



Norway

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Best Places to Eat

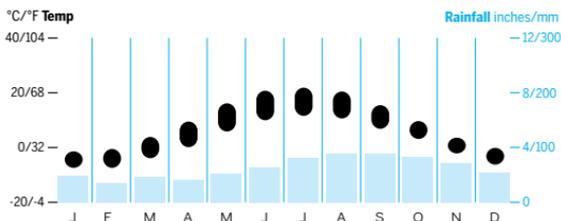
- ➔ Markveien Mat & Vinhus (p841)
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Why Go?

Norway is a once-in-a-lifetime destination and the essence of its appeal is remarkably simple: this is one of the most beautiful countries on earth. Impossibly steep-sided fjords cut deep gashes into the interior; grand and glorious glaciers snake down from Europe's largest ice fields; and the appeal of the Arctic is primeval. The counterpoint to so much natural beauty is found in the country's vibrant cultural life. Norwegian cities are cosmopolitan and brimful of architecture that showcases the famous Scandinavian flair for design. Yes, Norway is one of the most expensive countries on the planet, but it'll pay you back with never-to-be-forgotten experiences many times over.

When to Go

Oslo



Mar There's still plenty of snow on the ground, but enough daylight to enjoy winter sports.

Jun–Aug Scandinavian summers are short, and beyond the Arctic Circle, the sun never sets.

Sep The stunning colours of autumn make this prime hiking time.

OSLO

POP 647,676

Oslo is home to world-class museums and galleries to rival anywhere else on the European art trail and is fringed with forests, hills and lakes. Add to this mix a thriving cafe and bar culture, and top-notch restaurants and the result is a thoroughly intoxicating place in which to forget about the fjords for a while.

Sights

★ Oslo Opera House

ARCHITECTURE

(Den Norske Opera & Ballett; ☎21 42 21 21; www.operaen.no; Kirsten Flagstads plass 1; foyer free; ☉foyer 10am-9pm Mon-Fri, 11am-9pm Sat, noon-9pm Sun) Hoping to transform the city into a world-class cultural centre, the city leaders have embarked on a massive waterfront redevelopment project (which is scheduled to last until 2020), the centrepiece of which is the magnificent Opera House – a creation that is fast becoming one of the iconic modern buildings of Scandinavia.

★ Astrup Fearnley Museet

GALLERY

(Astrup Fearnley Museum; ☎22 93 60 60; www.afmuseet.no; Strandpromenaden 2; adult/student/child Nkr120/80/free, guided tours Nkr50; ☉noon-5pm Tue, Wed & Fri, to 7pm Thu, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) Recently re-opened in a stunning architectural creation at the centre of Oslo's waterfront, this museum, which contains all manner of zany contemporary art, is Oslo's latest flagship project and the artistic highlight of the city.

Akershus Festning

FORTRESS

(Akershus Fortress; ☉6am-9pm) **FREE** Strategically located on the eastern side of the harbour, dominating the Oslo harbourfront, are the **medieval castle** (Akershus Castle; ☎22 41 25 21; www.nasjonalefestningsverk.no; Kongens gate; adult/child Nkr70/30, with Oslo Pass free; ☉10am-4pm Mon-Sat, noon-4pm Sun May-Aug, noon-5pm Sat & Sun Sep-Apr) and fortress, arguably Oslo's architectural highlights. The complex as a whole is known as Akershus Festning. Inside the expansive complex are a couple of museums and interesting buildings.

Nasjonalgalleriet

GALLERY

(National Gallery; ☎21 98 20 00; www.nasjonalmuseet.no; Universitetsgata 13; adult/child Nkr100/free, Thu free; ☉10am-6pm Tue, Wed & Fri, to 7pm Thu, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun) One of Oslo's major highlights, the National Gallery houses the nation's largest collection of art. Some of Edvard Munch's best-known creations are on

display here, including his most renowned work, *The Scream*. There's an impressive collection of other European art, with works by Gauguin, Picasso and El Greco, plus impressionists such as Manet, Degas, Renoir, Matisse, Cézanne and Monet. Norwegian artists have a strong showing, too, including key figures such as JC Dahl and Christian Krohg.

Munchmuseet

GALLERY

(Munch Museum; ☎23 49 35 00; www.munchmuseet.no; Tøyengata 53; adult/child Nkr100/free; ☉10am-4pm, to 5pm mid-Jun-late Sep; ☎20, ☎Tøyen) Fans of Edvard Munch (1863-1944) won't want to miss the Munch Museum, which houses the largest collection of his work in the world: 1100 paintings and 4500 watercolours, many of which were gifted to the city by Munch himself (although the best-known pieces, including *The Scream*, are actually in the National Gallery).

Royal Palace & Slottsparken

PALACE, PARK

(Det Kongelige Slott; ☎81 53 31 33; www.royal-court.no; Slottsparken; park free, palace tours adult/child Nkr95/85; ☉guided tours in English noon, 2pm & 2.20pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 2pm, 2.20pm & 4pm Fri & Sun late Jun-mid-Aug) **FREE** Rising up above the western end of central Oslo is the sloping parkland of Slottsparken. Filled with stately royal trees and a duck pond or three, it's a lovely place for a quiet walk. The Norwegian royal family liked the park so much they moved in – the Royal Palace sits grandly at the top.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Begin in **Oslo** and soak up the Scandinavian sophistication of the city's museums, waterfront and culinary scene. Join the Norway in a Nutshell tour, travelling by train across the stunning roof of Norway, down to **Sognefjorden** then on to **Bergen** via **Gudvangen**, **Stalheim** and **Voss**. Three days in Bergen will give you a taste of this beguiling city, then jump back on the train back to Oslo.

Two Weeks

With an extra week, allow for two days in **Stavanger** (including the day excursion to **Pulpit Rock** above Lysefjord), a couple more days in **Trondheim**, then three days exploring the length and breadth of the **Lofoten Islands** before flying back to **Oslo**.