

# Welcome to Scandinavia

*Effortlessly chic cities meet remote forests,  
drawing style gurus and wilderness  
hikers alike. Endless day, perpetual night.  
Rocking festivals, majestic aurora borealis.  
Scandinavia's menu is anything but bland.*

## Epic Outdoors

The great outdoors is rarely greater than in Europe's big north. Epic expanses of wilderness – forests, lakes, volcanoes – and intoxicatingly pure air mean engaging with nature is utter pleasure. National parks cover the region, offering some of Europe's best hiking as well as anything from kayaking to glacier-walking to bear-watching. Spectacular coasts – rugged fjords, cliffs teeming with seabirds, archipelagos so speckled with islands it looks like an artist flicked a paintbrush at a canvas – invite exploration from the sea.

## City Style

Stolid Nordic stereotypes dissolve in the region's vibrant capitals. Crest-of-the-wave design can be seen in them all, backed by outstanding modern architecture, excellent museums, imaginative solutions for 21st-century urban living, internationally acclaimed restaurants and a nightlife that fizzles along despite hefty beer prices. Live music is a given: you're bound to come across some inspiring local act whether your taste is Viking metal or chamber music. Style here manages to be conservative and innovative at the same time, or perhaps it's just that the new and the old blend with less effort than elsewhere.

## Seasons

They have proper seasons up here. There are long, cold winters with thick snow carpeting the ground and the sun making only cameo appearances – if at all. Despite the scary subzero temperatures, there's a wealth of things to do: skiing, sledding behind huskies or reindeer, snowmobile safaris to the Arctic Sea, ice fishing, romantic nights in snow hotels, visiting Santa Claus and gazing at the soul-piercing northern lights. Spring sees nature's tentative awakening before the explosive summer's long, long days, filled with festivals, beer terraces and wonderful boating, hiking and cycling. Autumn in Scandinavia's forested lands can be the most beautiful of all, as the birches and other deciduous trees display a glorious array of colours, offering marvellous woodland walking before the first snows.

## Green Choices

You'll rarely come across the word *ecotourism* in Scandinavia, but those values have long been an important part of life here. Generally, green and sustainable solutions are a way of living rather than a gimmick to attract visitors. Scandinavia will likely be significantly affected by climate change, and big efforts to reduce emissions are being made across the region.



## Why I Love Scandinavia

By Andy Symington, Author

I've been visiting regularly for a couple of decades; right from the moment I arrive, those first breaths of Nordic air always seem fresh and pure. I'm entranced by Scandinavia's smart modern cities and cosy cottage culture. My first love, though, is the wilderness. Spotting the first roadside reindeer tells me I've reached the far north, whether for endless Arctic summer days or the eerily sunless polar night. Then, depending on season and place, it's time for brilliant hikes, the northern lights, baying huskies, smoking volcanoes, indigenous culture or intriguing wildlife. It fascinates me that there's such untamed nature in these modern nations.

**For more about our authors, see p512**

Above: Aurora borealis, Tromsø (p350), Norway