Årdalsvatnet and the undistinguished village of Øvre Årdal. From here, the Rv53 takes you, via the ferry between Fodnes and Mannheller, back to Sogndal.

Everything you'd expect in terms of self-catering facilities are provided, as well as a small organic juice factory, a croquet course, lambs to pet and free bikes to borrow. Eplet is run by Agnethe and Trond Henrik: Trond is an environmental geologist, seasoned traveller, climber and serious long-distance cyclist. They can let you in on the best cycle routes and walking trails around, including the extraordinary Molden hike.

### ★ **Walaker Hotell**

HOTEL **ccc**

(☎ 57 68 20 80; www.walaker.com; d Nkr2250-2700; ☀ May-Sep; 📶) This venerable, incredibly atmospheric place, sitting right beside the fjord, is Norway's oldest family hotel. In the hands of nine generations of the Nitters, back to 1640, you'll probably be greeted by Ole Henrik, the current owner, himself. Spread between three buildings, the main one has evocatively decorated (but unfussy) historical rooms with antique wallpaper, and two have claw-foot baths.

The Tingstova wing, the oldest, has four beautiful historical rooms, with stunning hand painted furniture. Standard rooms, in the '60s annex, are comfortable but unremarkable. Not least of the hotel's pleasures is its lovely lawn and garden of lilac, roses, apple and cherry trees, which is available to all.

## Urnes

### Urnes Stave Church

CHURCH

(adult/child Nkr80/45; ☀ 10.30am-5.45pm May-Sep) Norway's oldest preserved place of worship is a Unesco World Heritage Site. Directly across the fjord from Solvorn, it gazes out over Lustrafjord. The original church was built around 1070, while most of today's structure was built a century later. Highlights are elaborate wooden carvings – animals locked in struggle, stylised intertwined bodies and abstract motifs – on the north wall, all recycled from the original church, and the simple crucifixion carving, set above the chancel wall.

Ticket prices include an interesting 45-minute tour in English. Be aware that it's a 20-minute uphill walk from the ferry to the church: don't dawdle, as the guided tour waits for no one. It's also worth noting that, your visit over, you won't have time to catch the very next ferry, so relax a while at Urnes Gard cafe, just below the church.

If you want to stay or catch something to eat, try **Urnes Gard** (www.urnes.no; s/d Nkr400/700, cabins & apt 3-night minimum

Nkr2500, linen extra; ☀ 10.30am-5.30pm Jun-Sep). Once farm stables, the accommodation here is lovely, with a cabin, apartment or B&B options. All are decorated in a modern, rustic style: simple, earthy and warm. The cabin is particularly atmospheric. The cafe sells punnets of fruit fresh from the fields, home cakes and its own juices – strawberry, raspberry, gooseberry and blueberry.

## **i** Getting There & Away

A car and passenger ferry (adult/child/car Nkr33/17/90, 20 minutes) shuttles hourly from 9am to 4.50pm between Solvorn and Urnes; most drivers prefer to leave their vehicles on the Solvorn bank.

## Skjolden

POP 500

Skjolden is at the northern limit of Lustrafjord. In Fjordstova, its main building, you'll find most that matters tucked under one roof: the tourist office, a cafe, a swimming pool, a climbing wall and even a shooting gallery. The bit of industrial-looking junk on display outside is a turbine from the Norsk hydropower station.

East of Skjolden, the Rv55 at first runs beside the lovely turquoise glacial lake **Eidsvatnet**. **Mørkridsdalen**, the valley that runs north of the village, makes for some excellent hiking.

The village was home to Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein between 1913 and 1914. The fjords obviously worked their magic – it was one of the most productive years of his life.

## **i** Sleeping

### Vassbakken Kro & Camping

CAMPGROUND

(☎ 57 68 61 88; www.vassbakken.com; car/caravan site Nkr120/140 plus per person Nkr25, cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr480, cabins with bathroom Nkr850; ☀ May–mid-Sep) Along the Rv55, 3km from Skjolden, this smallish campsite is set beneath a surging waterfall. There's a popular cafe-restaurant here and all rooms in its HI-affiliated **hostel** (☎ 57 68 61 88; www.hihostels.no/skjolden; dm 250, s/dNkr545/755, all incl breakfast) come with a bathroom.

## **i** Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 99 23 15 00; www.sognefjord.no; ☀ 11am-7pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug; 📶) You can hire bicycles (Nkr75/120 per half/full day) and kayaks (Nkr75/140 per half/full

day) from here, which can also supply you with a brochure (Nkr20) on signed walks in the area.

## Getting There & Away

Bus 153 connects Skjolden with Sogndal (Nkr130, 1½ hours) three to five times daily.

If you're heading north on Rv55, check your fuel gauge; Skjolden's petrol stations are the last for 77km.

## JOSTEDALSMBREEN

For years mighty Jostedalshreen, mainland Europe's largest icecap, crept countercurrent, slowly advancing while most glaciers elsewhere in the world were retreating. Now Jostedalshreen itself has succumbed and is also withdrawing.

It's still a powerful player, though, eroding an estimated 400,000 tonnes of rock each year. With an area of 487 sq km and in places 600m thick, Jostedalshreen rules over the highlands of Sogn og Fjordane county. The main icecap and several outliers are protected as the Jostedalshreen National Park.

The best hiking map for the region is Statens Kartverk's *Jostedalshreen Turkart* at 1:100,000. The free *Jostedalshreen Glacier Walks* brochure, available at tourist offices and many other venues, gives a comprehensive list of glacier walks, their levels and guiding companies.

## Fjærland

POP 310

The village of Fjærland, also called Mundal, at the head of scenic Fjærlandsfjorden, pulls in as many as 300,000 visitors each year. Most come to experience its pair of particularly accessible glacial tongues, Supphellebreen and Bøyabreen. Others come to be bookworms. This tiny place, known as the **Book Town of Norway** ([www.bokbyen.no](http://www.bokbyen.no)), is a bibliophile's dream, with a dozen shops selling a wide range of used books, mostly in Norwegian, but with lots in English and other European languages.

The village virtually hibernates from October onwards, then leaps to life in early May, when the ferry runs again.

## Sights

### Supphellebreen

GLACIER

You can drive to within 300m of the Supphellebreen glacier, then walk right up and

touch the ice. Ice blocks from here were used as podiums at the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer.

### Bøyabreen

GLACIER

At blue, creaking Bøyabreen, more spectacular than Supphellebreen to the east over the hill, you might happen upon glacial calving as a hunk tumbles into the melt-water lagoon beneath the glacier tongue.

## Norwegian Glacier Museum

MUSEUM

(Norsk Bremuseum; ☎57 69 32 88; [www.bre-museum.no](http://www.bre-museum.no); adult/child Nkr120/60; ☀9am-7pm Jun-Aug, 10am-4pm Apr-May, Sep & Oct) For the story on flowing ice and how it has sculpted the Norwegian landscape, visit this well executed museum, 3km inland from the Fjærland ferry jetty. You can learn how fjords are formed, see a 20-minute audio-visual presentation on Jostedalshreen, touch 1000-year-old ice, wind your way through a tunnel that penetrates the mock ice and even see the tusk of a Siberian woolly mammoth who met an icy demise 30,000 years ago.

## Activities

### Kayaking

#### Fjærland Kayak & Glacier

KAYAKING

(☎92 85 46 74; [www.kayakandglacier.com](http://www.kayakandglacier.com); Sandaneset; ☀May-Aug 10am-4pm, or by appointment) At the small fjord-side shack, you can hire a kayak, canoe, motor or rowing boat or join one of its daily guided kayaking trips, ranging from 2½ hours (Nkr420) to a full day (Nkr950).

### Walking

The tourist office's free sheet, *Escape the Asphalt*, lists 12 marked walking routes, varying from 30 minutes to three hours. For greater detail, supplement this with *Turkart Fjærland* (Nkr80) at 1:50,000, which comes complete with route descriptions and trails indicated; pull on your boots and you're away. Most walks follow routes the local shepherds would have used until quite recently to lead their flocks to higher summer pastures.

## Sleeping & Eating

### Bøyum Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎57 69 32 52; [www.boyumcamping.no](http://www.boyumcamping.no); campsites Nkr190, dm Nkr200, d without bathroom Nkr315-400, 4-/8-bed cabins Nkr890/1100; ☀May-Sep) Beside the Glacier Museum and 3km from the Fjærland ferry landing, Bøyum Camping



## LUSTER STOP

Luster, on Lusterfjord's northern bank between Solvorn and Skjolden, makes for a diverting pit stop, with both divine and more earthly sustenance on offer.

**Lustrabui** (www.lustrabui.no; Luster; ☺ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) The two local ladies behind this traditional bakery trained with Bakeriet i Lom's Morten Schakenda, who is considered Norway's best baker. All natural sour dough is made by hand, with minimal ingredients, although it's the sweet goods that people drive miles for. There are tables to enjoy your *skillingsbollar* (sweet buns) and cinnamon swirls on the spot. They do espresso too.

**Dale Kyrkje** (Luster; ☺ 10am-8pm) Spectacular wooden stave churches get all the attention around here, but this little gem of a medieval parish church, built of stone, shouldn't be overlooked. Constructed around 1250, it's mainly Gothic in style with a wooden tower and elaborately painted western entrance (the work of a typically near-anonymous ecclesiastical artist known simply as 'Nils the Painter') that were added in the early 1600s. The crucifix above the chancel arch and fine multicoloured pulpit are from the church's earliest days.

The naive 16th-century paintings in the chancel were revealed only in the 1950s, when the whitewash was removed.

has something for all pockets and sleeping preferences, not to mention a great view of the Bøyabreen glacier at the head of the valley.

★ **Hotel Mundal** HOTEL €€€  
 (☎ 57 69 31 01; www.hotelmundal.no; s/d Nkr850/1200, water-view s/d Nkr1200/2100; ☺ May-Sep; P @) Run by the same family ever since it was built in 1891, this beautiful hotel retains much of its period interior: original local furniture with the odd bit of Viennese Thonet, paintings, rugs, leather armchairs made by local craftsmen and a 'modern' remodel of a 1920s parlour. Rooms are traditional, but pretty and light.

For Nkr500 extra, you can sleep the night in the tower's one suite, complete with wrap-around views of fjord and glacier – as did US ex-vice president Walter Mondale, whose family came from Mundal, and the present Queen of Norway (not, as the charming receptionist explains, on the same occasion). The restaurant serves carefully prepared traditional four-course Norwegian dinners (Nkr360). Non-guests need to book by 6pm. On one wall of its Mikkel Kaffe, a mountaineering theme, there's a giant, evocative 1898 map of Sognefjorden.

**Brævasshytta Cafeteria** CAFE €  
 (☺ 8am-8pm May-Sep) Do visit the Brævasshytta, built into the moraine of Bøyabreen glacier's latest major advance, even if it's only for a cup of coffee. With the glacier right

there and in your face, it's like you're in an Imax cinema, only it's real.

## i Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 57 69 32 33; www.fjaerland.org; ☺ 10am-6pm Jun-Aug, to 4pm Sep-May) Fjærland's exceptionally friendly tourist office is within the Bok & Bilde bookshop on the main street, 300m from the ferry point. It displays a full list of accommodation options, together with prices, on the main door and rents bikes (half/full day Nkr40/160). Also ask about ferry and bus trips to Balestrand that take in the glacier and museum.

## i Getting There &amp; Away

A car ferry (Nkr275/360 one way/return, 1¼ hours) runs twice daily between Balestrand and Fjærland in July and August (in May, June and September there's a daily passenger ferry).

Buses bypass the village and stop on the Rv5 near the glacier museum. Three to six run daily to/from Sogndal (Nkr73, 30 minutes) and Stryn (Nkr200, two hours).

## Jostedalen &amp; Nigardsbreen

The Jostedalen valley pokes due north from Lustrafjord's Gaupne. This slim finger sits between two national parks: long established Jostedalsbreen on the west side and, to its east, Breheimen National Park. It's a spectacular drive as the road runs beside the

## Jostedalbreen National Park



milky turquoise river, tumbling beneath the eastern flank of the Nigardsbreen glacier.

Of the Jostedalbreen glacier tongues visible from below, Nigardsbreen is the most dramatic and easy to approach, and also offers the best glacier walks.

If you're an experienced walker and fancy communing alone with (but not on) the ice, continue further up the road past the braided glacial streams at Fåbergstølsgranda to the dam that creates the big glacial lake, Styggevatnet. Along the way you'll find several scenic glacial tongues and valleys offering excellent wild hiking.

### Sights

**Breimsenteret Visitors Centre** MUSEUM  
 (☎ 57 68 32 50; [www.jostedal.com](http://www.jostedal.com); adult/child Nkr60/free; ☀ 9am-6pm mid-Jun-Aug, 10am-5pm May-mid-Jun & Sep) Jostedal's visitor centre has a small museum of geological displays, a shop and a cafe with spectacular views

down the valley to the winding blue glacial tongue. Their website collects together all the tour and activities operators.

### Activities

You can book directly or at the visitors centre for each of these outfits.

#### Ice Troll

GLACIER TOURS  
 (☎ 97 01 43 70; [www.icetroll.com](http://www.icetroll.com); 6hr excursions Nkr750, overnight Nkr1500) Andy – from New Zealand and with a decade of guiding experience on Nigardsbreen – and his team offer truly original glacier visits, where kayaks are used to get to isolated spots.

Most are suitable for first-timers as well as the more experienced, or there's a motorboat option for young families. All kayaking and glacier hiking equipment supplied, and they also do longer overnight and two-day sorties.

## Riverpig

(www.riverpig.no; rafting Nkr800; ☺ Jun-Sep) Riverpig offers white-water rafting on the Jostedal river (Nkr800) and, for the truly hardy, riverboarding (Nkr1300).

RAFTING

## Jostedalens Breførarlag

(☎ 57 68 31 11; www.bfl.no; tours from Nkr260-760) Leads several guided glacier walks on Nigardsbreen. The easiest is the family walk to the glacier snout and briefly along its tongue (around one hour on the ice, adult/child Nkr260/130). Fees for the two-hour (Nkr460), three-hour (Nkr525) and five-hour (Nkr760) walks on the ice include the brief boat trip across Nigardsvatnet lake.

GLACIER TOURS

## Sleeping & Eating

Two fascinating and friendly sisters run the valley's most tempting sleeping options.

## ★ Jostedal Camping

(☎ 57 68 39 14; www.jostedalcamping.no; car/caravan sites Nkr180/190, cabins Nkr390-1300; 🏠) Astrid, after many years travelling and working overseas, returned to her home village and with her partner runs this bucolic, well kept campsite, right beside the Jostedal river. Facilities are impeccable, with a beautiful new terrace, communal kitchen, lounge and dining space with floor to ceiling windows overlooking the river's rapid course.

CAMPGROUND €

All cabins are neat, clean and cosy, but the three-bedroom is particularly swish. Astrid has researched a range of local walks and is happy to provide itinerary suggestions. In winter, this is an excellent starting point for off-piste skiing.

## Jostedal Hotel

(☎ 57 68 31 19; www.jostedalhotel.no; s Nkr820, d Nkr1070, f Nkr1320; 📞) 🍃 Just 2.5km south of the Breheimsenteret visitors centre, this friendly hotel has been run by the same family for three generations and is currently under Laila's care. Newly renovated rooms are very comfortable, light and have very pretty views. There are also family rooms (Nkr1360) with self-catering facilities that can accommodate up to five guests.

HOTEL €€

## MISSING THE BOAT

Should you be unfortunate enough to miss the last ferry shuttle back over Nigardsvatnet, there's always a rowing boat left at the landing point for the use of the tardy.

Even if you're not staying, you can enjoy the valley outlook from the cafe or come for dinner. Meat, milk and vegetables for the restaurant come from the family farm.

## Getting There & Around

If you're driving, leave the Rv55 Sognefjellet Rd at Gaupne and head north up Jostedal along the Rv604.

From mid-June to mid-September, **Jostedal-bus** (No 160; Glacier Bus; www.jostedal.com/breussen; adult/child Nkr136/68) runs from Sogndal (with connections from Flåm, Balestrand and Lærdal) via Solvorn to the foot of the Nigardsbreen glacier, leaving at 8.45am and setting out on the return journey at 4.50pm.

From the Breheimsenteret visitors centre, a 3.5km-long toll road (Nkr35 per vehicle), or a pleasant walk with interpretive panels, leads to the car park at Nigardsvatnet, the lagoon at the glacial snout. From mid-June to August, a ferry (Nkr48 return, 10am to 6pm) shuttles over the lagoon. From the landing, it's a sturdy walk over rocks to the glacier face itself.

## Briksdalsbreen

From the small town of **Olden** at the eastern end of Nordfjord, a scenic road leads 23km along Oldedalen past Brenndalsbreen, and from there on to the twin glacial tongues of Melkevollbreen and Briksdalsbreen. More easily accessible, Briksdalsbreen attracts hordes of tour buses. It's a temperamental glacier; in 1997 the tongue licked to its furthest point for around 70 years, then retreated by around 500m. In 2005, the reaches where glacier walkers would clamber and stride cracked and splintered. So for the moment, there are no guided hikes on Briksdalsbreen, but capricious as she is, this may change.

It's about a 5km-return walk to the Briksdal glacier face, either up the steepish path or along the longer, gentler cart track. Alas, the traditional pony-carts that plied the route for over 100 years no longer transport visitors, but **Oldedalen Skyss** (☎ 57 87 68 05; www.oldedalen-skysslag.com) has 'troll cars', vehicles like giant golfing carts (Nkr195 per person). From their turnaround point, there's still a 15-minute hike on a rough path to see the ice. To breathe up close in the glacier's face, take a guided trip in an inflatable dinghy. Dinghies (adult/child Nkr250/125), operated by Briksdal Adventure (p225), depart approximately hourly in summer. We

strongly recommend advance reservation for both troll cars and dinghies as places are often snapped up by tour groups.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Melkevoll Bretun** CAMPGROUND €€  
(☎57 87 38 64; [www.melkevoll.no](http://www.melkevoll.no); campsites Nkr170, cabins Nkr700-800, with outdoor bathroom Nkr350; ☀May-Sep) There's no bad positions here. Look south and the Melkevollbreen glacier is sticking its tongue out towards you, spin west and the long, slim Volefossen waterfall cascades, turn north and the long reach of Oldevatnet lake shimmers, while eastwards, the Briksdalsbreen glacier blocks the horizon.

While the larger cabins are very well equipped, the far more basic camping huts here are cute as buttons with folky '70s touches that look like they've been styled for a hipster magazine. There's a gorgeous green campsite with stacks of space between pitches, or see if you can nab a rock bed and reindeer skin in the 'stone-age cave' (Nkr125).

**Briksdalsbre Fjellstove** LODGE €€  
(☎57 87 68 00; [www.briksdalsbre.no](http://www.briksdalsbre.no); s/d Nkr890/1190, 4-bed cabins Nkr980) This cosy mountain lodge has six comfortable rooms, cabins and a cafe-restaurant serving delicacies such as trout (Nkr200) and reindeer (Nkr260).

## Getting There & Away

Between June and August, buses leave Stryn for Briksdal (Nkr75, one hour) once or twice daily, calling by Loen and Olden.

## Kjennndalsbreen & Bødalsbreen

The **Kjennndalsbreen** glacier is a delightful 21km run up Lodalen, a parallel valley to Oldendalen, from the Nordfjord village of Loen. The least visited of the four best-known glacial tongues, it vies with Nigardsbreen for the most beautiful approach as you track parallel to the intensely turquoise glacial lake of Lovatnet. After paying a road toll (Nkr40), there's a lovely little spot where you can snack and hire a bike, canoe or rowing boat, before undertaking the final 5km to the glacier viewing point. You may not find yourself alone but you'll be in far less company than at Briksdalsbreen, just over the mountain.

**Bødalsbreen**, up a short side valley to the east, provides a couple of good hiking possibilities.

## Sleeping

**Sande Camping** CAMPGROUND €  
(☎57 87 45 90; [www.sande-camping.no](http://www.sande-camping.no); Loen; campsites Nkr225, 2-/4-bed cabins Nkr450/600, apt Nkr950) You could spend an active day or two in the lovely environs of Sande Camping, near the northern end of Lovatnet. There's also a free sauna and, for hire, rowing boats, canoes and bikes. Its small cafe-restaurant serves fresh fish from the lake or you can try your luck and dangle your own line (rods per day Nkr70).

The apartments are strangely urban for the location, though the cabins remain reliably retro.

## Activities

**Briksdal Adventure** ADVENTURE TOURS  
(☎info 57 87 68 00; [www.briksdal-adventure.com](http://www.briksdal-adventure.com); ☀May-Sep) Briksdal Adventure, also known as Briksdal Breføring, is based at Briksdalsbre Fjellstove, the end of the blacktop road, the next glacial tongue north of Briksdalsbreen. There are daily five- to six-hour guided glacier hikes (Nkr600). Walks leave at 10am and your crampons crunch the ice for about half the total time.

## NORDFJORD TO THE COAST

For most travellers the 100km-long Nordfjord is but a stepping stone between Sognefjorden and Geirangerfjorden. These two popular fjords are linked by a road that winds around the head of Nordfjord past the villages of Byrkjelo, Olden and Loen to the larger town of Stryn.

Stryn, Olden and Loen are not so much destinations in themselves, but each makes a good base for Briksdalsbreen and Kjennndalsbreen glaciers.

## Olden

POP 498

Olden serves as a gateway to Briksdalsbreen. For walks in and around the valley, pick up the map *Olden og Oldendalen* (Nkr50; 1:50,000), which indicates and describes 15 signed trails.

## Sleeping

There are several campsites along the route to Briksdalsbreen and many of them occupy stunningly pretty sites.

### Olden Fjordhotel

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 57 87 04 00; www.older-hotel.no; s Nkr930-1170, d Nkr1260-1670, all incl breakfast; s/d Nkr1200/1750; ☺ May–mid-Sep) It may be big and bustling, but the welcome is warm and most of the rooms have fjord views and nearly all have balconies.

## Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 57 87 31 26; www.nordfjord.no; ☺ 10am–4pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug) Next door to the fjord-side supermarket; they have a free map with suggested walks.

## Loen

POP 398

Loen, at the mouth of dramatic Lodalen valley, is, like nearby Olden, a gateway to the glaciers. From this tiny village, a road leads to the spectacular Bødalen and Kjenndalen glacial tongues.

Like Olden, it makes a good base for hikers. Arm yourself with *Walking in Loen & Lodalen* (Nkr50; 1:50,000), which describes 20 day walks. One great, though strenuous, hike leads to the Skålatårnet tower, atop the 1848m-high summit of Skåla. The route begins at a signed car park 2.5km east of Loen. Allow seven to eight hours – considerably more than the course record of under one hour 10 minutes for La Sportiva Skaala annual uphill race.

## Sleeping & Eating




### Lo-Vik Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 57 87 76 19; www.lo-vik.no; campsite Nkr220, 4-bed cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr495, with bathroom Nkr695-1290; ☺ May–Sep) This campsite is in the centre of town; find yourself a spot at the northern end beside the fjord, where there's a peaceful green area that's well away from traffic noise.

### Hotel Alexandra




HOTEL €€€

(☎ 57 87 50 00; www.alexandra.no; s/d incl breakfast from Nkr1670/2540;   ) Loen's undisputed centre of action is a full-service resort and dominates tourism in the valley. It offers two restaurants, two cafes, bars, a nightclub, swimming pools (both indoor and open), a spa and fitness centre, a tennis court and marina. Run as a family hotel

since 1884, it's managed nowadays by the fifth generation. Summer family deals are good.

### Hotel Loenfjord

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 57 87 50 00; www.loenfjord.no; s/d incl breakfast from Nkr1210/1640; ☺ Jun–Sep, Fri–Sun only Oct–May;   ) The Loenfjord offers waterside accommodation that's a little less expensive than the Alexandra, to which it belongs. It's altogether gentler on the eye, less crowded and offers bicycle and rowing-boat hire.

## Stryn

POP 2300

The small town of Stryn, de facto capital of upper Nordfjord, is a modern regional hub. It does sprawl, but retains some of its original wooden houses along the river and, in any case, its 'real' vibe is nicely energising if you've been in the wild for a while.

## Sleeping


### Stryn Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 57 87 11 36; www.stryn-camping.no; Bøavegen 6; campsites Nkr180/260, 4-bed cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr350, 3-/6-bed cabins with bathroom Nkr750/1050; ☺ year-round) The facilities are well maintained and the welcome friendly at neat Stryn Camping. It's at the eastern end of town, just two blocks uphill from the main street.

### Stryn Vertshus B&B

B&amp;B €€

(☎ 57 87 05 30; www.strynvertshus.no; s/d Nkr750/1250; ) Stryn's favourite cafe has five simple rooms upstairs and Fred and Anne couldn't be more welcoming. The original house's hundred-year-old bones add charm, plus they all have en suites.

### Visnes Hotel

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 57 87 10 87; www.visneshotel.no; Prestestegen 1; s Nkr900, d Nkr1495; ☺ mid-May–Sep;  ) The Visnes, run by the same family for six generations, occupies two magnificent listed properties, each with its own character. Most rooms are in the larger building, constructed in 1850. It's furnished in period style but with a rustic restraint. The more expensive rooms have stunning fjord views and there are also a couple of large family rooms (Nkr1950).

To feel like royalty, request a room in the smaller 1890 'dragon style' building that was occupied by King Rama V of Siam during his 1908 tour, or the one where King Oscar of

Sweden and Norway rested his head in 1913. The restaurant, in the hotel's larger building, serves traditional dishes made from local produce.

## Eating & Drinking

**★ Stryn Vertshus** CAFE, RESTAURANT **cc**  
(☎57 87 05 30; [www.strynvertshus.no](http://www.strynvertshus.no); Tonningsgata 19; mains Nkr180-230; ☀9am-1am Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat, 11am-8pm Sun) Both inside and on its flower-bedecked terrace, this happy village hub serves the town's best coffee (they use Italian Ily beans, and there is a varied legion of European baristas), tasty lunchtime burgers and salads (both Nkr130) and tapas platters (Nkr210), steaks (Nkr180) and pasta (Nkr160).

**Bryggja** FISH RESTAURANT **cc**  
(☎90 16 81 34; [www.bryggja.info](http://www.bryggja.info); Perhusvegen 11; mains Nkr170-310; ☀6pm-midnight mid-Jun-Aug, from 4pm Sun) Dine on the tiny outside terrace to make the most of the gorgeous riverside location. If it rains, the staff simply pulls over the sail-shaped cover. Fish is done simply, as are desserts like a good chocolate fondant. The nautical interior is an intimate space (there are only 30 seats; it's wise to book).

**Base Camp** BAR  
(1st fl Tonningsgata 31; ☀10pm-2.30am Sat) On the main street, Stryn's most popular bar gets its disco on as the night progresses.

## **i** Getting There & Away

Express bus destinations include the following:

- Måløy (Nkr240, two hours, three daily)
- Ålesund (Nkr255, 3¾ hours, one to four daily) via Hellesylt (Nkr105, one hour), from where the ferry runs to Geiranger

- Bergen (Nkr538, 6¾ hours, three daily) via Loen (Nkr52, 10 minutes) and Olden (Nkr59, 15 minutes)

## Florø

POP 8450

Florø, Norway's westernmost town, is a pleasant if sleepy settlement whose coat of arms features, appropriately, three herrings rampant.

Nowadays, wealth comes from the oil industry. The large Fjord Base, just northeast of town, serves the giant Snorreankeret offshore oil field. Florø is also enriched by fish farming and shipbuilding – the herring, the town's original *raison d'être*, plays a somewhat diminished role.

For a scenic overview, it's an easy 10-minute climb up the Storåsen hill from the Florø Ungdomsskule on Havrenesveien.

A group of several offshore islands is easily accessible by local ferry and makes for an atmospheric day trip to a number of significant historical sites from which to take in their incredible natural beauty.

## Sights

On and around Strandgata, Florø's main street, the most significant 19th-century timbered houses are well signed and documented in both Norwegian and English.

**Sogn og Fjordane Kystmuseum** MUSEUM  
(☎57 74 22 33; [kyst.museum.no](http://kyst.museum.no); Brendøyvegen; adult/child Nkr60/30; ☀11am-6pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun Jun-Aug, 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, noon-3pm Sat & Sun Sep-May) The first museum building is dedicated to fishing, including a model 1900 fishing family's home and exhibits on

## THE LOVATNET DISASTERS

Ascending Lodalen, you'll see what appear to be islands that nearly split the lake into two. These are in fact giant rocks that were dislodged from Ramnefjell and crashed down into the lake in three separate calamities. In 1905, when the resulting giant wave swept away 63 people – only nine of whom were ever found – *Lodalen*, the lake steamer, was deposited 400m inland. In 1936, an estimated 1 million cubic metres of rock crashed down, its wave killing 72 and lifting the steamer even higher. The third, in 1950, left a bigger scar on the mountain, but fortunately claimed no lives.

A path signed Pilgrimssti (Pilgrim's Path; indicated by blue markers), descends steeply through birchwood to a simple wooden cross that marks the site of a memorial to the victims of the 1905 disaster – itself swept away in the 1936 cataclysm. It can be found 100m before the toll road signs to Kjenndalsbreen. On the way, besides a series of edifying biblical tracts, you can spot the rusting remains of *Lodalen*, the lake steamer beached this far inland after being carried on the waves of disasters one and two. Allow 35 to 45 minutes for this out-and-back walk.

## THE WORLD'S LONGEST HERRING TABLE

On the third Friday in June, a herring table 400m long is erected in the heart of Florø. Just imagine a standard 400m running track, straightened out and laden with plates of herring, potatoes, bread and drinks, all free of charge, and you've got the scene. Then, once the table's cleared away, the festivities continue all weekend.

the foundation of the island as a small herring trading post barely 150 years ago. A second houses a collection of typical coastal boats. The **Snorreankeret** display – in a building that has the shape of the original oil platform that first pumped the country's oil – illustrates the exploration and exploitation of the North Sea oil and gas fields.



### Activities

#### Boating

**Florø Rorbu** (☎57 74 81 00; www.florbu.com; Krokane Kai) hires motor boats (Nkr200 to Nkr400 per day) and sea kayaks (Nkr200 per day), while **Krokane Camping** (☎57 75 2250; www.krocamp.no) rents out rowing boats (Nkr100 per day) and motor boats (from Nkr200/300 per three hours/day).

#### Hiking & Cycling

The tourist office sells a useful booklet, *Cycling in Flora* (Nkr10), and has map sheets on local hikes.



#### Tours

Between June and August, the tourist office runs a number of tempting guided tours. Pick up its leaflet of summer venues.



#### Sleeping

##### Florø Rorbu

APARTMENTS €

(☎91 39 28 88; www.florbu.com; Krokane Kai; apt Nkr650-1000) These excellent, family-owned, fully furnished flats are right beside a tiny inlet and have their own moorings (you can hire a boat or kayak and putter around the fjord).

##### Krokane Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎57 75 22 50; www.krocamp.no; campsites Nkr150, 2-/4-bed cabins Nkr450/550, 5-/6-bed cabins Nkr675/975, all with bathroom; 🏠) Krokane Camping occupies a wooded site on a peninsula 2.5km east of town. The shoreline

meadow, though a trek to the toilets, is a tent camper's delight.

##### Quality Hotel Florø

HOTEL €€

(☎57 75 75 75; www.nordicchoicehotels.no; Hamnegata 11; s/d from Nkr1100/1400; 📍📞📺) On the quayside, right beside the marina and constructed in the style of a dockside warehouse (the present banqueting area is a former fish store), this is Florø's best accommodation. Rooms with sea views cost no extra and a couple have 'boat beds', made of recycled rowing boats. Bryggekannten, its restaurant, sources most of its food locally and warrants a visit in its own right.



### Eating & Drinking

#### Bistro To Kokker

CAFE €

(☎57 75 22 33; Strandgata 33; dishes Nkr106-130; ☀9am-10pm) Come here for well-priced fare and large portions rather than atmosphere. There's squid, salmon, monkfish and other seafood served with cream sauce and mash, as well as fish and chips, burgers, good salads and pizzas. The special dish of the day goes for a song (Nkr97).

#### Hjørnevikbua

PUB, RESTAURANT €€

(☎57 74 01 22; www.tokokker.as; Strandgata 23; lunch dishes Nkr65-169, dinner mains Nkr255-285) The restaurant on the 2nd floor of Hjørnevikbua, with its ship-like interior, serves lunch that includes mean fish soups, then some rather ambitious evening meals, mostly featuring halibut, cod or salmon. You can also eat outdoors on its moored barge.



### Drinking & Entertainment

#### Shamrock

PUB

(Strandgata 58) One of a couple of pubs where the young folk of Florø head to down a beer, nibble on a snack or let their hair down at the Saturday-night disco. It also shows all major football matches.



### Information

**Tourist office** (☎57 74 30 00; www.fjordkysten.no; Strandgata 30; ☀9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, 11am-3pm Sun Jun-Aug)



### Getting There & Away

Widerøe flies here up to four times daily from Oslo and Bergen and four times a week from Stavanger.

Florø is the first stop on the Hurtigruten coastal ferry as it heads north from Bergen.

## GAMLE STRYNEFJELLSVEGEN: A DRIVING TOUR FROM STRYN

This spectacular 130km route takes a comfortable four hours. Head eastwards from Stryn along the **Rv15** as it runs alongside the river that descends from Lake Strynevatnet, then follows the lake shore itself. It's an inspirational ride with mountain views as impressive as anywhere in the country.

After 20km, stop to visit the **Jostedalssbreen National Park Centre** (Jostedalssbreen Nasjonalparksenter; www.jostedalssbreen.no; adult/child Nkr80/40; ☀ 10am-4pm or 6pm May-mid-Sep) in the village of **Oppstryn**. There's a worthwhile and informative 10-minute film about the glacier plus exhibits illustrating avalanches and rock falls and a variety of stuffed wildlife. Outside, enjoy its unique garden with more than 300 species of endemic vegetation, each labelled in Norwegian, English and French. A cluster of picnic tables offers a spectacular vista over the lake.

At an interpretive panel and sign 17km beyond the National Park Centre, turn right to take the **Rv258**. It took a team of local and immigrant Swedish navvies more than 10 years to lay the **Gamle Strynefjellsvegen** (old Stryn mountain road) over the mountain. The road, considered a masterpiece of civil engineering at the time, opened to traffic in 1894. For more than 80 years, it was the principal east-to-west route in this part of the country. Until well into the 1950s, a team of some 200 workers, armed only with spades, would keep it clear in winter, digging through several miles of metres-high snow.

The climb to the high plateau is spectacular, enhanced by thin threads of water tumbling from the heights and a trio of roaring roadside torrents carrying glacial melt. There are several stopping points as you ascend this narrow strip. Savour, in particular, the viewing platform above Videfossen, where the water churns beneath you.

Some 9km along the Gamle Strynefjellsvegen, you reach **Stryn Summer Ski Centre** (Stryn Sommerskisenter; www.stryn.no/sommerski), a bleak place outside the short season. But from late May until some time in July, it offers Norway's most extensive summer skiing; most of those photos of bikini-clad skiers you see around were snapped right here.

The steep ascent behind you, continue along a good-quality unsurfaced single-track road that runs above a necklace of milky turquoise tarns overlooked by bare, boulder-strewn rock. Here on this upland plateau, the sparse vegetation hugs the ground close.

After crossing the watershed 10km beyond the ski centre, there begins a much more gentle descent to rejoin the Rv15. Turn left for a fast, smooth, two-lane run beside **Lake Breidalsvatn** before diving into the first of three long tunnels that will bring you back to the National Park Centre and onward, retracing your steps back to Stryn.

After the completion of these three linked tunnels in 1978, the old road was overshadowed by its younger alternative: 12 speedy kilometres along a wide road against 27km of winding single track – there was no comparison. But the Gamle Strynefjellsvegen always drew travellers with time on their hands and lovers of wild scenery. Now, freshly designated a National Tourist Route, it again enjoys a share of a new, if softer, limelight.

The Gamle Strynefjellsvegen is normally free of snow from June to October. Electronic signs along the Rv15 indicate if the 'Strynfjellet' (its official name) is indeed open.

Express boats call in twice daily on the run between Bergen (Nkr630, 3½ hours) and Måløy (Nkr255, one hour).

If you're driving, the most scenic way north to Måløy by road is via Bremanger island.

## Offshore Islands Around Florø

Local ferries leaving from Florø's **Fugle-skjærskjærkaia Quay** connect the mainland to several small islands, each making for a

stimulating off-the-beaten-track day trip. The tourist office can reserve ferries and also advise on island accommodation.

**Askrova** has a prehistoric Troll Cave, whose deepest depths have never been explored. On the island of **Batalden**, check out the gallery and small museum at Batalden Havbu. You can overnight in their sensitively restored cottage B&B.

**Kinn** has a beautifully restored 12th-century church, believed to have been built by British Celts sheltering from religious



## KALVÅG

If you're travelling between Florø and Måløy via Bremanger island, do make the 5km detour from the ferry landing point at Smørhamn to the small, sensitively preserved fishing village of Kalvåg. Nowadays it's picture-postcard pretty and there's just one giant fish-processing factory on its outskirts that operates when the herring and mackerel shoals come near. But at its peak Kalvåg had over 50 herring salt houses that employed a seasonal workforce of around 10,000. You can still visit a couple of them; ask at the quayside **tourist office** (☎48 14 04 88; www.fordkysten.no; ☺10am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat, noon-4pm Sun Jul-mid-Aug, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri rest of year). To while away the time between ferries, scoff a plate of shrimps, split some crab claws or down a beer, brewed specially for the restaurant, on the dockside terrace of **Knutholmen** (☎57 79 69 00; www.knutholmen.no; mains Nkr298-319, seafood platters Nkr595; ☺8am-midnight) with the fishing boats right before you.

persecution. On the second or third weekend in June, it's the site of the Kinnspelet pageant, which celebrates the history of the church on the island. Climbers and hikers will savour the dramatic landscapes, particularly the Kinnaklova cleft.

On **Svanøy**, enjoy the hiking and pass by the small deer centre.

At 233m, the highest point on Tansøy offers great panoramic views over the surrounding archipelago.

## Måløy

POP 3500

The little fishing town of Måløy, at the mouth of Nordfjord, lies on Vågsøy island. Nestling beneath a pair of rounded hills, for all the world like a pair of giant breasts, it's linked to the mainland by the graceful S-curve Måløybrua bridge. Commercial boats ply up and down and it's a refreshingly real, working town.

Vågsøy island and neighbouring Selje are laced with sea-view hiking routes (pick up the 1:50,000 walking map *Outdoor Pursuits: Selje & Vågsøy Communes*).

A short drive for about 10km west of town brings you to the bizarre rock **Kannesteinen**, rising from the sea like the tail of a whale.

## Sleeping

### Steinvik Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎57 85 10 70; www.steinvik-camping.no; campsites Nkr200, cabins Nkr400-900, apt Nkr500-750; ☺year round) The nearest campsite to Måløy has spectacular views over the busy sea lane and a particularly cosy common room with sofas and armchairs. To get there, cross the bridge to the east bank, turn right after 2km beside a school and follow the track downhill for 1.2km. No credit cards.

### Target Hotell

HOTEL €€

(☎95 33 31 33; www.targethotell.no; Gate 1 49; s/d Nkr1090/1190; ☑☑) This modern, and unexpectedly stylish, hotel is friendly and informal. It occupies what was once an old caning factory: half of its 17 rooms have balconies and look directly across the waterfront and far mountains. There's a great open loft space on the top floor where you can drink tea and watch boats dock from floor to ceiling mansard windows.

## Eating

You'll find a cluster of three good places to eat and drink very near the express boat jetty.

### Snorre Sjømat

CAFE, MARKET €

(Havfruen; ☎57 85 23 36; ☺10am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) This dockside place is both a wet fish shop ('Born to fish, forced to work' says the plaque on the wall) and small cafe, serving fish cakes with mash (Nkr90), salmon and shrimp sandwiches (Nkr45), various stockfish dishes and, of course, cod and chips (Nkr130).

### Din & Min

CAFE €

(☎57 85 18 75; Gate 1 44) 'Yours and Mine' is a busy little cafe and late night drinking hole. And small's the word; sip a coffee or something stronger or nibble a snack within the confines of its agreeably woody interior. In warmer weather climb to the upstairs terrace, where you'll have the harbour spread before you.

### Kraftstasjonen

FISH €€

(☎57 85 12 60; Gate 1; dinner mains Nkr250-350; ☺11am-10pm Mon-Thu, 11am-1am Fri & Sat) Rita and Arne Anddal offer the freshest of fish. Come for cod, halibut and monkfish

prepared a variety of ways, plus one of the international style starters. Rita's fish soup (Nkr140) is tasty too. On weekends, live acts sometimes take up on the little elevated stage after dinner.

## **i** Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 57 84 50 77; Gate 1; ☀ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Jul, 10am-4pm Mon-Sat Jun & Aug)

## **i** Getting There & Away

The express boat to and from Bergen (Nkr790, 4½ hours) to Selje (Nkr83, 25 minutes) puts in at Måløy. The Hurtigruten coastal ferry also calls in.

Nettbuss express runs three times daily to/ from Oslo (Nkr620, 11 hours) via Stryn (Nkr180, two hours).

## Selje & Selja Island

POP 700

Few visitors make it to **Selje** and therein lies the charm of this village on the western edge of Norway, with its strand of pristine, white beach. **Vestkapp**, 32km by road from Selje, isn't Norway's westernmost point despite the name, but it still provides superb sea views. You can surf the point break at **Ervik** or the more reliable beach one at **Hoddevik**.

## **i** Sights

### Selja monastery

HISTORIC SITE

The haunting ruins of Selja monastery and the church of St Sunniva on Selja Island date from the 11th and 12th centuries respectively: this has been a place of pilgrimage for over 1000 years. A 40m-high tower is still intact and can be climbed for a splendid panorama. From mid-June to mid-August, the tourist office arranges two-hour guided tours, including boat transport (adult/child Nkr200/100), departing at 10am and 1.15pm.

## **i** Sleeping

### Doktorgarden

B&B €€

(☎ 90 92 97 71; www.doktorgarden-selje.no; d with shared bathroom Nkr1090; ☀ Easter-Oct) Up the hill from the port, you can wake here to sea views and the aroma of freshly baked cakes. Four big, carefully decorated rooms occupy the second floor of this lovely old house up the hill from the harbour. They share a large, spotless bathroom and guest kitchen. Downstairs, Anna, Torkjell and Karin also have a basement gallery, excellent little bookshop

and bright **cafe** (☀ 9am-6pm Jun-Aug, Sat & Sun 10am-3pm rest of year).

### Selje Hotel

HOTEL, SPA €€€

(☎ 57 85 88 80; www.selje-hotel.no; s/d Nkr975/1700) The Selje Hotel is right beside the beach, a '60s wood and shaped-stone pile. Its rooms are expensive in season, but super comfortable and there's a spa. There's a nice retro charm to it all.

## **i** Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 57 85 66 06; www.nordfjord.no; ☀ 9am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) Selje's tourist office, at the harbour, keeps a list of cabins and apartments in the area and can give you directions to local artisans and food producers, as well as suggesting walking trails and beaches. They are also incredibly knowledgeable about the region's rich cultural heritage, from its pilgrim routes to its WWII tunnels and fortifications.

## **i** Getting There & Away

From Måløy, you have two stunningly attractive ways of reaching Selje – the splendid fjord-side drive along the Rv618, or aboard the twice-daily Nordfjord express boat (Nkr83, 25 minutes).

Local buses run between Måløy and Selje (Nkr106, one hour) six times daily on weekdays and once on Sunday.

## THE NORTHERN FJORDS

More islet-strewn coastline and ever more deeply incised fjords await as you push further northwards into the region of Møre og Romsdal.

Stunning Geirangerfjord, a Unesco World Heritage Site, a must on most tours and a favourite anchorage for cruise ships, staggers beneath its summer influx.

Stray from this tour mecca though and you'll find the waterways and roads less crowded and the scenery just as arresting.

The architecturally unique port of Ålesund deserves at least a wander, and the drive over the Trollstigen pass is one of the world's most spectacular.

## Åndalsnes

POP 2244

There are two equally dramatic ways to approach Åndalsnes: by road through the Trollstigen pass or along Romsdalen as you ride the spectacularly scenic Raumabanen.

## THE ROLLING ROAD TO KRÅKENES LIGHTHOUSE

This 42km round trip can be comfortably driven in a couple of hours, including stops. Take the Rv617 from Måløy, then follow signs for Kråkenes Fyr (Kråkenes Lighthouse). On the way there or back, it's worth the short, signed detour to visit [Refviksanden](#), a 1.4km reach of white sand, voted Norway's finest beach in a 2010 online poll.

The road rolls over treeless, windswept grassland, runs past a long line of twirling windmills (step outside your car and you'll understand why they're sited right here) and offers staggering views of steep cliffs.

**Kråkenes Lighthouse** ([krakenesfyr.com](#); ste Nkr3950, d Nkr3150, with shared bathroom Nkr2100, minimum 3 nights), at the very end of the road, perches precariously on a rock shoulder. Sunny or stormy, it's a romantic spot with stunning views of the cliffs and pounding ocean. It's possible to stay in its B&B or bridal suite.

The rail route down from Dombås ploughs through a deeply cut glacial valley flanked by sheer walls and plummeting waterfalls. Badly bombed during WWII, the modern town, nestled beside Romsdalfjord might be nondescript, but the locals are delightful and the surrounding landscapes are absolutely magnificent.

### Sights

#### Trollveggen

CLIFF

From Dombås, the E136 and rail line drop in parallel northwest down to Romsdalen (you might have a sense of déjà vu if you've seen *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, in which the valley features). Near Åndalsnes, dramatic Trollveggen (Troll Wall), first conquered in 1958 by a joint Norwegian and English team, rears skywards. The highest vertical mountain wall in Europe, its ragged and often cloud-shrouded summit, 1800m from the valley floor, is considered the ultimate challenge among mountaineers.

#### Trollstigen

SCENIC DRIVE

([www.trollstigen.net](#); ☺ Jun-Sep) South of Åndalsnes, the Troll's Ladder is a thriller of a climb or descent. Recently declared a National Tourist Route, it was completed in 1936 after eight years of labour. To add an extra daredevil element to its 11 hairpin bends and a 1:12 gradient, much of it is effectively single lane. Several dramatic waterfalls, including the thundering 180m-high **Stigfossen**, slice down its flanks.

At the top, a visitors centre has been built from concrete, rusted steel and glass, to both withstand the extreme terrain and to mimic its many textures. Leading from here are dramatic viewing platforms that jut out here and there over the abyss and offer panoramas of the snaking road and the lush

valley below, as well as a perpetual waterfall soundtrack. Around you as you descend are the open reaches of Reinheimen National Park, established in 2006 and Norway's third largest, where wild reindeer still crop the mosses and soft grass.

The pass is usually cleared and open from late May to mid-October; early in the season it's an impressive trip through a popular cross-country ski field, between high walls of snow.

#### Raumabanen

SCENIC RAILWAY

Trains run daily year-round along this spectacular route, meeting the main line, after 114km, at Dombås. There's also a tourist train (adult/child return Nkr460/230, one child per adult travels free) with on-board commentary that runs twice daily from June to August from Åndalsnes' lakeside station up to Bjørli, at 600m. Book at the station or tourist office.



### Activities

#### Hiking

The pamphlet *Geiranger Trollstigen* (Nkr30) describes seven signed hiking trails in the Trollstigen area. You'll need to supplement this with the map *Romsdals-Fjella* at 1:80,000. The tourist office carries both. The tourist office can arrange mountain walks of four to six hours with a qualified guide.

#### ★ Aksia/Nesaksia

HIKING

([www.romsdal.com](#)) An excellent half-day hike begins right in town, along Romsdalsvegen, 50m north of the roundabout before the Esso petrol station. It takes around an hour to 90 minutes to reach the summit of Nesaksia (715m), the prominent peak that rises above Åndalsnes. The ascent rewards with the most astonishing views of

the Romsdal Alps, the Rauma river and the Romsdal fjord.

Utilising a series of steel walkways, the initial stage of the walk is easy enough to be done in ballet flats. After Nebba, the first viewing point, the marked path onward to the summit of Nesaksla (715m), gets a little more tricky but includes handrails in the steeper section and did not seem to phase your average Norwegian toddler. The most spectacular section is Romsdalstrappa, a series of natural stone stairs (built by a team of Nepalese sherpas) leading to a 6.5m-long metal grid that juts into thin air (calling it a 'viewing platform' just doesn't seem to do it justice).

This trail can also be the start for walking Romsdalseggen, and you can walk from both directions, from Åndalsnes to Vengedalen or from Vengedalen and back to Åndalsnes. From July to September, a bus (Nkr125, including map and trail information) leaves Åndalsnes for Vengedalen every morning at 9.30am, making for an easy way to do the walk in reverse. You can buy tickets from the tourist office, hotels and campsites. Wear at least sturdy trainers and bring plenty of water.

Other spin-off hikes from here include the straightforward ascent of the summit of Høgnoosa (991m) and a trek on to Åkesfjellet (1215m). Alternatively, traverse along the marked route 5km eastward and descend to Isfjorden village, at the head of Isfjord.

### Kløvstien

HIKING

Beginning in Isterdalen, on the RV63, the Kløvstien path's initial valley section is good for a gentle, forested walk, or, for something more challenging, continue up to the steeper section along Stigfossen.

### Climbing

The best local climbs are the less extreme sections of the 1500m-high rock route on Trollveggen and the 1550m-high Romsdalshorn, but there are a wealth of others. Serious climbers should buy *Klatring i Romsdal* (Nkr300), which includes rock- and ice-climbing information in both Norwegian and English.

### Skiing

Romsdalen is considered among the best skiing areas in the country, with the rewards of untouched powder and continuous views of fjords and wild peaks awaiting those who are up to its ski up/ski down challenges.

**Kirketaket** (1439m) is one of the Romsdalen 'classics' and takes three to five hours to ascend but delivers over 1000 vertical

metres of steep downhill slopes, from where you can ski right down to the fjord. Spring and early summer skiing is possible once the Trollstigen road opens as well.

See [www.romsdal.com](http://www.romsdal.com) and [www.kirketaket.com](http://www.kirketaket.com) for more information. For ski guiding see [www.skiromsdal.no](http://www.skiromsdal.no) or contact **Hotel Aak**, who can also organise ski guides.

### Fishing

#### John Kofeod Fishing Trips

FISHING

(☎ 97 17 94 42; [www.rauma-jakt-fiskesafari.no](http://www.rauma-jakt-fiskesafari.no); adult/child 3-hrs Nkr350/175, plus Nkr 75 per rod) John Kofeod runs three-hour fishing tours on Romsdalsfjorden three times daily in summer. Reserve directly or through the tourist office. There are 68 different fish in the fjord, with the most common catches being coalfish, pollack, cod, haddock, turbot, halibut, whiting, herring and mackerel.

### 🌟 Festivals & Events

#### Norsk Fjellfestival

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

(Norway Mountain Festival; [www.norsk-fjellfestival.no](http://www.norsk-fjellfestival.no)) A week-long get together for lovers of the great outdoors with plenty of folk events thrown in. Early July.

#### Rauma Rock

MUSIC

([www.raumarock.com](http://www.raumarock.com)) Central Norway's largest outdoor rock gathering. Two days in early August.

#### World Base Race

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

([www.worldbaserace.com](http://www.worldbaserace.com)) 'Organised' base jumping was invented in Åndalsnes; this contest is held in mid-August.

### 🛏 Sleeping

#### Åndalsnes Vandrerhjem Setnes

HOSTEL €

(☎ 71 22 13 82; [www.aandalsnesvandrerhjem.no](http://www.aandalsnesvandrerhjem.no); dm/s/d/f Nkr290/500/710/935; ☺ Mar-Nov; 📶) This welcoming, HI-affiliated, sod-roofed hostel is 1.5km from Åndalsnes train station on the E136, direction Ålesund. It's a nice garden complex of separate buildings with a great lounge area. A big breakfast buffet is included in summer. The Ålesund bus that meets the train passes right by as does the morning bus to Geiranger via Trollstigen.

#### Trollstigen Resort

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 71 22 68 99; [www.trollstigenresort.com](http://www.trollstigenresort.com); car/caravan sites Nkr190/200, 4-/5-bed cabins from Nkr500/1150; 📶) Recognisable by the strapping wooden troll at its entrance, this well-kept campsite is 2km along the Rv63 highway

## DON'T MISS

## SVELE AHOY

Norway is well known for its devotion to the waffle, but the western fjords and coast have a sweet afternoon treat that's all its own. *Svele*, a fat, folded pancake, can be found at cafes and hotels throughout the region, but, traditionally, it's the snack of choice for fjord crossings. Ferries have served *svele* in their cafeterias since the early 1970s and have their own closely guarded recipes. So what, apart from the experience of eating one in the presence of stunning fjord scenery, makes a *svele* unique? A particularly satisfying cake-like texture and flavour come from the addition of an unusual rising agent, salt of hartshorn, along with a measure of tart buttermilk. Plus it's in the toppings. Forget jam, *svele* come with either a sublimely simple smear of butter and sprinkle of sugar between the folds, or stuffed with a slice of *brunost*, the characteristic caramelised brown cheese of the region.

from Åndalsnes, direction Geiranger. The welcome's warm and the location, overlooking the River Rauma and embraced by mountains, is scenic and peaceful. All but one of the cabins have bathrooms and the two-bedders are smartly renovated. Open year-round, it's popular with skiers in winter.

### Åndalsnes Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 71 22 16 29; www.andalsnes-camping.com; car/caravan sites Nkr235, 4-bed cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr490, 7-bed cabins with bathroom Nkr950; 📍) Less than 2km from Åndalsnes, this friendly campsite enjoys a dramatic setting beside the River Rauma and nestled below the peaks. There's a good cafe and a cosy TV/recreation room, and you can order fresh bread to be picked up each morning. Hire canoes (Nkr50/200 per hour/day) and bikes (Nkr50/200 per hour/day) from reception.

### ★ Hotel Aak

HOTEL €€

(☎ 71 22 71 71; www.hotelaak.no; s/d Nkr995/1400; ☺ mid-Jun–Aug, restaurant 4-10pm; 📍 📞) One of the oldest tourist hotels in Norway is now in the hands of a charming young family. Kristine and Odd Erik Rønning – locals, dedicated travellers, super-experienced climbers, hikers and skiers – have imbued all with a light touch that beautifully en-

capsulates the region's rustic appeal, but is super stylish and switched on to a new generation of traveller.

Modern rooms are simple and spacious, while historic rooms are atmospheric and bold – all have views of mountains and fields, each are equally cosy retreats after an active day. Guests and nonguests can prebook for dinner, from simple suppers (Nkr179) to three-course feasts (Nkr595) in the stunning pine-clad dining room; it's the very picture of *koselig* – you'll be greeted by candles and vases brimming with wildflowers. Dishes are hearty and flavourful, made with great local produce and nicely finessed. Breakfasts, too, show the same attention to detail.

The hotel lies beside the E136, in a quiet corner of the Romsdalen Valley, 4km from town.

### Grand Hotel Bellevue

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 71 22 75 00; www.grandhotel.no; Åndalgaata 5; s/d Nkr1195/1550, dinner mains Nkr275-325; ☺ restaurant dinner only Mon-Sat; 📍 📞) This large hotel, up on its own hill, is the town's true centre. After a recent, smart renovation, its busy lobby is now rather glamorous. Most of its 86 rooms have fine views and lots of light. The restaurant is the town's most formal and decorated with a fascinating collection of local paintings, though the food is less remarkable.

From the hotel, you can walk straight into the interconnecting town library, cinema and auditorium, or to the public pool, 110m away.

## 🔪 Eating & Drinking

### ★ Sødahl-Huset

CAFE €

(Romsdalsvegen 8; ☺ 10am-3pm Mon-Thu, to 11pm Fri & Sat, 2-7pm Sun mid-Jun–mid-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) 📍 The blackboard declares 'local and homemade burgers, coffee, cake, ice cream – served by lovely ladies'. And, yes, it's all true. Owners Mari, Rannveig and Sissel are indeed lovely and the food here is proudly local, from the berry sorbets to the pour-over coffee to the *kraftkar* (local blue cheese) burger.

Even if you're not in the need of sustenance, this social hub also sells the work of local artisans (including the multitasking ladies themselves) and there's an enthralling selection of sheep skins, leather, knits, vintage clothes, jewellery and ceramics to poke around. At night there are beer tastings and live performances.

**Kaikanten**

CAFE, RESTAURANT ☼☼

(mains Nkr150-225; ☺ 10am-9pm Mon-Thu, to 11pm Fri & Sat, noon-9pm Sun mid-May-Aug) Sit back and relax at the jetty's edge and enjoy a drink and one pretty panorama in this welcoming place. The menu takes in those old Norwegian favourites: *svele* (pancakes), pizza and burgers.

**Kjellar'n**

PUB

(☺ from 10pm Sat) The Grand Hotel Bellevue's cellar bar, backlit in startlingly citified pink and lime green, is where the town meets on Saturday nights to drink, chat and dance until late.

**i Information**

**Tourist office** (☺ 71 22 16 22; www.visitandalsnes.com; ☺ 9am-8pm Jun-Aug, rest of year 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) At Åndalsnes train station. They rent bikes (hour/day Nkr60/185).

**i Getting There & Away****BUS**

Buses along the spectacular National Tourist Route to Geiranger (Nkr265, three hours), via Trollstigen, the Linge-Eidsdal ferry and the steep Ørnevegen (Eagle's Way), run twice daily between mid-June and mid-August.

There are also services to Molde (Nkr145, 1½ hours, up to eight daily) and Ålesund (Nkr295, 2¼ hours, four times daily).

**TRAIN**

Trains to/from Dombås (Nkr230, 1½ hours) run twice daily in synchronisation with Oslo-Trondheim trains. Trains connect in Åndalsnes twice daily with the express bus service to Ålesund via Molde.

**Valdal & Around**

Valdal is a place that travellers tend to pass through, on the way to or from the famous Trollstigen pass or after the blissful ferry journey from Geiranger. Perched in a nick of Norddalsfjord, its agricultural surrounds lay claim to being Europe's northernmost orchards. Here apples, pears and even cherries thrive and you'll find strawberries in profusion, commemorated in an annual **Strawberry Festival**, usually on the last weekend in July.

**Activities****Valdal Naturopplevingar**

WATER SPORTS

(www.valdal.no) From Valldal you can experience a four-hour white-water rush (Nkr790)

down the Valdøla River or gentler stand-up paddleboarding (Nkr590). This outfit's headquarters is 200m from the tourist office. It also offers kayak hire and a variety of other outdoor activities such as wilderness camping and, in winter, moonlight ski trips.

**Sleeping & Eating****Fjellro Turisthotell**

HOTEL ☼☼

(☺ 70 25 75 13; www.fjellro.no; Syltegata; s/d incl breakfast Nkr785/1180; ☺ May-Sep, cafe-restaurant 7-10pm) At cheerful 'Mountain Peace', just near Valldal's church, the welcome is warm and rooms nicely cared for. There's a cafe-restaurant here, too, that specialises in fish, and a pub on the ground floor, open at weekends. At the rear is a tranquil garden with a small playground for children.

**★ Juvet Landscape Hotel** BOUTIQUE HOTEL ☼☼☼

(www.juvet.com; Alstad; per person Nkr1450; ☺ Mar-Sep; ☺) One of Norway's most exclusive hotels, this remote hideaway combines brave contemporary architecture with a setting so compelling it seems mythological. Forget traditional notions of luxury, instead you have the reinvented cabin, with sublimely simple interiors of dark wood. These allow the landscape outside to glow summer green or winter white through cinematic floor to ceiling windows, eclipsing all else.

Breakfasts and evening meals (Nkr500 per person) take place around a long communal table in the rustic, reimaged barn, with local produce such as venison, reindeer, wild salmon or *bacalao* (salt-cod) the star of the show. Breads and pastries are made by an elderly neighbour. Note that to ensure guests' privacy, casual visits are not allowed.

**Jordbærstova**

CAFE ☼

(☺ May-Sep) About 6km up the Åndalsnes road from Valldal, Jordbærstova honours the valley's mighty strawberry. Stop in for a slice of their strawberry cake, a sponge with strawberries, cream and strawberry purée that may sound prosaic enough, but could just send you into a state of rapture. They also do traditional Norwegian buffets at lunch.

**Shopping****Valdal Safteri**

FOOD

(Syltetøysbutikken; www.baer.no; ☺ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat & Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) This artisan jam producer on the road behind and east of Valldal's church,

has a huge selection of jams and juices, pressed and simmered in the small factory behind the shop and sourced in the main from local farmers.

## **i** Information

Valldal's **tourist office** (☎ 70 25 77 67; www.visitalesund-geiranger.com; ☀ 10am-6pm mid-Jun-mid-Aug, rest of year 10am-5pm Mon-Fri) rents bikes (Nkr25/100 per hour/day) and can also arrange motor-boat hire (Nkr85/400 per hour/day).

## **i** Getting There & Away

Valldal lies on the 'Golden Route' bus service that runs twice daily from mid-June to August between Åndalsnes (Nkr125, 1¼ hours) and Geiranger (Nkr85, 1¼ hours), up and over the spectacular Trollstigen pass. If you're driving, pause at **Gudbrandsjuvet**, 15km up the valley from Valldal, where the river sluices and thrashes through a 5m-wide, 20m-deep canyon.

Equally scenic is the spectacular ferry cruise (adult/child single Nkr240/130, return Nkr370/190, 2¼ hours) that runs twice daily between Valldal and Geiranger from mid-June to mid-August.

## Tafjord

In 1934 an enormous chunk of rock, 400m high and 22m long – in all, a whopping 8 million cubic metres – broke loose from the hillside. It crashed into Korsnæs fjord and created a 64m-high tidal wave that washed up to 700m inland and claimed 40 lives in Fjorra and Tafjord.

## **i** Sights

**Tafjord Power Station Museum** MUSEUM (Kraft og skredseniter; ☎ 70 17 56 00; www.tafjord.net/museum; adult/children Nkr100/60; ☀ noon-5pm mid-Jun-early Aug) Within this historic, now-defunct, power station, exhibitions detail the advent of hydroelectric power in the valley, rock slides and avalanches. A long tube slide and indoor climbing wall make it extra fun for kids.

It's also worth taking the road that climbs from the village up to the Zakarias reservoir; after it passes through a bizarre corkscrew tunnel, a couple of kilometres higher up there is a short walking route that drops to the crumbling bridge at the dam's narrow base, where you feel at close range the stresses this 96m-high structure has to tolerate.

## Geiranger

POP 250

Scattered cliffside farms, most long abandoned, still cling to the towering, near-sheer walls of twisting, 20km-long emerald-green Geirangerfjord, a Unesco World Heritage Site. Waterfalls – the Seven Sisters, the Suitor, the Bridal Veil and more – sluice and tumble. The one-hour scenic ferry trip along its length between Geiranger and Hellesylt is as much mini-cruise as means of transport – take it even if you've no particular reason to get to the other end.

If you arrive from Hellesylt, Geiranger village, despite its fabulous location at the head of the fjord, comes as a shock to the system as you mingle with the waves of those delivered by bus and ship. Every year Geiranger wilts under the presence of over 600,000 visitors and more than 150 cruise ships.

You'll be overawed for another reason if you drop from the north down the Ørnevegen, the Eagle's Way, as the final, super-spectacular 7km of the Rv63 from Åndalsnes is called. As it twists down the almost sheer slope in 11 hairpin bends, each one gives a yet more impressive glimpse along the narrow fjord.

And whichever way you're coming or going, once the last cruise ship and tour bus of the day pulls out, serenity returns to this tiny port.

## **i** Sights

**Norsk Fjordcenter** MUSEUM (www.verdsarvfjord.no; adult/child Nkr100/50; ☀ 10am-6pm) The Norwegian Fjord Centre has tools, artefacts and even whole buildings that have been uprooted and brought here, illustrating the essential themes – the mail packet, avalanches, the building of early roads and the rise of tourism – that have shaped the land and its people. It's located up the hill along the Rv63, just past the Hotel Union (p238).

## Flydalsjuvet

VIEWPOINT

Somewhere you've seen that classic photo, beloved of brochures, of the overhanging rock Flydalsjuvet, usually with a figure gazing down at a cruise ship in Geirangerfjord. The car park, signposted Flydalsjuvet, about 5km uphill from Geiranger on the Stryn road, offers a great view of the fjord and the

green river valley, but doesn't provide the postcard view down to the last detail.

For that, you'll have to drop about 150m down the hill, then descend a slippery and rather indistinct track to the edge. Your in-trepid photo subject will have to scramble down gingerly and with the utmost care to the overhang about 50m further along, or if it's a selfie, we advise care when walking backwards.

### Dalsnibba

VIEWPOINT

For the highest and perhaps most stunning of the many stunning views of the Geiranger valley and fjord, take the 5km toll road (Nkr85 per car) that climbs from the Rv63 to the **Dalsnibba lookout** (1500m). A bus (adult/child return Nkr180/90) runs three times daily from Geiranger between mid-June and mid-August.



## Activities

### Sea Kayaking

#### Coastal Odyssey

KAYAKING, HIKING

(☎91 11 80 62; [www.coastalodyssey.com](http://www.coastalodyssey.com); sea kayaks per hr/half-day/day Nkr150/450/800, kayaking-hiking trips Nkr800-1250) 🍃 Based at Geiranger Camping (a short walk from the ferry terminal), this much recommended company is run by Jonathan Bendiksen, a Canadian from the Northwest Territories who learnt to kayak almost before he could walk. He rents sea-kayaks and does daily hiking and canoeing trips to four of the finest destinations around the fjord.

These include daily kayaking-with-gentle-hiking trips, lasting five to six hours. As his publicity flyer says with pride, these are 'the only trips available in Geiranger that have no environmental impact'.

### Boat Tours

#### Geiranger Fjordservice

BOAT

(☎70 26 30 07; [www.geirangerfjord.no](http://www.geirangerfjord.no)) This operation offers 1½-hour sightseeing boat tours (adult/child Nkr 110/45, sailing four times daily June to August). Its kiosk is within the Geiranger tourist office. From mid-June to August, it also operates a smaller, 15-seater boat (Nkr390/190) that scuds deeper and faster into the fjord.

### Hiking

Get away from the seething ferry terminal and life's altogether quieter. All around Geiranger there are great signed hiking routes to abandoned farmsteads, waterfalls and vista points. The tourist office's aerial-

photographed *Hiking Routes* map (Nkr10) gives ideas for 18 signed walks of between 1.5km and 5km.

A popular longer trek begins with a ride on the Geiranger Fjordservice sightseeing boat. A steep 45-minute ascent from the landing at Skagehola brings you to Skageflå, a precariously perched hillside farm. You can retrace your steps to the landing, where the boat stops (on request; tell the crew on the way out or just wave). To stretch your legs more, continue over the mountain and return to Geiranger via Preikestolen and Homlung.

### Cycling

#### Geiranger Adventure

CYCLING

(☎47 37 97 71; [www.geiranger-adventure.com](http://www.geiranger-adventure.com); Gågata; adult/child incl transport, bikes, helmet & equipment Nkr450/225) This outfit will drive you up to Djupvasshytta (1038m), from where you can coast for 17 gentle, scenically splendid kilometres by bike down to the fjord; allow a couple of hours. It also rents bikes (Nkr50/200 per hour/day).

### 🛏 Sleeping

Hotels are often booked out by package tours months in advance.

#### Geirangerfjorden Feriesenter

CAMPGROUND €

(☎95 10 75 27; [www.geirangerfjorden.net](http://www.geirangerfjorden.net); Grande; campsites Nkr260, cabins from Nkr850; 🌞late Apr–mid-Sep; 📶📶) An excellent camping option with well-maintained facilities and particularly pretty, well-decorated cabins. Good longer-stay rates are available.

#### Grande Hytteuteige og Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎70 26 30 68; [www.grande-hytteuteige.no](http://www.grande-hytteuteige.no); Rv63; campsites Nkr220, 4-bed cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr430, with bathroom from Nkr980; 🌞Apr–Oct; 📶📶) If camping, take the smaller, northernmost of its two fields for the best views up the fjord. It also hires out sea kayaks and fishing gear and can arrange a boat taxi to the fjord farms, accessible only by sea or on foot.

#### Geiranger Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎70 26 31 20; [www.geirangercamping.no](http://www.geirangercamping.no); campsite Nkr160; 🌞mid-May–end-Sep; 📶📶) A short walk from the ferry terminal, Geiranger Camping is sliced through by a fast-flowing torrent. Though short on shade it's pleasant and handy for an early morning ferry getaway.



★ **Westerås Gard**

CABIN €€

(☎70 26 44 97; [www.geiranger.no/westeras](http://www.geiranger.no/westeras); 2-bed cabins Nkr950, apt Nkr1150; ☀May-Sep) This beautiful old working farm, 4km along the Rv63 towards Grotli, sits at the end of a narrow road dizzily high above the bustle. Stay in one of the two farmhouse apartments, or there are five pine-clad cabins. The barn, dating to 1603, is home to a restaurant, where Arnfinn and Iris serve dishes made with their own produce.

From the farm you can do a 45-minute walk to the Storsæterfossen waterfall, along with many other lovely routes. Around 3km from the centre of Geiranger, you'll reach Hole Bru, where you'll see the sign for the farm road.

**Hotel Utsikten**

HOTEL €€

(☎70 26 96 60; [www.classicnorway.no/hotell-utsikten](http://www.classicnorway.no/hotell-utsikten); s/d Nkr890/1380; ☀May-Sep; P@) 'A temple to lift your spirits' – so observed King Rama V of Siam when he stayed during his grand tour. High on the hill above Geiranger (take Rv63, direction Grotli), the family-owned Utsikten, constructed in 1893, still has stunning views over town and fjord over a century later. Rooms, however, are small and a little more prosaic.

**Hotel Union**

HOTEL €€€

(☎70 26 83 00; [www.union-hotel.no](http://www.union-hotel.no); s/d Nkr 1600/2200; ☀Feb–mid-Dec; P@☎) The spectacularly situated Union is high on the hill above town. It's got a long history, but today takes the form of a large modern complex that includes a spa with a couple of pools and sauna (day access for non-guests Nkr350). Public areas have the air of luxury you'd expect at the town's best, but rooms are nothing special.

Their gargantuan dinner buffet (Nkr530) is good, and available even if you're not staying. The hotel's **Restaurant Julie** also does a local, seasonal multicourse à la carte menu (one to eight courses Nkr325–815).

✂ **Eating & Drinking****Olebuda & Cafe Olé**

RESTAURANT €

(☎70 26 32 30; [www.olebuda.no](http://www.olebuda.no); restaurant mains Nkr120-135; ☀cafe 9am-7pm, restaurant from 6pm) Occupying Geiranger's old general store, the pretty upstairs restaurant does a range of international-style dishes and good local standards like poached salmon roulade and house-smoked goat; all fish and meat are local. Downstairs is a colourful, casual

cafe with great carrot cake (Nkr45), all day snacks and good coffee.

**Brasserie Posten**

RESTAURANT €€

(☎70 26 13 06; [www.brasserieposten.no](http://www.brasserieposten.no); lunch Nkr99-124, dinner Nkr168-228; ☀noon-11pm) A simple menu of salads, burgers, steaks, fish and pizza is elevated above the norm by a passionate local chef who sources his Heel-sylt, organic dairy from Røros and makes the most of fresh herbs and vegetables. The modern Scando interior is bright and atmospheric, but the fjord-side terrace wins.

It's the perfect summer evening spot to enjoy their platters of local cured meats and smoked fish (Nkr189) and a glass of Slogen pale ale.

**Geiranger Skysstasjon**

CAFE

(☎8am-6pm Mon-Sat, from 10am Sun Jun-Aug, shorter hours rest of year) Big picture windows and footpath benches at this lovely black-stained Swiss-style shopfront look over the port action but keep you nicely out of the thick of it. The cafe makes great cappuccinos, using Ålesund's Jacu coffee, and delicious homemade *boller* (raisin rolls) and *svele* (pancakes). It's fully licensed and open some evenings for quiz nights and tapas – ask for upcoming dates.

🔒 **Shopping**★ **Geiranger Sjokolade**

CHOCOLATE

([geirangersjokolade.no](http://geirangersjokolade.no); Holenaustet; ☀10am-8.30pm May-Sep, Nov & Dec) Bengt Dahlberg's scented trail can reach as far as the dock as he handcrafts his wares in a basement of an old boathouse. Follow your nose and pick up a selection of his inspired work, including truffles flavoured with brown cheese or filled with cloudberry, or go for instant gratification in the form of ice cream or hot chocolate.

Out of season, if the shop's closed, pop downstairs and knock.

i **Information**

**Tourist office** (☎70 26 30 99; [www.geiranger.no](http://www.geiranger.no); ☀9am-6pm mid-May–mid-Sep) Located right beside the pier.

i **Getting There & Away****BOAT**

The popular, hugely recommended run between Geiranger and Hellesylt (car with driver Nkr320, adult/child single Nkr160/79, return Nkr215/115; one hour) is quite the most spec-

tacular scheduled ferry route in Norway. It has four to eight sailings daily from May to September (every 90 minutes until 6.30pm, June to August).

Almost as scenic is the ferry that runs twice daily between Geiranger and Valldal (adult/child single Nkr240/130, return Nkr370/190, 2¼ hours). A minicruise in itself, it runs from mid-June to mid-August.

From mid-April to mid-October, the Hurtigruten coastal ferry makes a detour from Ålesund (departs 9.30am) to Geiranger (departs 1.30pm) on its northbound run.

## BUS

From mid-June to mid-August two buses daily make the spectacular run over Trollstigen to Åndalsnes (Nkr265, three hours) via Valldal (Nkr85, 1½ hours). For Molde, change buses in Åndalsnes; for Ålesund, change at Linge.

## Hellesylt

POP 250

The old Viking port of Hellesylt, through which a roaring waterfall cascades, is altogether calmer, if far less breathtaking, than nearby Geiranger.

The **tourist office** (☎94 81 13 32; ☀10am-5pm mid-Jun-Aug) is in the Peer Gynt Gallery. For hikers, it carries *Taffardfjella*, a walking map at 1:50,000, and for cyclists, *Hellesylt Mountain Biking Map*.

## 👁 Sights

### Peer Gynt Galleriet

CULTURAL CENTRE

(adult/child Nkr120/60; ☀11am-7pm Jun-Aug) An only-in-the-fjords extravaganza, bas-relief wood carvings fashioned by local chippy Oddvin Parr illustrate the Peer Gynt legend, along with a 35-minute audio-visual show (three daily in English). There's an attached cafeteria with lovely big windows overlooking the fjord.

## 🛏 Sleeping & Eating

### Hellesylt Vandrerhjem

HOSTEL €€

(☎70 26 51 28; www.hihostels.no/hellesylt; dm Nkr260, s/d with shared bathroom Nkr390/640, d with bathroom Nkr750; ☀year round; @☎) This HI-affiliated hostel perches on the hillside overlooking Hellesylt. It's not flash, but in a beautiful spot. If you're arriving by bus, ask the driver to drop you off to save a long slog back up the hill.

### Hellesylt Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎90 20 68 85; www.hellesyltturistsenter.no; campsites Nkr190; ☎) The absence of shade at

this site is more than compensated for by its fjord-side location and proximity to the ferry pier.

## 📍 Getting There & Away

In summer, some ferries from Geiranger connect with buses to/from Stryn (Nkr115, one hour) and Ålesund (Nkr195, 2¼ hours).

## Norangsdalen

Norangsdalen is one of the most inspiring yet little-visited crannies of the northern fjords. This glorious hidden valley connects Hellesylt with the Leknes-Sæbø ferry on the scenic Hjørundfjorden, via the village of Øye.

The boulder-strewn scenery unfolds among towering snowy peaks, ruined farmsteads and haunting mountain lakes. In the upper part of the valley at Urasætra, beside a dark mountain lake, are the ruins of several stone crofters' huts. Further on, you can still see the foundations of one-time farmhouses beneath the surface of the pea-green lake Langstøylvatnet, created in 1908 when a rock slide crashed down the slopes of Keipen.

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

Beside the road about 2km south of Øye, there's a monument to one CW Patchell, an English mountaineer who lost his heart to the valley.

### ★ Villa Norangdal

HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(☎70 26 10 84; norangdal.com; s/d Nkr1450/1900; ☎) This enchanting 'mountainopolitan style' hotel began welcoming guests in 1885. The current owner, a descendent of the hotel's founder, began restoration in 2007, after it lay abandoned for decades. Six rooms are each an homage to a different 20th-century decade, utilising iconic Scandinavian design pieces, including Norwegian gems by Nora Gulbrandsen and Grete Prytz Kittelsen.

Downstairs, the traditionally decorated, atmospheric lounge has a log fire, there's a spectacular dining room and an outdoor jacuzzi. The freeride skiing from outside the door is excellent and in summer kayaking and climbing opportunities are close at hand. It's a magical place, in a fairytale location.

**Hotel Union Øye**HOTEL **ccc**

(☎70 06 21 00; www.unionoye.no; r Nkr1850; ☺May-Sep) Constructed in 1891, the Union has attracted mountaineers, writers, artists and royalty for over a century. With period artwork and furnishings, panelled in wood and speaking old-world charm, it's an over-the-top delight. The restaurant serves one- and three-course lunches (Nkr195 and Nkr350) and three- and five-course dinners (Nkr475 and Nkr595).

**Runde**

POP 100

The squat island of Runde, 67km south-west of Ålesund and connected to the mainland by a bridge, plays host to half a million sea birds of around 230 species, including 100,000 pairs of migrating puffins that arrive in April to breed and stay around until late July. There are also colonies of kittiwakes, gannets, fulmars, storm petrels, razor-billed auks, shags and guillemots, plus about 70 other species that nest here.

You'll see the best bird sites, as well as an offshore seal colony, on a **boat tour** (adult/child Nkr180/90). Three boats – the *Aquila*, the *Casablanca* and the *Rundo* – put out from Runde's small harbour, each two or three times daily.

There's a **tourist office** (☎90 18 34 55; www.rundecentre.no; in Runde Miljøsentet; ☺10am-6pm Jun-Aug, to 4pm May) and cafe within the Runde Miljøsentet.

**Sleeping****Goksøy Camping**CAMPGROUND **ccc**

(☎70 08 59 05; www.goksoyr.no; campsite Nkr180, 2-/4-bed cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr300/450, 4-bed with bathroom Nkr500; ☺May-Sep) Before the road north peters out, waterside Goksøy Camping has a range of basic cabins and rooms along with a campsite. The owners, long-term residents on the island, are welcoming and readily dispense information on birdwatching and walking trails.

**Runde Miljøsentet**APARTMENTS **ccc**

(Runde Environmental Centre; ☎70 08 08 00; www.rundecentre.no; r Nkr1500, 5-bed apt Nkr2000; ☐☎) This international research station, testament to the islands importance in the biology sphere, has accommodation, hosts conferences and training courses, and has an exhibition space.

**Ålesund**

POP 23,000

The home base for Norway's largest cod-fishing fleet, Ålesund sits on a narrow, fishhook-shaped sea-bound peninsula. Despite its primary source of income, this is no regular Norwegian port. After a devastating fire in 1904, the city was rebuilt in curvaceous Jugendstil – art nouveau – style and today remains Scandinavia's most complete and harmonious example of the era.

**Sights & Activities****★ Jugendstil Senteret**

MUSEUM

(Art Nouveau Centre; ☎70 10 49 70; www.jugendstilsenteret.no; Apotekergata 16; adult/child Nkr75/40; ☺10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-May) The city's unique architectural heritage is documented in a former pharmacy, the first listed Jugendstil monument in Ålesund. Apart from the building's own exquisite and almost entirely extant interior, including a sinuous staircase and florid dining room, displays include textiles, ceramics, furniture, posters and other ephemera. Even if you're not a keen aesthete, a 'Time Machine' capsule is great fun, presenting 'From Ashes to Art Nouveau', a 14-minute multimedia story of the rebuilding of Ålesund after the great fire.

Ticket price also covers entry to KUBE, next door.

**KUBE**

MUSEUM

(Møre and Romsdal County Museum of Art; Apotekergata 16; adult/child Nkr75/40; ☺10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-May) Ålesund's primary contemporary art space highlights Norwegian artists, as well as hosting the occasional design and architecture focused show. The old Bank of Norway building's upstairs gallery also has a wonderful view of the harbour.

Ticket price also covers entry to Jugendstil Senteret, next door.

**Sunnmøre Museum**

MUSEUM

(www.sunnmore.museum.no; Borgundgavlen; adult/child Nkr80/30; ☺10am-4pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sun May-Oct, closed Mon rest of year) Ålesund's celebrated Sunnmøre Museum is 4km east of the centre. Here, at the site of the old Borgundkaupangen trading centre, active from the 11th to 16th centuries, over 50 traditional buildings have been relocated. Ship-lovers will savour the collection of around 40 historic boats, including replicas

of Viking-era ships and a commercial trading vessel from around AD 1000. Take bus 613, 618 or 624.

Should your visit coincide with its restricted opening hours, don't overlook – as many visitors often do – its Medieval Age Museum. Displayed around excavations of the old trading centre are well documented artefacts discovered on site and reproductions of medieval illustrations depicting the way of life of the west Norwegian coastal folk who inhabited this thriving community.

### Atlantehavsparken

AQUARIUM

(Atlantic Ocean Park; [www.atlanterhavsparken.no](http://www.atlanterhavsparken.no); Tueneset; adult/child Nkr155/75; ☀10am–7pm Sun–Fri, 10am–4pm Sat Jun–Aug, 11am–4pm Tue–Sun Sep–May) At the peninsula's western extreme, 3km from the town centre, this aquarium can consume a whole day. Be introduced to the North Atlantic's teeming undersea world and the astonishing richness of coastal and fjord life. Children can dangle a line for crabs or feed the fish in the touch pool while the enormous 4-million-litre aquarium appeals to everyone. The grounds offer superb coastal scenery and walking trails (look out for WWII bunkers and gun batteries).

In summer, a special bus (adult/child Nkr200/100, including admission) leaves from beside the town hall hourly from 9.55am to 3.55pm, Monday to Saturday.

### Aalesunds Museum

MUSEUM

([www.aalesunds.museum.no](http://www.aalesunds.museum.no); Rasmus Rønnebergs gate 16; adult/child Nkr50/30; ☀9am–4pm Mon–Fri, noon–4pm Sat & Sun) The town museum illustrates the history of sealing, fishing, shipping and industry in the Sunnmøre region, the fire of 1904 and the town's Jugendstil rebirth and the German occupation during WWII. There's also a collection of boats and ships, including the *Uræd* lifeboat (piloted across the Atlantic in 1904 by an intrepid Ole Brude).

### Fiskerimuseet

MUSEUM

(Molovegen 10; adult/child Nkr50/10; ☀9am–4pm Mon–Fri, from noon Sat & Sun mid-May–mid-Sep) The 1861 Holmbua warehouse (one of the very few buildings to survive the 1904 fire) has exhibits on the development of fishing across the centuries and special sections on *klippfisk* (salt-cod) production and the processing of cod-liver oil. Its entrance area recreates an old grocery shop, a delight in itself.

## WORTH A TRIP

### STORDAL

If you're travelling between Valldal and Ålesund on the Rv650, do make a short stop at Stordal's **Rose Church** (Rosekyrka; adult/child Nkr30/15; ☀11am–4pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug). Unassuming from the outside, it was constructed in 1789 on the site of an earlier stave church, elements of which were retained. Inside comes the surprise: the roof, walls and every last pillar are sumptuously painted with scenes from the Bible and portraits of saints in an engagingly naive interpretation of high baroque.

### Aksla

VIEWPOINT

The 418 steps up Aksla hill lead to the splendid **Kniven viewpoint** over Ålesund and the surrounding mountains and islands. Follow Lihauggata from the pedestrian shopping street Kongensgata, pass the **Rollon statue**, and begin the 15-minute puff to the top of the hill. There's also a cheat's road to the crest; take Røysegata east from the centre, then follow the Fjellstua signposts up the hill.

### Ålesund Church

CHURCH

(Aspegata; ☀10am–4pm Tue–Sun) Built of solid stone in 1909, Ålesund's parish church has a strikingly wide chancel, every square inch covered in frescos over the wide sweep of its tunnel arch. Notable too are the stained glass windows, especially those in the north aisle with their appropriately nautical theme.

## 👉 Tours

### Guided Town Walk

WALKING TOUR

(adult/child Nkr100/free; ☀noon–1.30pm mid-Jun–mid-Aug) To get to know Ålesund's architecture with a knowledgeable local, sign on for the tourist office's excellent 1½- to two-hour guided town walk, which runs daily during the summer.

### 62° Nord

TOURS

(☎70 11 44 30; [www.62.no](http://www.62.no); Skansekaia) This highly respected operation offers a number of top-end excursions such as wildlife safaris, including one to Runde, fishing trips and cruises through Hjørundfjord. They can take you out in a Zodiac or yacht, and create customised itineraries. See them also for bike and kayak hire.

# Alesund



## 🌟 Festivals & Events

### Midsummer Jazz

(www.midtsommerjazz.no) Takes place on a weekend in late June.

JAZZ

### Alesund Boat Festival

(www.batfestivalen.no) A week of watery pleasures in the first half of July.

BOATS

### Jugendfest

(www.jugendfest.no) Norwegian and international bands all over town on one weekend in the second half of August.

MUSIC

### Norwegian Food Festival

(www.matfestivalen.no) Last week of August.

FOOD

## 🛏 Sleeping

### Alesund Vandrerhjem

(☎70 11 58 30; www.hihostels.no; Parkgata 14; dm/s/d/apt Nkr285/690/890/1490; ☺ year-round; @) In a pretty residential area a few minutes' walk from the port, this attractive build-

HOSTEL €

ing has big, pristine rooms. There's a large self-catering kitchen and breakfast is included. Most doubles come with bathroom and there are family-sized apartments with their own kitchen and sea views.

### Volsdalen Camping

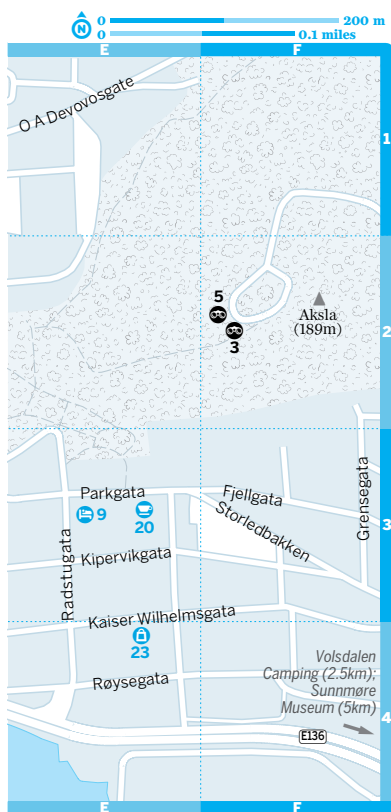
(☎70 12 58 90; www.volsdalencamping.no; Volsdalsberga; campsites Nkr150, 2-/4-bed cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr550/950, with bathroom Nkr1350; ☺ year-round) Above the shore about 2km east of the centre, this particularly friendly campsite is the nearest to town. Mainly for caravans and motorhomes, or for those wanting a cabin, it does have a secluded grassy area for campers at its far end. Take bus 613, 614, 618 or 624.

CAMPGROUND €

### Scandic Hotel Alesund

(☎21 61 45 00; www.scandichotels.com; Molovegen 6; s/d Nkr1060/1255; @) The Scandic has a lot going for it, position being just one. Rooms all have hardwood flooring and the

HOTEL €€



clean, bright Scandic look. While most do have some harbour view, you can't beat the junior suites; they are not large but have stunning round 'lookout' windows that bring the sea seemingly within reach.

### Rica Scandinavie Hotel

HOTEL €€

(☎ 70 15 78 00; www.rica.no; Løvenvoldgata 8; s/d Nkr895/1095; 📍 @) Ålesund's oldest hotel, the first to be constructed after the 1904 fire, has beautiful bones indeed. Sadly, its public spaces are rather uncared for and rooms are of your standard bland chain variety. Still, it's central and has great deals.

### ★ Hotel Brosundet

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 70 11 45 00; www.brosundet.no; Apotekergata 5; s/d Nkr1330/1530, d with view Nkr1730; 📍 @ 📺) Right on the waterfront and designed by superstar architects Snøhetta, this former warehouse is one of Norway's most charming hotels. Wonderful old beams and exposed brick walls are combined with

## Ålesund

### 📍 Top Sights

- 1 Jugendstil Senteret ..... A4

### 📍 Sights

- 2 Aalesunds Museum ..... C3  
 3 Aksla ..... F2  
 4 Fiskerimuseet ..... A2  
 5 Kniven Viewpoint ..... F2  
 6 KUBE ..... A4  
 7 Rollon Statue ..... D2

### 📍 Activities, Courses & Tours

- 8 62° Nord ..... C1

### 📍 Sleeping

- 9 Ålesund Vandrerhjem ..... E3  
 10 Clarion Collection Hotel Bryggen ..... B3  
 11 Hotel Brosundet ..... B3  
 12 Rica Scandinavie Hotel ..... D3  
 13 Scandic Hotel Ålesund ..... B2

### 📍 Eating

- 14 Anno ..... B4  
 15 Invit ..... B3  
 16 Lyspunktet ..... D3  
 Maki ..... (see 11)  
 17 Nomaden ..... B3  
 18 XL Diner ..... C2

### 📍 Drinking & Nightlife

- 19 Apoteker'n ..... A4  
 20 Jacu Coffee Roastery ..... E3  
 21 Milk ..... C2  
 22 Piano ..... D3

### 📍 Shopping

- 23 Celsius ..... E4  
 24 Ingrid's Glassverksted ..... A2  
 Invit Interior ..... (see 15)  
 25 Trankokeriet Antikk ..... A2

contemporary comfort and style. Bedroom furnishings are of white oak, bathrooms are set behind smokey glass walls and beds are draped with brown velvet and sheep skins.

Breakfast is served in the elegant, port-side Maki restaurant. If simple luxury is not enough, book 'room' 47, once the Molja lighthouse and featuring a round bed.

### Clarion Collection Hotel Bryggen

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 70 10 33 00; www.nordicchoicehotels.no; Apotekergata 1-3; s/d from Nkr1380/1580; 📍 @) This excellent waterfront option occupies a converted fish warehouse and has a beautiful full-height lobby and lounge area. Rooms have a smart maritime look and the deluxes are super big. Rates include nice extras like a

light evening meal and free waffles throughout the day, along with a guest sauna.

## Eating

Ålesund's top-end dining is good, with seafood a highlight. While midrange choices aren't so plentiful, you can't go past a scoop of fresh shrimps procured directly from the fishing boats that moor along the harbour front beside Skansegata.

### ★ Jacu Coffee Roastery

CAFE

(www.jacu.no; Parkgata 18; sandwiches Nkr99; ☺9am-3pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) The west coast's most highly respected coffee roastery is head-quartered in this sensitively remodelled industrial space. Drop in for an espresso or a made-to-order filter, breakfast pastries and lunch sandwiches. If you're keen to discover more about the Norwegian coffee scene, you can try one of the tastings and classes. Apart from churning out the best beans, they also host art exhibitions.

### Apoteker'n

CAFE

(☎70 10 49 70; Apotekergata 16; sandwiches around Nkr50; ☺10am-5pm Jun-Aug, 11am-4pm Tue-Sun Sep-May) Within Jugendstil Senteret (p240), this stylish, friendly little place offers excellent coffee and cake. They also do a good lunch menu of sandwiches and salads, made from top quality local produce sourced from Matbuda, a Stranda providore.

### Nomaden

CAFE €

(☎97 15 89 85; Apotekergata 10; sandwiches Nkr79; ☺11am-5pm) Affiliated with antique shop next door, this unpretentious cafe serves sandwiches, big slices of cakes and fresh coffee and has its own changing art exhibition.

### Invit

CAFE €€

(☎70 15 66 44; www.invit.no; Apotekergata 9; salads Nkr135, Thu eve seafood buffet Nkr300-450; ☺8.15am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 6pm-midnight Thu, 10am-4.30pm Sat) Invit does central Ålesund's best coffee and is its most stylish lunch spot. Daily changing salads are super fresh and inventive, healthy soups are warming and the nutty, fragrant cakes are homemade. If the streetside bar is full, spread out downstairs at one of the beautiful big wooden tables.

Attention to detail is not just in the decor, with even the complimentary water a delight, flavoured with seasonal berries or lemons and limes. If you're in town on a Thursday evening, you're in luck – book in

for their weekly seafood buffet and well-chosen glasses of wine.

### Lyspunktet

CAFE, RESTAURANT €€

(www.lyspunktet.as; Kipervikgata 1; mains Nkr129-169; ☺10am-10pm Tue-Fri, noon-5pm Sat & Sun) At this great-value place, join the youthful crowd on its deep sofa. There are free refills for coffee and soft drinks, and the west coast pulled pork and coleslaw sandwich is a local favourite, along with its fish soup. There are international cafe standards too, like chili con carne, as well as a 'slice of Sydney' focaccia.

### Anno

NORWEGIAN, PIZZA €€€

(☎71 70 70 77; Apotekergata 9B; mains Nkr235-335, pizza Nkr139-189; ☺11am-11pm Mon-Thu, to 3am Fri & Sat) This upmarket waterfront place attracts a young crowd and caters to a variety of moods. Wood-fired pizzas are the real deal and can be ordered in the lounge, or book a table for their more formal dinner menu. All dishes are described with key ingredient's provenience, such as veal from Sognefjord and fish from, well, just out there.

The fish soup, with its generous chunks of fish and scallops, roe and a subtle foam, is superb. The kitchen is open until 10pm.

### Maki

SEAFOOD €€€

(☎70 11 45 00; Apotekergata 5; 5-/7-course set menus Nkr720/850, mains Nkr345) The chef at Hotel Brosundet's portside restaurant earned his stripes as a ship's cook and his trawler connections means he gets the best seafood along the coast. Dishes have an international slant, though all is kept simple, letting the great produce shine. The street-side bar is a great place for a glass of wine, as is downstairs by the fire.

### XL Diner

SEAFOOD €€€

(☎70 12 42 53; Skaregata 1; mains Nkr289-340; ☺5pm-midnight Mon-Sat) Nothing could be further from a trad greasy diner than this 1st-floor fish restaurant overlooking the harbour. Seductively lit *klippfisk* (salt-cod) line the entrance, so there's no doubt about the house speciality. This quintessentially Norwegian dish is offered in a variety of *bacalao*-loving culinary styles, such as Genovese (with pesto and potato) or Spanish (with 'red' sauce).

There are also local specialities like pan-fried cod tongues with scallops and sour cream (Nkr140), a straight-up fish platter (Nkr340) and steaks (Nkr310).



## Drinking & Nightlife

### Milk

BAR

(Skateflua 1B; ☺ Tue-Thu 3pm-1am, Fri & Sat to 2.30am) A very stylish big-windowed bar that is right on the water and open late. While grown Norwegians are indeed known to neck a glass of the white stuff, it's good wines, beer on tap and cocktails that draw the locals here; the name comes from the building's former role as a milk delivery depot.

### Piano

BAR

(Kipervikgata 1b; ☺ 6pm-2am Tue-Thu, 3pm-3am Fri, noon-3am Sat) A laid-back bar with a steep rear garden; live bands sometimes use its flat roof as a stage. There's 28 beers on tap, the crowd is young and fun, and there are cosy spots if it's cold outside.



## Shopping

### Invit Interior

HOMEWARES

(☎ 70 15 66 44; Apotekergata 9; ☺ 11am-4.25pm Tue-Sat) Appropriately for such a design-forward town, this shop displays the very best of creative modern furniture and Scandinavian kitchenware and home appliances.

### Trankokeriet Antikk

ANTIQUES

(☎ 70 12 0100; www.trankokeriet.no; Molovegen 6b; ☺ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) This wonderful hotch-potch antique shop is a collector's dream. Though there are few bargains, there's an amazing stock of nautical curiosities, traditional Norwegian crafts, mid-century ceramics from Norway's best known designers as well as things that defy description. The coffee bar too is an eccentric delight.

### Ingrids Glassverksted

GLASSWARE

(www.ingridsglassverksted.no; Molovegen 15; ☺ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) You'll find everything from practical glasses and bowls to quirky, multicoloured chickens with spiky cockscombs.

### Celsius

GLASS

(www.celsius-glass.com; Kaiser Wilhelmsgata 52; ☺ 10am-4pm Tue-Sat, to 6pm Thu) 'Luxury for everyday use' is the motto of this small glass studio, where each piece is designed to be stylish yet functional. The kiln is at the front, the shop at the rear.



## Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 70 15 76 00; www.visitalesund-geiranger.com; Skaregata 1; ☺ 8.30am-6pm Jun-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri

Sep-May) Its booklet *Along the Streets of Ålesund* (Nkr30) details the town's architectural highlights in a walking tour.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Norwegian has direct summertime flights to Edinburgh and London (Gatwick). Internal destinations include Bergen (three times daily), Trondheim (twice daily) and Oslo (up to 10 times daily).

### BOAT

An express boat speeds down the coast daily to Måloy (3¼ hours).

On its northbound run, the *Hurtigruten* makes a popular detour, mid-April to mid-October, to Geiranger, departing at 9.30am.

### BUS

Local buses run to/from Åndalsnes (Nkr295, 2¼ hours, four times daily).

Express buses run to/from Bergen (Nkr686, 9¼ hours, one to three times daily), Hellesylt (Nkr190, 2¾ hours, up to five daily), Molde (Nkr155, 1½ hours, hourly), Oslo (Nkr915, 12½ hours, twice daily), Trondheim (Nkr1094, 7½ hours, one to three daily) via Molde (Nkr173, 2¼ hours), and Stryn (Nkr304, 3¾ hours, one to four daily).

## Getting Around

Ålesund's airport is on Vigra island, connected to the town by an undersea tunnel. **Flybussen** (www.flybussen.no; Nkr115, 20 minutes) airport buses depart from Skateflukaia ferry terminal and the bus station approximately one hour before the departure of domestic flights.

## Offshore Islands Around Ålesund

With a car, you can take in the four offshore islands of Valderøy, Vigra, Giske and Godøy in a pleasant day trip from Ålesund. All offer excellent short hill or coastal walks.

### Godøy

At the furthest, northern extremity of Godøy, the furthest offshore island from Ålesund, is the picturesque 1876 **lighthouse** (adult/child Nkr20/10; ☺ noon-6pm Jun-Aug) in the fishing station of **Aines**. For that end-of-the-world feeling, climb to the circular balcony via the five floors of this all-wood structure. Each displays the canvases of Norwegian artist and Godøy resident Ørnulf Opdahl.



## Giske

Giske was the home of Gange-Rolv (known as Rollon in France, he's also claimed by Vinga), the Viking warrior who besieged Paris. He subsequently founded the Duchy of Normandy in 911 and was an ancestor of England's William the Conqueror. Highlight of the island is its ornate 12th-century **church** (adult/child incl guided tour Nkr20/10; ☀ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-7pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug). Built largely of marble, its real jewels are the elaborately carved polychrome altarpiece and pulpit. The island's Makkevika marshes are a prime spot for birdwatching. Nowadays, it's renowned for its annual **free music festival** ([www.verdensbestefestival.no](http://www.verdensbestefestival.no)), with music of all genres, on the last Saturday in July.

## Valderøy

On Valderøy, the **Skjonghellaren caves** have revealed bones of Arctic fox, sea otter and ringed seal, plus evidence of human occupation at least 2000 years ago. In the northwest of the island, they're reached by a breezy 500m walk from the parking spot between cliff and shoreline, then a steep five-minute boulder scramble.

## Vigra

Vigra has Ålesund's airport as well as **Blindheimssanden** (also called Blimsand), a long white-sand beach.

## Molde

POP 19,900

Molde, hugging the shoreline at the wide mouth of Romsdalsfjorden, is known as the 'Town of Roses' for its fertile soil, rich vegetation and mild climate. But the town's chief claim to fame is its annual jazz festival, held in July.

Modern Molde, though architecturally unexciting, is a pleasantly compact place whose coastal landscapes recall New Zealand or Seattle's Puget Sound. To test the comparison, drive or take the one-hour signed walking trail up to the **Varden overlook**, 400m above the town.

## Sights

### Romsdalmuseet

MUSEUM

([www.romsdalmuseet.no](http://www.romsdalmuseet.no); Per Amdamsveg 4; ☀ park 8am-10pm) **FREE** There are nearly 50 old buildings within this open-air muse-

um, shifted here from around the Romsdal region. Among the barns, farms and storehouses, there's a short street of typical town houses and a small reconstructed chapel with adornments rescued from abandoned churches. After rambling around the ample grounds, take a break in **Bygata**, a town house that functions as a summertime cafe. In summer, there are very worthwhile **guided tours** (adult/child Nkr80/free; ☀ 11am-3pm or 6pm Jun-mid-Aug).

### Fiskerimuseet

MUSEUM

(Hertøya; adult/child Nkr80/50; ☀ noon-5pm mid-Jun-early Aug) This open-air museum, on the small island of Hjertøya, is a 10-minute boat ride from Molde's Torget terminal. Its cod-liver oil factory, cottages and fishermen's shacks, tiny schoolroom and collection of boats bring to life the coastal fishing cultures around the mouth of Romsdalsfjorden from the mid-19th century onwards. During opening hours, the boat (adult/child return Nkr100/free) runs hourly from Molde between 11am and 5pm; buy tickets from the tourist office.

## Sleeping

The tourist office has a number of private homes on its books, most with self-catering facilities and costing from Nkr500 per person. During the Molde International Jazz Festival, there's a large temporary campsite, Jazzcampen, 3km west of the centre.



### Kviltorp Camping

CAMPGROUND €

(☎ 71 21 17 42; [www.kviltorpcamping.no](http://www.kviltorpcamping.no); Fannesstrandveien 142; campsites Nkr190, 2-bed cabins Nkr620, 4-bed cabins with shower Nkr950-1020) This fjord-side campsite occupies a potentially noisy spot at the end of the airport runway, but fortunately there's very little air traffic. Cabins are bright and sweetly furnished and available year-round. Bus 214 and the Flybussen pass right by.

### Molde Fjordstuer

BOUTIQUE HOTEL €€

(☎ 71 20 10 60; [www.havstuene.no](http://www.havstuene.no); Julsundvegen 6; s/d Nkr890/1090;  ) The welcoming Fjordstuer replicates the squat, solid forms of typical fisherfolk cottages in a modern business hotel. Superior rooms have fjord views and balconies. There are two seafood restaurants onsite to choose from.

### Rica Seilet Hotel

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 71 11 40 00; [www.rica.no](http://www.rica.no); Gideonvegen 2; s/d Nkr1195/1445;  ) This soaring hotel juts out into the sound like a huge silver sail. It's undeniably corporate but very pleasant;

rooms have large picture windows and magnificent views. There's lots of boat watching at the waterside lobby bar or lots of cloud and sea from the 15th floor skybar.

**Quality Hotel Alexandra** HOTEL €€€  
(☎ 71 20 37 50; www.choice.no; Storgata 1-7; s/d Nkr1280/1440; 📍 📞 📺) Although architecturally less exciting than Molde's waterside Fjordstuer and Seilet hotels, the decor here is pleasing, and most rooms have a balcony and offer water views.

## 🍴 Eating & Drinking

**Rød** CAFE €  
(☎ 71 20 30 00; Storgata 19; soups/salads Nkr50-139, mains Nkr139-189; ☺ 11am-11pm Mon-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat, 1-9pm Sun) On the ground floor of the town's main student accommodation, expect good value meals all day and some rowdy fun as the night wears on. Daily specials (Nkr145) aim to keep the kids well fed, be that with reindeer stew or a spaghetti carbonara. Note that it's open until 3am right through Moldejazz.

**Fole Godt** CAFE, BAKERY €  
(☎ 93 09 13 33; Amtmann Krohgs gate 5; sandwiches & salads Nkr90-110; ☺ 7.45am-5pm Mon-Sat) Warm and welcoming cafe with a huge range of filled sandwiches, pizza slices, buns and cakes.

**Gorvell** NORWEGIAN €€€  
(www.xn-grvell-bya.no; Storgata 19; mains Nkr295-315) Beautiful local produce like halibut and crab from Averøya turns up on the menu at Molde's most elegant restaurant, though if you've had your fill of seafood on the coast it has good beef and reindeer too.

**Vertshuset** NORWEGIAN €€€  
(☎ 71 20 37 75; Storgata 1-7; restaurant mains Nkr279-319, bistro mains Nkr129-199) Hotel Alexandra's restaurant is all attractive panelled wood and bare brickwork and has a bistro menu of pastas, salads and sandwiches and tempting dinner choices such as fillet of lamb in a red-wine sauce with ginger-glazed vegetables.

**Syd** WINE BAR  
(www.motsyd.no; Fjordgata 3; ☺ from 11.30am Mon-Sat) No, not the name of your host for the night but Norwegian for 'south', the way this wine bar faces. Looking out over the fjord, its terrace offers an inspirational panorama. Wines - reds mainly from Italy, whites from France - have their perfect accompaniment in the prosciutto platters (Nkr125).

## 📍 Information

**Tourist office** (☎ 71 20 10 00; www.visitmolde.com; Torget 4; ☺ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, rest of year 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) In Torget, the main square near the express ferry terminal, this office is super well stocked and friendly. Ask for the Nkr95 *Molde Fraena* (1:50,000), the best hiking map of the area.

## 📍 Getting There & Away

**AIR**  
Molde's shoreside **Arø airport** (☎ 67 03 23 10) is 5km east of the city centre. Local bus 701 (Nkr35, 10 minutes) from Molde's bus terminal passes by the airport at least hourly. There are up to six planes daily to/from Oslo on SAS and Norwegian; Widerøe has frequent daily flights to Bergen and a couple a day to Kristiansund and Trondheim.

**BOAT**  
Northbound, the Hurtigruten coastal ferry leaves at 10pm (6.30pm mid-September to mid-April); southbound, it leaves at 9.30pm. Express ferries also operate from Molde. The express-ferry terminal is on Torget, the main square.

**BUS**  
Inland buses run hourly to and from Kristiansund (Nkr195, 1½ hours). Much more attractive and scarcely longer is the coastal run that rolls along the Atlanterhavsveien.

## MOLDEJAZZ

Every July, **Moldejazz** (www.moldejazz.no) pulls in up to 100,000 fans and a host of jazz greats. The line-up is primarily Scandinavian though every few years includes international top liners along the lines of Sonny Rollins, Bobby McFerrin and Herbie Hancock.

The town parties all the way from Monday to Saturday. Of over 100 concerts, a good one-third are free, while big events are very reasonably priced at Nkr50 to Nkr600.

Trad jazz belts it out in Perspiration Hall, while the big draws perform outdoors near the Romsdalsmuseet and there are plenty of supporting events, including a daily street parade, from noon onwards in front of the Rådhus.

For this year's events, see the website.

Regular buses run to/from Ålesund (Nkr162, 2¼ hours, hourly) and Åndalsnes (Nkr148, 1½ hours, up to eight daily).

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Travelling northwards on the Rv64, the Tussen-tunnelen shortcut avoids a dog's leg and lops a good 15 minutes off travel time.

## Around Molde

### Ona

The beautiful outer islet of Ona, with its bare rocky landscapes and picturesque lighthouse, is still home to an offshore fishing community. It makes a popular day trip from Molde. En route, WWII buffs may want to stop off at **Gossen Krigsminnesamling** (☎ 8.30am-3.30pm Mon-Fri Jul-mid-Aug), a former Nazi wartime airstrip built by Russian POWs on the low island of Gossen. The abandoned summer-house village of Bjørnsund also warrants a brief stop.

From Molde, you can visit Ona by public transport in a day. Take the 8am bus 561 to the ferry point at Småge. From here, it's a gorgeous trip by the 9.35am ferry, which stops at three islands en route and docks at Ona at 11.10am. You *could* scurry around and leave by the noon ferry. Better to take the 3.35pm boat from Ona, then the 5.10pm linking bus in Småge to reach Molde at 6.35pm. If you have wheels, leave your vehicle in Småge (it's an encumbrance on the island) and hop on the ferry there.

### Bud

The Rv664 coastal route between Molde and Kristiansund is a scenic alternative to the faster E89. En route lies the little fishing village of Bud, huddled around its compact harbour. It's difficult to believe, but in the 16th and 17th centuries Bud was the greatest trading centre between Bergen and Trondheim.

Bus 352 travels regularly between Molde and Bud (one hour; four to seven times daily, except Sunday).

### 👁 Sights

#### Ergan Coastal Fort

FORT  
(Ergan Kystfort; adult/child Nkr80/35; ☎ 10am-6pm Jun-late Aug) Serving as a WWII museum and memorial, this defensive fortification was erected by Nazi forces in 1940. Various

armaments and a network of bunkers and soldiers' quarters are dispersed around the hill with the sick bay and store sunk deep inside the mountain.

#### Draagen Smokehouse

FACTORY

(☎ 95 86 44 25; ☎ by appointment) Petter Aune set up this operation, where freshly caught Aukra salmon are smoked with pure local wood and herbs, after tiring of the poor quality industrial product. It's one of only a few left in Norway and the resulting salmon does indeed have the elusive 'smakupplevelse' – a melt-in-your-mouth quality. Come here to see the process, sample and buy.



### Eating

#### Bryggjen i Bud

SEAFOOD cc

(☎ 71 26 11 11; www.bryggjen.no; mains Nkr150-180; ☎ noon-9pm Mon-Sat, noon-6pm Sun Jul-Aug, noon-6pm Mon-Thu, noon-8pm Fri & Sat rest of year) This unpretentious place attracts people from miles around. 'People weep if they arrive and find it closed,' said the lady in the visitors centre, with perhaps just a touch of exaggeration. They come for coastal comfort food: fish soup, two varieties of fish ball, salted coalfish, and, of course klipfish (Norway's largest klipfish-drying sheds are just up the road).

## Averøy

Averøy has all the silence and wild beauty of one of Norway's offshore islands, but the definite advantage of a tunnel connection to Kristiansund along with direct access to the excellent Atlantic Ocean Road. For those road-tripping along the coast, or here to experience the Atlantic Ocean Road, its rocky sea-swept villages make a far more atmospheric base than Kristiansund. The accommodation options mentioned either offer nightly meals or are self-catering.

### 👁 Sights & Activities

#### Kvernes Stave Church

CHURCH

(Fv247, Kvernes; adult/child Nkr50/free; ☎ 10am-5pm late-Jun-mid-Aug) This beautifully sited stave church dates from the early 14th century, though it was rebuilt in the 17th. Inside are a large 300-year-old votive ship and unusual 15th-century altarpiece, with the Virgin Mary figuring prominently, Catholic to the core. While many such altarpieces were destroyed at the time of the Reformation,

this one luckily survived, although a stylised Lutheran surround was added in 1695. More luck: the church narrowly escaped demolition when the larger one beside it was erected in 1893.

### Sveggvika Dive Resort

DIVING

(www.sveggvika.com; guided dives per person from Nkr250) This dive outfit offers easy access to wrecks along with the rich coral and fish life of this part of the west coast. They have the full range of rental equipment and offer PADI courses and accommodation packages.

### Sleeping

#### ★ Sveggvika

GUESTHOUSE, CABINS €€€

(☎ 40 01 81 92; www.sveggvika.com; Seivågneset; d Nkr1450; 🛏) Lie in bed and watch the reflection of tiny pink clouds track their way across the still water of the bay or experience a ferocious North Sea storm sweep in – the stylish, if simple, rooms in this converted 1920s *klippfisk* warehouse make you feel part of the coastal landscape whatever the weather. Breakfast and dinners are excellent too.

### Håholmen Havstuer

HISTORIC HOTEL €€€

(☎ 71 51 72 50; www.haholmen.no; Håholmen; d Nkr1900; ☺ late-Jun–mid-Aug) This enchanting ‘hotel’ is in fact a small former fishing village on its own islet just off Averøy. Rooms here are 18th- and 19th-century cottages, mostly for doubles, though there are a couple of multi-bedroomed ones too. Some are more rustic than others, with exposed timber, but all are charming.

Ytterbrugga, its restaurant, serves the freshest of fish.

Parking is on the island of Geitøya, on the Atlanterhavsveien, from where a motor boat makes the five-minute sea journey. It leaves the roadside car park on the hour, between 11am and 9pm, or by appointment.

### Skjerneset Bryggecamping

CABINS €

(www.skjerneset.com; Ekkilsøy; campsite Nkr190, 2-bed fishermen's cabins Nkr450, 4-bed cottage Nkr820) The coastal cabins here have nice ocean views, along with cute porches to enjoy it from, or there are simple rooms in a former fish warehouse. The owners, themselves former commercial fisherfolk, organise deep-sea trips, or you can hire a boat, with or without motor, and sling your own line (from Nkr480 per day, with skipper Nkr2300 for three hours).

If you don't have any luck out there, it's possible to buy fresh fish to cook at your own cabin.

## Kristiansund

POP 24,135

The historic cod-fishing and drying town of Kristiansund still looks below the sea for its wealth. Even though the waters are no longer so bountiful – the huge hauls of yesteryear are now the source of tales as tall as any angler's – cod-processing remains important. A significant amount of the world's klipfish is cured in and around the town, while Mellemværftet, unkempt and chaotic, hangs on as a working boatyard.

Kristiansund also plays a significant role in servicing Norway's North Sea oilfields, with its hotels, bars and restaurants catering to off-duty oil workers (with oil worker wages to spend).

The town ranges over three islands; its port and centre was bombed heavily during WWII and were replaced with little of architectural note.

### Sights

Most sights hug the port or are in its grid of streets in the postwar centre. **Gamle Byen**, Kristiansund's old town lives on in a part of the island of Innlandet, with clapboard buildings that date back to the 17th century. The grandiose **Lossiusgården**, at its eastern end, was the distinguished home of an 18th-century merchant. The venerable 300-year-old **Dødeladen Café**, where you can still get a meal and a drink, hosts cultural and musical events. It's a 20-minute walk across the Heingsgata bridge, but the most enjoyable way of getting here is on the stubby Sundbåt ferry from Piren ferry port.

### Norsk Klippfiskmuseum

MUSEUM

(www.nordmore.museum.no; Gomalandet; adult/child incl guided tour Nkr70/free; ☺ 10am–2pm late Jun–early Aug) This museum, in the 1749 Milnbrygga warehouse on Gomalandet peninsula, presents the 300-year history of the dried-cod export industry in Kristiansund. It continues to produce modest quantities of *klippfisk* in the traditional way. From the town centre, take the Sundbåt ferry and ask to be dropped off.

Just north of this museum are two other classic buildings, both normally closed to the public: Hjelkrembrygga, a former

*klippfisk* warehouse dating from 1835, and Woldbrygga, a barrel factory constructed in 1875.

### Mellemværftet

SHIPYARD

Something of a nautical junkyard, Mellemværftet, free and accessible any time, is best approached on foot along the quayside from the Smia Fiskerestaurant (p251). It's difficult to make out what's what amid the clutter, but it includes the remnants of Kristiansund's 19th-century shipyard, a forge, a workshop and workers' quarters.

### Kirkelandet Church

CHURCH

(Langveien 41; ☺ 9am-3pm Sun-Fri) Architect Odd Østby's inspirational church was built in 1964 to replace the one destroyed by Nazi bombs. The angular exterior, where copper and concrete alternate, is sober and measured. Inside, all lines direct the eye to the 320 panes of stained glass at the rear of the chancel. Moving upward from the earthy colours at the base, they become paler and, at the top, replicate the 'celestial light of heaven'.

Behind the church lies Vanndamman Park, with plenty of greenery, walking tracks and the eagle's-eyrie Varden watchtower viewpoint.

### Petrosenteret

INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

(www.petrosenteret.no; Storkaia 9; adult/child incl guided tour Nkr75/50; ☺ 11am-4pm Jun-Aug) Presenting the modern face of Kristiansund industry, this centre portrays, through film, models, an exhaustive guided tour and mind-numbing megastatistics, the impact of oil and gas upon contemporary Norway. There are some nice models, but it's not a patch on the Norsk Oljemuseum in Stavanger.

### Festiviteten

OPERA HOUSE

(☎ 71 58 99 60; www.oik.no; Kong Olav V's gate 1) Constructed in 1914, Kristiansund's monumental theatre, although rather austere from the outside, has an attractive art nouveau interior that's definitely worth a peek for architecture and history buffs (the building is usually open during business hours or call ahead). Norway's oldest opera company resides here, along with the city's opera festival, although these will move to a new waterfront cultural centre by 2017.

## ★ Festivals

### Operafestukene

MUSIC

(www.oik.no) A two-week opera festival in early February.

### Tahiti Festivalen

MUSIC

(www.tahiti-festivalen.no) A late-June week-long music festival held on Innlandet.

### Nordic Light Photo Festival

PHOTOGRAPHY

(www.nle.no) Large fine-art photography festival that attracts big names and up to 70,000 visitors to its exhibitions and workshops, in September.

## 🏠 Sleeping

### Atlanten Camping & Motell

CAMPGROUND, MOTEL €

(☎ 71 67 11 04; www.atlanten.no; Dalaveien 22; campsites Nkr170, 4-bed cabins with outdoor bathroom Nkr595, with bathroom Nkr995, motel s/d Nkr595/795; 📞) This hostel and campground is an easy 20-minute walk from the centre. It's a friendly place, and the motel has a well-equipped kitchen, TVs in the rooms and a big screen in the lounge for sporting events. Camping facilities have recently been fully renovated and the furnished apartments are a great deal for small groups.

### Dala Bergan

CABINS €

(☎ 71 67 30 25; www.havfiske-kristiansund.no; 2-/12-bed cabins Nkr600/1200) Out along Dalaveien, these cabins are only a 10-minute walk from the centre, although they have a rustic seaside location. All have bathrooms, TVs and, sweetly, sunbathing platforms. Bed linen can be hired.

### Thon Hotel Kristiansund

HOTEL €€

(☎ 71 57 30 00; www.thonhotels.com; Fiskergaten 12; s/d Nkr895/1395; 📞) Located out on Innlandet, this hotel is a good 20-minute walk to the centre, but that could well be a bonus. The rooms in the converted 1915 warehouse combine this chain's usual clean, modern lines with historic beams and big windows. There's a great harbour-side terrace attached to the dining room and the views back to the city are fantastic.

### Rica Hotel Kristiansund

HOTEL €€€

(☎ 71 57 12 00; www.rica.no; Storgata 41; ☺ s/d from Nkr1300/1750; 📞) Recently overhauled, the fjord-side Rica has rooms that overlook the water and your standard chain comforts, including a sauna. It regularly books out and its public areas are often hectic.

## 🍴 Eating

### Dødeladen Café

NORWEGIAN €

(www.dodeladen.no; Innlandet; mains Nkr115-189; ☺ noon-11pm Tue-Thu, to 2am Fri & Sat) Part of

## THE ATLANTIC OCEAN ROAD

The eight storm-lashed bridges of Atlanterhavsveien (Atlantic Ocean Road), recently designated a National Tourist Route, buck and twist like sea serpents, connecting 17 islets between Vevang and the island of Averøya. The UK's *Guardian* newspaper once crowned it the 'world's best road trip'. For a highway that is barely 8km long, the weight of expectation may be too great, but it's certainly hugely scenic. During the autumn storms you'll experience nature's wrath at its most dramatic. And in season, look out for whales and seals offshore.

A newly opened rest area and walking path float about the wet marshland of **Eldhusøya**, an island off the southwest of Averøya; the suspended walkway is made of latticework floating above the terrain, secured on poles. There is also a kiosk, information boards, car park and toilets here.

At **Askevågen**, a little over 10km north of Bud, you can venture out onto a beautifully simple glass fronted viewing platform, which not only gives you a 360-degree panoramic view of the archipelago, the ocean and the shore, but a close, if protected, experience of the intense force of the ocean here.

From **Molde**, hit the coast at Bud; from **Kristiansund** and the north, take the new sub-sea road tunnel that connects with Bremsnes.

Whichever your direction, rather than driving the Rv64, which cuts across inland Averøya, choose the quieter, prettier road, signed for Kvernes, that loops around the island's southern coast and takes no longer.

If you're travelling under your own steam, **Eide Auto** (☎90 77 30 63; www.eideauto.no; Return day ticket adult/child Nkr150/100) buses link Molde and Kristiansund year-round, via the coastal route and Atlanterhavsveien. It's a 2¼ hour round trip, although if you buy the day ticket you can hop on and off at will. During the week there are six departures, two on Saturday and one on Sundays.

Gamle Byen on the city island of Innlandet, this cafe-restaurant-bar dates back to the early 1700s. It serves a menu of west-coast standards including fish soup, *klippfisk* in tomato, burgers, *svele* (pancakes) and waffles. It's also the office of the annual Tahiti Festival, when it comes into its own as the festival after-hours club.

You can get here on the Sundbåten ferry (p252) or take the bus from the centre heading towards Hønebukta.

**Sjøstjerna** SEAFOOD **cc**  
(☎71 67 87 78; www.sjostjerna.no; Skolegata 8; mains Nkr195-279; ☺noon-midnight Mon-Sat) The menu here offers traditional fish dinners and its jaunty marine-themed interior is a hoot, although the outlook from its street-side terrace, on a windswept pedestrianised plaza, is grim.

★**Bryggekannten** RESTAURANT, BAR **ccc**  
(☎71 67 61 60; www.fireb.no; Storkaia 1; lunch Nkr159-192, dinner mains Nkr298-310; ☺11.30am-10.30pm Mon-Sat, bar until 2.30am Wed, Fri & Sat) This cheerful brasserie sits right beside the harbour and is convivial both day and night. Burgers, mussels, pizza and bruschetta make for hearty lunches on the terrace, while the

dinner menu allows you to stay snacky or opt for more ambitious choices like smoked Vestfold duck with pear purée or pork with spring cabbage and asparagus.

**Smia Fiskerestaurant** SEAFOOD **ccc**  
(☎71 67 11 70; www.smia.no; Fosnagata 30b; mains Nkr240-295; ☺1pm-midnight) The much-garlanded Smia fish restaurant is in an old forge, adorned from wall to ceiling with blacksmiths tools – plus a couple of whale vertebrae and a hanging split cod. The fish soup (Nkr130) makes a great starter and the *bacalao* gratin does nicely for mains (Nkr249).

## 🍷 Drinking & Entertainment

**Christian's Bar** BAR  
(☎71 57 03 00; Storgata 17) On the 1st floor of Hotell Kristiansund, Christian's Bar is an oddly fascinating place that has the decor of a Williamsburg hipster haunt, but attracts punters that look like they will probably get a little scary as the night wears on.

## 🛍 Shopping

**Klippfiskbutikken** FOOD  
(Fosnagata 25; ☺10am-5pm Mon-Fri) Genial Knut Garshol, a member of the international

slow-food ecogastronomy movement, will buttonhole you and enthusiastically proclaim the virtues of klipfish at this splendid temple to the mighty cod. Try his grandmother's recipe for *bacalao*, to eat in or take away.

## **i** Information

**Tourist office** (☎71 58 54 54; [www.visitkristiansund.com](http://www.visitkristiansund.com); Kongens plass 1; ☀9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Aug, 9am-4pm Mon-Fri rest of year) In the centre, back up the hill from the waterfront.

## **i** Getting There & Away

### AIR

The town's Kvernberget **airport** (☎71 68 30 50) is on Nordlandet island. There are frequent flights daily to/from both Oslo and Bergen.

Buses travel regularly to/from the airport (Nkr60, 15 minutes, up to eight daily) to meet incoming flights.

### BOAT

Express boats connect Kristiansund with Trondheim (3½ hours, up to three daily from Nordmørskaaia). The Hurtigruten coastal ferry also calls in daily at Holmakaia.

### BUS

Inland buses run hourly to Molde (Nkr156, 1½ hours) and on to Ålesund (3¾ hours). The coastal run that rolls along the Atlanterhavsveien is much more impressive and scarcely longer. Northwards, there are up to three buses daily to Trondheim (Nkr400, 4¾ hours).

## **i** Getting Around

The **Sundbåten ferry** ([www.sundbaten.no](http://www.sundbaten.no); adult/child Nkr30/15, day ticket Nkr85) claims to be 'the world's oldest public transport system in uninterrupted use'. That's a heavy reputation for these small, squat boats to bear. Whatever the history, it's well worth the ride for its own sake and for the special perspective it gives of the harbour. Boats leave from Piren pier at the foot of Kaibakken hill, linking the town centre and the islands of Innlandet, Nordlandet and Gomelandet. They run every half hour, Monday to Saturday; the full circuit takes 20 minutes.

## Around Kristiansund

### Grip

Huddled together on a tiny rocky island as though for protection against Atlantic gales, the village of Grip with its pastel-painted houses sits amid an archipelago of 80 islets and skerries. The only elevation is the 47m-tall Bratthårskollen lighthouse on a nearby skerry, built in 1888 and prodding skywards.

In the early 19th century, after a drop in cod hauls and two powerful storms, the village was practically abandoned. But it bounced back, its population swelling during the cod-fishing season when basing yourself on the island saved three hours of hard rowing each way from the mainland. Imagine, as you wander among today's sprinkle of houses, spring fishing seasons, when more than 1000 fisherfolk hunkered down here.

The last permanent inhabitants gave up the fight in 1974. There's a small photographic display with an accompanying sheet in English in one of the storehouses. A summertime cafe serves snacks in what was once the village school (only three pupils were left when its bell rang for the last time in 1972).

The island's **stave church** dates from the late 15th century. Its altarpiece, discarded at the time of the Reformation, was found in a boathouse and restored to its rightful place in the 1930s. The lively frescos in the nave were revealed when later whitewash was stripped off.

From late May to late August, the **M/S Gripepressen** ([www.gripepressen.no](http://www.gripepressen.no); ☀late-May-early-August) plies the 14km between Kristiansund's Piren terminal and Grip (40 minutes; adult/child Nkr305/150 return) once or twice daily. Total journey time is 3½ hours, including time ashore. In principle, there's a guided tour included within the fare.

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