



Travel like a Pro

From what to pack to how to save money, here's what you need to know before you go to Norway.

BY TAYLOR HUGO

With its stunning scenery and buzzing culture scene, Norway is a must on many travelers' bucket lists. If you've never traveled to the country before, you may not know where to begin when it comes to planning a trip to the land of the Vikings. That's why Sons of Norway partners with Borton Overseas (bortonoverseas.com/sofn). In addition to creating custom itineraries, the full-service travel company offers members a 5 percent discount on its travel packages and a 10 percent discount on Icelandair fares. Plus, its staff is full of insider information to make your trip as smooth as sailing on a sparkling fjord.

"We can customize and streamline travel plans," says Betina Kohler, Borton's Scandinavian director. "Some people want an escorted tour and others want to explore more independently."

No matter what type of Norwegian adventure you want to plan—whether it's a capital-city tour of museums with family and friends, or a solo backpacking expedition across the country—here's what to know before you go.

Plan Ahead

As with any trip, planning ahead is key to creating your ideal itinerary and saving money. If your schedule isn't restricted by work or school, focus your travel timeline on the activities you're most looking forward to. Do you want to experience the midnight sun above the Arctic Circle, where there are 24 hours of daylight for 76 straight days? Summer, which brings warm, dry weather with temperatures in the 70s and 80s, is the time to go. Fall can be rainy and windy, but it's the ideal time to explore the country's landscapes on foot as the leaves change to blazing shades of yellow and orange. Come winter, 32-degree days and snow set the stage for skiing and shopping the magical Christmas markets, while spring's blooming trees and rushing waterfalls are a backdrop for two important national holidays: Easter and Syttende Mai, Norway's Constitution Day.

When to Book

Kohler recommends booking travel to Norway four to eight months in advance, but this will vary depending on where you want to go and when. "You want to make sure you get [the airfare and hotel] you want," she says, noting that summer is the high season for tourists.



Pack Appropriately

There is no bad weather, only inappropriate clothing, so it's important to pack for the season in which you're traveling. But there's no need to stuff your suitcase with formal attire, as Norwegians are known for their laid-back vibe. "Bring clothing you can wear more than once," Kohler says. "And comfortable clothes you can move around in." While items like your passport and a camera are a given, there are two other items that should be on your must-pack list: a Europlug adapter to charge all your electronics (look for type C or F) and good walking shoes.

A Slice of Norway

Make this a trip you'll never forget by leaving room in your suitcase for souvenirs. A knitted sweater is an iconic symbol of the country. Other goodies to look for include Freia chocolates, rosemaled décor and lucky troll dolls.

Europlug adapter



Save Money

For anyone traveling through Oslo, the Oslo Pass is a must. Available in 24-, 48- or 72-hour increments, the card gives users free entry to 30 museums and attractions, free public transportation travel, and discounts and special offers for ski rentals, restaurants, entertainment and more.

If you don't want to buy an Oslo Pass, which generally ranges from \$48 to \$90 for an adult, there are plenty of no-cost activities to keep you satisfied. The royally obsessed will love strolling through the Palace Park before catching the changing of the guards outside the Royal Palace. Art and culture fanatics will be happy to learn that most galleries boast free admission, as do the Ekebergparken and Vigeland sculpture parks, the Armed Forces Museum at Akershus Fortress, the Film Museum and Oslo City Hall, to name a few.

Kohler also suggests booking accommodations that include breakfast in the cost and have a kitchen in the room, so you can visit a grocery store and prepare some of your own food. "In general, Norway and Scandinavia are more expensive, especially with things like food and drink, so that's something to keep in mind," she says, adding that a quick stop at a hot dog or waffle cart for a snack or light meal is another great way to save money.

A Tip on Tips

Tipping isn't expected like it is in the United States, Kohler says. But if you want to acknowledge exceptional service at a restaurant or after a guided tour, 5 to 10 percent is a good rule of thumb.



Snap to App

With all of the picturesque scenery in Norway, Instagram is another app you shouldn't leave home without. Some great spots to snap a 'gram: the coastal Lofoten Islands; the famous swing in Trandal, surrounded by glaciers and the Hjørundfjord fjord; and the historic Holmenkollen ski jump built in 1892.

Be Techy

Before you leave for your trip, talk to your cell phone provider about how your phone and plan will work overseas. Some—like Sprint and T-Mobile—allow you to text and access 2G data for free, while Verizon and AT&T users can add a short-term international pass to their plan for a small daily fee.

Another option, says Kohler, is to download WhatsApp, a phone application that enables you to make video and voice calls, send texts and share photos with other WhatsApp users for free by using your internet connection, either through data or Wi-Fi. If your phone provider doesn't offer free data in Norway, make sure you're connected to Wi-Fi before using the app to avoid charges to your phone bill.

Other apps can help you plan everything from transportation to activities:



Visit Norway and VisitOSLO

Maps; information on attractions, restaurants, shops and hotels; and event calendars from two leading travel authorities.



Norway Lights

Increase your chances of experiencing Aurora Borealis with this Northern Lights forecast app that also offers fun facts and photo-taking tips.



RuterReise and RuterBillett

In Norway, public transportation is the best way to travel. Access all bus, ferry and train schedules and routes in major cities throughout the country, and easily purchase tickets from your phone.



Oslo Pass

Purchase and store your Oslo Pass city card—which grants you free and discounted access to attractions and transportation—even arrive in Norway.

Talk Like a Local

While nearly everyone in Norway speaks English, impress the natives with these common phrases.

Thanks	<i>Takk</i>
Hello	<i>Hallo</i>
Goodbye	<i>Ha det</i>
Excuse me	<i>Unnskyld meg</i>
Please	<i>Vær så snill</i>
Where is ... ?	<i>Hvor er ... ?</i>
How much does this cost?	<i>Hvor mye koster dette?</i>
How do you say this in Norwegian?	<i>Hvordan sier man dette på norsk?</i>



iTranslate

Are you looking for a good translation app? iTranslate recognizes your voice, converts your words to text and translates them into another language. The offline mode allows you to use it abroad without having to pay expensive roaming charges. Available on iPhone, iPad, Apple Watch, Android and Windows. itranslate.com

Read Up

Planning for your trip is half the fun! Check out these travel books for ideas and inspiration.

"Snapshot: Norway"

Travel expert Rick Steves gives advice on Norway's best sights, restaurants and hotels. He covers day trips, scenic drives and the famed "Norway in a Nutshell" ride.

"Lonely Planet Norway Travel Guide"

This book includes insider tips, cultural insights and itineraries to help tailor your trip to your personal needs and interests.

"Moon Oslo"

David Nikel is an expat-turned-local who offers advice on Oslo's neighborhoods and practical tips for exploring Norway's capital.

