



The Emerald City in the Pacific Northwest is A hub of Nordic culture. The next time you're in town, use this guide for what to see, what to snack on, where to shop and where to stay.

BY TAYLOR HUGO

Attracted by a landscape that reminded them of home, immigrants from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland flocked to the Pacific Northwest in the late 19th century to pursue economic activities in industries like logging and fishing. By 1910, 30 percent of the foreign-born population in Washington state was Scandinavian, making that ethnic group the largest in the area at the time.

"We have some similarities in our geographic features. Since we have inlets, farmlands, forests and mountains, it probably felt similar," says Tracey Wickersham, Visit Seattle's director of cultural tourism. "In terms of culture, we're independent-minded, and I think people from the Nordic countries found a kindred spirit here."

Eric Nelson, CEO of the Nordic Museum, points to parallel ideologies and interests to explain the strong relationship between the two societies. "There's a keen alignment of some of the values around sustainability and the connection to nature. Both are very literate communities, and both have really tight connections to design," he says, adding that 12.5 percent of the population in Washington state today claims Nordic heritage.

The culture's roots have only continued to grow over the decades, with everything from Scandinavian shops and eateries to historical attractions and heritage clubs contributing to the makeup of the community. Here are some must-visit places to add to your itinerary the next time you find yourself in the Emerald City.



# Nordic Events in Seattle

## Nordic Lights Film Festival

In January, the Nordic Museum and the Seattle International Film Festival team up to present the Nordic Lights Film Festival. [nordicmuseum.org/nlff](http://nordicmuseum.org/nlff)

## Syttende Mai

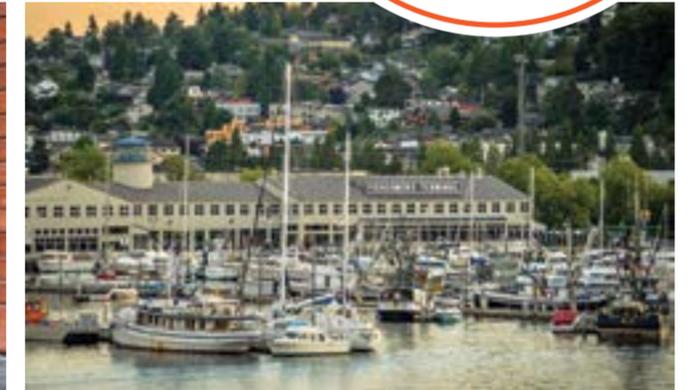
On May 17, Norway's Constitution Day, Ballard hosts one of the largest parades outside of Norway, complete with free activities at the Nordic Museum. [17thofmay.org](http://17thofmay.org)

## Viking Days

The weekend-long celebration in July includes traditional foods, folk music and dancing, crafts and activities, demonstrations and Viking reenactments. [nordicmuseum.org/vikingdays](http://nordicmuseum.org/vikingdays)

## Yulefest

In November, a weekend at the Nordic Museum is dedicated to an annual Christmas celebration with music, holiday treats and a raffle. [nordicmuseum.org](http://nordicmuseum.org)



## Did You Know?

Seattle has two Nordic sister cities. Bergen was named a sibling in 1967, with Reykjavik, Iceland, following in 1986. As part of the relationship, the cities participate in many cultural and educational exchanges.

## SEE

Ask any Seattleite where to experience an abundance of Nordic culture, and you will most likely be pointed in the direction of Ballard, a neighborhood that has welcomed Scandinavian immigrants since the late 1800s.

While there are a variety of boutiques and eateries to explore, its crown jewel is the Nordic Museum ([nordicmuseum.org](http://nordicmuseum.org)), which is reopening in a new location this month nearly two years after the project first broke ground. “We’ve been working closely with all five [Nordic] embassies to make sure we’re bringing the best of contemporary Scandinavia here to Seattle,” Nelson says of the museum, one of the largest of its kind in the United States.

The new, more visible location along the waterfront is brought to life by the nearly 60,000-square-foot, \$45 million building crafted by design firm Mithun, which was founded by the son of a Norwegian immigrant, and made to resemble a fjord. In addition to new spaces for an auditorium, a café and classrooms, the museum will be expanding its core exhibition, “Nordic Journeys,” to include 77 pieces on loan from a handful of institutions in the Nordic region. “Our mission is to share Nordic culture with the entire community,” Nelson says. “We are really trying to use the new museum to reinforce that message. We are a strong part of the community, and there is something to share with everyone.”

While you’re in the area, grab a coffee at Ballard Coffee Works and head to Bergen Place ([seattle.gov/parks](http://seattle.gov/parks)). It’s not hard to spot,

with flags from Norway, Finland, Iceland, Denmark and Sweden proudly displayed at the tree-lined park’s entrance. Named in honor of Bergen, Norway, one of Seattle’s sister cities, the park was dedicated by the late King Olav V on October 19, 1975.

Leif Erikson ([leiferikson.org](http://leiferikson.org)) is another famous Scandinavian celebrated in Seattle, marked by a statue at the Shilshole Bay Marina. Credited with being the first European to visit North America around 1000 AD, the Leif Erikson League gifted the statue of the explorer to Seattle for the 1962 World’s Fair. Crafted by sculptor August Werner, the statue follows the Viking tradition of facing the water, and is now surrounded by stones designed by artist Jay Haavik, a tribute to Nordic immigrants.

## SNACK

To fuel your sightseeing adventures, stop into Byen Bakeri ([byenbakeri.com](http://byenbakeri.com)) in

the North Queen Anne neighborhood. Brian and Michelle Morck opened the shop in 2013, baking made-from-scratch breads, pastries, cakes and sandwiches. Take your pick from a variety of Nordic treat selections — ranging from kringle, lefse and kransekake to julekake, Swedish rye and *kneippbröd* — and take in the water views from nearby Fremont Canal Park.

If you’re lucky enough to be in Seattle on the first Sunday of the month, don’t pass up the chance to attend the Swedish Club’s ([swedishclubnw.org](http://swedishclubnw.org)) pancake breakfast. For only \$11, fill your plate with fluffy pannkakor topped with lingonberries or strawberries, and drink a cup of Swedish coffee while enjoying traditional folk dancing. The club also hosts other open-to-the-public events, so even if you miss breakfast, it’s still worth a stop to take a Swedish language or weaving class, or catch a Scandinavian movie with English subtitles.

For a splash of aquavit, saddle up to Old Ballard Liquor Co. ([oldballardliquorco.com](http://oldballardliquorco.com)) to sip on the Scandinavian spirit.

The six-year-old nano-distillery batches different mixes throughout the year — including flavors like citron, dill, licorice and holiday spice — while the small, 12-seat café, which opened in 2016, will keep you grounded with a changing menu of nibbles like pickled herring, potato and leek soup with limpa bread, and sweet cardamom bread.

## SHOP

Now that you’ve gotten a taste of Seattle’s Scandinavian cuisine, don’t leave empty-handed. Scandinavian Specialties ([scanspecialties.com](http://scanspecialties.com)) in Ballard is the premier purveyor of goods from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland and Finland. Originally founded in 1962 as the Norwegian Sausage Company, the

RENDERING DESIGN BY MITHUN/IMAGE BY MIR.

PHOTOS BY (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) DESIGN BY MITHUN/IMAGE BY MIR, CHUCK PEFFLEY/ALAMY, STOCK PHOTO, ALABASTRO PHOTOGRAPH, SHUTTERSTOCK



# Worth the Trip

If you have time to spend outside of Seattle, take a day trip to the town of Poulsbo. With Liberty Bay and the Olympic Mountains in view, you'll understand why the fjord-like landscape has earned the town — founded by Norwegian Jorgen Eliason and now home to 10,500 people — the nickname “Little Norway.”

About an hour-and-a-half from Seattle, it gives you the chance to travel via water. “For any visitor to the region, riding a ferry is a must-do,” says Visit Seattle’s Tracey Wickersham. “It’s a huge part of our transportation system.”

It’s not hard to fall in love with the charming town. Make Sluys Poulsbo Bakery your first stop in the morning for fresh limpa, cardamom or Norwegian black bread before roaming shops like Swedish-inspired girls’ clothing store Flicka and The Verksted Gallery, where rosemaling and Norwegian bentwood boxes are on display. Cap off the evening with a Viking-inspired cold one from Valhöll Brewing. [visitpoulsbo.com](http://visitpoulsbo.com)



shop has evolved and changed ownership over the past 50-plus years, but hasn’t lost its focus on selling quality, authentic Nordic products. Stock up on items like Snøfrisk goat cheese, lingonberry jam and lemon rhubarb log candies, as well as Finnish Taika dishes, Sámi bracelets and candles.

You can also pick up some new duds while in town at Pirkko ([pirkko.com](http://pirkko.com)). Named for its Finnish founder Pirkko Karhunen and opened in 2010, the shop in the heart of downtown Seattle carries brands that embrace Scandinavian design. Marimekko’s apparel, fabric and bags are prominent, as are Ilse Jacobsen and Noolan jackets, and Ritva Falla’s collection of women’s ware, to name a few.

## STAY

Those who want to fully immerse themselves in the Scandinavian culture of Seattle should look no further than Hotel Ändra ([hotelandra.com](http://hotelandra.com)). “Ändra,” meaning “change” in Swedish, refers to the building’s transformation from efficiency apartments in the 1920s to a Women’s Army Corps transfer station in the 1940s to a hotel in the 1970s.

Today, the boutique, 119-room hotel in downtown brims with Nordic touches. In the lobby, a floor-to-ceiling maple bookshelf displays books about Scandinavian culture, while the common-area loft features chairs designed by Finnish architect Alvar Aalto and Danish designer Arne Jacobsen. Studio guestrooms boast handcrafted bed furniture and cabinetry by a Swedish wood artist, and the presidential Monarch Suite offers a Norwegian-made Ekornes recliner for optimum relaxation. 🍷

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