



Norway



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Itineraries



1
WEEK

Norway in Microcosm

Even with only a week to spare, you can still see the best that Norway has to offer. This itinerary begins with Oslo's considerable charms, traverses the drama of Norway's high country and precipitous fjords, and ends up in beautiful Bergen. This journey can just as easily be taken in reverse order.

After a couple of days exploring the fine galleries and museums of **Oslo**, take the scenic Oslo–Bergen railway, one of the most spectacular rail journeys on earth. From Oslo, the line climbs gently through forests, plateaus and ski centres to the beautifully desolate **Hardangervidda Plateau**, home to Norway's largest herd of wild reindeer and numerous hiking trails. At **Myrdal**, take the Flåmsbana railway down to **Flåm**, from where fjord cruises head up the incomparable **Nærøysfjord**. Travel via Gudvangen, sleep overnight in **Stalheim**, and then continue on to **Voss**, where thrill-seekers love the easily accessible activities on offer. Trains then carry you on to **Bergen**, arguably Norway's prettiest city – wander its historic wooden waterfront, climb the surrounding mountains for sweeping views or soak up the atmosphere of the bars and restaurants that so distinguish this cosmopolitan city.



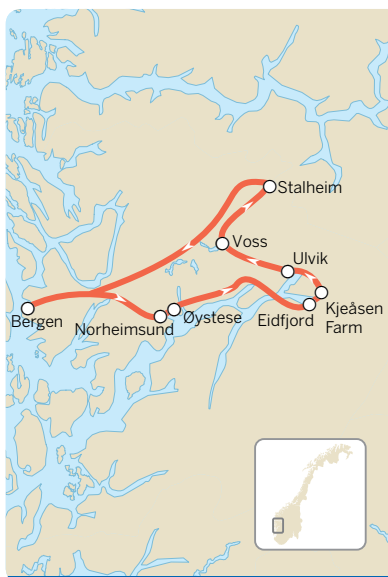
The Norwegian Coast

The coastline between Trondheim and the Lofoten Islands takes you across the Arctic Circle along a shoreline fissured with deep inlets, shadowed by countless offshore islands and populated by quiet fishing villages. You'll need a car to make the most of this route, or consider the Hurtigruten coastal ferry, even for just a leg or two.

Begin in **Trondheim** and linger for a couple of days in one of Norway's most agreeable cities. Heading north, via **Hell**, stop off in **Stiklestad**, a site of great historical significance for Norwegians. Overnight here or continue on to **Rørvik**, where a fascinating multimedia display is the perfect introduction to coastal life.

The Rv17 travels north to picturesque **Brønnøysund**, and don't miss the offshore detour to the fascinating, Unesco World Heritage-listed island of **Vega**; count on a couple of nights in Brønnøysund and Vega. Back on the mainland, the extraordinary **Kystriksveien coastal route** hugs the coastline. A candidate for Norway's most spectacular drive, this road passes an estimated 14,000 islands. It can be slow going with all the ferries and inlet-hugging stretches of road, but it is unquestionably worth it. The entire route could be done in a couple of days, but four or five is far more enjoyable. Factor in time as well for a detour to the **Saltfjellet-Svartisen National Park**, home to Norway's second-largest icefield and accessible glacier tongues. The most beautiful section of the Kystriksveien route is between Sandnessjøen and Storvik, and it's along this section that you'll cross the **Arctic Circle**.

The primary appeal of **Bodø** is as the gateway (by ferry) to the **Lofoten Islands**. Unlike any other landscape in Norway, the Lofoten could easily occupy a week of your time, although it can be experienced much more rapidly for those in a hurry – make three days a minimum. All of the islands and villages are worth visiting, but on no account miss **Nusfjord** and **Å**, the latter a charmingly preserved village at the southern tip of Moskenesøy. Like Lofoten but with far fewer visitors, **Vesterålen** is wild and beautiful and worth two days, including summer whale-watching off **Andenes**, before you head on to your journey's end at **Narvik**.

5
DAYS

A Bergen Long Weekend

Bergen is one of northern Europe's most popular short-break trips, with good reason. While there's more than enough to keep you occupied for five days in Bergen itself, the city's hinterland might entice you to consider a two-night excursion to see what all the fuss is about out in the fjords.

Bergen is the reason you came here and you've a busy time ahead of you if you hope to pack it all into two very full days of museums, wining and dining, shopping and simply wandering the postcard-perfect streets.

Although ranging beyond Bergen can be done using public transport, we recommend renting a car and driving on your third day through **Norheimsund**, the peaceful gateway to the stirring panoramas of the Hardangerfjord network. Pause in **Øystese** long enough to enjoy an unlikely contemporary art fix, then overnight in dramatic **Eidfjord**. The next morning, after a detour to **Kjeåsen Farm**, drive to gorgeous **Ulvik** for extraordinary views, stop for lunch in **Voss**, then drive to **Stalheim** for more spectacular views. Go for a hike in the morning, then drive back to **Bergen** in time for your flight home.

2
WEEKS

Best of the Fjords

Few natural attractions have come to define a country quite like Norway's fjords. This meandering route through Norway's fjord country, with a detour up and over the roof of Norway, is one of Europe's most beautiful. You'll need your own vehicle. Take as long as you can.

Begin in the far south, in **Stavanger**. After a day or two, take a day trip to **Lysefjord**, including the hike up to the signature lookout of Preikestolen (Pulpit Rock). A long day's drive north brings you to Hardangerfjord, and a string of villages you'll never want to leave, among them **Utne** and **Eidfjord**. Overnight in the latter, then continue on to **Flåm**; if you've still enough left in the tank, make for far lovelier **Aurland** for a couple of nights surrounded by extraordinary views. Wind your way north to pretty **Solvorn** on Lustrafjord, climb up and over the Sognefjellet Road through **Jotunheimen National Park**, then overnight in **Lom** with its perfectly sited stave church. Then it's on to peerless **Geirangerfjord**, up another breathtaking mountain road, the **Trollstigen**, down to **Åndalsnes** and then follow the coast to quiet and lovely **Ålesund**.



The Arctic North

The mystique of the extreme north has drawn explorers for centuries. Here is a horizonless world seemingly without end, a frozen wilderness that inspires the awe reserved for the great empty places of our earth. If you're really lucky, you might see a polar bear.

Tromsø is a university town par excellence. Its Polar Museum captures the spirit of Arctic exploration, its Arctic Cathedral wonderfully evokes the landscapes of the north, while the surrounding peaks host a wealth of summer and winter activities. You could also visit lovely **Senja** for a day. After three days on the road, head east for the rock carvings of **Alta**, then **Nordkapp**: as far north as you can go in Norway without setting out to sea. Next, head inland to **Karasjok** and **Kautokeino**, to the heartland of the Sami people. No exploration of the Arctic North would be complete without **Svalbard**. Return to Tromsø and catch a flight deep into the polar regions where the Svalbard archipelago is one of Europe's last great wildernesses. Allow at least four days to tap into the many activities that get you out into the wilderness.



The Heart of Norway

The high country of central Norway is simply spectacular and, provided you're willing to rent a car for part of the time, it offers some unparalleled opportunities to explore the region's quiet back roads; serious cyclists could also follow many of the same routes.

After a couple of days in **Oslo**, it's a short trip to **Lillehammer**, which hosted the 1994 Winter Olympics and remains one of central Norway's most pleasing spots; it has a wealth of Olympic sites and a lovely setting. Continuing north after a night in Lillehammer, **Ringebu** has one of Norway's prettiest stave churches. Having a car enables you to take the quiet Rv27, which draws near to the precipitous massifs of the **Rondane National Park**, before continuing northeast to Unesco World Heritage-listed **Røros**, one of Norway's most enchanting villages, with painted timber houses and old-world charm. After one or two nights in Røros, it's an easy detour north to **Trondheim**, a delightful coastal city with a stunning cathedral, large student population and engaging cultural scene; it's worth a two- or three-night stay.



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Anthony Ham

Coordinating Author, Spectacular Norway, Trøndelag, Nordland, The Far North, Svalbard

Anthony fell in love with Norway the first time he laid eyes on it, and there aren't many places in Norway he hasn't been, from Lindesnes in the south to the remote fjords of Svalbard in the far north. His true passion is the Arctic north, whether dog-sledding and spending time with the Sami around Karasjok or drawing near to glaciers and scouring the horizon for polar bears in the glorious wilderness of Svalbard. When he's not travelling for Lonely Planet to the Arctic (or, his other great love, Africa), he lives in Melbourne and Madrid and writes and photographs for magazines and newspapers around the world. Anthony's website is www.anthonham.com.

Read more about Anthony at:
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Stuart Butler

Oslo, Central Norway, Travel with Children

Stuart's first contacts with Norway were very cold ones – a surf trip in the shadow of Nordkapp one frozen November where he rode waves under the glow of the Northern Lights. Fortunately, the short days meant he didn't have to spend long in the water! Once he had thawed out, his interest in Norway was piqued and he has since returned numerous times to hike the central mountains, travel the fjords, hang out in Oslo and, deciding that Nordkapp wasn't quite cold enough, go on a surf trip to Svalbard... Today he lives with his wife and two young children on the much warmer beaches of southwest France. Stuart's website is www.stuartbutlerjournalist.com.

Read more about Stuart at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/stuartbutler



Donna Wheeler

Southern Norway, Bergen & the Southwestern Fjords, The Western Fjords

Donna Wheeler first came to Norway in search of the northern lights, insanely ambitious architecture and Arctic silence. She was happy to return and again immerse herself in the Norwegian sublime, easily found deep in the fjords, up mountain passes, in summer's first strawberries and on a Bergen dancefloor.

Donna is based in Melbourne, where she also writes for My Art Guides, *National Geographic Traveler* and other publications. Her features, photographs and experiential travel projects can be found at donna Wheeler.com.

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